Symposium on Reconciliation in South Asia:
Exploring the Terrain

17-19 March 2005

Proceedings

Symposium on

Reconciliation in South Asia: Exploring the Terrain

Organised by

WISCOMP

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama

in collaboration with

INTERNATIONAL IDEA
INSTITUTE FOR
DEMOCRACY AND
ELECTORAL
ASSISTANCE

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

New Delhi, India
17-19 March 2005

Contents

Foreword

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, New Delhi, in collaboration with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an inter-governmental organisation based in Stockholm, organised a symposium titled *'Reconciliation in South Asia: Exploring the Terrain'* from March 17-19, 2005. The programme was held at the India International Centre, New Delhi, India.

The symposium brought together over 50 senior and mid-career scholars and professionals to reflect upon the discourses and practices of reconciliation in the context of a plural and multicultural South Asia. It was premised on the understanding that people and countries are held together not simply through political institutions but also through processes and relationships which need to be restored every time there is a breach of peace either within or between states. The processes of reconciliation – of restoring fractured relationships at the personal, societal, national and regional levels – are integral to conflict transformation and peace-building.

The three day intensive interaction focussed on South Asian responses to protracted intra and inter state conflicts and attempted to map the field of reconciliation. It drew from past experiences and practices in South Asia to examine whether it is possible to build an inclusive vocabulary on reconciliation that resonates for the region as a whole.

Designed to facilitate maximum interaction and sharing of information among participants, interactive dialogues and roundtable discussions formed an integral part of the programme, along with the more formal plenary lectures. The symposium also used alternative mediums such as film clips, audiovisual presentations, a dance performance and a play to understand the terrain and scope of reconciliation and to highlight its internal dialectics and dilemmas.

WISCOMP is grateful to Mr. Rajiv Mehrotra and the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama for continued support and encouragement. Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, WISCOMP engaged at every point with the conceptualisation of the symposium – her support and encouragement inspired the WISCOMP team to see this effort through to its culmination.

The WISCOMP team worked for several months to put this symposium together. Stuti Bhatnagar and Sumani Dash along with Yamini Lohia and Rajeshwari coordinated the logistics of the symposium. Manjri Sewak provided inputs on the programme design, Soumita Basu lent her support during the course of the symposium and Mr. Harish Bhatt looked after the financial aspects. Special thanks are also due to our rapporteur Neha Wadhavan who compiled an initial short draft of the proceedings. We particularly acknowledge the contribution of Sumani Dash in rapporteuring and subsequently compiling this report. Thanks also to Ashima Kaul for the photographs on the cover page, to Manisha Sobhrajani for engaging with the copy edit, and to Tina Rajan for the cover design.

What follows is a brief overview of the issues, concepts, ideas, and thoughts that were put forth and generated in the course of the three-day symposium. We hope that this effort will contribute to the understanding of what reconciliation entails in a unique multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious context such as South Asia.

Sumona DasGupta
Senior Programme Officer
WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility

Reconciliation in South Asia: Exploring the Terrain

The Programme Design

The symposium was conceptualised along three major thematic rubrics. These were:

- Mapping Reconciliation: Opening up Thinking Spaces for South Asia
- Resources for Reconciliation: Perspectives from South Asia
- Reconciliation: People, Processes and Challenges –
  Experiences from South Asia

Mapping Reconciliation: Opening up Thinking Spaces for South Asia

The symposium *Reconciliation in South Asia: Exploring the Terrain* **commenced on March 17, 2005, with two opening lectures on** *Understanding Reconciliation***.** These were designed to examine the existing vocabulary on reconciliation and assess its adequacy in capturing the complexities of reconciliation processes for South Asia. The lectures were followed by a roundtable *Reconciliation: The Interlocking Discourses,* especially designed to examine the theoretical rubrics within which the evolving discourses of reconciliation are situated, such as peace-building, non-violence, co-existence, and secularism.

The dialogue *on Reconciliation: Perspectives from South Asia* was based on the assumption that the meaning of reconciliation is mediated by several factors – location, economic status and identity. Reconciliation is always contextual and means different things to different people. By moving across multiple faultlines of ethnicity, religion, caste, class and gender, the dialogue attempted to capture and understand the complexities of text and subtext while grappling with the notion of reconciliation.

Resources for Reconciliation: Perspectives from South Asia

The deliberations of March 18, 2005, aimed to focus on how the political, religious, and cultural traditions in South Asia address reconciliation, if at all. This was, however, informed by the premise that reconciliation and revenge, and violence harmony, co-exist and intersect. The deliberations were

intended to take on board the disturbing questions from the ground to examine how and why religion, for instance, is in practice increasingly being appropriated as a weapon of violence. In introspecting strategies for reconciliation, the paradox between the spaces for reconciliation offered by cultural and spiritual resources of South Asia and the simultaneous closure of other spaces by a new militarised and organised religiosity were factored into the design.

The plenary lecture *Reconciliation through the Gandhian Prism* was planned as an exposé on the resources offered by Gandhian philosophy and praxis to build a culture of reconciliation. The purpose of the subsequent panel discussions on *Religion and Resources for Reconciliation* was to explore the resources for reconciliation within the myriad faith traditions in South Asia, particularly those within Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The second roundtable of the day on *Culture as a Site for Reconciliation: Some Explorations from South Asia* included a visual presentation on *Aesthetics and the Politics of Harmony: A Vrindavan Story* in order to highlight the creative forces that unfold when dialogue replaces the politics of confrontation. Images of violence and cultural spaces for reconciliation in mythology and literature, spaces for reconciliation within the Indian epic traditions and literary traditions from the South of India, and post-colonial art as a site for reconciliation were some themes that were integrated into the programme design, as part of the explorations on culture and reconciliation.

Two performances – a dance and a play were planned – following the deliberations of the day. In the dance *Imagining Peace*, the artist visualised inner-scapes and resilience for reconciliation by using the metaphor of water. The play *Jailbirds* was conceptualised to interrogate the delicate relationship between truth, justice and reconciliation by examining the opposing realities of a mother and daughter emerging from their respective violent histories.

Reconciliation: People, Processes and Challenges – Experiences from South Asia

The proceedings on March 19, 2005 were intended to explore some of the dilemmas inherent in processes of reconciliation. The day's proceedings opened with a roundtable on *Methodologies of Reconciliation* intended to highlight a variety of themes and issues. Some of the themes that were planned as the basis of discussions in this session included an examination of the opportunities and challenges offered by the system of restorative justice as an alternative criminal justice system; accommodation of the demands for redressal

of historical wrongs and a growing culture of culpability; the politics of restitution, reparation and apologies and their location in processes of reconciliation. An audio visual presentation, *Popular Cinema and Reconciliation* was especially designed to explore the role of cinema in the construction of memory and the processes of healing, while a discussion on social healing was included in the panel to look at how healing takes place, and to understand its implications, particularly following political violence and post-conflict "closure".

The discussions on *Examining Dialogue Processes in South Asia* that followed the roundtable were premised on the notion that dialogue is central to reconciliation processes. The presentation on the theory and practice of dialogue was designed to understand how dialogue manifests itself through a fourfold process – of life, action, experience and articulation. Subsequent presentations were planned to follow the prospects and challenges of actual dialogue process in three contexts – between two state actors (India and Pakistan); between two communities (Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat); and a state and non-state actor (Sri Lankan state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam).

A roundtable titled *The Jagged Edges: The Dialectics of Reconciliation* was conceptualised to analyse the dilemmas that come up in processes of reconciliation. Some of the issues that were sought to be raised in this context included: intersection of gender with issues of caste and class; distinct feminist perceptions on reconciliation and the implications of reconciliation in the midst of political violence. Discussions were also intended to highlight the equations between justice, truth and reconciliation in an atmosphere where political killings and overt violence have become a part of everyday reality.

The symposium closed with a lecture on *Public Policy and Reconciliation* that looked at how the vocabulary of reconciliation can be made acceptable to policy makers. This lecture and the discussions following it were intended to reflect on whether reconciliation as a normative and practical strategy could inform public life.

March 17
Mapping Reconciliation: An Overview

SESSION I
Introductory Remarks

The symposium, *Reconciliation in South Asia: Exploring the Terrain* opened with introductory remarks by Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, WISCOMP. She highlighted the growing recognition of the need to collectively explore possibilities for conflict transformation and conflict prevention within and between societies in South Asia, and stressed the need to build on commonalities while recognising differences. Gopinath cautioned that without consistent and democratic introspection, interrogation and engagement, the culture of militarism might overpower and stifle voices of dialogue and reconciliation.

Dr.Meenakshi Gopinath

Tracing the inclusion of the notion of reconciliation into the lexicon of peace-building and conflict transformation, she also pointed to the existence over time of practices of reconciliation in South Asia, even though these were not necessarily 'coded' as such. The question that needs to be addressed is how the essence of these practices are to be foregrounded in a language that resonates for the region, such that they yield resources for democratic practices. Touching upon the complex relationships between the interlinked concepts of **peace, justice, reconciliation and co-existence**, she mentioned the need to exhaustively map various methods of reconciliation that have been part of praxis in the region. Gopinath emphasised that as a process of peace-building, reconciliation has more transformative connotations than the term 'co-existence', and in its deepest sense reconciliation releases both the perceived victims and perpetrators from the trauma and cycle of violence.

Gopinath also highlighted the **centrality of dialogue** in reconciliation processes. The contributions of religious and spiritual resources as well as local and indigenous cultures towards processes of reconciliation also need to be taken on board. There is consequently no single or generic method or level of intervention. Reconciliation is essentially a multi-dimensional process. She underlined that reconciliation practices that underscore *ahimsa,* for instance, are not tantamount to passivity or surrender. They involve engagement, endurance and resilience.

Reconciliation entails the creation of trust and understanding between former adversaries which, according to Gopinath, is a supremely difficult, but extremely vital task. It involves building a shared future from a divided past – a process that presents great challenges and unique opportunities to rebuild and renew societies emerging out of conflict. An additional task is to ensure that **all stakeholders are involved in the process of reconciliation.** This is crucial for sustaining democratic processes and institutions. She wondered if in this region the relationship between the experience and memory of violence is differently configured. Is violence in South Asia constructed in an episodic fashion in public discourse? Alternatively, is it acknowledged as the continuous phenomenon that it is, taking place at all times along fractures of caste, class, and ethnicity? Does the public discourse make it difficult to focus on the many dimensions of episodes of violence adequately?

The oldest and most sustained and systematic reflections on non-violence have come from Jainism, Buddhism and Gandhism – resources that the region claims as its own. Yet violence figures as an almost everyday phenomenon. **This reflects the extraordinary conundrum of how we live and what we claim to idolise – the gap between an almost continuous practice of violence, and the most sustained theorisation of non-violence.**

Citing the work of Dilip Simeon, Gopinath added that reconciliation is neither the perpetual nurturing of grievance, nor the cultivation of amnesia – it requires transcendence. She highlighted the need to overcome obstacles that block processes of reconciliation such as power structures, patriarchy, education processes and even the media that bind us to crippling prejudices. Gopinath suggested that reconciliation may also give rise to the possibility of a new understanding of the 'sacred', which in its broadest sense is any process that links us to the greatest context to which we belong. She concluded by examining the possibility of locating practices of reconciliation in this part of the world in a secular, democratic and civic space, perhaps removed from the exclusive inter-faith matrix where it currently seems to be located in South Asia. This is an extremely nuanced task which requires context sensitivity. But at the same time, it is imperative to protect the discourse on reconciliation from being hijacked by fundamentalist agendas.

Sumona DasGupta, Senior Programme Officer, WISCOMP, introduced the programme design and the logic of the inclusion of the different components and themes within the overall conceptual parameters of reconciliation. She noted that the primary challenge of the symposium was to identify and sculpt the potential contours of the enormous landscape that opens up when we use this term. The symposium was an exploratory exercise designed to unravel and

Dr. Sumona DasGupta

unpack the nuances and complexities of the theories, discourses, and practices associated with the new and emerging field of reconciliation. DasGupta noted that reconciliation could be articulated at different levels. At the most basic level of language, it is articulated through linguistic communication, and the symposium needed to introspect on the syntax, grammar, and vocabulary of reconciliation in South Asia. This also raises the question of whether reconciliation can be insulated from other concepts and constructs like peace-building, democracy, non-violence, multiculturalism and secularism – where do these concepts converge and where they do they collide? She suggested that at another level, reconciliation practices may be embodied in proverbs, maxims, rituals, symbols, collective memories, body language, non-linguistic communication and institutions: perhaps even in the manner in which we greet one another.

At yet another level, reconciliation is articulated through art, music, oral and written traditions, literature, moral life, ideas of excellence and selection of exemplary individuals in public life. DasGupta suggested that **perhaps reconciliation is embedded and embodied in our cultures in ways that we are not even mindful of.** She highlighted that these beliefs and practices that are rooted in our culture may be reconciliatory in nature, even though they are not cognitively or linguistically coded as reconciliation. This would necessitate decoding processes of reconciliation – consequently recognising and labelling them may become a necessary exercise.

While DasGupta highlighted the increasing "religiosity of culture", she also cautioned against the typical liberal response to this, which it may be alleged, sometimes takes the form of "secular militancy". The question of where to locate spaces for reconciliation in South Asia – whether in an anesthetised areligious "secular" space or in an alternative space that does not exclude the multireligious spiritual resources of South Asia – is a delicate one that calls for much introspection. The design of the Symposium takes this into account and the sessions on *Resources for Reconciliation: Perspectives on South Asia* was intended to provide space for discussion on the uses (and abuses) of religion and culture as possible sites for reconciliation. She suggested that **reconciliation in South Asia would involve building dialogic spaces, bringing all stakeholders to dialogue across the myriad faultiness that exist, and that it is as much an apparent peacetime concern as it is during times of manifest violence.**

SESSION II

Understanding Reconciliation – Plenary Lectures

The Chair, Mushirul Hasan, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi (India) initiated the discussion by underlining the need to reflect on processes of reconciliation already at work and the importance of studying local ground realities. He stressed the need for a **shift from grand narratives in order to understand and harness local resources** for reconciliation. He also reinforced the possibility of achieving dialogue and reconciliation in South Asia without necessarily dissolving religious sensibilities in the region.

Judith Large, Senior Advisor, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, (Sweden) elucidated that the IDEA initiative for reconciliation was a universal undertaking. She explained that while initially the concept of reconciliation had been grounded in notions of theology, anthropology sometimes criminology, or healing, and (only latterly) peacebuilding, International IDEA had attempted to re-cast reconciliation using a **governance approach. The governance approach highlighted three basic concepts – means of truth telling and healing, some form of justice (restorative or retributive in nature), and building institutions to prevent the recurrence of violence.** She stated, "…we are surely discussing ways which societies have used to come together after separation, to make whole again after destruction – physically or spiritually – to heal enough to grow and move forward again, to right a wrong. This takes us directly to the heart of both violence and injustice."
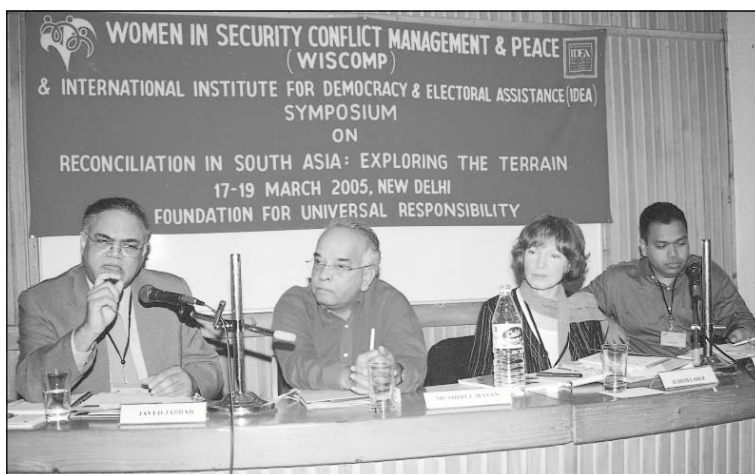
Mr. Javed Jabbar, Dr. Mushirul Hasan, Dr. Judith Large and Mr. Harim Peiris

Referring to the WISCOMP and IDEA Consultation on Reconciliation in November 2004, she recounted some of the ideas that were generated such as **restorative justice as an alternative to retributive justice, non-western resources for reconciliation, understanding and working with concepts of shame (and its distinction from guilt), and the importance of co-existence and relationship building in multi-cultural societies of South Asia. Large stressed the importance of the concept of culture, which could be a double-edged sword** vis-à-vis reconciliation, and the crucial relationship between trauma, reconciliation and cycles of violence. Identifying **gender, dialogue and identity** as three crucial dimensions that need to be taken into account, she also indicated the need to explore possibilities of reconciliation in non-democratic societies.

Referring to injustice as not just a consequence, but also a symptom and cause of conflict, Large emphasised that Truth and Reconciliation Commissions were rarely designed to address institutionalised injustices affecting people on a daily basis. She pointed out that we can and must go further than this in mapping the scope for reconciliation if it is to be meaningful in any society. There is thus a need for **multiple levels of analysis** – the individual and personalised experience, the inter-personal between individuals, the family level, community, social identity, region, state or national, international and so forth. She thus noted that violent conflict is a deeply fractured and individual experience. Emphasising that reconciliation was no longer considered a post-conflict activity, she cited grassroots level initiatives in Northern Ireland undertaken to deal with stereotypes and grievances. Reconciliation, she said, had to be viewed as a pro-active attitude and to make the process sustainable, there needs to be integration of gender as well. Large concluded that democracy entails conversation between peoples and government which implies that 'everyday violence' experienced by the poor and the dispossessed may be mitigated by inclusive policies, recognition of grievance, access to protection under law, and positive development strategies. Thus reconciliation surely must be active, linked also to both conflict prevention and processes of change.

Javed Jabbar, activist and writer, Karachi (Pakistan) began his presentation by identifying **three perspectives germane to reconciliation** that are relevant to the contemporary world. First, there is an unprecedented collective consciousness, which is instant, shared, conflictual, and at the same time consensual. This is facilitated by telecommunication, travel, commerce and the mass media. The second perspective is that there is unrivalled concentration of technological, economic, and military power in a single state. The hegemonic

dominance by one state that seeks to promote the free market and a cult that believes that 'big is better' and 'more is best' becomes a determinant of the way world affairs evolve. Third, there is unchecked devastation of the planet's ecology with 'consumption' as the core human value in place of 'conservation'.

In the context of South Asia, Jabbar defined **four contexts** necessary for consideration – the challenge of asymmetry and resulting consequences of power and dominance; the relationship between reconciliation and regionalisation with the latter sometimes furthering internal reconciliation; the instability of reconciliation between India and Pakistan that has an impact on the whole region; and finally, the mass poverty and growing disparity between people in South Asia, which raises the disturbing question of whether the poor should reconcile to their fate.

While violence is easy to measure, Jabbar pointed to what he called the "**dark side of non-violence",** which may apply to all kinds of inter-personal relationships – between husband and wife, or relatives and on a larger scale between communities, races, religions, castes and classes. The manner in which some parents bring up their children, ostensibly smothering them with love, but actually suffocating their creativity in the process is a case in point. Consequently, attempting reconciliation where violence has been insidiously avoided may prove to be more difficult than reconciliation after violence.

Reconciliation has to start with the individual, as each individual begins with an unchangeable inheritance of race, gender, religion, caste etc. In a sense, we are trapped from birth within the parameters of these realities. However, as an individual grows, multiple levels of internal realities emerge and consequently, life becomes a perennial search for internal reconciliation between what we are and what we seek to be – between the self and selflessness, the instincts of childhood and wisdom of adulthood, old convictions and new doubts, ambitions and ability, inherited identity and acquired personality and physical, emotional and spiritual realities. To help cope with these combustive and colliding worlds – one of inheritance and the other of internal imperatives – individuals resort to habitual patterns of thinking and action. Yet reconciliation demands that we venture into undiscovered territory, and abandon the tried and tested ways of life.

Jabbar pointed out that the distance between civil society organisations and political society in South Asia needs to be bridged for reconciliation to be meaningful. He concluded by underlining the need for innovation in democratic

processes, if indeed democracy has to genuinely drive processes of reconciliation. **Very often what passes off as reconciliation is really co-existence, while the fact of the matter is that there can be co-existence without reconciliation, even passive hostility without passive acceptance**. **He reiterated that reconciliation has to begin in the mind and soul of every individual and indicated that this can be a dangerously destabilising exercise.**

Harim Peiris, official spokesperson for H.E. President Kumaratunga, Sri Lanka, spoke of the challenges to reconciliation during peace processes from a practitioner's viewpoint and from the standpoint of public policy. He drew attention to the need for **interim reconciliatory measures** involving various stakeholders during political deliberations, even when causes and issues of conflict remain unresolved. **In the case of Sri Lanka, he stated that the reformation of political processes was necessary when the state had been an explicit perpetrator of violence and he also stressed the importance of community initiatives.** Peiris highlighted the challenge of dealing with deep divisions within society which is reflected in the media. This pressure also creates the need for the 'other' or the enemy as a reason for being. He concluded by calling for the examination of the successes of and responses to previously adopted methods of reconciliation in an effort to move forward in the direction of peace.

SESSION III

Reconciliation: The Interlocking Discourses – A Roundtable

F.S. Aijazuddin, art critic and author, Lahore (Pakistan) initiated the discussion by marking the intent of the roundtable as an effort to **improve communication** and asserted the need to make peace not just with friends but with neighbours as well.

Rita Manchanda, gender expert, Commonwealth Technical Fund, Colombo (Sri Lanka) speaking on 'Peace Building and Reconciliation: Exploring the Linkages' began by referring to the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka in December 2004 and the way in which assertion of a common humanity had prevailed that transcended, at least for the moment, ethno-nationalist divides. This spontaneous impulse had also been triggered by the recognition that the community (Tamil community) was distinct from the political formation that sought to represent it (i.e. the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam – the LTTE). Yet this outpouring of support was not lasting and Manchanda argued that reconciliation cannot be built on just sentiment and goodwill, and it needs to address the roots of the conflict – the political questions of justice, power sharing and reconstruction. She highlighted the need to **address structural violence at a pre-conflict phase** and emphasised the role of civil society and the inclusion of women in the peace process in rebuilding relationships of humanity.

Left to Right: Dr. Gurpreet Mahajan, Mr. F.S. Aijazauddin, Ms. Rita Manchanda

Manchanda stressed the need to reclaim the dialogue on reconciliation from militarised states and societies in order to address institutionalised violence in gendered multi-ethnic societies. Emphasising that **power** is a central notion that needs to be taken into account, she expressed unease at some formulations of co-existence and multiculturalism that simply sidestep this issue. She reasserted that reconciliation should not be construed to mean capitulation. Indicating the crucial role of rituals, symbolism and traditions in our cultures, she contextualised this by referring to the Naga peace process in North East India. Manchanda pointed out that the contemporary role of the Naga women as peacemakers in inter-factional conflicts draws on the traditionally accepted role of the Naga women as 'pukrelia' (peacemakers of the tribe). Community rituals – days of mourning, prayer day, atonement day, as well as the strategies used by the Naga Mothers Association derived from the funeral role of wrapping every unclaimed body with a traditional shawl – have helped to restore common humanity and respect for life in a zone of conflict.

At the same time, Manchanda cautioned that culture could be double-edged, and that **over sentimentalising motherhood politics was not without its perils.** There was a need to problematise the frequent use of religious idioms (the Nagas for instance use Christian idioms) and motherhood politics in processes of reconciliation. Indeed, the other side of reliance on cultural resources is that it can reinforce gender stereotypes and circumscribe the socially sanctioned space for women even while it validates women's role as peacemakers. For example, it could well exclude women from actually being present at the peace table. Manchanda also pointed out that reconciliation should go beyond taking cognisance of the 'special needs' of women to encompass the importance of social transformation, which in turn involves deconstruction of the very notions of masculinity and feminity.

Dilip Simeon, Director, Aman Trust, New Delhi (India) speaking on 'Reconciliation and the Discourse and Praxis of Non-Violence', interrogated the prevalent understanding of 'post-conflict' as signifying closure. He stressed

Dr. Dilip Simeon

that conflict tends to be continuous in history, often embodied in structural violence, which in turn undermines state legitimacy. **Laying emphasis on the need to explore concepts of justice and truth and develop a notion of universal ethics, he spoke about the need to devise a universal language of reconciliation and avoid selective victimisation of groups in society.** He raised doubts over the use of

'religion' as a resource for reconciliation, pointing to the fecundity with which organised religions produced theologies of violence. Simeon highlighted the need to find means to reconcile conflicts between universality and particularity, and globality and locality in the discourse on peace and non-violence. He argued that meta-narratives are useful in so far as they underline universal ethics and the notions of peace-building and multiculturalism.

Gurpreet Mahajan, Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India), making a presentation on 'Reconciliation and Co-existence: The Multicultural Model', referred to multiculturalism as a means of recognition. This is where multiculturalism continues to have an abiding relevance. She suggested that multiculturalism could contribute to a **new language based on accommodation**, in lieu of reconciliation and could lead to the creation of opportunities for the kinds of recognition required in everyday life for co-existence. The non-neutrality of and the attempt by states to create a homogenous cultural space puts some communities at a disadvantage. Political inclusion therefore does not go hand-in-hand with inclusion in the public arena. In this context, she affirmed the relevance of a multicultural framework in recognising difference and disadvantage.

It is interesting to note that the multicultural framework puts the **onus on the state** in attempting reconciliation and co-existence. She also drew attention to the role of multiculturalism in recognising and accommodating difference and the necessity of dialogue which encourages the growth of civil society consciousness. She highlighted that multiculturalism could help promote citizenship rights, state accountability and elevate the relevance of democracy. Mahajan concluded that co-existence of diverse communities requires a rethink of the traditional conceptions of the nation-state and citizenship, and emphasised that power sharing through formal and informal processes of reconciliation is also essential.

Speaking on 'Reconciliation and Secularism: The Linkages', Rajeev Bhargava, Senior Fellow and Director of the Programme of Social and Political Theory, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi (India), drew attention to **two levels** of reconciliation – the individual level and the societal level. He stressed that although these two levels are linked, they also need to be analysed separately. Bhargava highlighted that **reconciliation can be used**

Dr.Rajeev Bhargava

in two senses – a "strong" reconciliation, which involves the cancellation of estrangement or enmity by an act of forgiveness, and a "weak" reconciliation, which entails significant reduction of estrangement, or a minimising of disagreement by inculcating a culture of reciprocity and mutual respect. Achievement of reconciliation in the first sense is practically impossible, particularly for the state, although it can play a very important role in bringing about reconciliation in the second sense.

He differentiated between two models of secularism – the mainstream, western model and the sub continental, South Asian model. The western model developed in predominantly single religious nations, and was closely informed by notions of liberal individualism rather than by notions of community or minority rights. Consequently, it was characterised by a strict separation between the state and religion, which could either mean active hostility to religion or benign indifference. The sub continental model on the other hand developed in societies that were primarily multi-religious and was far more linked to community sensitive conceptions. It was thus **concerned with both intra and inter-religious issues**. Instead of a strict separation between the state and religion, this model espouses the notion of principled distance and provides space for differential treatment of different religious groups, taking into account the particular religious sensibilities of each group. Bhargava stressed that the sub continental model inculcates **critical respect for different religions**, moving away from an attitude of active hostility or benign indifference to it. In that sense, it actively creates an atmosphere where religions can be continually reformed. He concluded that the sub continental model, as against the western model, is much more conducive to promoting reconciliation in the weaker sense.

In the discussion that followed, the danger of "token", even "spurious", power sharing was emphasised, as was the absence of the concept of fraternity, which prevented communities from realising the potentialities of citizenship. It was also pointed out that there is generally no formal political space for women to determine the agenda of peace, and that identity buttressed by violence was problematic. It was suggested that globalisation, by making economic development important, renders reconciliation inevitable.

SESSION IV

South Asian Perspectives on Reconciliation – A Dialogue

The Chair, Anuradha Chenoy, Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India) initiated the discussion by reminding the listeners that nations in South Asia have been carved out of multiple violences, often followed by the **appropriation of memories**. This necessitates the process of reconciliation.

In his opening remarks, Harim Peiris highlighted the challenge of **making rehabilitation and reconstruction an area of commonality in which antagonistic groups could work together**. He pointed out how social and religious institutions had failed to unite towards resolution and reconciliation. He stressed the need for the political leadership to contend with 'politics of the extremes'. Peiris concluded by marking the need for reconciliation to find popular resonance in order to maintain an atmosphere of dialogue and find resources in the public.

Ava Shrestha, Board Member, Samanata Institute for Social and Gender Equality, Kathmandu (Nepal), spoke on 'Reconciliation in Contemporary Nepal: The Implications' highlighting in particular, the impact of the conflict on women. For mothers, the impact has been in terms of foetal bereavement, psychological trauma and grief. Widows, on the other hand, face problems of family responsibilities, suicidal tendencies, problems of livelihood and economic

Dr. Ava Shrestha

issues, coupled with the socio-cultural connotations of widowhood and atrocities on those lines. Young girls face high school dropout rates, sexual violence, the fear of recruitment into Maoist cadres and early marriage for security reasons. She emphasised that women across the region expressed empathy for women on the other side in the conflict. Highlighting the role of initiatives such as Nagarik Aawaz and Shanti Malika, Shrestha stressed the need to focus on **engaging the youth** to transform anger and revenge into forgiveness, reconciliation and peace-building. She concluded by underlining the opportunities provided by active conflict to usher in alternative ways of life, particularly in the context of changed gender roles.

Speaking on 'The Symbol of Motherhood – Mobilising for Reconciliation: Experiences from Sri Lanka', Visaka Dharmadasa, Chairperson of the Association of War-Affected Women, Kandy (Sri Lanka), stressed the need for reconciliation

Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa

to come from within. She said motherhood evoked a special quality of generosity to pursue the common goal of ensuring the safety of children on both sides of the conflict. Dharmadasa emphasised that **treating humans with dignity is the key to conflict resolution**, and drew attention to the importance of listening, mutual respect and the need to heal minds. Underlining the centrality of reconciliation for sustainable peace, she urged both the state and civil society groups to make a strong commitment to the cause of reconciliation.

Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri, senior journalist, Karachi (Pakistan), made a presentation on 'Reconciliation: Challenges in Pakistan'. He highlighted that although religion was supposed to serve as a major binding force in Pakistani society, ethnic, lingual, cultural and sectarian prejudices and faultlines continue to exist and simmer. In this context, he spoke of the "inherent hostility" within which reconciliation is aspired for in Pakistan. Mehkri pointed out that the problem has been exacerbated as a consequence of the attitude of the state while dealing with such realities, i.e. in terms of resorting to force rather than engaging in socio-political reconciliation. He noted that the absence of democracy was a major hurdle and had created tensions along ethnic faultlines. Mehkri stressed that frequent army interventions, weakening of democratic institutions, a culture of ad-hocism, feudalism and the onslaught of religious extremism had badly crippled Pakistan's ethnic and political mosaic. He also said that the engineering of sectarianism and lingual bias by the establishment had hampered national reconciliation in the long run.

Left to Right: Dr. Anuradha Chenoy, Dr. Gopal Guru and Mr. Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri

Mehkri emphasised that there was a need to reconcile various segments of society in a democratic manner without resorting to violence or repression, and that only a process of dialogue and reconciliation coupled with a vibrant and assertive civil society can help build a stable society. He also underlined the need for greater economic equality, and the establishment of strong democratic institutions and a participatory democracy that is grassroot oriented.

Mr. Hassan Yousufzai

Hassan Yousufzai, Capacity Development Specialist with the Asian Development Bank, Karachi (Pakistan), spoke on 'Indigenous Approaches to Reconciliation: A View from Pakistan', drawing from his experience in the North Western Frontier Province region. He said that modern political systems are characterised by a legalistic framework which do not afford space for interaction between victims and oppressors. Such systems hence lack the capacity to bring about reconciliation. He cited the tradition of Pukhtoonwali followed by the Pukhtoon community which can serve as an **indigenous model of reconciliation** between conflicting parties by creating spaces for dispute resolution, promoting a culture of mutual hospitality and socially sanctioned apology.

In this context, he highlighted the system of *jirga*[1] , which essentially means a strategic exchange between different parties to address an issue through verbal communication. While the exchange may not necessarily result in agreement, but the process itself leads the parties, including the interveners, to maintain a certain level of formal communication, thus ensuring peace. He stressed that while the state judicial system is based on a "crime-punishment syndrome", the tribal system, while meting out punishment for offenders, aims at meeting the needs of the victim and offender. The practices of restorative justice are thus very much a part of the tribal judicial system under a purer form of *jirga*. Yousufzai concluded by emphasising the utility of tapping local resources for reconciliation.

Speaking on 'Forced Displacement and Reconciliation: Afghan refugee women

---

[1] A *jirga*, or *jirgah* is a tribal assembly which takes decisions by consensus, particularly among the Pashtun ethnic group, but also in other ethnic groups near them. They are most common in Afghanistan and among the Pashtun in Pakistan. The word is from the Pashto language – *jirga* means "council", "assembly" or "meeting". It may also refer to a community council of elders. http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/jirga

in Pakistan', Bushra Gohar, Chairperson of South Asia Partnership International, Peshawar, (Pakistan), examined the *jirga* system, highlighting that it does not include women in decision-making, even while it speaks on their behalf, and pointed out that it often makes decisions which go against women, and stressed that **there is a need to look beyond the romanticised notion of the** ***jirga*** **and carefully analyse its top-down and feudal approach that gives little space**

Ms. Bushra Gohar

to take women's issues into account. Gohar noted that generally peace-building and reconciliation have been considered the domain of the state, and it is only now that the notion of civic engagement has taken centrestage. Relating her interactions with the Afghani refugee women residing in camps in Pakistan, she emphasised that life in these refugee camps was a particularly dehumanising experience for women. Sexual violence was a regular feature, and had become something the women had to endure for access to basic facilities and services. Cases of severe depression and contemplation of suicide among the women were also common.

Gohar highlighted that when Pakistan opened its doors to refugees, the focus was on providing basic services like food, education, vocational training, sanitation, etc. There was no move to provide a forum for sharing experiences, discussing and talking about the traumas which the refugees had suffered, in order to bring about some form of reconciliation. She emphasised that the current issue of repatriation, now that Afghanistan is considered 'free' and **the move to push refugees out of Pakistan, is another notable issue over which women have not been consulted, even though many women consider these camps as their home, having resided there for decades.** Moreover, for most women, going back to Afghanistan means starting all over again with the same type of exploitation, and dealing with the same kinds of mercenaries and warlords that they had to deal with in the Pakistani refugee camps. Gohar underlined that in this sense, ironically, one might say that there has been some reconciliation – reconciliation of the women to their fate, but she questioned whether this was the kind of reconciliation one hopes for. She also pointed to the need for dialogue and discussion forums at multiple levels. Gohar stated that one cannot simply attribute the non-participation of women to norms inherent in particular cultures, and that any culture and tradition that denies women such rights needs to be changed. She concluded by stressing that there cannot be any dialogue and reconciliation without women at the table.

Gopal Guru, Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India), spoke on 'Reconciliation: Subaltern Perspectives from India'. Ascertaining subaltern as including marginalised groups in society such as women, dalits, peasants and denotified tribes, he emphasised certain conditionalities for reconciliation. These include moral resources in a society, some degree of transparency in transactions, and inculcation of **reconciliation as a deliberate design through rationality** rather than treating it as an innate quality.

He also stressed the need for all parties to be reflective in detecting their own deficiencies and limitations. According to him, all reconciliation processes by definition are incompatible with radical revolutionary changes, and that it represents the space between absolutely settled and volatile conditions. He spoke of different kinds of reconciliatory mechanisms – those that enable coming to terms with oneself, passive reconciliation, which excludes dialogue and confrontation, and active reconciliation which comes through low profile, low intensity resistance in the subaltern. For the subaltern, the stakes are lower and they need only the guarantee of social security and the insurance of existing meaningfully. He concluded that reconciliation for the subaltern might be an initial condition for creating a *vasudheva kutumbakam*[2] later and underlined the moral stamina required by the subaltern for reconciliation.

Ms. Shaheen Afroze

Shaheen Afroze, Research Director, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka (Bangladesh), made a presentation on 'Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Brokered Peace: The Case of the CHT'. Drawing from Amena Mohsin's research work, Afroze elaborated on the conflict resolution process in Bangladesh. Calling the settlement arbitrary and incomplete, she described the dissatisfaction of the people with the peace accord signed between the government and the Parbattya Chattagram Janashonghati Samity (PCJSS or United People's Party of the CHT, the political front of the hill people that has waged an armed struggle for the autonomy of the CHT since the mid 1970s). Highlighting the strategic and economic relevance of the region along with the diversity of demands within the Hill peoples, she explained that the non-involvement of NGOs and civil society groups in the attempted resolution of the conflict signifies a **peace without justice**.

---

[2] *Vasudheva kutumbakam* in Sanskrit implies that the earth is a family of human beings.

Afroze further stated that women had been left out of the peace process, with only a minimal representation in the reformulated Hill Councils and there was lack of any effort to address their basic requirements. Although the peace accord was hailed internationally, there had been no redressal of the massive human rights violations that had taken place during the conflict. She remarked that the hill people were still in a situation of flux as no efforts had been made towards rehabilitating refugees, generating employment for women-headed households, or giving compensation to those affected by the violence. Reconciliation thus remained an unknown concept to the Chittagong Hill peoples and Afroze urged for renewed efforts by social forces to bring about reconciliation in the region.

Additional inputs to the discussion were made by a Burmese human rights activist, Toe Zaw Latt, who spoke of the efforts being made towards reconciliation in Burma by the ushering in of a new era of popular representation and democratic rule for the people. Highlighting the relevance of traditional ideas in bringing about reconciliation, he explained the attempt at psychological reconciliation drawn from Buddhism, practiced by 85 per cent of the Burmese population. He also mentioned the **stakeholder approach to reconciliation** with the aim of national reconsolidation, and community level reconciliation methods, ranging from inter and intra reconciliation between different groups up to the national level.

Ameena Hussein, gender consultant and author, Columbo (Sri Lanka) put forth the **perspective of Muslims in Sri Lanka**, who remain an unrecognised and unrepresented party to the conflict, and stressed the need to take this group into consideration for reconciliation to be effective in Sri Lanka.

The discussion that followed brought into focus the fact that proximity often distorts perceptions, as is the case of India and Pakistan. The need for traditional mechanisms of reconciliation to evolve in order to include women in the decision-making processes was also emphasised. It was further stressed that such a change should take into account whether one's position in the social hierarchy allows a life of dignity.

Anuradha Chenoy summed up the session in terms of certain common threads that South Asians can draw upon for reconciliation, which she noted was a neglected process in the region. She emphasised that reconciliation needs to be a continuous process, and it has to be engendered, radical and transformative in nature. It cannot remain confined to the realm of the state, and has to involve

individuals and communities. She added that women and civil society institutions are an undervalued resource and that informal institutions of reconciliation need to be reformed to make them more positive. There is also a need to move from myths to reality which comes from dialogue and knowing. There can be no reconciliation without justice, and establishment of institutions of reconciliation is required in terms of democratic cultures, rights, identity, and recognition.

March 18

Resources for Reconciliation: Perspectives from South Asia

SESSION V

Reconciliation through the Gandhian Prism – Plenary Lecture

Madhuri Sondhi, former Senior Fellow, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi, (India), provided an exposé on Gandhian resources for reconciliation that touched on both Gandhian theory and practice. Pointing out that Gandhi rarely used the word 'reconciliation' explicitly, she highlighted that he did however practice it by linking it with the larger frame of non-violence. Gandhi addressed both manifest communal conflict (Hindu-Muslim, for example) and structural conflict (based on the inequities of caste for instance) and Sondhi in her presentation dealt with both these aspects. Gandhi's socio-political engineering skills were starkly visible when dealing with the requirements of a non-violent or peaceable society – the equivalent of 'peacetime' reconciliation.

Sondhi highlighted that Gandhi believed that a non-violent society is best maintained in small face-to-face groups which facilitate communication and accountability. By definition, small communities are dialogic, certainly so in India, given the Indian propensity for articulation. Such communities should be self-governing through elected representatives immediately answerable to the people. But to realise this republican goal, Gandhi had to reform and modify the caste-system. He appreciated certain useful aspects of the caste system, such as transmission of skills and guarantees of employment, social solidarity and providing what can now be referred to as a welfare or social-net. As a result, he did not campaign for abolishing the caste-system as such, but for transforming it from within in such a fashion as would not deprive any individual of his or her self-respect and dignity.

However, Gandhi did want to subvert the iniquitous hierarchies of the caste-system, which largely operated through categories of manual labour and pollution. **The social hierarchy enforced a peace, but it was a structurally violent peace**. To combat this, Gandhi advocated what he called 'bread labour' for all individuals, poor or rich, i.e. paid manual labour. He wanted all individuals to undertake their own scavenging, so as to not associate any particular group of people with polluting activities. He also advocated common dining and

cooking. These were actually quite radical measures since they subverted the very *raison d'etre* of the caste-system.

Similarly, on the economic front, Gandhi's concept of sarvodaya aimed at a state of equitableness where everyone would be guaranteed a life of dignity, and where the better-off would accept responsibility for the public good. Gandhi also envisaged a moral or dharmic state as opposed to a legal state – the former operates through individual conscience and shared ethical norms; the latter through a constitution of guaranteed rights and freedoms. The concept of dharma includes duties, truth and morality, which could provide the governing ethos of a non-violent society. Sondhi pointed out that at one time it was believed that communal conflict did not occur in villages, but the Gujarat riots exploded this assumption. Still, there are many Indian villages where Hindus and Muslims live in peace. Their lives are interwoven through economic and civic interdependencies, though they do not socially intermingle. To ensure cooperation, Gandhi emphasised **the common moral space that is shared by all religions**, and even non-religious belief-systems.

Gandhi also stressed education in appropriate life skills and constantly reaffirmed the value of non-violence as a philosophy, strategy and technique. For any social breakdown that occurs in spite of all such shock-absorbers, Gandhi recommended satyagraha to redress the situation. Satyagraha literally means struggle by truth, and truth in Gandhi's definition includes ahimsa or non-violence. A satyagrahi is not a passive resister, but a proactive and provocative
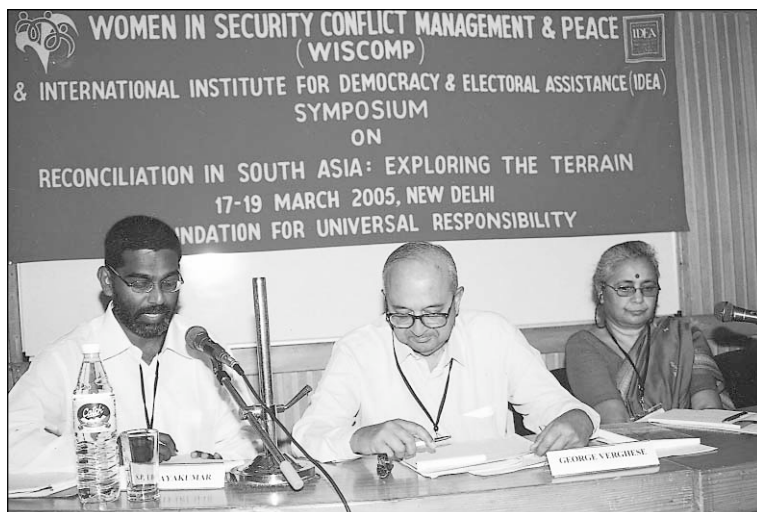
Dr. S.P. Udayakumar, Mr. B.G. Verghese and Dr. Madhuri Sondhi

challenger of injustice; he disturbs the local order in an apparently peaceful situation, sometimes strains the penal system to the limits by clogging up jails, even invites bloodshed and violence, and throughout occupies a high moral ground. By and large if any struggle or protest has been conducted non-violently, then reconciliation as a combination of forgiveness and renewal or start of amicable, or at least non-hostile relations, is almost built into it. This might be one of the reasons why Gandhi did not give the subject of reconciliation separate treatment.

The **second category of reconciliation foregrounds it in the aftermath of violent communal conflict**. The pre-partition riots of 1946 and 1947 were the sites where Gandhi used his reconciliatory skills. He used the power of moral persuasion, holding public meetings, conducting public prayers, fasting, in order to try and restore trust and amity. Gandhi used his immense personal and moral stature to pressurise, castigate and cajole people to reconcile in the aftermath of violence. **He employed the techniques of truth, forgiveness, reflection, repentance and confession**, applying them first to himself and then to the community.

Intrinsically linked to reconciliation is the notion of truth and Sondhi pointed out that **for actual post-violence reconciliation, the kind of truth we need is historic or descriptive, combined with moral truth or dharma.** Gandhi, despite his passion for unending pursuit of truth was aware that individuals could be one-sided or mistaken. His pursuit of truth was tempered by the fact that because we are individually selective, we may come up with different versions of shared events. We have to guard against easy assumption of 'universal' truths and avoid defending only one version of history or reality.

Justice, also linked inextricably to reconciliation, is a contested concept – for Gandhi, an overemphasis on justice would be a bar to forgiveness and reconciliation. While he spoke of truth, dharma, and sarvodaya, but justice especially as linked to egalitarianism introduced by the French revolution is not noticeable. If Gandhian thought and practices adopted as its point of departure the dignity of every individual – a dignity born not only of personal satisfaction but of moral responsibility – then we can creatively apply this approach in striving to maintain peace (continuous peacetime reconciliation), and rectification of injustice through non-violent measures.

S.P. Udayakumar, co-director, Transcend, Nagercoil (India) in his presentation on the Gandhian notion of reconciliation began by pointing out that the finest example of reconciliation can be seen as embodied in Gandhi's plea for

negotiations to the British: "I respectfully invite you to open a way for a real conference between equals." This has **respect, empathy, creativity, dialogue and equality – all the factors a real process of reconciliation must have.** Udayakumar highlighted that by shunning binary opposites such as man-woman, spiritual-secular, powerful-powerless, Gandhi displayed the creativity to unsettle traditional dividing lines and dichotomies. Reconciliation for Gandhi was not a violence dependent concept, and was one that went beyond the victim-perpetrator model. He believed reconciliation to be a constant centering of human relationships, which made it part of daily politics. Foregrounding Gandhi's reconciliatory skills in the context of his constructive programme, Udayakumar said that the constructive programme was both a process and a goal, which aimed at overarching recentering and rebuilding transformation. The constructive programme was aimed at khadi promotion, communal unity, prohibition of intoxicants and removal of untouchability.

The constructive programme also included individual and societal efforts for unity between diverse religious communities, removal of social abuses, a programme of rural education, decentralisation of production and distribution, schemes for health, sanitation and diet. It was thus essentially a concerted effort by all for the common good. It was Gandhi's belief that the constructive programme could generate a vast reservoir of non-violent energy and could serve as the basis for moral authority and political power for the ultimate goal of independence. A judicious combination of the constructive programme and effective resistance, according to Gandhi could make Satyagraha subversive of elitist politics and hence, truly democratic from within. Gandhi's notion of reconciliation hence entails closure, healing, and stating the present morality futuristically. Udayakumar stressed Gandhi's belief that non-violence cannot be sustained unless it is linked to conscious body labour, and finds expression in daily contact with neighbours. Gandhi emphasised that Congress members needed to have unbreakable heart unity, irrespective of religious affiliations. Consequently, he wanted all Congress members to cultivate personal friendships with those belonging to other religious faiths, and to also befriend those belonging to the lower castes, particularly the Harijans.

Udayakumar also brought to the fore Gandhi's efforts in engendering the freedom movement. Gandhi asked Congress members to help women realise their full status as equals of men and as honoured comrades in a common service. Gandhi spoke of khadi promotion to groups of women, citing Sita as the role model, thus using metaphors and examples from the Indian epics to promote the usage of khadi.

Although Gandhi was initially against the plan to have separate schools, temples and wells for untouchables, he later changed his views. While he recognised that it would not be possible to do away with the caste system altogether, he felt it would be better for the untouchables to have their own institutions rather than to totally deny them such amenities. He also strove to inculcate an attitude of viewing people not in terms of religion, but by appealing to the essential humanity and equality of all. Udayakumar concluded that by reconciling differences through the constructive programme and through other simple measures, Gandhi sought to bring about societal reconciliation.

The Chair, B.G. Verghese, noted columnist and visiting Professor at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi (India) said in his concluding remarks that although Gandhi is part of the Indian psyche, his teachings and principles seem to have been forgotten. While highlighting the continuing relevance of some of Gandhi's principles, he cautioned that Gandhi should not be reduced to an 'ism', as his ideology was not rigid and cast in stone. This is because Gandhi constantly changed and reformed his views. In this sense, his principles are extremely adaptive to time and circumstance. Verghese suggested that for Gandhi, unity and political independence were crucial, and that perhaps if Gandhi had lived on, he might have approached the issue of the caste system in a somewhat different manner than he did at the time. He stressed that **Gandhi stood for an inclusive participatory society with accountability and transparency, built from the bottom upwards**. This tenet of Gandhi's beliefs according to Verghese has been forgotten, as everything in the Indian society, even the political processes, have become top-down.

Verghese referred to Gandhi's ideas on ecological sustainability, and his conception of distributive justice, which meant that everyone should live sufficiently, not ostentatiously, and that there needs to be a spirit of sharing. The concept of sharing came later with the development of industry, which also gave rise to the idea of trusteeship. Emphasising that while Gandhi did not abhor wealth or profit, Verghese said that Gandhi did believe that if one earned more than was required, one holds that wealth in trust for fellow beings. Here again the question of need as against greed comes up. While Gandhi did not expressly use the word 'fraternity', he stood for it, which too has been forgotten in India today. Verghese also spoke of Gandhi's belief that rights come from duties well performed.

Gandhi's notion of reconciliation was essentially that there is only sin, and no sinner. The sinner is simply an aberrance, and there is always scope for

forgiveness and hence reconciliation. Referring to the Gujarat riots of 2002 as a terrible blot on India, he said that peace and justice go hand in hand and without either, there can be no reconciliation. Verghese pointed out that while one cannot necessarily redeem the past, i.e. while there can be compensation and forgiveness, **redemption can only come from one's actions in the future.** That is where real reconciliation lies. Verghese highlighted that another Buddhist and Gandhian value was related to happiness, which has been put forth by the government of Bhutan which spoke not of Gross National Product, but Gross National Happiness – happiness as not going beyond one's means, not running faster, but living in harmony with one's traditions, culture and nature.

SESSION VI

Resources for Reconciliation:
Faith Traditions in South Asia – A Panel Discussion

The Chair, Syeda Hameed, Member, Planning Commission, New Delhi (India), initiated the session by saying that at the individual level, the hurt or *'daag'* inflicted on the heart by communal sentiments stays for a long time, although, often the **processes of reconciliation begin almost instantaneously**, thus bringing about a healing effect.

Valsan Thampu, theologian and author, New Delhi (India), speaking on 'Reconciliation and the Christian Tradition' began by emphasising the importance of spiritual, as against religious resources for reconciliation. He said that the integrative purpose of religion is to promote the art of engaging 'otherness', and this becomes all the more important in today's context because the challenges of otherness are intensified by increasing nearness in a globalising world. Otherness, unless spiritually nuanced, can activate and aggravate conflicts proportionately as nearness increases. Thampu stressed that otherness in proximity is a greater problem than otherness at a distance, except when the resources for coping with the challenges and opportunities offered by both are developed. In that event, 'otherness in proximity' could unveil a new world of opportunities.

He highlighted that while the spiritual function of religion is liberation, in practice, religion often enslaves its adherents by conditioning them into subjugation to stereotypes. To avoid this, Thampu advocated a 'culture of seeking', including seeking the 'other'. To 'seek' is to remain open and vulnerable, free from prejudices and adversarial negativity. The quintessential spiritual enterprise is that of seeking the neighbour. This dismantles the walls of division and alienation, which perpetuate hostility and conflicts. Spiritually directed seeking has the power to transform hostility into hospitality, which is the goal of reconciliation. We can accept the other only if we seek the hidden side of otherness, which is neighbourliness. When religion loses this saving grace it degrades the neighbourhood and allows it to degenerate into a theatre of conflict. He emphasised that a religion, which excludes the humility to seek, becomes a framework for subtle or explicit oppression. Yet another major function of religion is empowerment, the foremost implication of which is the ability to accept change, which is also an authentic expression of freedom.

Thampu noted that from a spiritual standpoint, the purpose of reconciliation is to inaugurate a new beginning. Quoting the celebrated phrase from the Book of Revelation in the Bible – "a new heaven and a new earth" – he addressed the question of redeeming the sufferings of the past. He highlighted that justice, as applicable to reconciliation as a new beginning, is a collective commitment to creating a way of life where erstwhile victims and victimisers participate in unveiling new horizons. In this context, he emphasised that reconciling one with oneself is the seminal form of reconciliation. The alternative to this is grievance-hunting which anchors a person or people to the pains of the past, real or contrived, and paralyses them in respect of transforming the present and envisaging a glorious future. Therefore, in the Christian tradition, the avocation of the 'Kingdom of God' among other tenets means a new beginning, which according to Thampu, is a radical investment in a new future that stands on a full and creative appropriation of the opportunities of the present. The present is the approach road to the treasure house of the future. Unless we spread an outlook of positivity about the present and the future, or so long as we remain imprisoned in the past, we may not actually walk the path of reconciliation, even when we pay lip service to it.

Gurcharan Das, writer and columnist, New Delhi (India), speaking on 'Dharma and Karma in Indian Texts: Spaces for Reconciliation', explained the rationale of choosing the seemingly bloody Mahabharata as the source and inspiration for ideas on reconciliation. He pointed out that at the end of the war,

Left to Right: Mr. Gurcharan Das, General Ghulam Umar,
Dr. Syeda Hameed and Rev. Valsan Thampu

Yudhisthira's grief, rather than the triumphalism of victory, is the dominant emotion. This is poignantly captured in his lament, "…in all cases war is evil". Ultimately **the grief (shoka) is converted to peace (shanti)** through the instructions of Bhishma. This is why Anandavardhana, the great Kashmiri poet, reminds us that the Mahabharata is not about *vir rasa* but *shanta rasa.* In the same vein, C.V. Narasimhan, who made an abbreviated translation of the epic forty years ago, rightly concluded that the essential theme of the Mahabharata is peace and reconciliation.

Das chose three moments in the Mahabharata to shed light on strategies for reconciliation in the epic, and he did so from the **lens of *nishkama karma***[3]. The first moment is in Shanti Parvan after the war, when Yudhisthira's grief is converted to peace. Das examined Yudhisthira's conversion in the context of the change in the meaning of dharma that occurred in the course of the writing of the epic under the influence of the new ethics of yoga and Buddhism. A second type of reconciliation is offered by Krishna through the ethical ideal of *nishkama karma* at the beginning of the war when Arjuna refuses to fight. Finally, in the third moment in the Sabha Parvan, Draupadi's question[4] (described by Das as the primordial feminist moment) changes the assembly's discourse from power to dharma.

Ghulam Umar, Founding Member, Organisation of Islamic Conference (Pakistan), in his presentation on 'Islam and Resources for Reconciliation' pointed out that a handful of obscurist Muslim elements undertake activities in the name of Islam, resulting in the unabated maligning of this faith tradition. The true nature of Islam needs to be understood both by non-Muslims as well as by Muslims themselves. Umar highlighted that the very name 'Islam' literally means peace and submission, and asked whether there could be a more significant pre-requisite to reconciliation than peace. He said that there are two epoch-making documents given to the world by Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that spell out the paradigms that can become the basis of reconciliation among nations and faiths, reflecting the Quran in its letter and spirit. These are –

---

[3] *Nishkama karma* is essentially the principle of action without any expectation of the fruits or results.

[4] Yudhisthira loses everything – his kingdom, his brothers, himself and even his wife, Draupadi – during the epic game of dice in the *Mahabharata*. Duryodhana then orders Draupadi brought to the assembly to humiliate her. She refuses and sends the messenger back to find out if her husband lost her first or himself. The implication is that if he had lost himself first, then he was no longer free and couldn't stake her. Gurcharan Das, in 'Draupadi's Question', *The Sunday Times of India*, Nov. 28, 2004.

first, the Meesaaq-e-Madina (the Covenant or Charter of Madina) and second, the Sermon given on the occasion of his last pilgrimage. The Meesaaq (between Muslims and Jews) is a model document of political reconciliation. Also, the role and conduct of Sufis in South Asia indicates that humanity is unmistakably the other side of Godliness in Islam.

Like every system has an inner framework, identification marks, and vocabulary that is specifically meant for its followers, Islam, too, is based upon a few unmistakable certainties – the oneness of God who is without a partner or associate, the purity of Quran as divine revelation and the central role of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him). At the same time, Umar pointed to the **wide spectrum where the vocabulary, the principles and paradigms can be found for linkages and reconciliation with the world outside Islam**. These include notions of equality, justice, and stress on the intrinsic qualities of human character with an abiding sense of accountability. Umar concluded that in South Asia, the resources of its myriad faith traditions can be effectively used to construct a vocabulary for reconciliation that resonates for the region.

Naresh Mathur, lawyer and Buddhist scholar, New Delhi (India), elucidated on 'Engaged Buddhism: Interpreting Reconciliation'. He pointed out that the spiritual resources and impulses that can be used to transform and transcend conflict and heal relationships lie within the philosophical view of Buddhism, which emphasises that conflict arises and abides in a dualistic view and framework. **Transformation, healing and transcendence** must

Mr. Naresh Mathur

necessarily occur within a non-dualistic view and framework, as provided by some of the native South Asian spiritual traditions. In particular, *advaita* and *madhyamika* locate the conflictants in a framework where the enemy is not real and external but someone who is merely labelled and exists by way of mere imputation by mind.

The Buddha taught in the *satipattana* sutra that all is dynamic, changing and in a flux – there is no fixity in the world. This provides space for conflict transformation in that an enemy can become a friend, and vice-versa. According to the Buddha, conflict is a knot with strands of exaggerations, deep-rooted aversions and attachments, mistaken perceptions, humiliation and the desire for revenge, anger and ill-will. This creates a dull emotional ache behind it all and a kind of nausea – this is the *dukkha* of the conflict, the starting point.

Mathur explained the four noble truths of Buddhism as the recognition of the human condition of suffering, awareness of the causes of suffering, cessation of suffering by overcoming craving, attachment or aversion, and finally, the path of cessation. The final noble truth, the path of cessation, as spelt out by Joseph McConnel[5] embodies the right view that accommodates other contending viewpoints. Right thought is to abandon greed, ill will and distorted understanding of self and the 'other' and to generate a clear understanding of what conflictants think. Right speech involves abandoning hurtful speech while right action entails abandoning actions designed to hurt, and acting with the intent to benefit all. Right effort is to deal with and overcome one's mistaken notions, cravings and aversions. Right mindfulness is to be mindful of the conflict as well as the sources of it. Right concentration is to gather the scattered mind which wishes to get even and settle scores.

Mathur highlighted that the eight-fold path consists not of rules or successive stages but eight dimensions that need to be applied by a conflictant or a peacemaker. The imperative of reconciliation is that to persevere in conflict with 'them' generates the *chaitta* or mental factor of 'cold anger' or bearing grudges over extended periods of times that result in violence and actions governed by hatred.

Dr. Mohinder Singh

Mohinder Singh, Director, National Institute of Punjab Studies, New Delhi (India), spoke on 'Reconciliation in the Sikh Tradition: Theory and Practice and Memory as History'. Speaking of the three colonies for widows set up by the Indian government in the aftermath of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi, he lamented the fact that these colonies had been reduced to mere vote banks by petty politicians, creating further difficulties in the integration and rehabilitation of the widows into the mainstream. Highlighting how **memory is seen in terms of history,** Singh pointed out that in every case of violence – the assassination of Gandhi, demolition of the Babri Masjid, the 1993 Bombay blasts or the anti Sikh riots of 1984, instead of labelling or naming the perpetrators in terms of specific communities, it is the ideology of hate, preached and nurtured by some, that needs to be identified and dealt with. Unfortunately, in spite of passage of more than two decades since the 1984 riots, this strategy continues not only in Punjab but has spread to other parts

---

[5] Joseph McConnel in "The Realism of Applying Dhamma to Situations of Conflict."

of the country as well. He stressed that India as a nation needs to know the games of the politicians to avoid falling into their trap. Singh lauded the ability of the Sikh community to re-emerge stronger every time they are crushed, even as he emphasised that they need to learn from the mistakes of the past.

He quoted Guru Nanak who said, "Bure Naal Sab Bura Karende, Maaf karan koi Sianey. Bure Naal phir neki karni, eh Guru Nanak Jane" (Evil is returned with evil. It is only the wise who forgive and forget. Nanak alone knows the secret of returning good for evil). Again, when the fifth Guru, Arjun Dev, was tortured to death, his parting message was "Tera Bhana Meetha Laage, Nam Padarath Nanak Mange" (Sweet is Thy Will, Oh Lord, I ask for the boon of Thy Name). Singh pointed out that while observing Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom in the month of June every year, Sikhs do not display the spirit of vengeance or ill-will nor do they observe any period of mourning. Instead they serve sweetened cold water in the scorching summer heat to venerate the martyrdom of their Guru.

Singh explained that the tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, known to have fought many battles against the local Mughal officials and the Mughal Governor of Punjab, happily accepted Emperor Aurangzeb's offer of a personal dialogue with a view to bring about rapprochement to usher in an era of goodwill and peace. After Aurangzeb's death in 1708, the Guru supported his son Muazzam in the war of succession. Upon his victory and subsequent elevation as the Emperor of India under the title of Bahadur Shah, the king duly recognised the services of the Guru and offered him the most precious relic – the saif (sword) of Hazrat Ali, which is now preserved at Takhat Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur, Punjab, along with the other relics of the tenth Guru. The classic example of reconciliation and goodwill is however provided by the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Punjab. Singh said that it is interesting to note that in spite of the long period of conflict between the Sikhs and the Mughal rulers, Maharaja Ranjit Singh not only provided equal opportunities to his Muslim subjects but also gave them important positions in his Court. It is also worth noting that three of his most important ministers were the famous Fakir brothers.

Similarly, during British rule, while the Sikhs launched a powerful attack against the British bureaucracy during the struggle for reform of Sikh shrines, popularly called the Akali Movement (1920-25), they did not hesitate to come to the rescue of the Empire during World War II by enlisting themselves in the Indian Army in large number and died fighting on various war fronts in Europe. Singh concluded that there were several such instances in Sikh history that exemplified

the courage and determination of the Sikh community, and their ability to rise in the face of adversity.

In the discussions that followed, F.S. Aijazuddin stressed the importance of **lines of spiritual communication** between different religions. Iqbal Ansari said that the most notable hindrance to reconciliation in South Asian nations is the **absence of institutional mechanisms of law**, and he also stressed on the importance of civil society dialogue. Yogender Sikand, citing his research on syncretic shrines across India, **refuted the belief that Hindus and Muslims are two monolithic, neatly set apart religious groups**. He further explained how these shrines become sites where members of different communities come together and form bonds through worship, community eating etc.

Syeda Hameed concluded the session by stressing that the discussion had amply demonstrated that while concepts of peace are clearly enshrined in all of the faith traditions, what happens to religion (and the corruption of it) at the level of ground reality needs also to be taken into account.

Left to Right: Dr. Yogender Singh, Mr. F.S. Aijazuddin and
Dr. Iqbal Ansari (Second from Right)

SESSION VII

Culture as a Site for Reconciliation:
Some Explorations from South Asia – A Roundtable

Shrivatsa Goswami, Director, Sri Caitanya Prema Sansthana, Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh (India), spoke on 'Aesthetics and the Politics of Harmony: A Vrindavan Story'. His presentation was based on the history of Vrindavan as a site for reconciliation. He highlighted the potential of this strong mythological tradition as a resource for reconciliation, and stressed the importance of interacting either diabolically or dialogically. Interspersed with beautiful photographs of exquisite artwork in the temples of Vrindavan, Goswami's presentation outlined the fact of the **religious and political dialogue** between and among kings, monks and warriors and the dialogue that resulted from the struggle for power.

While pointing out that several temples in Vrindavan had been constructed as a result of dialogue processes, he said that conflict had at times resulted in the desecration of this space. Goswami emphasised the dialogue that occurs between traditions through dance, music, paintings, and the religious and political dialogue that led in some cases to an 'architectural dalliance', as seen through the fusion of Hindu and Muslim architectural styles in several temples. He underlined that when politics goes beyond conflict to the realm of cooperation, and when religion goes beyond rituals to the realm of the spiritual, only then can the *ras* or spirit of dialogue be understood. In this context, architectural space is an aesthetic, ritual requirement. He concluded that **reconciliation and dialogue are built on the logic of inclusive transcendence and should be viewed not as ends but as processes**.

Madhu Khanna, Associate Professor, Indic-Religious Studies, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi (India), made a presentation on 'Images of Violence and Cultural Spaces for Reconciliation'. She began by highlighting the representation of violence in Hindu scriptures, such as the Rig Veda, particularly through the myth of creation, in which violence is implicit. Creation is described not as a benevolent, immaculate act, but as a wild and fierce act of violence. Indeed ritual violence was accepted as part of Vedic culture. This was later treated as a ritual mistake, and was replaced by several symbolic non-violent acts.

Khanna stressed that in the medieval period, the epithet of warrior queens who vanquished the might of demons was a central focus – for example, through

the representations of goddesses Durga (Mahishamardini, slayer of the demon Mahisha), Mahatmayi and Kali (an epithet embodying Durga's anger and fury). Hence, apart from the imagery of motherhood, **the militant role of the feminine was exalted as well, and viewed as part of an integral totality of the divine feminine. This indicated the interplay between the forces of opposition between militant masculinity and acquiescent feminity and, according to Khanna, provided a particular space for reconciliation.**

She also emphasised that the tenet of the 'acceptance of the other' in all the Vedic texts provided an important site for reconciliation. Khanna however pointed to the appropriation of such cultural motifs into negative models, for example the appropriation of the image of goddess Durga by the Hindu right wing in India in order to inspire women into aggression and violence. On the positive side however, the image of the goddess as warrior challenges the stereotyped image of women in Hindu society. In this context, she spoke of real warrior queens, such as Raziya Khan and Rani Laxmibai who resisted restrictions imposed by patriarchal structures and proved the latent power of feminine power through masculine images.

Khanna opined that peacemaking cannot be isolated from religiosity. Reconciliation thus operates at two levels – personal reconciliation (through *vrata* or fasts, bhakti, yoga, tapasya or self suffering for truth, etc.) and societal or collective reconciliation (through pilgrimage, sacred chanting, religious festivals, etc.). She concluded that heritage sites should be looked upon as zones for reconciliation, and that another site for reconciliation is people's creativity through the fine arts and through icons.
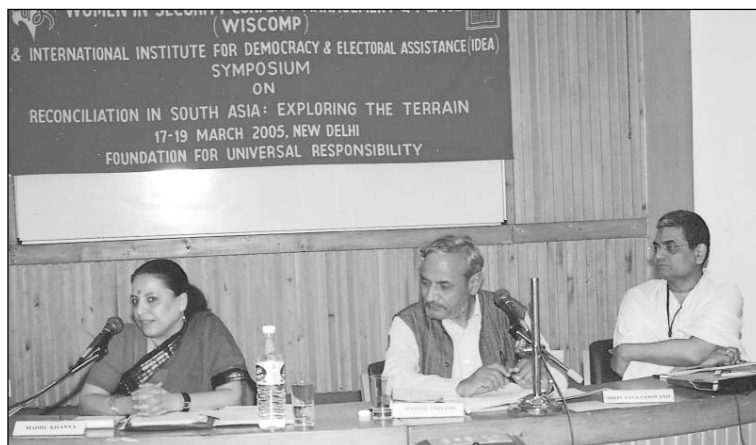
Left to Right: Dr. Madhu Khanna, Dr. Harish Trivedi and Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami

Dr. Swarna Rajagopalan

Elucidating on 'The Indian Epic Tradition: Spaces for Reconciliation', Swarna Rajagopalan, Independent Political and Security Analyst, Chennai (India), outlined the spaces for reconciliation in Indian epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and their current resonance in contemporary life. She began by highlighting that the dominance of society in the polity throughout Indian history suggests that civil society is a better point of intervention for reconciliation. She pointed out that the function of the polity is to protect the value system, provide refuge and guarantee justice. Therefore, reconciliation interventions are most useful at the level of redefining that value-system on its terms.

Rajagopalan said that reconciliation activity in cases where displacement has taken place must address the conditions that led to the displacement in the first place, and do so in good faith. Seeking to limit violence during a conflict and being vigilant about human rights violations and atrocities can increase the possibility of an amicable return from exile. Therefore, particularly where displacement is internal, the interests of reconciliation are best served by paying attention to life in refugee camps and the experiences of internally displaced persons and refugees. She pointed out that war was undertaken decisively only when all other methods failed, and that it had to be for a universally accepted rationale. These are the two qualifiers for resort to war that can be drawn from the Indian epics. Rules of interaction and engagement, codes of conduct and war all ensure a certain predictability in dealings and events that reduces anxiety, builds confidence and induces acceptance in the face of tragedy. Public rituals and ceremonies, that are not triumphal celebrations but dedicated to public welfare and that are inclusive (such as the rituals for assuaging Yudhishthir's grief at the end of the war in Mahabharata), can create economic opportunities as well as begin to heal alienation. Rajagopalan noted that the focus of the epics on individual actions and of spiritual teachers on individual transformation indicates that **individuals rather than institutions or collectives are the most culturally appropriate unit for reconciliation activity**. She concluded by reflecting on how the concept of karma and the cycle of life impinged on notions of crime, punishment, remorse and suffering.

Speaking on 'Literature from the South: The Vocabulary of Reconciliation', S.P. Udayakumar said that violence has been a major part of Tamil literature and poetry. He referred to **Sangam poetry**, with its heroic ballads and songs which

glorified conflict among the three Tamil kingdoms of the Cheras, Pandyas and the Cholas, and also celebrated the exploits on the battlefield. There is also celebration of gods like *Murugan* who was considered the ultimate embodiment of heroism. Despite this emphasis on the celebration of valour on the battlefield, Udayakumar stressed that there is evidence that violence was abhorrent to Tamil culture, and with the advent of the new tenets of Buddhism and Jainism, people became more receptive to concepts of peace and tranquillity. Hence, in the post-Sangam period, Buddhist and Jain scholars and monks greatly contributed to Tamil literary development by launching a new style of literature informed by notions of non-violence and peace. He concluded that although there is no specific word for reconciliation in Tamil literature, the Tamil literary record of non-violence, truth telling and reconciliation is extensive.

Speaking on 'Post Colonial Art as a Site for Reconciliation', F.S. Aijazuddin remarked that 'colonialism' has become so synonymous with British rule in the subcontinent that we tend to measure our subsequent growth against their imperial yardstick. However, going back in time, it is evident that the South Asian nations have in fact been colonised at one time or another, by someone or the other, long before the British came. Questioning whether art was ever a site for reconciliation, Aijazuddin pointed out for instance that Gandharan sculptures were designed to evoke submission to a higher force, and reverence and humility in fellow man, while the muraqqas and the imperial memoirs compiled for the great Mughals described the grandeur and magnificence of their courts, and texts like the *Akbar-nama and Jahangir-nama* documented violence rather than reconciliation.

At the same time, he stressed that some acts of reconciliation can be found within all of these. For example, the unique *Razmnama* – the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata* commissioned by emperor Akbar constituted a giant leap towards interfaith reconciliation. He emphasised examination of the need for inter-faith reconciliation through art, rather than 'post-colonial' reconciliation. Citing the various acts of violence that dot the history of the subcontinent, he pointed out that such memories have been forgotten, while there has been no act – public or private, of atonement, reconciliation, and forgiveness. In this context, he wondered **whether art had been used to anaesthetise our consciences, rather than to arouse them.**

Aijazuddin highlighted that art suffers from the inherent disability that if it is too graphic, it defeats its own objective by reminding the audience of horrors they would prefer to forget. On the other hand, if it is too symbolic, it dilutes

the intensity of its message. He noted that **it would be up to a newer generation of artists to wield art away as a weapon of nationalist propaganda so that its potential as an instrument of reconciliation between victors and victims can be realised.** Aijazuddin stressed that such understanding may lead to accommodation, without assimilation. He concluded by stressing the need for a commitment to mutual tolerance and the maturity to forgive, and be forgiven in any process of reconciliation.

The Chair, Harish Trivedi, Professor, Department of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi (India), concluded the session by remarking that it is a postmodernist axiom that all cultures are always already hybrid and yet, even in their ever-evolving states, all cultures are also highly distinctive and even unique. **It is individuals from one culture who may wish or need to interact with other cultures or to cross cultures**, and they are always likely to do it so much the better, as we saw in this session, if they are already embedded deep in their own cultures in the first place and are grounded in their own *samskaras*. Only the truly cultured can truly reconcile, and ensure the continued existence of cultural pluralism and variety.

March 19
Reconciliation:
People, Processes, Challenges
SESSION VIII

Methodologies of Reconciliation:
The Context of South Asia – A Roundtable

J.S. Verma, former Chief Justice of India and former Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi (India), initiated the roundtable by indicating the urgency of **mending fractured relationships** across the region, and said that while the past cannot be undone, there can be an effort to reduce the hurt caused. He stressed that a kind of justice is required that would touch the heart, and provide **reassurance of non-repetition of the wrong committed.**

Peter deSouza, Co-Director of the Lokniti programme, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi (India), commenced his presentation on 'Righting Historical Wrongs' by noting the **catharsis that remembering produces. At the same time he also noted the value of strategic forgetting** to avoid resurgence of conflict, and to engage with the process of reconciliation. He pointed out that an extreme argument for forgetting was provided by Nietzsche, who said, "Without forgetting, it is utterly impossible to live at all. There is a degree of insomnia, rumination, and historical awareness which injures and finally destroys a living thing, whether man, people or a culture." In this context, deSouza raised the question of what to remember and what to forget. Building his arguments on the central theme of democracy, he underlined that democracy makes memory struggles particularly visible, as new groups acquire voices and new opportunities for expression become available. This, coupled with the struggle for resources, makes demands for righting historical wrongs more vocal, and links it to a larger political agenda.

DeSouza stressed that democracy accentuates the politics of memory, and that memory can emerge either out of a sense of nostalgia, or because of a sense of hurt. The latter, i.e. the sense of grievance, has moral and psychological aspects, which democracy brings to the fore for purposes of mobilisation, identity formation and to consolidate constituencies. At the same time, **democracy also produces a whole range of new claimants that modern states have to deal with**. This requires some gesture in the present – either a policy response or a symbolic gesture that assuages the sense of hurt. This,

he pointed out, raises the complex question of who decides what constitutes harm. There is also the fact that the formal processes and civil society organisations work within a symmetry of power such that people who have been really wronged never find voice. DeSouza noted that this can be seen in the case of the displacement of the adivasis (tribals) in India. Democracy thus also needs to address the issue of who speaks for whom and how representative the agenda is.

He pointed to several compulsions which require historical wrongs to be addressed – prudential reasons, (fear of negative consequences), pragmatic reasoning (entails strategic gains such as bringing more people into the calculus of consent) and moral and ethical reasons. DeSouza noted that democracy has devised three ways of responding to such claims – though **reparation strategies** (which have gained the most visibility), **public apologies**, and by devising policies of **affirmative action**. He emphasised that India has been fairly successful at affirmative action, and that it is a particularly effective strategy as it addresses continuing processes of exclusion and discrimination, and not just wrongs committed in the past.

DeSouza concluded that democracy is both the problem and the solution – while it makes remembering visible and possible, and requires us to attend to wrongs committed, it also distracts by producing many claimants, and consequently dilutes the original pain of a single community by bringing into focus multiple pains of multiple communities. **At the same time, an unintended consequence of democracy is that through the exercise of giving voice, it reduces the intensity of pain and to that extent facilitates a process of reconciliation.**

Left to Right: Dr. Peter deSouza, Justice J.S. Verma and Dr. Nandini Sundar

Ms. Manjrika Sewak

Manjrika Sewak, Programme Officer, WISCOMP, New Delhi (India), speaking on 'Reconciliation: The Lens of Restorative Justice' outlined the complementarities between concepts of reconciliation and restorative justice. Comparing the latter with the legal judicial system, she illustrated the scope of restorative justice in providing alternatives for victims of conflict. Highlighting the relevance of the concepts of shame, apology, remorse, truth telling, empowerment, reparations, rehabilitation etc., Sewak explained that restorative justice holds the oppressor accountable to the victims and not just to the state, thus **linking personal change to social and structural change** in order to prevent a recurrence of violence. She enumerated several practices for reconciliation through methodologies of restorative justice. Sewak however expressed caution in the use of restorative justice in the realm of gender-based private violence such as domestic violence, because of the power imbalances inherent therein. She also stressed that culture was indeed a double-edged sword, and while there are justice practices within indigenous cultures, these have to be researched and looked at holistically, as often indigenous practices affect men and women differently, and this needs to be factored in.

Nandini Sundar, Professor, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi (India) made a presentation on 'Reparation and Reconciliation'. She noted that there are obvious double standards in the international discourse on reparations, apologies, and reconciliation and that the moral reasoning involved in reparation claims include several difficult to resolve options, particularly since the world appears to prefer security to justice. First, there is the **question of distributive justice across time** – whereas some liberal philosophers tend to discuss the issues in terms of the responsibility of individuals for the sins of their ancestors, others have pointed to the continuing disadvantage of groups or the continuity in state structures as a reason for the state and not individuals to own guilt and provide reparation**.** The second problematic issue is that of the **appropriate unit of reparation** – **should these be entire countries, communities or individuals?** A third question is the **clash between new entitlements due to need and old entitlements based on expropriation**. The problem exists in a reverse fashion when tribals are reduced to a minority in their own homelands by immigrants, some of whom may also be economic refugees.

Restitution claims also raise questions of **memory and representation** – how historical injustices are framed and transmitted in national history texts and

popular narratives and whether restitution privileges certain moments in history as against others. She questioned whether truth commissions or international tribunals, given their focus on individual legal responsibility, can address the issue of societal breakdowns of morality. Truth commissions assume that once ordinary people learn the full horror of what was being done in their names, perpetrator remorse will be part of a national reconciliation process. This does not appear to be necessarily borne out, and **reconciliation seems to have increasingly become another name for impunity.** Equally seriously, apologies for particularly egregious acts of colonialism might falsely suggest that these were aberrations in an otherwise humane system. Moreover, there are various crimes which find no mention in the growing list of demands for recognition as crimes against humanity, such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the same time, instances in which Western countries have apologised for wrongs committed in the past appear to legitimise similar action in the present, thus setting a dangerous precedent.

In conclusion, Sundar said that the reparations phenomenon only raises a series of moral questions that attend acts of injustice. It does not, as yet, point to anything like common or equitable international norms, unless one accepts norms that encode inequality in their very being. Much more needs to be done in the direction of a comparative political economy of claims and achievements than is currently envisaged if we are to use this phenomenon to advance a common humanity.

Arvinder Singh, therapist and counsellor, New Delhi (India), spoke on 'Healing and Reconciliation' and underlined that violence causes people to lose faith in the fabric of humanity. She highlighted that in most cases, the nature of the trauma changes and but it would often continue for years. She expressed belief in a **community-based approach**, **through the resilience tapped from community members as against a medical approach which focuses on the idea**

Ms. Arvinder Singh

of mental illness. The main themes in working with communities are resilience, home and containment. Psychosocial healing is important in this context, as it is a continuous process in which the larger community is engaged in building trust. She further pointed to the need to move from the language of victimhood to survivorhood in the consideration of conflict. Narrating several experiences of counselling in conflict-ridden areas in India, she concluded by calling for a need to develop communication and for collective co-construction of society.

Through an audio-visual presentation on 'Popular Films and Reconciliation', Ira Bhaskar, Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi (India), highlighted the powers of popular cinema in affecting and engaging public memory. She pointed out that popular cinema in particular has great powers of effective and emotional engagement with the audience. It can create spaces for discourse, confrontation and debate and form the contours and

Dr. Ira Bhaskar

limits of the representation of issues. She emphasised that cinema is an alternative discourse of history telling, and can in this way authenticate lived experience and cultural memory. Historical trauma and cultural memory are given an accessible form by circulating through the public sphere as collective and remembered experience of the past. Cinema also helps in the negotiation of public traumatic memory, and has a very important role in terms of 'mourning work'. When public history supersedes personal memory, it raises the important question of how the representation of historical trauma witnesses and preserves memory, and how this memory is to be passed on and negotiated.

Bhaskar added that cultural and cinematic resources could facilitate the imagining of the affective bonds between the different communities with a focus on shared histories and shared pasts. She stressed that **memory is fundamentally ambivalent in that it can have a healing or a destructive potential**. Memory is also constituted of and by historical events, and is thus constitutive of individual and collective identity. Memory can also be constructed and represented under pressure of later events – the politics of memory therefore needs to be taken into account. Bhaskar's presentation was interspersed with clips from the Hindi films *Padosi*, *Dharmaputra* and *Bombay,* depicting the resilience of human nature in overcoming social fracture. She concluded by highlighting the linkages between **memory and trauma and the power of melodrama in easing personal trauma and ideological conflict.**

The discussion that followed interrogated the complex interplay between law and justice, and how justice could be expected to right a wrong in cases where the state itself commits wrongful acts. There was emphasis on the difficulty of construction of consistent moral ideals. The discussion also generated a consensus on the efficacy of survivor terminology to transcend conflict.

SESSION IX

Examining Dialogue Processes in South Asia – A Discussion

The Chair, Uday Bhaskar, Officiating Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi (India), initiated the discussion by noting that the practices of conflict resolution and conflict management had changed considerably since the Cold War period. He called for a **need to analyse the interface between practice and theory and investigate whether theory has indeed managed to keep pace with the changing practices in the field.** He also drew attention to the need to locate the perspectives of practitioners of conflict resolution in the dialogue process itself.

Speaking on 'Dialogue and Reconciliation', Rudolf Heredia, Associate Professor, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi (India), based his presentation on three central concepts – **pluralism, tolerance and dialogue.** Pluralism, he asserted, is a fact, and the acceptance of pluralism is essential for a functioning society. He stated that besides the structural pluralism of autonomous institutional systems, a modern nation state also requires religious or cultural pluralism. Heredia highlighted that cultures which have different components, including language and religion, constitute independent systems. They require an overarching unity to bring them together, whether as an Indic or South Asian civilisation, or in terms of the market, i.e. through globalisation or on ecological grounds.

In the case of India, the diversity is far deeper than that of Europe, which required more than five hundred years and many wars to evolve some kind of a shared ethos. This diversity was brought together under an overarching Indian civilisation through hierarchies – which meant that every person had a station in life and spaces for communication were constructed within those delineated parameters. The challenge today is to replace this with a pluralism based on equality, which is democratic. Heredia pointed out that in this context, while on the one hand we need certain universal principles, on the other, we all need a particular place to belong. **He thus underlined that there is a need for universality as well as particularity, and a pluralism that denies either of these is essentially flawed.**

Heredia outlined **three levels of tolerance** – one born of practical necessity (where the 'other' remains an opponent), intellectual or philosophical level (where the 'other' is a complement), and the ethical level (where the 'other' is

one's fulfilment). Explaining the different levels of understanding, Heredia said that the first is the level of myth (in a hermeneutic sense), which is the imaginative grasp we intuitively have of our situation. When this **myth is articulated into a system, it is converted into ideology** – a system of ideas that help us to understand, respond to and control our world. While ideology, or 'logos' is at the level of the rational, myth is at the level of trans-rational or non-rational. In this context, he quoted Raymond Pannikar who said, "the tolerance you have is directly proportionate to the myth you live by and inversely proportional to the ideology you follow."

Dialogue, he emphasised, is fundamental to the human situation, and its multiple domains include:

- The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.

- The dialogue of action, in which we "collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people".

- The dialogue of shared experience, which comes from the sharing of experiences of joy, trauma, sorrow, etc.

- The dialogue of articulation which comes from ideas communicated.

Heredia pointed out that the dialogue of life and experience are at the level of myth, while the dialogue of action and articulation are at the level of ideology.
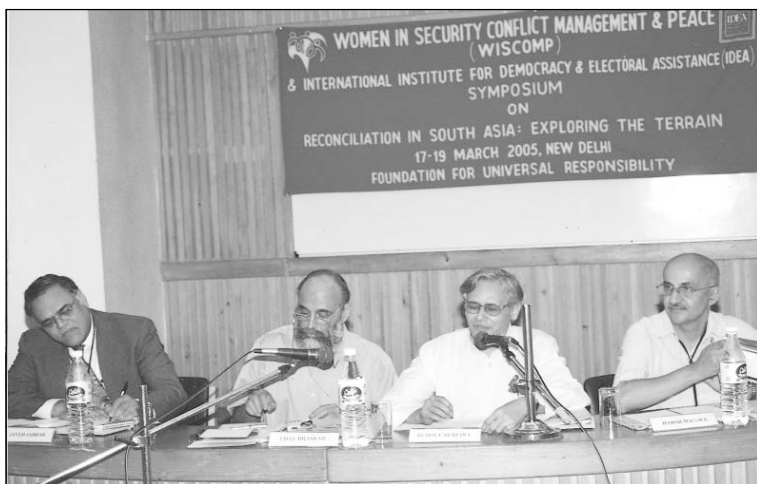
Left to Right: Mr. Javed Jabbar, Commodore Uday Bhaskar, Father Rudolf Heredia and Mr. Harsh Mander

He stressed that for any true and open dialogue, pluralism must not simply be a *de-facto* given, but a *de-jure* reality as we know it. Only then can diversity be celebrated, and levels of tolerance can move further into the spiritual and mystic, making dialogue effective at the levels of life and experience. He concluded that dialogue must be between equals, and should be able to find some common ground, particularly in the context of irreconcilable differences.

Harsh Mander, social worker and writer, New Delhi (India), in a presentation on 'Reopening Conversations across Faultlines in Gujarat', highlighted the ways in which the **politics of hatred** came about. He elaborated on four steps required for reconciliation – acknowledgement of conflict, followed by remorse, reparation and justice, much of which needed to be done under the aegis of the state. Mander pointed out that none of this had happened in Gujarat and the so-called 'peace' that currently prevailed was a counterfeit one, not based on any active process of reconciliation. The state had not taken responsibility for the carnage of 2002 in which the members of a specific religious community had been brutalised and women and children singled out for the most cruel treatment. Besides the state, the collective responsibility for the lack of reconciliation measures in Gujarat must be shared by political parties, civil society organisations and the people.

Mander asserted that common shramdaan undertaken jointly by Hindus and Muslims was an effective means for bringing together antagonistic groups in the process of rebuilding community life. He touched on the efforts made by the Aman Biradari and youth peace groups which had initiated rehabilitation projects and programmes giving psycho-social support. He also pointed to acts of individual courage and empathy and remarked that for every story of brutality, there were several stories, many of them untold, of compassion. The individual acts of compassion – the head of the panchayat who personally sheltered hundreds of Muslims in his home and used the stocks of grain stored for the year to provide food to all; the Muslim youth who participated in rebuilding the house of a Hindu widow as part of the common shramdaan programme – are profiles in courage and compassion that serve as a sharp contrast to the acts of omission and commission of the state. For Mander, these stories are the springwells from where a culture of dialogue and reconciliation can be built.

Mander pointed out that the compassion fatigue displayed by civil society groups had also caused great concern particularly when juxtaposed against the overwhelming support of the same civil society at times of natural calamities

like earthquakes and tsunamis. It was almost as if civil society was making a clear distinction between these catastrophes and reserving its compassion for one category and not the other. He also noted that despite the change in government at the centre, the new government had not yet taken concrete steps to heal the wounds in Gujarat.

Speaking on 'India and Pakistan: The Dialogue Process', Javed Jabbar called the dialogue "the latest chapter in centuries of continuing dialogue between the two nations". He opined that the dialogue process between (the idea of) India and that of Pakistan began a thousand years ago when the first Muslim landed on the subcontinent. Since then the dialogue (essentially between two religions – Hinduism and Islam, neither of which **are practiced, except in the core fundamentals, in a homogeneous manner due to notable diversity in cultural and in other respects**) has continued – sometimes in constructive forms, and at other times assuming a violent and destructive form, taking in 1947, the form of a dialogue between two independent nation states. In this trajectory, there were times when the dialogue became a contested one based on the quest for political dominance, metamorphosed into a dialogue for freedom from British rule, and in the final phase assumed the form of dialogue between two nation states, thereby losing, in some senses, some of the enriching strands of the earlier phases.

Asserting that the two nation theory had been vindicated rather than negated by the war of 1971 which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, Jabbar expressed the opinion that 1971 proved that there were not just two but multiple Muslim nations in South Asia including the Muslims of Nepal and Sri Lanka for instance. Nothing **better** illustrated the importance of continuing with the dialogue than the reality of the nuclear explosions of 1998 **which** in his opinion signalled that the sovereignty of Pakistan was no longer negotiable and that a repeat of 1971 would not happen with what remained of the territory of Pakistan. For Jabbar, the terrible reality of nuclear weapons was what drove home the point about the finality and irreducibility of Pakistan.

While elaborating on the various formal and informal dialogue processes between the now independent nations, ranging from the official state dialogue, track-two initiatives, the dialogue between provinces, people to people contacts, the dialogue of specialists, artists, trade and sports personnel, Jabbar however also highlighted the lack of dialogue between political extremes in both nations. He concluded by remarking on the uneven nature of communication between India and Pakistan, with India showing inflexibility on core issues as opposed

to the concessions and flexibility of Pakistan. He warned of a backlash from some constituencies in Pakistan if India continued to demonstrate this intransigence. Jabbar emphasised that there was a powerful civil-military combine in India and the Indian 'establishment' had been responsible for this inflexibility. He sensitised the audience to the fact that the India-Pakistan dialogue was actually a dialogue between North India and Pakistan with South Indian sensibilities not impinging on the consciousness at all.

Ms. Dilrukshi Fonseka and
Mr. Devananda Ramiah

Devanand Ramiah, Post-Conflict Transition Analyst at UNDP, Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Dilrukshi Fonseka, Consultant, UNDP, Colombo (Sri Lanka) jointly made the presentation on 'Dialogue Process in Sri Lanka'. In the context of the ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, they stressed the need for a functional dialogue between people and institutions. They drew attention to the overwhelming emphasis and pressure on a single dialogue process (track-one) to deliver on all contentious issues as the major weakness of the peace process. Highlighting the importance of **alternative means of dialogue**, they drew attention to the importance of multi-track dialogue processes. It was further pointed out that tools and mechanisms such as truth commissions, public apologies and reparations in themselves do not contribute to reconciliation – a larger process design is essential.

Emphasising on relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction as necessary for reconciliation, Ramiah and Fonseka said that where communities are polarised and economic opportunities unequal, reconciliation would be hollow without economic development. Another factor is the need for interim reconciliation measures, regarding which there is very limited knowledge. Underlining the impediments posed to political dialogue by postponement of the core issues, they stressed on the pivotal role of the state in maintaining open channels for discussion. They also pointed out that difficulties in estimating the costs of conflict create problems in operationalising reconciliation efforts. Ramiah and Fonseka also stressed the need for engendering dialogue, and concluded by

citing the important role which the diaspora can play in bringing about reconciliation through dialogue.

In the subsequent discussion, Sona Khan, Advocate, The Supreme Court, New Delhi (India), pointed out that the issue of the Muslim identity in India had brought into focus the debate between the engagement of Indian Muslims on the basis of specific personal laws versus their engagement within the realm of secular politics. Referring to the Shah Bano case, she said that a major concern the case had generated was whether Indian Muslims were diluting their identity by resorting to provisions of secular laws. She stressed that this was a dilemma that called for introspection.

SESSION X

Unveiling the Jagged Edges :
The Dialectics of Reconciliation – A Roundtable

Neera Chandhoke, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi (India), initiated the discussion by demarcating pluralism and tolerance as two requirements to envision harmony through reconciliation. Contextualising reconciliation as part of a larger project comprising pluralism and democracy, she highlighted the disruptive nature of social and political entrepreneurs who 'fix memory' through narratives and divide people in a community, thereby stalling reconciliatory efforts for short-term political gains.

Mary John, Associate Professor, Women's Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India), spoke on 'Reconciliation: South Asian Feminist Perspectives'. She highlighted that our understanding of conflict has been limited to the recognition of conflict within the nation-state or between communities. Gender issues are vital to explaining the effects of conflict as well as resolving dissent. Stating that **gender had become a significant category, she said that since women and men have different experiences of conflict, they access the peace process differently as well.** She spoke of the sexualised and stigmatised images of women, and raised the issue of strategies of survival of

*Left to Right: Dr. Rama Mani, Dr. Neera Chandhoke,
Dr. Mary John and Dr. Shaheen Afroze*

women in the absence of patriarchal structures. Referring to partition, she questioned whether strategies of recovery and truth telling were appropriate for the women who had been abducted and who did not wish to talk, creating another wall of silence.

John explained that conflict generates hypermasculinity, heroism and willing death, which can even gain acceptance as desirable notions. The concept of motherhood, especially motherhood of sons is a powerful mobilising force, as against the motherhood of daughters, or fatherhood. From a feminist perspective, the pre-conflict 'normal' world that is disrupted by conflict, is in reality, often structured by inequalities, un-freedoms, patriarchies and problematic norms of feminist and masculine behaviour. At times, spaces might open up in violent situations where women might perceive a sense of freedom. Consequently, patriarchies could either weaken or deepen. Highlighting that notions of the neighbourhood, community and home tend to be problematic, John stressed that **reconciliation should not mean coming back to the prior, or another kind of patriarchal situation**.

Speaking on 'Justice and Reconciliation: The Dialectics', Rama Mani, Course Director, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Geneva (Switzerland), focused around five key words that had emerged as recurrent themes throughout the conference, and which, in her opinion, underscored the essence of justice and reconciliation. These were: **bridge, accountability, power, structural violence and inclusion**. Her main concern was to identify the conditions under which justice can indeed serve as a bridge between reconciliation and peace, as this is not a given in all circumstances, and justice sometimes runs counter to these objectives. The first condition was accountability, and she urged a policy of zero tolerance to impunity which is normally rampant even after conflict officially terminates, with high violence and crime. The second condition is power – specifically the need to empower reconciliation through legal justice, the restoration of the rule of law, and ensuring that all, including the political elite, are equal before law. She also emphasised the importance of people power trumping political power. The third is addresssing structural violence, and the underlying causes of conflict without which only a counterfeit peace will result. The final condition is inclusion – she underlined that ultimately peace, justice and reconciliation can only be achieved durably when an inclusive political community is forged, based on survivors' justice which includes all members of society whatever their past role, as society must be rebuilt and shared jointly by them all.

Shaheen Afroze spoke on 'Social Capital Approach as a Tool of Reconciliation.' Noting that social capital[6] touches the lives of people at all levels of society, she said there is a need to balance individual interest with social interests to enhance peoples' capabilities and freedoms and create conducive conditions for mutual trust and cooperation. Unlike human capital which is individually owned, social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in the network of reciprocal social relations within the community. "A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital." Afroze spoke of the relevance of social capital in creating a positive climate for humanist understanding. She stressed that social capital may be used as one of the measures of conflict resolution and/or reconciliation and can be put into practice along with other measures and strategies. It should not be treated as a panacea. She however cautioned that social capital comprises constructs that are inherently abstract and therefore require subjective interpretation in their translation into operational measures.

---

[6] According to Robert D. Putnam, "social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue.' Robert D. Putnam quoted in http://www.infed.org/biblio/social_capital.htm

SESSION XI

Public Policy and Reconciliation: Challenges for South Asia – A Lecture

Kalyan Chakravarty, Trustee and Member Secretary, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi (India), opened the session by marking the nature of conflict as unending, and highlighted that the onus should not be on elimination, but on the **management of conflict**.

Speaking on Reconciliation and Public Policy, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi (India), pointed out at the outset that public policy derives its fundamental existential questions from a multiplicity of fields and consequently meaningful public policy cannot be cocooned in an ivory tower. To grapple with how an emerging field of reconciliation can factor into public policy requires that we **engage with the term 'reconciliation' both at the metaphysical level as well as at the more mundane level of politics.**

Theologically, the term 'reconciliation' signals a condition of existence that is without resentment towards the world or alienation from our sense of being. This looks difficult for two reasons. First, freedom demands a certain spontaneity whereas social cooperation by its very nature implies a degree of imposition. Second, the religious way of being demands, in some ways, being in this world but not of it.

At the same time, Mehta noted that both these tensions could be creative tensions rather than a source of sullen resentment and conflict. The relevance of these larger questions on the messy and violent realities of the conflicts that inhabit the actual world may not be apparent but are nevertheless not without practical significance. Explaining this connect further, Mehta asked: isn't the source of conflict a certain kind of existential rancor? And does not existential rancor often depend upon an unclear relationship between the self and the world and therefore between the self and others? Despite all the tremendous faults of organised religion, the fact that religion at least engages with these questions is the strongest argument for not excluding religion from the purview of reconciliation and public policy. Indeed organised religion seldom provides a space for these larger explorations because it has been colonised by a politics of resentment. To rescue it from that politics will however require engagement, not running away.

At the societal and political levels, the basic obstacle to reconciliation seems to emanate from the non-recognition of due claims of certain groups. At the very extreme, this act of non-recognition can entail a denial of someone's right to exist: people can simply become a target for being who they are. There is little doubt that the hybridity, plurality and indeterminate nature of identity create a politics of identity that is potentially conflictual. **While acknowledging that narratives that emphasise plurality rather than singularity are better and more objective, Mehta wondered if the antidote to the conflictual nature of identity politics is simply more plurality and hybridity.** Alternatively does the answer lie in framing the terms of cooperation for people who disagree about the forms of communal identity in a way that enables them to dialogue about this contentious issue?

The political task of bringing about reconciliation between groups of people who treat each other as "others", argued Mehta, requires all kinds of resources – moral, psychological, spiritual, historical and above all, delicacy and a sense of judgment. **He identified two primary areas in which reconciliation debates need to be rooted – the "security" dilemma and the "alienation" dilemma.** The Hobbesian insight that conflict has its roots less in hate, ambition, expansive egos and much more in sheer uncertainty – in the inability to gauge what the 'others are up to' speaks to the game theoretic character of social life, creating a security dilemma of significant proportions. Very often a broad agreement at the philosophical level can translate into acrimony over smaller details over specific institutional arrangements, precisely because of this kind of uncertainty.

Left to Right: Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Dr. Kalyan Chakravarty and Dr. Judith Large

Most peace negotiations end in deadlock not because parties hate each other or have to overcome their own histories, but because of residual uncertainties that few existing institutions can overcome.

A second obstacle to reconciliation is the fact that group identities entail abstraction followed by a sense of alienation – they first abridge our identities by naming us as one thing rather than the other and then require us to vicariously live through the achievements of others (Team India's triumph becomes MY triumph and so on). The question we need to ask, as Mehta pointed out is that why are so many willing to risk so much for conflicts that are premised upon an abridgement of who we are. This, he said is probably a question that requires a more existential answer outside the scope of this conference.

Underlining the gaps between reconciliation and politics, Mehta pointed out **that while public policy depends on authoritative commands, reconciliation demands voluntary internalisation of norms.** While states think in terms of security systems, reconciliation recognises that other values and virtues have to be cultivated for the creation of an enduring security framework. Reconciliation essentially implies the movement towards the creation of a social contract or social relationship governed by terms and conditions that can be freely accepted by all the people affected by that relationship – this is also the modern conception of democracy and justice.

In this context, he pointed to two kinds of societies – one, where the problem of reconciliation arises where despite a consensus regarding formal institutions of the state, in practice, there are large-scale deviations. This is the problem of almost all democratic societies, for example in Gujarat where on one level, the state is considered responsible for the massacre of 2002, and on another level, there is an appeal to state institutions like the judiciary and constitutional freedoms. The second type of society is where the terms of contract are less stable. In both societies, the core of the problems remain the same, and **reconciliation must be grounded in concepts of society, representation, democracy, power, truth and responsibility.**

Mehta noted that in a democracy the balance between forms of popular authorisation and the aspiration for reconciliation assumes significance. We should not assume that robust popular authorisations in a democratic set up would necessarily lead to promulgation of policies that will be acceptable to citizens. There is a need for more creative ways for institutionalising the practices of states, such that they have to continuously provide adequate

reasons for their actions. The concept of reconciliation has to be built into the aspirations of a democratic people and truth cannot be linked exclusively to a process of authorisation. Herein lies the kernel of the crisis of reconciliation in South Asia, where institutions vested with the process of authorisation are often seen as particular elements in a strategic game. The blurring of the lines that separate truth from lies further compounds the problem of reconciliation.

The Chair, Kalyan Chakravarty, said in his concluding remarks that the major obstacles to reconciliation include the assertion of an absolute truth, which refuses to accommodate any other dimension of it; second, the legal notion of crime and punishment, i.e. for establishment of peace, those who violate laws have to be punished; and third that identity and difference are the two sides of the same coin. Raising the question of memory, he said that it is better to accept, confront and live with memories, rather than ignore or suppress them, so as to prevent the past from embittering the present.

Chakravarty noted the **tendency to essentialise and engage in bio-cultural reductionism, now brought on by globalisation**. This can be seen in the primary sectors of agriculture, industry or mining, in the secondary sectors of drugs, chemicals and foods, and in the tertiary sectors of culture, education, conflict resolution and mutual tolerance. He stressed that we need to escape this bio-cultural reductionism. He pointed out that the state in its quest for making everything tangible, clear and predictable, tends to adopt a reductionist approach – thus forestry has changed from multi-tier to single tier, and in agriculture we are moving from poly-cultures to mono-cultures, while there is a move from poly-cephalic cities to mono-cephalic cities, and from poly-cultures of the mind to mono-cultures. There hence appears to be no voice except for that which is in the mainstream.

Chakravarty underlined that in dispute resolution we have superseded the multiplicity and complexity of different approaches by singular, univocal approaches. In conflict resolution too, there needs to be poly-vocality of approaches evolved by communities in different parts of the world.

SESSION XII

Closing Comments

In the concluding comments, Judith Large pointed to the diverse set of issues that had been raised during the symposium. Highlighting the salient points that were raised in the course of the three days, she spoke of the critical issues that must be dealt with in order to inhibit violence. Large summed up some of the central issues as follows:

- Drawing on Justice Verma's comment that the subtlety of justice is such that its interpretation requires only the heart, Large pointed out that this reflected the continual dilemma of the role of legal mechanisms for formal retribution. Instead, perhaps what we require are improved structures and relationships which uphold human dignity, and prevent the recurrence of violence.

- A conceptual shift had been made in the course of the proceedings, from a false dichotomy of violence as active struggle, and reconciliation as passive acceptance, to a realisation that mobilisation for violence often entails domination and pacification of those who kill. Consequently reconciliation can be a complex and active struggle to overcome difference, pain and deep personal or political division. ***Reconciliation can be therefore reconceptualised as active struggle.***

- Also, the importance of 'memory for learning' was re-asserted, in terms of not just the truth and reconciliation commissions with their limitations, but that the presentation of historical narrative and individual story for transformative vision and a better future needs to be taken into account. Democratisation can open the way for multiple renewed memory and claims which may be misused for political mobilisation, or can be alternatively channeled in active ways which reconcile, build a better state and resolve old grievances.

- Large drew attention to Nelson Mandela, who had to undertake considerable internal reconciliation in order to launch a successful united front for a non-violent struggle against apartheid, as an alternative course to armed revolution. In this context, the aspirations of many in the Burmese pro-democracy diaspora today is a case in point.

- Democratic approaches to reconciliation in South Asia may include reparation, apology and affirmative strategies to recognise and correct both exclusion and injustice. The cultivation of genuine citizenship is also vital, as is state accountability.

- The importance of understanding theories of change and mobilisation for either violence or positive development had been highlighted during the deliberations. In this regard, there are still structural challenges in terms of deeply entrenched institutions like caste and other hierarchies, which need to be challenged and reformed in the interest of equity and justice.

- For approaches to restorative justice, the importance of customary law for many communities in South Asia has to be taken into account. There also needs to be active application of notions of shame for the perpetrator for restoring relations. Finally, the vibrant connections between different religions, faiths and belief systems and the modern civic structures in South Asian nations too needs to be recognised.

- During the course of the discussions, there was also assertion of acute feelings in South Asia regarding global 'double standards'.

- There is a need to recognise power relations and their meanings for 'reconciliation' initiatives. For example, measures undertaken currently under the auspices of the Sri Lankan state may be better seen as confidence building.

- The easy equation of **impunity** with **accommodation** following violence also needs acknowledgement. For example, Timor Leste **seemed initially** to accept the lack of justice or acknowledgement of Indonesian military behaviour following the independence referendum, due to the need to normalise relations with it giant neighbour and ensure a future for its citizens. This **stands** in contrast to the situation of Gujarat within India, and the sense of many that in this case there can be no accommodation, and that impunity is not acceptable.

- Reconciliation, it was felt has a definite role in building South Asian democracies.

The symposium closed with reflections on the cumulative learnings from the deliberations. It also invited ideas on the possible directions which the current fledgling discourses and practices on reconciliation may take in the context of South Asia.

Programme Schedule

MAPPING RECONCILIATION: AN OVERVIEW

9.30 a.m - 10.00 a.m
Session I
Introductory Remarks: Meenakshi Gopinath and
Sumona DasGupta (WISCOMP)

10.00 a.m - 11.00 a.m
Session II
Understanding Reconciliation: Plenary Lectures
Chair: Mushirul Hasan
Presenters: Judith Large, Javed Jabbar, Harim Peiris

11.00 a.m - 11.15 a.m
Tea

11.15 a.m - 1.15 p.m
Session III

Reconciliation: The Interlocking Discourses –
A Roundtable
Chair: F.S. Aijazuddin

Peacebuilding and Reconciliation:
Exploring the Linkages: Rita Manchanda

Reconciliation and the Discourse and Praxis of
Non-Violence: Dilip Simeon

Reconciliation and Co-existence:
The Multicultural Model: Gurpreet Mahajan

Reconciliation and Secularism:
The Linkages: Rajeev Bhargava

1.15 p.m - 2.15 p.m
Lunch

2.15 p.m - 4.45 p.m
Session IV

South Asian Perspectives on Reconciliation –
A Dialogue
Chair: Anuradha Chenoy
Opening Remarks: Harim Peiris

Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Brokered Peace:
The Case of the CHT:
Amena Mohsin (presented by Shaheen Afroze)

Reconciliation in Contemporary Nepal:
The Implications: Ava Shrestha

The Symbol of Motherhood: Mobilising for
Reconciliation: Experiences from Sri Lanka:
Visaka Dharmadasa

Reconciliation: Challenges in Pakistan:
Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri

Indigenous Approaches to Reconciliation:
A View from Pakistan: Hassan Yousufzai

Forced Displacement and Reconciliation:
Afghan Refugee women in Pakistan: Bushra Gohar

Reconciliation: Subaltern Perspectives from India:
Gopal Guru

4.45 p.m - 5.00 p.m	**Tea**
7.30 p.m	**Dinner at Rock Gardens: IIC Main Building**

MARCH 18 – Friday

RESOURCES FOR RECONCILIATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTH ASIA

9.30 a.m - 10.15 a.m   **Session V**

Reconciliation through the Gandhian Prism:
Plenary Lectures
Chair: B.G Verghese

Presenters: Madhuri Sondhi, S.P. Udayakumar

10.15 a.m - 10.30 a.m   **Tea**

10.30 a.m - 12.45 p.m   **Session VI**

Resources for Reconciliation: Faith Traditions in
South Asia – **A Panel Discussion**

Chair: Syeda Hameed

Reconciliation and the Christian Tradition:
Valsan Thampu

Dharma and Karma in Indian Texts:
Spaces for Reconciliation: Gurcharan Das

Islam and Resources for Reconciliation:
Ghulam Umar

Engaged Buddhism: Interpreting Reconciliation:
Naresh Mathur

Reconciliation in the Sikh Tradition:
Theory and Practice: Mohinder Singh

Discussants: F.S. Aijazuddin, Iqbal Ansari,
Yogender Sikand

12.45 p.m - 1.30 p.m   **Lunch**

1.30 p.m - 3.15 p.m	**Session VII**
	Culture as a Site for Reconciliation: Some Explorations from South Asia – **A Roundtable**
	Chair: Harish Trivedi
	Aesthetics and the Politics of Harmony: A Vrindavan Story: Shrivatsa Goswami
	Images of Violence and Cultural Spaces for Reconciliation: Madhu Khanna
	The Indian Epic Tradition: Spaces for Reconciliation: Swarna Rajagopalan
	Literature from the South: The Vocabulary of Reconciliation: S.P. Udayakumar
	Post Colonial Art as a Site for Reconciliation: F.S. Aijazuddin
3.15 p.m	**Tea**
	Chinmaya Mission Auditorium
5.00 p.m - 6.00 p.m	**Dance Performance 'Imagining Peace': Geeta Chandran**
6.30 p.m - 7.30 p.m	**Play 'Jailbirds' –** Smita Bharti

MARCH 19 – Saturday

RECONCILIATION: PEOPLE, PROCESSES, CHALLENGES

10.00 a.m - 12.30 p.m	**Session VIII**
	Methodologies of Reconciliation: The Context of South Asia – **A Roundtable**
	Chair: Justice J. S. Verma
	Righting Historical Wrongs: Peter deSouza
	Reconciliation: The Lens of Restorative Justice: Manjrika Sewak
	Reparations and Reconciliation: Nandini Sundar
	Healing and Reconciliation: Arvinder Singh
	Popular Films and Reconciliation: Ira Bhaskar
12.30 p.m - 1.30 p.m	**Lunch**

1.30 p.m – 3.00 p.m	**Session IX**
	Examining Dialogue Processes in South Asia – A Discussion
	Chair: Uday Bhaskar
	Dialogue and Reconciliation: Rudolf Heredia
	India and Pakistan: The Dialogue Process: Javed Jabbar
	Reopening Conversation across Fault lines in Gujarat: Harsh Mander
	The Dialogue Process in Sri Lanka: Devanand Ramiah, Dilrukshi Fonseka
3.00 p.m- 3.15 p.m	**Tea**
3.15 p.m - 4.45 p.m	**Session X**
	Unveiling the Jagged Edges: The Dialectics of Reconciliation – A Roundtable
	Chair: Neera Chandhoke
	Spaces for Reconciliation: South Asian Feminist Perspectives: Mary John
	Justice and Reconciliation: The Dialectics: Rama Mani
	Social Capital Approach as a Tool of Reconciliation in Bangladesh: Shaheen Afroze
4.45 p.m – 5.45 p.m	**Session XI (Conference Room – 1ˢᵗ Floor)**
	Public Policy and Reconciliation: Challenges for South Asia – Closing Lecture
	Chair: Kalyan Chakravarty
	Speaker: Pratap Bhanu Mehta
5.45 p.m - 6.00 p.m	**Tea**
6.00 p.m – 6.30 p.m	**Session XII**
	Closing Comments: Judith Large (IDEA)
8.00 p.m	**Dinner**

Participants' Profile

Shaheen Afroze (Bangladesh) is currently the Research Director of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). She did her PhD from the University of Glasgow, U.K. on *The Non-Compliant Behaviour of the Small States of South Asia: Bangladesh and Nepal in Relation to India*. She has been working on issues related to gender and Non-Traditional security. She has published research articles in publications like Regional Studies, Asian Security Review, and the BIISS Journal. Dr. Afroze has edited *Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Interfacing New Dimensions and Perspectives* and *Bangladesh-Southeast Relations: Some Insights*. Her forthcoming publication is titled *Women in Frontal Wars: War of Liberation of 1971*.

F.S. Aijazuddin (Pakistan) has been writing on Indo-Pak history for a number of years. His earliest publication was a definitive catalogue of the Pahari and Sikh paintings in the Lahore Museum, published in 1977 in Karachi and New Delhi. Since then, he has lectured extensively on art-history in India, the United States and the United Kingdom. More recently, his featured articles in *Dawn* (Pakistan's most influential daily newspaper) on subjects such as the Kargil crisis and the visits by Former Prime Minister Vajpayee have been widely acclaimed.

Iqbal Ansari (India) retired as Professor of English at the Aligarh Muslim University in 1995. He was among the founders of the People's Union for Civil Liberties. Professor Ansari edits a quarterly, *Human Rights Today,* and is a member of the panel on Human Rights Education of the University Grants Commission. He is also the convener of Inter-Community Peace Initiative and founder-member of World Council of Muslims for Interfaith Relations.

Rajeev Bhargava (India) is currently Senior Fellow and Director of the Programme of Social and Political Theory, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi. His publications include *Individualism in Social Science*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), *Secularism and its Critics* (ed., Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998), *Multiculturalism, Liberalism and Democracy*, (ed. with A. Bagchi and R. Sudarshan, OUP 1999).

Ira Bhaskar (India) is Associate Professor at the Department of English, Gargi College, University of Delhi. She holds a PhD from the Department of Cinema Studies, New York University. Her dissertation was on *The Persistence*

of Memory: Historical Trauma and Imagining the 'Community' in Indian Cinema.

Uday Bhaskar (India) is Deputy Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi. He is amongst the leading defence analysts in India and has contributed over 50 research articles and papers to various journals and books published in India and abroad. Commodore Bhaskar has worked on nuclear proliferation, India-U.S. relations and maritime issues and is currently working on the subject of comprehensive security in the post-Cold War period.

Kalyan Chakravarty (India) is Trustee and Member Secretary, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts; Director-General, National Museum; and Vice Chancellor, National Museum Institute at New Delhi. Dr. Chakravarty has also been Principal/Additional Chief Secretary, Culture Education, Forest and Environment in Chattisgarh, and he set up a 100 hectare open air ethnographic museum in Raipur. He holds a Masters' degree in Public Administration and a PhD in Art History from Harvard University.

Neera Chandhoke (India) is Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi and Director of the Developing Countries Research Centre, also at the University of Delhi. Professor Chandhoke is part of the editorial boards of several academic journals, including *Democratization* published by the University of Warwick (U.K.) and the *Journal of Development Studies*.

Anuradha M. Chenoy (India) is Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is also an activist on gender and social issues. Professor Chenoy has been on the board of many national and international institutions. She has been a specialist at several United Nations meetings and has written several books and over a hundred articles in national and international journals. Some of the books authored by Professor Chenoy include *Militarism and Women in South Asia*, *Towards a New Politics* and *Making of New Russia.*

Gurcharan Das (India) is a columnist, novelist, playwright, and management consultant. He graduated in Philosophy and Politics from Harvard University and later attended Harvard Business School. He writes for the *The Times of India* and *Dainik Bhaskar* and contributes occasional articles for *Time* magazine, *Wall Street Journal* and *Financial Times*. He has authored several books such as the international bestseller, *India Unbound, A Fine Family,* and more recently, a collection of essays, *The Elephant Paradigm.* He is currently writing a book

on *Dharma* and *Nishkama Karma* and their relevance to public and corporate governance.

Nirekha De Silva (Sri Lanka) is currently a Researcher at the Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit of Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and is also attached to the National Peace Council where she is working on establishing a Peace Resource Centre, organizing Forums for Researchers and conducting Research on Sri Lankan Peace Issues. She has also been involved with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister's Office where she has worked on developing a National Action Plan on Reconciliation. Nirekha is pursuing her Masters' degree in Human Rights at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Peter deSouza (India) is Professor and Visiting Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. He is also Co-Director of the Lokniti programme and is currently coordinating the State of Democracy in South Asia (SDSA) project. He taught in the Political Science Department at Goa University for 16 years and in March 2000, was visiting scholar at the Taubman Centre, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Professor deSouza is a consultant with International IDEA on the Democracy Assessment Programme, and is a consultant to UNDP in Mangolia. He recently completed a study for the World Bank on *Dalits, Discrimination and the Struggle for Equal Citizenship*.

Visaka Dharmadasa (Sri Lanka) is founder and Chair of the Association of War-Affected Women and Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action and is Secretary of the Kandy Association for War-Affected Families. She has been coordinating a programme on war-affected women and has designed workshops on rehabilitation, re-integration, and reconciliation for the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka. Ms. Dharmadasa has also been coordinating a reconciliation process between mothers of missing soldiers from the South and mothers of disappeared youth of the North.

Raheel Dhattiwala (India) is Senior News Correspondent with *The Times of India*, Ahmedabad. She was awarded the Chief Minister's Gold Medal and *The Times of India* Silver Medal for academic excellence in a postgraduate diploma in journalism. She has also been awarded the WISCOMP *Scholar of Peace* Fellowship for her proposed study on 'Social Changes in the Muslims of Ahmedabad post riots of 1992-1993 to date', with a focus the riots of 2002.

Dilrukshi Fonseka (Sri Lanka) works as a Project Liaison Officer with the United Nations Development Program, and worked previously with the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies and the International Center for Ethnic Studies (ICES). She completed her undergraduate education at Mount Holyoke College and her graduation at The London School of Economics. Her research interests include reconciliation, transitional justice, gender and peace and she co-edited *Peace Work: Women, Armed Conflict and Negotiations* published by Women Unlimited in September 2004.

Bushra Gohar (Pakistan) has over twenty years of experience in policy advocacy on women and children's rights, regional cooperation, institutional and community development. She is currently the chair of the South Asia Partnership International and has served as Regional President and Global Vice President of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). She was a member of the first permanent National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in Pakistan and a member of Provincial (NWFP) Core Committee for Post-Beijing Follow-up. Ms. Gohar has been working with the NGO Human Resources Management and Development Centre as Director since 1994. She has a Masters' in Human Resources Management.

Acharya Sri Shrivatsa Goswami (India) is a member of a family of spiritual leaders and scholars at Sri Radharamana Mandir, Vrindaban. He has travelled extensively to participate in conferences on philosophy and religion and has lectured at universities around the world. Acharya Goswami has also been visiting scholar at Harvard University. Presently, he is the Director of Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana, an Institute of Vaisnava culture and studies at Vrindaban. He is also connected with several international peace and environmental movements.

Gopal Guru (India) is currently Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. His research and teaching interests include Indian Politics and Indian Political Thought. Professor Guru has published several articles on issues such as caste, reservation and elections in periodicals such as *Economic and Political Weekly* and *Seminar*. He has also authored several books including *Dalit Cultural Movements in Maharastra*, published by Vikas Kendra in 1997. He is a guest columnist for *The Hindu*.

Syeda Hameed (India) is currently a member of the Planning Commission, Government of India. She was the founder member of the Muslim Women's Forum and founder trustee of the Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia

(WIPSA), an organisation of women committed to bring about people to people contact. She is also founding trustee of the Center for Dialogue and Reconciliation which links issues of dialogue with justice and equity. Dr. Hameed has published several books on the condition of Muslim women, including *My Voice Shall be Heard: Status of Muslim Women 2003* (Muslim Women's Forum, 2003).

Mushirul Hasan (India) is currently Vice Chancellor, Jamia Milia Islamia University, New Delhi. He is also the Director, Academy of Third World Studies at the same institution. He has authored numerous articles, papers and books on themes of secularism, Muslims in India and South Asia, nationalism and identity. His books include *Islam in the subcontinent: Muslims in a Plural Society* (Manohar, Delhi, 2002), *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885-1930* (Manohar, Delhi, 1991), *Making Sense of History: Society, Culture and Politics* (Manohar, Delhi, 2003), *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and *A Moral Reckoning: Muslim Intellectuals in Nineteenth-century Delhi* (Oxford University Press, 2005). He is also the editor of the "Selected Work of Jawaharlal Nehru" volumes.

Rudolf Heredia (India) is currently an Associate Professor at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, and edits the publication *Social Action*. He completed his PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago in 1979. He was the founder director of the Social Science Centre, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, which is engaged in action oriented participatory research since 1980. In 1992-94, Father Heredia was Director, Department of Research, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, and edited the Institute's journal, *Social Action*, from 1993-94. He was the rector of St. Xavier's College, 1998-2003.

Ameena Hussein (Sri Lanka) is a freelance consultant based in Colombo and undertakes project writing, evaluation and research-based assignments for several national and international NGOs. She is also a gender consultant on projects pertaining to gender-based violence. She is the Editor of *Nethra*, Journal of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo and is the co-founder of the Perera-Hussein Publishing House. Ms.Hussein has also authored two short story collections *Zillij* (2003) and *Fifteen* (1999) and the ground breaking study on violence against women in rural Sri Lanka, *Sometimes there is no Blood: Violence against Women in Rural Sri Lanka* (2000).

Javed Jabbar (Pakistan) is a former Senator and Federal Minister, and is a member of the Neemrana initiative, the longest running track-two process

between Pakistan and India. He is the head of several public interest organisations (all of which he serves on a voluntary basis), including the recently established International Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution of the National University of Sciences and Technology. He is engaged in motivating hostile clans, castes and classes to dialogue with each other; attempting to include women in meetings and groups previously dominated by men; and in trying to reduce the alienation between official systems and non-official civil society systems in different contexts.

Mary John (India) is currently Associate Professor at the Women's Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has written extensively on feminist and gender issues in India and internationally. She received her PhD from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her publications include *Discrepant Dislocations: Feminism, Theory and Post Colonial Histories*, (California Press, Berkeley and OUP, India, 1996), *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economics of Modern India* (co-edited, Kali for Women, 1998 and Zed Press 2000), *Feminisms in Asia*, special issue of Inter Asia Cultural Studies (co-edited 2002), *French Feminism: An Indian Anthology (co-edited), Contested Transformations, Changing Economies and Identities in Contemporary India* (Tulika, in press).

Sona Khan (India) is an advocate in the Supreme Court and has dealt extensively with cases related to Islamic jurisprudence. She is renowed for her work on women's rights. Ms. Khan is a Barrister from Lincoln's Inn, London. She has written for *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu* and *The Hindustan Times*.

Madhu Khanna (India) is Associate Professor, Indic-Religious Studies, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi. She is the Director of *Narivada*, the gender, culture and civilisation network at IGNCA. She has contributed several academic articles on gender and religion in India and is a regular contributor to the volumes on Women and Religion brought out by the Henrich Boll Foundation, South Asia Office.

Gurpreet Mahajan (India) is Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. She has written extensively on issues of cultural diversity and minority rights. Her publications includes *The Multicultural Path : Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in a Damocracy* (Sage 2002), *Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India* (OUP 1995) and *Minorities and One Nation-State* (edited with D.L. Sheth, OUP 1998).

Ahmed Ijaz Malik (Pakistan) is Lecturer at the Department of International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Formerly he was a Researcher at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute and has been associated with strategic dialogue between IPRI and the Delhi Policy Group (DPG), which explores options for track-two diplomacy and addresses all aspects of security between India and Pakistan in particular, and South Asia as a whole. He also participated in sessions of the Regional Centre for Strategic Cooperation and the Salzburg Seminar.

Rita Manchanda (India) is Gender Technical Expert at the Commonwealth Technical Fund, based in Colombo. She was Programme Executive with the South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), Kathmandu and coordinator of its Women and Peace and Media and Conflict programmes. She is also a journalist and writer on South Asian security, human rights and gender issues and has been covering Nepal for *Frontline* magazine.

Harsh Mander (India) is a social worker and writer. He has worked formerly in the Indian Administrative Service as the head of district governments of tribal districts. He is associated with several social causes and movements, such as for communal harmony and Dalit rights. He is the author of several books including *Unheard Voices: Stories of Forgotten Lives* and *Cry, My Beloved Country: Reflections on the Gujarat Carnage 2002 and its Aftermath.* He was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award and M.A Thomas National Human Rights Award of Vigil India Movement, 2002.

Rama Mani (Switzerland) is a faculty member at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and is currently Director of the New Issues in Security Course (NISC). She is the author of *Beyond Retribution: Seeking Justice in the Shadows of War* (Polity, Cambridge, 2002). She was formerly Senior Strategy Advisor for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva. An established international practitioner and scholar, she teaches, publishes and does policy work on issues of justice and human rights, conflict and peace-building, rule of law and the security sector, the United Nations and terrorism.

Naresh Mathur (India) is a legal activist and a lawyer in the Supreme Court of India and is a scholar and a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. He studied Negotiation at the International Development Law Institute in Rome, and has been engaged in corporate negotiations and in his legal capacity, has worked on arbitration, conciliation and mediation in civil disputes. He has worked on International Refugee Law and is a member of an expert group in the UNHCR.

As advisor to the Public Interest Litigation and Support Centre, he has done extensive work on the ecology and environment. Mr. Mathur is particularly interested in the debate between various Indian religious and philosophical traditions.

Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri (Pakistan) is a senior journalist and was formerly associated with the daily *Dawn*. His academic background is in International Relations and his ongoing PhD research thesis is titled *Normalising U.S.-Iran Ties: Problems & Prospects*. Through his writings as a journalist, he has been campaigning for Indo-Pak peace and has been vocal against the stumbling blocs placed by the establishments in the two countries with regard to the peace process.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta (India) is President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. He was previously Professor of Government at Harvard University and Professor of Philosophy and of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He has published widely in the area of political philosophy, moral philosophy, constitutional law, ethics and international relations, intellectual history and politics in India. His publications include *India's Public Institutions* (co-edited, Oxford), *The Burden of Democracy* (Penguin, New Delhi, 2003). Professor Mehta is also a prolific columnist and has written extensively for leading national and international papers.

Harim Peiris (Sri Lanka) has been the official spokesperson for H.E. President Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka since 2001. In November 2003 he was appointed the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, Sri Lanka's national broadcaster and functioned in that capacity until the General Elections in April 2004. He was also the Director General for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation focusing on the post-conflict and the post Tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts in Sri Lanka.

Devanand Ramiah (Sri Lanka) is a Post-Conflict Transition Analyst at the United Nations Development Program in Colombo. He is also a member of the faculty for the Conflict Resolution and Peace Preparedness Program of Bradford University in Sri Lanka. Previously, he was Coordinator of the Peace and Conflict Analysis Unit at the Centre for Policy Alternatives, Colombo. He has also worked extensively in the area of election monitoring and has served as an election monitor on the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Kosovo and East Timor.

Swarna Rajagopalan (India) is an analyst of South Asian politics and security issues, currently working on a short political study of the Ramayana and a research project on post-conflict reconciliation. In addition to her work on gender, conflict and security issues, she has written on other governance and security topics like nation building. She is the author of *State and Nation in South Asia* (Lynne Rienner, 2001) and is co-editor of *Re-distribution of Authority: A Cross-Regional Perspective* (Praeger 2000) and *A Clearing in the Thicket: Women, Security, South Asia* (Sage, forthcoming).

Ava Darshan Shrestha (Nepal) has been working as a social development and gender consultant in Nepal for the past two decades. She attained her PhD from the University of Bath, U.K. in 1995 and a Masters' in Public Administration from Harvard University, U.S.A. She is the Chairperson of *Nagarik Aawaz,* an NGO working for conflict affected people. She is a member and treasurer of South Asia Partnership/Nepal, Board Member of Samanata-Institute for Social and Gender Equality and is the Chairperson of the Advocacy Committee of the Safe Motherhood Network of Nepal. She is also a Trustee of the Street Children Nepal Trust, a U.K based charitable organisation. Dr.Shrestha has undertaken several research projects related to women in Nepal. Her research primarily focuses on poverty, health, micro credit, employment and empowerment of women. More recently she has been researching on conflict/insurgency and its impact on women.

Sarah Siddiq (Pakistan) is currently working as Research Coordinator at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), and is also Coordinator for their Pakistan Environment Program (PEP). She has worked on the staff of an NGO, *Rozan* working on the emotional and mental health of women and children, and the communications, networking and advocacy of issues such as child sexual abuse, adolescents and reproductive health and violence against women.

Yogender Sikand (India) edits a monthly web magazine called *Qalandar*, which focuses on issues related to Islam and interfaith relations in South Asia. He has written numerous articles on issues related to communalism and caste discrimination for several journals and magazines. He has also written several books on issues related to religion such as *Sacred Spaces*, *Muslims in India Since 1947: Islamic Perspectives on Inter-Faith Relations*; and *Struggling to be Heard: South Asian Muslim Voices.* His recently completed book on madrasas in India will be published by Penguin India in 2005.

Dilip Simeon (India) has taught history for 20 years at Ramjas College, Delhi University. In 1988 he was elected to the Academic Council on an academic reforms platform. After the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, he helped establish the Sampradayikta Virodhi Andolan, which worked for communal harmony and justice for the victims from 1984 till 1993. From 1998 till 2002 he was the senior research fellow for Oxfam's Violence Mitigation and Amelioration Project. Currently he is Director of the Aman Trust, which works for the mitigation of violent conflict.

Arvinder Singh (India) is a trained counsellor and therapist in practice for over 12 years. Her work in the area of dealing with trauma has spanned over the last seven years. She has worked in Gujarat during the earthquake and the riots, in Northeast India, Punjab and in Kashmir in the last five years. Her work revolves around working with communities as well as training people in counseling skills.

Mohinder Singh (India) is Director of the National Institute of Punjab Studies, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi. Dr. Singh has taught Sikh history and religion for a number of years and was formerly the Director, Guru Nanak Institute of Comparative Study of Religions. During the 1980s in Punjab, he made efforts in bringing about reconciliation among students and the academic community prior to and after Operation Blue Star. Dr. Singh has, with his wife also worked for the rehabilitation of the anti-Sikh riot victims in Delhi. Dr. Mohinder Singh is also Member, National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Government of India.

Madhuri Sondhi (India) is former Senior Fellow at the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. She writes a column for Asian Age entitled 'Bookcase.' Her publications include *Modernity Morality and the Mahatma* (Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1997) and *The Making of Peace: A Logical and Societal Framework according to Basanta Kumar Mallik* (Selectbook Service Synidcate, New Delhi, 1985). Her latest project on *Martin Buber and Basanta Kumar Mallik Towards Intercivilizational Dialogue and Peace* will be published by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

Nandini Sundar (India) is currently Professor at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi. Her article titled 'Towards an Anthropology of Culpability' was recently published in the *American Ethnologist*. It deals with issues of reparation, apologies and the continuing crimes against humanity.

Valsan Thampu (India) served for three decades on the faculty of St Stephen's College, Delhi. He is a widely known theologian and author. Among his many concerns is the need to transcend conflictual religiosity and to promote a culture of shared spirituality. He is a Member of the National Integration Council and the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions. He is also a Member of the National Steering Committee for Curriculum Review where he chairs the Focus Group on Peace Studies.

Rita Thapa (Nepal) has over 25 years' professional experience initiating and supporting institutions relating to women's empowerment. She has extensive background in building networks among government, academic, and non-government institutions; competence in institutional analysis, project/programme planning and management, building networks and training methods. She is mainly recognised for her ground-breaking work in developing local philanthropy for self reliant development and women's empowerment in Nepal (Tewa), and in the past four years has been primarily involved in peace-building work through the organisation she helped establish (Nagarik Aawaz).

Harish Trivedi (India) is Professor at the Department of English, University of Delhi and has been visiting professor at the Universities of Chicago and London. He is the author of *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Calcutta 1993; Manchester 1995), and has co-edited *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London, 1999), and *Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800-1990* (London 2000).

S.P. Udayakumar (India) teaches conflict transformation, non-violence, human rights and futures studies courses at several institutions around the world. He runs the South Asian Community Centre for Education and Research (SACCER) at Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu to carry out community work, a primary school, a vocational school, and a peace and futures research institute. In 2001, he started the India-Pakistan Reconciliation School project — a free six-month online-cum-correspondence course that sought to promote peace and reconciliatory sentiments and values among young Indians and Pakistanis. His recent books include *"Presenting" the Past: Anxious History and Ancient Future in Hindutva India* (Praeger, 2005) and *Handcuffed to History: Narratives, Pathologies and Violence in South Asia* (Praeger, 2001).

Ghulam Umar (Pakistan) is the founding member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). He was formerly the Director General, Military Operations in the Pakistan army. He has held the position of Secretary of the National Security

Council and was also Chairman of the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs. General Umar holds a Masters' degree in International Relations from the University of London, and one in Modern Languages from the Istanbul University at Turkey.

B.G.Verghese (India) is a noted columnist and has been visiting Professor at the Centre for Policy Research since 1986. Educated at Delhi and Cambridge Universities, he was correspondent and Assistant Editor at *The Times of India* (1949-69), Editor, *The Hindustan Times* (1969-75) and Editor, *The Indian Express* (1982-86). A Gandhi Peace Foundation Fellow, he received the Magsaysay Award for Journalism in 1975.

J.S. Verma (India) is former Chief Justice of India and former Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission. Justice Verma was appointed judge in the Supreme Court in 1989 and was elevated to the position of Chief Justice in 1997. Some of Justice Verma's landmark cases include the Ayodhya judgement and the Hawala case. He also gave important judgements on gender biases, Dalit rights and ecological protection. The NHRC followed the Gujarat disturbances, commencing with the Godhra incident on 27 February 2002 and made visits and comprehensive recommendations.

Hassan M.Yousufzai (Pakistan) works as Capacity Development Specialist with the Asian Development Bank to support effective implementation of the Decentralisation Support Program. From 1998-2004, he served with the federal bureaucracy in Pakistan as a District Management Officer and worked in the capacity of Assistant Commissioner and Assistant Political Agent at Swat, Chitral and Bajaur Agency of NWFP in Pakistan. Recently he co-authored a book titled *Towards Understanding Pukhtoon Jirga, an indigenous way of peacebuilding and more...* under a USIP award (available to free download at www.justpeaceint.cjb.net). A Fulbright Fellow, Mr.Yousufzai holds a Masters' degree in Conflict Transformation from the Eastern Mennonite University, U.S.A.

International IDEA Team

Judith Large (Sweden) is Senior Advisor for Democracy Building and Conflict Management at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. She has been a practitioner and strategic analyst for the prevention and reduction of violent conflict. Dr. Large has worked extensively in the Balkans, Uganda and Indonesia. She was a visiting lecturer at the Centre for Conflict Studies, University of Utrecht (Netherlands), and the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit of the University of York (UK) and is on the Board of Trustees of the Centre for Security and Peace Studies (CSPS), at Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia.

Sakuntala Kadirgamar-Rajasingham (Sweden) holds a PhD in Jurisprudence from the University of Sydney. She has been the Senior Executive and Head of Programme, South Asia with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance since 1998. She developed and managed IDEA's democracy support programs on Burma and Indonesia and more recently has focussed on developing the emerging program in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Leena Rikkilä (Sweden) currently works as a Programme Officer at the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Stockholm, Sweden. She is involved with IDEA's reconciliation and dialogue related work in South-Asia and Burma. Ms. Rikkilä is former Secretary-General of Finland's Advisory Board for Relations with Developing Countries, KESU, which monitors and assesses issues related to Finland's development relations and global policy. She has also worked for the MOST (Management of Social Transformations) programme at UNESCO, Paris.

WISCOMP Team

Meenakshi Gopinath is Founder and Honorary Director of WISCOMP. She is also Principal of Lady Shri Ram College in New Delhi. Dr. Gopinath is member of various multi-track peace initiatives in the South Asian region including the Neemrana track-two initiative and the Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy. She is also on the National Security Advisory Board, Government of India. She has also contributed articles to several books and journals on issues relating to gender, security and peacebuilding. In recognition of her contribution to the field of women's education and empowerment, she has received several awards including the Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi Award, the Shiromani Mahila Award and the Delhi Citizen Forum Award.

Sumona DasGupta is Senior Programme Officer at WISCOMP. She holds a doctoral degree in Social Science. Her thesis focussed on the *Trends of Militarisation in Indian Politics in the 1980s.* Her research interests include low intensity conflicts, civil-military relations in South Asia and critical security studies. In recent years she has worked on the low intensity conflict in Kashmir using the lens of gender and non-traditional security perspectives and has been part of a reasearch team sponsored by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC, Washington) that examined roots causes of conflict in Kashmir through the gender lens.

Manjrika Sewak (India) is Programme Officer at WISCOMP. A Fulbright Conflict Resolution Scholar, she holds a Masters' degree in Conflict Transformation from the Eastern Mennonite University, U.S.A. She has designed peacebuilding training programmes for practitioners from South Asia and has written on issues such as peace education curriculum development and the role of women's' groups in conflict resolution processes. She recently published a book titled *Multi-Track Diplomacy between India and Pakistan: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Security* (Manohar, New Delhi, 2005) and has co-authored, with Meenakshi Gopinath, two resource books on conflict transformation titled *Transcending Conflict* and *Dialogic Engagement.*

Soumita Basu is Programme Associate at WISCOMP. She holds a Masters' degree in International Relations from the University of Bristol, United Kingdom, and a Bachelors' degree in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi. She has written for newspapers such as *The Hindu*, *The Pioneer* and *The Hindustan Times.* Her research interests include critical security studies, forced migration and media diplomacy.

Stuti Bhatnagar is Project Associate at WISCOMP. She holds a Masters' degree in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University and has recently completed her M.Phil thesis titled *The Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Towards Israel*. She has also been assisting her supervisor, Dr. P.R. Kumaraswamy, in compiling a historical dictionary on the Arab-Israel conflict.

Sumani Dash is Project Associate at WISCOMP. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi. For her honours programme, she completed an undergraduate thesis project on the topic, *The Al Aqsa Intifada and the American Media: An Analysis of Time and Newsweek Coverage*.

Yamini Lohia is Project Associate at WISCOMP. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi. She has been actively involved with WISCOMP's Non-traditional Security project.

B. Rajeshwari is Project Associate at WISCOMP, and has also been engaged with the Non Traditional Security project. She is currently pursuing her PhD from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Manisha Sobhrajani is Programme Associate at WISCOMP. She holds Master's Degree in English. She has worked with the *Asian Age*, the *Hindustan Times*, the *Indian Express* and also *Kali for Women.*

Left to Right: B.Rajeshwari, Sumona DasGupta, Stuti Bhatnagar,
Sumani Dash, Yamini Lohia and Soumita Basu

Glimpses....

Since its inception in 1999, WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) has carved a unique niche for itself, as an initiative, which works at the confluence of gender, security and conflict transformation. It was established as part of the efforts of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama to promote the leadership of women in areas of peace, security and international affairs. Through its various programmes, WISCOMP has emerged as a resource for conducting research, training and advocacy, and for providing policy briefs to parliamentarians and diplomats.

Founded in 1995, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), is an intergovernmental organisation that promotes sustainable democracy worldwide. IDEA brings together those who analyse and monitor trends in democracy and those who engage in political reform. IDEA strengthens the institutions and culture of democracy in both new and long-established democratic states. Its partners include international, regional and national bodies devoted to democratic principles. Based in Stockholm Sweden, IDEA also has regional offices in Latin America, the Caucasus, Africa and soon in South Asia.