



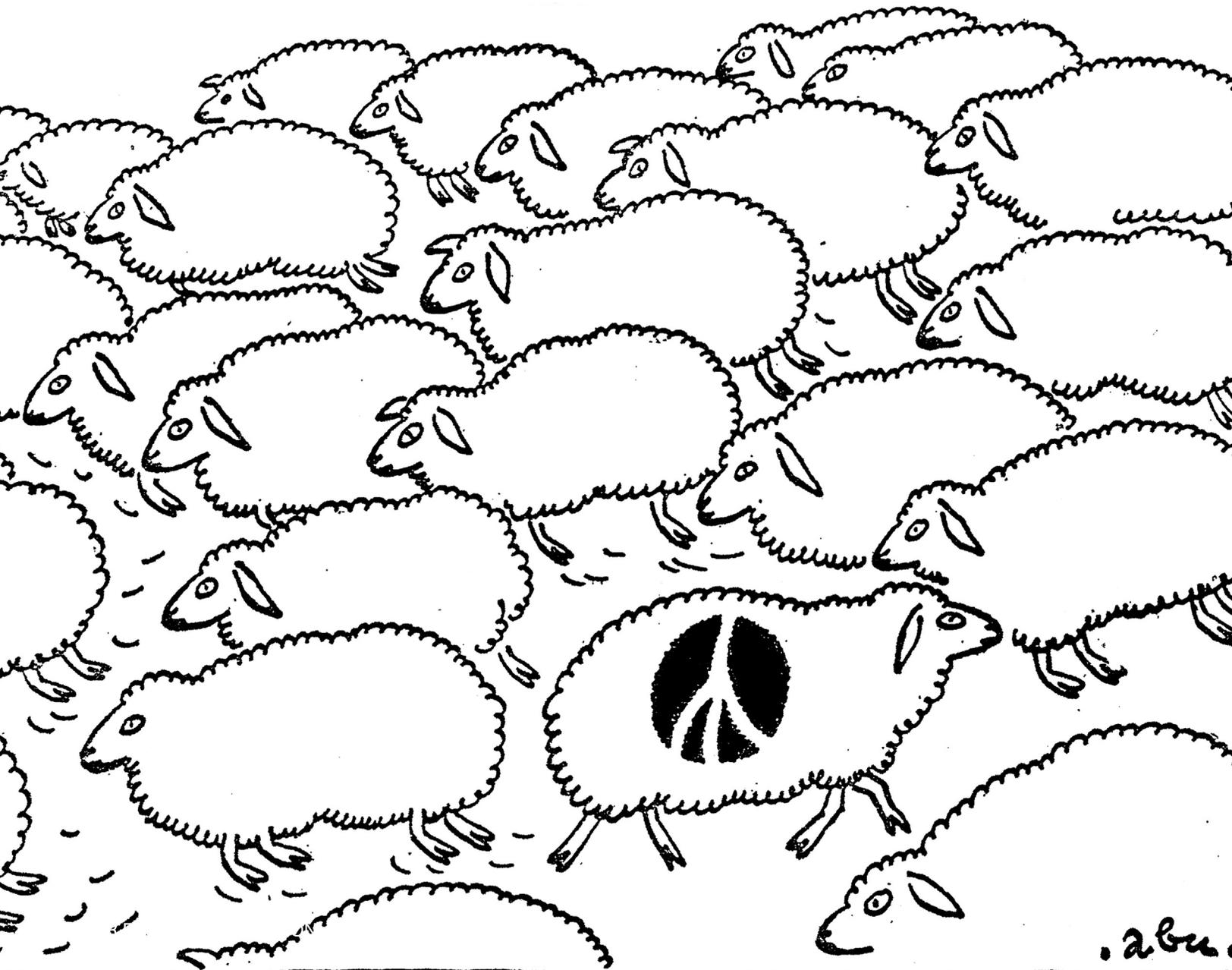
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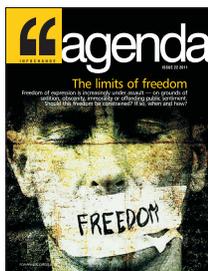
ISSUE 23 2011

Keeping the peace

What are the keys to building a positive peace? Is social, economic and political justice enough? What is the role of the state, and what that of communities and individuals? Can peace be taught and cultivated?



RECENT BACK ISSUES



The limits of freedom



Enclosure of the commons



Ethics of new medical technologies



Agricultural revival

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Infchange Agenda is a quarterly journal published by the Centre for Communication and Development Studies, a social change resource centre focusing on the research and communication of information for change

To order copies, write to:

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301, Kanchanjunga Building, Kanchan Lane, Off Law College Road, Pune 411 004

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Suggested contribution: Rs 90 (1 issue); Rs 300 (4 issues); Rs 550 (8 issues)

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This volume brings together content from CCDS's explorations of peace and peace-building over the last two years, from the Open Space 'Keeping the Peace' public lectures in Pune to workshops, dialogues, poetry and music concerts

Cover: A work by the well-known cartoonist Abu Abraham

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Peace refractions

What is peace to the refugee living in a camp, to the person who comes home to domestic violence, to those living in want, to those who cannot speak their mind, who are denied equity because of their caste, class or religion? Is the end of war or civil strife peace if justice is not done to the victims, and to the perpetrators of violence? And finally, can there be peace in any sphere without inner transformation?

SWARNA
RAJAGOPALAN

PEACE is actually such a simple thing.

When I think about writing this essay, I realise that all I really want to say is: “Be nice to each other. Peace is being nice to each other.” But that won’t do at all; I must say more even though my heart says this is all there is. Just the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Be nice to them.

I must say more, so I take the cool white radiance that glows from the word ‘peace’ spoken in any language, and I watch it refract through a prism into all its meanings. Each meaning is complete and stands alone; but peace itself is incomplete unless all its constituent meanings are in place.

More than two-and-a-half million refugees live in Darfur’s refugee camps. The majority of them fled their homes following both air raids and raids by Arab Janjaweed militia who would shoot, rape and loot their villages. Believing that Sudan’s government and the militia are closely associated, Darfur’s people would have had no choice but flight. Militia patrol the perimeter of the camps, and kill and rape those who stray outside. Thousands have died from the fighting and from hunger and disease. Peace for these refugees will begin when they are able to return to their homes and their livelihood, and be able to live without fear for their families and selves.

All over the world, people in large metros set out to work each day — as cleaners, as mechanics, as teachers, as bankers, as entrepreneurs — to every sort of job, ignoring the real possibility that their bus or train, their workplace or the market they stop at could be the site of a terrorist attack. Colombo. Islamabad. Mumbai. New Delhi. Ahmedabad. New York. London. Tokyo. The list of people whose lives were interrupted by such attacks is long and growing. Peace is the ability to go about your day, knowing you will go home alive at night.

To those who come home to domestic violence, however, home is not a safe haven. To live in anticipation of the next verbal or physical assault, never knowing what will provoke violence, is surely to live in a miniature war zone. Peace for victims of violence within the home — whether it is battery,

dowry harassment, rape or incestuous abuse — is life without fear or physical harm or torture.

Freedom from fear. Freedom from physical threat. Physical safety. Physical survival.

In recent years, scholars and activists have added many dimensions to their peace work — livelihoods, development, justice — but the bottom line remains a life without physical threats. From the minimalist definition of peace as ‘no war’ to the rights of a girl-child to a life without violence, the first definition of peace is a life without the fear of being hurt physically, where people are confident about their survival. This is the simplest meaning of security, and security is the most immediate meaning of peace.

Peace is security.

In recent years, scholars and activists have added many dimensions to their peace work, but the bottom line remains a life without physical threats. From the minimalist definition of peace as ‘no war’ to the rights of a girl-child to a life without violence, the first definition of peace is a life without the fear of being hurt physically, where people are confident about their survival

Recent discussions on a social network on the anniversary of the 1975 Emergency revealed nostalgia for the orderliness of those months. Trains ran on time. Government offices functioned efficiently. There were no strikes. There was security for everyone who lived within the bounds of permissible opinion and activity. What those bounds were, varied from state to state. In Uttar Pradesh, a compulsory sterilisation campaign forced surgery on young childless men, in order to meet state targets. In Kerala, student-activist Rajan was arrested and died during custodial torture. Elsewhere, thousands were jailed for protesting civil rights violations. The press was censored. Ordinary Indians were secure, but was India at peace?

Intolerance of dissent and intolerance of difference both create tense environments. Last year's controversy about *My Name is Khan* had nothing to do with the film. It was about the lead actor's support for including Pakistani cricketers in the Indian Premier League. Loud protests and threats to stop the release of the film resulted in small incidents of violence, extraordinary police security for a film release, and a climate of tension and anxiety about violence that could be. Not quite war, but hardly peaceful; peace lies in accepting difference and accepting the right to express that difference.

Repression in occupied territories and colonies may deliver some semblance of order and some degree of everyday safety, but as freedom movements across history have shown, most people are not satisfied with that. Arguably, the most inspiring collective dream of the last century has been the nationalist dream of freedom, of that "heaven of freedom," as Tagore put it.

Peace is freedom to speak one's mind, follow one's conscience, to learn one's language and celebrate one's culture, to travel at will, to follow any occupation, to participate in the affairs of the community as one wishes.

Peace is freedom.

In 1793, the East India Company devised the system of Permanent Settlement, creating overnight a class of landlords with the right to extract revenue from tenant-farmers. These zamindars became pillars of the Empire, but for the average farmer great suffering followed. As with any feudal arrangement, there might have been some benefit by way of protection, but it was not protection from exploitation by the zamindar himself. Debt and bonded labour were related consequences. The continuing plight of the Indian farmer reflects the legacy of this arrangement, with the cycle of low productivity, debt and hunger trapping rural Indians into desperate situations. Peace can mean nothing to the person struggling to make ends meet or trapped in a situation of permanent disadvantage.

Jaffna Tamils took to the introduction by colonisers of western schooling as a way out of eking a slender

living from their arid land. At the time of Sri Lanka independence, this placed them at a relative advantage vis-à-vis other communities. The politics and process of redressing this early imbalance led to a language policy that trapped each community within its region, to an educational policy that introduced weighted standards, to constitutions that defined nationhood more and more narrowly, and finally to war. On the Tamil side, the fight for equity was about equal representation, restored access to opportunities and, ultimately, self-determination. The lack of fairness in successive dispensations made it impossible for peace to flourish in Sri Lanka.

In 1980, the Mandal Commission made a series of recommendations extending India's reservation system further, as a way of extending affirmative action. The recommendations remained on election manifestos for a decade, until in 1990, the government decided to implement them. This decision, part of every party's election promises, caused desperate unrest, with young people hitting the streets, blockading New Delhi's arterial roads and dramatically setting themselves on fire to protest the shrinking of the 'open' category for educational and employment opportunities. Their desperate anger drew attention to the fact that caste and class privilege was not coterminous and that equity measures without nuance can be quite unfair. The peace of north India was shattered by the anger of protesting students; but there would be no peace after this in the homes of the young people who had chosen to die.

The unfairness of the world moves some to quiet, defeated desperation, and others to anger and violence. Even though life is not a zero-sum game, a win-win solution can be hard to identify. But without it, peace is superficial and tenuous. Peace follows equity.

Peace is equity.

In inter-state war, reparations are part of the peace — imposed or negotiated — and form compensation for hostilities and war crimes. Societies transitioning out of protracted internal conflict are faced with the same questions but a much more challenging context, since perpetrators and victims come from all sides of the conflict but belong to the same setting and must live together. This is Sri Lanka's challenge. It has appointed a Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission whose mandate is to find out what happened before and during the 2008-09 campaign, but stopping short of prosecution and punishment. Who will hold the army accountable and who will be accountable for the war crimes on the LTTE side, remain to be seen. A resolution of the conflict depends on justice being done, and lasting peace must wait.

During the 1971 Bangladesh war, thousands of women were raped by the Pakistani army. When independence came, they

were given the title ‘Birangona’ as if to negate the stigma of rape. Although Bangladesh has probably gone further to acknowledge their experience and to place it on a par with the sacrifices of other freedom fighters, the fact of war-rape has not ceased to be an issue. Bangladeshis demand an apology for sexual violence during the war, but the Pakistani army dismisses this as regrettable ‘excesses’, and it remains an issue between the two states. The issue is neither prestige nor nationalism; it is justice for non-combatants who were subject to violence as part of the war. We will have to wait and see if, when and how that happens, in this case and those of other women who have faced sexual violence and exploitation during war. Peace is incomplete without coming to terms and making amends to those who have suffered.

In the days after Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984, thousands of Sikhs were killed in what was found by investigating civil society activists to be an organised pogrom. Justice has still not been done. For decades, those believed to have masterminded the pogrom remained in politically important positions. An unconditional apology by India’s first Sikh prime minister is an important symbol, but it is not the same as justice. After all this time, only the victims of the 1984 violence have been punished, not the planners or perpetrators. Justice delayed is justice denied. How does that inspire confidence in the will of the state to serve all its citizens equally? And how genuine is the compact those citizens make with a state which has failed them? Justice is the foundation of peace; without justice, peace is a house built on a weak foundation.

Peace is justice.

Close your eyes and imagine ‘peace’. What I see when I do that is like a child’s drawing. Green grass. Large flowers. The sun smiling in a corner. And smiling people, some holding hands, sometimes standing together like a family. Sometimes the picture has a house with large windows. Sometimes a brook runs through the picture. But look most closely at the smiling people. Why are they smiling?

The connection between peace and prosperity is not a new one. As the Bible states: “He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore,” (Isaiah 2:4). The economist’s representation of public budget choices in terms of “guns” and “butter” takes this forward, and peace activists speak of the “peace dividend”. The idea is that war and welfare use the same finite resource base; that which is not spent on war may be spent on the common welfare. Peace is an opportunity to prosper. This is an appealing argument but not an infallible one.

The child’s drawing suggests wellbeing. People are smiling because they have homes (with gardens); they are not

starving; they are together, surrounded by beauty. They are not living in ruins, amid mounds of garbage, hoping to work, hoping to eat, hoping to see another day. That contentment, that feeling of having enough, that sense of wellbeing is the promise of peace. Actually having enough to eat, a place to live, fresh clean clothes, clean surroundings, work to do, and a community of family and friends to support you — that is what people yearn for in war. Those are the systems that break down due to famine and migration; starvation and debt (think farmer suicides); war and displacement; debilitating illness and poverty. When everyone can live well and thrive, that is peace.

Peace is wellbeing.

The Himalayan foothills, parts of which lead to Hindu pilgrimage centres, have changed considerably in the last century. Deforestation, grazing and soil erosion have made landslides much more common. Further, the construction of roads, burgeoning tourist traffic and also, large projects like the Tehri dam have altered the environment to the point that livelihoods and health are adversely affected. Water pollution is a serious concern. The factors that caused this degradation mainly benefit people outside this region; the price for change that is not ecologically sound is paid locally. This is neither ecologically nor politically sustainable — nor is it peace, even if no one is up in arms.

Equally, it is true that some things must change as populations grow and consumption patterns change. The Sardar Sarovar project, the large system of dams on the Narmada river, was intended to meet precisely such a challenge. The project was intended to irrigate large parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan, and meet the power requirements of a large area. The longstanding agitation against the dam challenges three aspects of the project: the environmental damage, destruction of livelihoods, and displacement of people from the area. Had the project planners engaged with local communities, is this the project they would have designed? Now, after so many years, there may neither be room for dialogue nor for withdrawal from existing, invested positions. Change is inevitable, but peace is only possible when change follows engagement and dialogue.

There has been a great deal of attention on conflicts arising out of competition for scarce but essential natural resources. Oil is now the classic example, but conflicts over water-sharing, over mining contracts or over fishing rights are other examples. The resources are not the source of the conflict; the quest to monopolise their use or maximise profit from their sales are. To believe that these scarce resources are not just the common natural heritage of humanity but also that they must be used judiciously so as not to jeopardise the heritage of future generations, is to live in harmony not just with nature but with each other.

A life lived in harmony — with nature and with others —

is a life lived in peace.

Peace is harmony.

Peace is the concern not just of states, but also of communities, families and individuals. In the Indian tradition, peace-building, like all external changes, begins with the inner transformation of individuals. Several stories and texts stress the importance of working on one's impulses. One is the story of Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra was a king whose sons offended the sage Vashishtha. The sage used the power of his penance to return the princes' fire and defeated them. Their father, Vishwamitra, arriving to avenge their defeat, met with the same fate. This encounter awoke in Vishwamitra the desire to better Vashishtha in the spiritual realm from which he derived so much power. Many penances and many tests later, it was when Vishwamitra conquered anger that he finally achieved the status that he sought. And by then, it was no longer the point.

Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita discusses *sthitaprajnya*, or one who is rooted in wisdom; it is considered the essence of the Gita. A *sthitaprajnya* is one who is unswayed by desire, sorrow, passion, fear and rage. She takes everything in her stride, with detachment (2:55-6). Attachment brings desire and desire anger; anger is followed by bewilderment, bewilderment by loss of memory, which in turn leads to the destruction of intelligence which is death itself (2:62-3). Therefore, the *sthitaprajnya* controls her senses, becomes free from both attachment and hatred (2:64). The *sthitaprajnya* "abandons all desires and acts free from longing, without any sense of mineness or egotism" and "attains to peace" (2:71).

Mohanlal Karamchand Gandhi drew on this idea of working on the self as a prelude to changing society when he prescribed conditions a person would have to meet to undertake satyagraha. Just wanting to be a satyagrahi or serve the nation was not enough; they would have to meet stringent physical and spiritual standards.

The many spiritual organisations, for instance, the Isha Foundation and the Art of Living Foundation, that work in conflict zones as part of their service to society, base their approach on this idea that individual inner transformation is the first step to combatants laying down arms and victims surviving trauma. Working on one's own fear, anger and pain releases the energy needed to rebuild one's life and to move on. Repentance and forgiveness are both good bases for reconciliation. Inner peace radiates outwards.

Peace education programmes also work on the same premise. Not only do peace educators believe that peace is teachable but that raising good citizens for a peaceful society is the point of education. The UNESCO charter states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be

constructed". The defences of peace are the attitudes, values and behaviour we teach our children. These values include acceptance, sensitivity, integrity, compassion and the willingness to cooperate. Peace is learned behaviour, even a lifestyle choice that can be taught. Peace in the community, state or international context will surely follow when individuals learn to make and live that choice. "Peace is every step," as Thich Nhat Hanh writes; every mindful choice we make.

Peace is a way of life.

Security. Freedom. Equity. Justice. Wellbeing. Harmony.
A way of life.

These values remain aspirations for most societies, as even the most stable, mature and efficacious political system has trouble delivering on these counts — leave alone realising all of these together. Peace is a composite of these seven dimensions, and as such peace is always a work-in-progress.

There will probably be no magic moment when world peace breaks out, to last forever. Peace is to be sought in moments when we choose to act peacefully and in values we choose to prioritise.

Om

Sarveshaam Swastirbhavatu |
May everyone be well.

Sarveshaam Shantirbhavatu | Sarveshaam Poornam Bhavatu
| Sarveshaam Mangalam Bhavatu ||
May everyone experience peace, fullness and prosperity.

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah | Sarve Santu Niramayaah |
May everyone be happy, healthy and free of disabilities.

Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu |
May they see goodness everywhere — in life and in others.
May they look to the good of others.

Maa Kashchid Duhkha Bhagbhavet ||
May they enjoy good fortune and never know sorrow.

Om Shanti Shanti Shantihi ||
Peace. Peace. Peace.

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The everydayness of conflict, and of peace-building

In the 21st century, conflict is everywhere, no longer playing out on battlefields alone, but in forests and mohallas, over control of water, food and livelihoods. As a result, the way we respond to conflict has also changed: it requires not just ending violence, but also changing unjust structures of society. Building a positive peace requires state diplomacy as well as engagements by individuals and communities at all levels

SUMONA
DASGUPTA

THERE HAS BEEN a dramatic change in the nature of conflict in the 21st century. Contemporary conflicts are no longer only about large wars or about starting such wars. They are also about struggles for life and livelihood; about competing and contending lifestyles brought on by recession or globalisation. Conflict today manifests itself through struggles over water, food and environment. It is sometimes violent, at other times non-violent. While conflict *per se* is not necessarily negative and non-violent conflict can well be a catalyst for positive change, violent conflict can become dysfunctional, divisive and devastating.

Violent conflict is no longer an industry necessarily fought with nuclear science or fighter bombers, but equally with petrol bombs, shrapnel and landmines. It is not only fought by soldiers in uniform, but also by non-state actors. There is no longer a fixed battlefield with a frontline and a rear line. In the 21st century, violent conflict can well be played out in *gallis* and *mohallas*, in mountains and forests. There is no separation between combatants and non-combatants. The so-called ‘rules of war’ do not apply here. Many of the people who are killed are not soldiers, but ordinary civilians and non-combatants — children, women, and men caught in the crossfire.

There is then no doubt that the nature, the texture and the context of contemporary conflict has changed. What we witness now in many parts of India is a ‘neither war nor peace’ situation. As conflicts around life and livelihoods multiply all around us — as farmers commit suicide despite our much-publicised growth rate; as community trust breaks down in areas where adivasis have traditionally lived because of a peculiar form of state intervention where groups are pitted against each other in the name of village defence; as the idea of ‘the commons’ is unceremoniously obliterated by new idioms of development which impatiently brush aside questions of who that development is for; and, more dramatically, as the lived experiences of people living in militarised areas like Jammu & Kashmir compel us to rethink our neat categories of war and peace — we slowly begin to make sense of the now canonical statement that peace is not just absence of war.

Because of this ‘everydayness’ of violent conflict, because it is so pervasive and has entered all spheres of our lives, peace-building cannot happen exclusively in the

anterooms of technocrats and experts who use an alienating technocratic language of security to isolate many matters from public scrutiny. The idea of citizens engaging in peace-building because of its pervasiveness in life is an idea that we need to stand by.

In many ways, Jammu & Kashmir reflects the larger changing trajectory of international conflicts and how these have been analysed. Till 1989, the conflict of Kashmir was largely seen as a problem between India and Pakistan. It was acknowledged as a problem ‘in’ Kashmir only when there was an armed rebellion against India and the deep alienation of the people of the Kashmir valley could no longer be brushed under the carpet. The frame of reference and engagement also changed in 1989 — from viewing it as a traditional territorial conflict between two nation-states, India and Pakistan, it was now seen through the lens of the so-called ‘new conflicts’, calling for a fresh set of analytical tools to understand it.

In the early-1990s, following the outbreak of the armed conflict, the immediate reaction of the Indian government, as we all know, was to send in the armed forces. While the Indian army has been present in Jammu & Kashmir after 1947 along the border, the 1990s marked the first time they were asked to step in with a counter-insurgency mandate that marked a qualitative change in their role. The conflict trajectory has changed a lot since then, but the legacy of the violence and the endemic militarisation of state and society has not disappeared, especially as the roots of discontent and anger persist. And that is why we see ebbs and flows — sometimes violence is high, sometimes it is low. Of course this is not the only ‘no-war, no-peace’ zone right now in India, but it certainly figures as a dramatic case in point.

Insurgency and counter-insurgency in any part of the world set in motion a cycle of violence that is very difficult to break. In Jammu & Kashmir, August 2008 and the summer of 2010, for instance, marked periods of intense and dramatic violence. In 2008, when the Amarnath land row became the centrepiece of reportage, it raised issues that went beyond just ‘land’. It brought into sharp focus the plethora of diversities and divergences between different communities within Jammu & Kashmir, and their different political aspirations. How do we bring all these complex divergent aspirations to the negotiating table and to the process of dialogue so that

it is inclusive? This is the challenge of peace-building.

Peace and conflict studies

The recognition of the everydayness of peace and conflict issues is of course a recent phenomenon. As a field of study, peace and conflict studies was the legacy of the Second World War and Lewis Richardson's decisive work in 1960, *Arms and Insecurity: A Mathematical Study of the Causes and Origins of War*, was in many ways indicative of the manner in which the domain was conceptualised in the early days. Conflict studies in the 1960s and 1970s predictably continued to reflect the dominant security architecture of the Cold War. Threats to security were defined primarily in military terms and always in terms of nation-states.

The dominant global discourse shapes the way in which we frame a conflict; the way we frame the conflict also opens up — or constrains — the possibilities for mediating and finding solutions. Very much in sync with the typical Cold War architecture of security in 1947, the Jammu & Kashmir conflict was defined primarily in terms of competing claims to territory and accompanying competing nationalisms.

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the field of peace and conflict studies underwent a tectonic change as ethnic explosions engulfed Kosovo, Palestine, Congo, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Chechnya, Angola, Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia, Columbia and Sudan. The 1990s was a decade of dramatic changes following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the uprisings in Afghanistan. The movement for self-determination in Kashmir could hardly remain untouched by these global developments in the 1980s and 1990s.

Responding to these changes, security analysts began to accept that threats to security were increasingly emanating from within national boundaries and nation-states themselves were not necessarily protectors and guarantors of the security of the people who lived within their boundaries. The concept of human security — security of the people — made a decisive entry into the field of conflict studies in the 1990s. This acknowledgement also helped bring into the mainframe the humanitarian dimension of the Kashmir issue and the people of Jammu & Kashmir rather than only the territorial interests of India and Pakistan.

Conflict analysis

Conflict analysis, as has been pointed out, is not necessarily about learning new things about the conflict. It is about understanding the same thing in different ways. It helps to identify the main actors, main issues, main factors, the earlier attempts at the resolution of the conflict, the phases of the conflict, and in the process throws light on the balance of power and the state of relationships.

In workshops that we have conducted over the years with young people, one tool of conflict analysis that has yielded rather interesting insights on Kashmir is

the timeline approach, which involves identifying some important benchmarks in time and reflecting on what the same benchmark could mean for different people and stakeholders. For instance, what does 1947 signify for third-generation Pakistanis, Indians and Kashmiris on either side of the line of control? When we do this exercise together with a group of Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris on both sides of the line of control it helps build a shared understanding of certain events. There is greater empathy that comes out of an understanding that my view doesn't cancel out yours; my truth is not more important than yours.

Another kind of conflict analysis that can be very interesting in the context of Jammu & Kashmir is conflict mapping, which is essentially a visual technique that maps power relationships between multiple actors with different interests. It helps one understand the multiplicity of stakeholders in this conflict, not just the state actors — India and Pakistan. It involves visually representing the larger and more powerful actors in larger circles and less powerful actors in smaller circles, and mapping the web of relationships between them by a series of single, double or broken lines depending on the level of trust and interaction. Sometimes, participants in this exercise find that there are so many stakeholders that they can think of that one chart paper is not enough to map them! It is a telling commentary on the complex web of relationships involved in the Jammu & Kashmir conflict.

A sociological theory that we found speaks well to Jammu & Kashmir and allows for interesting insights from young people to emerge based on their lived experiences is the 'basic needs theory' by social psychologist John W Burton, whose central postulate is that all human beings have the same basic needs — material needs, social and cultural needs, security needs, the need for belonging somewhere, need for settlement, for freedom and for distributive justice. These are non-negotiable. An important element is identity, because Jammu & Kashmir can also be seen as a space where there is a clash of identities and identity politics. In a conflict zone, identities are in conflict, and they become militarised. It is interesting to understand at what point of time a particular identity marker (be it religion, culture, etc) becomes militarised and how it is used to mobilise people.

Responding to conflict

We respond to violent conflict differently. Conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation present somewhat overlapping but, at the same time, significantly different ways of understanding and responding to conflict.

In conflict management the basic assumption is that conflict follows patterns, human beings are basically rational, we can anticipate the ways in which the conflict will happen and therefore design 'interventions'. It does not rule out the possibility of the use of force. In many ways, the approach of the Indian government in Jammu & Kashmir in the early-1990s was one of conflict management.

Conflict resolution on the other hand looks at a range of non-violent approaches — negotiation, mediation, facilitation — typically used by state actors to ‘end’ conflict. The visible tangible outcomes of conflict resolution are the much-publicised peace agreements or pacts, such as the pact between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah in the 1970s and Rajiv Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah in the 1980s. Invariably, these are tenuous and shortlived as they are essentially nothing more than power-sharing arrangements rather than transformatory in nature.

Conflict transformation, advocated forcefully by scholar-activists like John Paul Lederach, changes the entire architecture of the question by asking: What is it that you are building, instead of what is it that you are ending. Conflict transformation is seen as integrating the emotional and psychological aspects of peace-building with the more substantive structural aspects. Most importantly, it believes that not just state diplomacy but also engagement of civil society and people at all levels has to be part of the transformation. The transformation has to happen at different levels — at the level of individuals, communities, social structures, state. It assumes that in our highly atomised and globalised world, we need human dignity, respect, affirmation — these are universal values. Clearly, conflict transformation in Jammu & Kashmir is an idea whose time has come.

Many years ago, in a completely different context, Johan Galtung had alerted us to the structural and cultural dimensions of violence and in the process we were reminded of the difference between negative and positive peace. The *shikharas* sailing on Dal Lake are routinely floated as the iconic snapshot of ‘normalcy’ returning to the valley. As people engaged in conflict transformation one might need to ask oneself the difficult question: Is violence fatigue a sign of peace or even of normalcy? Bringing about a positive peace is a very, very difficult task. It is not just about ending violence; it is also about changing certain structures of society which are violent, but not always visible. The political economy of violence that is invariably built up in a zone of protracted conflict like Jammu & Kashmir means that there are a large number of state and non-state actors with vested interests in keeping the violence alive because they gain from it.

Peace-building

Different approaches to responding to conflict remind us that peace-building is a complex web of processes that incorporates different roles, strategies and interventions. It employs a range of processes — peace agreements, more long-term effects of transformation, mediation, relationship-building, peace education, non-violence training, etc — and a range of actors, not just governments — conflict resolution professionals, non-violence trainers, government officials, journalists, NGO workers, businessmen, justice advocates, etc.

Peace-building is not just for ‘post-conflict’ societies but for all societies as a way to prevent violence and satisfy human needs. It is about creating just social structures. Justice becomes a part of peace. Peace without justice has no meaning. And sometimes when we are doing justice work we have to deal with people who are angry and alienated.

Peace-building has many dimensions. Research, conflict analysis, emotional and relational skills, commitment, values — all have to come together before we have a culture of peace-building. There are so many different actors, so many different priorities, it is understandable young citizens feel lost. Where do they locate themselves? What is their skill and passion? Where would they fit in the peace-building matrix?

Lisa Schirch, a scholar of peace-building and the author of *The Little Book on Strategic Peace Building*, has provided a very interesting map of peace-building which might help this process of finding one’s way. One circle relates to waging conflict non-violently, through advocacy, direct action and civilian defence. The second circle of peace-building is how to reduce direct violence: when violence is high, there is no dialogue. Therefore, in this circle, one deals with justice and the legal systems, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, military interventions, ceasefires, peace zones, etc. The third circle of peace-building is to look at how one can play a role in building capacity. Can one engage with training, development and research? The fourth circle looks at transforming relationships. So justice and conflict transformation work, governance and policymaking are important here.

It is also interesting to observe that Harold Saunders, a career diplomat from the US, has been the one to advocate what he calls a public peace process that emphasises citizens as actors in politics, and affirms a larger political process that is citizen-driven and that can work with the formal negotiation process. It is based on the assumption that conflict is not just a clash between institutions; it is ultimately humans who can change conflictual relationships through a process of sustained dialogue.

In many conflict zones, including Jammu & Kashmir, even as stories of youth unrest have been in the news it is important to note that there are also stories of youth reaching out to build bridges of peace. This unfortunately does not make headlines. Today, we talk increasingly about people-to-people contact at multiple levels and among multiple constituencies. It is only when the ‘everydayness of peace-building’ is recognised and peace-building is no longer seen as the sole prerogative of the state that we can move towards building a culture of dialogic engagement.

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Manufacturing conflict

It is a short step from something as simple as colouring the old city green and the outer city saffron on a VHP map of Ahmedabad in 1991 to the violence Gujarat witnessed in 2002. And a short step from carrying the coffin of Swami Lakshmanananda around Kandhamal to the gutting of 100 villages. Communalism is not about religion but the manipulation of religion and religious symbols for political mobilisation; it is not about history but the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of history

TEESTA SETALVAD

COMMUNALISM is not about religion, but the manipulation of religion and religious symbols for political mobilisation.

Romila Thapar delivered a very interesting lecture at Mumbai University in 1999 on the Somnath temple (thereafter published by Kali), which was integral to the growth of communalism in Gujarat. The ICSE history course that I studied in school mentioned only the 16 raids by Mahmud Ghazni on the Somnath temple. Thapar tells us that till 1843, that is about 13-14 years before the first war of independence in 1857, there was no historical discourse around Ghazni's raids on the Somnath temple. The Somnath temple had been raided almost three dozen times before it was looted by Ghazni, because it was one of the richest temples of its period. Therefore, the Satyavahanas, the Pratiharas, whoever wanted to get hold of the wealth, raided it. The raid by Mahmud Ghazni, which was of course very critical in the early medieval period, became important in historical discourse in 1843; until then Gujarat experienced no greater angst over Ghazni's raids than over other raids, before or after. Thapar tells us that 400 years after Ghazni's raids on the Somnath temple, the panchkula (committee of village people, pundits, etc) gifted a part of the temple land to one Noor Ud Din Firoj(z), an Arab trader, to build a small mosque within the wider temple precinct. The sources for this historical analysis are original and contemporary, the temple inscriptions themselves. Would this have happened if there were this huge historical Hindu anger against the raids on Somnath?

Thapar further states that these kinds of raids, small conflicts and negotiations kept happening through history, not always between Hindus and Muslims, sometimes between this caste and that, sometimes between brother and brother, and sometimes between sister and sister, and it was only in 1843, when somebody approached the British administration, that the so-called demand of bringing back the (mythical) gates of the Somnath temple was articulated in a British administration-led bid to reduce this 'Hindu angst'. The Hindu angst was thus, in a sense, the creation of the British administration of the period. Somewhere in the British administration, documentation began that if we create feelings of historical Hindu angst against Muslim invaders, maybe we can stem the uprising that is taking



Courtesy The Hindu

place against us. Then the wrong set of gates were brought from somewhere near Taxila and were put away in some fort near Agra. The whole debate was in that sense concocted in 1843.

In 1940, K M Munshi, a prominent figure of the freedom struggle who became a minister in Jawaharlal Nehru's Cabinet, and who was sought to be appropriated as a right-wing ideologue afterwards, wrote a book called *Jai Somnath*, which ran into several editions and was critical in resurrecting this interpretation of the raids on the Somnath temple, that were an echo of the British administration's constructed interpretation. Except that coming from Munshi, a prolific writer and well respected, at a time when the subcontinent was being divided and reconstructed by the forces of communalism, majority- and minority-driven, it found instant resonance. Anyone from Gujarat will know this book, which went into 20 editions and was widely read. It contributed to the mythical Hindu angst becoming a reality, and becoming the sub-text in a sense of the wider freedom struggle and its fallout within Gujarat.

This is how history gets constructed, re-constructed and deconstructed the world over.

How did Slobodan Milosevic, who finally died mysteriously

in jail whilst facing charges of crimes against humanity, begin the movement that led to the massacre of thousands of Bosnians not so long ago? He began by digging up coffins of people who had been killed by the Turks and he took those coffins in a procession all over his country, causing bloodshed and creating newly-constructed hatreds. What did Praveen Togadia and the BJP ministers in Naveen Patnaik's Cabinet do on August 25, 2008, after the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda in the Kandhamal region of Orissa? The coffin of the swami was taken all over the 220 km of Kandhamal (I've been to Kandhamal four times; it takes 16 hours to reach it from Bhubaneswar, and the poverty of the tribes of Kandhamal is extreme). Three hundred villages were gutted as the procession wound its way, and 100 people — tribal Christians and dalits who were being converted to Christianity — were killed. This is how communal conflict is manufactured and manipulated.

Exclusion and inequity are other ways in which communalism manifests in democratic or non-democratic structures. In 1953, when the Sri Lankan constitution was written, there were two members belonging to the Sri Lankan left who actually said that the Tamil language should be included as an official language in Sri Lanka. By excluding Tamil, and privileging Sinhala, the Sinhala Buddhist-Tamil divide was created and the seeds of the civil war that ripped the country apart were sown.

Communalism, cumulatively and progressively, grows and festers on the residue of certain political decisions made in the past. The Constituent Assembly Debates, for example, are a very interesting set of documents, in 18 volumes, that are available with Parliament. They tell us how every single issue that was included in our Constitution was intensively debated for one-and-a-half years by different minds — centre, left and right — until agreement was reached. In that sense, it represents an excellent set of documents reflecting consensus-building. Partition took place right in the middle of this debate. We researched Constituent Assembly Debates related to majority-minority rights, gender, caste, community, etc, before and after Partition. Article 16, for one, changed dramatically in this period. Article 16 is the section that gives us the right to affirmatively reserve or commit affirmative action for socio-economically backward sections. It is under this article, for instance, that the Mandal and OBC reservations have taken place. There was a sub-committee headed by Sardar Patel, and there were six other members. And one of the most interesting discussions was that it had been assumed by everybody that when you talk about socio-economic backwardness, religious minorities must find inclusion because they are, within India, from the poorer sections. Exactly what the Sachar Committee told us in 2005. After Partition, however, the discourse in the Constituent Assembly changes and states that we don't have to spell out religious minorities, everyone understands it. There is a whole discussion on this, and the only person who speaks very forthrightly is Frank Antony who says, no,

today it will be assumed because the leadership is honest, but tomorrow it will be assumed that this section is not needed (if the motives and calibre of the political leadership changes). So please put it in. The Muslim leadership was very defensive because Partition had happened, they didn't have the courage to argue it out. Only Frank Antony, on behalf of the Christians, was arguing it out and finally the two Muslim leaders in the committee actually struck a deal with Sardar Patel. They said fine, don't include us in Article 16, but (in return) don't touch the personal laws of Muslims. Muslim women have become the victims of this deal.

Competitive communalism, majority and minority, resurfaced again in the 1980s and, ironically, gender and Muslim women was again the issue of barter for the minority. It was in 1986 that the VHP's three-decade-long demand for mobilisation around the temple of Ayodhya was finally accepted by the BJP as part of its national agenda and programme. It was also in 1986 that Rajiv Gandhi's government, with a huge majority in Parliament, passed the Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Divorce Act in response to completely retrograde mass actions and protests on the Shah Bano judgment which had awarded just Rs 125/month to a divorced Muslim woman. I remember going to different areas in Mumbai and seeing the mobilisation of mostly the Muslim male clergy at the time. The enactment of this law kept Muslim women, for the purposes of maintenance after divorce, out of the purview of secular criminal law. Worse, it gave life — and blood — to a latent prejudice among Hindus of the inherently intransigent and 'separatist' tendencies among Muslims! Shortly thereafter, the locks of the Ram temple were opened. And a 40-year dispute was given life by the ruling party, when it had been a marginal issue.

The majority-minority communal politics has been replayed ever since in the most cynical ways possible, for the Ram temple movement was never about the construction of a temple, it was about demonising the minority community and attacking their lives and property. It saw Mumbai burn in 1992-93, followed by Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Jaipur and Hubli, which had never burned even during and after Partition. Wherever L K Advani's *rath yatra* went it left a bloody trail behind it or before it. Worse, it left a lasting legacy for the BJP to benefit from. Acceptable 'othering' and hatred against India's religious minorities, especially Muslims and Christians, were now legitimised.

Addressing communal conflict

One of the ways to tackle communalism is by going to court and trying to book the perpetrators, as there cannot be peace without justice. But another way that is equally critical is through learning or education.

Language is an important factor in social inclusion or exclusion, and we need to consider language — not just the

mothertongue — when we are constructing curriculum and deciding on the medium in which to teach. Premchand, for instance, wrote only in the Urdu script because that was the script in which the person speaking Avadhi Hindustani wrote. There was no Hindu-Muslim divide between Hindi and Urdu at the time. The aggressive division between Hindi and Urdu came only after Partition, on our side, while on the Pakistani side Urdu became a completely un-understandable elite language.

Apart from language, how do we address issues of conflict in the classroom? Given the exposure of all children to mass media, which is moulding perceptions and even language, we are forced to address issues related to personal and social conflict sensitively and creatively. We have to make children aware of how we live together, how we've always

lived together, and how and why we are now being forced to live separately.

In a classroom in 1997, when we were discussing course curriculum, we said let's give the children some words in Hindi and Marathi and ask them to write sentences about what they have experienced in the city in the last few weeks (there had been police firing in a dalit neighbourhood). We asked the teachers to choose words that were not too obvious or leading, so they chose words such as 'eat', 'leave', 'come', 'go', 'starve', in Marathi. Despite this, many of the children wrote out brutal sentences related to the violence that had taken place in Mumbai. There is a desire among children to be able to communicate these feelings.

In Gujarat we saw signals of the violence that was to come

K P Fabian, courtesy Asianews.it



Violence in Kandhamal

at least 15 years before 2002. I remember seeing a map of Ahmedabad prepared by the VHP when I was covering the post-rath yatra violence in July 1991: the old city green and the outer city orange. It is a short step from this to what I witnessed at the height of the violence in 2002. They were sending out the message that Muslims should stay confined to the old city. This is how communalism enters a conscious personal space.

Why do we have laws and safeguards in the Indian Penal Code on things like hate speech and inflammatory writing? Not in order to become a police state, to curb freedom of expression, but to say that even something like Article 19 has some limits (vide Section 153a and 153b), and what are those limits, and what is to be done when the line is crossed. Unfortunately, these laws are never enforced in the build-up to violence.

The police rarely take action against hate speech and hate writing, so it swirls around us and becomes accepted, and we become complicit in the violence by not reacting to it.

In 2008, I visited Dhule, Digras and Akola districts of Maharashtra, where property worth Rs 40 crore had been lost only by the Muslim community in a targeted exclusion. Those people have not been able to stand on their feet again. I was very disturbed when I saw the pattern of violence in these three places because it confirmed the stereotype about both communities. There's a particular cassette which, ghost-like, has been doing the rounds of Maharashtra for the last three years. In police circles it's called the *Mandir Wahin Banayenge* cassette. It's horribly crude, it's a terrible song, but it's available everywhere in Maharashtra and I've got four copies of it from four different places. It is played deliberately by forces such as the VHP, Bajrang Dal and RSS, at procession sites or near Muslim clusters. It has been played on Durga Puja and during Ganesh Chaturthi, and each time it has faithfully provoked the Muslims into going berserk. The moment there has been one spark lit from the minority side there has been such a vicious payback that the property of 85-90% of the minority community has been destroyed. I've seen this, visiting these places within two or three days of the violence taking place.

But to get back to history and social studies, it is extremely important for our children to be able to look at our neighbours and understand our age-old historical, cultural connections. Equally, they need to be able to look at the majority-minority divides across South Asia, and the geographical/topographical boundaries that we've created as a nation-state. All this needs to be explored with the young in the classroom, through the curriculum. In Maharashtra, our history textbooks haven't been revised for a long time but minor changes keep taking place. I remember that Khan Abdul Gafar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, who has now reappeared, had disappeared for 25 years.

Why had he disappeared? I think he disappeared because he did not suit the dominant political mindset that was manipulating history, which did not want to accept that there were Muslims out there like Maulana Azad who actually challenged the premise of Partition, who felt that this is going to harm, not help, the interests of any particular section.

Take our history textbooks on Shivaji, who signifies an egalitarian rule that few have seen in the latter parts of the feudal period, quite apart from the fact that he had a lot of Muslim generals and a Muslim accountant, which is very important in terms of secularism. Most admirable of all was the fact that he decided that even when he raided areas he would not allow women and children to be part of the war victory, the loot and plunder. When we discuss the contributions of women like Savitribai Phule why don't we add that when her school, with just nine girl-students opened, she was targeted, and the only person who stood by her was her longstanding friend Osman Sheikh? That it was a brahmin who offered space at Bhidewada in solidly brahmanical Pune? Why don't we mention that the first teacher in her school was Fatima Sheikh? You don't have to look very far for communal harmony stories; they are all around us, because that was the subcontinent's interwoven history. It just depends on what you look for and what you pick and what your approach is, and the problem is that if you look at history through either the lens of identity power or politics you tend to undermine it and, worse, manipulate it as a tool of hate.

Instead of portraying history and historical figures with this open-ended mindset, history teaching and syllabus writing has now become a method of manipulation. And I think it is very important as cultural educationists, as people who want our children to grow up with open minds, to look at what our children are studying, how they are being taught, what the languages are, what the content of the syllabus is, and engage with it.

(This article is based on a talk by Teesta Setalvad, human rights activist and educationist and co-editor of Communalism Combat, in Pune as part of the CCDS-Open Space lecture series entitled 'Keeping the Peace', in 2010-11)

A people-centred peace

Why have all peace-building measures failed in Kashmir? In this article, one of the government interlocutors appointed to study the Kashmir conflict discusses the importance of going beyond positing the crisis as a Hindu-Muslim one, or one of competing nationalisms, to seeing the plurality of concerns, interests and aspirations in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, and putting the people at the centre of a settlement, not nations, ideologies and faiths

DILEEP
PADGAONKAR

WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER invited me and two of my colleagues to become interlocutors on Jammu & Kashmir in October 2010, we took a couple of decisions. The first one was that we would not go to meet the usual suspects. There were people who were appointed as interlocutors before us. They were men of great intelligence and experience, but by and large they confined themselves to Srinagar and Jammu. More often than not people came to call on them in the state guesthouse. We would definitely meet the usual suspects, but we would also travel extensively across the state to find out directly from people what their concerns and interests were, and what their aspirations were in economic, social, cultural and, above all, in political terms.

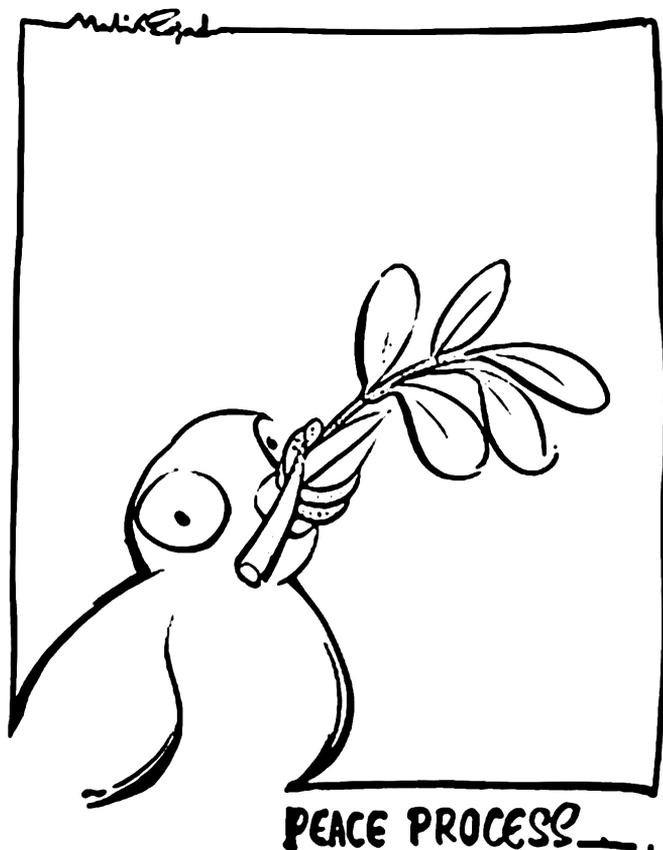
So far, in seven months we have covered roughly 17 of the 22 districts in the state and met more than 530 delegations, or a little more than 4,000 people in all parts of J&K. They belonged to all communities and all kinds of ideological and political persuasions. And this is where we realised that for 63 years a certain mindset has been created which needs to be revisited.

Three issues in particular have been significant. The first is that the entire issue of Jammu & Kashmir has been posited in ideological terms largely as a Hindu-Muslim problem. Secondly, we found that it was posited also in terms of Indian and Pakistani nationalism. And thirdly, it was posited in terms of Kashmiri nationalism.

The heaviest concentration of Muslims in Jammu & Kashmir has been and is still in the valley of Kashmir. The Kashmiri-speaking Muslims, especially Sunni Muslims, were against Dogra rule of Maharaja Hari Singh but they were also solidly behind their leader Sheikh Abdullah, whose own political instincts were much more in tune with the secular traditions of the Indian National Congress. On the other hand, the Muslims of Jammu came under the umbrella of an organisation called the Muslim Conference which was much closer, ideologically, to the Muslim League. So there was an ideological divide even before 1947 within the Muslim community.

The second issue was of national ideology. Pakistan has always believed that without Kashmir Pakistan is incomplete. For India, the fact that a Muslim-majority state was with the Indian Union was the absolute litmus test of India's secularism. Probe that a little and you find that the Pakistani case was always weak. Because Jinnah insisted that any princely state had to choose between India and Pakistan based solely on what the maharaja or the nawab of that particular state wanted. In the case of Jammu & Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh chose India, but there was legitimacy to his choice because the most popular leader of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, was also in favour of his accession. Secondly, after the breakup of Pakistan in 1971, the whole case of the two-nation theory on which they claimed Kashmir could not work. In the case of India, to say that secularism is really a test for Jammu & Kashmir is correct.

Malik Sajad



But at the same time one has to understand that it is the people of Kashmir who have really been caught between these two dimensions of nationalism because if you accept one, you automatically negate the other. So if you accept that Jammu & Kashmir should be part of India it is not just because it is a Muslim-dominated state but also because the homeland for Indian Muslims that was created in 1947 left behind more Muslims in India than there were in Pakistan, including the people in East Pakistan.

The third is about nationalism in Kashmir. That nationalism is couched in a single word called ‘Kashmiriyat’. What you do find however, when you probe a little deeper, is that Kashmiriyat refers almost exclusively to the Kashmir valley. The people of Ladakh and Jammu do not share it. Kashmiriyat is rooted in the Sufi tradition of Islam which is certainly very prominent in Kashmir. It has also been rooted in a long historical memory. Kashmir is the only part of India which has a *recorded* history of 4,000 years. This part of the subcontinent has been a crucible for three very distinctive civilisations to come together and form a kind of fusion which you find nowhere else in the world — namely that of Hinduism, Sufi Islam and, in between, Buddhism. And it is from the experiences of Kashmir that Buddhism, in fact, spread to Central Asia, Tibet and China. So the basis of Kashmiriyat is conviviality, a living together of people belonging to different cultures and different faiths. But that was in the past.

Today, Kashmiriyat represents the strong, ideologically-motivated nationalist force of sections of opinion in the Kashmir valley. From there on we soon discovered that we have been living with three myths that have gone unchallenged for the past 63 years. The first is to try and look at the entire state of Jammu & Kashmir primarily, if not exclusively, from the prism of the valley. This is to ignore Jammu which is a far more interesting part of the state because of its diversity. The tendency is to take the people of Jammu for granted. Likewise, the people of Ladakh constitute a very small number in terms of population but in terms of territory it is larger than Kashmir and Jammu put together. Because you look at the entire problem primarily through the prism of the valley you ignore the interests and aspirations of people in Jammu and in Ladakh. Simply put, those aspirations are for closer integration with the Indian Union. In fact, there has been a strong demand for giving Ladakh the status of a union territory just as in Jammu there have been significant sections of opinion wanting a separate state for Jammu.

In a sense one can understand why the focus has been primarily on Kashmir: all the chief ministers have come from the valley, except for Ghulam Nabi Azad. Secondly, all the secessionists, armed or unarmed outfits, have been from the valley. Almost all the violence that has taken place in the state, particularly in the past 20 years, has affected the people of Kashmir more than it has affected the populations

of the other areas. Media and scholarly attention has therefore focused on the valley, to the neglect of the other two regions of the state.

Secondly, the myth is being perpetuated that this is primarily a matter of a Muslim-majority state pitched against Hindu-majority India. If you examine the facts on the ground you get a very different picture. For example, the Shia Muslims, the Sunni Muslims along the LOC, people like the Bakkarwals, the Gujjars and the Paharis do not share the political aspirations of the people of the valley. They have their own set of aspirations. So, for any one region or community to claim that they represent the people of Jammu & Kashmir is incorrect. I don’t even mention people like the Rajputs and the Dogras, people who have seldom found space in the media, who are migrants who came to Jammu in successive waves in 1947, 1965, 1971, and who today are in many respects worse off than the Kashmiri Pandits. Then you go to the regions and find the Kargillis feel they are caught between the valley population and the Buddhist population of Leh, under pressure from both sides. There is a plurality of concerns, interests and aspirations in all the three regions, and also within these regions, which needs to be taken care of.

The third myth is that no one acknowledges that there is a similar pluralism also in Pakistan-administered Jammu & Kashmir. Year after year, Pakistan had been using every opportunity at the international level to cite India’s so-called human rights violations in Kashmir. Hardly any attention has been paid to human rights violations on a massive scale in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. In fact, the Pakistanis detached a portion of the erstwhile princely state which they called the Northern Areas. These are not even administered by the government of Pakistan-administered Jammu & Kashmir. Attempts have been made, with a degree of success, to change the demographic constitution in Gilgit Pakistan, and also to bring in sectarian conflicts there because a large number of the population is Shia, so they have brought Pathans and Punjabis and tried to change the demography there. Until less than 25 years ago there was not even adult franchise in Pakistan-administered Jammu & Kashmir. None of this has been discussed in our media.

So we have got to contend with these three factors where we look at the whole issue primarily through the prism of the valley, not countering western propaganda, ably aided by Pakistan, that this is a question of a Muslim-majority state pitted against a Hindu-majority country, and not looking sufficiently at what has been happening since 1947-48 on the other side of the LOC.

How do you therefore look for a political settlement in this situation?

First and foremost, it will be necessary to inform public opinion in India and abroad of this complexity. You can no

I am Malik Sajad a political cartoonist from Kashmir

I was invited to India Habitat Center* to display my art.

13-9-2008

SHOOT AT SIGHT

MY installation art: "TERRORISM OF PEACE," I had hung cartoons & photographs depicting Kashmir inside the loops of concertina wire!

* a cultural center in Delhi

I had to submit the daily cartoon to my editor at the newspaper in Srinagar

CURFEW PASS

I went to an internet cafe nearby.

BREAKING NEWS

At the same time several bombs exploded in Delhi markets. Everyone panicked.

And owner of the cafe called LODHI ROAD POLICE STATION.

HELLO, THERE IS A KASHMIRI IN OUR CAFE. WE WANT YOU TO VERIFY HIS IDENTITY!

Soon the police rushed into the cafe.

BASTARD, YOU SPEAK SUCH NICE HINDI, WHY DO YOU HAVE PROBLEM WITH INDIA?

In Delhi Kashmiris are always primary suspects, hundreds have been arrested, killed after wrongly labeled as terrorists by the police!

They took all my stuff

INTERNET CAFE & PCO

LODHI ROAD

And dragged me to Lodhi Road Police Station!

The police officer began to write evidence against me.

He was looking at websites with diagrams of guns and maps.

He was searching for the information about Kashmir.

He had a camera.

I stood up and started shouting at them.

SHOOT ME, OR LABEL ME A TERRORIST, BUT REMEMBER THAT I AM AN ARTIST AND I HAVE BEEN INVITED HERE!

An hour later they took me to the Habitat Center.

SEE YOUR WORK BASTARD ISN'T IT ANTI-INDIA!

I grabbed a stone lying nearby and smashed the installation.

With the crash everyone in the auditorium rushed outside. And the police woman ran!

longer think in terms of facile labels. Changing mindsets is a huge task before us. We said to ourselves that it would be completely foolhardy to come up with solutions, but what we can attempt to do is gradually change the narrative on J&K to look at it in terms of the interests of its people rather than through the spectacles of ideologies. Then you will at least recognise that things are not what they appear to be. From there on I think it's possible to take another look at what these aspirations actually are. It is the pluralism and the diversity of the aspirations that have to be recognised and understood.

Secondly, it is imperative that we do not look at a solution primarily through the prism of security. I think the armed forces have been doing a splendid job in Jammu & Kashmir but they have to be under public scrutiny because there have been allegations of human rights violations. I have spoken to army generals and I think they are as aware as anyone else that force cannot be an answer to the issues that we face in Jammu & Kashmir; that the only way out is through a political process leading to a political solution. That means that you have got to get public opinion on your side; to say that first and foremost they are doing a difficult and a good job in extremely difficult conditions but also to see that there are perceptions, particularly in the valley, of the army being an occupational force. Different political parties are not going to like what I am saying, but those of us who are not aspirants to high political office and are very happy being journalists like me can come up-front and say that this is the picture. It is a messy picture; a confused and complicated picture.

Add to that the fact that great emotions are involved in Jammu & Kashmir. We will not move forward unless we choose words carefully, unless we learn to listen to people more carefully, and unless, finally, we accept that terrible errors have been made by people in India as well. If you take a quick look at history from 1952 onwards, it is a history of failed promises. Chief ministers have been elected and dismissed. Elections have been rigged. And in the past 20 years the due process of law which is applied all over the country is not being applied with as much care as is required in J&K. People have been languishing in jail for years without trial. Last summer, 117 youngsters who pelted stones were killed, but the reasons for the incident have not been properly gone into. Action has been taken, because we made a series of recommendations to the government saying that crowd control, the manner in which you deal with agitating youth, needs to be handled with much greater care, and techniques and instruments are available for this. Yet you go back to last summer's agitation and find that, yes, there has been provocation, yes, the provocation has come from sources that we know pretty well. But the manner in which you handled it is a matter of great concern. If you can get continuous television coverage of the Arushi murder case, how come the death of 117 youths did not merit a fraction of that media time? How come the deaths did not find a single mention in Parliament? How do you

expect people in the Kashmir valley to look at the Indian state and Indian concern if there is no concern shown by the elected representatives?

So you have got to deal with very hardened perceptions about India in the valley. For 22 years, a whole generation has grown up not knowing anything but violence. That sense of alienation is there and to believe that this is again a concoction of this or that group is wrong. There is an alienation which needs to be addressed at the highest levels. An all-party delegation went there. That was a move that was welcome, but after they got back I thought they would raise these issues in Parliament and ask why so many young people were killed.

There are other issues like youngsters being picked up and put in jail under the Public Security Act. We have made suggestions like the kids should be released by taking bonds from their parents or community leaders. This provision has started as a result of these recommendations, but then they were let off on bail. This means that they have to make court appearances from time to time, and there is a permanent stamp now on these kids when they apply for jobs and so forth.

There have been other instances of denying democratic rights to the people of Kashmir, like passports — even for the Haj — being denied because some distant member of the family may have been engaged in some kind of militant activity. This has changed because the chief minister has now said that if anyone applies for a passport they will get one, and I am glad that this too flows from the recommendations that we have been making. But all these months have gone by and those perceptions have hardened. We need to take a look at the mistakes that have been made, and obviously these mistakes are exaggerated by a section. But that does not mean that you should deny the fact that mistakes have been made and are being made.

The other major development that has taken place in J&K is the latest elections to the panchayats. The kind of voter turnout despite calls for background, despite a couple of killings, has been absolutely impressive. It has been more than 75% and has reached 92% in certain areas. You have to acknowledge that faith is being shown in the democratic system of governance at the grassroots level, and this is a very impressive thing. But you cannot say that this shows you once and for all that they are all with India, etc. No, they are not with India. The political problem has to be addressed and the political problem is one of determining what kind of political future they envisage for themselves.

So we come back to where we began — to acknowledging the pluralism of interests, concerns and aspirations of politics, economy, society, culture. Acknowledging it should not lead to what some people have been proposing, and which I believe is dangerous, namely splitting up the state.

The trifurcation of the state into three independent regions is dangerous and I don't think that anyone in India is ever going to accept any kind of solution which smacks of communal division. We have gone through that once, in 1947. The challenge is to address the political aspirations in all their plurality but without in any way damaging the unity and integrity of J&K. We have got to keep it in one piece and ensure that the differing, even divergent, aspirations are addressed differently. Therefore, I believe that we have got to go back to the history of Kashmir if we have to look at the future of Kashmir.

The Kashmiris have ruled themselves for about 250 years and, therefore, the sense that they must be masters of their own future is extremely strong and acute in the Kashmir valley. Their sense of victimhood is not found elsewhere in the country. But addressing Kashmiri aspirations must not deflect attention from the aspirations of others. Jammu, in particular, believes that it has been at the receiving end of the valley politicians. They give you statistics to tell you what the representation of Jammuites is in the state civil services, in economic disbursement of loans and projects. They also tell you that the delimitation of constituencies has been such that in Jammu, for example, to become an MP you need a certain number of voters, but to elect an MP in the valley you need a smaller number of voters. This is equally true of electing an MLA. So there is a sense of victimhood throughout the state. Much of it is real, and a lot of it is perceived. But a group like ours has to first and foremost listen and understand each sense of victimhood before even thinking of a possible political settlement.

I will conclude by telling you that until about a month or so ago, every time I was asked a question like 'do you see light at the end of the tunnel?' my answer was 'I have yet to discover the tunnel'. Today I can say with a certain degree of authority that yes, we think we know what the tunnel is like and, in fact, it's a labyrinth, but for a number of reasons which are both internal and external we believe that we see a small ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

A political settlement that can work is a settlement that places the people at the centre of things and not nations, ideologies and faiths. We will not come up with a prescription, because the solution or political settlement should emanate from the people of Jammu & Kashmir themselves. All we can do is tell them that we understand the complexities, we acknowledge and admit the terrible errors that have been committed. That we accept that there is an external dimension to this issue, which is Pakistan. And then we will see how to reconcile these varied aspirations of the regions, sub-regions and communities within the framework of a united agenda.

Wherever you go, young people particularly speak of the need to respect democratic rights. They want to end Kashmir's

isolation from the rest of the world. One of the things that continuously crops up is, please open all roads that lead from Jammu & Kashmir to the other side. This is interesting because we have to make a distinction between people who ask for this in Jammu or Srinagar and people along the LOC. They have different perspectives. And the reason is that once you start looking at the composition, history and aspirations of people in Pakistan-administered Jammu & Kashmir, among the first things that strikes you is that they constantly speak about Kashmir but in fact the Kashmiri-speaking population of Pakistan-administered J&K is less than 1%. Not too many people know this. So what you have is political Kashmiris who have come to the fore, largely because over the last 100 years about half-a-million people from today's Pakistan-administered Kashmir have migrated to Britain. They trace their lineage to the area around Mirpur, which is not a Kashmiri-speaking place at all. These are people who speak other languages which are fairly close to Punjabi. Mirpur has also provided a large number of soldiers to the Pakistan army. Generals have come from this area. These half-a-million British citizens call themselves Kashmiris because the state is called J&K also on the other side. They are extremely influential in terms of votes in several constituencies which are Labour-dominated around the area of Birmingham. And it is they who have been at the forefront of making sure that Kashmir figures in a prominent way in British foreign policy.

In the end we have to reckon with the fact that we have got to deal with our Kashmir and to address people who are on our side. That will require an enormous amount of political imagination because the hurt that we find in the valley, particularly, runs so deep that it cannot be easily solved by giving more money, more packages. I don't think that free and fair elections alone can resolve the issue. The issue is a political one and it requires a political answer. The political answer has to come from within the state itself. And that's why we have urged the two mainstream parties in the valley to produce a document each, making a series of proposals. We have also told the two major separatist outfits that all of them should come up with a kind of consensus. That is not enough. They ought to seek similar consensus with other parties in Jammu and in Ladakh and evolve something which is acceptable to all the regions, sub-regions and communities. That is going to be our endeavour. We are going to list the issues, suggest alternatives, but it is for the people of J&K to say which alternative — either the ones that we have suggested or they might have their own — would be acceptable to all the people of Jammu & Kashmir. This would also be acceptable to the people of India and Pakistan.

(This article is based on a lecture delivered by Dr Dileep Padgaonkar, noted journalist and commentator and member of the team of interlocutors appointed by the government on the Kashmir crisis, on May 28, 2011, in Pune, as part of the CCDS-Open Space lecture series titled 'Keeping the Peace')

The folly of using violence to quell violence

As early as 1986, the government was warned of the “backlash of modernisation” in the central tribal belt. But the colonial precedent of using violence to quell violence has been government’s only response to Maoist extremism to date. Why are there no peace efforts? When and why did the Union home ministry, once tasked with the delivery of social justice, especially for adivasis and dalits, become just a law and order ministry?

K S
SUBRAMANIAN

A SUPREME COURT judgment recently ordered state governments, including that of Chhattisgarh, to ‘immediately cease and desist from’ creating and using Special Police Officers (SPOs) against Maoist violence. Likewise, the Union of India was ordered to ‘cease and desist’ from using any of its funds in support thereof, as such activities violated Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India. The judgment made an eloquent exposition of the socio-economic factors behind the emergence of a militant Maoist movement in the country, and asserted that people do not “take up arms, in an organised fashion, against the might of the state or against fellow human beings without rhyme or reason”. It cited the 2008 Planning Commission Report, ‘Development Challenges in Extremist-Affected Areas’, which advocates a comprehensive developmental approach to Maoist violence.

The Government of India has studiously ignored this report and relied mainly on the law and order approach to Maoist violence, developed by intelligence agencies.

Elaborating, the Planning Commission report stated that “the development paradigm pursued since Independence has aggravated the prevailing discontent among the marginalised sections of society... The benefits of this paradigm have been disproportionately cornered by the dominant sections at the expense of the poor, who have

borne most of the costs. Development which is insensitive to the needs of these communities (viz dalits and adivasis) has inevitably caused displacement and reduced them to a sub-human existence. The pattern of development and its implementation has increased corrupt practices of a rent-seeking bureaucracy and rapacious exploitation by contractors, middlemen, traders and greedy sections of the larger society intent on grabbing their resources and violating their dignity”.

The report went on to say that the “state itself should feel committed to the democratic and human rights and humane objectives that are inscribed in the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of the Constitution. The state has to adhere strictly to the rule of law. Indeed, the state has no other authority to rule... *What is surprising is not the fact of unrest but the failure of the state to draw the right conclusions from it...* There will be peace, harmony and social progress only if there is equity, justice and dignity for everyone” (emphasis added).

Noted scholar Amit Bhaduri (2009) has observed that reliance on the market mechanism as the main driving force of efficient resource allocation and growth has accentuated poverty and created rumblings in the countryside that often spill over into fury and despair. Land in rural and urban areas is being acquired by government for the purposes of mining, industry and special economic zones. Mining, typically, displaces the poorest people: adivasis, who constitute 8% of the population and 40% of those displaced in the name of development. The state apparatus takes recourse to ‘silent violence’ in various ways. ‘Developmental terrorism’ is practised by the state with the sole purpose of enriching big business but under the guise of industrialising and modernising the economy.

II

Maoist violence in India is the consequence of non-performance on basic issues related to tribal development in the letter and spirit of the Constitution of India. It is a response to the enormous state violence and structural violence against adivasis. The recent open letter to the President of India written by Dr B D Sharma, former



commissioner for scheduled castes and tribes (Sharma, 2010), makes this abundantly clear.

The 28th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes submitted to the President as early as 1986 also contained an elaborate discussion of the major issues in tribal and social development. The report was described as a "Constitution within the Constitution" by an eminent scholar.

Unfortunately, central government institutions such as the Union home ministry and the Intelligence Bureau (IB), entrenched in their colonial past, have failed to play an appropriate role. The absence of proper policy mechanisms; the inadequacy, amateurishness and ad-hocism of available policy professionals; absence of interdisciplinary inputs of knowledge, skill, vision and expertise; dependence on past precedents; and reliance on the police machinery have dented the policy response to major violence in India. Humane governance has been a casualty at all levels of governance.

This overall failure is to be located in the basic structure of conflict management in India at the district, state and central levels, inherited from the British Raj (Subramanian, 2007). E M S Namboodiripad once observed that India has "democracy at the top and bureaucracy at the bottom". It is a little noticed fact that the basic criminal laws of the land such as the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Police Act, prepared by the British, prioritise state security, maintenance of public order and intelligence collection as the main functions of the police, at the expense of investigation and detection of crime — the main function of the police elsewhere.

The Union home ministry's information on conflict situations stems mainly from the IPS-controlled Intelligence Bureau and the state police forces. Both agencies are not equipped to study the multiple complexities of developmental conflicts but tend to view all conflicts through the lens of their state security preoccupations.

Given the limitations of police agencies in reporting developmental conflicts objectively, the ministry set up its own agency, the Research and Policy Division, in 1967, to report on conflicts independently. The Division worked well but was soon converted into a convenient parking lot for officers moving from one job to another in government. IB reportage on conflicts and the reports produced by the R&P Division often differed on facts and interpretation. The Division was mysteriously wound up in the 1990s.

Based on the Government of India Allocation of Business Rules, 1961, the Union home ministry had two divisions for the development and protection of dalits and adivasis. Steps had been taken, during the post-Emergency 1980s, to develop and implement special measures for the

development of these communities, including a Tribal Sub-Plan for adivasis (STs) and a Special Component Plan for dalits (SCs). Special arrangements were in place to study and deal with 'atrocities' against dalits and adivasis. Increasing 'atrocities' against dalits and adivasis were seen as contributory causes in the emergence of Naxalite violence. The two phenomena were studied in juxtaposition with each other, and guidelines issued to state governments on dealing with them. The SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act was passed in 1989 to deal with 'atrocities'; implementation was supervised by the ministry.

In the name of re-organisation, however, the divisions dealing with SCs and STs were transferred in the 1990s to a newly-set-up Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Separate national commissions came up for SCs and STs. This arrangement has not worked well.

From a nodal agency for the development and protection of dalits and adivasis, the Union home ministry has gradually become just a law and order ministry. The constitutional obligation on the part of the state to protect and take special care of dalits and adivasis, and ensure their development, was given reduced importance with the transfer of the subject to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The Union home ministry, with its command over police forces across the country, could have been a powerful agency for the delivery of social justice. But it was not to be. This had a particular impact on 'atrocities' management. In early-2004, atrocities increased sharply in the development-project-affected central tribal belt (CTB), which also saw increasing Maoist/Naxalite violence.

Maoist violence, which originated in a single police station area in a single district in West Bengal, is now reported to have spread to over 2,000 police stations in 223 districts across 20 states, as stated by the Union home minister. And the police budgets of Union and state governments have reportedly gone up over a thousand-fold from 1967 to 2007.

The lesson seems to be that a mere police response is far from adequate to respond to Maoist violence. Though state violence tends to aggravate the cult of violence, the colonial precedent of using violence to quell violence appears to have become customised with our post-colonial rulers.

While 'public order' and 'police' are state subjects in the Constitution of India, the Union home ministry plays a key role in formulating government policy to deal with Maoist violence. The prime minister stated at a chief ministers' conference in April 2006 (he has repeated it frequently) that Maoist violence is India's biggest internal security threat. This was probably based on IB analysis on the subject. The then Union home minister sent a large force of CRPF

battalions to the Naxalite/Maoist-affected states. He told the states not to enter into dialogue with the Maoists unless they gave up arms. ‘Local resistance’ by vigilante groups (the Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh) was to be “up-scaled”. Though the 2004 National Common Minimum Programme had said that extremist violence was not just a law and order problem but had deeper socio-economic roots, the state police agencies thought otherwise and acted on the suggestions contained in documents on ‘left-wing extremism’ produced by the IB.

The home ministry, influenced by IB reports, further geared up to deploy central paramilitary forces on a massive scale. The ministry’s annual report for 2008-9 states that Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa together accounted for about 86% of all incidents of Maoist violence in 2008.

The prime minister’s statement on Maoism in 2006 did not make even passing reference to the growing violence against dalits and adivasis. Interestingly, neither the newly-created Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (now in charge of dalits and adivasis) nor the national commissions for SCs and STs were invited to attend the 2006 and 2009 meetings of state chief ministers though this is required under the Constitution. Speakers came out strongly against Maoist violence, but none referred to the issue of increasing violence against dalits and adivasis, especially in the central tribal belt, as reported by official agencies.

A seminal 1969 home ministry report, the first major report of its kind prepared by the Research and Policy (R&P) Division, titled ‘The Causes and Nature of Agrarian Tensions’, had warned that the ‘green revolution’ could turn into a ‘red revolution’ in the absence of agrarian reforms.

Ironically, though the Ministry of Home Affairs was aware of deficiencies in its information base on conflict resolution, as seen in the setting up of the R&P Division, it did not take the additional step of institutionalising policymaking. Traditional reliance on police reports has continued. The then home secretary (Srinivasavaradan, 1992) stated that the “available expertise at the bureaucratic level to understand, anticipate and evaluate an intricate problem was inadequate and amateurish. The situation in some cases was salvaged in the past because of the flexibility of the system, the sagacity of the political leadership and its openness to information from all quarters”.

III

As early as 1986, the 28th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes to the President of India referred to the “backlash of modernisation” in the tribal areas. Its assessment was that the outcome of the developmental measures taken plus the adverse forces already at work was a negative one and marked

a “slideback” in the fortunes of dalits and adivasis, notwithstanding some achievements in the sphere of reservations in government jobs. The report decried the “omissions, distortions, subterfuges and the studied silence on vital issues” in government policies which protected vested interests. The concern expressed in the Constitution’s Fifth Schedule, that the laws of the land should be suitably adapted in their application to scheduled areas, had been violated. The effect of non-recognition of the rights of local communities’ command over resources had resulted in “disorganisation, displacement and destitution” of adivasis.

The 2008 Planning Commission report states that the “methods chosen by the government to deal with the Maoist phenomenon (have) increased the people’s distrust of the police and consequent unrest. Protest against police harassment is itself a major instance of unrest, frequently leading to further violence by the police in the areas under Maoist influence. The response of the Maoists has been to target the police and subject them to violence, which in effect triggers a spiral. The rights and entitlements of the people which give rise to the Maoist movement find expression in the Constitution, the laws enacted by various governments and the policy declarations. The administration should not have waited for the Maoist movement to remind it of its obligations towards the people in these matters”.

The conflict is still going on with no visible peace efforts on the part of the government; indeed the government has rebuffed a Maoist initiative to start a dialogue process. Even if the conflict is eventually resolved, the consequences of the violence and the scars both on human survivors and in the national psyche need to be healed and a reasonable degree of ‘closure’ achieved so that the patterns of political violence and terrorism do not reappear (Wallace, 2007).

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Constitutionalism and the possibilities of peace

How is law and order to be maintained in times of conflict even while ensuring that the exercise of state power is kept within constitutional boundaries? More importantly, should not the state ensure a lasting peace by promoting social, economic and political justice? It is the manner in which the state behaves in times of conflict that determines the nature of the state in times of peace, the recent Supreme Court judgment on the Salwa Judum reminds us

SIDDHARTH
NARRAIN

Given humanity's experience of unchecked power, where unchecked power then becomes its own principle, and its practice its own raison d'être, resulting in the eventual dehumanisation of all people, the scouring of the earth by the unquenchable thirst for natural resources by Imperialist powers, and the horrors of two World Wars, modern constitutionalism posits that no wielder of power should be allowed to claim the right to perpetrate state's violence against anyone, much less its own citizens, unchecked by law, and notions of innate human dignity of every individual. — Supreme Court in Nandini Sundar and Ors v State of Chhattisgarh (1)

THE SUPREME COURT'S recent judgment in the Nandini Sundar case on Special Police Officers (SPOs) and vigilante forces like the Salwa Judum, raised by the state of Chhattisgarh to fight the Maoists by recruiting young men from local areas, has come as a huge boost to those fighting for civil liberties and the restoration of the rule of law in states affected by armed violence and insurgency. The Supreme Court has asked the state government to ensure that these vigilante forces give up arms in their possession, and it has also asked the state to protect the SPOs from retribution by the Maoists.

At the core of the court's decision was protection of the rule of law based on the ideas of constitutionalism, ideas that take on enormous significance in times of violence.

State policy has always been to create exceptions to the rule of law to maintain 'law and order' and ensure peace. Draconian legislations like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, extra-judicial killings, the power of preventive detention, and more recently the arming of vigilante forces to combat Maoists have for a long time been justified both by the state and by the courts as necessary exceptions in times of violence. The Supreme Court's decision in *Nandini Sundar* questions the basis of this logic. Delving into the reasons behind these violent times, the court concluded that we cannot ignore the reasons behind what has led to people taking up arms against the state — increasing inequalities spurred by amoral economies and unfettered extractive industries. Chhattisgarh is an example of how states with abundant mineral wealth have gone out of their way to attract investments in the mineral sector, and in doing so have weakened whatever little social and environmental protections that the law provided to tribal and marginalised communities that live and depend on the land where these minerals are situated.

The violence of rapacious capitalism

The logic of rapacious capitalism has little space for the niceties of informed consent, where the opinions of villages that are opposed to mining or other industrial development are often brushed aside. Comparing the logic of mineral



extraction in Chhattisgarh to that of early colonial expansion in Africa (through Joseph Conrad’s description of colonialism in the Congo), the court points out that what we are seeing in Chhattisgarh and other parts of the country is the violent outcome of an equally violent economic logic. The Chhattisgarh example is especially stark, as the state has dealt harshly with any voices of dissent. The Chhattisgarh Public Security Act, passed without debate in the legislature, has extremely draconian provisions. The way the state has dealt with Dr Binayak Sen, one of the first human rights activists to question the logic of the vigilante Salwa Judum, is only one example of how it has become almost impossible to challenge predatory forms of capitalism backed by draconian legislation.

Referring to the root causes of violence in the state of Chhattisgarh, the court said:

Guided by an instinct for survival, and according to Thomas Hobbes a fear of lawlessness encoded in our collective conscience, we seek an order. However, when that order comes with the price of dehumanisation, of manifest injustices of all forms perpetrated against the weak, the poor and deprived people revolt. (2)

The dangers of vigilantism

One of the founding principles of the colonial state in India is that the state retains an absolute monopoly over violence. In that sense, those who believe in violence as a form of resistance fall outside the fold of constitutional protections. The irony of the situation in conflict zones in India is that the state is attempting to lease out this right of using violence to armed vigilante forces. The warped reason for this is that these vigilante forces will comprise of persons from the local area, many of whom have been impacted by Maoist violence. However, the Supreme Court has completely dismissed this logic, saying that those personally impacted by Maoist violence should not be used in counter-insurgency operations as their actions will be prompted by feelings of rage and hatred, thus making them highly suspicious of everyone around them, and increasing the chances of them perpetrating grave human rights violations and branding those unconnected with Maoist violence as Maoists or their sympathisers. Commenting on the inherent dangers of the government policy of arming vigilante groups, the court said:

What the mandarins of high policies forget is that a society is not a forest where one could combat an accidental forest fire by starting a counter forest fire that is allegedly controlled. Human beings are not individual blades of dry grass. As conscious beings, they exercise a free will. Armed, the very same groups can turn, and often have turned, against other citizens, and the state itself. (3)

Founding moments of constitutionalism

The Indian Constitution is the main text where we find an

attempt to address the issue of economic, political and social justice. The Directive Principles of State Policy, though non-justiciable, form the backbone of legislative and judicial measures to address the massive gap in the socio-economic conditions of the country’s citizens. These, when read with the Fundamental Rights guaranteed in the Constitution, laid the foundation for a plethora of laws and regulations that formally intended to address the central problem of distributive justice while at the same time guaranteeing individual freedom. Our constitutional framework or gridlines thus envisaged the idea of society in which peace could only be addressed through a more just society.

However, there remain tensions between the founding moments of constitutionalism and its invocation now to ensure peace in the long term. Ranabir Samaddar, who has worked extensively on the early history of the Indian nationalist movement, points us to the violent history of Indian constitutionalism, in which the colonial government crushed any violent resistance to its rule. These measures ranged from the use of torture to the inhuman conditions at transportation centres where many early nationalists died or lost their sanity (4).

It is the legal and constitutional regime that arose out of these developments that became the foundations for the colonial legal apparatus, much of which was retained by independent India. While the British used extensive violence to crush any violent resistance, with scant respect for the rule of law, it is through the law that they codified many of these principles. For instance, the violent history of constitutionalism has meant that most constitutional schemes have always included exceptions to the rule of law. These exceptions have been invoked in times of emergency, but in parts of India it is the exception that continues to be the norm. For instance, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act is an exceptional legislation that has been impossible to dislodge despite Justice Jeevan Reddy’s recommendations that it be re-examined.

The legal scholar Upendra Baxi has, in his work, pointed to the foundations of modern legal and constitutional regimes in countries like the United States, which are based on a violent history that involved the genocide of the native Indian population (5). In India, the parallel is the plight of the adivasi population. One of the spokespersons of the adivasi community, Jaipal Singh, in a speech before the Constituent Assembly, on December 19, 1946, while welcoming the Objectives Resolution Parliament, post-Independence, warned against continuing the policies of the British that had marginalised the adivasi population. Unfortunately, statistics show us that this is exactly what we have continued to do. Between 1951 and 1990, around 8.5 million members of the scheduled tribes were displaced by development projects. This number represents a disproportionate percentage (over 40%) of the total number of those displaced (6).

It is this inherent contradiction that surfaced when the state of Chhattisgarh claimed before the Supreme Court that it needed constitutional sanction to perpetrate what the Supreme Court termed, “its policies of ruthless violence against the people of Chhattisgarh” to establish a constitutional order.

Given the violent foundations of the rule of law in India, the question is how one reconciles the need to preserve constitutional gridlines with the long-term prospects of peace in the country. The Supreme Court points us to one particular solution.

The court said:

Our Constitution provides the gridlines within which the state is to act, both to assert such authority and also to initiate, nurture and sustain such authority. To transgress those gridlines is to act unlawfully, imperilling the moral and legal authority of the state and the Constitution. We, in this court, are not unaware of the gravity that extremist activities pose to the citizens, and to the state. However, our Constitution, encoding eons of human wisdom, also warns us that ends do not justify the means, and that an essential and integral part of the ends to which the collective power of the people may be used to achieve has to necessarily keep the exercise of state power within check and constitutional bounds. (7)

This statement, when examined carefully, is laying down two important principles. The first, in the court’s own words, is that the “law cannot remain silent when the canons roar”. This implies that the rule of law becomes even more important in times of conflict. It is the manner in which the state behaves in times of conflict that determines the nature of the state in times of peace. However, this principle is circumscribed by the origins of constitutionalism, which is itself embedded in violence. It is the second principle that we have to look at then — how do we draw upon the collective power of the people and ‘eons of human wisdom’ to keep a check on state power? Can we think of an ethical framework, or a way of life outside of the formal legal and constitutional setup that will enable peace in the long term? Such a framework will have to, as the court puts it, “undertake all those necessary socially, economically, and politically remedial policies that lessen social disaffection giving rise to such extremist violence”.

The promise of fraternity

In constitutional terms, looking for an ethical framework could mean looking outside of just limiting state power to breathing life into ideas of fraternity that are enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution. As the judges in this case explain, the Constitution in no uncertain terms demands that the state shall strive, incessantly and consistently, to promote fraternity among all its citizens, thus ensuring that the dignity of each citizen is protected (8). At the heart of

this endeavour is the duty of the state to strive for social, economic and political justice.

Dr Ambedkar, in his closing speech in the Constituent Assembly, stressed the importance of fraternity, liberty and equality to achieve an ethical framework that he termed a ‘social democracy’:

We must... not be content with mere political democracy. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the heart of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life that recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principle of life. These principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy... Without fraternity, equality and liberty could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. (9)

Sixty-four years after Independence, we seem to have lost sight of the far-sighted vision of the framers of our Constitution. The Supreme Court, through this remarkable judgment, has reminded us that it is imperative for us to begin thinking seriously of challenging the amoral political economy that we live in. How do we work towards building an ethical framework, informed by the constitutional values of fraternity, liberty and equality? How do we avoid the path where the only option for the state is to rule with an iron fist, establish a social order where every person is to be treated as suspect, and anyone speaking for the human rights of citizens is deemed a suspect and a Maoist sympathiser (10)? These are questions that we need to ponder before we can begin to think of the possibilities of a constitutional path to peace.

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Endnotes

1 Writ Petition (Civil) No 250 OF 2007, decided on July 5, 2011, para 3

2 Supra note 1 at para 4

3 Supra note 1 at para 17

4 Ranabir Samaddar, ‘Law and Terror’, in Gilles Tarabout and Ranabir Samaddar, ‘Conflict, Power and the Landscape of Constitutionalism’, Routledge, London, 2008, p76

5 Upendra Baxi, ‘Violence, Dissent and Development’, Law and Social Change, pp 72-76, www.upendrabaxi.net, accessed August 13, 2011

6 Supra note 1 at para 13

7 Supra note 1 at para 71

8 Supra note 1 at para 12

9 Constitutional Assembly Debates, November 25, 1949, p 979, Book No 5 as cited in People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) Karnataka, Cultural Policing in Dakshina Kannada: Vigilante Attacks on Women and Minorities, Bangalore, 2009, pp 39-40

10 Supra note 1, para 4

‘Listen to your mother before you kill your brother’

The women of the Northeast have halted violence between warring villages and tribes, campaigned against AFSPA by stripping naked, as the Meira Paibis did, or by fasting for 11 years as Irom Sharmila has done. But though women have been at the forefront of peace-building, there is not a single woman in the state assemblies of Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur: clearly, women can be relied on to stop the violence, but not to shape the peace

RITA
MANCHANDA

IROM CHANU SHARMILA, Manipur’s own Gandhian icon, watched from her prison hospital in distant Imphal, the other Gandhian, Anna Hazare, who, with the moral force of his ‘fast’ mobilised an urban middle class multitude and disarmed India’s structures of authority to do his bidding on monitoring corruption. “So short! Only 11 days of fasting, and the government agreed,” she said. Irom Sharmila has been fasting for 11 years (force-fed via nasal tubes) to get the Indian state to repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), the symbol of state militarisation. In a bid to appeal directly to policymakers, she escaped to Delhi in 2007. There, she was a magnet for human rights defenders, but Delhi’s power elite remained indifferent to the frail Sharmila’s act of moral courage to free the people of the Northeast from a martial law-like regime. But then, AFSPA concerns national security issues, and the Northeast is a frontier area, where a ‘zone of exception’ can be tolerated.

The women of the Northeast are not to be daunted. Seven

years ago, on July 15, 2004, a Manipuri mothers’ group, the Meira Paibis, stripped in front of the Assam Rifles headquarters in Imphal, holding aloft a banner on which was written in blood red: ‘Indian Army, Rape Us’. The mothers were denouncing the rape and death in custody of Manorma Devi (33), accused of belonging to an insurgent group. It was an act of patriarchal shaming, accusing the Indian security forces of using rape as an instrument of war. The event catalysed a nation-wide campaign for a repeal of AFSPA (1958) and the arbitrary use of force. Under pressure, the Union government withdrew the Assam Rifles from Kangla Fort, the historic seat of the Manipur kings. A committee was set up to review AFSPA. The Reddy Committee report was submitted, but not officially released. It recommended that the Act be repealed.

Irom Sharmila comes from a vibrant tradition of women’s collective peace activism across the Northeast. In 2000, Sharmila resolved to fast unto death after the Malom



Manipuri women stripped to protest AFSPA on July 15, 2004

massacre in which 10 civilians at a bus-stand were gunned down by the security forces on suspicion of being insurgents. It was a routine manifestation of the abuse and misuse of powers under AFSPA to kill any person on mere suspicion, and with impunity.

The Northeast is a region of separatist insurgencies that have spread like wildfire from the Naga to the Mizo hills, Manipur to Assam. Its remoteness is reinforced by a different ethnic, cultural and religious mosaic. Disaffection with the Indian state has given rise to popular ethno-nationalist mobilisations that challenge the Union's integrationist project. Alongside are faultlines of inter-ethnic hill-valley conflicts, and competing bids for ethno-territorial homelands.

As the state became more repressive and the conflict more militarised, women at the grassroots emerged as the frontline of the protest against militarisation. Narratives of the her-story of conflict and peace-making are strewn with incidents of women shielding men; lying on the road to block army trucks loaded with village boys from leaving; getting hostages released; and stopping inter-factional violence. As the women of Jotsoma, a Naga village, said: "When the Indian army came, it was women who stepped forward between the soldiers and the villagers... We mothers would go to the warring factions, walk to their camps and plead with them not to kill each other and not to harass the villagers."

Masses of Naga women interceded to defuse tension during the 2009 Shirui siege. In Shirui village, in Manipur, when hundreds of paramilitary troops laid siege to the Naga armed group NSCN (I-M) camp, trapping civilians in between, Naga women staged a sit-in for 15 days and eventually averted the violence. "We're just doing our job as peacekeepers," the women told the commanding officer.

Amongst the Meiteis, the Meira Paibis are ubiquitous, in pink *phaneks* (sarongs) and white *inaphies* (stoles), marching down the streets protesting against AFSPA, braving *lathi* blows, or sitting in silent protest against enforced 'disappearances'.

The Meitei women's protest drew its inspiration and social legitimacy from a long history of women fighting injustice, memorialised as the colonial Nupi Lal wars of revolt against imperial rule and the unjust orders of the maharaja. In Nupi Lal I (1904), the women revolted against the practice of forced labour as collective punishment for the rebellious act of burning the British residency; in Nupi Lal II (1939-40) the women mobilised to ban the export of rice in a time of famine. The Meitei women derive socio-economic status from their traditional control of trade and vending. In the 1980s, these women were transformed from social activists into activists against state militarisation by the April 1980 Lamjing incident in Manipur when, following a bomb blast, a paramilitary group unleashed a brutal combing operation, assaulting, arresting and raping women.

1980 marked the extension of AFSPA to the Manipur valley. Since then, the Meira Paibis with their flaming bamboo

torches have patrolled their neighbourhoods, sounding the alarm on search and cordon operations, marching to police/army camps and to the insurgents to get the 'boys' or hostages released. The Meira Paibis believe the 'Under Ground' (UG) are 'misguided'. State agencies have branded them 'Mothers of Insurgents'.

Their peace activism remains largely at the grassroots level with each locality having its autonomous group. There is no apex body. According to Pradeep Pnajibam, the influential editor of *Imphal Free Press Journal*: "The abundance of energy, talent and enterprise all remain too raw to be able to transform into the instruments needed to carve out equal spaces in the negotiations for power in modern political institutions." Even when their moral authority was at its peak, after the naked protest in 2004, the women members of the coordinating committee, Apunba Lup, played a passive role, preferring to let the men speak.

A further challenge to women's peace activism is the failure to transcend the divisions of identity politics. Manipur is an ethnically plural space and competing claims of a 'homeland of one's own' have produced tensions between Naga Meiteis, Naga Kukis and Meitei Kukis. The Nagas who dominate the hill districts of Manipur want unification



of all Naga territories, while the Meiteis fiercely oppose undermining the state's integrity. During the May 2010 Mao Gate standoff, when two Naga students were killed and scores of women injured following agitations over the Manipur government blocking Naga leader Th Muivah's visit, and the two-month Naga students' economic blockade of the valley, the women were upfront, but mobilised along community solidarities.

Valley Rose, a Naga activist and editor of a Tangkul daily, voices these tensions: "Are we really talking about peace or are we talking about my group/your group, this right and that right? And are we not creating more differences among different communities in the state through these activities?"

Social sanction for Naga women's peace activism is rooted in the traditional role of Naga women as peacemakers between warring villages and tribes — a *demi* or a *pukrelia* who steps forward in the midst of battle and halts the violence. Such a role is re-evoked in the 1998 story of Neidonuo Angami, then president of the Nagaland Naga Mothers Association (NMA), stepping forward between two fighting factions in Phek district of Nagaland declaring: "Listen to your mother before you kill your brother."

The NMA's emphasis on motherhood as a mobilisation strategy secures social legitimacy but de-politicises their activism, thus enabling the NMA to claim a non-partisan stand.

Spiralling fratricidal violence in the 1980s and 1990s pushed the welfare-oriented Naga women's organisations into peace work. Every morning would bring bodies lying unclaimed in the bazaars of Kohima and other Nagaland district towns, with people too terrorised to come forward and claim them. The NMA, in alliance with the churches, performed a mourning ritual, giving every body a dignified

funeral in a tribal shawl, thus asserting that every life was precious. In 1994, the Naga Mothers launched a 'Stop All Bloodshed' campaign with non-partisan peace teams fanning out to the district headquarters to urge an end to the violence, reaching out to the segregated tribal factions.

In 2003, the NMA renewed that pledge to stop all bloodshed, a sad testament to the continuing inter-factional killings. Between 2004 and 2008, fratricidal violence surged claiming nearly 500 lives.

Because the issue of 'unity' continues to stymie the Naga peace process, the NMA and Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWU) strive to keep the channels of communication between rival factions open. Following the 1997 ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN-Isak Muivah group, the target of violence shifted to internecine violence between the NSCN I-M and K factions (the NSCN-Khaplang group was not a party to the ceasefire agreement). In an effort to stop the violence, in 1999, the women's groups enabled indirect talks between the top leaders of the I-M and K groups. In January, four top leaders of the NMA and NWU met Isak and Muivah in Bangkok. Weeks later, in March, the women trekked across the Myanmar border to the NSCN-K camp, becoming the first Naga social organisation to meet S S Khaplang. He declined to be party to the ceasefire but agreed to restraint. On their return, they briefed 16 top I-M group leaders. Naga women who were traditionally not trusted to carry important messages, had become trusted interlocutors.

After the 2002 Bangkok civil society consultations convened by the Isak-Muivah group to gauge what would be considered an 'honourable' settlement, the women again met Khaplang and apprised him of the details, breaking his isolation. More recently, the NMA and NWU have been



The Meira Paibis with their flaming bamboo torches patrol their neighbourhood



From Sharmila comes from a vibrant tradition of women's peace activism across the Northeast

important members of the crucial non-partisan initiative of the church and Naga social organisations to build reconciliation — the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR). Since its emergence in 2008, it has mid-wifed the joint working group of the armed groups and brought down factional violence. More importantly, the FNR, last August, provided a forum for top leaders to talk face-to-face for the first time since the NSCN split in 1988.

When the 1997 ceasefire agreement was signed there was limited support for pursuing peace negotiations before unity was established among Naga warring groups. The Naga social solidarities, including the women's groups, played a crucial role in winning popular acceptance and legitimacy for the NSCN (I-M) to speak for all Nagas. When multiple ceasefire violations threatened to derail the peace process, the NMA joined a 22-member civil society action committee to independently monitor the ceasefire. The NMA president declared: "Both sides can decide to break the ceasefire. But for whom are they talking? We're all stakeholders in the process." The action committee pushed for inclusion of independent observers in the formal ceasefire mechanism. Though accepted, it has not been implemented. However, the Ceasefire Ground Rules were amended in 2001 to accommodate civilian security concerns — guarding against civilian injury and property damage.

As a conscious strategy, the NMA avoids commenting on the political agenda. The NWU, on the contrary, pursues a rights-based agenda in the private sphere of marriage law reform and the public sphere of representation in the all-male Village Tribal Council and the apex body United Naga Council of Manipur.

The Naga women's profile in peacemaking is singular because you glimpse the possibility of women peacemakers

with moral authority in the 'informal' grassroots sphere of politics being incrementally accommodated as peacemakers in the formal sphere of politics. It is not incidental that the current president of the influential Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) is Gina Shankham, former president of the NWU.

Similarly, in May 2010 in Kohima, women representatives from the NPMHR and other groups played a meaningful advocacy and monitoring role in a crucial dialogue between the home secretary and Th Muivah. Government officials were surprised that Th Muivah had invited the women. It showed Naga women no longer passive or only a ceremonial presence as the group's cultural markers. They were participating as equal interlocutors. But the traditional backlash is never far. The Committee for Alternative Arrangement representing the United Naga Council in the tripartite talks with the Union and Manipur governments for special autonomy for the Naga hills, included Naga women at the initial Delhi meeting. At the formal talks in Senapati, in December 2010 and June 2011, there were only men.

In the Northeast, alongside the remarkable visibility of women's peace activism is their invisibility in state politics. In the state assemblies of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, there are no women. The chief ministers of the northeastern states have asked for a waiver on reservations for women in elected bodies. It was a reminder that identity-based national movements are hostile to women and minorities. Women are needed to stop the violence, not to shape the peace.

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The violence within

Legal and constitutional safeguards, education and economic progress will not by themselves suffice to resolve caste conflicts in India. If we want a social order free of exclusion and dominance, we need to reinvent the victim-victimiser relationship, with the victimiser not only giving up the process of victimisation but directly and overtly standing up for the victim, as the grassroots movements of the '60s and '70s did

EDWARD A
RODRIGUES

IN THE DECADES after Independence, it was commonly believed that the discriminatory and exclusionary phenomenon of caste could be eradicated by invoking both the Constitution and the overarching modernisation programme of planned economic development. Particularly for the scheduled castes, the constitutional provisions were vital in ensuring, among other things, protection against caste discrimination and violence perpetrated on them by the upper castes. Yet more than half-a-century later, contemporary Indian society is faced with the sobering reminder that caste has not vanished; on the contrary, this system of discrimination and exclusion continues to proliferate, reinventing itself in a myriad ways. Notwithstanding its other interpretations, in this article, 'caste' will be understood as a system of discrimination and exclusion. It is in this sense that I seek to make a case for casteism as a form of violence that is embedded within Indian society.

In the 1950s and '60s, many scholars from the social sciences such as Rajni Kothari, M N Srinivas and S C Dube, among others, held that traditional caste solidarities would gradually give way to more universal and secular solidarities aligned with the nation and its aspirations of becoming a modern society. It was believed that a modern educational system, a jurisprudence based on secular law, a modern press, as well as the scientific rationality underlying the spheres of production and economic modernisation could together establish the foundations of a modern India freed from the fetters of caste tyranny and exploitation.

Yet, despite the existence of all the above, Indian society has become even more caste-conscious, infusing an instrumentalist working of caste throughout the social, economic, political and cultural fabric of society. Notwithstanding the adaptive potential of caste as represented by sociologists like Susan and Lloyd Rudolph in the 1970s, it is this instrumentalist character of caste functioning that has overtaken all other dimensions of caste behaviour in the contemporary Indian context. Whether it is votebank politics and the formation of caste alliances, caste violence in the agrarian sector, the re-emergence of caste panchayats, control and access of institutions and resources within the economy, etc, in all these different spheres, caste instrumentalism functions either to exclude or undermine others in the pursuit of control and privilege. In this sense, caste functions as a deeply divisive force, constantly reinventing

solidarities whose ultimate goal is the pursuit of its own self-interest. Any notion of a larger collective orientation is immediately the object of deep suspicion from the different caste groups, or, additionally, such collective orientations quickly become sites of competing caste interests.

In such a situation, the potential for conflict is often very great. It is not surprising then that the Human Rights Watch report of 1999 titled 'Broken People' observed caste violence as the worst kind of violence to have afflicted modern Indian society in the past half-century. It is therefore useful for us to acknowledge the systemic character of casteism and the role it plays in perpetuating a violent social order in contemporary Indian society.

How does one make sense of caste violence in contemporary Indian society? What are some of the measures that have conventionally been deployed to overcome such violence? To what extent can efforts at conflict resolution open up new ways of thinking about caste that are both reflexive and critical of the instrumentalism alluded to above?

These are some of the questions that need to be engaged with in our effort to interrogate casteism. The effort here is to explore the inner dynamics of caste practice with a view to understanding how exclusion and dominance persist in modern Indian society. Caste violence, I want to suggest, is symptomatic of a deep-rooted hatred/antagonism towards those who threaten to destabilise the existing structures of exclusion and dominance. Thus, even as prejudice and irrationality pervade the mindset of caste, it is inequality and dominance that circumscribe the structure of caste violence in contemporary Indian society. Implicit in this is the understanding that both at the level of structure as well as the level of everyday practice, casteism evolves into an ideological legitimisation of exclusion and dominance.

Not surprisingly, even as the law would render illegal and offensive traditional practices of caste exclusion and dominance, it is this ideology of casteism that gives rise to newer strategies to escape the eye of the law as well as to perpetuate the practice of caste. Additionally, the problem of caste violence becomes even more complicated when one begins to position its different moments of



Sudharak Olive

representation within the domain of the public and the private. It is important to highlight this public-private representation of caste, if only to foreground the rampant existence of the 'caste' sentiment, particularly in the case of those upper castes for whom the public display of caste would invite legal repercussions. The retreat into the domain of the private not only renders caste outside the gaze of the law, more importantly it allows for the unhindered practise of caste irrespective of the values of citizenship and Constitution that dominate the public sphere.

Given the solidity of this private domain and its deep-rooted resistance to change, Milton Singer, among others, pointed to the 'compartmentalisation of psyche' amongst Indians in their everyday life. Equally, it was B R Ambedkar who observed that this absence of a unitary self amongst Hindus, combined with the instrumentalism that motivates caste interests everywhere, creates the preconditions for casteism to become a practice of everyday life across all castes, high and low, and in all parts of Indian society. Not surprisingly then, various scholars have pointed out that caste violence is greatest amongst those who stand adjacent to each other, as compared to those who are positioned at opposite ends of the caste hierarchy. It is this overarching experience of caste in the everyday life of Indian society that must account for its ideology that is deeply rooted in prejudice and irrationality but which nonetheless serves as a vital

force for legitimising exclusion and dominance.

Ambedkar and Gandhi pointed to two very different ways of addressing the ideology and practice of casteism in Indian society. Speaking from the vantage point of the victim, Ambedkar believed that casteism was an invention of the upper-caste Hindus who stood to gain the maximum from its continued existence. He believed that upper-caste Hindus must make a conscious effort to give up the practice of casteism in their everyday world. Yet, given his deep suspicion of their willingness to engage in such a practice of social transformation, he sought to take recourse in legal remedies to protect and nurture the wellbeing of the scheduled castes. But this legalistic approach, even if it served as a deterrent, could only have a limited value in confronting casteism. In addition, Ambedkar was profoundly committed to the path of education as a vehicle of empowerment for the scheduled castes.

By emphasising a renewal of traditional Hindu values, Gandhi believed that casteism could be overcome. It was his firm belief that casteism was a curse on Indian society. For Gandhi, this was a project of societal renewal that involved both upper and lower castes. Through his ashrams he was able to compel Indians everywhere to reconsider their prejudice towards dirt and defilement. Yet, in hindsight, one can only say that when it came to confronting casteism even Gandhi

appeared to be both ambiguous and idealistic in the way he romanticised his *Hind Swaraj* and the place of caste therein.

Quite clearly, casteism remains an unresolved phenomenon in contemporary Indian society. As the Human Rights Watch report (1999) observes, casteism has also pervaded the institutions of state, thereby making it increasingly difficult for victims of caste atrocities to seek protection and justice from the agencies of the law. In large parts of Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh the report observes how dalits have faced an indifferent/prejudiced administration when seeking to complain about caste atrocities. Further, even as dalits and bahujans become empowered in a political engagement hitherto unthinkable even a few decades ago, it does not appear as if the upsurge from below is yielding a dissolution of casteism. Rather, what seems obvious to everyone is that casteism from below has replaced casteism from above. Despite our best intentions, the language of caste continues to be the discourse of emancipation everywhere in India.

How can conflict resolution point to a different way of understanding casteism? What we do know in the way that we have developed our argument thus far is that: a) casteism invokes deep-rooted hatred and antagonisms amongst different caste groups; b) casteism has ensured that victim and victimiser will always stand in sharp opposition to each other.

Any form of conflict resolution must seek to work around these two propositions by creating the conditions that will undermine the prejudice that lies at the heart of caste hatred, as well as going beyond victim and victimiser in search of a new relationship based on equality and dignity.

In operational terms, such a project of conflict resolution would be a multi-pronged engagement influencing various spheres of this malaise. Critically interrogating prejudices of all kinds pertaining to casteism must be one of the paramount goals of any exercise in conflict resolution. The growth of a critical knowledge as well as the cultural confrontation of existing caste prejudices can go a long way in undermining the mindset of casteism. But beyond an engagement with caste prejudice there must also be a reinvention of the victim-victimiser relationship. Hitherto, within Indian society, the victimiser has always believed that the problem of exclusion and discrimination had to do with those who were excluded and discriminated against. Untouchability was thus the problem of the untouchables. There was an unspoken writ among the upper caste that it was the duty of the state to take care of such problems, while the practice of casteism continued unfettered in the private sphere.

Any attempt to reinvent the victim-victimiser relationship would have to take cognisance of the need for the victimiser to not only give up the process of victimisation but, more importantly, to stand up on the side of the victim when he/she is victimised by others. It is only by persistently reasserting the victimiser's claim that he/she seeks to stand on the side of the victim at all times and in all conditions, that both the

process of victimisation as well as the categories of victimiser and victim can be declared irrelevant. To put it differently, it is time for the upper castes to sincerely believe that only when they can stand up against casteism perpetrated against the lower castes, will casteism eventually be eradicated.

Such an engagement is neither an impossibility nor out of the ordinary. During the radical and turbulent phase of the 1960s, Rajni Kothari, D L Seth and others pointed to the crucial role of Non-Party Political Formations (NPPF), which were grassroots outfits made up of young people, students, teachers, activists, including sections of the working class and peasantry. They were witness to the corruption of the model of economic development, just as they witnessed the declining role of communist parties in giving shape to a politics of emancipation.

Groups like the Yuva Kranti Dal, Shramik Sangathana, Kashtakari Sangathana, Lal Nishant, Dalit Panthers, amongst many others in Maharashtra, were deeply suspicious of both the Congress and the communists. They were convinced that only a struggle that simultaneously confronted both caste oppression and class exploitation would genuinely address the problems of inequality facing Indian society. Not only did many of them begin rethinking Marx in the context of the caste-class question, equally, many of them sought to learn from the oppressed, embracing the lives of the victims in what Paulo Freire termed the 'process of concientisation'. They sought to overcome the barriers of casteism by directly and overtly taking sides with those who were the victims of casteism. Many of these individuals were themselves from the upper castes; they struggled to de-caste themselves through a process of critical engagement with the victims of casteism. It is a significant point to note, if only to understand the value of these movements during that period, that when faced with the worst form of caste violence during the Marathwada riots of 1979 it was such fronts that both protected the dalits as well as stood up against the violence of the upper castes.

These were valuable experiences that could have served as the basis for a pragmatic and long-term engagement with casteism, leading eventually to its eradication. Historically, however, this was not to be. If the struggle against casteism dominated the popular imagination of '60s and '70s Indian society, by the 1980s casteism was strategically displaced, making way for the forces of Hindutva and the rise of Hindu communalism.

If Indian society is to find a way out of casteism, it must return to the decades of the '60s and '70s and re-examine some of the great experiments that were critically reshaping the social order, free from exclusion and dominance.

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The Indian family: A peace not worth protecting?

Justice and peace do not always coincide. The heterosexual patriarchal family, for instance, contributes to the dominant social order in India, but it is not a just or equal space for women. Is this then a peace that should be protected? Sometimes, this author suggests, conflicts should not be resolved; sometimes disorder can be the beginning of justice

NIVEDITA
MENON

THE FRENCH NOBEL PRIZE-winning writer Romain Rolland said: "Where order is injustice, disorder is the beginning of justice."

Peace and order are not necessarily just. Often peace and order are maintained to shore up the interests of dominant groups. Peace often rests on a dominant order that maintains itself through a combination of coercion (force) and hegemony (belief through consent). Hegemony is the policeman inside your head who tells you how to behave. Coercion could be exercised by institutions ranging from the army and police to schools, the family and religious institutions. Coercion often involves the law, and the law predominantly maintains an order that is in the interest of the dominant groups.

The family is one of the key institutions for maintaining order — but not necessarily a just order — in society. People tend to define family in terms of love, solidarity, companionship and support. But every such institution is not necessarily recognised as a 'family'. The law will define family according to certain personal laws in this country. But extra-legally too, you are forced into being part of a family defined in a narrow and strict way. For instance, a woman, her mother and the woman's friend are not a family. A 'family' can only be a patriarchal, heterosexual family: man, his wife, two children, a dog maybe, and two cars!

In 1984, a judgment by the Delhi High Court said that fundamental rights are not applicable in the family: these rights have to stop at the door of the family. One way of responding to this as a feminist is to say that this is wrong, fundamental rights *should* be applicable in the family. The other way is to recognise that this judge was absolutely right. Because if you bring fundamental rights into a family, and if every individual in the family is treated like a free and equal citizen, that family will not survive. Because the family, as it exists, rests on one person being head of the household: the (eldest) male, the husband, the father. So, you have a situation in which there is actually no equality and no freedom and, in fact, if you introduce equality and freedom then the family as established by law and social practices will collapse.

One of the key features of this family is the sexual division of labour, with domestic work done by women. This sex-based segregation of labour is key, not just to maintaining the

family, but also the economy, because the economy would collapse like a pack of cards if this unpaid domestic labour had to be paid for by somebody, either by the husband or the employer. When you have an entire kind of labour underlying the economy which is unpaid for, then surely the sexual division of labour is not something domestic and private.

Feminists do recognise that the family offers a space which no other institution offers and as feminists we also recognise that we have failed to create alternatives to the family. But an uncompromising critique of the family is absolutely crucial. The personal is political: Political is not just the vote, the state, institutions. What happens inside the bedroom and the kitchen is political too, because 'politics' is about power relations, and power operates in the private realm as well.

Also, the heterosexual patriarchal nuclear family is not natural, nor is it something that has always existed in all parts of India. Its current form is based on an upper-caste north Indian norm. In the south, even today, it is not assumed that if a woman marries she has to go to her husband's home. This is a particularly north Indian idea. These kinds of families are called 'virilocal', that is, the woman leaves her natal home forever once she is married. But other forms of the family have existed till well into the 20th century. For instance, in the Nair community of Kerala that I come from, till my grandmother's generation we were matrilineal. A normal family for my grandmother was sisters and brothers living with the sister's children, and these children's fathers would continue to live with their sisters. It sounds odd, but it was perfectly natural. This form of family ended due to various legal interventions brought about by the British in partnership with the Nair male elite.

Even today, in Meghalaya, the Khasis have a form of matrilineality where the youngest daughter inherits the property. She stays with her parents to look after them in their old age, and her husband joins her in that house.

The other aspect of the family, both legally and otherwise, is that it is hetero-normative, assuming heterosexuality to be the norm. A family can only be produced by a union of a man and a woman, and 'his' children. In matrilineality, it didn't matter who the children's father was because the property passed from the mother to her children. I remember this

amazing moment in the Hindi film *Mrityudand* — Shabana Azmi and Madhuri Dixit are married to brothers; Shabana's husband is impotent and everyone in the village knows this. She goes off and has an affair, and when she comes back to the house after a while she is visibly pregnant. Her sister-in-law Madhuri Dixit asks her in shock: “*Didi, yeh kiska bachcha hai?*” (Whose child is this?) This question would make *no* sense in my matrilineal Nair community, because it is clearly her child, the baby is inside her body. It would only make sense in a patriarchal context, because the question is: ‘Which *man*’s child is this?’ ‘Which identity does the child bear?’ ‘If it’s a boy, whose property can he make a claim to?’

Shabana answers simply, “*Mera*” (Mine). This reply created quite a buzz in the audience!

It is to protect this idea that a family is a man, his children and his wife that women’s sexuality must be strictly controlled. You have to control a woman’s sexuality because the fact is, no man can ever know whether a child is his. A woman will know and a man can never know, not even with a DNA test, which can only tell you if the child is *not* yours, but if your DNA matches it only indicates a high statistical probability that it is your child. It is this knowledge that creates a permanent anxiety for patriarchy, and because of the fear of this, women’s sexuality has to be controlled.

The American feminist Adrienne Rich has used the term ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ to refer to this range of controls that keeps heterosexuality firmly in place as the only normal and natural way to be. By using this term ‘compulsory’ with ‘heterosexuality’, she is de-naturalising heterosexuality, making you recognise that it is reproduced as natural through a range of controls, from hegemonic to legal. The point is not that homosexuality is natural and heterosexuality is unnatural, or the other way around. All forms of love and desire are either natural or non-natural. They are produced in various kinds of ways and we ought to be able to recognise the fluidity of this.

This heterosexual patriarchal family is the basis for securing the dominant social order in India. How do you maintain the purity of caste if people are going to go off and have relationships and marriages with people from all kinds of castes? You have to maintain the dominant caste order, the dominant religious community identity, and the property. You have to make sure not only that men can pass on property to ‘their’ sons, but that a few families control most available property. As long as this utterly unjust institution of property and inheritance remains, equality is just an empty word.

So the family as it stands is key to maintaining the dominant social order.

Feminists have critiqued Valentine’s Day because in this particular construction only a particular kind of love story is a real love story, and of course that is a man-woman one. ‘Romance’ is supposed to be so uncontrollable, but it ends up being so appropriate to patriarchy. However, once we

realised that the Hindu right-wing was seriously exercised about Valentine’s Day too, we did a reassessment: we also understood what the Hindu right perceives, correctly, to be the subversive potential of love. Because there is always at least the *possibility* that if you let love happen, you may fall in love with the wrong kind of person, of a different caste or community, or of the same sex. Then what happens to this institution of the family? How are you going to maintain a certain kind of politics based on community identities and caste identities if these identities are going to be dissolved? This is why the family has to be protected at all costs. When we are asked as feminists, do feminists want to destroy the family, earlier we used to say, ‘No’, but now I actually say, ‘Yes, we want to destroy the family as it exists today and it’s already happening. Look around you, look at the property disputes between father and sons, between brothers, the way in which marriages are breaking up’. There are ways in which people are already living their lives outside the frame, and as feminists we recognise that we need to support those groups. The family is being reconstructed, deconstructed and reconstituted all the time.

If the maintenance of this order ensures peace, then resisting the order leads to conflict. If you look at India today, you see different kinds of conflicts and different kinds of resistances. One is against the oppression of the family, which is everywhere. The khap panchayats of Haryana are killing their young people because young people are falling in love and eloping. So clearly, the resistance is coming from inside the community, not from outside it. Inside Haryana, there’s a huge resistance to these ways of controlling your life. That’s one kind of conflict. But there are two other kinds of conflict which you notice: the huge movement against land acquisition, in which the Indian state has been acquiring land, dispossessing communities from common property resources and transforming this common property into private property which is handed over to corporations. Once upon a time this was done for dams, so the state could pretend it was for the common good. But now it’s handed over straightaway to a corporate house. Take a roll call of names — Nandigram, Singur, place after place in Chhattisgarh, Goa, these are conflict zones and there is resistance to the projects of the Indian state everywhere.

Now look at another set of resistances — Kashmir, the Northeast. These conflict zones are resistance to the imperialist nationalism of the Indian nation, backed by its army. The Northeast and Kashmir are kept within this territory called India by the army, by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

Now, in such a scenario, where you find different kinds of resistance to the project of the nation-state on the one hand, and to the project of social order on the other, when you find that at every level in society there are certain kinds of conflicts, what is the assumption behind linking *women* and *peace*?

An endless number of conferences are being held on ‘women and peace’, ‘women and conflict resolution’. This

term 'conflict resolution' is another problematic term in this context. Because you cannot resolve a conflict unless you remove the inequality and injustice that underlies it. It is not a matter of getting you to sit and talk to each other; if one party is very powerful and the other completely powerless, you can't expect them to resolve their conflict. So, sometimes conflicts have to be there. They should *not* be resolved. That conflict has to lead to a new order. Now, in such a scenario when you say 'women and peace' and 'women and conflict resolution', the assumption is actually the unquestioned sexual division of labour. Women are mothers, women are nurturing.

But I don't think women have a very special role to play in conflict simply because they are women — they can be combatants, they can be violent, they can want peace, they can want to resolve conflict; just like men, they too can have a range of roles. Nevertheless, I do want to bring to your notice that there is a way in which, in certain kinds of contexts, women use their conventional identity to be peace activists in quite creative ways. So, anthropologist Malathi de Alwis looks at the political formation called The Mother's Front that emerged in Sri Lanka between 1990 and 1993. It had the membership of a huge grassroots movement and worked with 25,000 women, basically mothers who were protesting the disappearance of their sons and male relatives. For three years the Mother's Front actively and creatively used its identity as mothers, presenting themselves in traditional ways as mothers who care, with maternal suffering, but using these ideas to make a mark in the *public* arena, subverting the idea of motherhood as private and individual. They may have been foregrounding maternal suffering but they were not sitting at home and suffering, they were marching on the streets, facing the Sri Lankan army.

Women in Black in Latin America and many others have used and creatively played with this identity.

Eco-feminism also draws from the sexual division of labour and women's productive role to make a link between ecological conservation and feminism. They point to the predominance of what they call a 'masculinist ideology' that structures the world, through which both nature and women are to be controlled, dominated and their productive capacities harnessed for economic goals. Vandana Shiva, for example, shows how both women and nature are thought to be passive by masculinist ideology, productive only if their energies are harnessed in a certain way. A forest is thought of as unproductive until it is planted with, let's say, commercial woods like teak that you can cut and sell (the very term 'natural resource' suggests that a natural resource is for capitalism to yield profit). Shiva points out that its productivity is actually continuous and that we must understand it in other ways. It is preserving groundwater just by standing there. It's replacing oxygen in the atmosphere, it is providing habitat for animal species, it is providing food and fuel for local inhabitants. So what eco-feminism tries to do is claim from masculinist ideology a radicalised notion of the feminine. These kinds of creative things can also be done.

If, in conclusion, we're saying that justice and peace may not coincide, then nor do women and peace coincide in an obvious way. As feminists then, when we talk about women we have to see women as negotiating different forms of violence as well as participating in them. And whatever they do, they are exercising agency. They are exercising agency when they're being violent, and they are exercising agency when they are resisting violence.

Let me close with four different images of women in contemporary India from four different conflict situations.

One image is from the violence against Muslims in Gujarat, in 2002. On television, on one of the news channels, Hindu women were laughing and chatting together in the winter sun on the terrace. They were smiling shyly at the camera as they made missiles and fire bombs with everyday materials — saris, dupattas, kerosene from their kitchens. They were making these missiles to be used on Muslims, just as they would have made *papad* or pickles together. This is one image of women in a conflict situation.

Another image is of the Maoist cadre. Tribal women clad in olive green, wearing their guns and carrying them proudly. Says Arundhati Roy about Comrade Kamala: "She's 17, she wears a homemade pistol on her hip and boy, what a smile!" So that's another image.

The third image is of Manipuri women marching militantly, naked, to Fort Kangla in Imphal, where the Indian army was at that time quartered, and they carry this banner, 'Indian Army Rape Us'. This was a protest against the rape and murder of a young woman by soldiers of the Indian army.

And finally Irom Sharmila who has not eaten for over 10 years, in a hospital, with a plastic tube up her nose — she's under arrest and being force-fed; she's under arrest because she's violating the law against suicide in this country. She is on a hunger strike and she will not eat until the Armed Forces Special Powers Act is repealed.

You have these four women in four different conflicts. The point is that women are not just some biological bodies that reproduce and so are nurturing and harmless. Women are located differently in different contexts — caste, religious community, class, race — and women respond politically, imaginatively, creatively, violently, peacefully, to different kinds of situations. We have to understand these situations, we have to understand these contexts, and we have to think about justice as something that may need disorder to bring about.

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(This article is based on a lecture organised by CCDS-Open Space in Pune as part of the 'Keeping the Peace' series of lectures)

Secular rethink

Is it time to accept that secularism as we have known it has failed India in many ways? Should we begin to redefine ‘secularism’ with the aim of embracing, rather than obliterating, multiple identities based on religion, region, caste, language, etc? Members of Citizens for Peace, a Mumbai CSO, reflect on their 20-year journey from an unquestioning faith in secularism to a more nuanced questioning

SECULARISM as we have known it has failed India in many ways. The whole idea of secularism needs introspection and fresh thinking to make it more vibrant and relevant for this century.

In the past, many of us who were committed to secular ideals became impatient with any opposition to ‘secularism’, as we perceived it to be the very soul of India. This is certainly true for most of us who are active in Citizens for Peace (CfP). So we began by acknowledging that the diverse, sharp, opposing and sometimes bitter responses to the very term ‘secularism’ need to be understood more deeply and, wherever possible, with empathy.

For instance, for some, India is already a richly plural and secular country; in their view, this heritage must simply be reaffirmed and protected. Others argue that secularism has become a farce, a political ploy, which should now either be abandoned or redefined to ensure unity rather than diversity. The space between these extreme views is rife with powerful and conflicting emotions that, over the last two decades, have bitterly divided not only communities but even families and friends within a community.

Perhaps it is time to look beyond the immediate details of each conflict and reflect on what role all of us, as ordinary citizens, can play in fostering positive energies.

Background

Secularism can be seen as a construct, a kind of meeting space bringing together diverse faiths, castes and language groups. Some Indians interpret secularism as *sarva dharma sambhava* (equal respect for all religions) and see this as a vital element of civilisations that have flourished on our subcontinent. Others feel that secularism is a term imported from the European experience of separating church from state, and is thus out of place in Indian culture. Additionally, they argue that India is a predominantly Hindu nation which, over the last 1,000 years, was first colonised by Muslims and later by the Europeans. From this vantage point, the demolition of the Babri Masjid is seen as a necessary step towards the empowerment of Hindus — not only as an act of ‘historical justice’ but to counter

the alleged favouritism by state machinery towards both religious minorities as well as disadvantaged castes.

Why should any of this matter to the 50% of Indians who are currently under 25 years of age? Partly because these young people witness and experience a great deal of shadow-boxing between forces vaguely labelled ‘communal’ and ‘secular’. This, in turn, fosters confusion, frustration and fear at a time of proliferating violence, simmering formless hatred, and corrosive tension.

So where do we go from here — as a nation and also as individuals who have a sense of identity and affinity for a particular religion, caste, region?

We can start by accepting that the model and practice of secularism that has emerged since Independence has left many Indians dissatisfied and disturbed. We at CfP, therefore, decided to review the idea and practice of secularism in a fresh, non-reactive manner. Since 2005, we have been examining various dimensions of secularism over the past 60 years, and holding discussions with those who have knowledge and/or strong views on the subject. For instance, some Hindus feel that secularism has been used as a tool by certain political parties to garner Muslim and Christian votes. Among the most bitter issues in this context are: the special status of the Kashmir valley; the subsidy to Muslims towards Haj expenses; state management of many Hindu religious trusts while those of minority communities are left out of state purview; the continuance of different civil codes, above all the Muslim Women’s Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986 following the Shah Bano case which denied divorced Muslim women the right to maintenance beyond the three months of *iddat* by their husbands as provided in the Indian Civil Code; the existence of some mosques on the sites of destroyed temples.

At the same time, some Muslims feel they have been rendered second-class citizens. In most outbreaks of communal violence a bulk of the casualties are Muslims. And in most such cases, the victims (usually belonging to minority communities such as Muslims and, in some cases, Christians) have found the police to be either passive or colluding with the attackers. After such incidents, victims

have more often than not been denied justice in the courts. Muslims experience problems renting or buying homes in many metropolitan cities. They are also discriminated against when it comes to employment in certain private sector companies. The Sachar Committee report documents that a majority of Muslims are socially and economically disadvantaged.

In many parts of India, Hindu groups and Christian groups are caught up in violent conflict over the issue of conversion. Additionally, caste conflicts such as the dispute between Gujjars and Meenas have turned increasingly bitter. The reservation matter has also brought to the surface the sharp divide between what have traditionally been upper castes and scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

For 60 years we have relied on the government to address, mediate and resolve such conflicts. Now there is much greater awareness about the need for creative initiatives by social groups and institutions working both to strengthen grassroots processes as well as to ensure accountability from the powers-that-be.

Secularism, as it relates to the actions and policies of the state, is only one part of the challenge we face. What is really at stake is India's future, not merely as a nation but as a civilisation that thrives on the pluralism of multiple identities based on professed or rejected faiths (including atheists or non-believers), caste, and regional and linguistic affinity.

Here, pluralism does not mean erasing differences in identity

A creative secular culture has to contend with the challenge of respecting multiple faiths whilst also standing firmly in favour of values such as gender equality. The fate of India's adivasis — their unique sense of identity based on their traditional affinity with ecosystems and other lifeforms — may well be the most challenging test of whether we can build a plural secular culture

but rather retaining multiple identities on the basis of a fundamental ethical coherence arising from the core values of the right to life and the right to dignity as inalienable rights of every human being.

The terms 'communal' and 'secular' are often used loosely and can be misleading. There is an urgent need for open, self-critical reflection which sets aside stereotypes as well as facile assumptions both in relation to specific communities and ideological frameworks. Only then might we have a closer understanding of what really divides people. This endeavour depends on two imperatives: a social process to acknowledge and analyse the genuine angst that different communities feel, rather than dismissing it as imaginary or irrelevant; and a social and political culture of equal respect between communities.

This, in turn, has two vital requirements: (a) *dharm nirpekshta*: treatment by the state of all faiths on a non-preferential basis, fully ensuring equality of all before the law; (b) *sarva dharm sambhava*: mutual acceptance of people of other faiths at the level of the individual and civil society. This means that while we don't always have to be 'happy' with each other, or feel a sense of affinity with our neighbour, we are able to cohabit in social, economic and other public spaces in ways where conflict, differences, dissonance and other divisive factors are addressed in collective, peaceful and democratic ways.

Indian society and democracy is in the process of refining the term 'secularism' in ways that are uniquely our own and embracing, rather than obliterating, multiple identities — religious, regional, caste, language, etc.

So how do we move towards a finer, rejuvenated secularism in ways that both widen and deepen our democracy?

Strengths we can build upon

Dialogue is possible even in the face of sharp disagreements, provided we are willing to listen to the grievances or anxieties of the other side instead of dismissing them as invalid, irrelevant or false. Such a dialogue can be an ongoing process in which the mutual angst between 'communalists' and 'secularists' can at least be expressed in a non-combative manner. This does not mean that answers or a 'resolution' are waiting around the corner. But the willingness to talk, listen and understand releases positive energy. A dialogue is vastly different from a debate. A dialogue enables a much broader, multi-faceted conversation instead of two opposing views in a face-off. A dialogue means shared reflection and an open exchange of competing aspirations — on the basis of reason rather than raw passion and/or prejudice.

The aspiration for secularism is deeply embedded in our country. This is true in both its dimensions — the separation of religious identity from the exercise of state power, and

a cultural ethos of living with differences of every kind: religion, region and caste. The Constitution of India is a sure and steady base from which to engage with a diverse range of people who might otherwise be divided by hierarchy, hatred and/or prejudice. The Fundamental Principles of the Indian Constitution are a sound basis for an egalitarian democracy. The surest protection against the virus of identity-based dissension and violence is to improve the health of the democratic process and bolster the immune system of civil society.

‘Love Thy Neighbour’ is an ideal that has been practised by countless communities that did not like one another. Yes, this subcontinent has seen violent conflicts between many communities through the centuries (Buddhism versus Vedic Hinduism, Shaivite versus Vaishnavite, Shia versus Sunni, Hindu versus Muslim, various religions versus adivasis). But this is only part of the story. There is also evidence of a sustained social ethos in which people of different castes, religions and regions co-existed and interacted constructively.

However, it is not enough to celebrate these traditions of pluralism and diversity. In the 21st century, a viable secular polity and society needs a new negotiation of spaces within the contemporary framework of justice and dignity for all. This would mean rejecting both oppressive domination and/or manipulation by any group, be it a majority community or a minority. It also means a special emphasis on gender justice within each community.

Twenty years ago, many of us were active proponents of a uniform civil code that would ensure social justice, particularly for women, in all religious groups. Over the years, we have realised that this ought not to become a contest between the Hindu majority and various minority communities. Rather, the challenge lies in reforming all civil codes, of all religious groups, in order to make them consistent with progressive definitions of the rights of women and children.

Obstacles on the path ahead

The boundaries, or *lakshman rekhas*, of basic public norms have been violated too often both by those who occupy public office and non-state actors who deploy brute force in the form of vandalism and intimidation. There can be neither stable governance nor a secular public culture unless these boundaries are re-established and zealously maintained across lines of caste, religion and regional affiliation. This is not merely a challenge to ensure better accountability from elected and other public officials; it is equally, or more, vital that citizens from every walk of life apply the norms to themselves in all situations. The repeated failure of the state machinery to act with impartiality towards all communities is one of the biggest hurdles. In too many incidents, the rule of law has been selectively applied to different communities. In some parts of India, notably Kashmir and the Northeast, the armed forces have

repeatedly violated the basic rights of citizens and continue to do so despite appeals, protests and pressure from citizens and civil society. These failures of governance have been vociferously opposed by human rights activists. But mass violence has, disturbingly, found a fair amount of public approval in too many cases — in Delhi during the violence following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in the Kashmir valley at various points, in Mumbai during the 1992-93 riots and, more recently, in Gujarat in 2002.

Equal respect for all faiths also has its challenges. For instance, patriarchy is a faultline that runs through all faiths, creating conflicts between the orthodoxy of all religions with the more liberal values of modern governance and civil law. A creative secular culture has to contend with the challenge of respecting multiple faiths whilst also standing firmly in favour of values such as gender equality. The fate of India’s adivasis — their unique sense of identity based on their traditional affinity with ecosystems and other lifeforms — may well be the most challenging test of whether we can build a plural secular culture. Since the conflicts that afflict adivasi communities are usually posed as ‘development’ versus ‘anti-development’, their place in the national discourse on identity, democracy and justice tends to be obscured.

Taking the secular rethink process forward

This process of reflection and rethinking calls for engagement with a wide range of groups and individuals who hold diverse perspectives. What are some of the more creative and imaginative forms that this engagement could take? Ideally, we need a dynamic and active interface between the dispersed energies of civil society, the electoral process of state power, and the many organised competing pressure groups with their diverse agendas — be they votaries of Hindutva, Islam, Christianity, dalits, or of linguistic and/or regional separatism. This will, hopefully, create more space for the issues of discontent and self-esteem of various communities to be heard, understood and resolved within the democratic framework — both within electoral politics and in the non-electoral spaces of civil society.

We are now in a situation where what we would otherwise regard as default commonsense needs to be clearly articulated as a message. This exercise has to be carried out by every sector of society — business circles, political parties, religious communities, caste- or region-based organisations, and professionals. CFP is attempting to make a small contribution in this endeavour through its PeaceTalks initiative (www.peacetalkscfp.org). The binding energy, and inspiration, for these endeavours comes from knowing that differences can be faced and thereby addressed to foster respect for all.

(Citizens for Peace (Cfp) is a Mumbai-based volunteer group that was born as a response to the communal violence that rocked the city in 1992-93. This text has been drafted by Rajni Bakshi and the other trustees of CFP: Devieka Bhojwani, Dilip D’Souza, Dolly Thakore, Gulan Kripalani, Pervin Varma, Rina Kamath and Titoo Ahluwalia)

The space where either/or co-exist

It is literature and the arts — more than politics or religion — that hold the possibility of peace, because they allow open spaces for imagination, dialogue, dissent, and plurality. Even for questioning the Truth. This is why we must guard against the enclosure of these spaces

ASHOK VAJPEYI

OPEN SPACES ARE OPEN not only physically, but also metaphysically; they are spaces that allow imagination and invention, dialogue and dissent, and above all, plurality.

Constitutionally and theoretically, our Parliament is supposed to be an open space. But Parliament is in fact at the moment closed, enclosed by forces which are unparliamentary — forces of the market, forces of 'free' society.

The media is supposed to be the custodian of our liberties. In many ways it is open, but look at the phenomenon of paid news, their utter indifference to music, dance, theatre, visual arts. The media has almost systematically closed the space which spiritually and intellectually was supposed to be an open space.

Our economy is a 'free' economy. And yet it is completely bypassing the poor, the exploited, the suppressed. We claim to have a rate of growth of 8.5%, which is one of the highest rates of economic growth in the world. But it is an economy which is growing at the cost of millions of people.

All religions in the world today are regressive and violent: far from open. They are not only intolerant of other religions, they are intolerant of their own plurality.

So this is the story of the open spaces that exist in India. Actually, this is the story of the absence or the shrinking of open spaces. The arts and literature in this country have at least retained some of the aspects of open spaces. I wouldn't go to the extent of saying that they are the *only* open spaces, but they are at least some of the more open spaces in our situation. But they cannot remain open for long if politics, economy, spirituality do not allow or sustain openness. Their openness is contingent on openness elsewhere. And at the moment I have a feeling that they have an adversarial relationship with our own society which has turned so violent, so non-pluralistic, that it is increasingly being pushed to close spaces.

My contention is that today the real opposition, if you like, the real political opposition, exists in literature and the arts and not in politics. Because it is there that plurality has been embodied, sustained and followed with vigour and with dedication. The arts allow a plurality of visions, styles, approaches, idioms.

Indian plurality cannot be enclosed in a generality. Plurality is also a generalisation, I am aware, but plurality is at least a generalisation that allows for this openness which other generalisations don't. So in literature we have any number of Marxists and we have people who are not Marxists. And both exist, furiously fight, but survive merrily in the literary arena. Literature is that space where either/or co-exist.

There is a global conspiracy to make us forget. Forget about Partition, forget about Babri Masjid, forget about Gujarat! Let us go ahead. But one of the functions of literature and the arts is to remind you that you should *not* forget, to remind you that you are responsible, that you cannot get away just by saying "let's go ahead, you know we didn't do it". Yes of course we didn't do it: given an opportunity we would have done it. This is what the arts tell you — that ultimately, we are them, and they are us

Oscar Wilde famously said: “Artistic truth is one whose contradiction is also true.” You can’t claim this in religion — either you believe or you don’t believe. In politics, either you are with me or you are with my enemy. The arts make you ponder. Literature and the arts are not concerned with Truth. Actually, truth itself, according to me, is a dictatorial concept. It demands perfection. Literature and the arts are concerned with reality, which is much more chaotic, admitting of contradictions, and ultimately questioning the dictatorship of truth. And everyone who has destroyed the world, either through ideas or through armies, has claimed to know the truth. The moment someone says “I know the truth,” he becomes a danger to humanity because humanity has not given unto any one of us to know the truth — we are imperfect beings, dreaming of perfection and knowing full well that we shall never reach the threshold of perfection. That is the essence of being human. That is the human truth.

The arts have a way of opening all enclosures and bursting out sooner or later. Nazim Hikmet was jailed in Turkey because he was a communist. He started composing poetry in his head, and remembering it. Here was a man put into an absolutely closed and guarded space, but he finds a manner in which to free himself. The Jews in concentration camps — I have been to Auschwitz in Poland — had no writing instruments, but some of them wrote with their nails, some of them made pictures.

The arts break out into the open because the truths — I am using this term in a more general sense having earlier attacked the idea of truth altogether — that literature and the arts propose, or embody or enact, are half-truths. Which means you have to add a bit of your own truth to it to make it complete. And this is the radically democratic nature of the enjoyment of all arts and literature. You cannot respond to, read, witness or enjoy art unless you participate in it in some way. This nature of making you a participant in the creative act itself is the permanent guarantee, in a manner of speaking, that this space will remain open and vulnerable.

Now let us look at spaces which are open, but which are not vulnerable, and so they are to that extent a little less human, a little less for our purposes. We need spaces which are both open and vulnerable. And these spaces created by the arts and literature have some very strong lessons embedded in them — whether you learn them or not is besides the point — and one of them is that we have a human responsibility towards others, that we cannot exist without others. And these ‘others’ do not mean only other human beings — we are responsible to other beings, other forms of life, to nature, to the environment, and we are also responsible for what has gone before us and what will come in future.

Nowadays you are being made to live in an eternal present. As if, in a civilisation which is 5,000 years old, public memory has become so short that we do not even remember what happened 25 years ago. A cat doesn’t recall

that there were cats in the 17th century; a dog doesn’t recall that there must have been dogs in the 10th century. But we, homo sapiens, do recall, given an opportunity, that there were human beings 5,000 or 7,000 years ago. Part of the riches that we have are language and memory. And there is a global conspiracy to make us forget. Forget about Partition, forget about Babri Masjid, forget about Gujarat! Let us go ahead. But one of the functions of literature and the arts is to remind you that you should *not* forget, to remind you that you are responsible, that you cannot get away just by saying “let’s go ahead, you know we didn’t do it”. Yes of course we didn’t do it: given an opportunity we would have done it.

This is what the arts tell you — that ultimately, we are them, and they are us. This is the big lesson: that there is no difference. Well, yes, there are differences but why do we read novels that are completely out of our experience and yet are moved by them? Because ultimately, they are us and we are them. This is the ultimate opening of all spaces. And as long as we realise that we are them and they are us, these spaces shall remain open.

But look at what’s happening today. Look at what happened to M F Husain, to Salman Rushdie, and so many others. All the open spaces are being systematically enclosed.

Indian modernism was defined by two spokesmen: Vivekananda who said a Christian should not become a Hindu, a Hindu should not become a Christian, a Muslim should not become a Hindu, etc; they can remain what they are, yet reach whatever it is that they want to reach through religion. And Gandhiji who was asked a question: If all religions lead to the same god, why should there be so many religions? He answered that all religions are true but they are all imperfect and that’s why we need a plurality of religions. The Hanuman Gadhi in Ayodhya is opened every morning by a Muslim *chowkidar*. We have had a long tradition of living together. Equally, we have had a long tradition of fighting — but we did not close the space. We kept these spaces open in terms of conventions, rituals. But once the identity bug comes then one has to assert that I am more Hindu than others, I am more Muslim than others, I am more Christian than others, and whatever. That creates a problem.

Let me finish with this very interesting thought: everything that exists can also not exist. Thought, music, nations... Let us remember, that which exists may not exist. If today open spaces exist, tomorrow they may not unless we are alert, unless we see that these open spaces don’t close, are not allowed to be closed; that they remain vulnerable and therefore open, and therefore human.

Ashok Vajpeyi is a poet, translator and cultural commentator. This article is drawn from his talk on ‘Open Spaces’ in Pune as part of the CCDS-Open Space ‘Keeping the Peace’ lecture series

Between 'Yes' and 'No'

In letting go of the anchors of identity — Hindu or Muslim, feminism or patriarchy, secular or sacred, folk or classical, dalit or upper caste — do we walk into a more fluid space, a place without walls or doors that allows for the possibility of others entering? And is it poetry and song that best carries us to such a place?

SHABNAM
VIRMANI

Haan kahun to hai nahin, naa bhi kahyo nahin jaaye
Haan aur naa ke beech mein, mera sadguru raha samaaye
(If I say 'Yes' it isn't so, yet I cannot say it's 'No'
True wisdom resides somewhere between that 'Yes' and 'No')

IN 2002, after the Gujarat riots, I began to search for the meanings of Ram. Ram had become such a loaded, fractious entity in Indian society. I was intrigued by the fact that the saint-poet Kabir's poetry continuously refers to Ram, yet that was not necessarily the Ram of the Ramayana or the Ram militantly mobilised by the Hindu right-wing. Who is this Ram that the *nirgun* poet Kabir is talking about? The journeys that I embarked on in this quest resulted in the making of four films and took me from the heart of the conflict in Ayodhya through Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and across the border to Pakistan — where too we found both Ram and Kabir.

I want to share with you my personal sense of loss of identity in the course of these journeys. I had set out with my camera firmly on my shoulder, my identity as a feminist, filmmaker, secularist, a person who mistrusts religion and gurus, firmly in place. Somewhere along the way, I began to feel an inner meltdown, a kind of dissolution of watertight notions of 'self' and the 'other'. I did not lose these identities but I felt their tight grasp on me loosen, and I began to wear them in a more relaxed way, almost like loosely fitting garments. But at the same time, it was a deeply discomfiting journey. Suddenly I felt like I didn't know who I was anymore.

I cannot say who it is I am
I am amazed, I am amazed!
I cannot call this self 'myself'

Who is in my eyes seeing?
Who is in my heart enduring?
Who is inhaling and exhaling?

Why is there life coursing below my skin?
Why are my eyes bloodshot from crying?
Why this religion, why this faith?
I am amazed, I am amazed!

O Seyyid Nizamoglu, hear this:
Everything comes from the One
Abandon yourself to this mighty beauty
I am amazed, I am amazed!

Perhaps when we move out of a passionate righteousness that comes with being firmly anchored on one side of a duality — Hindu or Muslim, feminism or patriarchy, secular or sacred, atheist or believer, *des* or *pardes*, folk or classical, dalit or upper caste — when we take a walk to the other side of the duality, into uncertainty, into a more fluid space, perhaps when we create for ourselves a *be-dar-o-deewar-ka-ghar*, a home with no walls or doors, then we open up the possibility of allowing others to enter our space. That perhaps is a clue to compassion and the possibility of peace.

But how does one live in the world with this uncertain sense of self, with an identity that is and isn't? Let's not romanticise or oversimplify this idea. Obviously, it is not easy to negotiate the business of living in this world of social injustice and cultural difference while hanging on to a sense of "not knowing". I don't have any neat answers. I only have some suggestions.

I remember the first time I went to Malwa in Madhya Pradesh to shoot with the folk singer Prahlad Tipanya. I had already cast him in my mind as my "dalit hero". In my mind, he was to bring forth in my films the dalit pain and their identification with Kabir. But somehow, Prahladji kept disappointing me. He was not speaking the script that I wanted him to. I wasn't getting the video bytes I needed. This was because he would never passionately foreground his identity as a dalit. Initially I thought his political conscience was not sharp enough. Then I started travelling with him, and I began to realise that what he does is a very Kabirian negotiation of his dalit identity. On the one hand, he is never far from it. In his onstage concerts he sharply and relentlessly challenges caste and other social divisions through the poetry of Kabir. And yet he never identifies himself in an upfront manner as dalit. It is this dual movement between *haan* and *na*, between 'yes' and 'no', that opens up a third space, another possibility or way of knowing and being. Kabir shows us that the truth often lies in between fixed spaces. When we settle down we are far from the truth. When we are uncomfortable we are closer to it. That's why Kabir says: "*Sooli upar ghar hamara, oth paayo vishraam jee.*" ("My house is on the tip of a horn. That's where I find my ease.")

I had a similar experience with Prahladji's wife, Shantiji. When I viewed her through a staunchly feminist lens, I didn't like what I saw. The rural patriarchal culture delimits her spaces and experiences; it doesn't encourage her to sing or sit in *dhyaan*. Her role is to be supportive of her man's spiritual quest. When we believe passionately in one identity we tend to slip into dishonesties because we want to see things in a particular way. We need to see oppression in certain places, we become incapable of seeing anything else, of appreciating truths that lie in between. I guess I came to appreciate both her pain and his truth, and his pain and her truth. I was able to see her struggles and yet appreciate her sense of dignity, location and equanimity, and the long journey she has traversed within the four walls of her home to arrive at it.

For me, and I think for many people, this dissolution of the hard-edged unilateral sense of self and identity has been intimately linked with the experience of the mystic poem as song. I don't think this meltdown was caused by the working of the intellect. This is more linked with a reception of something through the full 'body', which as we know is the central vehicle of the song. This is when knowledge becomes an experience, rather than an argument.

I am intrigued by this capacity of poem as song to alter our sense of self. The capacity of mystic music to carry us to a place where our identity stands in question. This destabilisation of the inner Self can be particularly destabilising for outer structures of religion, society, nationalism, and gender which tend to be pinned on precisely such fixed and definite notions of identity. It is not surprising then that the mystic song becomes deeply threatening to orthodox structures of religion, because it holds the capacity to carry its listener to a place of *loss* of that religious identity itself! Rumi says...

*Listen to presences inside poems,
Let them take you where they will.*

So it's not enough that we have this legacy of great mystic poetry. I believe it is the *practise* of this poetry in society that far outstrips the importance of the poem itself. The poem is best and most potently lived through song. When a poem is sung, it's almost like the truth that lay sleeping in it wakes up. It starts speaking to the world, it becomes manifest, and the energy of that truth gets radiated into the universe.

All cultures have had (and perhaps in some places are in danger of losing) traditions of just such a ritual enactment and embodiment of these poems. The all-night village gathering, the *satsang*, is in its best sense, a non-gated open space where people of different faiths gather to ritually engage with their non-selves... their true selves! I believe this regular reminder to ourselves to gently disengage from our received or adopted identities, to stand outside of them, to even laugh at the self-conscious pomposity with which we carry them around with us at all moments, is a deeply

healthy practice.

These rituals work towards a containment of the violence, the divisiveness, the folly that we as human beings are capable of, as we go about the complex and difficult business of living together with difference. If it weren't for such ritual spaces, I believe the world would be erupting in even more fearful pogroms and violence than we see today.

*Aag lagi aakash mein
Jal jal pade angaar
Aise sant na hote jagat mein
To jal marta sansaar
(The sky erupted into flames
It was raining embers
If it weren't for saints, poets, mystics
This world would be scorched)*

It is my conviction that those who *truly* imbibe this spirit of mysticism as enacted in the open spaces of the village *satsang* tend to stay away from corrosive social mobilisations based on the politics of hate. Secular activists may dismiss the culture of *bhajans* and *kirtans*, seeing them as a retreat from the space of political action, as a space of cowardly inaction. I might argue that often such inaction may be the most potently charged form of action.

These *satsangs* are robust and thriving in many parts of India and Pakistan. But they are under threat in many places. In Pakistan, Sufi shrines are under attack and under siege by Islamic fundamentalists. So even though assertions of pluralism abound in our traditions, they need to be safeguarded, diversified and reinvented.

As cultural practitioners we try to promote cultural diversity as part of peace-building. We create these moments of community, in open and non-gated spaces, in the hope that such moments of collectivity will engender multiple individual journeys. For, let us not forget that as Kabir and so many other mystics remind us — while we may journey with some others who may show us the way and fall in step for a while, ultimately we walk alone.

*Laalan ki nahin boriyan
Hansan ke nahin paat
Singhan ke nahin lehde
Sadhu na chale jamaat
(Rubies aren't found in sacks
Swans don't fly in flocks
Lions don't roam in herds
A true seeker walks alone)*

Shabnam Virmani is a documentary filmmaker and Director of the Kabir Project. She has made a quartet of films exploring the legacy of the saint-poet Kabir across the subcontinent. This article is based on her talk for CCDS-Open Space's 'Keeping the Peace' lecture series

Teaching peace: Civil society peace education programmes in South Asia

Several peace education programmes across South Asia, from the Peace Museum in Karachi to the Sita School near Bangalore, are initiating processes that incorporate ideas of peace and non-violence. But they are fighting for space within the mainstream education system and tend to be confined to private schools

ANUPAMA
SRINIVASAN

WE KNOW THIS about peace education in South Asia: there are many peace education programmes, particularly in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; those who initiated them were motivated by many different factors that inevitably intersect between the personal and the political and include both their individual and collective histories; peace education programmes are as much about and for the trainers as they are for the trainees or students; there are several qualified, well-intentioned educators eager to expand the boundaries of learning in their classrooms; there are schools that genuinely want to offer their students education that incorporates ideas of peace and non-violence; in these schools, young people are encouraged to develop their individual capacities to acknowledge and address any violence in their lives (1).

We also know that there is no one single type of peace education programme in South Asia (2). Every peace education programme is defined by its specific context: geographical, political, social, psychological, economic, cultural, demographic and environmental, among others. Peace education also embraces a range of meanings, within the ambit of one overarching objective: usually, to achieve and sustain peace. More simply, we can contend

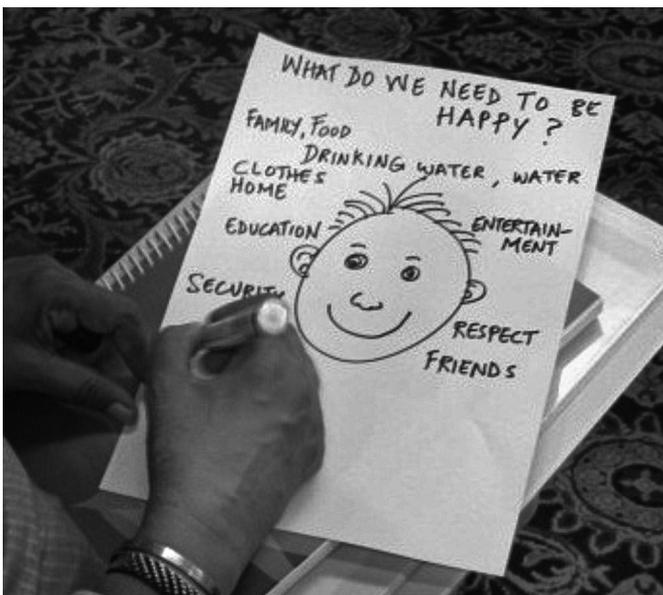
that the process of peace education is two-fold: teaching people (adults, men, women, children) about the potential dangers of violence (in its many manifestations) and helping them develop their capacities to counter violence, thereby enabling them to build (and sustain) peaceful communities.

While there is no obvious taxonomy of peace education, it is evident that programmes have widely differing objectives and processes. Curriculum development, specifically the production of peace manuals for teachers, is the focus of several programmes initiated by non-governmental organisations. Such programmes also seek to establish networks of schools that will use their materials on a regular basis, year after year. The Simorgh Women's Resource and Publication Centre's School Text Book Project in Pakistan (3) is one such example.

The Kaleidoscope primers produced by Simorgh are "an attempt to counter the culture of intolerance and violence that was being generated by officially produced school texts," (Hussain, no date). These primers address human rights issues linked to life, safety, education, food, and health and can be used through inventive participatory methods in the classroom. Children are also taught to use logic as a problem-solving tool. For teachers, there is an accompanying guide, to motivate them to use the material effectively.

Says Neelam Hussain, founder member of Simorgh, in a personal interview: "Some of the standard texts were so boring, so badly produced, also very biased, in terms of promoting nationalism and jingoism. As a feminist, a human rights person, the heavy focus on Muslim identity also bothered me. Even more troubling was the complete stranglehold the education system had over the minds of students, effectively closing any possibility for student-led debate."

Other peace education programmes have focused on establishing safe spaces for children, such as the Children's Museum for Peace and Human Rights (CMPHR) (4), based in Karachi in Pakistan. The CMPHR is an example of a long-term endeavour to create and sustain a stimulating space for children to interact in. Originally launched as the Human Rights Education Programme (HREP) in 1995, this project was a response to the growing violence in Karachi in the early-1990s. HREP was therefore born of the conviction that



Treaties are made by governments, peace is made by the people

Two young participants in peace-building programmes recount their experiences and insights

Peace is an extremely elusive concept. So many different levels, so many influential factors. International peace, intra-national peace, peace within communities and families, and, lastly, inner peace. I see it as an inverted pyramid. Logically, inner peace looks like it would be easiest to achieve. After all, by definition, you are in control of your own peace of mind.

Seeds of Peace (SoP) is an international non-profit conflict resolution programme. It started, as do many other projects and movements of value, with a man with a vision. John Wallach, an award-winning author and journalist, founded SoP in 1993 to provide an opportunity for children from the war-torn Middle East to meet and befriend their faceless 'enemy', and in doing so, to plant the seeds for future peace. At summer camp in Maine, sitting beside the lake and beneath the pines, teenagers (referred to as 'Seeds') from both sides of a border get to know one another as individuals, and as friends. Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians and Americans all sit together at a table to dine after a day of playing football and basketball, canoeing, singing, and engaging in serious dialogue with the help of experienced facilitators. Indians, Pakistanis and Afghans joined them in 2001, when SoP began to include South Asia as well.

I went to camp in 2007 and 2009. I had never harboured any real stereotypes about Pakistanis, but nevertheless my camp experience was eye-opening. I knew, of course, that we were one country originally; but it never really registered how similar we were. My very first experience with a Pakistani was during my first meal. I've forgotten why, but one of the counsellors at my table was trying to explain what a 'chickpea' was. He was going on and on about the colour and size and texture, when the boy sitting across me finally said: "Arrey, he's talking about *chole*." I stared at him. "You're Indian?!" "No, silly. I'm Pakistani."

After leaving camp, we all kept in touch over Facebook and Skype. In 2008, we went to Pakistan for home-stays (the most anticipated post-camp activity, where Seeds travel across the border and live for a week in the home of a friend from the "other side"). I stayed with my friend Maha. Her mother would make sure all meals were vegetarian, and that I liked what she was going to cook before she started. I met her friends and uncles and aunts. We visited a few schools, and made presentations. At the end of it, all these girls who I'd never met before were giving me goodbye hugs; one even invited me to her home.

Today, I would count a few of these Pakistanis amongst my closest friends. And although this seems irrelevant, it means that when someone around me makes a sweeping statement about how Pakistanis are this or that, I don't agree. It means that I can distinguish between the Pakistani government and the Pakistani people. And it makes me oppose any policy or movement that would harm the Pakistani common man, especially a full-blown war, because I care about these people.

A line oft-quoted at Seeds of Peace is that "treaties are made by the government, but peace is made by the people". Person-to-person interaction and eradication of stereotypes seem to be the first steps to international peace. It will take a while, but peace doesn't seem all that impossible now. — **Jahnvi Vaidya**

* * *

Recently, Seeds of Peace-India held a workshop in Vasind, about an hour-and-a-half from Mumbai. Amongst the various things we did, we were asked to come up with a quote of our own; just invent a quote. I thought of this: "The more we try to define peace, the more we realise that it can't be defined." Peace is difficult to explain, but it can be shared. In fact, that's what it's all about.

Founder of Seeds of Peace John Wallach said: "The enemy has a face." His vision was for the youth of the world to see the face of their constructed 'enemy' and to understand them for who they really are. Dialogue about international conflict is a daily process at camp. Indians, Pakistanis and Afghans come together at camp, along with Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians and Egyptians. Apart from these delegations, there are the Americans. The presence of the Americans at camp is often questioned, but I have come to realise that their presence is essential. It is easy for the Indians and Pakistanis to blame all their problems on America. So Americans must be there to present a defence. Without them, the dialogue would not be complete.

For me, dialogue was tough, taxing and yet one of the most enriching experiences of my life. It was not debate, it was much more. Other than that, at camp we played football in the rain, sang songs along the lake, danced, laughed, stayed up nights together and bonded. When we came back to India, we had regular follow-up sessions, meetings, workshops, events. We all sincerely tried to spread the peace we now felt to people around us.

This summer we had a workshop, Voices of the People, where the Pakistanis and Afghans came to Mumbai. They stayed in our homes, met our parents, came to our schools, and entered our daily lives. My parents and family friends met Zohra, my Afghan friend who stayed with me, and they had so much to ask her. They were curious, intrigued and loving. She was loving in return. It was a beautiful process of cultural and emotional exchange. It was an example of how peace can be shared. And yet, my journey has not ended. It has barely begun. — **Ira Chadha-Sridhar**



Participants at the Children's Museum for Peace and Human Rights, Karachi

education had to be socially relevant. To even talk about peace, children first had to understand the world they lived in, and acknowledge and deal with its many complexities.

CMPHR's museum concept was therefore envisaged as "a multi-dimensional educational space that will provide children with structured opportunities to explore, interact with, reflect upon and understand a wide spectrum of social issues in an enjoyable, interactive and inspiring environment," (CMPHR 2009). This working model anticipates that schools will continue to come to CMPHR, instead of the other way around. This is the process: any interested school is added onto CMPHR's mailing list; its students must then actively participate in any or all of the current campaigns. At present, most activities take place during class hours and are structured around specific campaigns. Each school receives five mailings in an academic year, containing posters, leaflets and booklets with lesson plans for teachers. Depending on the nature of the current campaign, schools can choose to use the material in the appropriate session; art classes might be best suited for one campaign, whereas language sessions might be more appropriate for another. At any given point, there are at least 300 schools working with CMPHR, and often as many as 500.

The Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation's (CDR)



Sita School, Silvepura

programme in Jammu & Kashmir (5) has its roots in specific phases of violence that the state experienced. CDR focused on two main areas — training schoolteachers across the state to address and cope with issues of violence, conflict, religion and identity in their classrooms; and developing an appropriate curriculum that these teachers could use. Neither process was a mutually exclusive one — the curriculum was a literal outcome of training workshops and classroom activities.

Over a five-year period from 2001, CDR worked extensively with schoolteachers in the state. Initial workshops revealed that teachers faced the same obstacles as other teachers around the world — lack of support from the authorities, inflexibility of the official syllabus and therefore their inability to find time for anything "extra". Sushobha Barve, CDR's executive secretary, is encouraged by the innovation and courage some teachers have shown. One teacher took her class, made up mainly of young Muslims, for a walk to an area where there had been a large population of Hindu Pandits. As they walked along the river, they passed by broken, destroyed houses, remnants of violence. She then casually began a conversation:

Teacher: What are these houses? Why are they like this?

Students: Some bad people used to live there. Now they're gone.

Teacher: How do you know they are bad people? What happened to them? Why don't they live here anymore?

Barve believes that the teacher in question showed exceptional courage in even bringing up the subject, knowing all along that her students would return home and inevitably discuss this with their families. "If we can trigger that kind of initiative in even a handful of teachers across the valley; if they can find ways to use their own methods to pass on things to their students, without always waiting for official sanction..." she says.

Young people in rural areas have had fewer opportunities to

participate in peace education programmes. Some exceptions include the Garden of Peace day school in Tamil Nadu, also based on the concept of a peace museum. This primary school teaches 100 students from neighbouring rural areas. Although compelled to adhere to the mainstream curriculum, Ramu Manivannan and his team of teachers find ways to maximise outward learning. For example, students learn from an early age to take care of plants, nurture small gardens, and will eventually be equipped, Manivannan hopes, to address issues of cattle and organic farming which are particularly relevant to the local area.

Similarly, the Sita School in Silvepura, outside Bangalore, works with children who drop out of the mainstream education system for a number of reasons. The majority of students at the Sita School are “from the socially and economically underprivileged sections of the dalit community; children of migrant workers, children of uprooted and unstable families,” (Learning Network, no date). These children would normally have limited access to education, for both social and economic reasons.

At both these schools, peace education is integrated into every facet of functioning, as opposed to being a stand-alone curriculum.

Each of the above examples illustrates the strikingly distinct approaches to peace that organisations have chosen to adopt. But all of them face several common challenges, most of all that of sustainability. On the one hand, there is the question of organisations facing a constant resource crunch and having to depend on external funding. This means that programmes are inevitably interrupted just as they are gathering momentum or, worse, forced to shut down at least temporarily. One possible way to circumvent this problem is to continue to focus on teacher training, thereby initiating a process of transferring ownership of peace education to the teaching community.

What is evident is that a peace education programme is not, and cannot be, an independent, stand-alone entity that a well-meaning organisation introduces to a community. In each case, peace educators have had to and will continue to fight for space within the mainstream education system that educates the vast majority of young people in the region.

Finally, there is also the question of affordability and access to peace education. There are projects that work with public sector schools, but these are rare. This means that a large number of NGOs are forced to or choose to implement peace education programmes in private schools that remain out of reach of the average South Asian family. Equally, private schools that have greater access to new resources and ideas and are sometimes more willing to innovate, like the Riverside School (6) or Bluebells International (7) (both in India), are more likely to incorporate ideas of peace and citizenship. We need to find ways to address this issue of access, so as to ensure that students from less privileged

backgrounds are not deprived of engaging with such ideas and activities. It would be unforgivably ironic if we allowed peace education to, however unwittingly, become discriminatory in nature.

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Endnotes

- 1 This article is adapted and excerpted from ‘A Survey of Civil Society Peace Education Programmes in South Asia’, a study published in 2009 and funded by a grant from The Sir Ratan Tata Trust. The study is available in full at: <http://prajnya.in/eprsl2.pdf>. The research process included several interviews with educationists and peace activists, in person, on the phone, and via email
- 2 This essay understands peace education as “a process whereby people learn about the dangers of violence, develop their capacities to counter violence and build sustainable peace in their communities”
- 3 Simorgh Women’s Resource and Publication Centre, www.simorghpk.org
- 4 Children’s Museum for Peace and Human Rights, www.cmphr.org
- 5 Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation, www.cdr-india.org
- 6 www.schoolriverside.com
- 7 bluebellsinternational.com

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Beginning with children

Preventing conflict is the work of politics, establishing peace is the work of education, said Maria Montessori. NCERT's National Curriculum Framework 2005 proposes the integration of peace education and the building of peace-seeking mindsets across the entire curriculum, not just in a weekly 'moral science' class. It emphasises the interdependence of living beings and the creation of an environment that builds sensitivity to others' cultures, perspectives and rights

PRIYADARSHINI
RAJAGOPALAN

"If we are to teach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." — Mahatma Gandhi

WHEN WE SAY 'peace education', what pops into our minds is some form of defence against violence (1). It is not so. One cannot create the identity of 'peace' based on the absence of violence but on characteristics and skills that promote it consciously. Educators, developmental psychologists and social visionaries alike have seen childhood as the best moment to intervene, with the objective of teaching children different ways of being, of relating to others, and of dealing with difference and conflict. If the idea of peace is to precede the idea of war, then it has to be nurtured from the very birth of independent thought.

What then is 'peace education'? It is the learning of skills and building of attitudes that support a peace-seeking mindset. It has often been said that the reason we are losing this battle to violence is because while some people are actively teaching violence, no one is actively teaching peace. This is one of the things that the National Council for Educational Research and Training's National Curriculum Framework, published in 2005 (hereafter, NCF 2005), proposed to change so that existing lessons and lesson plans would reflect the guidelines and integrate peace education across the curriculum.

The National Curriculum Framework is a document that sets basic guidelines for schools and was proposed by the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) as a means of evolving a national system of education. NCF 2005 recommends varying approaches to different subjects, curriculum, teaching methods and examination. With regard to peace education, the NCF recommends creating an environment that builds sensitivity to others' cultures, perspectives and rights, clearly stating that education must be oriented towards values associated with "peaceful and harmonious coexistence" (NCF 2005: 9). There is also a strong emphasis on reorienting education, so that it does not merely lay down the rules for ethical conduct but also nurtures the need to reason, understand and make informed choices.

Some of the underlying beliefs that come through in the NCF are that education should concern itself with highlighting the interdependence of humans. Students need to be exposed to the concept of living beings, including humans, consciously or unconsciously supporting one another by continuing to perform their inherent tasks. If this is true, then exposure to and acceptance of diversity in gender, religion, culture, language, ability, or economic status, becomes inevitable. Towards this, great emphasis is also laid on individual nourishment of personality, as a disturbed psycho-social environment often leads to stressful relationships as well. Therefore, the focus is on the child's experience with content and people being positive and encouraging.

Another premise is that non-violent conflict resolution skills can be taught, practised, nurtured and applied to solve individual, group or national issues. This, in turn, means that these skills can be taught to children so they begin using them from the time of petty playground squabbles till adulthood, thus making these an integral part of their interactions.

The view that the need for peace education in the current social/political scenario is compelling is seen throughout the document. It advocates a long-term process of building civic consciousness, acceptance, justice and values which should be a dimension of education.

Significantly, the NCF reflects the concept that peace education is by no means a stand-alone subject or instructional module but one whose principles cut across curricular and extra-curricular aspects of education. This signals a departure from the practice of including one or two classes a week dedicated to moral education where students are expected to spontaneously imbibe all the positive values expressed in a lesson or topic. Here the idea is of peace education permeating the systems, teaching-learning processes, content, behaviour, relationships, environment and policies across the school, thereby helping a child learn through a process of immersion where s/he not only talks about these practices but experiences them in every interaction at school. This then becomes a norm in the child's daily life instead of being a one-off intervention.

Based on these ideas, the NCF guidelines for integrating peace education in the curriculum focus on the teaching-learning process, and offer many strategies for implementing the same in classrooms as a part of regular instructional time, across subjects.

Some key ideas that are proposed deal with allowing children to make choices, thus building their thinking skills to evaluate situations based on information and sorting between things that are appropriate and those that are not, while keeping the perspective of the common good. There is also a stress on teachers being role models of unbiased thought and action so as to encourage students to construct their own understanding of ethical behaviour. Another area of teacher involvement deals with the relationship between the student and the teacher. Here, the recommended strategies speak of drawing children out in conversations, being non-threatening, not suppressing but allowing the unwanted, improper or unacceptable behaviours to be discussed, and refraining from mere preaching of morals by choosing to have meaningful discussions around them.

In this process, some of the tools that are likely to help include stories and anecdotes that allow for this dialogue to happen. Another strategy that is recommended is to show students the linkage between their immediate social context and the community, and then the global perspective. For this too the teacher needs to be oriented towards peace him/herself and have the knowledge and skill to make the relevant connections.

The NCF also speaks extensively of exposing children to the aspect of ‘work’ as a productive, collaborative, positive effort that benefits the community, as this brings about an appreciation of things other people or living beings do for us. This is not to be confused with vocational training but is valid work done to solve a real situation or fill an existing need. “Through work one learns to find one’s place in society. It is an educational activity with an inherent potential for inclusion.” (2) Since being inclusive of differences is critical to peace it is no wonder that this area has been given prominence for its multi-faceted benefits, like creating interdependence, encouraging focused, controlled, disciplined efforts with a clear goal, building a sense of self-worth, and seeking and acknowledging others’ support to ensure successful completion.

If these are the principles and guidelines we need to work with, the question is how can they be implemented? What needs to happen to put this in place? Based on the present scenario in schools, some fundamental practices need to be altered to allow for this integration. Some of the more obvious aspects that impact this are class size, teacher training, and true integration. If the recommendation is to allow students to interact, discuss, form opinions and share them then it is apparent that such a classroom cannot be crammed with 50-60 students. So, limiting class size to facilitate the level of communication and collaboration

required between students and teachers is a major factor in making this approach work.

Another important peg in the process is the teacher, who is expected to make this happen. While teachers do undergo training in delivering a lesson they now need to have the upgraded skills of facilitating learning through dialogue. They need to prepare themselves to either be free of biases or to be able to keep them away from their students to truly help them remain non-judgemental. Students need to make choices based on their knowledge, experience, and understanding.

Taking the integration of peace into every aspect of school education, one realises that it is actually much harder to achieve than just setting aside a class for moral/value education. It brings the added dimension of every person, system and practice in school being inclusive and unbiased. This then is a real challenge in implementation.

Other aspects that aren’t as evident are practices like examinations, admissions, disciplinary action, etc, wherein the manner in which these are conducted needs to change in order to reflect an environment that embraces peace. One cannot truly begin a conversation on non-violent conflict resolution in an environment that condones corporal punishment, for example.

While these are just some of the challenges, it is important to note that for peace education to be integrated into the school curriculum there needs to be a proportionate change in systems, content, personnel, and pedagogy.

In conclusion, the common thread of peace education found in this document runs through all areas from curriculum to teacher preparation to the learning environment. And the single, persistent thought that comes through is that these skills and attitudes need to be built at a young age if we are to see any visible change in the global environment of the future.

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Endnotes

1 The Education for Peace Initiative at the Prajnaya Trust did a study based on the National Curriculum Framework as part of a series of peace education research projects supported by a small grant from the Sir Ratan Tata Trust in 2008-2009. These studies are available at <http://www.prajnya.in/peacepapers.htm>

2 NCF, chapter 3, page 59

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NCF 2005: National Curriculum Framework, National Council of Education Research and Training, 2005

Cultivating compassion: Putting the heart back into higher education

Universities offer many courses on war, genocide, justice and injustice. But can we teach students how to become more compassionate and ethically driven? An experimental course at Stanford University seeks to help students understand the roots of violence within themselves as well as in the world around them. It is a course that attempts to put the 'heart' back into higher education which tends to focus only on intellectual learning

LINDA HESS

FOR THE LAST 15 YEARS I have been teaching undergraduate courses on Hinduism and other South Asian religions in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. One of the threads I have developed is concerned with violence and non-violence and includes courses on Gandhi and on religious conflict and co-existence in the region. I have taught 'Gandhi and Non-violence' and 'Hindus and Muslims in South Asia' on an ongoing basis since 1999. In 2008, Professor Clayborne Carson and I co-led a Stanford overseas seminar in India, 'Gandhi and His Legacy'. Professor Carson, one of the world's foremost scholars of Martin Luther King Jr, also co-taught a course with me on the Stanford campus called 'Gandhi, King, and Non-violence'.

I am designing a new, experimental course on violence and non-violence, which aims to test the possibilities of combining academic study with experiential learning. One premise of the course is that understanding the roots of violence in individuals is important to understanding large-scale violence in the world. Another premise is that students are hungering for educational experiences that allow them to grow in self-knowledge, even as they develop their knowledge of history and politics, their skills in reading and critical thinking.

Meeting three times a week, the course will run as a normal academic class for two days. The third meeting will be a two-hour experiential workshop, led by a number of expert facilitators. Workshop approaches will include: Understanding the body-mind connections in violence and non-violence; Non-violent communication (<http://cnvc.org>; <http://www.baynvc.org/>); Facing history and ourselves (www.facinghistory.org); How we learn to behave with cruelty and indifference or with compassion and courage, in situations of violence, danger, suffering (by Philip Zimbardo and associates — <http://lucifereffect.com/>; http://www.heroicimagination.org); Theatre exercises; Mindfulness and Metta: Meditation as a way to prevent violence and to heal the traumatic effects of violence; Compassion cultivation training as developed by CCARE.

The new project was born from a conversation that took place in my course 'Hindus and Muslims in South Asia', in spring 2010. Some students were stunned by what they learned about the 1947 partition of India-Pakistan. First, we read conventional history about the events and politics of Partition, which did not produce a strong reaction. But



Jeff Miller

Wearing a 128-channel geodesic sensor net, Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard sits in a soundproof room and prepares for an electroencephalography (EEG) test at the Waisman Centre at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Ricard is a long-time participant in an ongoing research study that monitors a subject's brain waves during various forms of meditation including compassion meditation

students were deeply affected by a book of oral histories and a powerful narrative film, which gave some answers to the question that always arises: How can people *do* such things? These sources revealed the emotional and physical upheavals that people went through, the loss of control, the fear and rage, the inexorable disintegration of social bonds, the swiftly accelerating cascade of reactions to violence, the functioning of belief systems and authority structures, and so on. As students came to realise that extreme and massive acts of violence are often committed by ordinary people, not just criminals, lunatics, sociopaths, or evil politicians, they raised these points in quick succession: (1) Could we do such things under similar circumstances? (2) How could we prepare ourselves *not* to behave that way? (3) Academic study is irrelevant and useless to this undertaking.

I took this moment as a challenge and inspiration to test whether the academic setting is "useless" when it comes to touching students in a transformative way. Can we engage with the histories and present conditions of violence/non-violence both in the world and in ourselves? Can we see connections between the social-political and the personal roots of violence/non-violence, and can this vision inform and inspire our attempts to confront injustice and violence in social, political, economic, environmental, and other contexts?

I did not want to believe that our university education is useless and irrelevant to such goals. But it was striking to see how sure the students felt at that moment that what they did in their Stanford classes would not help them in circumstances like those of the Partition and comparable situations of hatred and atrocity.

From a certain point of view, structures and values at Stanford would seem to support this endeavour. We have a Centre for Ethics in Society, a degree-granting Programme on Ethics in Society, the Haas Centre for Public Service, to name just a few entities. We laud social service and praise people in our community who do it. Renowned researchers like Philip Zimbardo shed light on the psychological roots of evil and cruel social behaviour as well as on kindness, courage, and compassion. We have many courses and centres that deal with war, genocide, justice and injustice.

But do we teach students how to become more compassionate and ethically driven? Is this something we can properly do within the domain of academic study? Do we need to leave such learning to the informal sector, where students independently search for inspiring models, engage in service projects, apprentice through internships, or look to other programmes that allow for exploration of personal meaning? Is there a place for such learning in the classroom? If we move in this direction, are we treading a dangerous line between intellectual and moral or psycho-spiritual education?

The answer to the last question is — yes. It feels dangerous. We keep things compartmentalised. Feelings are important but they are a distraction to analytical thinking. We have a high respect for arts practice but keep it separate from academic study of the arts. Some at Stanford will be inclined to avoid or discourage what may appear to be a confusion in mission. But it is also this hard separation between what we call ‘intellectual’ and the other parts of our being, including the emotional, imaginative, and moral, that gives rise to the kind of sudden despair about the meaning of education that erupted in my classroom last spring.

Potential advisors, allies, and collaborators for this course at Stanford include the Centre for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE), which hosted a recent conference on ‘Scientific Explorations of Compassion and Altruism’, featuring Stanford researchers in conversation with the Dalai Lama (<http://ccare.stanford.edu/>). CCARE’s current projects include research on the neuroscience of compassion, the psychology of cruelty and kindness, and the implementation of educational programmes.

The Centre for Ethics in Society, under the direction of Professor Debra Satz, is currently sponsoring a two-year series on ‘Ethics and War’. We will coordinate class activities with this programme.

Professor Rob Reich, director of the Programme on Ethics in Society, said in response to a description of this project: “Academic study is not useless, but only if academic study is

connected to a kind of character education or soulcraft that is all-too-often absent from modern classrooms. Academic study is most frequently seen as skill transfer, and I’m with the students when they say that academic study (conceived as skill transfer) won’t help prevent the sort of transformation they witnessed in the film. But of course academic study need not be skill transfer. It can be something grander — something that provides students with resources for guiding their lives, shaping their identities, instilling a moral or spiritual compass. Religious education more often aims at this, but secular education can too.”

At Stanford, at this time, many developments seem to encourage this kind of exploration. The proposed experimental course has one distinct feature that I hope will add something to the rich mix of people and programmes seeking to understand compassion, altruism, ethical/unethical behaviour, violence/non-violence, and so on. That feature is an attempt to bring together academic study and transformative experiential learning in the undergraduate classroom, with a course design that acknowledges connections between inner and outer worlds.

At the CCARE conference with the Dalai Lama, Professors Philip Zimbardo and Linda Darling-Hammond spoke of education programmes for schoolchildren that cultivate empathy, compassion, courage, and other qualities/skills conducive to a more non-violent world. Can we imagine and implement such education in the university?

Neuroscientist and Medical School Professor James Doty, the director of CCARE, opened the conference with a story about Buddhist monks in the 1990s who volunteered for empirical studies of the neuroscience of meditation. They laughed when they saw the EEG caps that would plug into their brains to measure signals of compassion associated with meditation. Their laughter arose not because the caps looked funny (though they did), but because they knew that the seat of compassion is not the head but the heart.

The culture of higher education, for reasons many will understand, reinforces a split between intellectual-analytical-critical functions, on the one hand, and emotional-imaginative-spiritual functions on the other — what the monks meant by head and heart. This split is itself a kind of violence from which students and others in the university suffer. The experimental class format I propose does not devalue the intellectual or propose to replace it with ‘heart’ functions, but seeks to provide a venue where these functions may be integrated, consciously experienced in each other’s presence. Such a format would reinforce the belief that a person can be whole, and that even ‘higher’ education can address the whole person.

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Beyond social and economic justice

'Social + economic justice = Peace' is now an established universal principle. But it banishes the quest for a deeper, more fundamental peace to the personal realm. It's true that there may not be peace without justice, says this writer, but justice by itself will not ensure peace. Better laws and better social and economic structures can only work if there is a ceaseless personal renewal of the underlying values in everyday life

RAJNI BAKSHI

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice." — Martin Luther King (1)

"Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih"

— *The Waste Land* by T S Eliot (2)

IT WAS ON DECEMBER 1, 1955, that Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested for refusing to surrender her seat to a white person on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks' courageous act triggered a sustained campaign to oppose racial segregation on public buses (3). As the movement gathered momentum, Martin Luther King Jr and other Afro-American activists were accused of "disturbing the peace". It was in response to this allegation that King pointed out that peace could not be equated with absence of tension — or visible violence.

Half a century later, King's sentiment is the basis of passionate resistance to diverse forms of injustice in societies across the world. This quotation is also etched on a stone pillar at the India International Centre in New Delhi.

The equation 'social + economic justice = peace' is now established as a universal principle, however much it might be violated across the world. Creative energy and organisational strength is now focused on the 'how to' challenges. Over the last two decades, more and more movements have found answers in a rights-based approach on the assumption that as injustices are eliminated there will be more peace. This has energised campaigns that aim to raise mass awareness in favour of various rights. But the primary accountability for delivering the rights has been reposed in the state. New laws with better implementation are seen as a key instrument for activating the equation.

But will a certain volume and intensity of social, political and economic mobilisation deliver us to the Promised Land in which justice equals peace? Isn't the striving for peace deeper and wider than the need to create more just structures? Indeed, what are the deeper and perennial challenges in our species' quest for peace?

Suppose we explore these durable questions by looking

more closely at the prayer '*Shantih, Shantih, Shantih,*' which marked the close of several Upanishads. Peace was invoked three times because suffering and pain are experienced at three levels — *Adhi-Bhautika*, *Adhi-Daivika* and *Adhyaatmika*. *Adhi-Bhautika* is the physical realm of bodily suffering — from lack of material needs to violence or illness. *Adhi-Daivika* is the spiritual or extrasensory realm of unfulfilled longings for ineffable peace or union with the divine. *Adhyaatmika* is the mental or psychic realm in which suffering can arise from afflictive thoughts or other mental phantoms. *Shantih* is invoked three times to seek peace at all these levels.

What, you might say, does this have to do with the contemporary *secular* striving for peace in the world — so that no child goes hungry, no one is ill-treated because of caste-colour-class, no one is driven to becoming a suicide bomber?

It is precisely the urgency of longing for these goals that creates a compelling need to re-examine the nature and causes of human suffering. Contemporary political discourse is sharply focused on what can be delivered through democratic governance. It tends to banish the quest for a deeper, more fundamental peace to the personal realm. This remains true even as more and more people are signing up for a wide variety of meditation courses or connecting with diverse spiritual traditions.

Of course, there is a certain comfort in keeping the struggle for peace close to historical, material factors that we can track and act upon. But to limit our endeavour to these dimensions, and ignore the fundamentals, could mean that we are stuck on a treadmill.

Fixing our gaze on a wider horizon, let us briefly look at two very different expressions of frustration and rage with our collective failures.

T S Eliot's maddeningly obscure poem *The Waste Land* appeared in 1922. Eliot, who completed the poem whilst recovering from a nervous breakdown, himself described it as "just a piece of rhythmical grumbling". In 1999, *Time* magazine's profile of Eliot as one of the hundred most significant figures of the 20th century, described *The Waste*

Contemporary political discourse is sharply focused on what can be delivered through democratic governance. Of course, there is a certain comfort in keeping the struggle for peace close to historical, material factors that we can track and act upon. But to limit our endeavour to these dimensions, and ignore the fundamentals, could mean that we are stuck on a treadmill

Land as a “deeply unoptimistic, un-Christian and therefore un-American poem” (4).

Drawing on mythic images from various traditions, and placing them beside a desolate depiction of modern times, the poem closes with these lines:

“*Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. Shantih shantih shantih*”

Harvard academic Helen Vendler, along with other literary scholars, interprets these lines as Eliot turning for salvation to the Buddha and his three ethical commandments: Give. Sympathise. Control.

In the Vedic tradition, *Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata* were the injunctions given by Prajapati, the creator, to three types of beings — *devas* (gods), *manushyas* (humans) and *asuras* (demons). *Datta* means to be charitable. *Damyata* means to be self-controlled. *Dayadhvam* means to be compassionate (5).

These injunctions are based on the recognition that desire, greed, anger and the tendency to be oppressive and misuse power are part of the human condition. But our species need not be locked into the miseries that result from these tendencies. We can choose to sublimate these urges through self-restraint, charity and mercy. Only then can we experience peace, *Shantih*, in all three dimensions of existence. In his extensive footnotes to the poem, Eliot explained the three-time invocation of *Shantih* as the biblical equivalent of “the peace which passeth understanding”.

M K Gandhi’s angst was expressed differently: “We are living in the midst of death trying to grope our way to Truth. Perhaps it is as well that we are beset with danger at every point in our life, for, in spite of our knowledge of the danger and of our precarious existence, our indifference to the source of all life is excelled only by our amazing arrogance.” (6)

That was a relatively mild version of Gandhi’s sense of frustration about an increasingly materialistic definition of what it means to be civilised. He sublimated this anxiety by trying to refine his own practise of *Datta* — as non-attachment to material possessions; *Dayadhvam* — as compassionate engagement, even with opponents; and *Damyata* — as self-restraint that enables the practise of non-violence.

Thus, the Truth which Gandhi refers to above is not a lofty state reserved for those at some rarefied level of spiritual evolution but love and compassion that can be practised by everyone — at least to some degree. This is an essential part of the reaffirmation that James Lawson carried back with him from India in the mid-1950s.

Lawson was an African-American who grew up in Ohio, USA. As a student, he became an activist of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) which advocated non-violent resistance to racism. In 1951, Lawson declared himself a conscientious objector and refused to report for the draft. After spending 14 months in prison he came to India where he worked as a Methodist missionary in Nagpur. There, he met with many of Gandhi’s followers and studied Gandhian non-violent resistance. Lawson returned to the USA in 1955 and met Martin Luther King shortly after the Montgomery bus struggle. He went on to become a mentor and trainer for most of the leaders of the civil disobedience movement that changed the nature of race relations in the USA.

Half a century later, Lawson is still urging people to begin with themselves: “We must take responsibility for our personal, inner work and dismantle in our minds any idea that any other being is inferior. We can work to unlock a vision for a world of love and compassion.” (7)

The imagery of ‘unlocking a vision’ implies a great deal of hard work away from the barricades of protests, campaigns for legislation, dogged persistence in demanding implementation, and efforts to find non-war solutions to conflicts between nations.

It’s true that there may not be peace without justice. But justice will not itself ensure peace — either in the public or personal spheres.

Social, political and economic mobilisation — though essential and necessary — will not in itself deliver us to the Promised Land. Even if it delivers some semblance of justice = peace, these actions may leave us wanting if they are not anchored in the quest for ‘the peace that passeth understanding’.

Being a 'believer', or in any known way religious, is not a prerequisite. Generosity, compassion and self-restraint can just as well be secular values. But the obstacle is not between the religious and secular domains. The most persistent enemy of peace might be the assumption that we can depend on laws and governance to do the bulk of the work. This assumption arises from a powerful undercurrent in our times — namely the conviction that human beings are essentially inclined to be greedy, brutal and unrestrained. It follows then that laws — with their rewards and punishment — are the only way to fight injustice and maintain a semblance of order.

The other drag on our longing for peace is the idea that adequately refined structures, with attendant rights, will deliver us to the Promised Land. Better social and economic structures would certainly alleviate avoidable suffering for millions of people, which would be a monumental achievement. But even these structures would only work if there were a ceaseless renewal of the underlying values in everyday life.

Yes, 'the peace that passeth understanding' may remain elusive for most. But approximations of it depend on a perennial striving at all three levels of *Shantih*, *Shantih*, *Shantih*.

Rajni Bakshi is a freelance journalist and author of Bazaars, Conversations and Freedom: For a Market Culture Beyond Greed and Fear and Bapu Kut: Journeys in Rediscovery of Gandhi

Endnotes

1 As quoted in *Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King Jr*, 1982, by Stephen B Oates. http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr, viewed on July 28, 2011

2 *The Waste Land and Other Poems* by T S Eliot. Faber & Faber, London, 1972

3 The Montgomery bus boycott was a political and social protest campaign that started in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, USA, intended to oppose the city's policy of racial segregation on its public transit system. Many important figures in the civil rights movement were involved in the boycott, including Reverend Martin Luther King Jr, Ralph Abernathy, and others. The boycott caused crippling financial deficit for the Montgomery public transit system, because the city's black population, who were the principal boycotters, were also the bulk of the system's paying customers. The campaign lasted from December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested for refusing to surrender her seat to a white person, to December 20, 1956, when a federal ruling, *Browder v Gayle*, took effect and led to a United States Supreme Court decision that declared the Alabama and Montgomery laws requiring segregated buses to be unconstitutional. Source: Wikipedia

4 *T S Eliot*, by Helen Vendler. <http://www.time.com/time/time100/artists/profile/eliot.html>

5 Source: The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad by Swami Krishnananda. http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/brdup/brhad_V-02.html

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Means over ends

Why violence in service of justice must never be defended

SUDHIR KAKAR

VIOLENCE, we must admit, is as Indian as *aam ka achar*, as American as apple pie, as Japanese as sushi rolls. Odd as it may sound, the two biggest causes of violence all over the world, identified by psychologists such as Roy Baumeister, are the two we admire as positive qualities and encourage in our children: high self-esteem and moral idealism. On the collective level, we give high self-esteem, the narcissism of a community, the high sounding name of *izzat*, honour, and justify any number of acts of cruelty and murderous violence in its name. But there is an even greater source of violence that bedevils our individual and collective lives: moral idealism.

Once you believe that your violence is a means to a moral end, the floodgates to brutality are opened. As long as the perpetrator of violence maintains his moral commitment — to his faith, to his religious community, to the oppressed, or whatever else is the 'cause' — he rarely displays guilt or shame for his murderous actions, something which is not true of the same actions as a member of other kinds of groups.

We know that most major atrocities of the last century, and I have no doubt the trend will continue in the present one, were carried out by men believing they were creating utopias, or defending their faith or idealised community from attack. Idealism is dangerous because it is inevitably accompanied by the belief that the end justifies the means. If you are fighting for God, for the oppressed, or your religious community, then what matters is the outcome, not the path. Once you feel you have a moral mandate, you care much less for rules and legalities; the quest for 'justice' tends to be contemptuous of the notion of fairness.

Unfortunately, there have been eloquent voices that have defended violence in service of justice. In her *Reflections on Violence*, the philosopher Hannah Arendt writes: "...Under certain circumstances violence, which is to act without argument or speech and without reckoning with consequences, is the only possibility of setting the scales of justice right again... In this sense, rage and the violence that sometimes, not always, goes with it, belong to the 'natural' emotions, and to cure man of them would mean nothing less than to dehumanise or emasculate him."

What we need is a blanket rejection of violence no matter what the cause. Justice is extremely important, but we need to teach our children that the value of compassion is above that of justice. When Gandhiji, in contrast to revolutionaries of the left and right, insisted on the priority of means over ends, he was intuitively aware of the malignant violence inherent in the other position

The problem with this position is that such 'hot' violence inevitably turns into a 'cold' carnage characterised by planning and calculation. Moreover, violence that begins with a clear purpose acquires a life of its own, fulfilling obscure wishes more than its consciously stated goals. It begins to exercise a dangerous fascination, a "terrible beauty", from which, also, we cannot avert their eyes. We get a glimpse of this fascination in many kinds of collective violence, especially of the revolutionary kind. This violence has been described by Franz Fanon, in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, as one that "binds men together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in a great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards". He might well have been speaking of the orgasm of violence.

No, what we need is a blanket rejection of violence no matter what the cause. Justice is extremely important, but we need to teach our children that the value of compassion is above that of justice. When Gandhiji, in contrast to revolutionaries of the left and right, insisted on the priority of means over ends, he was intuitively aware of the malignant violence inherent in the other position.

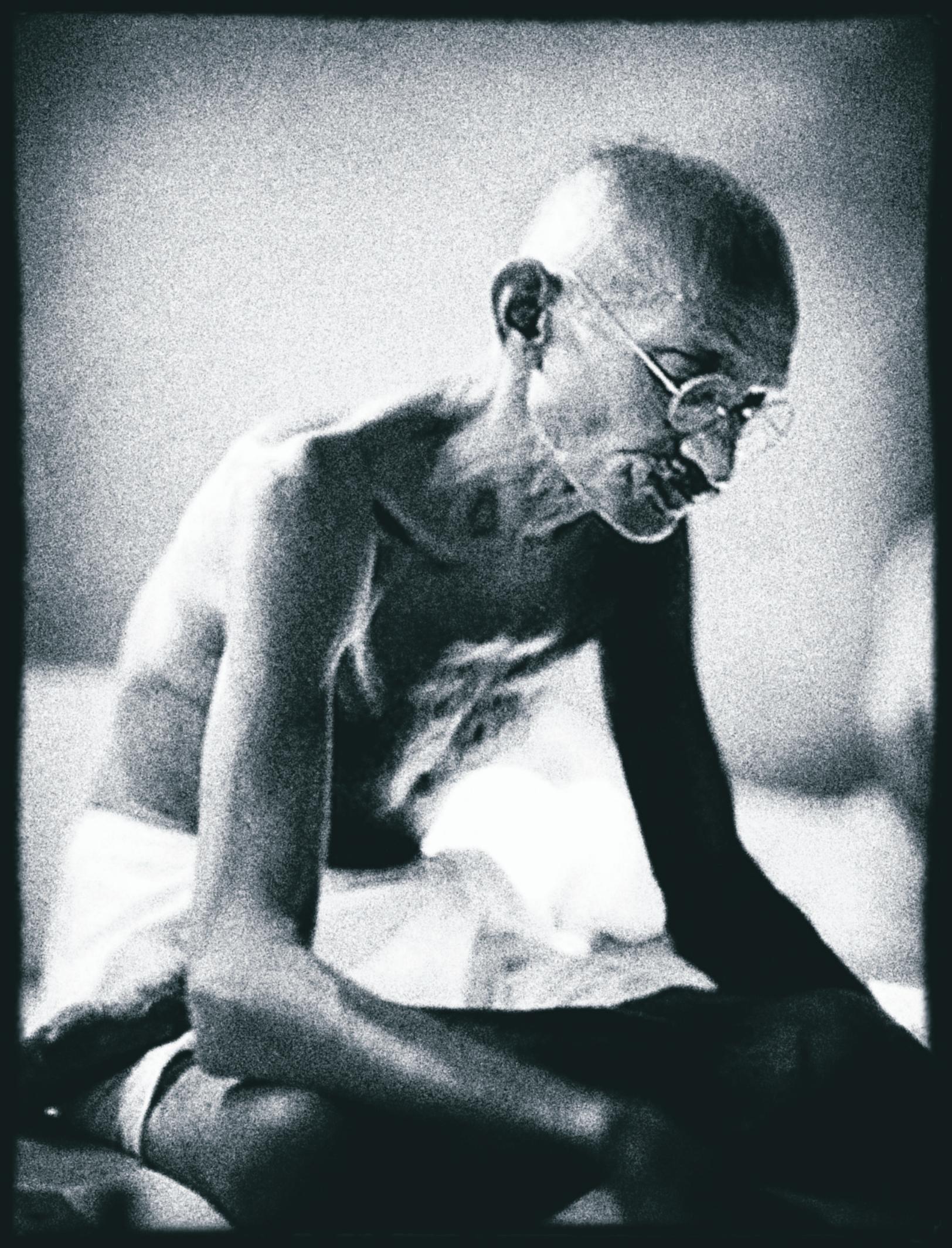
What can we do? In the short term, there is no alternative to a firm resolve of the state that violence, no matter what the stated cause, will not be permitted. We know, for instance,

that in ethnic/communal riots there is a window of about 24 hours in which the tension between the opposing groups is very high, but violent acts have not yet taken place. Firm police action in this crucial time period can prevent the outbreak of violence which will otherwise spiral out of control.

How to isolate responsible police officers from political interference within this 24-hour period (switching off all mobile contact?) is an issue needing urgent attention.

In the longer term, we need to focus our educational efforts on emphasising the value of compassion, of which fairness and tolerance are important constituents, as much as of justice, of re-dedicating ourselves to the priority of means over ends. This is not an idealistic choice but is based on our evolutionary reality as human beings. We need to awaken our natural human compassion to counteract our perhaps equally natural propensity for violence, and not just cede the battleground to the latter. Indeed, compassion is as natural as violence. We now know from experiments using brain imaging that watching the suffering of someone who appears to be a victim of violence, activates a similar 'pain network' in our brains, the so-called 'mirror neurons'. Showing the suffering of victims, of terror attacks or other forms of collective violence, as part of our educational curriculum in schools and colleges, as also in other group settings, is an obvious next step in the long-term combating of violence. We need to use all our available knowledge on social violence to begin freeing ourselves from this ancient curse of humankind.

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