

# Literary

The Sunday Statesman

SUNDAY 31 MARCH 2002

SI-22  
2013  
Book review

THIS is a collection of essays on various aspects of the Dalit condition in India and its expression in politics and culture. The term Dalit, as editor Ghanshyam Shah tells us, although used by Ambedkar, became regular political currency during the anti-caste riots in Bombay in the early 1970s and was subsequently adopted by the Dalit Panthers and some radical Dalit writers such as Namdev Dhasal, JV Pawar, etc. Eleanor Zelliott in her article on Ambedkar points out the significance of this change: "Gandhi's 'Harijan' is an object of pity. Ambedkar's 'Dalit' is a man or woman filled with pride and self-respect." It is a way of signalling that the relationship with caste Hindus has changed, that they are now faced with a challenge of a revolutionary potential.

The most concrete expression of the Dalit condition is, of course, inequality, particularly economic inequality. In discussing the various approaches, neo-classical, Marxist and Ambedkarite, to the economic dimension of the caste system, Thorat and Deshpande quote extensively from Ambedkar to show that market or class oriented theories are inadequate when it comes to describing the inequalities of the caste system which distorts the normal balance of social forces through its rigidly maintained hierarchies. "The Hindus, says Ambedkar, are the only people in the world whose economic order is consecrated by religion and made sacred, eternal and inviolate." Further, whereas other religions are caught in the tension between society and the individual which in social terms manifests itself as a concern for utility or a demand for justice, in Hinduism, "the centre of the (Hindu) ideal is a demand for justice, in Hinduism, 'the centre of the (Hindu) ideal is neither individual nor society. It is a class; it is a class of supermen called Brahmins... to the question what is right and what is good, concludes Ambedkar, the answer is that... the act must serve a class of supermen, namely the Brahmins." In all indices related to landowning, employment and income, the SCs are at the bottom of the table and till the mid-1990s half the SC population lived below the poverty line.

N Sudhakar Rao tries to show that the American sociologist Michael Moffat is wrong when he says that Dalits tend to replicate caste hierarchies based on notions of purity/impurity in their own milieu. He relies, in this, on the behaviour of the Malas and Madigas of Andhra Pradesh whose caste status and occupations and the symbiotic relationships they have with those beneath them, tend to fluctuate and that proximity to the upper castes is crucial in determining their status. One would have thought that this proves, and not disproves, Moffat's thesis. He says that in certain places Brahmins are subordinate to the Gujars, economically and politically. The Gujars are a backward caste, not Dalit, one could say the same thing about the Yadavs of UP. It is possible to reverse political and economic equations within caste society, but the Dalits are situated beyond a barrier that is absolute



## REVIEW

# The Dalit condition

and this barrier is, indeed, defined by the notion of ritual impurity. Gopal Guru tells us how radical Dalit opinion feels that the state-constituted categories of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are basically an attempt to domesticate these groups and put a lid on wider caste confrontations. On the other hand, the term Dalit hasn't really abolished traditional caste identities, which continue to be used outside the domain of politics and academics. In other words, there has been no radicalisation of the Dalit masses, which continue to rely on a number of other, less radical strategies, such as conversion, in their search for dignity.

For Kancha Ilaiah, the confrontation between Dalits and Brahmins is a confrontation between ideologies, the Dalits, because of their

daily involvement in productive activities, being materialists and the Brahmins idealists. He shows this opposition working in all anti-Brahminical discourses, beginning with the Lokayats, down to certain Bhakti saints, Jyotiba Phule, the anti-Aryan Dravidian movement of EV Ramaswamy Naicker who though of instituting Ravan Rajya against Gandhi's Ram Rajya and, finally, Ambedkar. The analysis is a bit forced, simply because it borrows its basic schema from Marxism and tries to equate the Dalits with the working class, even though elsewhere Ilaiah says that the Marxism was used by the upper castes to elude caste antagonism and retain their social hegemony. Eleanor Zelliott makes the interesting point that Ambedkar as an important leader of the nationalist era, wears

western clothes and carries a pen in his suit pocket. The only other person to do so at the same time was Mohammed Ali Jinnah. This only confirms that for the oppressed or the marginalised, adoption of western values and norms, was a way of bypassing the obstacles that traditional societies placed in their path. Veena Naregal in her study of the vernacular press in 19th century Maharashtra has shown that Dalits were more enthusiastic about Western learning than their upper caste counterparts, they saw what was in it for them and Ambedkar's image symbolises this aspiration towards emancipation.

Lancy Lobo shows that Dalit Christians in Gujarat are prone to change their identity to suit their purpose: if it is a government job, they revert back to their original caste status, but for admission to a missionary school, they declare themselves to be Christians. This is one of the reasons that triggered off the violence in Dangs a few years ago. The truth, however, is that Dalit Christians face discrimination both inside and outside the church, although, by and large, the church gives them much more dignity than caste Hindu society and improves their lot. But conversions, very often, also means depoliticisation, since the Church rarely engages in a larger struggle against caste Hindu society on behalf of the Dalits. Its prescriptions, for Dalit anguish, are "pietistic and ritualistic."

Three articles in this collection, one by Gail Omvedt, the other two by Sudha Pai and Abhay Kumar Dubey are about the rise of the Dalits as a political force in India and focus mainly on Ambedkar, the Dalit Panthers, the Republican Party of India and, of course, the

Bahujan Samaj Party. Omvedt shows how Ambedkar broke away from Marxism and tried to evolve a theory of social revolution based on Buddhism. It is Ambedkar who first articulated the necessity of an ideological and political confrontation with Hinduism and of forging a political platform adapted to the Dalit condition in India. Besides, he was shrewd enough to realise that the classical European model of revolution, emphasised equality and fraternity over liberty. However, the Republican Party founded by him could do nothing to take the Dalits away from the Congress. Leadership was not the only question, the Congress built very useful coalitions between the upper castes and the Dalits and instituted patron-client relationships - vote-bank politics - that worked very well till the mid-1980s. Subsequently, two things happened. One, the policy of job reservations had produced an educated and politically aware Dalit middle-class, two, the emergence of backward castes into the political arena and the introduction of caste into the mainstream political idiom, at least in the Hindi-speaking areas. The rise of Kanshi Ram and the BSP signals a break with earlier Dalit politics, either reformist or radical, and the entry of the Dalits into the political mainstream as an autonomous entity.

— Soumitro Das

## Running to type

It has now become trite to wonder why diaspora novels all tend to be about arranged marriages, long-

## REVIEW

Sudha and Anju, described in Divakaruni's trademark prose, effusive even in irony ("her dear, dear



The Vine of Desire  
By Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni  
Abacus, 373 pp, £10.99

cousin, sister of the heart") is disturbed when Sunil begins to feel the return of an old attraction for Sudha. It's a small flat, etc ("Neither of the cousins were simple women, though there was much that was childlike about them when they were together alone, or with Dayita. When Sunil was away..."). So it goes.

And then there is an ABCD (American born confused desi) suitor too for Sudha - Lalit, a medic. Lalit's conversations with Sudha are reconstructed for us as a series of "What I said / What I didn't say / What you said / What I wanted you to say," and so on; soon there are so many voices clamouring for attention that it's a madhouse.

## EXCERPT

For a quick recap, as they say on television: Anju is the plain but bright one, who marries computer whiz Sunil and goes off to live in California. Her cousin Sudha is the beautiful one, not quite so bright, of course, but something better: she is a silent sufferer. Sudha is the one who marries the He l p l e s s Husband and the Horrid Mother-in-Law; the one who runs away leaving both husband and Ma-in-law behind when the Ma-in-law wants her to get rid of the girl child in her womb.

Leaving behind a pining suitor in India, Sudha lands up in America, complete with baby Dayita and all, when Anju asks her to come there. Anju (for the sake of symmetry at least, conveniently) loses her own baby. The almost-cloying solidarity between

"Last week she opened her India suitcase and took out a framed picture of herself and Sudha at their school graduation dinner. She examined it for a long moment before setting it on her dresser with a dissatisfied thunk. Even at that heedlessly happy time in her life, she hadn't been pretty in the traditional way. She didn't have her cousin's rush of curly hair, or those wide, sooty eyes which always looked a little mysterious, a little tragic.

But anyone could see (anyone except herself, that is) that she had spirit. In the photo, she stares out, a challenge in her eyes. She crooks her lean, stubborn mouth in a half-smile. There's an irrepressible intelligence to her nose. Maybe that was what made Sunil choose her from among all the girls he could have had as an eminently eligible, foreign-returned, computer-whiz groom in Calcutta.

But somewhere along the way Anju's eyes grew dull and muddy. Her mouth learned to twitch. And the expression on Sunil's face when he watches her nowadays - he does this in bed, sometimes, after she has fallen asleep - is complicated. At times it is pity. At times, regret."

with instructor's comments ("Interesting subject matter, though it responds to the assignment in a rather tangential way...").

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## NEW ARRIVALS

A Historical Mela: the ABC (Art, Book and Cinema) of India  
Curated by Neville Tuli  
Osians, 318pp large format, Rs 900

THIS is a well-produced catalogue of mostly visual art objects auctioned by Osians of Mumbai, which includes modern and contemporary Indian art, photographs, vintage posters, lobby and show cards of Hindi cinema from the 1930s to the 1970s. Art and popular culture objects are promiscuously mixed in this catalogue, including oleographs and calendars-cum-advertisements after Ravi Varma; paintings by Gaganendranath Tagore, Asit Kumar

Haldar and Jamini Roy; posters and photographs from a vast variety of films; and the work of artists such as FN Souza, MF Husain, Ramkinkar Baij, Sailoz Mukherjee, NS Bendre, VS Gaitonde, Ganesh Pyne and many others. The reproductions and annotations are of high quality, and if one can make do without possessing the originals getting this book is a good way of getting a gander at them all.

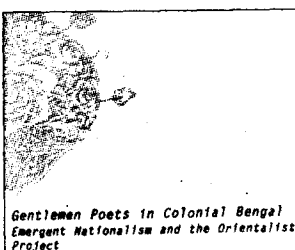
India: Development and Participation  
By Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze  
Oxford, 512pp, Rs 395

THIS is a new edition of the authors' earlier India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity published in 1995; Sen and Dreze take a comprehensive look at India's economic record seven years down the line. They find that the tempo of growth in the 1990s is marginally higher than the 1980s, but the social record

remains equally abysmal - among other things, India has the severest incidence of undernourishment in the world. Sen and Dreze look at the link between improvement in quality of life and public action for the expansion of human capabilities, and venture into underexplored areas such as the cost in economic terms of India's raised nuclear profile and military expenditures. Should be essential reading for those concerned with policy.

Gentlemen Poets in Colonial Bengal: Emergent Nationalism and the Orientalist Project  
By Rosinka Chaudhuri  
Seagull, 213pp, Rs 550

WHAT are the crossovers between the work of British Orientalists and Indian nationalism? The book explores this fas-



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The Common Man Tackles Corruption

The Common Man Tackles Corruption  
By RK Laxman  
Penguin India  
194 pp, Rs 200

RK Laxman's world is a familiar one: that of the

common man looking on while politicians scheme, bureaucrats rob or housewives gossip. They look at India's problems from a middle class point of view; among the best of them in this collection is one of two scruffy

beggars sitting on a street and browsing a newspaper which announces the latest population increase, and one asks the other "Aren't you proud? We are the world's biggest democracy and soon we will be a still bigger democracy!" This volume collects 194 cartoons with Laxman's usual cast of Dickensian characters, and includes a short introduction by him.









# Campaign against AIDS to target stigma, discrimination

PARIS, Nov. 30. Doctors and activists muster on Sunday for World AIDS Day, launching a campaign for easing the burden of stigma suffered by many of the 42 million people with AIDS and HIV.

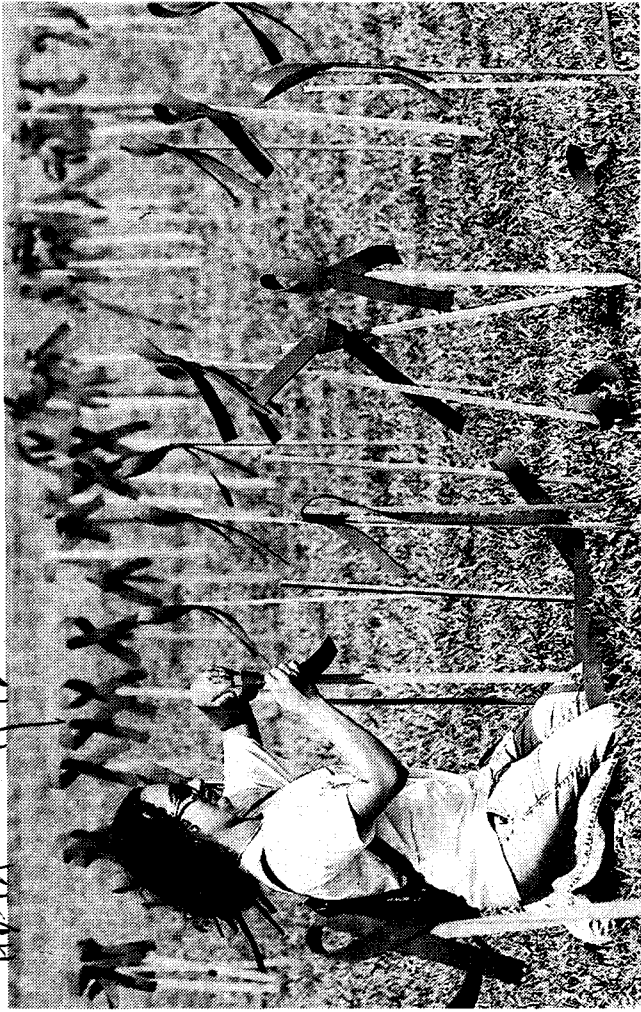
"Live and Let Live," the slogan for the year-long U.N.-backed campaign, will lobby for understanding and tolerance for people with HIV/AIDS, who often face crippling discrimination in the workplace, from friends and even their close family.

"The fear of stigma leads to silence, and when it comes to fighting AIDS, silence is death.

It suppresses public discussion about AIDS, and deters people from finding out whether they are infected," the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said in an address to mark World AIDS Day, now in its 15th year.

The latest raft of figures, released earlier this week by U.N.'s specialist agency, UNAIDS, and the World Health Organisation, makes for grim reading.

Five million people this year will have become infected with the human immunodeficiency virus, and some 3.1 million will



**MARKED RISE:** A woman student prepares ribbons on the eve of the World AIDS Day in Brasilia, Brazil. — AP

could become uncontrollable a few years from now in China and India, where prostitution is the main motor.

For the first time in the two-decade-old history of the epidemic, women account for half Government intervention, it

of infected people, compared with 48 percent last year, the report said.

## 10 m. in China?

Chinese experts scoffed when a U.N. report in June warned of

a future 10 million Chinese AIDS victims.

Months later, though, the figure appears to have gained wide credibility among officials and in state media, lending urgency to growing calls for more efforts against the disease. On Saturday, the eve of World AIDS Day, the figure appeared in no less authoritative form than an editorial in the official *China Daily*, which called it "the harshest assessment and sternest warning ever given".

Its appearance seems to bolster impressions that China is beginning to take its AIDS problem seriously after years of ignoring it at as a national embarrassment.

"The fight against HIV/AIDS has gone beyond the confines of hospitals and clinics. It is now a delicate social issue that needs joint efforts from all sectors of society," the English-language paper said in an editorial.

AIDS in China has been thrust into the open in recent months as the Government looks for ways to halt the disease's rapid spread. Already, an estimated 1 million Chinese have the virus and it has begun to pass from high-risk groups

such as drug addicts and prostitutes into the general population.

In another sign of the issue's new acceptability, an awareness promotional event is planned for Sunday at the Great Hall of the People — the seat of the national legislature where the Government's most important political ceremonies are held.

## Ethiopia ravaged

The number of children who had lost either one or both parents to HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia has reached about 900,000, the country's National AIDS Secretariat announced.

There are about 2.6 million Ethiopians living with the virus, said Negatu Mereke, head of the Government's task force coordinating the fight against the disease.

Mr. Negatu said 7.3 percent of Ethiopians were infected with the virus that causes AIDS. Of the people living with AIDS, 250,000 were children below 5 years of age. He said the biggest problem facing the country to check the spread of AIDS continues to be behavioural change. — AFP, AP, DPA













# Rural industrialisation

**RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION IN KERALA:** Mridul Eapen, Thela Thesis; Prinseneiland 305, 1013 LP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Price not mentioned.

THE BOOK under review, which examines the dynamics and local linkages of rural industrialisation in Kerala, focuses on the nature and growth of rural industrialisation in the State during 1971-91.

Two perspectives drawn from similar studies elsewhere have guided the author. One relates to the process of rural transformation resulting from industrial activity and the other to the contribution that dynamism in the rural industrial sector can possibly make to the advancement of modern industry.

Kerala, high on social indices and low on economic indices, has been an enigma to scholars. Official figures suggest a low level of urbanisation but the State is in fact a rural-urban continuum, where one cannot easily determine where the village ends and the town begins. Urban amenities are available in most villages even if they are qualitatively deficient.

The two-decade period that Mridul Eapen chose for study is one of great significance in understanding the so-called Kerala model, which combines social advancement with economic backwardness.

By 1971, land reforms had already been accomplished but in the years that followed agriculture, instead of prospering, declined. The largely village-based traditional industries suffered, too. Like the

general run of politicians, the writer dwells on the neglect of Kerala in the Centre's industrialisation strategy.

She does not devote much attention to the failures of successive governments. There can be no getting away from the fact that they could not create conditions conducive to rural industrialisation.

By and large, Kerala has moved along different lines from the rest of the country. The rate of growth of employment in the small industry in the state has been less than elsewhere.

Labour productivity growth, too, has not kept pace with developments in other States, including the neighbouring ones. Both the size of the small-scale units and the investment in them has been on the decline. Satisfactory explanations for these facts on record are not forthcoming.

A realistic study of the developments in relation to small industries must include a close scrutiny of the labour situation during the relevant period. However, the parameters set for the research appear to have precluded an examination of the role of the trade union movement.

Apart from making use of the wealth of data gathered by official agencies Mridul Eapen gathered material through a limited field survey.

The chief value of her study lies in the useful information that it provides with regard to local linkages. The primary focus has been on assessing the strength of

the rural linkages. The study shows that agricultural linkages play an important role in inducing growth of non-agricultural employment in rural areas. Urban linkages often dominate the process of diversification in contiguous rural areas.

Kerala has a higher proportion of tiny units (those in which the investment in plant and machinery is less than Rs. 5 lakhs) than other States.

The educational level of entrepreneurs and workers engaged in these units is comparatively low. In the urban periphery, the units tend to be larger, with higher capitalisation, and the entrepreneurs and workers are better educated.

The large units in the development areas have growth potential but their spread effect appears to be weak.

Mridul Eapen acknowledges that the enterprise approach that she followed to understand the nature of linkages and their market orientation has its limitations and that it needs to be supplemented with a household survey to examine consumption linkages and their character in great depth.

This, however, does not detract from the relevance of the policy suggestions that she makes. She stresses the need to raise agricultural productivity, strengthen the infrastructure, promote indigenous entrepreneurship and evolve new organisational forms to overcome the constraints on the growth of small industries.

**B. R. P. BHASKAR**

## BOOK REVIEW

# I. G. Patel's memoirs

**GLIMPSES OF INDIAN ECONOMIC POLICY — An Insider's View: I.G. Patel;** Oxford University Press, Y.M.C.A. Building, Jai Singh Road, Post Box No. 43, New Delhi-110001. Rs. 395.

YOU CAN deride it or you can be protective about it. Either way you have to acknowledge that there was something special about the Indian economic experience of 1956-91. The chorus of dismissal is now very loud, but one of the first and largest countries to be free from the colonial experience was attempting a dramatic and rapid socio-economic transformation within a framework of parliamentary democracy. Looking back, half century later, the achievements of that experiment are at best mixed. And looking across at other developing economies — China, South Korea and Malaysia to name just three — the disparities in performance seem even wider. What went wrong (and what went right) in India? One potentially rich source of insight is from the people who were at the centre of decision-making. There are not many people still around who can match Mr. I. G. Patel's involve-

ment in formulation of policy and management of the economy. After training as an economist in the U.K. and the U.S., Mr. Patel returned to India where, between 1954 and 1982, he worked in the governments of four Prime Ministers (Nehru, Shastri, Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai), the one interregnum was 1972-77 when he took up an assignment with the UNDP. He did not just work in their governments; at times he interacted closely with each of them and was apparently trusted by these Prime Ministers as well.

Mr. Patel became a Secretary to the Government in the Finance Ministry in his early 40s and worked with Finance Ministers from C. D. Deshmukh onwards and then as Governor of the RBI in 1977-82. Mr. Patel is still, in some respects, associated with public policy. He is today a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council and if rumours are correct, was Narasimha Rao's first choice for Finance Minister in 1991. He was in many ways the ultimate insider.

If all this makes Mr. Patel a storehouse of information, the reflections he has penned are a bit of a disap-

elegantly about events and processes, like the "Mahalanobis" (Second) Plan, the Gold Control Order following the 1962 war with China, bank nationalisation, foreign aid and more. There is certain sensitivity as well in his description of personalities and he does not always shirk from expressing an opinion about certain happenings. Like criticising T. T. Krishnamachari (who was apparently very fond of him) for not standing by his officials during the Mundhra affair and Indira Gandhi for her shabby treatment of D. R. Gadgil, which almost surely contributed to the fatal heart attack of this eminent economist on his journey from Delhi to Bombay after being forced to quit his position in the Government.

One reason for the less than substantial view of economic policy-making in those decades that has been offered is contained in the title itself "Glimpses." Another could well be that the memoirs seem to have been written from memory and without reference to either official records or to any notes that Mr. Patel may have maintained. But perhaps the real reason is contained at the end of the book in an appendix titled "On a Personal Note."

Mr. Patel suggests there that the story of Indian economic policy from 1947 to the present day is one of evolution and continuity — without revolutionary changes. Not many people will buy this argument, but it is not one that cannot be coherently argued (However, other than making this observation Mr. Patel does not really flesh this out in these reflections). He also writes that he has tried in his life to strike a balance between being passionate (which makes you blinkered) and being non-judgemental (which makes you indifferent).

Combine this balance in your worldview with the perspective that there has been continuity in economic policy since 1947, and what we end up with are memoirs that are not exactly overflowing in detail or understanding.

Finally, for someone who wrote speeches for prime ministers and takes pride in his drafting abilities, the publisher's bloomers must be embarrassing: "irreverently" (p26), "pursuaded" (p119), "...pleaded with him not travel that day" (p142), "My family teases at me..." and many more.

**C. RAMMANOHAR REDDY**



pointment. Memoirs of public personalities often suffer from one or two shortcomings — self-glorification or cover-ups. Mr. Patel's disappointment, not because they suffer from either failing but because he does not give you enough. There is a lot that is written

# Clash of civilisations

When Samuel P Huntington wrote in 1993 on the "Clash of Civilizations", eyebrows were raised and an animated debate ensued. Eight years later as 11 September, Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan continue to sink in as grim reality, Huntington's theory assumes terrific relevance.

While elaborating this article into a book, the Harvard University professor wrote on the post-Cold War scenario, "In the greater clash, the global 'real clash', between Civilization and barbarism, the world's great civilizations, with their rich accomplishments in religion, art, literature, philosophy, science, technology, morality, and compassion, will also hang together or hang separately.

"In the emerging era, clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace, and an international order based on civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war".

But first, his credible definition of civilisation - "A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.

It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people."

Of the eight cultural blocks that he mentioned, three are the largest and the most influential in today's scheme of things. The first is the West - the American-European culture that arose from the Renaissance and is the direct precursor of the prevailing democratic and open economic order in the world.

Second is the Confucian culture that is inherently Chinese. The main point is that there is no democracy, dissent is violently put down as was seen at Tiananmen Square in 1989. So, for some, China is a state with the pretence of a civilisation.

Third is Islam. Especially over

the past 30 years, since Iran gave seed to the concept of religious war or Islamic war, the faith has become a unifying factor for people the world over. Like Christianity, Islam has a sole point of certainty - the Word of God revealed to the Prophet in Arabia 1,400 years ago.

Today, most modern historians are convinced that this culture of the Muslim world is the only true ideological competitor to the West at the end of the 20th century. One of the reasons could be that this spiritual certainty is the biggest and unrivalled binding force for this particular cultural block, even more so as it has begun to play an increasingly undeniable role in the social and political spheres of its civilisation.

In August 1994, *The Economist* ran a different kind of survey - on the idea of Islam - "an exploration of the misty territory of religio-political conviction". The provocation for this exercise was apparently Huntington's article and the subsequent debate it spawned.

The highly sober publication wrote on the faithful returning to the Koran as if in a return to basics, "This is what has set scalps tingling in other parts of the world, especially among Europeans. They see the Last Ideology on the march. A Muslim crescent curls threatening around the southern and eastern edges of Europe. A new cold war could be on the way. And it may not stop at being a cold war". Europe, by the way, historically, has

the infamous crusades close to civilisation's identity.

Significantly, the concept of this civilisational clash is not in isolation. Czech President MR Vaclav Havel said, "Cultural conflicts are increasing and are more dangerous today than at any time in history."

The former European Commission chairman Jacques Delors spoke in a similar vein, "Future conflicts will be sparked by cultural factors rather than economics or ideology."

Seeing this, Huntington in 1996 wrote in *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, "In the post-Cold War world, culture is both a divisive and a unifying force. People separated by ideology but united by culture come together, as the two Germanys did and as the two Koreas and the several Chinas are beginning to.

Societies united by ideology or historical circumstance but divided by civilization either come apart, as did the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Bosnia, or are subjected to intense strain, as is the case with Ukraine, Nigeria, Sudan, India, Sri Lanka, and many others."

Bosnia is a typical case study of how cultural conflicts along fault lines between civilisations shake up the country. Prior to the Balkan Wars, communal identities were not strong, Muslims, Croats and Serbs lived peacefully and inter-faith marriages were not a matter of concern.

The broader Yugoslav identity collapsed when sections saw the Vatican-inspired initiative trying to get a hold over them. Then religion assumed renewed significance and grew as fighting intensified. Each of the three groups began identifying with its own cultural and ethnic moorings predominantly defined by religious lines and this tore the country apart.

Despite such a tragedy in modern history, the world might not have really understood the civilisational and cultural complexities dictating the shape of the emerging world.

For instance, the Americans with a decade of merry economy and a brief punctuation of present recession, might balk at the idea that the future world would be affected not by economic differences but cultural ones.

Half a world away in India, proponents of the faith that information technology is God's gift to the country would be horrified that attrition in this coming generation would not be between information haves and have-nots. It would hinge on civilisational lines.

In all fairness, it is not as much Islam as it is the Wahhabi influence, the Saudi rigid variant of Islam, which is shaping the fundamentalist quality of this civilisation. In the 18th century, Saudi cleric Muham-

mad-ibn Abd al-Wahhab sought to remove the diverse readings of the Koran that evolved since the Prophet received the Koran.

As part of it anything, laws, customs or rituals, that were not in the literal reading of the Koran were treated as idolatry and dealt with harshly. It also included that Saudi Arabia, being home to the sacred Mecca and Medina, should be free from any un-Islamic influence. Subsequently, the House of Saud incorporated Wahhabi views as national policy.

As it happens when serious thought is required, attention is drawn away in the slush of political rhetoric. In these five months, an understanding is emerging on what exactly is it that is making this religious fundamentalism loathe the West.

On a broad basis, the West is regarded by the Muslim world as the reason for their predominant deprivation and lack of opportunities. The American policy in the Middle East and its relationship with Israel rankles many.

The point is, if the West does accept that these two are the cultural fault lines over which the civilisational clash is building up, does it make the world a better place? Will terrorism in the name of religion stop?

Will it cover up the centuries of differences, angst and an established distrust between the two established blocks of civilisation? The question - what needs to be done - has to be applied equally and forcefully to both these blocks.

The crux of Huntington's article needs to be mentioned, "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future".

The West, a product of the Christian world, is what it is today largely due to the Reformation of the early 16th century which said it is the individual who is responsible before God for his life. It began in 1517 with Martin Luther nailing his thesis on a church door in Wittenberg. This spelt the end of priests staking claim to their right to decide for the people and in course of time kings and princes followed suit by paving the way for the world's most supreme philosophy - democracy.

About three centuries after this Reformation, Jamal al-din al-Afghani said Islam needed its own Martin Luther to break free from the scholars - a problem affecting the richness of Islam. Al-Afghani in the mid-1800s was pursuing a turbulent career of a religious reformer and was seen as a wild and irresponsible character. This idea irritated his fellow Muslims who then quickly ignored him.

In all probability, what al-Afghani was trying to say is that this civilisation needs to get democratic. *The Economist* while sifting through 39 countries said, "Only seven can in one degree or another even hesitantly be called democracies." And it concluded, "Yes, Islam has a democratic

Basing his hypothesis on Samuel Huntington's book, STANLEY THEODORE deduces that future attrition will not be between information haves and have-nots, hinging rather on civilisational lines where economic differences are subservient to cultural ones

deficit".

For this it is unfair to fault Islam as there are several historical reasons like the Muslim-dominated areas being occupied by 19th century European empires, when North America and sections of Europe began their march towards democracy.

The other reason are the scholars again, who offer their own Koranic interpretation of democracy. The immediate need for

Islam for it to be a credible and strong alternative civilisation to the West, is to incorporate change. It would be tempting for the West to bring about this change either by force or by subterfuge. And that would be counterproductive.

The Koran mentions the tenets of consultation where it is obligatory on the government's part to consult the people on the policies it aims to pursue. This alone is proof enough that democratic

values are enshrined in the faith.

What the faith needs are men who can counter-quote when a so-called scholar quotes from the Holy Book. The evil version of the faith is manifested in Osama bin Laden. The noble version is awaited, for the civilisations to grow and prosper.

(The author is The Statesman's Hyderabad-based Special Representative.)

7/10/02  
HDK

# Re-writing history without Columbus 103

**LONDON, MARCH 9.** Is it good-bye Columbus? A British historian's claim that a Chinese admiral reached America decades before the Italian explorer has unleashed a frenzy of media interest in a theory that could force the rewriting of history.

Gavin Menzies, 64, a former Royal Navy submarine commander, provoked headlines around the globe last week after a British newspaper published an outline of his thesis that China "discovered" the New World 70 years before the West. Based on contemporary European maps and records, Chinese star charts and archaeological finds, Mr. Menzies' case is that Chinese sailors mapped the world in the early 1400s before abandoning global seafaring in the

middle of the 15th century.

Historians contacted by Reuters say the amateur historian's thesis is speculative and leaps to conclusions that may be correct but have yet to be proved.

Mr. Menzies says Chinese maps passed to the West through the Portuguese, by way of an Italian traveller, Nicolo da Conti, who went on some of their voyages.

Don Pedro, son of Portugal's King Joao I kept the resulting map of the world as a State secret. But elements of this map, drawn in 1428 and now lost, leaked out and were copied into other charts, says Mr. Menzies.

These revealed parts of America and Australia before they were "rediscovered" by Europe's Christopher Columbus,

Ferdinand Magellan and James Cook. "Every single one of them refers to maps he's either got with him or seen before he set sail," Mr. Menzies told Reuters.

"My argument is somebody must have drawn these maps before the Europeans got there. Who was it?" For Mr. Menzies the answer is Admiral Zheng He, a Grand Eunuch who commanded seven voyages of exploration from 1403 to 1433.

In huge many-masted ships, the largest four times the size of Columbus's Santa Maria, the Chinese made increasingly ambitious tours of Indonesia and the southern Asian coastline.

Historians agree that the fleet reached east Africa and may have rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Mr. Menzies says the

107-strong armada of the sixth voyage of 1421-3 went further, reaching Latin America, the Caribbean and Australia, circumnavigating the globe a century before Magellan. Wherever they went, split into four flotillas, they left porcelain, votive offerings and wrecks, he says.

"There are 10,000 pieces of evidence," he said. "It's so blindingly obvious now that it's not Columbus. How he's got away with it for so long mystifies me," he added.

He says the honour should go to two of Zheng He's fellow eunuch admirals, Heng-Bao and Zhou-Man, who continued the sixth voyage after Zheng He returned early to China.

A starting point for Mr. Menzies' thesis is a 1424 map of Eu-

rope and the Atlantic that he says shows Puerto Rico and Guadeloupe nearly 70 years before 1492.

His identification is backed by Carol Urness, Emeritus Curator of the James Ford Bell Library at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, where the "Pizzigano" map is held. "I think he has made a very good argument for those identifications for the 1424 map," she told Reuters.

"Now the question is whether the prototype for this map is a lost European map or is the Chinese map. That's going to be the harder leap." Gillian Hutchinson, Curator of the History of Cartography at London's National Maritime Museum, said she was unconvinced.

THE HINDU

10 MAR 2002

# White House helped Enron as it tried to lobby with Delhi

Secretary Brajesh Mishra. "I ask that you give this matter serious and immediate attention."

By last summer, documents show, the National Security Council was intimately involved. A June 28, 2001, e-mail from an NSC staffer announced there was "good news" regarding Enron and Cheney: "The Veep mentioned ENRON in his meeting with Sonia Gandhi". Also that week, an unnamed government staffer noted that he would "ask the Indians" if Enron chairman Lay "is invited to the dinner" with OPIC's Watson.

A July 30 government memo, labelled as a "Confidential Busi-

ness Communication" was distributed to members of the "Dabhol Working Group." It noted that earlier in the month, Lay visited India and met with various officials. It said State Department official Christina Rocca had met with a senior aide to Vajpayee. The memo also noted possible plans to "broaden the advocacy" related to the power plant. That plan called for solving problems related to the plant "in a diplomatically correct manner."

The memo suggested enlisting the aid of Ambassador-designate Robert Blackwill, the World Bank, the US Embassy in New

Delhi, the State Department and the Indian Embassy in Washington. A November 1 government e-mail indicated that talking points had been prepared for Bush in his meeting with Vajpayee. They were never used.

An intragovernmental e-mail sent on the afternoon of November 8, and labelled "Importance: High," said, "President Bush can not talk about Dabhol as was already mentioned." The e-mail released by OPIC officials after they deleted the sender's and recipients' names — also said Bush's top economic adviser, Lawrence Lindsey, "was advised that he could not discuss Dabhol." Lind-

sey had earned \$100,000 as an Enron consultant in 1999 and 2000. A November 9 e-mail said national security adviser Condoleezza Rice chose not to discuss Dabhol in her meeting with Mishra. Enron shares had fallen to \$8.63 that day, and the company filed for bankruptcy law protection on December 2.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the administration's actions had nothing to do with Enron political contributions. He noted that the Clinton administration had acted in a similar manner on Dabhol. Indeed, according to the Center for Public Integrity, Lay accompanied

Clinton's Commerce secretary, Ronald Brown, on a trip to India in 1995. Clinton administration officials said they felt obliged to champion Enron's cause because Maharashtra had reneged on its contractual obligations to pay for the plant's output. "There is an appropriate role for the US government to step in on behalf of US companies when foreign governments are treating them unfairly," said David Rothkopf, deputy undersecretary of commerce for international trade in the first Clinton term. "Enron, just like any other company, was entitled to that support."

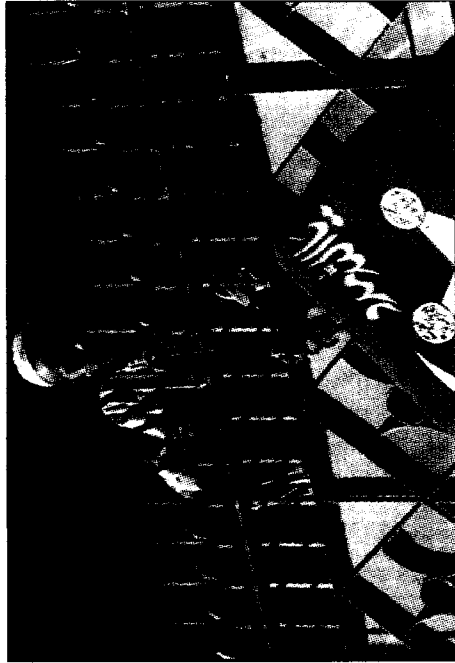
(LA Times-Washington Post)

INDIAN EXPRESS



Musharraf's regulatory framework divides opinion in India

# Madarsa debate spills across border



A signboard of the banned Sipahi-e-Sahaba goes off. (Reuters)

SA FROM RASHEED KIDWAI (41)

New Delhi, Jan. 13: Is President Pervez Musharraf trying to do a Kamal Pasha Ataturk?

Opinion among Indian Muslims is sharply divided after his historic speech where he promised to regulate madarsas and mosques in a sweeping reform to separate politics from education and religion. Conservative sections of Indian Muslims are wary, fearing that the BJP-led government may embark on a similar course, leading to a witch-hunt.

Anis Durrani, chairman of the Delhi Haj Committee, said madarsas operating in Pakistan and India were vastly different in nature. "In Pakistan, most of these institutions are commercially run. They are like shops, receiving funds from West Asia. In India, most madarsas are old and in dire need of money," he said.

He feared that Musharraf's remarks are likely

to give credence to the campaign that many madarsas in India are breeding grounds of ISI activities.

But members of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board differ. They even see a lesson to be followed here. "We will be only too glad if efforts are made to regulate religious institutions. But there should be no discrimination. Let the government of India also check activities of the Bajrang Dal, VHP, RSS shakhas and Bal Shishu mandirs," said Kamal Farooqui, a member of the board.

He said the Milli Council, a body of prominent Muslims, had already conducted a survey in Rajasthan to check the activities of madarsas and mosques. "I can say it with authority and satisfaction that there was nothing that could be described as suspicious or illegal. Our conscience is clean. Let there be an investigation," he said.

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# Muslim reaction

► FROM PAGE 1

G.M. Banatwalla, an MP of the Indian Union Muslim League, said there were many misconceptions about madarsas in India. He said a home ministry document had stated that thousands of madarsas had recently mushroomed along the Indo-Nepal border. "We checked and found nothing of that sort so I wrote to the home secretary. I was shocked to get a reply that said that these madarsas were on the Nepalese side."

Other religious leaders said there were similar misunderstandings over the Deobandi sect. "In India, the Deobandi sect implies those against the worshipping of graves but in Pakistan, the Masood Azhar (Jaish leader) brand of Deobandi militancy has an altogether different connotation," said Naeem Ur-Rahman, a scholar from the Nadwa school of Islamic learning.

Khalid Rashid, deputy imam of the Lucknow Idgah, and other leaders said Musharraf's bid to crackdown on Islamic extremists should be seen in the Pakistani context as it has little or no relevance in India.

"India is a secular country so the government should not interfere in religious affairs. If there is a need, the community itself would take the lead to set the house in order," said Durrani.

Khalid said that under Islam different sets of rules apply in different situations. The holy scriptures talk about codes of conduct in "Darul-Islam" (Islamic state), Darul-Aman (peaceful land) and Darul-Kufr (land of the infidel). Since India is Darul-Aman (land of peace), religious obligations such as jihad have no relevance, he said.

At another level, Musharraf's speech has begun a debate in the Muslim community. While a majority favours action against extremists, some feel the Pakistani President is going the way of Ataturk who demolished the decaying and defunct Ottoman empire to create modern Turkey. But many conservative Muslims believe Ataturk's experiment failed.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 JAN 2002

—DPA

## To appeal to U.N.

11-14 12/1

**HONG KONG:** Mainland Chinese abode-seekers who failed in a legal battle to secure the right to live in Hong Kong are planning to appeal to the U.N., their lawyer said on Friday. The Court of Final Appeal (CFA), Hong Kong's highest court, ruled on Thursday that only around 500 of the more than 5,000 claimants would be entitled to permanent residency here. The rest would have to be deported back to the Chinese mainland. The drawn-out and increasingly complex legal battle ensued after Beijing overturned a lower court decision in January 1999 which said any child with one Hong Kong parent was entitled to stay. Thursday's ruling has also called into question Beijing's influence on Hong Kong's legal affairs, despite the former British colony being promised broad autonomy since its return to Chinese rule in 1997. Lawyer Krista Ma, whose law firm Pam Baker and Company represents the majority of the abode applicants, said they would now petition United Nations General Secretary, Kofi Annan, "in the next few weeks". The petition would call on Mr. Annan to urge Hong Kong Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa's government to grant residency status to more of the claimants on the grounds that they had been unfairly deprived of their human rights. "The petition will be on behalf of everyone who filed case before the judgement was passed yesterday," Ma told AFP. "The CFA said our clients had a legitimate expectation they would be granted residency by the government but the reinterpretation effectively trumped that. —AFP (A man and a child join other migrants on Friday at a Hong Kong park to discuss the fallout of the verdict. — AP)



11-14 12/1

11-14 12/1

# Taking out the Taliban — I

By Gail Omvedt

*"For never in this world  
Do hatreds cease by hatred.  
By freedom from hatred they cease:  
This is the eternal dhamma."  
(Dhammapada 5)*

**T**HIS WAS part of my first effort to articulate a response to September 11. Like many others, I had the fortune — good or bad — of seeing it on TV, in an unusual situation. Sitting in Kasegao, I had just turned on the only English news we get on cable — Sahara, at 7-45 p.m. It showed just a shot... and, wondering, appalled, I switched to PTV on AV, which has better English news than the poor selection of cable channels in our village — to find them rebroadcasting CNN. For two hours I sat there horrified and fascinated watching the breaking news, interrupting this only to whisper it to my husband and to phone to Pune to have my e-mail checked by a friend to see if my daughter (who lives in New York and worked then near the World Trade Center) was all right — that she was became clear after an hour. Still, the scenes unfolded, that day and for a couple of days after... the towers crashing, people running in fear, old file photos of Osama bin Laden with his strange, almost mystical yet frightening smile, shots of Palestinian children dancing in the streets, shots of presumed suspects and evidence about them. George W. Bush in his jacket, looking very Texan, Colin Powell looking authoritative and calm. An assault of images; an assault of messages, many coming on e-mail from the U.S., forwarded by my daughter who was more upset about the racist attacks that came after, messages mainly from African-Americans, Indian-Americans, Palestinian-Americans such as Edward Said, and even one Afghan.

What mixed emotional reactions I had even from the beginning! One sane, rational, peace-loving part of me followed the Dhammapada and the message of all religions (including Islam), that at a moral level and in the long run the only way to protect oneself and to resolve violent conflicts is to deal with the roots of violence — and that what happened did indeed have its roots in rage caused by

events in which the U.S. was heavily implicated.

But another immediate emotional reaction was simply: if this is how the "whole world" feels about "us", then we have to defend ourselves. And, whatever may be the morality and the long-term considerations, there is not, and never has been, a government in the world which would not at least take police action to defend its people. No socialist

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***There is not, and never has been, a government in the world which would not at least take police action to defend its people... At the same time, I thought there would be no bombing.***

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government, no Muslim or even Buddhist-dominated government would have returned hatred with non-hatred. In fact, police action — for that matter, leave aside the various versions and meanings of "crusades" and "jehads" and "revolutions" — is something that was justified even for Buddhist emperors, who were expected not only to provide "seed for farmers, capital for merchants, pay to employees and welfare to the destitute" but also to protect their subjects. It may indeed be true that various forms of limited "police action" will be the alternative to war in the global age, though it may increasingly look like war and involve new levels of surveillance, as Amitav Ghosh has remarked.

And, of course, who would trust the American Government and Mr. Bush to carry out limited police action? Mr. Bush, talking of "crusades", calling Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden "evil" and at the same time ignoring all the terrorist actions of the U.S. against the world's peoples. However, another reaction of mine, from the very beginning, was that the U.S. Government, though capitalist and oppressive, was probably rationally so, and would limit its actions. Further, since Mr. Bush himself knew nothing of foreign policy (and little of how to speak to anyone but Americans, which is why Tony Blair and others had to make world

tours) he was dependent on others — in particular, his Secretary of State, Colin Powell. And if the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, was a hawk, Gen. Powell — standing before the cameras and the people of the world as a truly powerful man, the first African-American to hold such high office — clearly understood something of non-white peoples and probably, like that other former General, Pervez Musharraf, understood the costs

of war. Or so I hoped. Thus, when the U.S. Government made it clear that it was determined to take out the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, I hoped it would be done in as patient and slow a fashion as possible.

And, if I felt anger in those days (as an American-born) against anyone, it was not against the Palestinian children who were shown on TV dancing in the street after hearing of the attack; after all they had sufficient reason to do so. Rather, I felt anger against the educated, sober adults of the Left who so quickly came forward with "it was a terrible act but...", and went on immediately to stress that this was a reaction to U.S. terrorism and give their analysis of imperialism.

At the same time, I thought there would be no bombing. First, quite aside from the moral implications, it did not seem a sufficient way to take out the Taliban and deal with the problem of Afghanistan. There were Russian Generals interviewed to tell of how hopeless it was to fight in such inhospitable terrain, there were memories of how the small, impoverished Vietnamese had humbled bulky American soldiers — it was not so easy to fight Asians! And there was the letter from the Afghan-American, who wrote simply that it was useless to talk of "bombing Afghanistan back to the stone age", because it had already been done,

and the Taliban had destroyed what was left "If you think of the Taliban, think Hitler. And if you think of the Afghan people, think Jews in the concentration camps," he had written — and went on to warn once more that bombing was useless, that what must be done, however hard it would be for Americans to bear the count of "body bags" coming back, was to send in soldiers.

(Question (asked later in India): "Why does the U.S. only concern itself with terrorism against its own people?" Answer: "Because they are the ones who elect it." Further clarification: It also has to be remembered that U.S. citizens now include not only whites, but African-Americans, Indian-Americans, etc. as well as Arab-Americans and even a very few Afghan Americans. According to the latest *New York Times/CBS News* poll, taken between December 7 and 10, 2001, nearly three of every four Blacks and nine of every 10 whites approved of Mr. Bush's performance.)

With all of this came reports of the racist reactions, against Muslims, people with turbans, any "brown people". This was especially in New York city, where the tragedy was directly felt, and where hundreds of firemen — themselves mostly from "white ethnic" and some African-American background — had died rushing into the building to save people; but elsewhere there were the crazies, the man who simply shot a Sikh gentleman and rode away in his car. The truth is that there are maybe 5 per cent really crazy racists in the U.S., a lot of mild racists — but also many good-hearted people who were trying to understand the tragedy. "Weep for us," wrote one Quaker friend. "We all are beginning to understand that the whole world has changed and will continue to change," wrote a cousin, referring to "our disbelief and sorrow at what has happened here, our feelings of helplessness and need to do something..."

Against such a background, the U.S. Government set out, on September 11, to take out the Taliban, Osama and the Al-Qaeda.

## ...Terrorism

(Continued from page 1)

countries and echoed Mr Blair's announcement yesterday that Britain viewed India as "a natural contender" for permanent membership to the United Nations Security Council and would work with New Delhi to achieve it.

There were two parts to resolving a problem, said Mr Blair. One was that terrorism in any form, whether it was the attack on Indian Parliament or the attack on Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, was condemnable.

The other part was that everything could be done peacefully through a democratic and meaningful dialogue which should replace violence, Mr Blair said.

Mr Blair, who will leave for Islamabad tomorrow, told the Press in the evening that "provided this threat (of attacks from terrorists) is over, I believe India is prepared for a dialogue. Everybody knows what the situation is".

Mr Vajpayee, when asked about his meeting with President Musharaff in Kathmandu, said he pointed out to General Musharraf that he avoided the word "terrorism" in his speech. "He didn't reply. He spoke of violence but not terrorism. It was a big omission," Mr Vajpayee said.

# London talks focus on Sri Lanka truce

HO-10  
2/1/11

By D.B.S. Jeyaraj

**TORONTO, JAN. 23.** The Norwegian facilitator team visiting the U.K. informed the LTTE chief negotiator and political adviser, Anton Balasingham, of the action taken so far on the requests made by the LTTE in connection with the peace process when it held a three-hour meeting at the latter's London residence on Tuesday, informed Tamil sources said. The facilitator team comprised the special peace envoy, Erik Solheim, and the Foreign Ministry official, Krijste Tromsdal.

The LTTE had earlier informed a delegation led by the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vidar Helgesen, on January 4 that it desired India to extend its good offices to help resolve the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict by acceding to its two requests.

It wanted India to allow Mr. Balasingham and wife, Adele Anne, to relocate in Chennai temporarily,

and for talks to be hosted by India in a South Indian city such as Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram or Bangalore.

The requests raised a storm of protests in Tamil Nadu with most parties, including the ruling AIADMK, demanding that the Central Government not give in to the "audacious" LTTE demands.

Although the Centre has not finalised a decision yet, media speculation indicates that there is very little likelihood of the requests being granted in view of the widespread public opinion against such a move.

Tamil sources said the London talks had primarily focussed on evolving a ceasefire between both sides first and thereafter addressing issues concerning the modalities of envisaged negotiations such as venue, etc.

The facilitators had brought a draft ceasefire agreement to which fresh suggestions and alter-

ations had been proposed by the Tigers.

A Norwegian delegation headed by Mr. Helgesen is scheduled to meet with Mr. Balasingham again next week. Oslo's Ambassador in Colombo, Jon Westborg, is also expected to be part of the delegation.

The envoy will provide inputs regarding Colombo's viewpoints on the proposed ceasefire. Both sides have currently extended the cessations of hostilities declared separately. Thereafter, Mr. Helgesen will undertake a visit to Colombo.

A subsequent trip to New Delhi to officially acquaint India of related developments is also planned though not finalised.

Mr. Balasingham, in an interview to a Tamil newspaper in Sri Lanka, has said that India must favourably consider the LTTE requests on a "humanitarian" basis.

## Peace talks first: Kadirgamar

By Nirupama Subramanian

**COLOMBO, JAN. 23.** Sri Lanka's former Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, today advised the Government against a hasty de-proscription of the LTTE and called for peace talks to begin before the world's anti-terrorism mood began to wear off.

Mr. Kadirgamar, who campaigned across the globe for banning the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, said "the question of de-proscription should be considered with deep circumspection and caution," and pointed to the experience of other countries in talks with banned groups.

The Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, who outlined his Government's policy in Parliament on Tuesday, indicated that he was seriously considering removing the ban on the LTTE which has demanded this as a pre-condition for participating in peace talks.

Responding to Mr. Wickremesinghe in Parliament, Mr. Kadirgamar said the new Government must also

set a definite time-frame for talks on substantive issues before the international attitude towards terrorism in the wake of September 11 wore off.

Mr. Kadirgamar expressed the support of the People's Alliance to the steps taken by the Wickremesinghe Government to lift the economic restrictions on LTTE-held areas in northern Sri Lanka, and for the truce being observed by the Government forces and the LTTE.

Pledging the "constructive co-operation" of his party, headed by the President, Chandrika Kumara-tunga, to the Government's peace initiatives, Mr. Kadirgamar said, however, that it should not be peace at any cost.

Mr. Wickremesinghe said on Tuesday that Sri Lanka must not let the ban become an impediment to peace talks. He sought to strengthen his case with "international opinion" which recognised the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, but also wanted Sri Lanka to hold peace talks with it.

THE HINDU

24 JAN 2002

## ...Musharraf:

(Continued from page 1)

hopes it's a breakthrough." Asked when formal consultations would be held, Gen Musharraf said: "No dates have been fixed, but there is an urgency for a formal dialogue and I hope it will occur in the near future..."

Despite Pakistan attaching great symbolic value to the meeting, India said the meeting did not indicate any change in stand on Pakistan. The country would not resume talks with Pakistan until it took firm steps against terrorist groups operating from its territory.

Later, upon arriving at New Delhi airport, Mr Vajpayee underplayed the interaction and the handshake between them at the close of the summit. "Bataane layak kya hai? Dua salaami hui thi. Haal chaal pucha gaya. Baat khatam ho gayi (What's there to say? We exchanged pleasantries. We inquired about each other. The conversation was over)."

Asked if he would attend the next Saarc summit in Islamabad, Mr Vajpayee said: "Sthithi saamanya rahi to zaroor jaoonga."

The Indian leadership's dogged public posture is being widely seen as unyielding, compared with Gen Musharraf's reasonableness; once again suggesting that the Pakistani President has been more media savvy.

The Kathmandu Declaration adopted by Saarc noted that terrorism posed "one of the most serious threats to international peace."

Among other things, the leaders committed themselves to dismantling trade barriers by concluding a framework South Asian Free Trade Area treaty this year. The Saarc nations also pledged to suppress financial sources of militant groups.

They plan to attain the goal by criminalising the collection of funds for extremism and refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or allowing the use of their territories for such acts and redoubling efforts to tackle poverty and other ills afflicting the region on a war-footing.

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