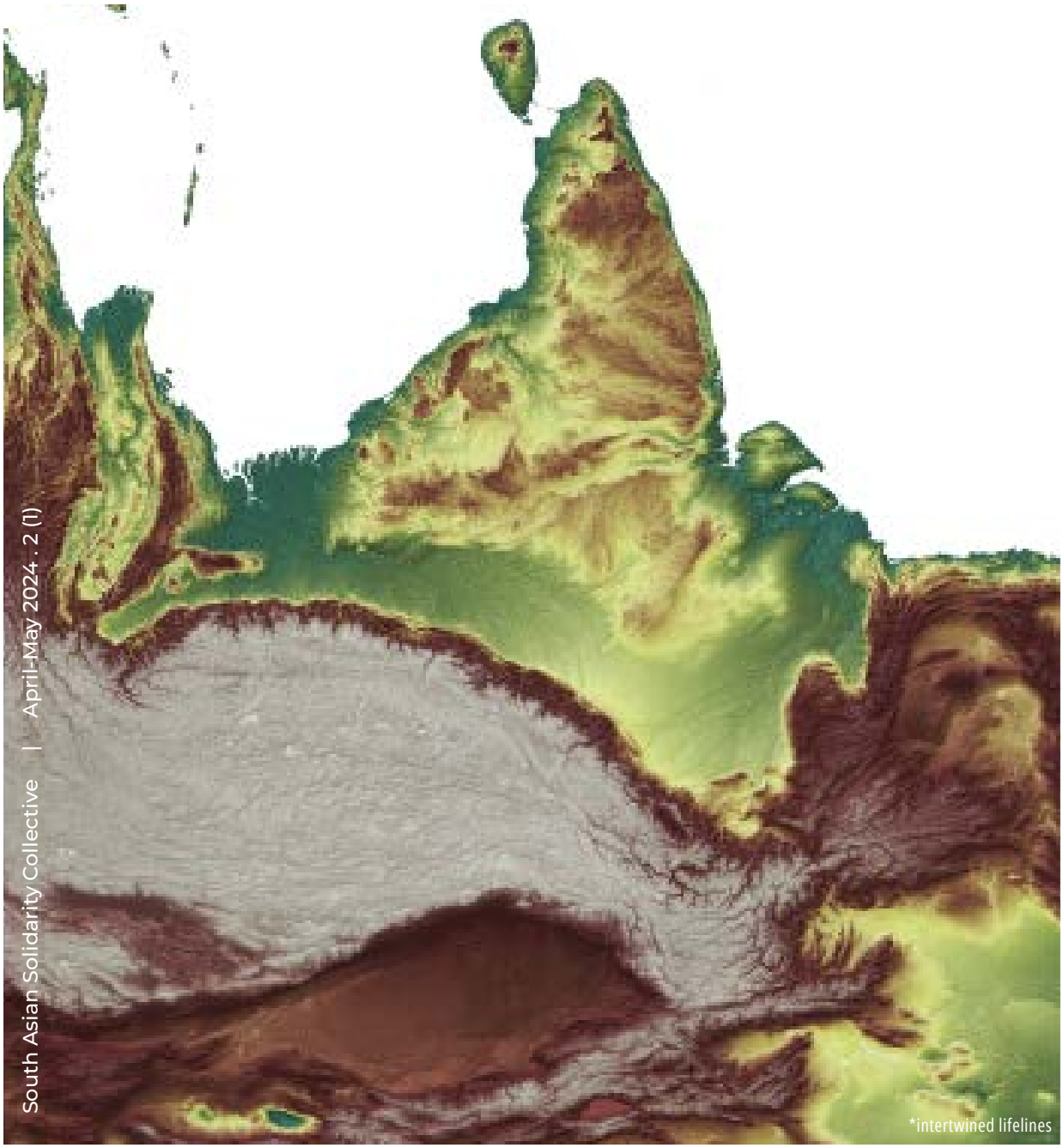
Zuwa*

Journal of Cross-Border Conversations



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*intertwined lifelines

Zuva: Journal of Cross-Border Conversations

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Editorial note

If everyone fought for their own convictions there would be no war – War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy

This forum and this journal have been born of the conviction that we, the people, have the power to stop war. We, the people, are the only ones who have the power to bring and maintain peace to this region of the planet currently occupied by the two warring States of India and Pakistan.

Things become even more complicated when we realize that in our animosity, we not only hurt each other but also cause immeasurable harm to other nations in the region. As people with control over these two States, we not only have the responsibility towards ourselves but also to those who have nothing to do with the con`flict but have to bear its costs.

As the guest editor of this issue, I have chosen both historical and contemporary pieces to shine a light on the state of things today. Conflicts must first be understood for them to be resolved amicably. Both parties must see the merit in the other party's perspective to have a fruitful negotiation where everybody wins something and nobody feels like they have lost everything.

The underpinning idea of this issue is that in the face of problems which are much bigger than our petty national rivalries, we must either work together to stay afloat or sink together scratching at each other's throats. We must find commonalities with each other—like the fact that a lot of us speak the same language (Hindi and Urdu)—and build on those to make this relationship work for all of us.

To this effect, there are articles on climate change and extreme weather events which argue that we occupy a common region and must therefore find common ground to make policies from.

The issues of Punjab and Kashmir are discussed, for those who take away the freedom of others can never be free themselves. By behaving undemocratically towards others, we are in effect giving up on our own democracy and our own power.

Both countries suffer from the malaise of caste and the masses on either side of the border have a common agenda to unite on, even as the elites are busy watching Rome burn.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was one of the few political leaders who truly understood the power dynamics of the subcontinent across the lines of religion and caste. His legacy has been forgotten and twisted beyond repair. An article each from India and Pakistan has been included to appraise the man anew and see if he can teach us something about consensus building in these fraught times.

Finally, one of the greatest public intellectuals to be born in the subcontinent, who understood the nature of modern conflict like no other, was Eqbal Ahmad. An interview given by him 1993 has been included so we can see the kind of intellectual integrity that is required of us who claim to be on the correct side of history.

These are not the times for wishful thinking. We must act, and act now. This issue is an attempt to inspire the right kind of action.

Contents

Authors

David Barsamian is an Armenian-American radio broadcaster, writer, and the founder and director of Alternative Radio, a Boulder, Colorado-based syndicated weekly public affairs program heard on some 250 radio stations worldwide.

Eqbal Ahmad was a Pakistani political scientist, writer and academic known for his anti-war activism, his support for resistance movements globally and academic contributions to the study of the Near East.

Ashish Duttatreya is an artist and a writer. He aspires to produce films and songs in the future. Having obtained his bachelor's from NLU Lucknow, his aim is to earn his livelihood through everything except law.

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Nawal Ali Watali is a researcher and photographer based in Kashmir. Her research interests include analysing human security amidst state violence in Kashmir, specifically in areas around the Line of Control.

O Kashmiri is any and every anonymous Kashmiri demanding the right for self-determination for their nation.

Sharjeel Imam is a political activist and minority rights scholar currently imprisoned by the Indian state for existing.

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THE INTERVIEW

Credits: Ravi K Kawre

EQBAL AHMAD INTERVIEWED BY DAVID BARSAMIAN

This interview with Eqbal Ahmad was originally published (in 1993) on http://www.tni.org under a Creative Commons Licence [https://www.tni.org/en/article/interview-with-eqbal-ahmad]. Reprinted here is an excerpt of it.

AT THE TIME OF THIS INTERVIEW, EQBAL AHMAD WAS A PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES AT HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE IN AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS. HE WAS THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE QUARTERLY *RACE AND CLASS*. HIS ARTICLES AND ESSAYS APPEARED IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, *THE NATION* AND OTHER MAJOR NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HE WROTE A WEEKLY COLUMN FOR *DAWN*, PAKISTAN'S OLDEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER.

DAVID BARSAMIAN: The Indian Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, gave a speech at the Human Rights World Conference in Vienna in mid-June. He said: "India's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, political and civil as well as economic, social and cultural, is unreserved and total. This commitment has evolved logically from the age-old ideals which have been the basis of our composite culture of the centuries." How does that track with India's record?

EQBAL AHMAD: Certainly very badly with the recent record. But I am delighted to hear that people like Manmohan Singh are reiterating India's commitment to respecting human rights and equally important that they are emphasizing the composite character of Indian culture. I think these two commitments must remain important. If people like Manmohan Singh continue to reiterate them, I would continue to hold hope in really difficult circumstances. But the actual record of India is abominable in the last ten years, and it's getting worse by the year.

Khuswant Singh, a columnist for the Hindustan Times, in an article entitled "India, the Hindu State," has this comment to make: "The most disturbing development in India is the increasing number of senior civil servants, intellectuals and journalists who have begun to talk the language of Hindu fundamentalism, protesting that religious minorities, particularly the Muslims, have pushed them beyond the limits of patience."

What Khuswant Singh is saying there is so terribly important and so true. It was in 1990 that I found myself shocked in a discussion with the Commissioner of the district of Faizabad, where the Babri mosque was. This Commissioner, the highest official in that particular district, was talking absolutely the language of the right-wing fundamentalist Hindu parties who wished to

destroy that historic mosque. The result came two years later, in 1992, when a mosque built in 1527 was actually demolished by Hindu mobs led by the fundamentalist leaders. So what Khuswant Singh is saying is truly a frightening phenomenon and it is very often what I'm trying to emphasize is that their language of militancy and sectarianism is translated almost daily in Indian life in violent and destructive actions.

It should be pointed out that the mosque you mentioned is in the town of Ayodhya in the state of Uttar Pradesh in north India. That was very quickly followed by organized pogroms against Muslims in Bombay which were led by the Shiv Sena (a Marathi Hindu nationalist organization). There were many reports that the police and other military formations participated with the Shiv Sena in attacks on Muslims.

I think it is to the credit of a few investigative Indian journalists plus one or two Western journalists that they are the ones who discovered, through the monitoring of radio broadcasts, that the Indian police in Bombay were actually participating in the organization of the pogroms in Bombay. Remind yourself also of the fact that in those pogroms nearly 3,000 people were killed and people were dragged out of their homes and apartments and murdered.

Conventionally, when people in the West think of Islam they immediately think of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Syria and Egypt, etc. They don't think of India as having a large Muslim community. But in fact it does, does it not?

India has at the moment possibly the second largest Muslim population in the world. I say "possibly" because Indonesia and India are neck to neck as holding the largest Muslim populations in the world. But if I could add something else, when people think of Islam and Muslims, they think normally of places like Iran and Saudi Arabia and Egypt and not of places like India and Indonesia. Secondly, when they think of fundamentalism, they always think of Islam and Muslims and not of other very menacing fundamentalist movements, such as the Hindu fundamentalists in India or the Christian fundamentalists in Serbia. So Islam is thought of in more than one distorted way.

It's interesting that you should point that out. During the siege and then deaths in Waco, Texas, the media constantly referred to David Koresh as a "cult leader" and the members of his group as "cult followers." They were never described as fundamentalist, militant Christians.

Absolutely. Similarly, quite frankly, if Ronald Reagan and his connections with the Moral Majority movement had existed in Egypt, we would clearly see them typed as fundamentalists, which they were. Ronald Reagan's rhetoric and policies to a lesser extent bore very much the stamp of Christian fundamentalists. The conviction, for example, that the Soviet Union was an "evil empire". It was a religious concept of evil empire that bore a certain similarity to Ayatollah Khomeini's description of the United States as the "Satanic Empire". But we don't quite see those similarities, do we?

It seems that would speak very much to the quality of information that the US media and the Western media in general deliver to Americans on these issues.

It would refer also to the failure of the non-media institutions in this country to provide a correction to what the media does. The media have been like this historically, in the short history that mass media have in the world, about a hundred-and-fifty years, but during this period even the other institutions of

society: the trade unions, the church, universities, professors, the schools, had provided a corrective to the vulgarization and distortions that the media have inevitably engaged in. What is very strikingly regrettable in our time is that institutions which were expected to have a deeper, more considered evaluation of events and cultures the world over are behaving like the media or are taking their cue, their understanding of the world, from the media. What I'm trying to emphasize here is that there has been a lot of emphasis in this country among critics about the failures of the media. The media have always been a very easy instrument for powerful forces to manipulate because they are a very shallow instrument, very easily manipulated. The newspapers are all dependent for publication on advertisements, therefore they are deeply organically linked to big money. They are dependent on powerful figures for news, therefore there are ties of dependence to institutions of power. If they don't, they feel they will be denied access to news. Media have been, from their inception, an institution deeply vulnerable to money and to power. Therefore, media's weaknesses are to be balanced by the maturity and strength of the more stable institutions of civil society: the trade unions, the universities, the churches, the political parties, and so on. What is really shocking and very upsetting, in fact dangerous, for the future of civilization, is that the media have become the definer of public discourse. There are no countervailing institutions which are challenging this hegemony.

I want to get back to South Asia and your analysis of Kashmir and the situation there. It's been reported by a number of human rights organizations that there have been massive violations going on.

An uprising began in 1989. The Indian forces intervened. The uprising has continued. Violations by Indian forces have escalated to unimaginable degrees. But this is not saying very much. I should quickly recapitulate that Kashmir is a disputed territory. It's one of the first issues the United Nations took up after its founding. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India at that time, committed to the United Nations that India and Pakistan should hold a plebescite to allow the Kashmiris to determine their future. That plebescite has been denied to the Kashmiris. That is a cause of great anguish to the people of Kashmir. It has also been a cause of two wars so far, between India and Pakistan. Pakistan occupies about a third of Kashmir and India two-thirds. The Pakistanis say, at least formally, that they are willing to hold the plebescite. India is the one which is now refusing to do so. The uprising is on the Indian side of Kashmir.

Is there a communal factor at work? Is there a Hindu-Muslim issue?

It is a Hindu-Muslim issue to the extent, although it must not be exaggerated, that the majority of Kashmiri population is Muslim, about sixty-five per cent, and about thirty-five per cent are Hindus. I said it should not be exaggerated because my feeling is that had India had the courage to hold the plebescite in 1949, when it promised, or 1955, when it was scheduled, or even 1964, before the second major war between India and Pakistan over this issue, I think that the Muslim population of Kashmir would have voted to go with India. The people of Kashmir have become alienated from India for the reasons that you talked at the beginning. It is a country now in which Muslims are being massacred, in which Sikhs are being massacred, in which Christians are in jeopardy. As Hindu fundamentalists rise and the Hindu demands exclude minority groups, obviously Kashmiris have become more and more alienated from India. Primarily because they are a majority Muslim population who find themselves threatened. What they want, I think, is not joining Pakistan, but probably independence.

Let's talk about your native Pakistan. I was interested in your comment made in an earlier conversation that you feel that things have improved in the country in some respects.

First of all, they have improved to the extent that I am back there. I am spending more of my time in Pakistan.

That was something you couldn't do doing the military rule?

That was something I could not do for 30 years.

Because of the military rule?

In the first military rule of Ayub Khan, there was a warrant of arrest on me. In the second military government of Yahya Khan I was put on a death sentence. In the third military government of Zia ul-Haq I was a *persona non grata* for over 11 years. Now I am able to go back. Parliamentary government has been restored. It's at least formal democracy. I would like to see it become a truer democracy, but I would also like to see the United States become a truer democracy. What is more interesting about Pakistan is that greater freedom of speech and association has drastically reduced the power and influence of the Islamic movement. More people are able to speak out challenging the premise of fundamentalism, and fresh air seems to blow away the worst of religious right-wing thinking. I am mentioning this because countries like Egypt and Algeria, which are constantly facing the fundamentalist threat, should learn from it. A great deal of Islamic fundamentalism thrives on absence of freedom, as it did in the Iran of the Shah. Dissent has no place to go except the mosques. The answer to the fundamentalist divide is more democracy, not more dictatorship. The tragedy is that the United States government, while opposed to fundamentalism (in Pakistan) now, supports dictatorships in Algeria, in Egypt and repressive monarchies in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. So the United States is actually supporting both fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist dictatorships in the Middle East, from Saudi Arabia to Algeria. This has to stop. If there is a democracy, I think the battle can be fought in an open field and we are going to win. By "we" I mean the secular Muslim forces.

You write a weekly column for* Dawn*, an English-language newspaper. Can you pretty much write whatever you want?

I can write anything I want. I am also writing for some Middle Eastern newspapers, including *El Hayat*, which is one of the largest Arabic-language papers. In the Middle East the record is that about 60 per cent of my columns appear and 40 per cent get censored out.

Those are in the Arab countries, you mean?

In the Arab countries. But in Pakistan, a 100 per cent gets published.

Tell me what radio and TV are like in Pakistan. Can you have a discussion like this?

Radio and television are government controlled in Pakistan still.

So there really aren't any independent electronic media. Why do you think they give a little slack to the print media?

Interesting question. I don't know. Partly tradition. Partly the feeling that only about 20 per cent of the population can read the print media because illiteracy is nearly 75 per cent in Pakistan. So no more than 20 per cent of the population can read and write. Incidentally, I should say that the English-language media are more free than the local languages media.

Urdu and Punjabi?

Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi. All those languages. The media are somehow not more censored, but certainly more dominated by the government point of view. They are poorer. They cannot afford the money. The live on government subsidies. Therefore the print will be much more conservative. English media are more free.

Neighbouring Afghanistan in the 1980s was the focus of a multibillion not-so-covert US operation in support of various mujahideen groups resisting Soviet occupation. What has been the legacy of the Afghan war in Pakistan?

Much worse than the legacy of the Afghan war in the United States. In the United States all you have are people like Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. You don't have to live with too much. Sheikh Abdel Rahman was clearly one of the great allies of the United States.

In the Afghan war?

They brought him for that reason. When I said that five months ago, no one was ready to believe it. Now *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* are finally publishing that information. It has become much too clear to suppress it. For Pakistan the effects are, number one, guns. We have now for a population of 110 million people about four million people who possess illicit arms. Secondly, and worse, there is a huge amount of gun trade going to India, to Sri Lanka, to other countries of the world from Pakistan. These are all American guns which are surplus from the war in Afghanistan. Thirdly, drugs. The drugs were very heavily promoted during the Afghanistan war. The CIA was very deeply involved in it. Once the war is over, the Soviets have been defeated, America has taken its profits, but the drugs are still with us. There is a lot of bitterness among the groups that were working with the CIA because now the CIA is trying to pay off people to stop the drug trade.

They're also trying to buy back the Stinger missiles at a huge cost.

I know. $55 million. But they won't get more than two or three.

What's the situation like in northwestern Pakistan, in the Peshawar area near the Khyber Pass, which was the center of the mujahideen movement?

It is something to go and look. The place reeks of drugs and guns and refugees. We have four million refugees. Americans and the Germans and the British and the French were all providing a lot of supplies to support the refugees during the war against the Soviet Union. Now the Soviet Union is over. America has its victory. The refugees have been abandoned. There is no money coming in. Pakistanis have to feed them. American aid to Pakistan has stopped. So it's a mess. But somehow we are trying to manage.

I'd like to move still further west, to the Middle East. Noam Chomsky tells how he has to give titles of lectures years in advance. He has one title that he says always seems to work for him, no matter how far in advance it's given. That's called "The Current Crisis in the Middle East". Why is the Middle East in seeming constant crisis?

For a number of reasons. First, and it's very important, the Middle East is the world area of convergence. Areas of convergence are always so strategic that nobody leaves them in peace. What do I mean by area of convergence? A lot of things related to world politics come together in the Middle East. Take into account the following: This is the center of energy for the Western world. For the West, economic and strategic interests converge in the Middle East. Take another one: Geographically, it's in the middle of everywhere. Africa and Europe and Asia, Central Asia and South Asia and Western Asia converge here. This has been known since Roman times as the crossroads of civilization. Convergence. Take a third one: Here the worst conflicts of our time are converging. Israeli Zionism and Arab nationalism. Secularism and fundamentalism. Nationalism and internationalism. All sorts of battles are converging in this region. The result is that it has remained in a state of total crisis. There is finally another important factor to be remembered. This is the last of the great non-Western civilizations to decline. Indian civilization had already declined by the seventeenth century when the British took over. By the eighteenth century it was finished. Chinese civilization was in a mess by the middle of the eighteenth century. Africa was way behind by the sixteenth century. The Middle East held out as the powerful center of the world right up to the nineteenth century. Remind yourself of the fact that it was after the discovery of the New World, just before the French Revolution, that the last Muslim armies had knocked on the gates of Vienna. So it's still a civilization that stands between recovery and decline. It's a kind of violent situation, a situation of deep confusion, uncertainty, not knowing which way this boat may turn. Hence the current crisis. Who knows how long it will last?

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, talking about US policy in the region, said in late April: "I am determined that the United States not only seem evenhanded but that we actually be evenhanded." What's been the US record in terms of being evenhanded?

Unevenhanded.

Can you be more specific?

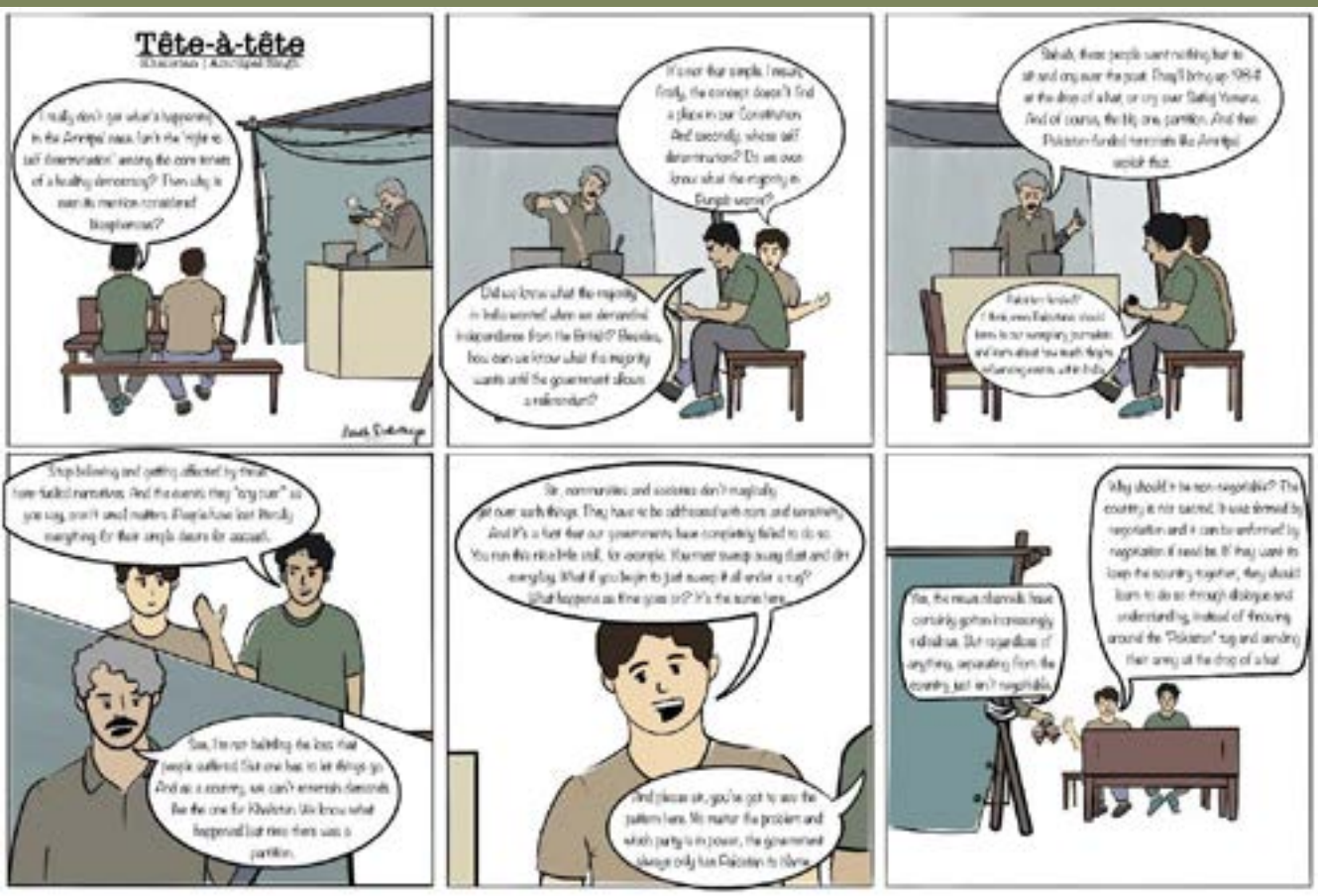
I can be very specific in ten different ways. Take the most immediate. The United States pressured every Middle Eastern government and the PLO to come back to the peace negotiations without the Israelis respecting international law. The Israeli government deported more than 400 persons, in December of 1992, from the occupied territories. Lebanon would not accept them. Therefore they are sitting in a no man's land for the last seven months. The United Nations passed two resolutions condemning Israel for doing this against international law. The United States government acknowledges, the State Department

acknowledges, that the Israeli expulsion of these people, who have not been charged of any crime, who have not been tried of anything, they have just been deported on some sort of suspicion, without trial, without anything, is against the Geneva Conventions, against international law, against UN resolutions. After all that, the United States says to the Arabs, *You sit with Israel while Israel continues to defy international law*. That is not quite being evenhanded, is it?

Or take the negotiations themselves. In the negotiations, the Arabs have given everything they could give. The PLO is not represented officially. Jerusalem is not represented officially, which merely acknowledges Israeli control of Jerusalem, which is illegal under international law. The Palestinians in exile are not represented, apart from the PLO. And yet the negotiations are taking place. Everything in the negotiation process has been weighted in favor of Israel.

Or take, finally, that the current Israeli invasion of Lebanon was a violation of international law and of human rights in every sense of the word. The Prime Minister of Israel publicly stated and acknowledged that he was bombing the civilian population to create a refugee crisis for the government of Lebanon. The media, by the way, were so bad that they continued to portray the Lebanese resistance to Israel as somehow an attack on Israel, which it was not. Israel invaded the whole of Lebanon, made for 250,000 refugees, in punishment for Lebanese resistance to the occupation of the territory. The Israeli soldiers who were killed died on Lebanese territory, not in Israel.

2 CARTOON



Credits: Ashish Duttatreya

In the broadest and most universal sense, what is Khalistan? Isn't it merely an expression of the desire for independence? Manifested in the language of nations and states, as the right to self-determination. Even if we do not find this demand justified, do we not owe the demand-makers an honest conversation? To understand their viewpoint, maybe even be convinced by it. To morally concede to them their claimed right.

But how can such a conversation happen if the very expression of this desire has been criminalized? When the people who express this desire and are willing to talk are charged with a variety of colourful offences and thrown behind bars, far away, in another hotly contested land.

All of us recognize this universal desire, of which Khalistan is a local expression. The desire itself, it manifests with different names everywhere. The idea of India was once purported to be an expression of this desire. So was the idea of Pakistan. Today, these two states have themselves joined the forces, also universal, policing this desire in all its local manifestations.

Most obviously, we see the same desire manifest a little to the north of Punjab, in Kashmir. The expressors of this desire have long been beaten, maimed, raped, jailed, tortured, killed, disappeared, impoverished . . . broken. The truth they carry buried with them or without them.

Interestingly, all of us Indians also have this desire. This is the same desire we see in the feminist movement, the communist movement and the Ambedkarite movement. At its root, this desire stems from a moral precept, that nobody who desires freedom should be denied it. If we claim the right to be free, we claim it as a universal right, as a human right, or we have no right to claim it at all.

-- Editor's note

3 ARTICLE

Credits: Vineet Gedam

HINDI-URDU RELATIONS

Written in Urdu by *Professor Sadiq*
Transliterated from Urdu by *Shahadat*
Translated from Hindi by *Akshat*

Topics like 'Hindi-Urdu relations' have generally been considered very controversial, not just these days but for the past two centuries. Old books, journals and newspapers tell us that the linguistic dispute between Hindu and Urdu began in the nineteenth century and since then there has been a knot in the rope connecting these two languages. If the matter had remained limited to this much, it would still have been alright. But once the knot was tied, the rope started getting tangled, till it became more an imbroglio than a rope. Many valiant attempts were made to untangle the rope but they ended up doing more harm than good. The more they tried to untangle the rope, the more it got tangled, till a situation was reached where one language became two merely based on the script, or as some intellectuals hold: one language was divided into two—Hindi and Urdu—by English rulers.

What happed after that is a unique historical event. That is, the new languages were given religions—Urdu was declared a Muslim language while Hindi became a Hindu language. This was a tragedy. The foot soldiers of empire had a special role to play in the propagation of this line of thought, especially the late scholar George Abraham Grierson. He was a famous linguist and a member of the Indian Civil Service in late 19th century who first proposed the Linguistic Survey of India. In the event, his claim was accepted as true and Hindi started being seen as joined to Hinduism and Urdu started being seen as connected to Islam. To stop the fight between the scripts, a proposal was made to use the Roman script. Many advantages of such a move were detailed out but the proposal met with frustration as the Indian mind refused to accept the alien script.

"The new languages were given religions—Urdu was declared a Muslim language while Hindi became a Hindu language"

There are thousands of languages all over the world with their own regions and speakers. Languages are commonly associated with a specific region or country based on the population

which speaks it, but no language is ever associated with a religion. At least I am unable to find an example of such a thing. By what stretch of logic then can Urdu be declared the language of Muslims? Even today, the speakers and writers of Urdu include Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Christians. Fifty years ago, the number of Urdu-speaking Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Christians was much larger, everyone knows this, just like everyone knows that Muslims neither reside in any one region of India nor do they speak any one language. Muslims in Bengal speak Bangla, In Kerala they speak Malayalam, in Gujarat Gujarati and in Tamil Nadu Tamil. If they speak and write in Koshur in Kashmir, then they speak and write in Assamese in Assam. Even in Pakistan, the number of Sindhi, Punjabi, Syriac and Pashto speakers is higher than Urdu speakers. In Bangladesh, almost everyone speaks Bangla. How can this fact be ignored, even as it is staring us in the face?

It is clear that in the presence of these facts, Urdu cannot be declared a Muslim language. Let alone Urdu, I am not even willing to accept Arabic as a Muslim language, because just as Urdu's foundations were laid before Muslims arrived in India, Arabic was also spoken before the advent of Islam. Secondly, apart from Muslims, there have always been and still are a large number of Christian and Jewish Arabic speakers. Hindi does not just become a Hindu language and Urdu does not just become a Muslim language because someone says so passionately or this illogical assertion is made in dictionaries, in fact these acts only raise further questions to be answered, for example, if Hindi is a Hindu language, then what would you call (Sufi singer, musician, poet and scholar) Amir Khusrow, (Sufi poet and pir) Malik Mohammad Jayasi, (poet and one of the Navratnas) Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, (poet) Qutubun, (Sufi poet) Manjhan, (Sufi poet and devotee of Krishna Syed Ibrahim Khan) Raskhaan, (poet) Aalam, etc.? And if Urdu is a Muslim language, then where would (novelist, columnist and editor) Ratan Nath Dhar Sarshar, (poet) Daya Shankar Kaul Nasim, (writer) Munshi Premchand, (poet) Brij Narayan Chakbast, (writer, critic and poet) Firaq Gorakhpuri, etc. find space?

"Only the lover's desire is true, everything else is foolishness"

The Muslim and Hindu men of letters that I just mentioned are not only included in the syllabus for these languages, their writings have been taught to us right through schools, colleges and will thus be taught for a long time to come. To join Hindi and Urdu to particular religions is actually to strike a blow at the true relation between the two languages. I don't know why we don't exercise more caution in this matter, why we are afraid to think about it seriously and deeply. The language that you call your mother tongue, in which you think, speak, read and write, have you ever thought about how much of it is Hindi and how much Urdu? When and how does it transform from Urdu to Hindu or from Hindi to Urdu? When I look deep within myself and think about this issue, then I come face to face with many mysterious truths. When I learnt how to speak as a toddler, the first word I must have said would surely have been "Ma". Now you tell me what was the first word you learnt and spoke? If you also say that this was the first word you also learnt, then I will ask you, is this word Hindi or Urdu? The word might be the same, but our replies to this question would be very different. Your mother tongue is Hindi. Therefore, it would be natural for you to say that this is a Hindi word. My mother tongue is Urdu. Therefore, my claim cannot be wrong that this is an Urdu word. The matter is not limited to one or a few words but thousands of words we have learnt after

the first one, like dada-dadi, nana-nani, chacha, mama, bhai, behen, bhaiya, roti-paani, saag, sabzi, aloo, tamatar, etc. The words for animals, fruits, vegetables, things, there are too many such words to name here about which one of us would say they are Urdu while the other would swear by all that is holy to them that they are Hindi. And this relation between Hindi and Urdu is not limited to words alone. With words come sentences which we use in our everyday lives. Such sentences are also in their thousands. The Hindi for "I am eating", is *mai khata hun*, but this is also the Urdu for "I am eating". How would one translate this sentence from Hindi to Urdu or vice versa? This is the true relation between Hindi and Urdu.

(Reformer, philosopher and educationist) Syed Mohammad Khan had compared Hindi and Urdu to the two beautiful eyes of a bride—even if one eye is damaged, the bride would lose her charm. Premchand also considered Hindi and Urdu to be one language written in two scripts. In his article titled *The Aim of Literature*, he wrote that according to him Hindu and Urdu are one language. When subject and object, verb and adjective are the same, then there can be no doubt that the languages are the same. Premchand wrote stories, articles and novels in both these scripts all his life. He has pride of place in the literary histories of both Hindi and Urdu. For the past few decades, the curriculums of both these languages have been graced with his creations. Premchand's son and popular Hindi author Amrit Rai has written a book on the Hindi-Urdu dispute. According to him, this was one house that has now been divided.

"Syed Mohammad Khan had compared Hindi and Urdu to the two beautiful eyes of a bride—even if one eye is damaged, the bride would lose her charm"

Linguistic history tells us that Hindu and Urdu were born from the womb of *Khari Boli*. They evolved with time. Soon, the number of Sanskrit words started increasing in Hindi and Farsi words in Urdu, though this difference is not felt at the level of everyday conversation. For example, if we were talking to each other, reading a story or a novel, watching a play, TV show or a film, we wouldn't feel this difference because we would have no trouble understanding the language. On the other hand, the language of academic articles and books is difficult, because Hindi writers liberally make use of the difficult words of Sanskrit and Urdu writers do the same with Farsi. I understand it is necessary for them to do so. These kinds of books require to be translated from Urdu to Hindi and vice versa. Whereas in the case of a story, play novel, etc., mere transliteration from Nastaliq to Nagri or vice versa does the trick, though sometimes an explanation needs to be adduced to a word or two. I had edited a book called *Nayi Hindi Shayari* (New Hindi Poetry) about 20–25 years ago. In the prologue of that book, I had presented the point, buttressed by an example, about how a Hindi poem becomes Urdu merely by being transliterated and maybe changing a few words here and there. In 1990, I translated a few of (novelist, short story writer, academic and journalist) Qurratulain Hyder's short stories from Urdu to Hindi, which were published in the form of a book titled *Ye Daag-Daag*

Ujala (This Stained Dawn). In later years, I translated the representative poetry collection of (poet and essayist) Ashok Vajpeyi called *Kahin Nahin Wahin* (Nowhere but There) from Hindi to Urdu for the Sahitya Akademi. In both these cases, I only needed to translate a few words. Whatever else I did was not translation but transliteration. I have given these examples to show from the basis of my own experience the close relation of Hindi and Urdu.

Hindu and Urdu have different names. No one can deny that their scripts are different. Not only this, the literature written in Hindi and Urdu is also different. These are the truths which generate the reluctance to accept Hindu and Urdu as one language. There is one more hindrance. To remove this obstacle is not something I or anyone can do but I can at least give an example to clarify what I am saying. Separate languages are recognized by the fact of their speakers needing an interpreter to understand each other. Imagine a Bangla speaking person who does not know Marathi. And there is another person who knows Marathi but is ignorant of Bangla. Both of them don't know the other's language. In this situation, to talk to each other they will require an interpreter who knows both their languages well. Will they be able to talk without an interpreter? You will say no. And my second question will be, do you likewise feel the need for an interpreter between an Urdu-speaker and a Hindi-speaker? You will say no again. That is because a Hindi-speaker and an Urdu-speaker do not require any kind of an interpreter between them. This in itself is the most concrete proof of Hindi and Urdu fundamentally being one language.

A Hindi-speaker and an Urdu-speaker do not require any kind of an interpreter between them

This incident is from the 1980s. In those days, other than the MA and MPhil courses in the Urdu department of Delhi University, I also used to teach students in the 'Urdu Certificate Course'. This certificate course was for those people whose mother tongue wasn't Urdu. In these courses, there also used to be a few international students who had arrived here after finishing their diplomas in something like Indology. They used to learn both Nastaliq and Nagri scripts before coming here. Their understanding of these two disputed languages appeared to be quite healthy to me. We Indians might have rejected and forgotten the formula of *Hindi* + *Urdu* = *Hindustani* that Gandhi had created to resolve the problem of the national language, which had also been enthusiastically supported by Premchand, Sajjad Zaheer et al, but these foreigners fully recognize the importance of it. They have successfully been able to use it as well.

We viewed the formula with suspicion. The patrons of Nagri thought that Gandhi was trying to force Nastaliq down their throats. While the patrons of Nastaliq were fearful that Gandhi was trying to make Nagri the dominant script. In the fog of suspicion, both parties were not able to look very far. The advocates of English suggested once again that the Roman script should be adopted to resolve this dispute once and for all, but very few hands were raised in support of the Roman script and that proposal died before it could start walking.

I have shown many similarities between Hindi and Urdu. There could be yet more similarities apart from these that I am not aware of. Despite these similarities between the two languages, we cannot turn away from the truth that Hindu and Urdu are two different languages which exist separately from each other. Both have their own alphabets. Both have their own scripts. Both have their own dictionaries. Both have their own writers. Both have their own literatures and literary histories to be proud of.

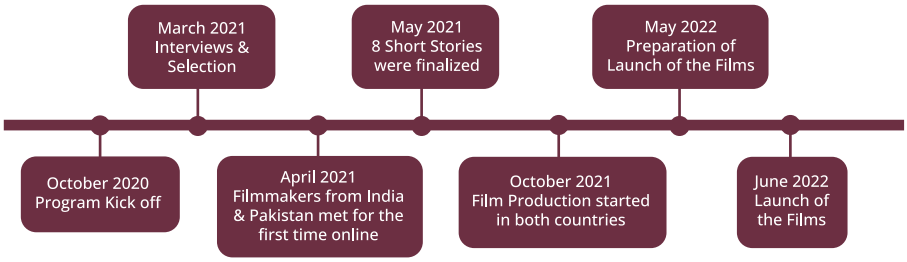
Hindi and Urdu are the daughters of Khari Boli. Despite being the same to a large extent on the level of everyday conversation, they keep their separate identities. There is no possibility that both will become one at some point, though it is good for both of them to go on together like two parallel railway tracks.

4 FROM THE REELS

THE KITNAY DUUR, KITNAY PAAS INITIATIVE

FILM REVIEWS OF 'NANI' AND 'ASSI NABBE PURAY SOU'

By *Ashish Duttatreya*



Indian films are as popular in Pakistan as they are in India. Pakistani TV shows are perhaps even more popular in India than they are in Pakistan. And why would it not be so? We, as people, aren't very different after all. Our languages, tastes, and ways of going about life, are all easily relatable on both sides of the border. Yet, there have not been many instances of artistic collaboration between our storytellers.

The 'Kitnay Duur, Kitnay Paas' initiative, undertaken by Seeds of Peace (a peacebuilding and leadership development organisation) and the U.S. Dept. of State (the irony of America involved in peacebuilding is not lost on me but sometimes even a Hitler can be good for some animals), was aimed at bringing together digital filmmakers from India and Pakistan to collaborate and make films on shared issues, highlight our similarities, and hopefully spur critical thinking about regional challenges. Beginning in October 2020, the entire process took nearly two years, and a total of 8 short films were launched under the initiative in June 2022. Paucity of time and resources allow us to take up two of those films for this edition, 'Nani' and 'Assi Nabbe Puray Sou'.

Written and directed by Ebad Khan, 'Nani' is the story of a young boy, Hassan, and his nani (maternal grandmother) and her longing (or what the Portuguese call saudade) for her long-lost home.

Set in a small village in Pakistan, the film begins with a distraught Hassan looking for his nani in a busy marketplace. He finally finds her sitting in an abandoned railway station, 'waiting for her train to India.' As a viewer, one cannot help but feel for this old woman and the ache that she must have carried for so long. The abandoned railway station seems symbolic, almost, of a time, that for many came to a standstill as they fled from their homes during Partition. Her delusion

and her longing for home even in this state evokes a deep sense of discomfort, as we pine for a resolution.

As it happens, Hassan comes across Iqbal, a true desi hustler in every sense of the word. Hassan happens to overhear him as he's trying to sell his goods (perfumes, imitation jewellery, etc.) by making tall claims of having procured these items from all over the world, including India. As others leave, Hassan approaches Iqbal and shares with him his wish to take his nani to India. He asks if Iqbal would take them, to which he agrees, stating that they would need at least 2 lakh rupees for the same. As a viewer, one feels hesitant about trusting Iqbal, a sentiment shared by nani when Hassan tells her of his encounter. The agonizing longing for home becomes clear yet again, as, despite being suspicious, she brings out all their savings, including gold and jewellery, to gather enough money.

Their journey, albeit a short sequence, beautifully highlights one thing. In Iqbal's lively hustle, in his pride regarding his bargaining prowess and in his constant restlessness to get his money while staying respectful to nani, we see so many people that we personally know and see every day. I do not know about the world, but can say with certainty that there are countless such Iqbals on both sides of the border.

Finally, they reach their destination. There are temples, and images and sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses in the streets. Nani's joy upon seeing her home again is infectious. If the film were to end here, it would still be a beautiful film, albeit a little too direct. It would still manage to put across plenty that needed to be expressed.

But it is the climactic revelation of this "Indian village" which perfectly captures, perhaps the most crucial theme of the film, that of shared heritage. The village isn't in India. They're still in Pakistan.

Such is the thoughtful juxtaposition of familiar Indian iconography with subtle differences, that while nani is filled with bliss at having been to her home again, Hassan, Iqbal and us, the viewers, are perhaps left to question our preconceived notions of borders.

The film concludes with Iqbal rejecting their money, and praying that one day, nani would actually be able to visit India. For a film that has strived to break preconceived notions and evoke emotions of familial love and warmth, finding out that our street-smart Iqbal also has a heart of gold after all, makes for a wholesome conclusion.

The telling of 'Assi Nabbe Puray Sou' revolves around a special photograph. The story takes place in India and Pakistan simultaneously. Written by Nidhi Sharma and directed by Hamza Maya, this film studies the multi-generational facet of partition and its long-lasting horrors. The ease with which the film marches forward, full of humour and vibrance, is quite commendable given its sensitive subject.

It enraptures you from the very first moment. As the camera slowly pans into a typical Indian household, Ram Sampath's comically nasal 'Saigal Blues' plays in the background. The family is preparing for Amma's

100th birthday celebrations. Amma is the oldest member in a family with four generations living under one roof.

The premise of the film is triggered by a small mishap, where, due to faulty wiring, a small fire breaks out. While it isn't serious at all, a certain photograph hanging on the wall gets burnt. Just as it happens, Amma's health begins to deteriorate rather alarmingly. The family realises that her health is directly connected to this photograph. They also discover her will, which states that if she dies before turning 100, all her property should go to charity.

With the tone of the narrative beautifully set, we embark on a journey with the family, to get that cherished photograph, which they soon discover is in Pakistan.

It would be wise to hold back from sharing some aspects of the film here, because that may be doing disservice to an extremely well-crafted story. The outline is that the person who has this photograph in Pakistan is also related to Amma, although even he is unaware of the extent of truth about his lineage and heritage.

Once again, as the film cuts back and forth between India and Pakistan, capturing lives on both sides of the border, it is very clear that we are essentially the same beautiful people. Simple, even in the chaotic complexities of life. Loving, even in the midst of sorrow and hardships. This duality is present in the making of the film as well. The way humour has been tied into this emotionally taxing journey gives us a clear glimpse into the minds and hearts of the creators.

The journey concludes with certain truths being discovered regarding the past, which acts as a strong catharsis for both the characters and the viewers. Amma finally gets to see the photograph, and seems to be getting well again, as the camera pans back and 'Saigal Blues' plays in the background.

You will find both these films on YouTube for free. Certainly, the craft is not as sophisticated and the production, not as grand. Still, these are truly well-made films, from a purely technical viewpoint. But it is the heart of these stories that makes them special and worth watching. The emotions that are evoked are much needed, especially in the present day. We must realize the arbitrariness of our borders and the senselessness of our hate. We must see that we are all together in this thing we call life. And the films under this initiative are more than capable of making people see that we are together. We are divided by borders and separated by distance, yet united by our shared past and brotherhood. Kitnay Duur, Kitnay Paas.

5 CASTE

Credits: Prateek Draik

ON DISPOSSESSION OF CASTE

Poet: *Shripad Sinnakaar*

The eyes of the bear hidden in the exodus
of its thousand black pelages.
Red from how they exhume the looked at-, an unseen slit,
the other happenings, dispersed, all beckoning,
blazing on the edges till the titles.
Children pluck the mane of the bear to test its sainthood
as it rustles, with its i-look-at-you-&-you-become pauses at each door
to a stealth pace of noon. Its body a setting of slow withdrawal,
(as its keeper, a boy, dragging its chains,
calling out to collect alms) its back now beating–—
how many? how many? how many?
chafed by the pecking & cawing, disjunct
from where it looks at me. Is it now, standing at my threshold,
rising on its hind to show itself, reminding itself
of my toothlessness? The direction the children elope to,
away from this corner the boy fastens its chain in,
off-centred, crusting on the rims of a drum left to fill itself in rain
–—dehiscent & nameless–—starting a fold to warm its end,
fraying, all brown shot in dark algae green.
Uncoiling in slow circles, downwards, in the path of its retrace–—
echoing in its decomposition, the last sigh of a swell
stripping to worsted pleatings,
deducted to a blade of scrap. Rust is our redemption.
As in we have touched, we are forsaken.
Chawl daughters married off afar don't even return
for their brothers' funeral.
Steep between the walls–—
never a behind, there is no back to it, only napes that are seldom skies.
A kothi over her phone pressed hot in it, & then another
in the adjacent dark, & another.
Arriving in white flocks. Curses, slights
like cheap marigold blossoms torn apart.
Now gilded embroidery–—

IT IS TIME TO TALK ABOUT CASTE IN PAKISTAN AND PAKISTANI DIASPORA

By *Shaista Abdul Aziz Patel*
(First published on 15 December 2020 by Al Jazeera)

On 29 September 2020, Manisha Valmiki, a 19-year-old Dalit girl succumbed to her injuries from a gang rape committed by four Thakur (upper caste) men in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. News of the incident caused outrage across India and the rest of the world, including in Pakistan and the diaspora.

I and many fellow Pakistanis have actively participated in social media campaigns demanding justice for Valmiki. But few of us have said much about another horrendous death of a Dalit woman.

On 30 September, just a day after Valmiki's death, 17-year-old Momal Meghwar took her own life in the village of Dalan-Jo-Tarr in Sindh province, Pakistan. A year earlier, she had been brutally raped and filmed by three men who have remained at large.

Meghwar was the 58th woman to take her own life this year in Thar alone. There is a multitude of reasons for this macabre statistic and all are at the intersections of gender, religion, class and caste.

"Meghwar was the 58th woman to take her own life this year in Thar alone"

Yes, caste—a word which many of us Pakistani feminist scholars and organizers, especially those with sectarian, caste and class privileges in the diaspora, remain unfamiliar with, whether wilfully or out of ignorance.

Of course, due to the untiring work of mostly (but not exclusively) Indian-origin Dalit feminists and organizations such as Equality Labs, those of us Pakistanis who have not thought about caste before are learning about caste in India and its diaspora.

However, concerns raised by Dalit and anti-caste thinkers from Pakistan often remain ignored and outright dismissed, especially by caste and class privileged Pakistani Muslims who refuse to see caste, let alone the caste dominance and caste terror prevalent in Pakistan and its diaspora.

Pakistanis need to stop believing that Dalits live only in India. There are about 40 castes, 32 of which were listed as Scheduled Castes under the November 1957 Presidential ordinance of Pakistan. Meghwars are one of these listed castes, along with Bheels, Kolhis, Baghris and others.

While there are Dalit Muslims in Pakistan, because of the belief that there are no caste hierarchies among Muslims, the castes mentioned as scheduled are necessarily read as Hindu only. It is important to point out the infusion of upper caste Brahmin supremacy that has coerced and contained lower caste people into the category of Hindu. Many Dalit-Bahujan people see themselves as part of indigenous cultures and traditions and reject Hinduism as their religious identification.

Moreover, the majority of Christians in the country are also Dalit—pejoratively labelled as Chuhra. As a recent *New York Times* article on Dalit Christians taking up scavenging jobs in Pakistan notes, according to the 1998 census, Christians made up only 1.6 per cent of the population but filled 80 per cent of the sweeper jobs. This caste apartheid is prevalent in Pakistan and yet there is no authentic caste census available.

"Pakistanis need to stop believing that Dalits live only in India"

Just like in India, Dalits face discrimination by society at large and by the state. In a 2007 report on the condition of Scheduled Castes in Pakistan, journalist Zulfiqar Shah points out that a 6 per cent government job quota for Scheduled Castes from urban and rural areas put forward in 1948 was never ethically implemented and was simply scrapped in the 1990s.

In other words, no political or economic security measures are extended to Scheduled Caste people who continue to be seen simply as "religious minorities" in Pakistan and marked for violence with impunity.

That is why it is important to call Momal Meghwar's rape and death by suicide what it is: caste-based sexual violence. While Pakistani mainstream media has mostly stayed silent, in some instances where the incident was discussed, it was made into a case of her being Hindu, a religious minority, effectively erasing caste which is also one of the main factors legitimizing violence against lower caste people by both upper caste Muslims and Hindus.

The murder of social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch in 2016, which was widely covered by the media, was also linked to caste, but journalists and scholars overwhelmingly ignored that aspect. One of the people who drew attention in public to the role caste played in the killing was anti-caste activist, Auwn Gurmani.

As he explained in a July 2020 tweet: "We remember Qandeel and we also remember she was killed because of her gender, class and most importantly caste background: Qandeel's caste was Mehra (ارائیں in Siraiki). Mahar, Mehra, Mehar, Mahara—all these castes have the same origin, scheduled caste in Madhya Pradesh."

Caste dismissal in Pakistan often comes from the belief that because we are Muslim, caste does not exist in our communities and societies. Unlike Hindu scriptures, the Quran does not establish and condone a

caste system. Moreover, unlike India, Pakistan does not have Brahminical cis-heteropatriarchy and Islamophobia governing the nation-state.

The ritualistic, religious, familial, social, economic, political and gendered aspects of caste have their own tones in Pakistan. It is not saffron-tinted, as Hindu nationalism is, but rather it takes a green, Islamic traditional, hue. This is not to say that the importation and translation of Hindutva ideology are not happening across the border and do not affect Pakistani Muslims' conception of caste.

As Sindhi anti-caste scholar Ghulam Hussain, who has contributed ground-breaking work on caste relations in Sindh, notes, Sayedism and Brahminism are infused with each other. Sayed supremacy—which Hussain labels as Sayedism—comes from the (unproven) belief that Sayeds are genealogical descendants of Prophet Muhammad and therefore have a more authentic grasp on Islam and all social and political matters.

"Sayedism and Brahminism are infused with each other"

Another anti-caste researcher, Haris Gazdar, points out that "the public silencing on caste contrasts with an obsession with it in private dealings." There is always violence attached to caste hierarchies of which Gazdar names several examples, such as having pejorative labels to strict taboos around eating and drinking together and sharing of utensils to stealing land to beatings and rapes of men and women of lower caste people with impunity, all to "keep them in their place".

Islam is often evoked by upper caste Muslims as the reason for some of these practices. Pakistani Muslims would argue that lower caste people from Hindu and Christian minorities eat "haram" (forbidden by Islamic law) food. However, eating with upper caste Hindus and Christians is not frowned upon.

These Brahminical notions of ritual purity become aligned with concepts of "paak" (pure/clean) and "naapak" (impure/unclean) under Muslims' casteist interpretations of Islam. Even when lower caste people from religious minorities convert to Islam, they continue to meet with the same caste-based violence. Conversion to Islam in Pakistan does not de-casteize the lower caste people who continue to be treated as "untouchables".

There is also the commonly circulated argument that caste exists only in rural areas of provinces like Sindh and Punjab. But caste dangerously circulates as common sense in large cities as well.

A recent example of this, even among young people who are usually understood as more progressive than their parents' generation, is a student-led survey at the University of Lahore in Punjab in which students were asked on camera questions about how caste informs choices they make about romantic relationships and friendships. Every single one of these students knew their caste from Sayeds to Arains (a predominantly agricultural caste) to Sheikhs (a lower caste stereotyped as having a business acumen). In the almost nine-minute-long video, it is quite clear that caste is an active and everyday experience for university students in an urban setting.

More survey work needs to be done in urban and rural areas, as well as in the diaspora to fully understand the forms which caste takes at our dinner tables, in our kinships, our attachments, workplaces and every other aspect of our lives.

As many of us diasporic Pakistanis become invested in liberatory projects of Black Lives Matter and indigenous sovereignties in the west and educated about caste politics in India, it appears that this is indeed the right time to turn inwards and explore our own experiences with caste. Sayedism—a prime example of upper caste dominance and hegemony—is quite prominent among us and should be studied both in Pakistan and in the diaspora.

In our pursuit of understanding caste, however, we also need to be very careful, particularly us western-educated, class- and caste-privileged diasporic scholars. Some of us go to Pakistan to focus on caste violence in the menial jobs lower castes are relegated to, such as scavenging or sanitation work.

While I think these anthropological studies have their place and must be done, I am also reminded of scholar Joby Mathew's remarks in the book Hatred in the Belly: "If any intellectual wants to emphasize the pathetic condition of Dalits through these derogatory images [of scavenging], that itself amounts to symbolic violence."

Furthermore, when looking into caste-based, gender-based violence and trying to understand a figure such as Baloch in all her complexities, our analysis needs to move beyond the binaries of lower caste women as either vulnerable victims or heroes. Therefore, it is urgent that we engage with Dalit feminist theory.

And finally, we also have to remain aware and mindful of how Islamophobia and anti-Pakistan violence can be disruptive in our critical work on complicity in various structures of domination. To talk about violence in Pakistan is difficult because of how quickly nationalist non-Muslim Indians—and even those Indian Muslims invested in the idea of Brahminical India—latch onto our critiques to further malign Pakistan as a terrorist Muslim state.

But the intense Islamophobia, casteism and colonial violence—in relation to Kashmir, for example—in India should not be a reason not to have these important conversations and studies in Pakistan and the diaspora. After all, these violent paradigms are interconnected and know no borders.

6 KASHMIR

KARAMAT ALI KHAN

By *O Kashmiri*

(These two stories are part of a collection of four stories first published in 2020 and 2021 in *Inverse Journal*. O. Kashmiri brings us the short stories of a land and its people told through the story of a man and his struggle, as both are inevitably interlinked and bound by grief, despair and hopelessness.)

Sometime after the Summit of the Great Leaders, Karamat Ali was informed that he would have to leave his home on the mountain slope. The Army was building a new headquarter and needed the slope because the current Commanding Officer's wife had taken a fancy for the view from the lovely, deforested slope, overlooking a small, quaint valley full of mustard fields in spring, and paddy fields in summer. The taking of land of the 'natives' was now fully permitted after the Summit of Great Leaders. The 'natives' had no recourse to prevent their uprooting.

In that Summit of Great Leaders, Great Leader-I, who had previously married, but abandoned his wife, met Great Leader-II, who had previously married twice, and then settled for a spiritual connection with a third, under the watchful eye of Great Leader-III who had married a Rockstar. Great Leader III was the most powerful and had built a network of roads and bridges throughout the world so that his people could navigate through far-off lands and trade wherever they wanted. One such road passed close to Karamat Ali's village. The Great Leaders resolved that their respected nuclear power states, built on varying degrees of concepts of Islamism, Hinduism, and Communism, now had only one common -ism, and they called it Money-ism. The Great Leaders went back and sold Great Ideas of Money-ism to their people and told their people to forget about the poor, downtrodden, and miserable that inhabited Valleys and Plateaus. Great Leader-II went to great lengths to tell his people to watch TV programmes from the past, and read about Spirituality and Awakening, and told them to look to the Heavens for help in this Great Project of Money-ism. He called it, 'Islamic Money-ism.' Great Leader-I did not bother about any explaining. He got on to TV one day and told the people what to do and that was that. Great Leader-III did not need to do anything. Everyone in his big country knew what to do each day in the morning.

Karamat Ali was confused by Money-ism. He had had four sons. He had been taught by radio programmes about a great land, called the Land of the Pure, where rivers of honey and milk flow and where people could speak their minds without fear or hindrance and where everyone is a brother to another. He had been so inspired by the Land of the Pure that he wanted to make his mountain slope a part of the Land of the Pure when he was a young boy. He raised a green and white flag and flew it on his rooftop. Some soldiers who did not speak his language came and brought the flag down and burnt it. "Next time we will burn your house down," they said to him. He did not understand what was wrong with them. Karamat Ali married a girl from his village and

they had four sons. He named them Mohammed, Liaqat, Ayub, and Yahya. The fifth son, Zulfiqar, died in infancy. All four grew into strong lads.

One day Karamat had a visitor. The visitor told Karamat about his visit to the Land of the Pure. There was now a mission to 'liberate' his mountain slope and fight the soldiers who could not speak Karamat's language. The leaders of the Land of the Pure had decided that it was time to take the Mountain Slope back and give 'Freedom' to the people of Karamat Ali's village. Karamat was excited by this prospect. He asked all his four sons to accompany this visitor to a place where they would be trained to fight. Karamat wanted to go himself, but he was old now,

and his joints would not carry the load they once used to. Mohammed, Liaqat, Ayub, and Yahya all went with the visitor and they crossed over the mountain and were never seen again. A few days later, someone came to Karamat to tell him that all four of his sons had been killed by the soldiers who could not speak his language and their bodies had been thrown in to the gorge that was near the Land of the Pure. Karamat consoled himself. "At least in death they will be in the Land of the Pure."

Many Great Leaders came and went and Karamat was waiting for the Great Leader who would come and unify his mountain slope village with the Land of the Pure. But no one came. One day, Karamat Ali decided to declare himself a Great Leader and said he was declaring his village as part of the Land of the Pure. Many villagers looked on in disbelief as Karamat conducted a parade of his sheep, goats, and chicken in the village square, each of them painted green and white, with Karamat leading the way holding a Green and White Flag. His neighbours were bewildered at the funny sight of an old man shouting slogans about the promise of the Land of the Pure and its Great Leaders. Soon, the soldiers who could not speak his language, came, and took Karamat away. What happened in the intervening months and years, no one knows, but, when Karamat finally came back, he wasn't what he used to be. He did not speak to anyone. He did not care for anyone. He stood naked on his front porch and stared at the mountain slope in front of him, beyond which his four sons lay floating in the stream at the bottom of the gorge. He thought of all the promises he heard made on the radio and then the television and then the videos on the phone, all about the Land of the Pure and he would stare blankly and start to cry.

While he was gone, Great Leader-I had changed laws, as though they mattered, and had given the soldiers who could not speak his language a free reign to do what they wanted. On the mountain slope, where his goats and sheep once grazed, a new camp had come up, with beautiful lawns, a large mansion, a school for kids, a place to land a helicopter, and a manicured lawn where the Officers of the soldiers who could not speak his language played golf. Men from Karamat's village, who had once herds of hundreds of sheep, were now working as porters and servants in the camp. Women used to entertain the soldiers with their song and dance at night and would work in the kitchens by the day. Kids born in the Village now looked different, and they could not speak the language Karamat spoke. It was a whole new world.

When the Summit of the Great Leaders took place, Karamat spoke for the first time in years. He said to his once beautiful wife, "It is over." He realised that the Great Leaders now worshipped a new God, a God who had never come to the mountain slope before, and who only lived in banks and was prayed to when one needed a new gadget. The Great Leaders called it "Enlightened Money-ism," but Great Leader-II called it "Islamic Money-ism." Karamat Ali decided that he had to see the Land of the pure himself. "How was it possible?", he thought, "That the leaders of the Land of the Pure and the people of the Land of the Pure,

after so many years of promises, had suddenly decided to worship another God?" And now the soldiers were asking him to leave his home. Where would he go?

Karamat packed a few pieces of bread, a warm shawl, and his radio when he bade goodbye to his wife. He said he wanted to cross the mountain and travel to the Land of the Pure to ask the Great Leader-II about his plans for the mountain slope. He remembered the path from his youth and set out one morning. A few hours later he found himself facing a few soldiers who did not speak his language. They asked him a few questions, and he told them his purpose of travel. Laughing among themselves, they allowed him to proceed towards the Gorge where the Land of the Pure began. Karamat walked and walked, and he walked for a long time. He walked for days and days and he crossed mountains and hills and then plains, but he could not meet anyone who remembered anything about the Land of the Pure. Even the old people, who like him, used walking sticks and had grown white beards with rosaries in their hands, could not tell him about the Land of the Pure. Karamat kept walking until he reached the end of the Land, at the mouth of that Great river which had swallowed his four sons. And he stared at the sea ahead. At that moment, he realised what had happened. The Land of the Pure was nothing. He had been fooled and fooled many times, and he had given his sons to the visitor to fight, and he had raised the flag, and led a parade of sheep, goats, and chicken, and gone to a Godforsaken place of chains and bars, and returned, and now he wanted to see the Land of the Pure before his eyes went out. But it was not there.

Money-ism had eaten it up and spat it into the sea. At the spot where many large ships came from around the world to pick up goods from the land of Great Leader-III, Karamat decided that he would continue his search for the Land of the Pure. Not having money to buy himself a boat, Karamat thought, and thought, and thought, and then taking off his clothes, and leaving his meagre belongings by a rock on the sandy beach, he stepped into the sea for the first time in his life. A large wave was approaching. Karamat took a deep breath, said the name of the One True God he worshipped and then, most uncharacteristically, shouted, "Long Live the Land of the Pure!" and jumped into the oncoming wave.

No one heard him again.

They found his naked body by the beach a day later. Somewhere on his body, they found the marks of torture. What they could not find was the love in his heart of a Land whose promise was long forgotten. That love died with him, drowned at sea.

KARAMAT ALI KHAN AND THE BOOK OF MEMORIES

By *O Kashmiri*

I

The Book of Memories was not a single bound volume. It was a collection of diaries stored in a steel trunk in a room in Karamat Ali Khan's house that was situated in his village on the Mountain Side.

II

Everyone heard the news on their radios, and they saw it transpire on their television sets, and on their phones. The Great Leaders of the warring countries had decided to end the war that was being fought to end the war that had been started when the Great War had ended. The lines in the grass were to be replaced by walls of steel and concrete with no gaps in between. The walls were to be erected so high that even birds could not fly over them. And even packs of dogs, with the DNA of both warring nations in them, were to be separated from each other forever.

The Great Leader, a demigod, with his larger-than-life portrait adorning every household that had cooking gas, children's books, grain, or vaccines, in his country, told his loyal subjects and worshippers that the time had come to be generous and kind and to give away a part of what was rightfully theirs along the path to peace. Everyone nodded. They thought, "It is time for us to re-educate the people of the Mountain Side, over whom this war was fought. It is time to make them forget the past and make them think of the future. And what a bright future!"

The Great Cricketer, a cricketer-turned-philanthropist-turned-politician-turned-hated-hero, told his people to think about "the hungry kids of the Land of the Pure." He even displayed images of the scans of the brains of these poor, malnourished kids and asked his people, "Isn't this more important than a scrappy piece of land on the Mountains?" Everyone nodded. From the snowy peaks in the North, to the deserts of the South-West, to the lush green plains of the Centre, and the rugged, dry, restful mountains of the West, everyone nodded. They thought, "It is time to end malnutrition. It is time to rid ourselves of the war that has caused this malnutrition. It is time for us to forget the people of the Mountain Side."

And it happened thus. The Land of the Pure forgot about the Mountain Side and the people of that green, fertile, cold, welcoming place. The Great Leader's country too, forgot about the Mountain Side, but they did it by ignoring the Natives. The Great Leader passed edict after edict proclaiming the end to this law and that, until the Final Law. The Final Law was supposed to end any remnants, any memories, any symbols of the people of the Mountain Side. They were to

be 'integrated.' They were to be 'forgotten by means of assimilation.' Their history, their ways of life, their clothes, their language, were all to be subsumed into the One Nation, One Language, One Religion Theory. Their names, their faces, their homes, the names of their towns, the names of their valleys, were all to be changed to reflect the Unity of the One Nation, all under One Union. There was little the Natives of the Mountain Side could do to stop this Final Law from being implemented. Those who dared to raise their voices against the Final Law were whisked away to far-off jails for years on end, at best, and at worst, were never heard of again. The Final Law would result in the erasure from the collective memory of the place and people of the Mountain Side.

The Natives who worked under the Great Leader's apparatus went about their jobs with a zeal reserved for religious festivities. Graveyards were erased to make way for wider roads. Places and buildings that carried the memory of events past were torn down and rebuilt in the image of the Great Leader. Children born were given names as per a roster devised by a famous local Native. The Great Leader decided what crop was to be planted and when. Apples and paddy were banned. Apparently, many historical events were tied to apple trees and paddy fields. It all worked according to plan. In a few years, the children looked different, talked different, and had different names from those of their forefathers. They were told no tales of the past. They were designed to be worker bees, essential for the survival of a colony, but with no mind or memory of their own. There was only one problem.

Some old men and women, through no fault of their own, remembered, and many times all too well.

The Great Leader was informed of this travesty. In his immense wisdom he directed to collect all the old people with intact memories of the past and transport them to 're-education camps' that were scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country that now officially included the Mountain Side. With the old people gone, with the names and faces changed, there would be no memory of what had happened, whenever it had happened and where it had happened.

The edict was passed. All old people with intact memories were to be collected, bundled up into transport vehicles, and taken to camps throughout the country in specially designed trains. The Natives went about identifying those old people they knew and reporting them to the authorities. In a few weeks, the Mountain Side was emptied of its old, frail, elderly and dependent. Few ever asked questions. No one asked why it was happening. Many old people died during the transportation. Some old people, unwilling to forget, killed themselves. Some other old people, hated for their memories and ramblings of the past, were killed by their sons and daughters to spare them the trouble of travelling to hotter, humid climes elsewhere and die alone and lonely under indefinite confinement. Some old people feigned ignorance and confusion when asked their own names. The authorities of the Mountain Side realised the only way they could test the memories of these actors was to ask them to complete the sentence, "We want…" And the old people with memories, without thinking much, would say the word, "Freedom."

III

Karamat Ali Khan was quite old, frail, with only a few strands of white hair on his bald head, and a thick, flowing, white beard. He was the village headman a long time ago, long before the edict was passed that prevented Natives from taking positions of authority. He had travelled the length and breadth of the country and watched its imagination being captured by a murderous zealot who now professed to be a magnanimous Great Leader. He had sighed at the sights unfolding in front of his eyes and oftentimes wept softly at the fate that awaited this once great nation. But he was a minority in a majority that was a minority

in another majority, and no one listened to him anymore. There was a time when he was sought after for his advice and his opinion. He was especially revered for his memory.

During the days of trouble, which had never really ended, when there were few phones, and no televisions, when the news was heard on the radio, and rumours spread by word of mouth, people would walk from far away to ask Karamat a few questions. He would tune into the radio, punctually, every morning, afternoon, and night. He maintained a diary which no one saw. In the diary he took down the names and addresses of the dead, the disappeared, the raped and the arrested. Each day, the Native Police would give out a statement on the "numbers," because that is what Native life had been reduced to – numbers. Except for Karamat. He felt it his duty to keep that diary full of names and addresses. Each year he would purchase a new diary and keep the old one in his ever-burgeoning trunk full of diaries. He called it The Book of Memories. He used to tell anyone who would cast doubts at his sanity, "It is the duty of the living to remember the dead."

Mothers would come from far off after years of visiting prisons far and wide to enquire about their sons. Wives came to him to ask about their husbands. Sons, now old enough to feel the absence of the fathers they never saw, came to ask about their fathers. Daughters too. So came the brothers, in hope of finding some closure to their pain. They came and asked Karamat whether the names of their loved ones were written in his diaries. And Karamat would diligently take down the names on scraps of paper and go inside his room and disappear for a few minutes. And he would come back with the news on their deaths whenever there was a match. Mothers would cry, wives would wail, sons would weep, brothers would beat their chests. If ever Karamat declared someone to be dead, that person was most surely dead and gone forever. Not half-dead, not disappeared, not half-alive, not arrested, not detained, not missing. Well and truly dead. No habeas corpus would force anyone to produce them before any court of law anywhere.

After the edicts on old people were passed, and Karamat's old friends were being handed over to the Native Police for transportation, attention in the village shifted over to Karamat. There were whispers, which became screams. "Send the old man away," some said. "He knows too much for his own good," said others. "His memory is a burden on us," said some others. His neighbours decided to report him to the Native Police. As Karamat once had four sons, now all dead and gone, and three daughters, now married and gone, and a wife, now old and blind without a memory or an education, the villagers took it upon themselves to comply with the new edict and report him to the Native Police.

The Native Police knew more.

They knew Karamat had a trunk full of diaries, The Book of Memories. And they wanted it too. The plan was simple. In the dead of the night, while the village slept, the Native Police, in their traditional modus operandi, would enter Karamat's house, ransack it, take away anything of value and take Karamat to be transported to a 're-education camp.' The trunks would be emptied, and the contents burnt. No one could know what was in them or what stories Karamat had written or documented.

The night was illuminated by a full moon. There were no dogs in the courtyard to bark at the presence of strangers, silhouettes, or ghosts. There were no sheep left in the paddock. There were no chickens in the coop. When the Native Police came to ransack Karamat's home and take him away, there was little by way of warning or resistance anywhere. The heavens and the earth had probably conspired to rid themselves of the burden of his memories. It was cold. Karamat was woken up by the kick of an over-zealous Native Policeman who was not a Native, and who used whatever insulting expletive he could conjure to wake

the old man up. Karamat's wife was not woken, as she was deaf. Karamat was not allowed to put on any warm clothes. He was not allowed to relieve himself for the last time in his own home. He was blindfolded.

A young Native Policeman went into the 'secret' room and found a bunch of trunks with dairies in them. No one could read what was in the diaries. In their overzealousness to prove themselves loyal subjects of the Great Leader, they emptied the contents in the front courtyard and lit a fire. The Book of Memories, a book about times gone by in the Mountain Side, the chronicles of the pain of mothers, father, wives, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters, became ashes, dust, and smoke within a few minutes. Karamat could see the blazing glow of the fire through his blindfold. His faith in the One, True God kept him company. Some Native Policemen laughed. Some sneered. Some looked at him and said, "Well, that's it."

The old woman slept through the night. It had been years since she had seen or heard her husband. It had been only a few hours ago that Karamat had cooked their last meal together, and a few minutes before the Native Police had come bashing through their unlocked and unguarded door. He had covered her with a blanket on a cold night lit by a full moon, just a few hours before. She had responded to his familiar touch, like so many times in the past. Neither of them knew that it would be the last time he touched her.

Karamat was taken to the police station where he was not allowed to use the toilet. "Old men don't know how to pee," was what the Native Policeman who was not a Native said to him when he asked politely. Karamat thought of his wife and about who would take her to the toilet when she would wake up all alone. He was not thinking about the embers that lay scattered in his front courtyard. He was bundled, still blindfolded and pushed into a jeep that would take him to the headquarters where he was to be loaded onto a bigger truck to be transported to the place where he inevitably would have to spend the remaining years of his life.

As the jeep made its way across the winding paths downhill, Karamat felt a sudden urge to urinate, an urge which he could not control. And as the driver swivelled the jeep across one of the many hairpin bends, his urine trickled out. It wet his pyjamas, and then wet the seat on which he had been seated, making a small pool in the depressed centre, spreading further right, and left and soiling the dryer portion of his clothes. He did not say a word. Relief and agony swept through his body at the same time. As the driver negotiated another turn, the urine overflowed from the small pool it had made at the centre of the centre seat where Karamat sat and wet the adjacent seat. The Native Policeman—a local Native who was drunk on power and connections and was doing the bidding of The Great Leader with the dedication of a worker ant—felt his pants getting damp. In an instant he knew what had happened. The odd chance of detainees, particularly those elderly arrested, urinating themselves while being transported in a blindfold was not too uncommon. In fact, with this new policy in place, it was less of an exception, and more of a rule.

Nonetheless, the repetitive nature of the occurrence did not divert the Policeman's anger, rather it became an excuse for yet another outburst of anger. "Stupid old man!" he shouted. "Stop the damn jeep," he blurted at the driver. "The stupid old man has pissed in his pants!"

The driver gradually brought the jeep to a halt on the side of the road. Below, a Valley with a stream at its centre lay to one side, with the foreboding rocks of the mountain on the other. The men got down and stretched their legs while the Policeman, with Karamat's urine running moist through his pants, tried to clean it off with some water. Karamat sat where he was, relieved, ashamed, and wet at the same time. No one asked him whether he was alright. For the young men that night, this old man was a burden. The

policemen got back on the jeep and the driver started the engine, pressed the accelerator, and began the journey again.

At that very instant, a dog appeared from behind a roadside bush and made a dash for the other side. The driver, in an attempt to avoid hitting the dog, turned the car hard to the left, applied the brakes, and ultimately lost control of the vehicle. The momentum carried the jeep forward and to the side and it tipped to lie on its right, with all the policemen piled on top of one another inside, the driver at the bottom. Somehow, Karamat found himself at the top of the pile and close to the window. The sudden movement and possibly the fingers of a policeman trying to grab at something had pulled his blindfold off and he could see what was happening. The ropes tying his hands had also come loose. He was free and he could see.

In that moment, under the moonlit sky, on top of a pile of four injured Native Policemen, who an instant ago had been transporting him to the place where he would spend the rest of his waking life, Karamat decided to be young again. He decided that his life, or whatever was left of it, had deeper meaning, and he was going to live out that meaning. He lunged for the broken window that opened to the night sky, grabbed the door handle, and pulled himself with strength of a younger man. In a second he was out of the jeep; the moans and painful cries of the policemen inside did not distract him. He knew where he was.

Karamat left the upturned jeep and its occupants where they were, and he began walking down the slope to the Valley below. He knew the stream led elsewhere. It led to the Land of the Pure. Maybe he could find a way. There was no way he was going back home to his blind, deaf wife. She would have to die alone, without him. There were bigger things for him to do.

Karamat crossed the stream and made it to the other side before daybreak. He rested against a rock on the bank opposite a Native Police post. As he slept, he was awoken by the sound of gunshots being fired. Later he would swear that he felt one bullet whiz past his ears. He stood up with his hands up, unwilling to hide and be shot anyway, like thousands who had crossed the stream for the cause of Freedom. He shouted in a pitiful tone, with a purposeful intonation, explaining that he was a frail old man and he had lost his way.

The shots were being fired from the bank he was on, a few hundred feet away. From the language and the colour of the uniforms, the old man understood that these trigger-happy young men were from the Land of the Pure. Karamat instinctively disrobed until he was completely naked. And then in another gist of instinctive impulse, pointed to a circumcised part of his body and shouted, “I am one of you!” One soldier said to another, “Another one of those mad men who think that this is a land of milk and honey!” The second one asked, “Shall we let him walk?” “Yes, he seems pretty old and useless. And we have some empty graveyards,” sneered the first one.

Karamat took a few tentative steps and when he realised that he was not going to be shot, he put his hands down and started walking, still naked.

When he arrived at the gate of the post where the soldiers who were shooting at him were positioned, his mind blanked out. He felt darkness around him, he felt weak and powerless and cold, and he fainted. When he woke up, he was in a hospital bed hundreds of kilometres away from the stream and farther away from his now very lonely and dying wife.

A young nurse came to check on him. He told her that he was fine. He asked whether there was anyone who remembered what the Mountain Side was. The nurse replied, "No. I have not heard of it. What is it?"

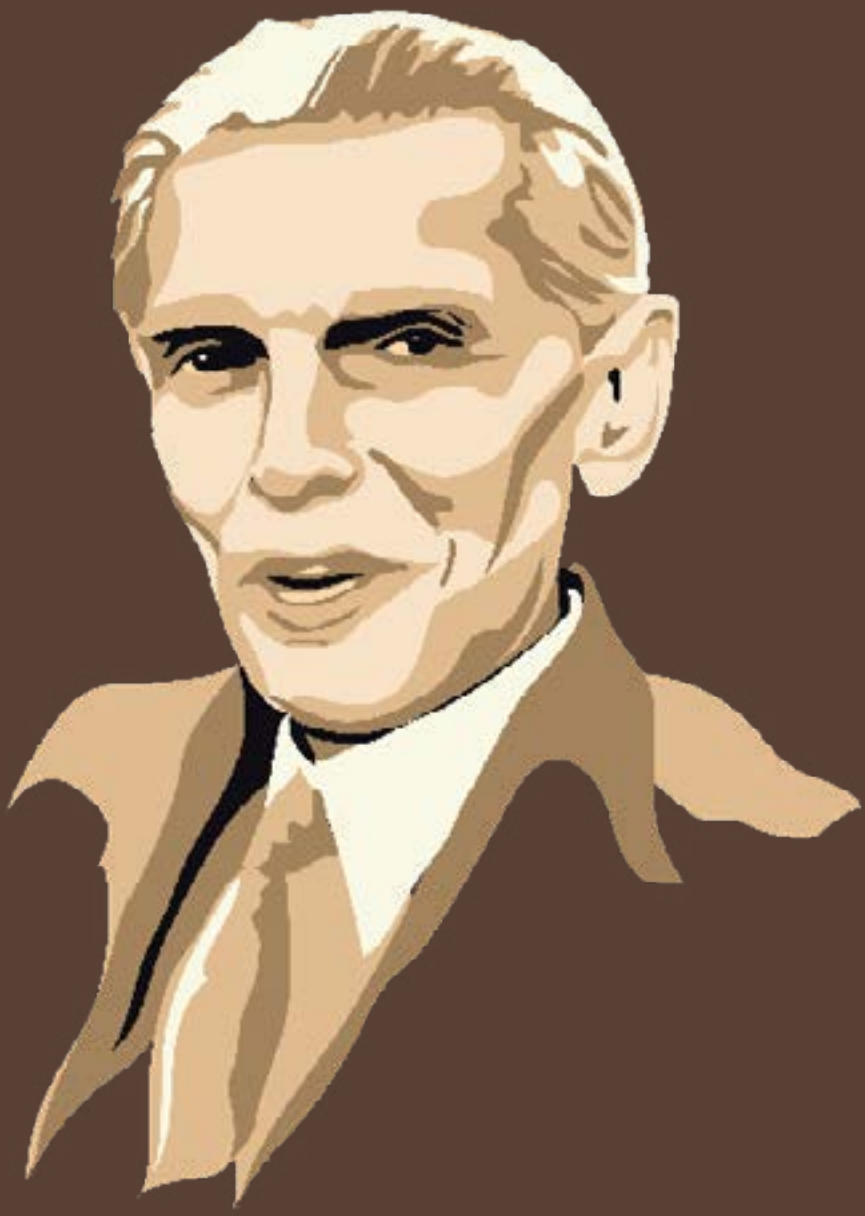
"It was my home," Karamat said. "Have you heard of Maqbool? Have you heard of Afzal? Have you heard of Ashfaq? Have you heard of Mushtaq? Have you heard of Parveena? Have you heard of Asiya? Have you …" The nurse kept shaking her head. "Bring a pen and paper please," he requested.

Years later, in the Karamat Ali Khan Memorial Hospital, the room where Karamat was first admitted had become a museum, a site of pilgrimage for the people from the Land of the Pure.

It was the room where, Karamat Ali Khan, the dishevelled, naked man who crossed a stream and was almost shot, with arms too weak to write with, dictated The Book of Memories to a nurse. The Book would contain the names of all the men, women, and children who were killed, disappeared, or raped and molested and never heard of again in the Mountain Side during endless years of trouble. It had their names, their addresses, the dates of their deaths and disappearances, and the places where their graves lay before they were desecrated and forgotten. The ashes and dust that had become of the countless diaries that the Native Police burnt on the courtyard contained nothing of value.

Karamat had memorised every name, every address, every event, every place, every tragedy that had befallen his people. He had memorised all of it, every single detail, as a Hafiz would memorise the Quran, except, for him, there would be no spiritual reward. He had carried the burden of an unresolved history and its horrors in his memory, which now lay recorded in the ink on the paper that composed The Book of Memories.

7 JINNAH



Credits: Ravi K Kawre

IT'S TIME WE ABSOLVE JINNAH

(First published by *The Wire* on 7 May 2018)

Sharjeel Imam **is currently imprisoned by the Indian state. He has now spent more than two years in prison without even being convicted of any crime. They refuse to give him bail while conducting his trial because he is apparently a threat to public peace and order. Before the authorities imprisoned him to take him off the streets where he was a potent organizational force, he was pursuing his PhD in Modern History from JNU. He was working on Partition and Muslim Politics. The speech for which he was allegedly arrested can be read here.**

Whenever Mohammed Ali Jinnah is in the news, Indian Muslims tend to pander to the insecurities of their Hindu co-nationalists, and come out and criticize the founder of Pakistan for harming the nation and the community. It happened when L.K. Advani visited his tomb in 2005. Over a decade later, it is happening again in the case of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

The relation between modern Indian psyche and Jinnah is complicated, to say the least, but the overwhelming attitude, especially among Hindus, is that of anger and lamentation, especially given Jinnah's nationalist background.

He is seen as a man who fell to the communalist camp because of his ambitions for power and was instrumental in dividing the nation. However, Indian Muslims, despite having been indoctrinated for generations now, retain some memory of Partition and Jinnah. For many of them, Jinnah is the author of Partition and yet one of the greatest leaders of "Muslim India" in the last century, who made the Muslim League (ML) into a national party by mobilizing millions of Muslims across British India.

Protests at AMU. Credit: PTI

The tensions implicit in the juxtaposition of these contradictory images of Jinnah reveal themselves from time to time, as they have done again in the case of AMU. The portrait of Jinnah has been there since 1938, reminding us of the fact that Jinnah had a distinguished recognition as being one of the most important leaders of "Muslim India". These contradictions and outbursts also point to the fact that the Indian public is not fully informed of the debates in those ten eventful years before Partition or about the movement of creation of Pakistan, and is more influenced by propaganda and the social need to pay lip service to nationalism.

In order to demystify Jinnah and to resolve such contradictions, a fuller discussion of Partition should have been a part of our educational setup. However, it has been made impossible to know such a historic figure by attributing violence of Partition to him. This as an attempt by the Congress to hide its failures to accommodate the genuine Muslim demands and aspirations for political proportional representation.

Issues between Congress and Muslim League

The Congress will, in reflexive self-defence, stick to the 'One Nation' catchphrase, and make any nuanced discussion on the terms 'nation', 'community' or 'democracy' impossible. The most important points on which there was contention between Congress and Muslim League were about Muslim representation, electorates and Centre-province relations. These were the issues around which most Muslim parties were seeking assurance from the Congress for more than two decades.

Even after Jinnah returned from London and took charge of the Muslim League in 1934, he was hopeful of reaching an agreement with the Congress on these issues. Jinnah attempted to repose his faith in the Congress leaders to come to an agreement which would have avoided disillusionment of Indian Muslims with the Congress leadership.

However, these three heads are rarely discussed in relation to Partition, and phantasms such as communalism, pan-Islamism or 'new Medina' are given more attention in the Indian narrative of Partition. Most Muslim parties demanded a guarantee for Muslim representation in legislature, services and military. A share in administration was sought to be fixed so that they are not left behind because of discrimination, which was a real danger in the context of repeated anti-Muslim mob violence.

Some backward Muslim parties, like Momin Conference, sought further safeguards and reservations within the Muslim space for backward communities. More importantly, Jinnah as the ML president, demanded that Congress agree to fix the Muslim share in military constitutionally, as he believed that "political rights emanate from political might". If the two communities do not learn to "respect and fear each other", then no agreement is worth more than just a piece of paper.

The third important issue was of the relative importance given to the Centre in future India. Muslim-majority provinces argued for more provincial powers, while Congress argued for a strong centralized state in Delhi. The issue of veto is linked to this Centre-province issue. If Hindus outnumbered Muslims three to one in the parliament with a strong Centre, and a bill is introduced for which all Hindus vote, and none of the Muslims vote, it will still pass with a three-fourths majority. Hence, a law could be passed affecting the whole system of this vast subcontinent even if no Muslim representatives vote for it. Jinnah believed this was not proportionally democratic, and said that this was an example of one nation ruling over another "through the ballot box", and could only be avoided if the Muslim community receives a veto power in legislative assemblies as well.

All of the demands made above relate to communal rights, a word which has been vilified by Congress to such an extent that we have forgotten the older and more logical meaning of this word. Communal is something that relates to community, and this was the sense in which this term was used by many thinkers and politicians in the colonial times. It is only because of Congress' usage of the word that we understand communal as a negative feature. 'Communal' need not mean harbouring hate and prejudice against the other, it means identifying with one's community.

Minority rights

British India was inhabited by innumerable communities who did not intermarry with each other divided vertically and horizontally. Muslims and Hindus were two such vertical divisions among others, as there were horizontal caste divisions. We were and are still not a nation in the academic sense of Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities. Jinnah argued that we would be able to become a nation only if we could make the minority community feel secure. And a party which argues on the behalf of the minority was a communal party. Congress twisted the meaning of 'communal' and made it into a contemptuous term. Similarly, it misappropriated and abused the term secularism and gave it a new meaning, making it a tool to deny any constitutional powers and rights to the Muslims.

Hence, these issues of sovereignty, the debate around the relation between community and nation, or whether 'qaum' translates to community or to nation, are at the heart of the Partition debate.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Credit: junaidrao/Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Does my neighbour have the right to make laws on my behalf, without any qualification or limitation, just because he is my neighbour? Can two communities be called one nation when they do not intermarry or even inter-dine? Can the minority against whom prejudice is rampant in the majority surrender all its rights based on the false assurances of majority leaders? Can a strong Centre be allowed to be dominated by a community which outnumbers you three to one in this vast subcontinent without any provisions for veto from the minority side? Can the majority amend the constitution unilaterally because it has a three-fourths majority? Could a few provinces not decide to secede in this context, because they fear injustice and unfair treatment, like the provinces of north-west and east? On all of these questions, even the most liberal individuals turn into die-hard nationalists and start talking of unity of India, brotherhood of masses, etc. However, I think these questions are just the starting point of a larger debate which will inevitably take place again and again, as the situation of Indian Muslims is made to worsen.

Jinnah and Muslim League

Coming back to Jinnah, after having taken charge of Muslim League, he led the party in two elections. Congress consolidated the Hindu electorate in 1937 by receiving more than 70 per cent Hindu votes, but the Muslim vote was split into a number of regional parties such as Unionist Party, Muslim Independent Party and Krishak Praja Party, among others.

However, the Muslim League was the only party which received votes all over India and received around 10 per cent of Muslim votes. At this juncture, the Congress rejected any chance of an alliance with Muslim parties, and even many Congress and Jamiat Muslims have written about it. Their two-year rule in Muslim minority provinces like Bihar and UP saw a spike in anti-Muslim violence, and Muslim League's popularity grew among Muslims.

It is also worth recalling that the Muslim League had to defeat other Muslim parties, as Congress rarely received any Muslim votes. During these years, Jinnah sought and made alliances with tribal parties such as in Jharkhand as well as with Scheduled Caste representatives such as B.R. Ambedkar.

Muslim League leaders, 1940. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

By 1946, as the British were preparing to leave, the Muslim electorate had swung behind Jinnah and ML received around 80 per cent of Muslim votes across British India. This was the possibility which Congress was afraid of, as it still claimed, despite receiving almost no Muslim votes, to represent Muslims.

Hence, in the final negotiations, Jinnah emerged as the united leader of almost all Muslim political factions and repeated the demands which had been on the table for decades. Most of these demands were not acceptable to the Congress, and they rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan even after accepting it, a fact which Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin Ahmed bin Khairuddin Al-Hussaini Azad or Maulana Azad refers to in his book India Wins Freedom. In this context, it is difficult to argue that the Muslims were left with a choice except for Partition or Civil War.

Jinnah in post-Partition India

The standard tropes which have dominated discussions on Jinnah in post-Partition India revolve around: his lack of religiosity, his communalism, how he was used by the British in their divide and rule policy and how he harmed Indian Muslims by further enfeebling them.

The charge of being irreligious is difficult to hold, as there is no standard scale of measuring such mentalities. It would be enough to read his speeches, and the reforms he proposed in his long legislative career to gauge his understanding of Islamic law as well the social structures that Islam engenders, or that of the geopolitical situation of Muslim nations.

His colonial education is often given as the reason of his aloofness from Indian reality. However, this charge is difficult to hold as most top politicians were educated abroad.

Jinnah's communalism is positive communalism as discussed above, and need not be understood through the contemporary meaning of the word. He did not believe that India was a nation, as is shown by the frequent use of term 'continent' as well as 'subcontinent'. He was merely representing one community in this grand ocean of communities, and in this process, he was trying to secure rights for all numerically inferior communities.

This charge is a very frequent one, and raises questions, among other things, on separate electorates. I have discussed separate electorates above. In addition, one should remember that even the Momin Conference could not survive electorally after the collapse of separate electorates, and the backward Muslim formations also collapsed after safeguards were removed.

On the other hand, Pakistan Congress won more than 30 seats in the first East Pakistan elections since separate electorates were retained there. Hence, it is true that the British were keen on dividing Muslims and Hindus, but it does not mean that separate electorates or the issues of sovereignty discussed above have no basis in reality at all, and is merely elite manipulation for power.

The Indian Muslims

Finally, the complaint by the Indian Muslim who has been further enfeebled by Partition. Firstly, it is true that Partition harmed the Indian Muslims most, but to put the blame on Jinnah, or Muslim League is not necessarily a correct historical reading. Jinnah argued that it does not matter if we are 15 per cent or 25 per cent, unless we receive safeguards, they have all the resources to monopolize power. In other words, the Muslim majority provinces chose to secede rather than stay in a Hindu-dominated centralized India, as

they saw no other option. Hence Partition is not their responsibility, it is their compulsion by the conditions created by Congress.

Secondly, the suffering of Indian Muslim after Partition is not Jinnah's doing. Muslims have been killed in India by right-wing Hindu forces, as well as the oppressive State, who denied them representation in every field from the very start. Even the separate electorates which Jinnah's Pakistan had for Hindus, Muslims were denied in India. It is not Jinnah who has harmed us, it is Congress and their successors like BJP who are the oppressors.

Jinnah raised questions which are still relevant. As the largest religious minority in the world, Indian Muslims are one of the major victims of majoritarian democracy. It is the political struggle of these hundreds of millions of besieged Muslims which will define the meaning of plural democracy for the coming centuries.

The AMU portrait of Jinnah must not go. If anything, we need thousands more.

PORTRAIT OF JINNAH

By Jane Perlez

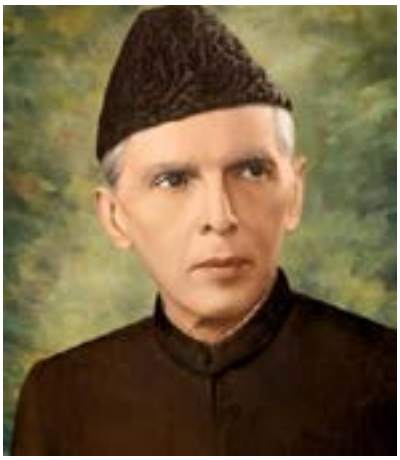
(First published in Granta Issue 112: Pakistan in Autumn 2010)

When a Pakistani friend won a promotion to a powerful job in Peshawar I went to congratulate him on his new sinecure.

He is a cultivated man with a beautiful home from the British colonial era and tentacles all across Pakistan's tormented tribal region, where he once served as a political agent—the all-purpose government official who is supposed to act as lord and regent over the fractious tribes and the inexorably rising tide of the Taliban.

As always, my friend wore a starched and pressed white shalwar kameez. While we talked he carefully untied the green ribbons on stacks of well-worn cardboard folders, signed the government papers stacked inside with a fountain pen, and then tossed the retied folders on to the floor. Every half-hour, a clerk appeared and carried away the piles of completed paperwork.

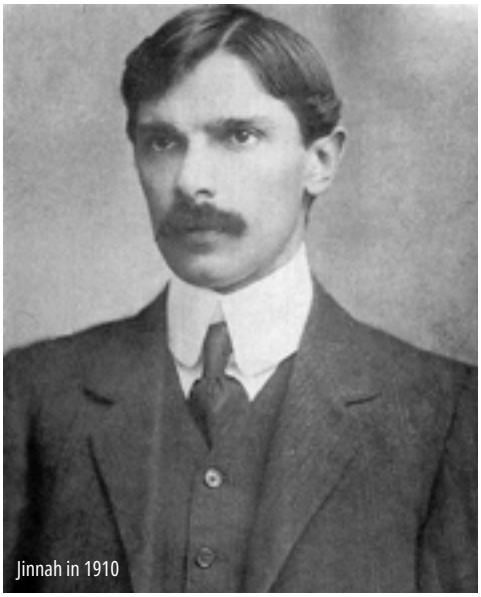
Government offices are important symbols in Pakistan—size, furniture, scope of retinue. This one was handsome, a large room set off a broad veranda in the ersatz Moghul-era quadrangle of pink stucco. A white mantelpiece signalled the dignity of the office holder. Above it hung a portrait, more a sketch in dingy brown, of Pakistan's founding father, Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The face was gaunt and elderly—an aquiline nose, sunken cheeks, unforgiving mouth. A peaked cap high off his forehead and a plain coat buttoned to the neck with a high collar gave the aura of a religious man. The picture reminded me of the first image I had ever seen of Jinnah: a mysterious, dark oil painting covered with glass hung high on a wall of the formal reception room at the Pakistani High Commission in London.



Jinnah in 1947

A few months later I returned to see my friend. Same signing of documents, same clerk, different portrait above the mantel. The new visage showed a serious young man with a full head of dark hair, an Edwardian white shirt, black jacket and tie, alert dark eyes. What happened? I asked.

"I would like to see Jinnah brimming with life," my friend said. He did not want to be reminded of the clerical image that is now considered politically correct in many places throughout Pakistan. An Anglophile acquaintance of my friend's in Peshawar had found the more youthful, secular image of the founding father as a law student in England and had


Jinnah in 1910

personally come to hang the replacement. The question of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's portrait is no small matter in Pakistan. For a foreigner, the choice of portrait is one of the most telling signs of where you are, whom you are meeting. The style of portrait will give clues as to how your host interprets the intentions of the founder, a lonely, ascetic and, by all accounts, brilliant, British-educated lawyer.

In most nations, there is energetic debate about the philosophy of the founders; sometimes over who among a group of prominent men was the true maker. There is no doubt about who was responsible for the birth of Pakistan on 14 August 1947. It was Jinnah who had argued for Pakistan, and who stood beside Mountbatten in the new legislature in Karachi to accept a message from King George welcoming Pakistan to the Commonwealth as a new independent nation. But there is ceaseless argument over what the founder intended, and the identity of Pakistan—secular nation or Islamic state—has been in dispute among its citizens ever since.

What did Jinnah envision? Did he wish for a homeland for Muslims, a secular country where they could practise their religion without discrimination, and where others could too? Or did he want Pakistan to be an ideological state committed exclusively to the practice of Islam? Did he even want a separate country from Hindu-dominated India? Maybe not. As historians comb the archives, and a small but increasing number of Pakistanis watch with envy as India surges ahead, it has become fashionable to argue that Jinnah used the idea of Pakistan as a mere bargaining chip for Muslim majority rights within a loosely united post-colonial India.

An astute tactician, Jinnah never explicitly answered these vital questions. From 1938, he fought for Pakistan as a principle but provided few details, a tactic that allowed him to appeal to many kinds of Muslims—landlords, religious leaders, the urban elite, bureaucrats, villagers. There is little argument, however, that Jinnah was personally indifferent to his religion—he drank, smoked, ate pork. He was so unaware of the religious calendar that he planned the inauguration-day banquet for Pakistan as a luncheon even though it was Ramadan and the guests would be unable to eat. (It was eventually changed to a dinner.)

In his first speech to the newly independent country, Jinnah sounded the themes of a secular man. Like some upper-class Pakistanis today, he could not speak Urdu, the national language. In his patrician English accent, his voice ravaged by his daily habit of more than fifty Craven A cigarettes, Jinnah said: "You are free. You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state."

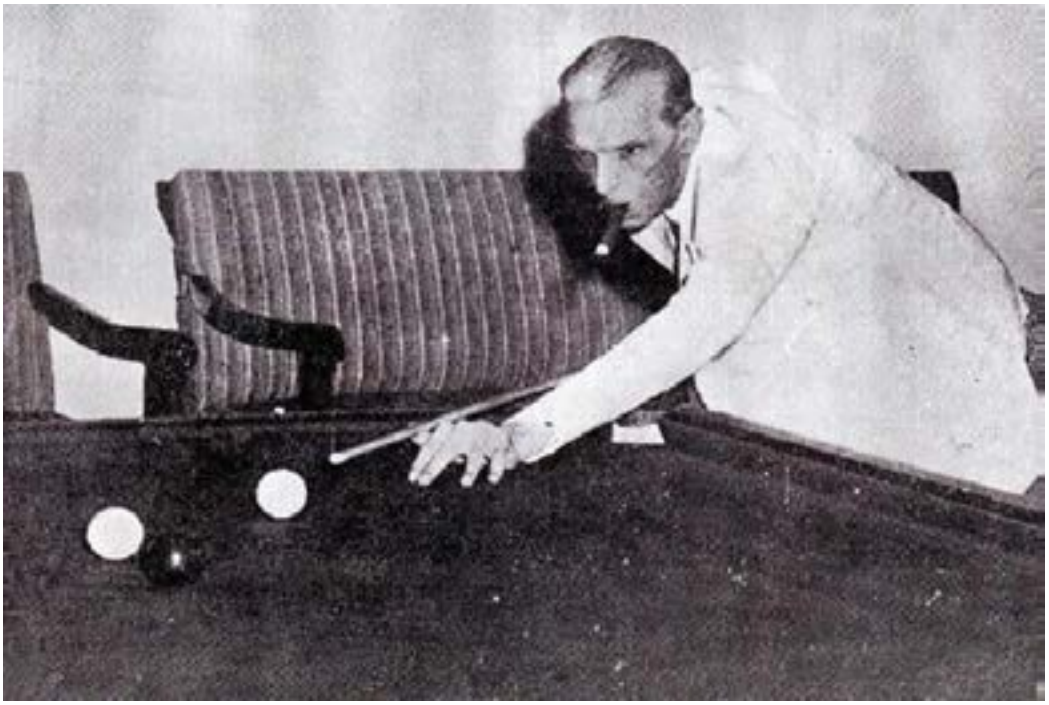
When he took charge as Governor General in the new capital, the brutally hot seaside town of Karachi, he was terminally ill with tuberculosis and lung cancer. He died eleven months later aged seventy-one. He did not write an autobiography, and had few confidants. His wife had died of ill health ten years after they

married. His constant companion, his sister Fatima, had little of substance to say during his life, although later she tried to keep the secular flame alive during a brief career as a politician.

The first year of Pakistan was marked by the staggering bloodletting that accompanied partition. The exchequer was empty. Experienced Muslim bureaucrats, some of whom had ruled large swathes of territory for the British in India and Burma in great style, arrived in Karachi to find not even desks and chairs for their makeshift offices.

Jinnah's physical decline prevented him from taking on the usual role of founding father: galvanizing the people. He spent his last weeks sequestered in the clear air of remote Baluchistan, his body a skeleton of less than eighty pounds. When his doctors agreed to fly him back to Karachi so he could die in dignity, Jinnah lay in the plane gasping for air from oxygen canisters. The ambulance that took him from the airport to Government House broke down, and Pakistan's founder nearly died, stranded on the roadside. He passed away a few hours later at Government House on 11 September 1948, his new country as frail as its founder.

Compared to Nehru, Gandhi and the never reticent Mountbatten, Jinnah remains a shadow in twentieth-century world history. Judging from the documents, books, expensive clothes, smart cars and stylish furniture assembled at the national mausoleum and museum in his birthplace, Karachi, he was a fastidious man with a taste for the best of everything. The museum curators' choices are remarkable for the absence of religious belongings: on show are the artefacts of a rich lawyer. There is a tasselled black silk dressing gown made in Marseilles, shoes from Lobb in London, black patent pumps with satin bows for his swearing in as Governor General, tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles by E.B. Meyrowitz in Paris, several



suits from among the two hundred Savile Row models that hung in his wardrobe at his death, a cream 1938 Packard convertible and a black 1947 Cadillac.

"The man had class in whatever he did," said my companion at the museum, retired brigadier Javed Hussain, a former special forces officer. "There was no barrister like him in Bombay. The judges would avoid him. He was so witty, so brilliant the judges felt inadequate in front of him." The brigadier particularly liked the photo of Jinnah leaning into a pool table, cue stick in hand, cigar clenched between his teeth, taking aim.

Jinnah was born into a Shia mercantile family. After secondary school he sailed for London, practised law at Lincoln's Inn, attended parliamentary sessions at Westminster, and became a devotee of parliamentary procedure. He returned to India just before World War I, committed to Hindu-Muslim unity. His wife, a beautiful socialite, Ruttie Dinshaw, the daughter of Sir Dinshaw Manockjee Petit, the scion of one of Bombay's wealthiest families, was a Parsi.

The idea of an independent Muslim homeland on the subcontinent first surfaced in the nineteenth century, and was popularized in the 1930s by the poet Muhammad Iqbal, a national hero in Pakistan, whose portrait can also be found in offices and living rooms all over the country. In the same period, a Cambridge University student, Rahmat Ali, coined the word Pakistan from the initials: Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Sind; and from Baluchistan he added 'stan', meaning land.

These were the fragments that Jinnah built upon as he organized the Muslim League into a pre-eminent position among Muslim voters in the late 1930s. Key to the success of the League was Jinnah's pact with Sikandar Hayat Khan, a powerful landlord in the Muslim- majority Punjab who controlled the votes of the overwhelmingly rural electorate.

At the same time, Jinnah began using the rhetoric of Islam and adopted a slogan, 'Islam in Danger', for the Muslim League. In 1940, in the Lahore Resolution, Jinnah defined a two-nation theory, saying the Muslims were a 'nation by any definition'. Under Jinnah's direction, the League embraced *pirs* (spiritual leaders) and *ulema* (religious scholars) as a way of mobilizing the different ethnic and linguistic groups of the Muslim masses.

The big Muslim landlords who had thrown their weight behind him were not particularly religious but tolerated the use of religion as the path to greater power for themselves in their provinces. For political meetings, Jinnah shed his British suits and began wearing a high-collared, knee-length and tight-fitting jacket known as a sherwani that was favoured by educated Muslims. A portrait of him in these clothes hangs in the National Gallery in Islamabad. He was now referred to as Quaid-i-Azam, or 'Great Leader'.

Even so, the main religious party, Jamaat-e-Islami, opposed the new platform of the Muslim League, arguing that Islam was a world religion, not a religion of the state. To counteract this opposition, and to overcome the anti-Pakistan Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind, Jinnah made sure a new Islamic party was created under a more compliant imam, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani. By 1946, Jinnah had been so successful at transforming the Muslim League into a mass movement that the party won 75 per cent of the Muslim vote, a stunning leap from only 4.6 per cent of the Muslim vote in 1937.

There seems little argument that Jinnah was seeking political guarantees, not so much religious guarantees, for the Muslim minority within India. A group of historians led by Ayesha Jalal, the author of *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, argue that if those guarantees had

been entrenched in a strong federal state the Muslims would have stayed inside a unified India. They point out that in the rushed negotiations under Mountbatten, Jinnah was forced to accept what he called a 'moth-eaten' version of Pakistan. The new country was awarded only half of the vastly important Punjab and Bengal provinces and more Muslims were left behind in India than ended up in the new country.

To find out what the Islamists of Pakistan make of Jinnah, I travelled to the Darul Uloom Haqqania madrasa in Akora Khattack, not far from Peshawar. Some of Pakistan's most notorious militants have graduated from this place, including Jalaluddin Haqqani, the veteran Afghan Taliban commander allied with al-Qaeda. At a recent graduation ceremony at the madrasa, tens of thousands of Taliban fighters, organizers, funders and sympathizers turned up, all of them opposed to a secular Pakistan. I had visited Haqqania several times. The administrator, Maulana Yousaf Shah, is a friendly, gregarious preacher and politician. From time to time he welcomes Western journalists, and when journalists have been kidnapped in the tribal areas he has tried to help as an intermediary. I turned up with my colleague Pir Zubair Shah, who is from south Waziristan, and a member of a prominent family of the Mehsud tribe. It was Friday, just before midday prayers at Haqqania, so we sat on the floor of the maulana's reception area, a grubby narrow room with a single bed, a row of cushions arrayed along one wall for the guests to recline on. A strip of neon light illuminated the dark space, and a clutch of red plastic flowers sprouted from a space on the wall. There was no image of Jinnah, or anyone else.

While the maulana delivered the sermon at the nearby mosque, we chatted with a barefooted, poorly dressed man who introduced himself as Juma Khan, a former member of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a militant group from the Punjab that is formally banned in Pakistan but seems unstoppable in its capacity to carry out terror attacks in major urban centres. He had been jailed a dozen times for speeches against the Shia, he said. Weary of jail, he had now retired from militant work to devote himself to hunting quail.

What did a foot soldier in one of Pakistan's myriad militant groups think of Jinnah? A dark look crossed his weathered face. "He was a Shia. They are the worst infidels on earth," he shot back. "His past is not so good." But was he not the founder of the nation? "God made Pakistan, not Jinnah."

The maulana, fresh from the pulpit, walked in wearing a dark turban and a fresh white shalwar kameez. Three of his children, two boys and a girl all under the age of seven, scampered in and out. One of them dutifully brought a tin spittoon and placed it on the floor by the bed where the maulana sat. Occasionally, he spat in it.

"I grew up in a very religious family; they didn't like Jinnah," said the maulana. "My forefathers were active in the referendum, and they supported Jinnah at every level at the formation of Pakistan. Then they complained: 'You separated us from the Hindus but we do not have an Islamic state.'"

In 1947, the expectations of the Islamists were high, the maulana said. The president of the new Islamic party, Maulana Usmani, raised the green-and-white Pakistani flag, decorated with a crescent moon and star, on Independence Day. That was a great accomplishment, a promising start for the Islamic cause. But ever since, he said, the foreign powers have worked against Pakistan becoming an Islamic state.

This is not exactly true. In the 1980s, the United States backed the Islamic military dictator Zia ul-Haq, who had overthrown and then hanged the democratically elected Zulflkar Ali Bhutto. Together, the United States and Pakistan supported the mujahideen fighters in their battle against the Soviets in Afghanistan. As the war raged inside Afghanistan, the United States looked the other way as Zia moved Pakistan towards becoming an Islamic state, one that ideologically matched the Islamic cause over the border in Afghanistan.

It was in this period that Jinnah was rewritten, redrawn, repackaged. The lawyer and astute politician was transformed into a proud Islamist. The school books were overhauled, and to this day retain the view of Zia and his Islamic ideologues. The language became stridently anti-Hindu, more fundamentalist. Some of the recasting verged on the comical as the curriculum mandarins tiptoed around uncomfortable facts. One passage in a social studies book reads: "At the initial period of his political career, Jinnah had a conviction that the interests of the Hindus and those of the Muslims were not colliding, but with the passage of time he had to change his mind." Jinnah is described as a 'true devotee of Islam'. Pakistan, the book says, is not merely a 'tract of land' but 'a laboratory for the implementation of Islamic injunctions'.

Jinnah, for all his secular habits, is partly to blame for this posthumous transformation. He often said one thing, but did another. He carved out his state on the basis of Islam and rallied the support of the Islamic religious leaders, but never intended that Pakistan would be a theocratic state. When he was garnering the support of the imams, photographs show Jinnah looking remarkably uncomfortable. In one shot he stands under a banner written in Urdu—'Allah is Great'—looking terrified of the throngs of youth jostling around him.

The Jinnah portrait in the inner sanctum at the army headquarters in Rawalpindi—the room where Pakistan's top commanders meet each month around a long, oval, polished wood table—presumably reflects the Pakistani Army's verdict on Jinnah. A tall, lean, elegantly dressed Jinnah, in beige summer suit, white shirt and tie, sits in a 1940s art deco armchair, his right arm draped over the back of the chair, a cigarette in his fingers. He could be mistaken for an imperious, pre-World War II Hollywood producer. Outwardly, there is an eerie echo of the current army chief, the most powerful man in Pakistan, General Parvez Ashfaq Kiyani, in military fatigues, erect and handsome, who presides at the table in front of the Jinnah portrait chain-smoking cigarettes much as the founder did.

There seems little question that Jinnah would be shocked by Pakistan today. His daughter, Dina Wadia, now in her nineties and living in Manhattan, has told acquaintances that her father must be turning in his grave. On 11 September 2001, exactly fifty-three years to the day after his death, al-Qaeda showed the world how far Islamic extremists had eaten into the fabric of Pakistan.

A civilian government tarnished by the corruption and nepotism that Jinnah warned about in his inauguration-day speech is nominally in charge. But the army essentially runs the show. In July, the government granted General Kiyani an unprecedented three-year extension of his term, handing the military even more power. The military receives about 17 per cent of the total state budgetary expenditure, a

precedent that Jinnah established when he devoted an overwhelming proportion of Pakistan's first budget to the army.

Today, the Pakistani Army is convinced that the India Jinnah left behind is the ultimate enemy. To offset what it sees as India's far greater economic and military strength, Pakistan uses Islamic militant groups to fight against Indian interests in Afghanistan and, on occasion, within India. Other militant groups have turned against Pakistan itself, and in the last year the army has fought against them. But the strategy of supporting some Islamic groups, and fighting others, further erodes the chance for secularism to have a dominant role in modern Pakistan. The Jihadistan that looms on the horizon as the future Pakistan, a likely compromise between extremist groups and the army, would not have a place for Jinnah today, regardless of how he portrayed himself.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

BUILDING RESILIENCE TO EXTREME WEATHER IN SOUTH ASIA

Extreme weather – including heatwaves and flooding – appears to be the new normal for South Asia with Pakistan enduring both in 2022. The impacts are numerous and inter-connected, cascading across economic sectors and political geographies. The need to build resilience, learn from best practices and innovate to adapt, is paramount.

Authors: *Gareth Price and Anum Farhan*
Originally published on 24 November 2022 on cascades.eu

Shahbaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, gave an emotive address at the recent UN Climate Change Conference held in Egypt. In the aftermath of widespread floods across Pakistan, Sharif said: "Despite our low carbon footprint...we became a victim of something with which we had nothing to do." Increasing greenhouse gas emissions are supercharging extreme weather events across South Asia and the world. Indeed, South Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change with more than half of all South Asians already affected by at least one climate-related disaster in the last two decades. Recent extreme weather events clearly correlate with the changes expected by climate modelling, namely, variability in the timing, intensity and location of monsoons. But, though these changes have been predicted, their impact – particularly in unprepared areas – was nonetheless devastating.

2022 saw an early, and prolonged, heatwave in India and Pakistan which contributed to subsequent flooding in wide swathes of Pakistan as well as parts of India and Bangladesh. These events appear to provide a sample of the 'new climate normal' in the region. Indeed, according to the World Bank, more than 800 million people across South Asia are living in climate hotspots.

On the one hand, the region is struggling with the largest global cluster of poverty, continuing high inflation, slow economic growth, and numerous marginalized communities at severe risk from the threat of climate change. On the other hand, the region's youthful population is a source of optimism and there is potential for growth particularly regarding investment in climate resilience and adaptation. Both viewpoints are valid. But what is unquestionably true is that if the region fails to deal with climate change successfully, the ramifications will be global. In this vein, generating an effective response to climate change across South Asia should be seen as a global public good.

Climate change, South Asia and the monsoon

Climate change is expected to lead to more intense extreme weather events. Warmer air can hold more moisture, implying longer dry spells as water remains in the atmosphere, and heavier rainfall when clouds do eventually burst. But climate change is also expected to bring greater uncertainty regarding weather patterns.

The central weather event in South Asia is the monsoon, the 'bringer of life' to the region yet the specific ways in which climate change will affect the monsoon, which is a complex weather system, are not yet definitive, and recent extreme weather in the region cannot yet be linked to climate change with complete certainty. The monsoon is characterized by heavy rainfall concentrated in the summer months. As the land-mass heats up in summer, the wind direction changes, and moisture-laden air from the Indian Ocean is drawn towards South Asia. Subsequently, the monsoon is maintained by latent heat released by convection. But rainfall during the monsoon is affected by a range of factors such as the local topography: mountain ranges affect airflow, in turn, affecting where rainfall is concentrated and where it is not. The slopes of the Himalayas, for instance, receive significant rainfall which feeds numerous rivers which flow across South Asia.

The general assumption that South Asia will witness hotter and more prolonged heatwaves, as well as more intense rainfall, seem borne out of the events witnessed in the subcontinent in 2022.

The trajectory and strength of the monsoon has always been variable though the average arrival date of its passage across South Asia can be seen above. Historically, weak monsoons had a significant economic impact, and in extreme cases, famine. Food security has improved significantly since the Green Revolution of the 1960s, though there are widespread concerns over issues such as the over-use of fertilizer and depletion of groundwater. In such a context, greater variability in the monsoon is concerning.

While the relationship between climate change and the monsoon is not definitive, other natural and unnatural phenomena have been shown to alter monsoon patterns. These include El Niño, which is generally linked to more extreme heat and lower rainfall, and emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols, which have been linked to the decline in average rainfall in central India between the 1950s and the early 2000s. This is because aerosols scatter sunshine, causing hazy days, and absorb heat. This reduces the temperature difference between the land and the sea thereby affecting rainfall patterns. Air pollution, a challenge across the subcontinent, plays a similar cooling effect to greenhouse gases though over a much shorter timeframe. Future trends in pollution – and aerosols – will feed into the equation that determines the scale of temperature rise and consequent impact on the monsoon.

2022: A year of heatwaves and floods

In March 2022, India and Pakistan experienced a heatwave well before the usual months for peak heat across both countries. India recorded its hottest March since 1901 and temperatures peaked at close to 50 °C in the Pakistani city of Nawabshah. The hottest temperature, 51 °C, was recorded in Jacobabad in May. The heatwave was one of the longest for decades and it was followed by a late, and incessant, monsoon which would go on to cause widespread flooding in Pakistan. The two events are connected. Extreme heat increases the risk of subsequent flooding because warmer air can hold more moisture, drier ground is less able to absorb rainfall and, for countries in South Asia, hotter weather in the Himalayas brings the risk of increased glacial melt.

The so-called Third Pole, the Himalayan mountains, contain the most glaciers after the Arctic and Antarctic. The extreme events also coincided with two unconnected events which exacerbated the challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Restrictions associated with the pandemic affected the availability of agricultural labour while the Russia-Ukraine war raised the cost of food and fuel.

A climate-triggered roulette

The floods of 2022 did not stem from overflowing rivers. Instead, four low-probability meteorological events occurred simultaneously.

1. Record temperatures in March and April hastened the melting of the Shisper Glacier.

This burst through an ice dam in early May. Government officials estimate that unusual heatwaves in the region contributed to 16 glacial lake outbursts in 2022 compared with between five or six in previous years.

2. Monsoon clouds drifted from their traditional pathway

and the absence of easterly winds meant the clouds stalled. This exacerbated the depression caused by the heatwave and led to torrential rain and urban flooding in Karachi. Significantly, moisture-laden winds from both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal usually move towards northeast India at different times of the year but, in 2022, arrived at the same time thereby drowning the region.

3. Baluchistan – not a typical monsoon area – saw torrential rains end a long period of drought in the region.

The country's poorest province, Baluchistan, was hit the hardest and rain destroyed top-soil required to grow crops, livestock, homes and infrastructure. Of every 10, three casualties were in Baluchistan, the largest in any province. The region was also hit by an earthquake in July which destroyed several houses.

4. Monsoon clouds from Rajasthan came from an unusual route to inundate the Sindh province with 'standing floods'.

Combined with earlier flooding, the city's drainage system did not function effectively having been damaged by rapid and unplanned urbanization. Overflow from excessive rain pushed water onto the streets and contributed to washed out roads.

A cloud outburst on the Afghan border and further flash flooding in Baluchistan province added to the climate turmoil. All of these extreme weather events reinforced the negative impacts of each disaster.

While the countries of South Asia have extensive experience of riverine flooding during the monsoon, when swollen rivers burst their bank, the floods in Pakistan in 2022 were an order of magnitude different from the past, stemming from intense rainfall, including in areas unused to heavy rainfall.

The heatwave and flooding had significant effects which cascaded across sectors and geographies because of multiple inter-dependences. These effects are both direct and indirect and demonstrate the manner in which the challenges are inter-linked. According to the World Bank, they threaten "Pakistan's development ambitions and its ability to reduce poverty. The country needs fundamental shifts in its development path and policies, requiring substantial investments in people-centric climate adaptation and resilience, that will require international support."

Direct consequences of extreme weather include heatwaves leading to increased forest fires, for instance, or flooding destroying infrastructure, eroding riverbanks, saline intrusion and the destruction of buildings and crops. The heatwave in the breadbasket of South Asia – Pakistan and northwest India – was particularly harmful for the wheat crop.

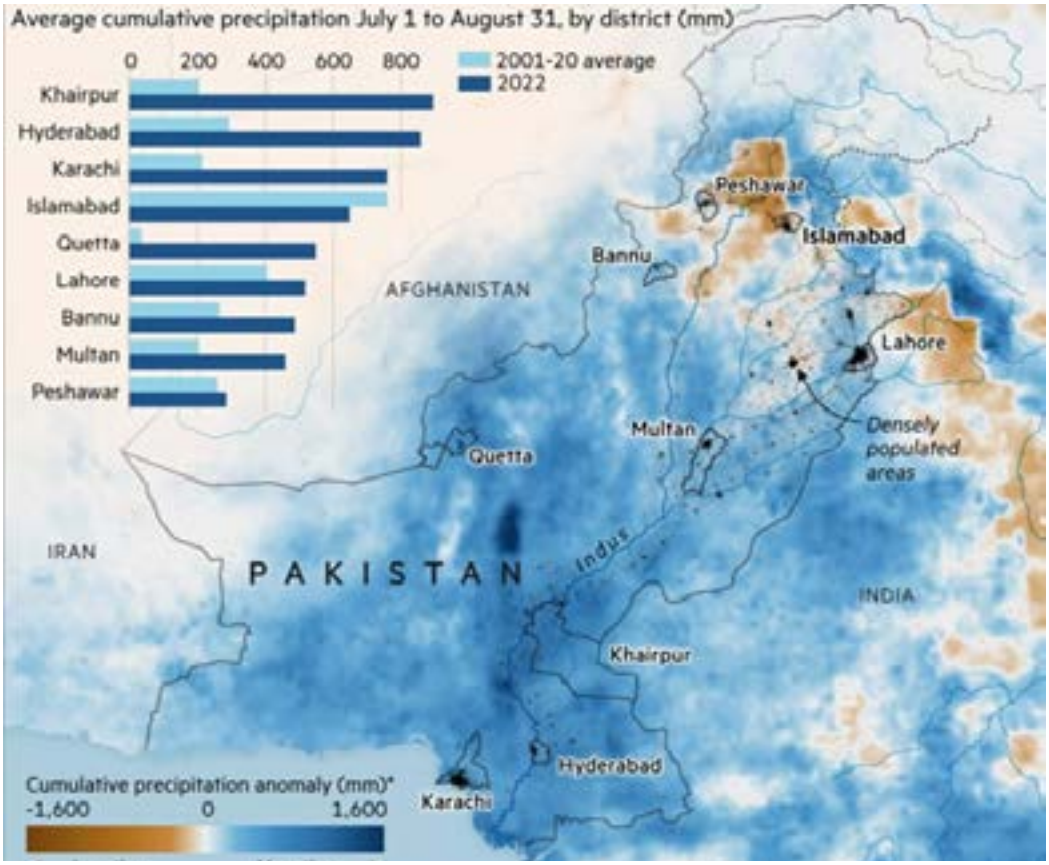
The indirect consequences range from migration within, and between, countries, food insecurity, health risks and disruption to trade and finance. While the means by which societies can become more resilient to the direct impacts are relatively well-established – if often politically difficult – resilience needs to be extended downstream into the indirect threats.

Photo of the Pakistan pavilion at COP27 | Source: Ed King.

Around 3 million people were affected by the flooding in Pakistan. While the death toll was relatively low given the scale of the flooding, at around 1,700 people, the impact on property, however, was considerable. Perhaps as many as 2 million houses were destroyed along with 3 million livestock. In some areas, floodwater was unable to escape, leaving some populated areas submerged by several meters of floodwater. This standing water in turn creates serious health risks from water-borne diseases such as cholera and dysentery as well as malaria and dengue fever which was exacerbated by a shortage of mosquito nets

in flood-affected areas. As sea levels rise, future floods could be even more severe since higher sea levels will slow water flow into the sea.

Along with the loss of livestock, the flooding caused widespread damage to crops and washed away topsoil, potentially harming future agricultural productivity. Agrarian distress drives migration to urban areas, in particular, the migration of men. This migration from rural areas has numerous societal impacts: it leaves women left behind vulnerable, creates additional pressure on urban infrastructure and raises concerns regarding law and order.



Pakistan's monsoon season affects tens of millions | Source: FT.

Climate extremes have become the norm across South Asia

Extreme heat has had wider environmental, economic and social ramifications across the region. Between 2017 and 2021, the damage done by wildfires in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand more than trebled, and between November 2021 and June 2022 the state recorded almost 13,000 wildfires. Along with industrialization and pollution, a rise in wildfires is thought to have contributed to a rise in respiratory diseases in mountain communities and has led to economic losses in agricultural communities.

The most immediate economic impact from heatwaves is a surge in demand for power for cooling which has overloaded power grids across the region and led to widespread power outages. To counter these effects, India has tried to ramp up electricity generation using coal-fired power stations. While demand for power has increased, demand for most goods have fallen, and productivity has been lower. By some estimates, India alone suffers half the 200 billion days of labour lost globally owing to heatwaves. This could account for up to 4.5 per cent of India's GDP by 2030, while Pakistan and Bangladesh could see losses of 5 per cent of GDP due to lost labour. The impact is worse for informal workers as well as those who work outdoors in sectors such as construction, transport and agriculture.

The need for cooling extends beyond individuals. Some medicines and food products require cooling. At present, less than 4 per cent of fresh produce in India is transported by cold chain logistics (keeping foodstuffs cool along the supply chain). While the potential market for cold chain technology across South Asia is huge, if it were to develop, there would be major implications for energy demand. Demand for air conditioning is rising fast as access to energy increases but from a low base. In 2019, one study suggested just 10 per cent of India's population had an air conditioning unit. The massive untapped market offers business opportunities – by some estimates up to $1.5 trillion by 2040 in India alone – but also indicates the need for a significant rise in energy production and/or the development of new cooling technologies. Investment in sustainable cooling solutions will be key to a just and equitable energy transition.

Several surveys in Bangladesh have suggested that the vast majority of those that move into urban areas cite environmental reasons as the reason for their moving including erosion, flooding and cyclones. Those that move into slums are frequently the worst affected by extreme weather, as slums are usually over-crowded with less green space and less access to cooling technology. In addition, slum dwellers are often more likely to work outside whether in agriculture or construction. Water-borne diseases such as dengue and malaria affect poorer communities more than affluent communities.

BRAC: Using technology to anticipate climate impacts

BRAC, an international development organization based in Bangladesh, has partnered with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop the Climate Resilience Early Warning System Network (CREWSnet) to forecast the community-level impacts of climate change in Bangladesh. By fusing climate science with development programming, BRAC can use this tool for informed decision-making. For example, BRAC can identify when a heatwave will become particularly severe, or which communities will need to be evacuated during a cyclone, and provide the necessary knowledge and resources to strengthen affected communities' abilities to respond, and adapt, to future extreme weather or climate impacts. CREWSnet can also be used to locate areas better suited to climate migration, an issue of growing importance, since 57 per cent of slum dwellers across five cities in Bangladesh are climate migrants. Not only could this provide an enhanced standard of living to those who are displaced but also build stronger and more positive community relationships and stability across the country.

Historically, migration provided one means of dealing with environmental degradation, and South Asia's cities continue to expand because of rural distress The abandoned Moghul capital of Fatehpur Sikri stands testament to the fact that cities require a perennial water supply. But, within contemporary South Asia,

the scope for mass migration within the region is less apparent. Those areas with the prerequisites for urbanization are largely already built upon.

Scientists predict that this extreme weather phenomenon, in particular 'urban heat islands' where 45 degree temperatures feel like 50 degrees, will become more frequent and severe. Yet, while these impacts have generated understandable anger among politicians in South Asia, not least for the region's lack of responsibility for climate change, they do not appear to have generated widespread public demand for action nor generated concrete actions to prioritize climate action. Instead, the greater the frequency of extreme weather events, the greater the ambivalence towards them. While countries such as Pakistan highlight their lack of responsibility for climate change yet their vulnerability to its effects, many argue that this emphasis on vulnerability provides an excuse for inaction.

Building resilience at the local level

Climate change provides multi-faceted, multi-layered challenges, requiring a corresponding response. It needs societal shifts to incentivize resilience coupled with a range of technical responses. Because the risks cascade, siloed approaches are unlikely to be effective. In fact, solutions to some challenges may exacerbate other problems such as harming already marginalized communities. Those working outdoors during a heatwave, for instance, face a choice between health risks of continued working in extreme weather and losing their livelihoods.

Every country in South Asia has a national level policy or plan to deal with the impacts of climate change. But, implementation of those plans is less apparent, and the capacity to implement plans at a local level varies dramatically across the region. Indeed, in the worst cases, it is close to non-existent. In addition, there is a need for evidence, particularly to demonstrate the economic benefits of action, not least through the likely costs of inaction.

At an individual level, without significant technological advancement, there will be a need to make do with less. In particular, water usage is likely to be needed to be minimized, requiring a focus on maintenance as well as agricultural usage of water.

At a local level, effective urban management will be paramount to deal with the various impacts effectively. Most South Asian cities, however, are suffering the effects of historic poor management and rent-seeking, making solutions now costlier than if urban expansion had been better planned.

Existing governance systems are likely to come under strain in the event of significant environmental shocks. In parallel, dealing with the impacts in rural areas will be imperative. In the event of significant rural distress, migration into urban areas will hamper urban management.

Solutions to the specific impacts of climate change – more extreme heat and rainfall – are largely known and, while often simple in theory, are sometimes harder to implement in practice. Increasing vegetation in cities, for example, is one means of dealing with the urban heat island effect. Vegetation reflects, rather than absorbs, sunlight and plants release moisture helping lower temperatures. For example, as part of the Cooling Singapore project, 56 per cent of the island has been lined with shady Angsana and rain trees to reduce heat and improve outdoor thermal comfort.

The construction of more green public spaces, such as parks or playgrounds, would also serve to absorb heat and allow better circulation of air. Rising land values in cities mean that much green space is already built upon. Protecting existing green space is a significant challenge let alone demolishing existing buildings

and resettling and compensating those affected. The Dhaka North City Corporation is an admirable example whereby 20 parks and playgrounds are being developed through the greening of urban open spaces.

A less costly alternative would be the construction of rooftop gardens. Traditional roofs absorb heat while heating the building below. By reflecting heat, rooftop gardens could serve to lower the cost of air conditioning, and of heating in colder months. Depending on the plants grown, additional benefits could be to filter pollutants, provide food or increase biodiversity.

An alternative to rooftop gardens is to simply paint roofs white so they reflect rather than absorb heat. Various pilot projects in India have found that this reduces indoor temperature and also helps reduce demand for power.

World Bank: Sustainable cooling solutions in developing countries

Cooling devices such as refrigerators, air conditioners and industrial chillers account for almost 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, three times the amount generated by aviation and shipping combined. When temperatures increase above 30°C, cities like Delhi, for example, have recorded a 30 per cent increase in energy demand. The intensity of heatwaves, population growth and urbanization across South Asia could see emissions double by 2030 if sustainable cooling solutions are not rapidly financed, scaled up and deployed. The World Bank has recognized the critical nexus between sustainable cooling and the energy transition, and the potential of cooling as a development strategy, and has recently launched the Efficient, Clean Cooling Program to introduce energy efficient cooling solutions that are affordable and accessible to South Asian countries. Technical assistance can strengthen longer-term climate resilience, improve economic productivity and deliver on broader development goals.

Early warning systems and the construction of shelters, either raised structures or built on higher ground, can save lives from flooding though not protect property or livestock. Improving drainage systems, including waste management in urban areas, is one means of preventing the build-up of water. Recent flooding in Karachi, for instance, was exacerbated by insufficient drainage, poor maintenance and the blockage of drains by plastic bags and other solid waste. These problems, in turn, can stem from the 'verticalization' of cities. Finite space has led to the expansion of buildings upwards. Drainage systems intended for a two-story building, for example, cannot cope with double or treble the population in the same building.

Water storage is a challenge in its own right. With 80-90 per cent of annual rainfall in the region arriving during the short monsoon season, ensuring water supplies year-round is challenging now and will not become easier in the future. Better water storage would also hold more water thereby reducing the impact of floods.

Rainwater harvesting or rooftop gardens can play a similar role in water storage. Water running-off traditional roofs adds to the volume of water to be dispersed. If water can be captured, either through storage or by feeding rooftop gardens, the volume of water on the ground will be reduced.

Solar reflective paint being used in Ahmedabad to lower the temperature of houses as part of their Cool Roofs Initiative. Source: Times of India.

Urban growth has led newer migrants to many cities to live in more flood-prone areas including on riverbanks. Reducing the population living in these areas is an obvious means of reducing the numbers affected by floods. However, the challenge here is not dissimilar to retrofitting green space in inhabited areas, in other words, the cost of compensation and/or the provision of alternative housing for those affected.

Underpinning many of these issues is the question of how to tackle these impacts while ensuring equity and fairness. Providing green space, for instance, by demolishing slums, would displace, rather than resolve, the problem. Upgrading existing slums, coupled with a focus on second tier cities to reduce pressure on existing metropolises, would present a more durable and equitable pathway.

There is also scope to mainstream traditional knowledge in managing water flow. Many of the worst impacts of extreme weather are exacerbated by modern construction techniques. Traditional approaches of learning to live with flooding, for instance, may prove more effective and less costly than attempting to prevent floods from occurring. In farming, this can involve techniques such as the construction of trenches and troughs to catch rainwater and allow it to soak into the ground.

The scope for nature-based solutions extends beyond urban vegetation. Mangroves, for instance, can lessen the impact of extreme weather such as cyclones, are cheaper than sea walls and can create livelihoods. In addition, mangrove forests act as carbon sinks.

Towards a regional approach

Many of the countries of South Asia are politically, socially and economically fractured, worsened by divisions between the countries themselves, which are exacerbated by India's size compared to its

neighbours. Divided societies and regions are by nature less resilient than more harmonious ones. These conditions neither serve to build resilience nor encourage working together on a common agenda.

Whether climate change serves as an opportunity for regional collaboration or works to exacerbate existing divisions remains to be determined. While there are many challenges to overcome, progress has been made in information-sharing, and regional cooperation in general between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN), has grown substantially in recent years. The South Asia Hydromet Forum has also made inroads to promoting collaboration and strengthening the capacities of regional agencies to share weather and climate data across the subcontinent.

The starting point for regional engagement in relation to disasters, particularly in regions with concerns regarding sovereignty and political tensions, has generally been through meteorological information-sharing and the development of early warning systems. For riverine floods, in particular, data held by upstream countries can warn those downstream of impending threats though sensitivities between upstream and downstream riparians regarding river-flows can stymie efforts towards information-sharing. While progress on data-sharing at a governmental level is admittedly slow, several NGOs are working across borders to provide flood warnings to those downstream. Several such projects exist between Nepal and India and between northeast India and Bangladesh.

Heat Action Plans are a key adaptation measure to manage growing heat stress

In one lethal week in 2010, temperatures in Ahmedabad surpassed 48 °C and over 1,300 people died. There were 100 neo-natal deaths in one hospital. Ahmedabad subsequently became the first city in South Asia to design and implement a heat action plan. The plan includes an early warning system, procedures for inter-agency coordination, capacity strengthening among government and health professionals for preparedness and reducing exposure and community outreach programmes for those most vulnerable including slum communities and outdoor workers. Ahmedabad has also moved from reactive to mitigative measures such as the cool roofs initiative. Using roof-building materials that reflect sunlight and absorb less heat can help lower indoor temperatures by as much as 5 °C. The initiative has been rolled out to more than 15,000 slum households and 1,000 local government buildings. The success of Ahmedabad's plan is seen through the impact of the 2015 heatwave in India: while 2,300 people died across the country, Ahmedabad reported only seven deaths. The heat action plan has been replicated in 23 other heatwave-prone states in India, covering more than 130 cities and districts, and has influenced Karachi, Male, Nepal and Sri Lanka to produce their own. Heat action plans are an important measure to help cities begin to adapt to extreme heat but a more robust and granular picture of the impacts of heatwaves will be needed. For example, cities often lack the ability to collect and analyse climatological-led empirical evidence such as the number of days and seasonal variability of heatwaves which is critical for building adaptive capacity for effective heatwave management.

Progress through inter-governmental regional groupings has undoubtedly been slow. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) remains stymied by tension between India and Pakistan. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which

includes Myanmar and Thailand but excludes Pakistan and Afghanistan, has until recently been hamstrung by resource constraints. BIMSTEC offers scope to formalize and deepen cooperation between the BBIN countries at least.

But there are several arguments to justify greater cooperation across South Asia including between India and Pakistan. The first is that in the absence of cooperation, climate change will serve to heighten tension, in particular, over shared rivers.

The second is that there is scope for mutual benefit from early-warning systems and information-sharing along with learning from examples of best practices.

Finally, because the challenges are shared, so too are countries' interests. Engaging regionally and forging joint positions in international forums, most obviously the Conference of the Parties (COP), would amplify their voices. This is particularly the case where India and Pakistan need to stand together on climate-change related issues despite their other political differences. In fact, Pakistan currently chairs the G77 and, together with China, has pushed the issue of loss and damage and climate finance onto the agenda at COP27 in Egypt.

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has shifted from data-sharing towards a more holistic regional response to disasters driven by the collective experience of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. South Asia could feasibly follow a similar trajectory though previous shared disasters such as the 2005 Kashmir earthquake did not serve that purpose. In the absence of inter-governmental collaboration, there remains scope for interaction and peer-to-peer learning at other levels. Examples of successful rural and urban responses to climate change are likely to be replicable across the region and several initiatives, such as C40 Cities, provide a forum for urban managers to cascade successful interventions. Similarly, despite government reluctance to engage, there is scope for scientific cooperation and aspirations to maintain data secrecy have been superseded by satellites and the Internet.

Challenges to climate change must be overcome to improve lives across South Asia

But, even with the best intentions, policy frameworks and on-the-ground implementation, significant challenges will lie ahead. Changing weather patterns will present significant challenges. The floods of 2022 affected areas such as Baluchistan particularly badly: housing in Baluchistan is particularly unprepared for the effects of flooding given that average rainfall is just 5 cm. If rainfall patterns continue to change, extreme weather events will affect ill-prepared areas and could hinder the development of insurance markets. However, the greater the unpredictability, the harder it will be for underwriters to accurately assess the risks.

Because the response needs to be multi-sectoral and multi-layered, this raises questions of who owns, and is responsible for, the implementation. Both India and Pakistan delineate the responsibilities of central government and the states/provinces. But this framework will not necessarily translate into effective action to counter the effects of climate change. The multi-faceted challenges do not necessarily sit squarely within the remit of one layer of government. While this is not insurmountable, the challenge is heightened if central and provincial governments are of different political hues. There are numerous precedents for governance failures to become political footballs used by political parties to blame their political opponents.

The question of finance is also imperative. Carbon markets offer one means of generating finance while tackling climate change and markets are starting to evolve in India and elsewhere but many of the examples are small scale and need to be aggregated to make them attractive to potential investors. Given the costs involved, it is understandable that there are widespread demands for those responsible for carbon emissions to bear more of the costs faced by those most immediately affected.

Dealing with climate change can become an economic and technological opportunity rather than simply a cost or burden. The region stands to benefit from a suite of international aid and trade agreements by aligning their priorities and signaling a commitment to deal with the impacts of climate change. Industries worth trillions of dollars can emerge in fields not limited to cooling, transport, agriculture and construction along with millions of other green jobs. But this will not happen by accident. It will require political will, public support, technological advances, regional cooperation and, most likely, a great deal of luck.

ADAPTING TO THE VAGARIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH ASIA:

COOPERATION BETWEEN STATES THE ONLY WAY

By *Kalyani Tembhe*

The recent torrential rains and corresponding flash floods and landslides in the northern states of India are merely a glimpse into the country's deep vulnerability to climate change. The story is not any different in the neighbouring State of Pakistan. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlights India's and Pakistan's defencelessness to the vagaries of climate change, especially in the Himalayan region.[1]

In recent years, erratic monsoons, droughts, heatwaves and similar climate extremes have been plaguing both countries. These increasing instances of extreme weather are harbingers of bigger threats—food security, human health, water resource management, population migration, and last but not the least, climate-induced conflict. Not that the economy matters when human lives are being lost, but given that we can only think of losses in terms of economics these days, it is important to mention that according to the latest report by the World Meteorological Organization, in 2022, Pakistan incurred economic losses of over US $15 billion and India incurred losses of over US $4.2 billion due to floods alone.[2]

Climate extremes pose an imminent threat to the climate change adaptive capacity of both the fledgling countries. The strained relations between them, along with ceaseless border conflicts, are not helping either. In what is becoming a vicious cycle, the countries are not able to adapt to climate change because of their bad relations, which are becoming even worse due to their inability to adapt to climate change.

Both countries are individually trying to deal with an issue that inherently does not recognize imaginary boundaries which exist only on maps created by power-hungry men untouched by the perils of climate change. They try to deal with climate change on their own and when they fail, they innocently ask, why? Seminars are held in air-conditioned halls, with participants who arrive in planes from all over the country and beyond it, on why their efforts are proving to be inadequate. Grand theories and moral exhortations are paraded by the participants who overlook and ignore the simplest explanation for this failure—climate change knows no boundaries and cannot be tackled individually by nations without coordinating with all the stakeholders.

Establishing a bilateral climate mitigation and adaptation framework between all the stakeholders of the two countries is the only way forward (that does not fall within the ambit of lunacy). Building an integrated cooperation framework, that addresses the underlying causes of vulnerability and helps build regional climate adaptability while directing the economic development of the region in a more sustainable direction, is key to enhancing regional environmental and socio-economic

resilience against climate change. That is to say, the only way to keep the region fit for human habitation and allow the region's population a modicum of hope against a life that is bound to become 'poor, nasty, brutish and short' is for the two countries to stop hating each other and start co-operating with each other.

Key climate vulnerabilities shared by India and Pakistan

The Hindu Kush Himalayan Region

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region, 2015 | Source: Riccardo Pravettoni [https://www.grida.no/resources/6699]

India has for decades been almost single-handedly responsible for the conflict around the international border of Kashmir, causing a great deal of social and economic losses to the residents of the region. The vulnerability of the region, however, is not just defined by the border conflict anymore, but by an even more recalcitrant and insidious player—climate change (It is an irony, or maybe a tragedy, that the people of the region are neither responsible for the border conflict nor the climate change afflicting them—both are the work of foreigners).

Often referred to as the 'third pole', with their massive glaciers and glacial lakes, the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) mountain ranges that span from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east, hold the largest

volume of ice on earth outside of the polar regions. According to the latest report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the HKH cryosphere is facing "unprecedented and largely irreversible changes over human time scales", the primary cause of the changes being climate change.[3]

Both Pakistan Administered Kashmir (Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan) and India Occupied Kashmir (Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh) are located within the broader region of the Hindu Kush Himalayas. The population of these regions is experiencing both climatic and non-climatic drivers of change which are having a cascading impact on their livelihoods and adaptability. Understanding the intertwined causal relation between these drivers and their corresponding impact on the population is important to improve their climate adaptability.

Himalayan glacial melt and snow melt are the source of freshwater which define the hydrological characteristics of the Indus River and, hence, hold great socio-economic importance for both India and Pakistan (not to mention Jammu and Kashmir). Snow and glacial meltwater are a major source of water not only for high mountain towns in the region but also for the home and commercial water supply systems in downstream areas, including heavily populated urban areas. Changes in the hydrological cycle of this region due to climate change are not only going to be a major issue for the humans reliant on the freshwater but are also adding to the vulnerability of the broader ecosystem and biodiversity of the region.[4]

The region has about 5,300 glacial lakes, tens of thousands of ice cliffs, and permafrost on unstable high slopes. Since these areas are located in the greatest earthquake risk zones (IV and V), cryosphere-related hazards can have cascading impacts on the region.[5] Glacial Lake Outbursts (GLOFs) and flash floods are damaging agriculture, livestock, assets and infrastructure, along with damaging important cultural heritage.

Not only is the population of the region suffering through all of this due to climate change created historically by outsiders (mostly the West) but their ability today to respond to these hazards and emergencies is seriously compromised by the 'occupational' desires of India. The systematic creation and maintenance of poverty of a large swathe of the population, the socio-economic inequalities and disparities in the distribution of resources, the forced displacements and migrations, and the infrastructure deficits due to the people of the region being totally politically and economically neutered by the presence of hateful Indian boots on the ground, have made it impossible for the people of the region to protect themselves from a problem they did not even create.

Given that the people of the region are not being granted freedom to do with their resources what they choose to do, and they are not being allowed to protect themselves from disasters, the least India and Pakistan can do is to cooperate to improve the climate change adaptability of this disaster-prone region.

The Indus River basin

The Indus River Basin is one of Asia's largest river systems. It consists of the Indus River and a number of its tributaries. Most of these tributaries are also major rivers—Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas. The rivers originate in the Himalayas, the Karakoram and the western end of the Tibetan Plateau and mostly flow through the war-torn regions of Kashmir and Punjab into the Arabian Sea.

According to the current distribution of state power and sovereignty, India is upstream of the river basin whereas Pakistan is downstream. Both these states heavily depend on the Indus River for their water needs. The basin produces around 80 per cent of Pakistan's agricultural output and is key to the livelihood and water supply in the northwestern states of India, giving rise to disputes both between India and Pakistan and between different states of India.

The Indus river basin, 2015 | Source: Riccardo Pravettoni [https://www.grida.no/resources/6692]

One of the most significant climate change threats to the region arises from water stress in the river basin. The conflict surrounding the river basin stems from the division of water of the Indus River after the partition of Kashmir and Punjab between the two newly formed States of India and Pakistan in 1947. The two States signed the Indus Water Treaty in 1960—without any consultation with the people of Kashmir or Indian Punjab. It is a water-sharing agreement mediated by the World Bank. The agreement delineates the distribution of water from the Indus River and its tributaries between the two countries, along with defining the clauses around any new hydropower projects. The Indus Water Treaty is regarded as an important example of successful water diplomacy, and it has played a significant role in preventing major conflicts over water resources in the region. Even though the treaty has been facing some challenges

recently, largely due to India's hydropower projects on the western tributaries, the two countries have by and large upheld the treaty even during times of war.

Recent extreme weather events (melting glaciers and corresponding flash floods) and deepening mistrust between the two countries have challenged the basic principle of the treaty—acceptance of the shared problem. India's new dam designs, which India claims are necessary to mitigate environmental degradation and climate change, have opened the floodgates (so as to speak) for claims and counter-claims of bad faith. Pakistan fears that the dam designs proposed by India will give the country a way to manipulate dam storage levels in order to amplify downstream floods. India, on the other hand, is concerned that Pakistan will use floods caused in part by climate change to falsely accuse India of water manipulation to gain geopolitical advantage. Some of the solutions that have come up are to add a climate change clause to the existing treaty and design the water-sharing clause around the principle of climate mitigation. But, is a mere water-sharing treaty enough to address the climate change challenges the residents of the river basin are facing? How effective is adding a perfunctory "climate change clause" to the existing treaty going to be?

Even though the Indus Water Treaty is a good example of water-sharing diplomacy, adding a climate change clause won't necessarily be an effective solution to improve the climate change mitigation strategies and adaptive capacity of the region; because the effects and causes of climate change are way beyond the ambit of water management. But, owing to its success, the treaty can be used as a good reference for building a bilateral climate cooperation framework between the two states; and the new framework can in turn guide the water management strategies of the Indus Water Treaty.

Rann of Kutch and the Indus Deltaic Coast

Another eco-sensitive region shared by India and Pakistan is the Great Rann of Kutch. The Rann of Kutch is a large area of saline mudflats located in the Thar desert region of South Asia, demarcated by the western Indian state of Gujarat and the south-eastern province of Sindh in Pakistan. The Rann has a unique geography with shifting sand dunes, coastal wetlands and a harsh desert climate, which makes the region highly vulnerable to climate change. Invariably, the residents of this eco-sensitive area are left with the daunting task of adapting to this increasing vulnerability.

The region, owing to its unique geography, poses varied climate adaptation challenges depending upon the local microclimate. The erratic rainfall pattern, with bouts of drought and high evaporation rates, threatens the availability of potable water and irrigation in the region. Rising occurrences of extreme temperatures and heatwaves further add to the health risk of the local population. In the coastal wetland region, which lies along the India-Pakistan border, rising sea level in the Indus River delta and decreasing river sediments are increasing the sea encroachment further inland. This marshy area of Rann of Kutch can adapt to moderate levels of sea level rise, but the marshes might prove to be ineffective in keeping up with the current rates of sea level rise.[6]

This region is also prone to coastal cyclones and floods, and climate change has already started exacerbating this vulnerability. Cyclone Biparjoy highlighted how unprepared both states are and how tokenistic the cooperation between the two is when it comes to tackling disasters. According to reports, there is minimal data sharing and coordination between the authorities of the two states. For climate-related disasters like cyclones, glacial lake outburst floods, avalanches and landslides, there is no framework in place for bilateral coordination.[7]

The marshy wetlands of the Great Rann of Kutch have a history of border disputes, which were mostly controlled after the agreement of 1965 wherein both the states agreed to a ceasefire and restore the pre-war status quo of the region.[8] While the two states agreed to demarcate the border through surveyors, the larger issue remains unresolved. The dispute is largely around the demarcation of the maritime boundary around the Sir Creek region. This delineation of the border is a source of contention because the demarcation will determine the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) either country has in the region as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[9] This ongoing dispute has added to the burden of the fishermen of both countries. Frequent arrests and loss of resources have roped these vulnerable people into the fights between the two countries.

Declaring the region as a protected wetland or using environmental diplomacy and ceasing disputes might help to some extent. But for a holistic and long-lasting solution, a sovereign yet legally binding bilateral agreement to tackle climate change and reduce the vulnerability of the local population needs to be formed.

May it be the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, the Indus River Basin or the Rann of Kutch, the tale has been mostly the same—both countries blaming the other for instigating disputes. When you add the impact of climate change into the politics of these climate-vulnerable territories, these disputes can get even murkier. Rising sea levels, erratic floods, droughts and decreasing wetlands have the potential of disrupting not only the lives of residents but also the entire ecosystems of these areas for years to come. Keeping in mind the vulnerability of the local populations and the imminent threat climate change poses to both adaptability and peace, the two neighbouring States need to prioritize improving the state of the climate in the region.

Gujarat and Kashmir: A tale of differences

The 2014 floods in Kashmir present a perfect example of how a sudden climate hazard can unmask and exacerbate the ugly truth of occupation behind a political façade of democracy. The outcomes of climate hazard in the conflicted valley and one of the world's most militarized zone is not the result of a singular event, but an outcome of the Indian state's longstanding indifference to the fate of the region's population. Despite facing an unprecedented natural disaster and the Indian government's claims of sending transboundary support, no support actually reached the disaster-struck population. It was the local youth volunteer groups, bearing the prejudiced identity of 'angry young men' who took on the major chunk of aid and rescue on the ground.

The Indian government denied international humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the Kashmir flood, but had an entirely different approach after the earthquake that hit the state of Gujarat in 2001.[10] Not only did India welcome foreign aid from UNDP, but there were also around 300 international aid organizations based out of Bhuj alone. The stark differences in the government's actions or inactions in these two situations highlight how the human rights and security of the people of Kashmir are consistently overshadowed by India's insatiable hunger for control over the land of Kashmir.

Climate mitigation and adaptation in India and Pakistan: Status quo

Both India and Pakistan acknowledge the deleterious impacts of climate change and are signatories to UNFCCC's (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) climate cooperation agreements—the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and the Paris Agreement of 2015, both aimed at controlling and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate global warming and its impacts. The Indian government released the 'National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)' in 2008 which defined detailed implementation plans for different sectors. In 2016, the Nation Assembly of Pakistan passed the 'Pakistan Climate Change Act' which was enacted in 2021.

India's National Action Plan on Climate Change is a policy framework that outlines strategies and actions but is not a legally binding framework. On the other hand, Pakistan's Climate Change Act is a legislative document that provides a legal framework for climate action. It establishes the National Climate Change Council, the National Climate Change Authority, and other bodies with legal mandates. Whereas India's Action Plan has sector-specific (agriculture, renewable energy, transportation, etc.) climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and action points along with climate finance mechanisms, Pakistan's Act does not delve into sectoral strategies and focuses on establishing institutions and mechanisms for climate governance. Both countries have sub-national level action plans that complement the national level targets and goals.

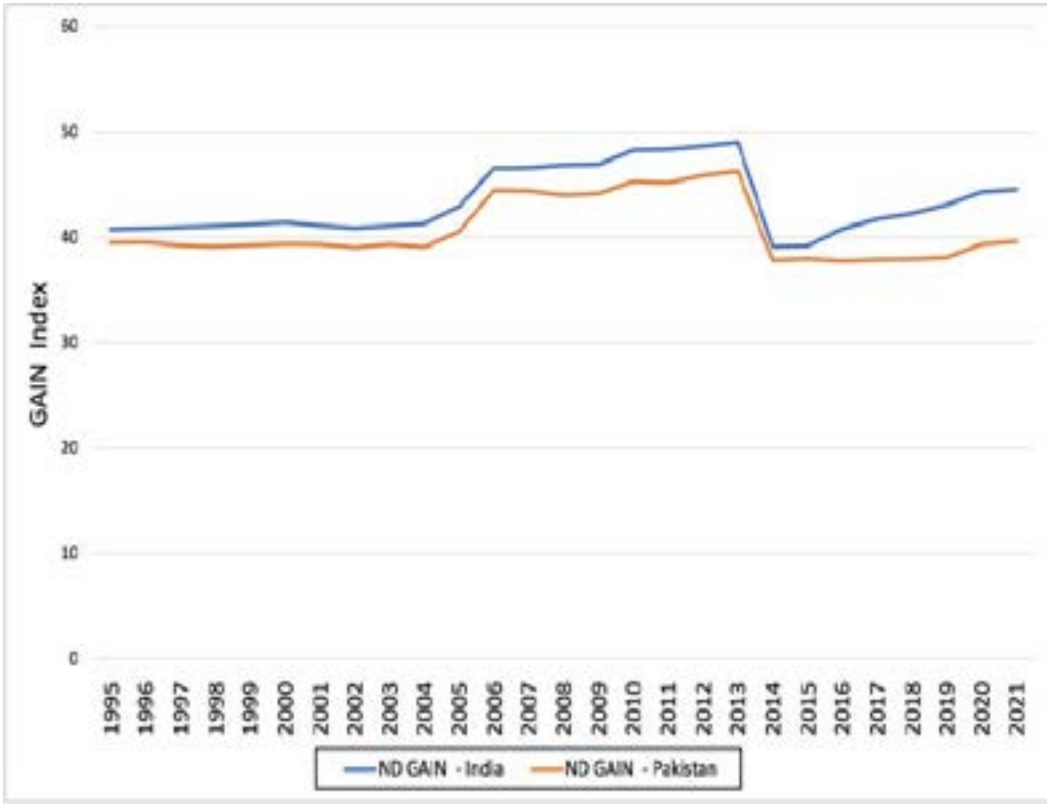
Having said this, the effects and mechanisms of climate change are beyond the ambit of political boundaries. And owing to the shared vulnerabilities, neither India nor Pakistan, at this point, can individually tackle this crisis. Despite the two nation's various climate change adaptation and mitigation interventions, these siloed efforts are falling short due to various factors ranging from lack of funds to lack of credible statistics.[11,12]

Need for a regional bilateral climate change framework

India and Pakistan share eco-sensitive regions and hence, invariably share climate change vulnerability. According to a metric (higher the better) developed by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN), India and Pakistan are almost equally susceptible to the risks of climate change (see *Graph 1: Notre Dame's GAIN score for climate change*).[13] The sharp dip in the score of the two countries in 2014 might be because of the devastating floods in Kashmir; which highlights just how much the two countries share vulnerabilities.

A bilateral agreement for climate change can spearhead the creation of a cooperation framework along with the creation of a climate fund that would address the individual and collective climate vulnerabilities of the region. One of the important dampeners of climate change adaptation and mitigation is the lack of funds. A bilateral agreement can open gates for voluntary donations along with other regional support programs. A cordial acknowledgement of the shared vulnerability between the conflicting nations will encourage international multi-lateral climate finance groups to fund the initiatives. To gain credence from these organisztions, the roadmap for the implementation of climate actions needs to be defined in minute detail along with interim goals and legally binding targets decided by the respective nations. Most importantly, all these targets need to be backed up by credible scientific and socio-economic statistics.

Graph 1: Notre Dame's GAIN score for climate change



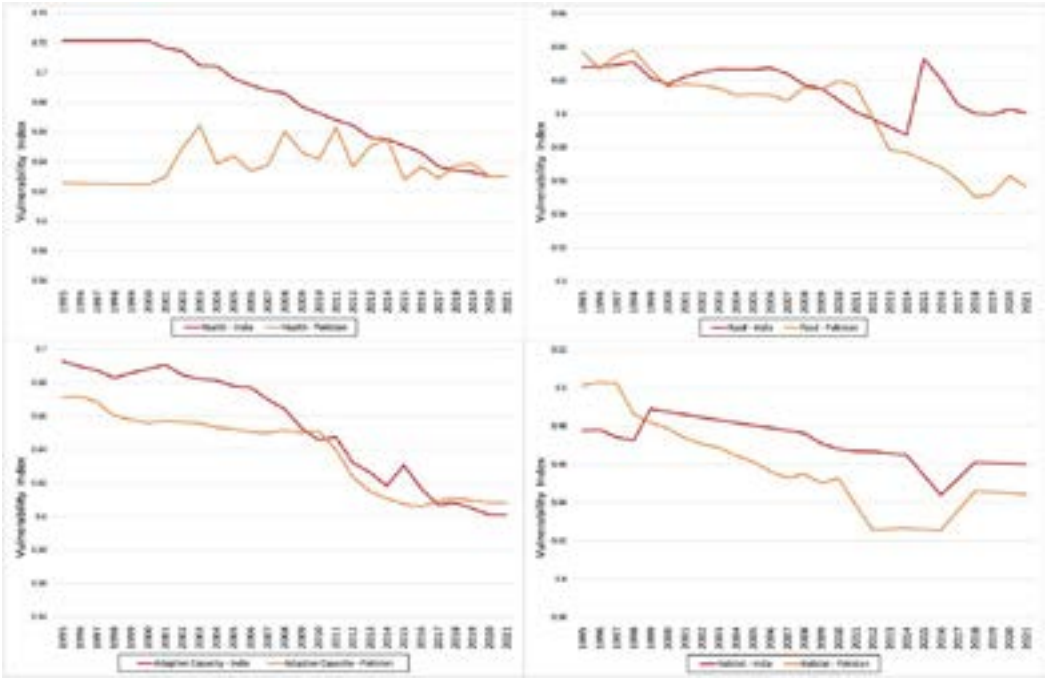
Source: Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative 2023

The proposed agreement should entail several crucial and interconnected features aimed at effectively addressing the imminent challenges of climate change between India and Pakistan. The following are some of the key features any such agreement should adopt:

1. Clear separation of scientific and technical bodies from the domain of political negotiations. To ensure the credibility and robustness of climate-related data, the establishment of dedicated scientific bodies is important. These specialized entities would conduct thorough qualitative and quantitative studies, thereby filling existing data gaps. To uphold the objectivity and integrity of these tasks, these scientific bodies must operate independently, insulated from the influences of political proceedings and bilateral agreements.

2. Furthermore, the efficacy of the agreement hinges on the seamless integration of different sciences—ranging from climate sciences and sector-specific insights to policy analysis. By amalgamating findings from climate modelling, disaster management, and nuanced sectoral understanding (such as agriculture, industry, and transportation), the agreement would provide a comprehensive foundation for streamlined mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Graph 2: Vulnerability of different indicators in India and Pakistan



Source: Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative 2023

Note: Even though the vulnerability index (lower the better) of the adaptive capacity of the two countries has decreased over the years, the vulnerability of food availability and health have seen an erratic trend in India and Pakistan respectively.

3. To concretize this approach, the framework should encompass dedicated scientific working groups, each aligned with specific verticals:

   - **Climate sciences:** Encompassing climate modelling, meteorology, heat island effects and global warming, this vertical would offer crucial insights into evolving climatic patterns and phenomena.
   - **Sectoral sciences:** This vertical would extend its scope to encompass sectors both contributing to and impacted by climate change. Beyond greenhouse gas emissions, this scientific body will analyse sector-wise multifaceted factors pivotal for sustainable development. This would include facets such as energy supply-demand dynamics, adaptability of energy-intensive sectors to emerging technologies, the climate resilience of agriculture and livestock, and the state of the solid waste sector. This comprehensive assessment would serve as the bedrock for precise sector-specific mitigation and adaptation strategies.
   - **Disaster management and extreme weather planning:** Recognizing the escalating risks associated with extreme weather events, this unit would substantially bolster regional disaster management capabilities. Simultaneously, it would assume a critical role in the timely dissemination of disaster alerts. Depending on the scale of its responsibilities, this unit could operate as a self-contained entity or as an integral sub-part of the aforementioned units.

4. Supplementary to these scientific and technical underpinnings, the framework should also accommodate a distinct working group tasked with policy planning, implementation and periodic reviews. Within this multifaceted group, a spectrum of verticals—including policy analysis and planning, climate finance, socio-economic impact assessment, capacity building, and meticulous monitoring or auditing—would coalesce to ensure the seamless execution of the agreement's tenets.

5. To facilitate efficient cooperation and information flow, both scientific and policy groups should operate autonomously while maintaining an active exchange of data and insights. An executive body comprised of officials from both nations and representatives of the most vulnerable communities from all the regions should oversee the entire structure.

6. To effectuate equitable climate adaptation, it is imperative to recognize and actively engage climate-vulnerable groups. This collective should encompass communities confronted with socioeconomic and political vulnerabilities as well. By granting these communities a participatory role in the decision-making process, the agreement would foster an inclusive trajectory towards just and comprehensive climate adaptation.

7. The agreement's efficacy necessitates the establishment of legally binding and equitable interim targets for climate mitigation by the respective states, thereby reinforcing a tangible commitment to sustainable action. These targets can be decided by the states, depending upon their respective capacity, and agreed upon in the bilateral framework.

8. Beyond mitigation, the agreement should extend its scope to encompass the demilitarization of eco-sensitive regions jointly shared by India and Pakistan—such as the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region, the Indus Water Basin and the Rann of Kutch. Similar to the agreement of ceasefire in Kutch in 1967, there should be agreements to reduce the extremely harmful militarization of the Siachen Glaciers. Because this is not only adding to the climate vulnerability of this fragile ecosystem but increasing the vulnerability of the military and the local population as well.[14]

Climate mitigation and adaptation agreement between India and Pakistan will require building good faith between the nations. Any kind of conflict resolution within the framework, especially the ones involving water resources, can easily become a source of contention and the parties can use their veto rights to stymie the process. Both parties must accept that they are fighting a common battle against climate change and not against each other, and definitely not against the people who inhabit the vulnerable regions.

By prioritizing climate resilience over political disputes, India and Pakistan can jointly combat climate-induced vulnerabilities. A robust bilateral agreement, centred on shared climate challenges and regional cooperation, holds the potential to reduce tensions, enhance adaptive capacity and ensure sustainable development.

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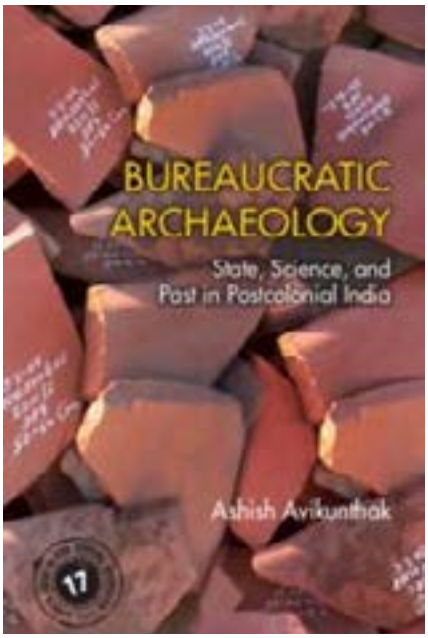
9 FROM THE SHELVES

ARCHAEOLOGY IN SAFFRON:
A BOOK REVIEW OF BUREAUCRATIC ARCHAEOLOGY: STATE, SCIENCE, AND PAST IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

By *Akshat Jain*

If we did not become aware of "one of the largest bureaucracies in the world—the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)"—from our history lessons or from seeing signboards in various 'tourist spots' like the Taj Mahal or the Sanchi stupa, then we certainly did become aware of it when the organization became a central player in one of the most significant political moments that defined the post-British Indian nation-state—the Babri Masjid dispute.



While that was the crowning moment of the organization's long and chequered archaeological career—at least in terms of immediate influence on the lives of millions of people—archaeology has played a leading role not only in the making of the modern Indian State (both pre- and post-British), but has also "significantly contributed to the reimagination of India as a contiguous entity spanning over 5,000 years". It is after all through the fruits of archaeology that India laid claim to being an ancient civilization and found considerable pride in defining itself as a *vishwaguru* (teacher of the world).

The ASI, considered by its own archaeologists as "a national organization whose sole purpose was to produce the 'glorious heritage [viraasat] of ancient India [praacheen bhaarat] and bring it to the attention of the nation'", has been instrumental in exercising its exclusive domain over archaeological knowledge production in India to narrate a story of the past through which India is defined as the "definite territorial centre of Hindu civilization". In *Bureaucratic Archaeology: State, Science, and Past in Postcolonial India*, Ashish Avikunthak shows through "an anthropological investigation of archaeology as a bureaucratic practice" how the 'science' of archaeology was put into the service of this exclusionary Hindu ideology by a corrupt and prejudiced postcolonial bureaucracy. In his own words, "This book is an anthropological study of this epistemological failure of the ASI—it ethnographically plunges into the minutiae of this breakdown."

Avikunthak conducted fieldwork between 2003 and 2005 in Dholavira and Juni Kuran in Gujarat; Bhirrana and Hansi in Haryana; and Tarkhanewala Dera, Chak 86, and Baror in Rajasthan—

all sites associated with Harappa and, more sinisterly, with the Saraswati Heritage Project (SHP), which originated in 2002 through a Government of India gazette notification leading to the constitution of the Advisory Committee for the Multidisciplinary Study of the River Saraswati, under the chairmanship of the then minister of tourism and culture, Jagmohan, who was already infamous for his role in Kashmir in the previous decade. The central aim of the project was to 'scientifically' prove the existence of 'Vedic Harappans' by crediting the Rig Vedic Aryans with authorship of the Harappan civilization, and who better to head such a preposterous endeavour than a proven proponent of 'hard' Hindutva who also set up the Vaishno Devi Shrine Board. In Kashmir, Jagmohan put religion in the service of politics, now here in India he was to make science do the same.

This project was essential to prove that the Vedic people (with all their trappings of caste and dharma) were indigenous to the subcontinent and did not migrate here from the steppes of Central Asia to encounter (and mingle with or subjugate or both in some measure, depending on whom you ask) an already existing population, as other archaeological and genetic studies were claiming with some validity. The ASI was being used because it was already being run by civil servants under the direct control of the central government and many of its archaeologists were either pro-Hindutva or did not care either way as long as they were well compensated. They allowed their research agenda to be thus hijacked because they were already not conducting research. As a disgruntled archaeologist remarked to Avikunthak, "It is about money, corruption, public performance, politics, favouritism, personal gains, and everything else . . . Go ask any archaeologist what research is and you will know that it means nothing to him." They were used to getting their research design "from above [uper-se]," and working away at it from "the bottom [neeche-se]" without even questioning its archaeological validity, let alone its politics.

The same thing happened in the Babri Masjid case as well. While Harappa excavations happened in the daily routine of the ASI, the "Ayodhya excavation of 2003 was done under completely unfavourable circumstances and not at all like any other ASI excavation in the entire 142-year history of the organization." Under direct pressure from the judiciary and the ruling government, the archaeologists conducted an extremely hurried and superbly flawed excavation, the cherry on top of which was the two-volume, 574-pages report written in 10 days—normally, ASI reports take months and years, if not decades to be completed. This report provided the basis for High Court and Supreme Court judgments which provided "a legal sanction for the construction of the temple over the obliterated mosque . . . a legal rationale for the presence of God", and, most problematically, imparted "a powerful juridical validation for the destruction of the Babri Masjid".

The judicial and archaeological bureaucracies were able to dovetail together so well because the social ecology of both these organizations is the same. And this is what Avikunthak wants to convey about India's bureaucracy through his study of the ASI, that under the veneer of science or justice or scientific administration, it serves the interests of the Hindu state.

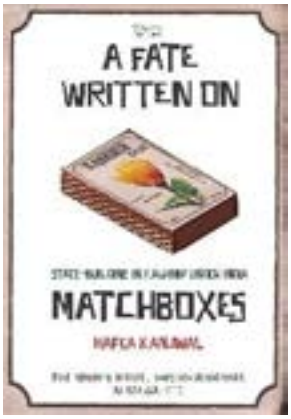
But, coming back to archaeology and the central concern of the book, since the post-British Indian state is a Hindu state, whose bureaucracy is manned by Hindus, the archaeology it produces is a Hindu archaeology in the service of Hindu interests. Two things of central concern to this state are justifying the caste system and claiming the territory of *akhand bharat* or unpartitioned India for the Hindus. Avikunthak shows through the Saraswati Heritage Project and Babri Masjid excavations how the ASI was used for these two purposes, in one case by taking caste back to the Harappans (this is the basis of Mohan Bhagwat's claim that all those living on the subcontinent are Hindus—since all are descended from Vedic Harappans) and

in the other case by helping justify the removal of mosques from Hindu land (if they can make up a temple under Babri, they can do so under and over any other mosque).

Avikunthak demands archaeologists to free themselves of this baggage of political hate. As scientists, they need to be objective. Or if they are making a political intervention, they need to make their politics explicit. As Avikunthak has done by, among other things, naming the caste locations of all his subjects, an anti-caste intellectual practice discouraged in 'liberal' Indian academia. And as bureaucrats, they need to be neutral and serve the interests of the citizens they are constitutionally mandated to serve, rather than becoming pawns in the political executive's power moves.

While the book is no doubt directly relevant to the practitioners of archaeology, it is also an eye-opener for understanding how the 'facts' we receive through official archaeological sources are fabricated from conception to excavation to conclusion. After reading the book, one cannot but develop a healthy scepticism for knowledge produced by bureaucracies in general, Indian bureaucracy in particular and the ASI to be very specific.

BROWSING AMONG BOOKS



A FATE WRITTEN ON MATCHBOXES: STATE-BUILDING IN KASHMIR UNDER INDIA

Hafsa Kanjwal

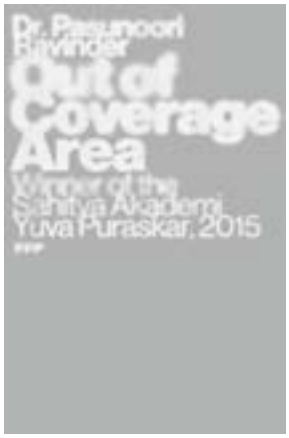
In 1953, Sheikh Abdullah, the first prime minister of Jammu and Kashmir, was jailed for being too 'anti-India'. His deputy Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed then took the reins, and was tasked with securing Kashmir's contested accession to India. *A Fate Written on Matchboxes* tells the story of Bakshi's ten-year client regime and the varying modes of control and governance it deployed. His "politics of life" foregrounded the day-to-day concerns of employment, subsidized rations, free education, and basic services while questions of self-determination were suppressed. To integrate and empower Kashmiris, Bakshi often doled out jobs by writing appointments on matchboxes and slips of paper.

Drawing on bureaucratic documents, propaganda materials, memoirs, literary sources and oral interviews, Hafsa Kanjwal shows us how Bakshi's theory of politics and state-building was marked by tension, corruption and repression. This decade in Kashmir's post–1947 history entrenched Indian rule. As Jawaharlal Nehru had once told Abdullah, "India would bind Kashmir in golden chains." However, it also paved the way for local resistance.

Hafsa Kanjwal is assistant professor of history at Lafayette College, US.

Navayana Publishing; Rs 599
Link: https://navayana.org/products/a-fate-written-on-matchboxes/?v=c86ee0d9d7ed

To learn more about Kashmir, see the #KashmirSyllabus



OUT OF COVERAGE AREA

Dr Pasunoori Ravinder

A collection of short stories written by Dr Pasunoori Ravinder, who was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2015 for the same book in Telugu. These riveting and powerful stories have been translated into English for the first time.

The stories are about middle-class Dalits in urban areas and how they keep getting caught in the caste network no matter where they go. While the upper caste people who benefit from caste deny its very existence, these stories show how Dalits have to encounter caste at every step. For those

oppressed by caste, there seems to be no escape from it. Most Dalit characters in the book believe in the possibility of an urban existence without caste discrimination but their beliefs are constantly challenged by walls which have not become any less solid even as they have been invisibilized.

These stories work as eye-openers for all those privileged enough to go through life without learning about caste; those people who refuse to accept that caste is alive and well precisely because privilege works by making those who benefit from it ignorant of it; those people who do not understand that merit is an extremely pernicious myth perpetuated as a new form of discrimination, that this world which they occupy so righteously is still made and unmade each day on the back of slave labour.

Dr Pasunoori Ravinder is a Sahitya Akademi Award winning Telegu Dalit writer. This is the first English translation of his works.

Panther's Paw Publication; Rs 599

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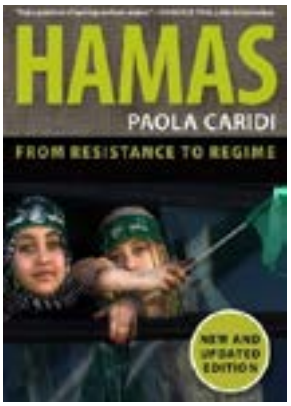

HAMAS: FROM RESISTANCE TO REGIME

Paola Caridi
Translated by Andrea Teti

Informed by years of on-the-ground research and interviews with residents of Gaza and leaders of Hamas, Paola Caridi covers the history of Gaza, from its golden age as a port city, to the formal birth and slow militarization of Hamas. This English-language translation brings the reader to present-day Palestine, offering a never-before-seen chapter on Operation Cast Lead, the shocking WikiLeaks disclosures, and the Cairo Revolution.

When the radical Islamist group Hamas was elected to lead Palestine in 2006, the Western world was shocked. How had the majority of Palestinians come to support an extremist organization and how would the group's new political power affect the larger Israel/Palestine conflict?

Italian journalist and historian Paola Caridi offers both a clear-eyed account of how the conditions in this war-torn region led to the rise of Hamas and an unbiased look at the complex feelings that Palestinians have toward getting behind a government that supports violent resistance. By breaking from the sensationalist journalism surrounding the elections, Caridi is able to tell the story of a movement caught between the desire to resist its oppressor and the need to provide support for a refugee people.

Hamas paints a picture, with intelligence, dexterity and heart, of a people trapped in the most historic of political battles and reveals the strange complexities behind the controversy by explaining one of the key players in the search for peace and justice that runs through the central crisis of the Middle East today.

Paola Caridi is a journalist and historian who contributed to the founding of the press agency Lettera22 and has worked with L'Espresso, Sole 24 Ore, La Stampa, and Famiglia Cristian.

Seven Stories Press; Rs 1,299
Link: https://www.sevenstories.com/books/3150-hamas

10 PALESTINE

PALESTINE / ISRAEL: THE BASIC FACTS

Introduction: the situation today

Since its foundation in 1948 the state of Israel has established a body of laws, policies, and practices that Israel's activities have also fragmented the Palestinian population, this oppression operates in different ways.

- There are over seven million Palestinians living in exile, many in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The majority are those who were forced out during the creation of Israel in 1948, known to Palestinians as the Nakba or 'catastrophe' (see below), and their descendants. Under international law these refugees have a right to return to the lands from which they were expelled. However, Israel has continuously denied them this right.
- Some Palestinians remained in what is now Israel. Today, 1.7 million live as second class citizens, comprising more than 20% of Israel's population. They are subject to over 65 laws that discriminate against them because they are Palestinian.
- A third group of Palestinians (many also refugees) today live either under brutal military occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.
- In the West Bank, 2.1 million Palestinians are governed under a discriminatory, unjust system of military law, face home demolitions, and severe restrictions on their freedom of movement.
- In East Jerusalem 327,000 Palestinians live as permanent residents, inferior to Jewish Israeli citizens.
- In Gaza, 1.9 million Palestinians live under a brutal siege, and have been subject to three aerial bombardments in the last twelve years. Due to the conditions imposed by the siege, the UN estimated that the area would be completely uninhabitable by 2020.

While Palestinians endure discriminatory treatment and the systematic denial of their human rights, Jewish Israelis enjoy full rights under the law within a system of institutionalised ethnic privilege. This leaflet provides basic information about the history and current situation in Palestine, and what you can do about it.

Timeline: how did we get here?

While the history of Palestine/Israel is often presentedas 'complex', the basic dynamics of the situation are not in fact hard to understand. It is helpful to have some understanding of the historical events which led up to the blatantly unjust status quo. As this timeline explains, the consistent pattern has been one of Zionist movement colonisation followed by Israeli state violence and forced displacement of Palestinians, all conducted with the active support of western states like the UK.

1897 Modern political Zionism, the nationalist movement to establish a Jewish state, emerges in Europe. The First Zionist Congress, held in Switzerland, settles on the idea of colonising Palestine, then part of the Ottoman (Turkish) empire.

1917 Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour issues the 'Balfour Declaration' promising the UK government's support for the creation of a 'national home' for Jewish people in Palestine, despite its inhabitants being 90% Palestinian Arab.

1918–48 As part of its global empire, Britain rules Palestine until 1948 during the so-called 'mandate period' and crushes all Palestinian revolts. Jewish immigration to Palestine grows.

1948 Post-WWII, Britain leaves, handing responsibility to the newly-created United Nations which plans to create a Jewish state of Israel on 55% of historic Palestine, although just a third of the population at that time is Jewish.

1948–9 What Israel calls its 'war of independence', Palestinians call the Nakba (catastrophe) as Israel's forces raze over 400 villages to the ground and drive more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes. Israel now occupies 78% of historic Palestine and ignores (to this day) UN resolution 194 demanding it allows the return of the Palestinians expelled or forced to flee in 1948. Palestinians remaining in the land that becomes Israel are placed under martial law, which remains until 1966.

1967 During the 'Six Day War', Israel occupies the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip (the Occupied Palestinian Territories, OPTs), bringing all of historic Palestine under Israeli control. It ignores (to this day) UN resolution 242 calling on it to withdraw. More than 1 million Palestinians are forced into exile.

1987 Illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT grow steadily, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The First Intifada (uprising) sees mass Palestinian protests brutally crushed.

1993–5 The US brokers a series of agreements between Israeli and Palestinian leaderships. The 'Oslo Accords' are intended as a step towards Palestinian self-rule, with a staged withdrawal from the OPT by Israel. However, illegal Israeli settlements double in number during the 'peace process'.

2000 Israel's increasingly brutal military rule and ongoing seizure of Palestinian land ignite a second intifada.Thousands are killed as Palestinian towns and refugee camps are invaded, shelled and bombed.

2002 Israel starts construction of an apartheid wall, mostly built on Palestinian land. Its route annexes Jerusalem and major illegal settlements, belying Israel's 'security' justification.

2004 The International Court of Justice (ICJ) declares the wall illegal and orders its removal. Israel ignores the ICJ and instead extends its matrix of control including checkpoints, the ID system, a segregated road-network, house demolitions and administrative detention practices (imprisonment without charge or trial).

2005 On the anniversary of the ICJ ruling, Palestinian civil society launches a call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, modelled on the global movement that helped isolate apartheid South Africa. Despite daily settler and military violence, the non-violent Palestinian popular resistance movement in the West Bank grows.

2006 Hamas wins elections declared by independent monitors as free and fair in the OPTs. Israel responds by abducting 35 Palestinian MPs and imposing a complete blockade of Gaza, subjecting it to major attacks, destroying the only power plant.

2008–9 During 'Operation Cast Lead', Israel bombs Gaza for three weeks, destroys 25% of buildings and kills over 1,400 Palestinians including 300 children. Thirteen Israelis are killed. The Goldstone Report condemns Israel's war crimes.

2010 Israeli forces kill nine crew members on the Mavi Marmara, part of a flotilla of ships seeking to break the siege of Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid. International outrage spurs the growth of the BDS movement.

2012 During 'Operation Pillar of Defense', Israel again bombs Gaza, killing 158 people.

2014 In yet another episode of intense state violence, Israel's 51-day assault on Gaza code-named 'Operation Protective Edge' kills more than 2,000 Palestinians.

2018 Donald Trump moves the US embassy to Jerusalem – unilaterally recognising its illegal annexation by Israel – and ends US humanitarian support for Palestinian refugees expelled in 1948.

2018-20 Israeli forces kill more than 260 Palestinians in Gaza during the Great Return March – a series of demonstrations in which Gazans march for their fundamental human rights.

Since 1948 Palestinians have been subject to ethnic cleansing, settler colonialism and a discriminatory regime that amounts to apartheid. Ethnic cleansing through forced removal from their lands and the denial of the legally enshrined right of return for those driven into exile; settler colonialism though the destruction and theft of Palestinian land for Jewish- only settlement, and apartheid through the establishment of a body of laws and polices that grants privileges to Jewish citizens of Israel that are denied to Palestinians.

Hope for the future: what you can do

Western governments allow Israel impunity despite decades of violating international law. But Palestinians continue their liberation struggle and grassroots support is growing around the world.

- Join PSC: Palestine Solidarity Campaign is the
- largest UK organisation working to support justice and human rights for Palestinians. Join us today. Learn more: you'll find factsheets and other resources on our website www.palestinecampaign.org.
- Support the BDS movement: heed the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel respects international law. More info at bdsmovement.net.

UNFOLLOW THE MEDIA, FOLLOW THE RESISTANCE

Posted by indi.ca on 15 December 15 2023

Today, there's a rebellion against the White Empire, but you wouldn't know it from the western media. They're still condemning those pesky rebels for attacking the Death Star, and explaining why the Empire needs to incinerate an entire population in response. "Millions of voices suddenly crying out in terror" is apparently a good thing, if you just STFU about it.

They tell you to worry about students saying the word 'genocide', and to ignore the nuclear-armed states actually doing it. They lie about beheaded babies to actually murder children. They lie about raped white women to actually lynch an entire population. As Malcolm X said, "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing."

It's not just that western media is actively evil, they're also passively dumb. They use passive voice to say that Palestinians just 'die' or hospitals spontaneously 'explode,' displaying less editorial standards than Clippy from MS Word. They repeat whatever Israel says, despite Israel constantly lying and making them look like idiots. They present everything through an imperial frame (we're just trying to help!) and miss the big picture entirely; that the Empire has no clothes

and a raging hard-on for war. People can see this for themselves, and the western media looks worse than evil. They look like dumbasses.

So what's the alternative? Well, plenty. Read a book, talk to someone, stare into space. Once you realize that the 'free' press of the west is just privatized propaganda, you can't unrealize it .Anything is better consuming the informational equivalent of fast food, giving you diabetes of the brain or — worse — verbal diarrhea as you repeat this dumb shit to other people. If you are going to consume propaganda — and it's all propaganda— it might as well be organic propaganda, straight from farm to plate. No GMOs, no IOF, no CIA.

Of course you can always watch/read Al Jazeera, or Al Mayadeen, organizations that earned their stripes by getting attacked by Israel, not embedding with them like CNN and other fakes. But, more interestingly, you can go straight to their sources, and follow the Resistance yourself.

With Telegram and a little working-around Apple/Google censorship, you can follow Hamas's Al-Qassam Brigades, Hezbollah, and Abu Obeida himself. You can follow Ansar Allah Media Center from Yemen, Sabereen for the Iraqi resistance, or great analysts like Fotros Resistance and the Resistance News Network, who aggregate all of the above. You have to take all of this information with plenty of salt and I, in fact, cannot vouch for the provenance of any of them, but you should be doing that with media anyways.

When I say 'work-around' what I mean is that the App Store versions of Telegram will censor many of these accounts. However, you can access them on a modern Huawei phone (I assume), or by simply using Telegram Desktop or Web, which is what I do. Since most of these accounts are in Arabic, you'll need Telegram Premium to auto-translate them. Once you do, however, you will have completely broken out of the app-proved, western, English-speaking worldview, and that's a much better way of viewing the world, which is not western or English-speaking at all.

Through these specific accounts, you can follow the ongoing rebellion against Empire through GoPros trapped to actual Resistance fighters instead of professional propagandists phoning it in from hotel rooms. You can get analysis from people who aren't, like western pundits, paid to deliberate not understand things. You'll also encounter a lot of dead people and killing because there's a war on, so it's not for the faint-hearted. As I mentioned, staring into space is a perfectly viable alternative too.

It is honestly a lot of information (which I've just scratched the surface of), and you cannot possibly agree with all of it, but if you want a direct rather than a directed source, it is out there. It is possible to get information straight from the horse's mouth, rather than bullshit from dumbasses, as most media consumers are used to. So unfollow the media and follow the Resistance. Actually listen to the people you're supposed to hate and you might be surprised what they tell you. Even if you still consider these people enemies, there is no greater teacher than the enemy.

I, however, consider White Empire the enemy, and I get some comfort from the people fighting them, and winning. All three legs of Empire — military, money, and media— are visibly shaking and the stool will be just a historical piece of shit soon enough. There's a rebellion on, and Telegram is the new pirate radio. Millions of voices are crying out in terror, but billions can hear them, without the filter of white noise. It's a brave new world, and the brave people fighting for it have Telegram accounts. You, too, can follow along

FILMS ABOUT PALESTINE

A list of recommended films about Palestine by Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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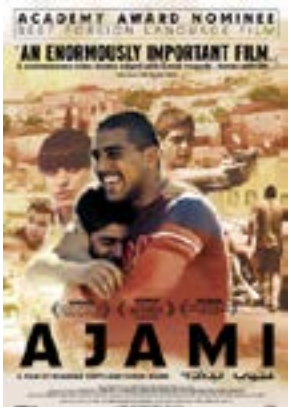
Ajami (2009)

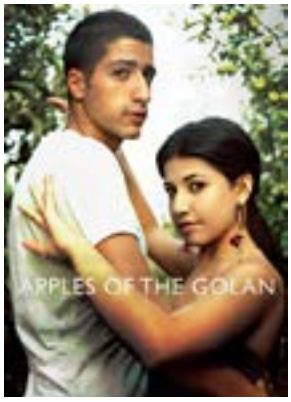


Nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 2010 Oscars.

Misunderstanding and violence spiral out of control in Palestine and Israel. Omar has to pay for his uncle's mistake; Malek is a Palestinian `illegal' from Nablus who is working for Abu-Elias to pay off his mother's medical bills; Dando is an Israeli policeman distraught at the disappearance of his conscripted brother; and Binj is an apolitical, hedonistic Arab despised by his friends for having a Jewish girlfriend.

Crime/Drama | 120 mins | Directed by Scandar Copti and Yaron Shani

Apples of the Golan (2012)



Nestled high on a mountainside in the Middle East, a Syrian Druze village has survived under Israeli occupation, while 136 others like it were wiped out. The surviving communities find ways of forging lives enriched with music, dance, and intrigue, despite the ever-present IDF forces.

Documentary | 80 mins | Directed by Jill Beardsworth and Keith Walsh

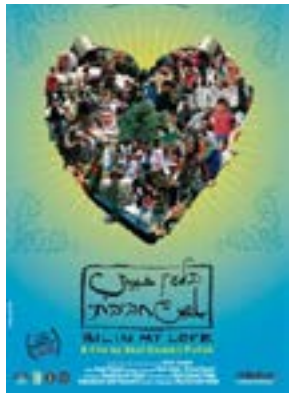
Ave Maria (2015)

Nominated for Best Live Action Short Film at the 2016 Oscars.

Nuns of the Sisters of Mercy convent in the middle of the West Bank wilderness have their daily routine of silence and prayer disrupted when a family of religious Israeli settlers crash their car into the convent's wall.

Short/Comedy | 14 mins | Directed by Basil Khalil

Bil'in Habibti (2006)



The village of Bil'in is about to lose over a half of its territory to the Wall and to the settlement of Modi'in Elite. The residents of the village decide to embark on a struggle against the construction of the barrier and are joined by international and Israeli activists. Director Shai Carmeli Pollak joins the village's struggle for over a year, focusing on two central figures: Mohamed, a member of the village's local committee against the wall, and Wagee, farmer and father of ten, who is losing the majority of his land to the wall and the settlement. The film reveals the relationship formed between the villagers and activists, against the back of their struggle. The film explores a struggle for nonviolent resistance and exposes the military's use of under-cover infiltrators (mustaravim) in order to "justify" the use of brutal force against villagers and activists alike.

Documentary | 85 mins | Directed by Shai Carmeli Pollak

Boycott (2021)

When a news publisher in Arkansas, an attorney in Arizona, and a speech therapist in Texas are told they must choose between their jobs and their political beliefs, they launch legal battles that expose an attack on freedom of speech across 33 states in America.

Boycott traces the impact of state legislation designed to penalize individuals and companies that choose to boycott Israel due to its human rights record. A legal thriller with "accidental plaintiffs" at the center of the story, Boycott is a bracing look at the far-reaching implications of anti-boycott legislation and an inspiring tale of everyday Americans standing up to protect our rights in an age of shifting politics and threats to freedom of speech.

Documentary | 70 mins | Directed by Julia Bacha

Farha (2021)

Fourteen-year-old Farha dreams of attending school in the city with her best friend Farida, but she knows that, as the daughter of the mukhtar (the head of the village, played by Ashraf Barhom), she is in for an uphill battle against tradition. Girls Farha's age are expected to marry. It's 1948, and British control over Palestine is coming to an end. What Farha and her father do not yet know is that forced displacements are already happening across the region. When Israeli bombs reach their village, Farha's father locks her in the cellar of their home, promising to return as soon as he can. While Farha waits and watches through the cracks, the village she was so excited to leave is transformed to ruin, threatening an end to the future she had planned and leaving only trace memories in its wake.

A dauntless and compelling feature debut by Jordanian filmmaker Darin J. Sallam, Farha captures both the isolating terrors of war and the lingering beauty that can colour recollections of dispossession — a mental record of the last laugh shared, the faint smell of freedom before the void of exile. An impressive lead performance from newcomer Karam Taher punctuates catastrophic loss with uncompromising determination.

In this remarkable and devastating story, Sallam's resonant directorial voice presents a penetrating perspective on the Nakba and returns the gaze to a cultural legacy in the midst of a global resurgence.

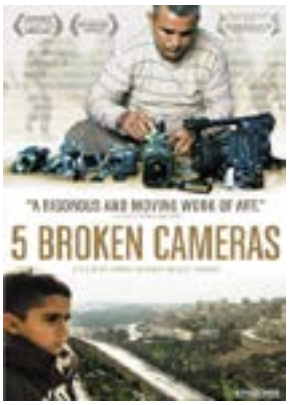
Drama | 92 mins | Directed by Darin J. Sallam

Fatenah (2009)

The first 3D animated film made in Palestine. Fatenah is a 28-year-old woman living in the Gaza Strip. Her life is similar to the lives of many other women in Gaza. Her life changes the day she discovers to have breast cancer.

Short/ Animated fiction | 20 mins | Directed by Ahmad Habash

5 Broken Cameras (2011)



Winner of a 2012 Sundance Film Festival award and the 2013 International Emmy Award. Nominated for a 2013 Academy Award.

When his fourth son, Gibreel, is born, Emad, a Palestinian villager, gets his villagers start to resist this decision. For more than five years, Emad films the struggle, which is led by two of his best friends, alongside filming how Gibreel grows. Very soon it affects his family and his own life. Daily arrests and night raids scare his family; his friends, brothers and himself are either shot or arrested. One camera after another is shot at or smashed. Each of the 5 cameras tells part of his story.

Documentary | 94 mins| Directed by Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi

Flying Paper (2014)

The uplifting story of resilient Palestinian youth in the Gaza Strip on a quest to shatter the Guinness World Record for the most kites ever flown.

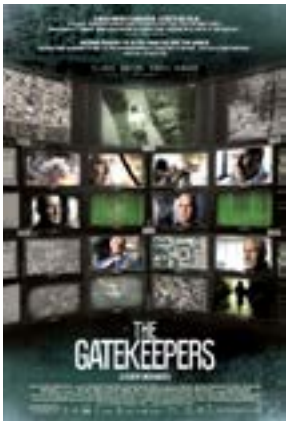
Documentary | 52 mins | Directed by Nitin Sawhney and Roger Glenn Hill

Gaza Mon Amour (2020)

An old fisherman is in love with Siham, a woman who works at the market with her daughter. One day, he finds an ancient statue of Apollo in his fishing nets and decides to approach her with the discovery.

Romance/ Drama | 87 mins | Directed by Tarzan Nasser and Arab Nasser

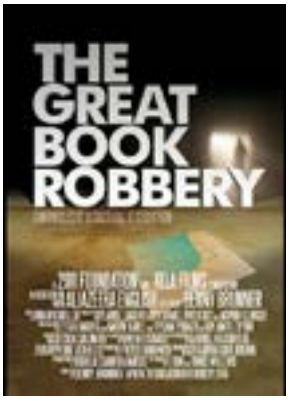
The Gatekeepers (2012)



A documentary featuring interviews with all surviving former heads of Shin Bet, the Israeli security agency whose activities and membership are closely held state secrets. What clearly amounts to torture is freely admitted, as are their methods of acquiring Palestinian informers and their accounts of targeted killings, in which they take especial pride ('clean, elegant'). In the latter part of the film, the participants take a step back and consider what they have achieved. At the political level, they agree that their efforts have only strengthened the resistance, and the whole process has destroyed what they thought Israel stood for. The closing words sum it up: 'We win the battles but we are losing the war.'

Documentary | 95 mins | Directed by Dror Moreh

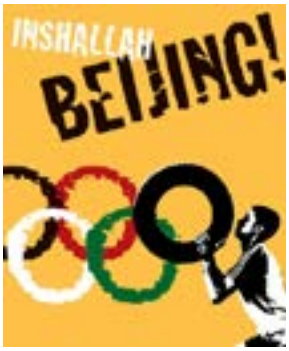
The Great Book Robbery: Chronicles of a Cultural Destruction (2012)



The story of 70,000 Palestinian books that were looted by the newly created State of Israel in 1948. The film interweaves various story lines into a structure that is both dramatically compelling and emotionally unsettling. The interviews centre on eyewitness accounts and cultural critiques that place the book theft affair in a larger historical-cultural context; in the process, new light is shed on the Palestinian tragedy of 1948 and the moralistic-heroic Israeli narrative of the 1948 war is deconstructed.

Documentary | 57 mins | Directed by Benny Brunner

Inshallah Beijing! (2008)



Ghadir dreams that at last someone will buy her some running shoes. Nader trains while hoping that a missile doesn't land on him. Zakia hasn't got a permit from the military authorities to get to the swimming pool. They are athletes belonging to the Palestinian team who leave Jericho in July 2008 to take part in the Beijing Olympic games. Inshallah, God willing – because a lot of difficulties must be overcome before reaching China. First and foremost, the difficulty in competing for a country that doesn't exist yet – Palestine – and that doesn't have the means to support its athletes. It won't be easy to adapt because the war is not just at home: the athletes carry it inside them. Getting to Beijing is already a victory.

Documentary | 54 mins | Directed by Francesco Cannito and Luca Cusani

The Iron Wall (2006)

In 1923 Vladimir Jabotinsky, leading intellectual of the Zionist movement and father of the right wing of that movement, wrote..."Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population – behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach." From that day these words became the official and unspoken policy of the Zionist movement and later the state of Israel. Settlements were used from the beginning to create a Zionist foothold in Palestine. This film examines the establishment of Israeli settlements in the West Bank as part of a strategy for permanent occupation of the territory. Produced by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees and Palestinians for Peace and Democracy, it features interviews with noted peace activists and political analysts, including Jeff Halper, Akiva Eldar, and Hind Khoury.

Documentary | 52 mins | Directed by Mohammed Alatar

Jerusalem... The East Side Story (2008)

Produced by the Palestine Agricultural Relief Committees, this documentary looks at the Israeli government's policy regarding the city and its inhabitants and includes interviews with Palestinian and Israeli leaders, human rights activists, and political analysts, all of whom agree that the handling of Jerusalem, its settlements and its Arab and Israeli populations, is the key to peace.

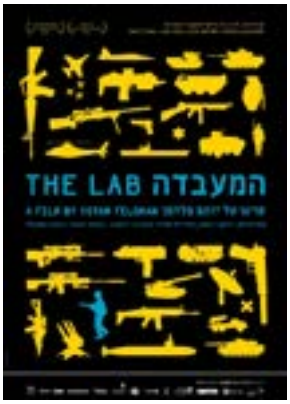
Documentary | 56 mins | Directed by Mohammed Alatar

The Land Speaks Arabic (La Terre Parle Arabe) (2007)

Documents the late 19th century birth of Zionism and its repercussions for Palestinians. Brings together rarely seen footage of Palestine before 1948 juxtaposed with original source documents, eyewitness accounts, stunning choreography, moving testimonials, and interviews with historians. This award-winning film shows that the expulsion of the indigenous Arab population from Palestine was far from an accidental result of the 1948 war, shining a spotlight on the ethnic cleansing of Palestine by the Zionist movement.

Documentary | 61 mins | Directed by Maryse Gargour

The Lab (2013)



Israel is a world leader in the international arms trade. Large Israeli companies develop the vessels of future warfare, which is sold worldwide by private Israeli agents who market it as "field tested" on Palestinians. At the same time, Israeli theoreticians explain to various foreign countries how to use the technology to defeat civil and para-military resistance. This film follows two private Israeli arms dealers as they go about their business with their clients, and documents how the Israeli military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank has been made into a marketable, highly profitable, national asset. It reveals a vicious circle in which new wars need new weapons and new enemies, thereby reinforcing the age-old bond between the profitable and the lethal.

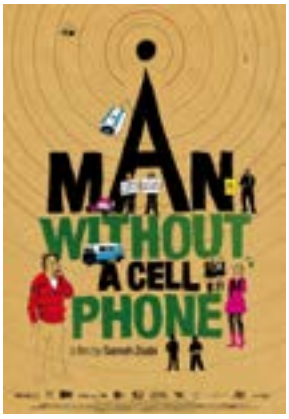
Documentary | 60 mins | Directed by Yotam Feldman

The Law in These Parts (2011)

Award-winning Israeli documentary about the military court system operated by the IDF in the West Bank. Interspersed with archival material, it is based on interviews with nine retired military judges who speak with remarkable candour about the use of torture, and their belief that "security is above the law".

Documentary | 101 mins | Directed by Ra'anan Alexandrowicz

Man without a Cell Phone (2011)



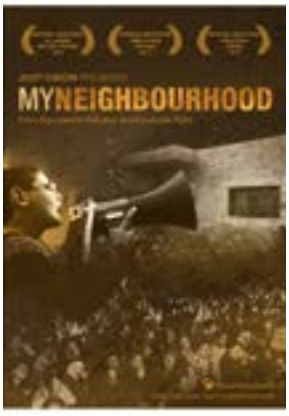
A humorous, sharp take on the social milieu of a Palestinian village inside Israel. Jawdat, a restless young concrete worker, just wants to have fun with his friends, talk on his cell phone, and find love – a near impossible task in a place where politics and traditional values dominate. Adding to Jawdat's problems is his curmudgeonly father, Salem, who establishes the film's irreverent tone with his opening pronouncement of his people's dilemma: "Co-existence, my ass!" Dragging Jawdat and the entire village into his outrageous battle against an Israeli cell phone tower that he fears is poisoning them with radiation, the father's hysterical behavior stands in stark contrast to his son's cool attitude to win the hearts of girls while wrestling with college entrance exams.Man Without a Cell Phone Social Comedy | 83 mins | Directed by Sameh Zoabi

Mayor (2020)

An award-winning look at the life of Musa Hadid, the Christian mayor of Ramallah, during his second term in office. His immediate goals: repave the sidewalks, attract more tourism, and plan the city's Christmas celebrations. His ultimate mission: to end the occupation of Palestine. Rich with detailed observation and humor, Mayor offers a portrait of dignity amidst the madness and absurdity of endless occupation while posing a question: how do you run a city when you don't have a country?

Documentary | 89 mins | Directed by David Osit

My Neighbourhood (2012)



Mohammed El Kurd is a Palestinian boy growing up in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in the heart of East Jerusalem. When Mohammed turns 11, his family is forced to give up part of their home to Israeli settlers, who are leading a campaign of court-sanctioned evictions to guarantee Jewish control of the area. Shortly after their displacement, Mohammed's family and other residents begin protesting the evictions, determined not to lose their homes for good. In a surprising turn, they are quickly joined by scores of Israeli supporters who are horrified to see what is being done in their name. My Neighbourhood follows Mohammed as he comes of age in the midst of unrelenting tension and remarkable cooperation in his backyard. Highlighting Mohammed's own reactions to the highly volatile situation, reflections from family members and other evicted residents, accounts of Israeli protesters and interviews with Israeli settlers, the film chronicles the resolve of a neighbourhood and the support it receives from the most unexpected of places.

Short/ Documentary | 25 mins | Directed by Julia Bacha and Rebekah Wingert-Jabi

Occupation 101 (2006)

Presents a comprehensive analysis of the facts and hidden truths surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and dispels many of its long-perceived myths and misconceptions. The film also details life under Israeli military rule, the role of the United States in the conflict, and the major obstacles that stand in the way of a lasting and viable peace. Unlike any other film produced on the conflict, 'Occupation 101' explains the complicated reality with precision storytelling through a series of highly stylized visual edits, and gives audiences a complete context with which to better understand the Israeli-Palestinian debate. The roots of the conflict are explained with thought-provoking commentaries from leading Middle East scholars, peace activists, journalists, religious leaders and humanitarian workers whose voices have too often been suppressed in American media outlets.

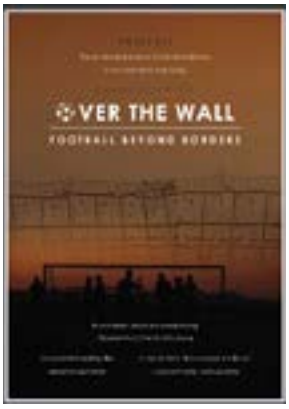
Documentary | 90 mins | Directed by Abdallah Omeish and Sufyan Omeish

Open Bethlehem (2013)

Follows award-winning Palestinian director Leila Sansour's extraordinary journey to the city of Bethlehem, the place where she grew up. Armed with a camera and a family car that keeps breaking down, she sets out to create an intimate chronicle of a historical town in peril. Ten years on, with 700 hours of footage, the result is nothing like she had expected. This film is an emotional journey of one woman in a struggle to save her hometown. It takes viewers deep into Bethlehem and paints portrait of the town as it has never been seen before.

Documentary | 90 mins | Directed by Leila Sansour

Over the Wall - Football Beyond Borders (2012)



An unlikely and ambitious hour-long documentary that touches on the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Arab Spring and the role football can play in overcoming prejudice and discrimination. It follows a 2011 tour of the Middle East by London's SOAS University football team, organized with the help of Football Beyond Borders, an organization that uses the universal power of the sport to tackle political, social and cultural issues.

Documentary | 60 mins | Directed by Jasper Kain and Matthew Kay

The Present (2020)

Nominated for the 2021 Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film. Winner of the 2021 BAFTA Award for Best Short Film.

On his wedding anniversary, Yusef and his daughter, Yasmine, set out in the West Bank to buy his wife a gift. Between the soldiers, segregated roads and checkpoints, how easy would it be to go shopping?

Short/ Drama | 25 mins | Directed by Farah Nabulsi

Tears of Gaza (2010)

Harrowing documentary on the fate of families during and after Israel's bombing of Gaza in Operation Cast Lead, 2008-2009. The film shows the devastating effects of war on the women and children living in Gaza, and the difficulties faced in their everyday lives. Forced to live in tents or ruins, food, water, money, and electricity are in short supply. The film is based on the imagery taken by people themselves in Gaza during the war, with some additional material from the few foreign journalists who were present.

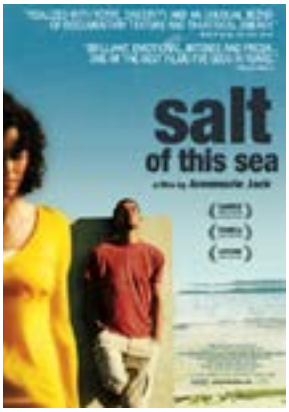
Documentary | 90 mins | Directed by Vibeke Løkkeberg

Where Should the Birds Fly? (2013)

The first film about Gaza made by Palestinians living the reality of Israel's siege and blockade of this tiny enclave. It tells the stories of two young women: Mona Samouni, an 11 year old girl whose family died when her home was hit by Israeli rockets during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-09; and Fida Qishta, the filmmaker, whose story begins with the destruction of her family home in 2004, follows her work as a videographer documenting the daily life of Gazan fishermen and farmers struggling to work under siege, and concludes with the Israeli military attack at the end of 2008. The film reveals the strength and hope, the humanity and humor, that flourish among the people of Gaza. Few films document so powerfully and personally the impact of modern warfare and sanctions on a civilian population.

Documentary | 61 mins | Directed by Fida Qishta

Salt of This Sea (2008)

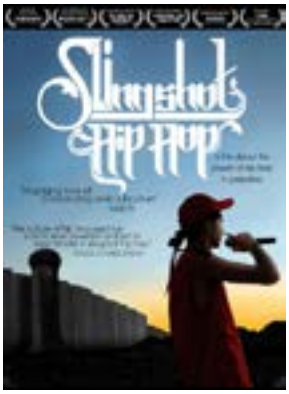


Official Selection of the Cannes International Film Festival in 2008.

Born in Brooklyn to Palestinian refugee parents, Soraya decides to journey to the country of her ancestry to retrieve her grandfather's savings, which have been frozen in a Jaffa bank account since his exile during the 1948 Nakba.

Drama | 109 mins | Directed by Annemarie Jacir

Slingshot Hip Hop (2008)



An invigorating documentary portraying the story of three aspiring Palestinian musicians from the rap group DAM as they develop their talent in their bedrooms and take it to standing-room-only crowds throughout historic Palestine. The film traces the history and development of hip hop in Palestine from the time DAM pioneered the art form in the late 1990s. It braids together the stories of young Palestinian artists living in Gaza, the West Bank, and inside Israel as they discover hip hop, and employ it as a tool to surmount divisions imposed by occupation and poverty.

Documentary | 80 mins | Directed by Jackie Reem Salloum

200 Meters (2020)

The Israeli separation wall sits between a Palestinian man and his family. Denied entry on a technicality, he will stop at nothing to reach his injured son.

Drama | 97 mins | Directed by Ameen Nayfeh

The Promise (2011)

A four-part drama that originally aired on Channel 4. It follows a young British girl who travels to Palestine, retracing the steps of her grandfather, who was a British soldier stationed there in the 1940s.

Drama mini series | Directed by Peter Kosminky

Private (2004)

Mohammed, a Palestinian teacher, lives with his family in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. When violence erupts near their house, Mohammed refuses to evacuate, despite the fears of his wife, Samia. Israeli soldiers occupy the residence's top floor, arousing the hatred of their son, Yusef, and daughter, Mariam, who spies on the men. Despite being given freedom to leave, Mohammed insists that his family stick together in their house.

Psychological drama | 90 mins | Directed by Saverio Costanzo

April-May 2024 . 2 (1)

South Asian Solidarity Collective

Zuva*

Journal of Cross-Border Conversations

*intertwined lifelines