

EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

A warm welcome to the pages of the first volume of *Peace Prints*!

An initiative by WISCOMP, *Peace Prints* is a new journal dealing with questions related to peacebuilding in the South Asian context. Since its foundation in 1999, WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) has done a great amount of pioneering work in this field. WISCOMP is a research and training initiative which pays particular attention to the leadership of women in the areas of peace, security and international affairs. Throughout the years, the organization has conducted, amongst others, a series of conflict transformation workshops between young Indian and Pakistani professionals. Emphasizing the gender aspect of peace and security, WISCOMP has paved the way for South Asian women's voices to be heard in this discourse.

But why yet another journal? *Peace Prints* is actually not just another publication - it opens a whole new chapter by being the very first-of-its-kind in the field of peacebuilding in South Asia. It seeks to go beyond the established paradigms and conventional discourse, with the aim to generate research and discussion on issues that lie at the intersection of peace, conflict, security and gender.

Likewise, it aims to facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas by highlighting perspectives from different sociopolitical contexts and different regions of conflict – also those beyond South Asia. Hence, *Peace Prints* seeks to provide a forum for South Asians to showcase their peacebuilding lessons internationally and, at the same time, offers them insights gained in peacebuilding projects in other parts of the world.

The journal is also unique with respect to the dialogue it seeks to open up between senior, mid-career and entry-level practitioners and scholars. Perceptions and experiences of peace and, indeed, the lack of it vary from one generation to another. In today's world, the notion of comprehensive peace and security is no novelty anymore, but even then, it can be approached from very many different angles, based on different historical experiences.

The journal consists both of articles and book reviews, some of them dealing more closely with the academic research aspects of peacebuilding, some of them crossing horizontally over to narratives based on personal experiences, and even to Indian epics. The categorization of "academic papers" and "perspectives from the field" has been done with a purpose to open up a much-needed conversation

between scholars and practitioners where theory is enriched by praxis, and vice versa.

The papers bring to the fore a whole range of different issues and give a five-course meal worth of food-for-thought for all of us. Howard Zehr's article on restorative justice and Lisa Schirch's on strategic peacebuilding touch upon the theoretical and terminological foundations of the discourse. The conceptual frameworks are highlighted also in the book reviews that take on Ken Booth and Nicolas Wheeler's security dilemma, as well as a compilation of alternative approaches to security.

Saira Yamin examines the aspect of religion and religious identities in the analysis of causes for violence. Kevin Kester talks about the crucial role of education in peacebuilding efforts, as does Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Michelle Antonette Baxter's book reviewed in the journal. And as Leszek A. Cwik shows in his article, peacebuilding can be done also by very innovative means – such as by using football as an entry point to reconciliation.

Examples of South Asian peacebuilding efforts are also many. Eirene Chen and Mariam Jalalzada highlight the multiple roles women have, and restrictions they face, in making peace and resolving conflicts at the community level in Afghanistan. Priya Parker elaborates the structural challenges of the ongoing reconciliation processes in Gujarat. Alpana Kishore takes us on a very thought-provoking tour to the Lolab Valley in Kashmir and Swarna Rajagopalan takes us back in time to the Ramayana and Mahabharata that are introduced as epic efforts of reconciliation.

Peace Prints is a precious contribution to the cause of peacebuilding in South Asia. The problem in the international peacebuilding discourse has for too long been its very heavy reliance on Western, particularly Anglo-American research. In spite of its strong merits, it still has failed to address many perspectives emanating from the rest of the world. It is, therefore, particularly important that a journal such as *Peace Prints* has been conceptualized, to create a vocabulary of peacebuilding that transcends a purely Western perspective and that resonates for women and men living in the South Asian region.

May these peace prints evoke many good thoughts and many good actions. May they become footprints on a path towards a more reconciliatory world around us.

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