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Essay proposal

**What is the potential
of the media, specifically the documentary,
to contribute to the promotion of democratic values
and a just social order?**

Sarwar-Issues Essay

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1. Introduction

“The open secret of the electronic media, the decisive political factor, which has been waiting, suppressed or crippled for its moment to come, is their mobilising power.”

Since emerging into the ‘public sphere’ -- that is, “a domain of our social life in which such a thing as a public opinion can be formed” -- the media have become increasingly integral to forming public opinion, in any society which has mass media: radio, television, newspapers and magazines, advertising, and cinema. With even the least attentive and most sceptical audiences, internalising much of what they see or hear in the media, their role is critical to agenda-setting and public discourse, and therefore to developing or subverting democratic values.

Although the media, as part of society, do not operate in a vacuum, I take the view that they have a responsibility to do more than merely reflect (what they define as) public opinion -- a lame excuse for “giving the public what it wants”. Catering to the lowest common denominator benefits the status quo, because it breeds passivity: this benefits authority, as well as the big media corporations who rake in money not only through advertising revenues, but also through the passive consumerism and demand for popular entertainment and its spin-off consumer items manufactured by their affiliate companies.

Below, I briefly state my position on ‘democracy’ and ‘documentary’, before going on to discuss, with particular reference to the USA and Pakistan, how the big media, whether in a democracy or a dictatorship, subvert democratic values, and how the current trends have led to a shrinking space for meaningful journalism and dissenting views, in particular the documentary. But there are many organisations and individuals actively combating these trends, as I discuss, and in this lies inspiration for continuing the struggle for democratic values, including media that are free from editorial interference.

a. Democracy

By ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic values’ I refer not just to a political system of adult enfranchisement -- the inadequacy of this by itself is obvious in my country, Pakistan, and indeed other South Asian countries -- but to a just social order. A ‘meaningful democracy’ in which the citizens are alert, well-informed participants in decision-making, rather than the passive consumers or spectators they are being reduced to.

While acknowledging that a whole range of influences contribute to public discourse, national myth-making and popular perceptions -- like cinema, advertising, music, and education, as socio-cultural forces, government policies, legislation, and political discourse -- this paper focuses on the news media, in particular broadcasting and the documentary form which is my area of study. These forms also appear to be taken more seriously by the policy makers and intelligentsia.

b. Documentary: definition and significance

The term documentary generally refers to the non-fiction film in various forms -- ranging from the entirely observational form to the interactively intrusive. In this paper, documentary refers to the non-fiction, ‘activist’ film for social change, depicting “actuality from an individual and emotionally committed perspective” (Rabiger, 1987: 10).

Discarding the notion that any narrative form made from such a perspective can be ‘objective’, even if it leaves out the comment or editorialising, I define documentary here also as a form that

provides complete (but not necessarily 'balanced') information. The views of the film-maker will emerge if not explicitly, then implicitly in editing and camera angles, even their work is self-consciously unmediated.

Basically, I operate from the premise that anyone who sets out to explore an issue honestly and with conscience will not betray the spirit of democracy, but will in fact contribute to it. Taken like this, and given its potential to explore issues in a more in-depth way, the documentary counters news formats as they are currently structured. (These formats, combined with the journalists' own inevitable subjectivity result in information that is incomplete or slanted against democratic values -- or withheld altogether. In societies like America with no overt censorship, this has a more insidious effect since viewers believe they are getting the full picture).

The significance of documentary, as a factual narrative form, lies also in its 'representativeness': "it represents and is a representative of cultural formations comprised of bodies and theses -- gendered histories," as Rabinowitz (1994: 11) put it.

Documentary has a shelf life, and "prestige" element, not only in societies with low literacy rates where radio and television have greater impact than the print media, but also in information-rich societies deluged by superficial visual and sound bites.

Finally, as Kanak Mani Dixit put it at the inaugural of the First Film South Asia Documentary Festival in Kathmandu, Nepal, 1997: "Documentaries represent the climax species, the highest form, of audio-visual media. A societal conspiracy today keeps this media from fulfilling its promise. But we can confirm that once the documentary is allowed to be seen in the Subcontinent, the public will catch on. It will begin to demand. And this will change the face of the region, for that is what documentaries have the power to do."

2. Media and Democracy: The Unrealised Potential

What is generally referred to as the mainstream media, is actually the 'big' media, particularly television networks with the greatest outreach in terms of numbers. Reaching the most people does not, however, mean that television represents the genuine aspirations and issues of most people -- Flanders (1997) demonstrates how it ignores or misrepresents them. However, its contribution to shaping the superficial consumerism that people increasingly aspire to is undeniable (Crawley and Page, 2000).

While any medium or style can be appropriated by progressive or conservative elements -- those aspiring for social changes based on the principles of fair play, tolerance, equality and justice (democratic values), as well as those clinging to the status quo that holds back these changes -- the media cannot but be democratic and contribute to democratic values if it provides complete information, honestly and fairly (Flanders, 1997; Dixit, 1997).

"What would happen if citizens controlled their own broadcast networks? What would happen if the purpose of television and radio was to provide people with the information they need to participate fully in our democracy -- rather than simply to be consumers?" questioned Ralph Nader. Quite. One also wonders, with Gitlin (1980), how the public would have perceived the black and student opposition movements of the 1960s if they had been referred to in the media as "movements for peace and justice" rather than as "civil disturbances". One is left wondering whether it is better for a protest to be framed in a slanted way, or whether it is better to be ignored in the big media altogether, like the anti-nuclear agitations in Pakistan.

It is not just protest movements of the left that are misrepresented and misleadingly framed. The increasing discontent in former East Pakistan was ignored and glossed over by the politicians and the media; the Awami League, despite winning a majority of seats in the national elections, was not allowed to take over government; and West Pakistanis were led to believe that West Pakistan's literal invasion of the eastern wing was a legitimate, ideologically sound action brought on by civil disturbances. 1971 presented a classical case of media distortion and its collusion in violence, rape, and political repression; there were several protests, by West Pakistanis, to the injustice being perpetrated on their East Pakistani compatriots, but these were never allowed to reach the public (Salim, 2001). But we don't have to go that far back in history to be aware of how the big media routinely ignores or glosses over the issues most important to people.

Issues like violence in society, 'terrorism', gender violence, rape, and the nuclear issue are presented and represented, in ways that strengthen the status quo, with the root causes overshadowed by actual, sensationalist events; food, shelter, employment, housing, clean air and water. The dangers posed to the local population by a nuclear reactor or test site are often ignored, until there is an accident

By ignoring or sidelining issues of genuine importance, and by the way conflicts are actually framed, television impacts not only domestic politics but world peace in an increasingly interdependent planet where the policies and systems of one state can impact other societies for better or for worse. The media coverage of the Vietnam War (Hallin, 1994) and the Falklands invasion (Glasgow University Media Group, in Marris and Thornham eds, 1997) provides a potent example of the damage to peace that incomplete or slanted coverage can contribute to.

The public has a right to the full picture about their country's foreign policy choices. The appeal to emotions based on nationalism, religion, security and identity would be considerably hampered if people could see the full picture. The role of the media is thus crucial to the development of a thinking, questioning consciousness in order to create a pressure for change.

While the superficial entertainment (foreign or home-grown, under local pressures as in India) rained down through independent satellite channels is tolerated by authoritarian regimes to an extent, independent news and political views are not. When Pakistan's largest newspaper company tried to venture into satellite territory with a channel called Geo that would beam news and current affairs programmes into Pakistan, it found itself embroiled in a huge row with government – advertisements and newsprint withheld, spurious tax cases, pressure to sideline certain journalists. To be operated by an off-shore company, Geo didn't need government permission. But the government's strong-arm tactics ensured that the Group was "too entangled in financial matters to even think about moving ahead with Geo".

Besides the insidious influence of independently (from the government) produced news and current affairs programmes, satellite television also allows a glimpse of life (at least as it is portrayed) of other cultures and societies -- including a consumer culture accompanied by the seductive whiff of freedom regarding personal choices. And there is precious little even the most authoritarian government can do to stop it. Nothing seems hidden anymore. The greater openness has led to even undemocratic governments trying to improve their image by paying at least lip service to media freedom and freedom of information. The space that this provides must be expanded upon.

In order for the media to fulfil its democratic role it needs to be free not only of political influence

but also of restrictions imposed by corporate (profit-driven) considerations. Since neither military dictatorships nor democratic republics are likely to give up the influences, restrictions and “manufactured consent” that benefit them politically and economically, the role of individuals in media organisations, and of the non-mainstream, alternative media, becomes even more crucial and needs to be strengthened in every way possible.

3. Obstacles

a. Citizen vs. consumer: Profit over public interest

The media’s potential for democracy is subverted and threatened by the deteriorating standards of journalism generally, as well as by media structure, operations, and ownership. Media has created a “crisis for democracy” (Kellner,1990) and has become a “significant anti-democratic force” (McChesney, 1999) in much of the world.

Given that this is no ordinary industry -- broadcasting, for one, is “too powerful a tool to be treated as just another business or as a propaganda organ” -- but one which impacts society and politics in the most fundamental way, media in most countries are governed by special legislation. And the media policies of a nation reflect the desire to live in peace, ensuring justice to all peoples, or to live in aggression, fighting territorial, economic, and ideology wars, demonising ‘the other’ to mask insecurities and weaknesses at home.

Most societies recognise that the media has a special responsibility to society -- to public interest. Given the lack of space here to discuss the definition, merits and demerits of various public service models, I will just affirm that the media’s responsibility is best fulfilled, not through the motives of profit, but public interest; and leave the debate over how it should be regulated or structured, to the experts. However, it would be useful to remember that public service broadcasting and regulation takes on a different meaning in societies where the overall culture is undemocratic and government controls the mass media, as in Pakistan.

With greater political freedom (or the semblance of it), following the death of Gen. Zia in 1988, there has been a demand in Pakistan to free the electronic media from state control. But freedom from political interference alone will not ensure editorial independence, given the media’s dependence on advertising revenues and government goodwill. There are lessons to be learnt from the country with the world’s largest broadcasting system: mergers between big industry and media companies in the USA since the 1980s have led to a serious decline in media standards as well as democracy.

The media and industry nexus is ominous: it means that issues of vital importance to the people will not be touched, thus violating the citizens’ the right to know. If mothers in Pakistan knew that switching from breastfeeding to formula milk (when made up in unhygienic conditions) is causing their babies to get diarrhoea and die, would they continue to get taken in by the aggressive marketing of international companies which dare not pursue such tactics on their home ground. Nuclear energy and the military-industrial complex are as much out of bounds for the American network NBC, given its affiliation with General Electric (GE), a major defence contractor and producer of nuclear energy plants, as military spending is for a nation under military rule, like Pakistan.

Increasingly underwritten by corporate sponsors, even the US public service television, PBS, and radio, NPR, shrink from airing material that might be too controversial (Flanders, 1997: 207, 138). Pacifica Radio, holding out with difficulty as one of the last bastions of the left in America

(Scott, NYT, 23-12-2000), despite rejecting corporate sponsorships, asks fiery interviewees to “tone down” (Flanders, 1997: 138). Although the new president of PBS, Pat Mitchell, appears to be a woman with vision, who expresses her “deepening concern about what we do and how our work shapes questions about the images we put out” PBS programming is still dominated by material that will not rock the boat. Breaking through the restrictions or unwritten censorship codes entails a risk not just under dictatorships but in so-called democracies.

The question of who owns the media also figures in what and how journalists report or don't report. If an aggressively right-wing media owner like Rupert Murdoch and his “Murdoch ethos” can push his papers to the right, the world's biggest news network, CNN can gloss over Israeli aggression and reinforce perceptions about Palestinian aggression with “biased reporting that makes killing acceptable” .

Yet Ted Turner declares that CNN provides balanced news and views. He recounts a decision he took against the advice of his associates, following the Union Carbide disaster at Bhopal. Struck by the complaint of the head of India's state-owned Doordarshan that only disaster news from the developing world made it to CNN, and declaring that “democracy is all about freedom of speech and space for dissenting opinions,” he decided to show news clips made by journalists in foreign countries, aired unedited by CNN. “The programme was a huge success, and allowed us access even into countries that saw us as Western media imperialists”.

Turner may be sincere in contending that “our aim is not to dominate or conquer the world, but try to make it better”. However, the fact remains that a world with more access to CNN directly leads to more advertising revenues for the network and its affiliates.

At this point it should be noted that ‘disaster reporting’ is not limited to the ‘western imperialist’ media companies alone. Journalists elsewhere, aspiring to and modelling themselves on Western media concepts, are equally guilty of covering events rather than processes, feeding stereotypes and demonising ‘the other’; the exception (usually in the more independent print media) only going to prove the rule. (Sainath, 1996; Dixit, 1997).

The scramble for profits has led to a major area of neglect: children's programming. Largely ignored by media in countries like Pakistan, this area in the big media is now overwhelmingly dominated by cheap re-runs and cartoons -- which in turn create a demand for the videos, games, snack foods, shoes, toys and clothes manufactured largely by the corporations with heavy stakes in media. Wiseman's ‘High School’ (1968) and Barron's ‘Sixteen at Webster Groves’ (1966) are as relevant today; only the passivity and materialism that characterised their subjects then is now greater.

b. Events vs. processes: polaroid snapshots over the larger picture.

Democracy is also subverted by the media's tendency to focus on events rather than processes. One study demonstrates how this confers an apparent legitimacy to the establishment and “decreases the public's control over their elected representatives and the policies they pursue” (Iyengar, 1994: 2-3). A national consensus then appears to exist over contentious policies, whether it is an increase in military spending, a decision to test nuclear weapons (eg., India and Pakistan's nuclear weapons tests of 1998), or sending armed forces to war across the world (eg. the Gulf, Falklands) or across the border (eg. Ireland, Kargil).

The next media chapter was defined by the ‘war in your living room’ approach of reporting on the Persian Gulf War (Kellner in Raboy and Dagenais eds., 1992), and the “war-like situation”

between India and Pakistan in May-June, 1999 at Kargil. The lack of in depth reporting on Kargil was augmented by a self induced censorship, which “slanted public opinion to believe that war is inevitable and military force the only way. The [Indian] media not only reported the Kargil war, but endowed militarism with a nobility of purpose and defined nationalism as patriotic flag waving, dangerously intolerant and demonising of the ‘other’- in this case, all Pakistanis” (Manchanda, 2001) -- and, in the case of the Pakistani media, all Indians.

However, the media’s role in shaping perceptions is by no means absolute. While exacerbating fear and mistrust between ordinary Indians and Pakistanis, the media have been unable to erase the aspirations for peace and friendship, as is evident by the people-to-people contacts between the hostile neighbours. This desire is evident even among media professionals, although positive trends can be sabotaged by the very nature of the professional and self-created restraints of the media. This was sharply illustrated by a seminar in Islamabad which provided top print and television journalists from the most powerful Indian and Pakistani media organisations the rare opportunity of meeting face to face – and that too, a year after Kargil. During informal discussions as well as at the seminar, they condemned the media’s role in continuing hostilities between their countries, and reconfirmed what media activists and citizens groups have been saying for years: in order for an atmosphere to be created that could lead to peace, the media needs to change how it covers the ‘other’. But traditional news sense took over when the country’s self-appointed head, army chief Gen. Musharraf opened the floor for questions on the last day. Much of the goodwill dissipated under an aggressive line of questioning that illustrated the quest for the newsworthy, headline making quotes rather than in-depth, analytical line of questioning that could promote understanding.

4. Reclaiming Space: The way ahead

The situation may look bleak, but there is hope in the number of committed individuals and organisations working for change. It is time, as Nichols and McChesney point out, to capitalise on the people’s growing discontent with big media, and bring media issues onto a political platform (2000: 53-88). The way ahead is indicated by the growing political success of liberal/left parties in New Zealand, Canada, Finland and Sweden which have brought this issue onto their agenda.

There is inspiration too, in the media’s struggle for democracy in countries like Indonesia (where Radio 68H with its growing network is playing an increasingly crucial role), Philippines, South Africa and Pakistan, despite all odds. This was dramatically illustrated in Yugoslavia by the online independent news organisation Radio B92, which used the internet, radio and television after being shut down by Milosovic’s government. As local municipalities began participating in the democratic opposition movement, local media began partnering with B92 to carry on its broadcasts. “There were innumerable little islands of opposition, in big cities and beyond,” Pantic [B92 Internet director] recalls. “... We used B92 to deliver uncensored content to them -- and watched as those islands of free speech grew larger and larger... For years, we’ve believed that all of the sanctions, the bombings -- none of it will work. It’s ridiculous. You can’t kill 10 million people into democracy. Instead, you have to create a democratic environment, and that can only be accomplished with independent media.”

Around the world, bold media initiatives are emerging to forge alliances and partnerships with each other – for example ‘alternative’ agencies like Inter Press Service, Television Trust for Environment, Panos, Gemini, and OneWorld. Although they are but a “tiny, tiny, tiny” slice of the media pie, they have the impetus of urgency and they are growing. They are also redefining ‘the media’ and the traditional concepts of representation, audience, and outreach. The latest venture of the OneWorld Broadcasting Trust (its website <http://www.oneworld.org> has multiple

links to hundreds of organisations world-wide), is InterWorld Radio in partnership with the media organisation Panos. Interworld Radio, headquartered at the Panos office in London, commissions local journalists around the world for stories which are then downloaded through the audio files on the web, providing an alternative media model that is consciously pro-democracy.

Documentary makers, barred access to the national networks, find affirmation and strength in the increasing number of film festivals around the world (for filmmakers of the Indian sub-continent, Film South Asia documentary festival in Kathmandu, started in 1997, offers a much-needed platform); screenings at villages, seminars, educational or cultural institutes, or through local television networks, reach an audience that, although miniscule in numbers, can utilise the information most effectively. There is also support for independent films in organisations like the London Socialist Film Co-op, Association for Independent Video and Filmmakers, and the distributor Bullfrog Films which takes on 'activist' films.

Organisation is key, as Martin Lucas and Martha Wallner of the Gulf Crisis TV Project of 1991 stress. The Project showed how community involvement, vision, commitment and organisation can break into the existing structures by creatively utilising existing options -- even in a country like the USA, even at a time of media hype like the Gulf War.

Independent Media Centres formed "movement oriented print, audio, video and photo journalists" during the April 1999 protests in Seattle and in April 2000 in Washington against the IMF and World Bank, distributed coverage of the protests to the world through their website, www.indymedia.org. They "bought satellite time to pipe down daily video coverage to hundreds of community access television stations nationwide. Tapes of the video coverage also found their way onto mainstream evening news reports," report Nichols and McChesney (2000: 104). They believe that the role and impact of the independent media is expanding and will expand. They have other success stories of citizens' groups preventing media monopolies and corporate takeovers. For example, a number of organisations joined together in Hawaii to stop the closure of the state's second largest newspaper in Honolulu (ibid: 101-103).

People organising for democratic, political change with media on the agenda, have to, of necessity, can create the pressure needed for structural changes in the media in order for this goal to be achievable -- breaking up monopolies, re-structuring public service broadcasting and expanding public access television and re-defining regulation of public service broadcasting.

To sum up, if the media contribute to an anti-democratic culture, conversely, they also can also be used as a force for democratic change -- for the unrealised promise of democracy in the western world, and of freedom in the post-colonial era -- since in the end it is these values that threaten the established status quo.

(ends)

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Index of books, articles and films consulted and/or referred to in researching for this essay. Also included is a list of the organisations consulted.

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Bangalore Declaration, Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, April 08, 2000.

FAIR, Action Alert: 'In the Soup at The View: ABC allows corporate sponsor to buy talkshow content', Nov 20, 2000
-- 'Media vs. Democracy', Media Advisory, Nov 16, 2000

Freedom of Information Ordinance, text of draft published in daily Dawn, Aug 29, 2000.

'Freedom, how Far?' Special Report (on the military government's proposed Freedom of Information Ordinance), in The News on Sunday, Pakistan, Oct 08 2000.
["http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/oct2000-weekly/nos-08-10-2000/spr.htm"](http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/oct2000-weekly/nos-08-10-2000/spr.htm)

Greed or Need: Genetically Modified Crops, Panos Media Briefing No. 30A, Feb 1999

Milking Profits: How Nestle puts sale ahead of infant health, The Network -- Association for Rational Use of Medication in Pakistan, Islamabad, December 1999.

Masking the Truth The Network for Consumer Protection in Pakistan (formerly Association for Rational Use of Medication in Pakistan), Islamabad, September 2000

'Success Stories: Films that made an impact', in Moving Pictures Bulletin, Issue 8, Mar 1990:14-15.

Television in the South, unpublished paper, Panos, 1996

The Bigger Picture, a survey of the audio-visual landscape 1997-2000 and recommended action, Television Trust for the Environment, London, 1997

Tobacco Explained: The truth about the tobacco industry in its own words, ASH, UK, 1998

c. Selected Films

Achbar, M., and Wintonick, P., Noam Chomsky and the Manufacture of Consent, Necessary Illusions in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada, 1992

Ali, T., Law and Disorder: Liverpool 8 (Bandung Files), UK, 1981

Barron, A., Sixteen in Webster Groves, USA, 1966,
-- The Berkeley Rebels, 1965

Bawa, N., Voices of Dissent: A Dance of Passion, Pakistan, 1999

Bose, T., and Mulay, Suhasini, An Indian Story, India, 1991.

Broomfield, N., The Leader, his Driver, and the Driver's Wife, UK, 1991.

Corcoran, L., In Our Own Backyard: The First Love Canal, USA, 1982.

Dewan, M., California Dreaming: A Film on Indian Brides for Export, India, 1998.

Gupta, R., The Selling of Innocents, (dir. Cobban, W.), Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1997

Gazdar, M., They are Killing the Horse, Pakistan, 1978.
-- Ten Days of Lamentation, 1981.

Iwasaki, A., The Tragedy of Japan, Japan, 1946 (ref. Barnow, 'Iwasaki and the Occupied Screen', in Macdonald and Cousins, 1996:182).

Loach, K., Gimme Shelter: Kathy Come Home, UK, 1966

Kabir, Y., Dushomoy (A Mother's Lament), Bangladesh, 1999

Klein, B., Not a Love Story, USA, 1981.

Kirmani, F., Death in the Family: A Fearful Silence, UK (Channel Four), 1986

Mann, M., The Insider, USA, 1999

Masud, T., and Masud., C., Muktir Gaan, Bangladesh, 1995

Mitchell, C., Mr Jinnah: The Making of Pakistan, Pakistan/India, 1997

Morris, E., The Thin Blue Line, 1989

Mulay, S. and Gharekhan, H., Talking Peace, India, 1999

Murphy, R., Banned in Pakistan, (under production), USA/Pakistan, 2000

Parmar, P., A Place of Rage, UK (Channel Four: A Critical Eye), 1991

Pasha, S., And She Dances On, Pakistan, 1996

Patwardhan, A., In The Name of God, India, 1992

- Father, Son and Holy War, India, 1995
- A Narmada Diary, India, 1996
- We are Not Your Monkeys, India, 1996
- Ribbons for Peace, India, 1998

Pilger, J., Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq, dir. Lowery, A., UK (ITV), 2000.
 -- Cambodia : The Betrayal, UK, 1990
 -- Cambodia : Return to Year Zero, UK, 1993

Podneiks, Y., Hello -- Do You Hear Us? (series of five), USSR/UK, 1990 (ref. Success Stories', in Moving Pictures Bulletin, Issue 8, Mar 1990:14-15

Portenier, G., with Frenkiel, O., Murder in Purdah, UK, 1998

Prakash, S., The Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda, Patna, India, 1999

Riefenstahl, L., The Triumph of the Will, Germany, 1934

Sehbai, S., Bachon Ka Park (Children's Park), Pakistan Television, Mar 23, 1989.

Sinha, A., Ajit, India, 1996.

Stuttard, I., Vicious Circles (2 parts), Yorkshire Television, May and June, 1990

Sumar, S., Who Will Cast the First Stone, Pakistan, 1988.

Walker, K., Photo to Castro, UK, 1999.

Watkins, P., The War Game, UK, 1965 (released by BFI).

Wiseman, F., Titicut Follies, USA, 1967

-- High School, USA, 1968

d. Organisations - *This is by no means a comprehensive list of relevant organisations. It started out simply with some institutions that I have been in touch with for various issues. In the course of researching for this paper I came across other sources that would be helpful as a starting point to the independent documentary maker and have listed them as well..*

ASH (Action on Smoking and Health)
 102 Clifton St.,
 London EC2, UK
 Tel: 020-7739-5902
["http://www.ash.org.uk"](http://www.ash.org.uk)

Association for Independent Video and Filmmakers
 304 Hudson Street, 6th Floor,
 New York, NY 10013, USA
 Tel. 212-807-1400
www.aivf.org

Baby Milk Action
 23 St. Andrew's Street,
 Cambridge, UK.
 tel: 01223 464420
["http://www.babymilkaction.org"](http://www.babymilkaction.org)

Bullfrog Films
P.O.Box 149, Oley,
PA 19547, USA
["http://www.bullfrog.com"](http://www.bullfrog.com)

Committee to Protect Journalists
330 7th Avenue, New York
NY 10001, USA
www.cpj.org

Dawn (daily)
Haroon House,
Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road,
Karachi, Pakistan
<http://www.dawn.com>

Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting
130 W. 25th Street
New York, NY 10001, USA
www.fair.org

Himal South Asian magazine,
and Film South Asia (FSA), Kathmandu, Nepal 1997 and 1999
GPO 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal
www.himalmag.com/fsa

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
Aiwan-e-Jamhoo
102 Tipu Block
Lahore, Pakistan
www.hrcp.cjb.net

International Womens Media Foundation
1726 M. Street, NW
Suite 1002,
Washington DC 20036, USA
www.iwmf.org

Inter Press Service
48 (FF), Defence Colony Market
New Delhi 110024, India
www.ips.org

Jang Group of Publications (including The News and The News on Sunday)
Al Rehman Building
I.I. Chundrigar Road, Karachi
Pakistan
<http://www.jang-group.com>

London Socialist Film Co-op
13 Foundling Court, Brunswick Centre
London, WC1N 1QE, UK
Tel/fax. 020-7278-5764

The Network for Consumer Protection in Pakistan

40-A Ramzan Plaza, G-9 Markaz,
Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel: 92-51-2281755, Fax: 92-51-2291552,
email arump@best.net.pk

The OneWorld Broadcasting Trust
www.oneworld.org

Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy
11 Temple Road, Lahore, Pakistan
and: K-14 (FF), Green Park Ext., New Delhi, 110016, India

Panos London
9 White Lion Street
London N1 9PD, UK
www.panos.org.uk

Panos South Asia
GPO Box 13651
Patan Dhoka
Kathmandu, Nepal
www.panos.org.np

Television Trust for the Environment
TVE Centre for Environmental Communication
Prince Albert Road,
London NW1 4RZ, UK
www.oneworld.org/tve

Appendix a: Mushtaq Gazdar

‘The Gentle Rebel’, by Beena Sarwar in The News on Sunday, Dec 03, 2000

[Extract]

.....

Saeeda Gazdar went on to become a well known short story writer and poet in her own right, but she also worked extensively with her husband, scripting many of his films and providing the ideas and inspiration for several of them, the most recent being 'Gharistan', a long play about the rights of women in the family, which was shown on PTV in 1997.

The first documentary I remember seeing was his 'They are Killing the Horse' (1978), although his first film was 'The Fury of the Mighty Indus' (1973), on the floods in Sindh that year. 'They are Killing the Horse' stands out as a powerful, indictment of the system of treating psychological disorders through 'traditional' practices rooted in superstition in the guise of religion. The film, made in black and white, crosses the line between feature and documentary. It is based on the story of a young woman called Noori (named after the young ayah who used to look after us) who after doing an MA is forced to sit at home and help her mother - 'We don't educate our girls so they can go to the office and work'). Noori's only entertainment is reading in a bricked up terrace or pacing on the rooftop watching pigeons in flight. Occasionally they swoop onto the rooftop to peck at crumbs and strut about looking for mates, their mindless gregariousness a stark contrast to Noori's loneliness.

Noori, who gradually falls victim to her frustration and boredom, is not, however an entirely fictitious character but based on true psychiatric studies, provided at the time by Dr Haroon Ahmed. Mushtaq Gazdar's documentation of various shrines and the pathetic condition of the mentally insane who are left chained there, sometimes for years at an end, is powerful footage, a testimony to a reality that is ignored by society.

The constructed sequences of Noori's story, visualised in flashbacks as her older brother relates her story to a psychiatrist (after all other avenues have been exhausted and Noori 'supposedly freed' from the 'jinn' that was possessing her), are interwoven with real footage of conditions at the shrines. Also interwoven are scenes of the streets of Karachi, of young students at the university where Noori supposedly went to study. At one point the viewer gets a glimpse of what it must be like to walk anonymously through the streets in a burqah, as the camera wends its way forward, its lens peering through the veil.

There are lasting images also of a Moharram procession where the blood stained chaddar of the Zuljanah is the final straw in the snapping of Noori's mind, and the powerful sequence, the public flogging of a prisoner sentenced to 15 lashes by a military court for molesting a five year old girl. The rise and fall of the whip on the man's buttocks, the quivering flesh, the writhing body tied to a frame in the public ground, the relish with which the punishment is delivered are unlikely to leave a viewer's mind as the dull thud of the cane comes the only sound in the sequence, climaxing in the girl's scream.

Many of these refrains - the metaphor of Muharram as a symbol of the fight for justice, of good versus evil, the concern for the rights of the people – are echoed in Gazdar's later films. The Moharram theme is taken up most directly in 'Ten Days of Lamentation' (1981) Like 'Horse', this too was made during Gen. Ziaul Haq's martial law. It ends with another powerful flogging sequence, juxtaposed with the flames of confiscated drugs going up in smoke.

Although it is apparently a purely sociological picture of the rituals and meaning of Moharram for Muslims, especially Shias, there are clear references to dictatorship and usurpers. The largely observational commentary, at some risk in those times, stresses how Hazrat Imam Hussain gave up his life rather than obey a usurper. It reminds us that most Muslim countries are currently ruled by "kings, monarchs, military dictators, and self made presidents with no mandate from the people". Their encouragement of the catharsis brought about by the ten days of lamentation, it is suggested, is rooted in the thought that a hundred thousand mourners or lamenting souls are no threat to their rule.

His 'Song of Wishes' (1980) is an ironic visual interpretation of Allama Iqbal's 'Lab pe aati hai dua', its English translation (by the famous Marxist historian Syed Sibte Hasan) rendered in a piping childish voice (Aisha, then about ten). The black and white images of poor children contrast sharply with the full colour pictures of well to do youngsters at school or play. But the poor children are not condescended to or looked down upon. The camera captures them laughing, playing, being children. And although the film has been criticized for its too obvious contrast between the rich and the poor, it succeeds in its aim of drawing attention to the fact that, rich or poor, all children are after all children, and deserve and need special attention and care.

'Concert on the Footpath' ('Footpath pe upna dera') is also visualised on poetry - N. M. Rashid, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sahir Ludhianvi and Shah Latif Bhitai's - translated into English by M.H. Askari. The narrative commentary (mostly Aslam Azhar) focuses attention on the forced migration of the rural poor to cities where the inhabitants are unaware of, or indifferent to the plight of these displaced souls. The film follows four musicians who come to Karachi from

interior Sindh. Although it does not give them a direct voice,, their silence and dignified faces are eloquent testimonies to their situation, juxtaposed as this is with the poetry, images of stark poverty and contrasts with the rich people in cars or at weddings to whom they play and who give them handouts. Now that he is no more with us, a proper retrospective of his work would be a fitting tribute to this pioneer among Pakistani film-makers.

Appendix b: **The ‘real’ Pakistani woman: Shattering stereotypes**

Article based on a paper presented at The News South Asian Media Conference, Islamabad, "Towards a free, fair and vibrant media", July 1-2, 2000

Beena Sarwar

"It is generally accepted that the media plays a vital role in disseminating information and in forming public opinion. However, given that ‘information’ exists within the ambit of ideas, this service is never benign - it is closely bound up with the ways in which those who finance or produce the mediatic message see or would like the consumers to see the world."

--“Re-Inventing Women: Representation of Women in the Media During the Zia Years”, The Simorgh Collective, Lahore 1985.

Think ‘Pakistani woman’. What image comes to mind? If you are not very familiar with the country, chances are you’ll visualise a docile, submissive creature demurely wrapped in an all-encompassing ‘chaddor’ or a head-to-toe burqa. If you’ve been watching Pakistani television channels, you might think of an immaculately groomed, ultra-feminine, dutiful wife and mother, the healer, the soother, the symbol of ‘Mamta’ (motherhood)?

If your source of information is Pakistani films, you might picture a vamp or saint – the first a ‘fast’, westernised’ creature with tight trousers, cigarette between painted lips, no maternal feelings; the second a sacrificial wife, emotional mother or fantastically dressed heroine gyrating to pulsating music.

Going through Pakistani publications, you might think of Pakistani women as perpetual victims, battered and killed for ‘honour’. Although the English language press is generally more sympathetic to women and ‘women’s issues’ (perhaps because there are more women attuned to these issues, in editorial positions), there is a tendency to sensationalise crimes against women, something which the Urdu press is far more prone to do. The emphasis is often on the looks and character of the victim, which shifts the emphasis from the crime and reinforces existing negative attitudes. The Urdu Press often solicits the opinion of religious leaders about such incidents. The view projected is a blinkered one. ‘Good’ women are traditional, self-sacrificing and pure.

Women who assert themselves are portrayed negatively, seen as ‘westernised’ and of suspicious character. These reports ignore the fact that the violence against women is countered by process of increasing education and awareness of womens’ rights in all sections of society. More and more women are stepping out of traditional roles and wittingly or unwittingly challenging the status quo, exercising their right to a partner of their choice or to employment of their choice. The orthodox and the traditionalists respond with violence.

If you’ve been reading Pakistani school textbooks, you might imagine Pakistani girls only in domestic roles, never in outdoor games or in powerful positions, even though the country has the

distinction of bringing to power the world's first Muslim woman prime minister. Textbooks typically marginalise the contribution of women in all spheres of society – although the enrolment of girls in Karachi and Lahore's universities is almost 50 % and their performance in the exams usually far outstrips that of male students, as the Simorgh report points out..

Portrayals of rural women, who make up the majority of women in this largely agricultural society, are romanticised and glamourised in television and films, which ignore the harshness of their lives and the strength they need to keep going. Working an average of 16 hours a day in fields and looking after hearth and home, these women have no time to fuss with purdah. Although, like their counterparts elsewhere in the region they prefer to keep their faces hidden from strangers, they would not be able to carry on their work in the voluminous chaddors or burqas that the orthodoxy would like to see them in.

In the cities, increasing numbers of women work in factories, offices, laboratories; they work as commercial airline pilots (there are enough female flight officers to form a Women Pilots Association), dentists, doctors, journalists, engineers and scientists, apart from the more popular career choices of educators and nurses.

Gen Ziaul Haq and his so-called Islamisation process (1977-88) has a lot to answer for, in terms of how women are perceived in Pakistan today, and how the forces of status quo would like to see them perceived. Zia targeted women as symbols and persons, as a means of political control, using media and laws to reinforce his views, many of which have been internalised over the years. For example, the perception that rape is a sex crime rather than as the crime of violence and power that it is, was reinforced by the Hudood Ordinances that Zia pushed through in 1979.

Under this law there is little distinction between zina (adultery) and zina bil jabr (rape), and adultery is a crime against the state. Under Zia, female announcers on television were required to cover their heads, and in television plays a man and a woman could not to be shown alone on the screen; a third person had to be present in the background. When leaving the room, the actor and actress had to take different exits.

The focus on women as symbols of culture and society, reinforced existing prejudices against women in Pakistan. There was a brief respite during Benazir Bhutto's first tenure. But with the next government, Sharif's first, we were back to the process of accelerated indoctrination and reinforcement of the 'dupatta' policy. Although television policy under the present government is again more relaxed vis a vis women, it can be tightened any day under pressure from religious extremists and political opportunists.

In advertisements in television and in the print media, and in television dramas, what tends to be stressed in women's characters is emotionalism (as opposed to the rationalism of the male), dependence, traditionalism and domestication. If a woman is shown as a working professional, she is not in the workplace due to ambition or ability, but out of economic necessity. Thoughtfully presented television serials or talk shows remain exceptions, although there have been some good attempts.

The vamp or saint image perpetuated by the Pakistani film industry – known popularly as 'Lollywood' since it is based in Lahore – caters to a world of male fantasy. Not only do all the heroes take the law in their own hands, films don't even bother about the laws of the land. A film about a second marriage does not even refer to the law, which disallows a second marriage without the permission of the first wife.

Not all the negative or stereotypical images of women are perpetuated by men. On the contrary, large numbers of professional women have careers in film-making, publishing, advertising, television, etc. However, those involved in image-making, have often internalised the values of a patriarchal system. This, combined with the influence of “the market” leads to a tendency to use women as sex objects, more as part of the economics of making money, than of making news.

However, despite all kinds of social prejudices and pressures, reinforced as they are through the media, women are forging ahead in all spheres of society. A supportive media would not only make their task easier, it would contribute to the empowerment of half the country’s population. The end result can only be positive for everyone – except of course the forces of status quo in whose vested interest it is to prevent this.

Footnote: After the presentation of this paper at The News South Asia Media Conference in Islamabad (July 1-2, 2000) colleague in Karachi argued that media is part of society and as such the images it projects cannot be held responsible for violence against women. This certainly bears thinking about, but so does the point that, as illustrated above, if the media mirrors society's fantasies, it should also mirror the reality of women and not project a one-sided dreamworld in which this reality is virtually ignored.

Appendix c: The Network

The Network -- Association for the Rational Use of Medicine in Pakistan was formed by concerned doctors and citizens in 1991, in response to a case involving babies dying due to the unethical marketing of the anti-diarrhoeal drops Immodium (Johnson & Johnson). A doctor in Multan (southern Punjab) found that there was practically an epidemic of babies dying from diarrhoea – after being administered Immodium drops to stop diarrhoea. It was being marketed in Pakistan as suitable for children ‘over two years’ old as opposed to the prescription being suitable for children ‘over age four’ in Britain; in addition, there was over-administration by illiterate mother who had not been properly explained its effects. Yorkshire TV made a documentary on this case, called Vicious Circles, televised on June 5 1990.

Activists also found a clear link between the increasing cases of diarrhoea and the declining rate of breastfeeding, due directly to aggressive marketing by baby-milk companies, in particular Nestle. Painstaking research in the field established how the companies violate the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substituted, agreed to by the baby-milk manufacturing companies, and adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981. The Network has been consistently following this case, and last year, expanded to its current mandate as The Network for Consumer Protection in Pakistan.

Following is a summary of recent events in the baby-milk action saga in Pakistan, related by a Network activist:

“On December 8, 1999, Germany's ZDF pulled its documentary based on Milking Profits at the eleventh hour, after Nestle's Corporate Communications Director, Mr. Francois Perroud, met with a senior executive of the channel. but promised to broadcast it later. It has still not been broadcast. I can tell you also that when Milking Profits was launched in Canada, Nestle PR people were seen literally chasing down journalists and stuffing papers in their hands. The next day, instead of coverage of the report, the papers were filled with Nestle ads (contact Betty Sterken at INFAC T Canada, tel: 1-416-5959819, email: infact@ftn.net).

“On November 22, 2000, the European Parliament held a public hearing to investigate Nestle's marketing in non-European countries (see ‘Adidas boycotts EU ethics hearing’, The Independent, 23 Nov 2000). Pakistan was taken as a case study. Nestle refused to attend! and sent instead the person who did the "external, independent audit" commissioned by Nestle after the backlash of *Milking Profits*. The "audit" used a biased methodology, flawed interpretation of the International Code, drew unsubstantiated conclusions and ignored much evidence.

“They gave four different (weak) excuses for not coming. A week later, Nestle's vice president Niels Christiansen and I were interviewed concurrently for the BBC World Service program Outlook. He was slick, I could list off so many places where he had manipulated words and stretched the truth, but in the concurrent interview format it was difficult to respond or call him on it. The BBC did not even ask Nestle why they didn't turn up at the hearings, which was supposed to be their peg. At the end, after Christiansen was off the line, they asked me how I thought it had gone and said they thought they got a pretty balanced story. I couldn't believe it -- Nestle snubs the European Parliament and the BBC is after a "balanced story!”

-- Tracey Wagner-Rizvi, *Campaign Officer, Protection of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition, The Network, correspondence with the writer on Jan 14, 2001*

Mehdi, T. and Wagner-Rizvi, T., March 1998; Milking Profits, December 1999; and Masking the Truth, (critique of Nestle's audit), September 2000.

Appendix d: Documentary and its shrinking space

Since the documentary makes no profits from advertisers, “its makers must depend on enlightened individuals and corporate policies” (Rabiger, 1987: 23). Such individuals and corporate policies are fast disappearing from the scene, even in Britain with its long documentary tradition – ITV's, dropping of the 40 year old 'This Week', was a severe blow. “Now they only have the occasional documentary to pay lip service to their commitment to the genre,” comments Christopher Mitchell of OR Media, pointing to the marginalisation of films on international issues and in foreign countries as another example of lack of commitment to the documentary. (Discussion with the writer, Dec 12, 2000).

Although the number of documentaries in ITV and Channel Four have increased over the last year, there is little space for “wall-kicking” documentaries like those made by the celebrated radical journalist John Pilger. Films like Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq are now a rarity, comment Pilger followers. “He'd engage people in areas they wouldn't normally be interested in, like what's happening in Cambodia - - that film had a huge impact, created a national row,” says Jenny Richards, Deputy Director, TVE. “People would be so angry, they'd get up and kick the walls -- but he'd also give them something to do about it, like write to their local MP.” (Discussion with the writer, Jan 17, 2001).

Documentary "is fast becoming soap opera in order to keep place in the schedules... Relatively simple stories and ideas are being stretched over weeks in order to build up an audience, and the subjects chosen tend to be vehicles for excitement and violence... There is a pressure on (documentary-makers) to be sensationalistic in order to compete with drama," comments Molly Dineen in 'The Burning Question' -- the responses of several prominent documentarians and television executives to the question of what they try and achieve in their work and what they think the future of the documentary. (Macdonald and Cousins, 1996: 160).

Commissioning editors in the non-profit oriented but commercial Channel Four mourn the tendency towards de-politicisation and increase in 'factual entertainment' in the documentary (the most recent and glaring example being the hugely successful, if morbidly voyeuristic 'Big Brother' series) -- and admit to the sea-change” in their own roles that has contributed to this trend. Increasingly required to be revenue-conscious and shape outputs, they have to be far more influenced by “ratings”, increasingly “market-driven,

commercial-oriented” Allan Hayling, C4 Commissioning Editor, Documentaries, in a discussion at Channel Four, London, with Goldsmiths College MA TV Documentary students, Dec 4, 2000.

But it isn't just 'market concerns' that reduce the space for dissent. The censorship of the brilliantly conceived and directed The War Game, which could have swung public opinion against Britain's nuclear deterrence policy, resonates in less democratic set-ups where filmmakers going against the established order continually face an uphill battle to show their work on the national networks. Not surprisingly, the documentary tradition is least developed in countries with a poor democratic track record, like those of South Asia. Although powerful work does emerge, it is necessarily sporadic and threatened, as in the case of Pakistan (Varma, Dec 1997). Although Pakistan Television has spawned some excellent filmmakers, those wanting to work according to their own convictions have had to leave, like Shireen Pasha, who resigned some years ago and is now an independent documentary maker.

Appendix e: The biased reporting that makes killing acceptable

Email activism and two kinds of reporting.

Email circulated by: "http://us.f115.mail.yahoo.com/ym/Compose?To=Letters_from_Palestine-owner@egroups.com&YY=11060&order=up&sort=sender&pos=2"

Subject: [Letters_from_Palestine] Fisk: The biased reporting that makes killing acceptable

Date: Sat, 25 Nov 2000 11:34:31 -0000

Friends,

Below is a link to a petition to CNN demanding fairness in their reporting of this Intifada and Palestine more generally. Under that is an article by Robert Fisk in the Independent called "The biased reporting that makes killing acceptable" which speaks for itself. The petition to CNN is very important as there has been much official pressure from the Israeli government on CNN to be even more pro-Israeli (I know, you didn't think that was possible. Me neither.) So we have to make our voices heard.

-MET

TITLE: BE FAIR ..CNN

SUMMARY: A word to cnn to be fair in their coverage of the middle east news.

Click here to sign the petition: "<http://www.petitionpetition.com/cgi/petition.cgi?id=910>" \t "[blank](#)"

The biased reporting that makes killing acceptable

By Robert Fisk

14 November 2000

("[http://www.independent.co.uk/news/UK/Media/2000-\" \t \" blank\" 11/reporting141100.shtml](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/UK/Media/2000-\))

When CNN's Cairo bureau chief, Ben Wedeman, was shot in a gun battle in Gaza last month, I waited to hear how his employers would handle the story. Having visited the spot where Wedeman was hit in the back, I realised that the bullet must have been fired by Israeli soldiers at a location on the other side of the nearest crossroads. So, what happened? CNN reported that

"most of the bullets" fired came from the Israelis, but -- according to a pathetic response from a company spokesman in London -- CNN was not going to suggest who was to blame "at this time". Indeed not. The American Associated Press news agency later reported -- a real killer, this one -- that Wedeman had been "caught up in crossfire".

So much, I thought, for the 150 or so Palestinians shot dead by Israeli troops over the past six weeks. If CNN didn't have the courage to tell the truth about the shooting of its own reporter, what chance did the Palestinians have? The latest shocking piece of American journalism promises to be an "exclusive" on the American CBS network, whose 60 Minutes team has been given access to an Israeli army "re-enactment" of the killing -- by Israeli troops -- of 12-year-old Mohamed al-Dura. The picture of him cowering in the arms of his father and then collapsing dead beside him has become an iconic image of the current conflict in the Middle East.

The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, whose reporting of the battles outshines anything appearing in the supine American press, has already quoted an Israeli member of the Knesset, Ophir Pines-Paz, who complains that the reconstruction sounds "fictitious" and like an attempt to "cover up the incident by means of an inquiry with foregone conclusions... the sole purpose of which is to clear the IDF of responsibility for Al-Dura's death". Lobby groups in the United States, including a few brave American Jews, are demanding to know why the CBS network is filming a partial inquiry that is intended to prove that those who killed a little boy didn't kill him -- without, apparently, even asking the Palestinians for their version of events.

It is all part of a familiar, weary pattern of biased reporting, which, over the past few weeks, has started to become dangerous as well as deeply misleading. The Israeli line -- that Palestinians are essentially responsible for "violence", responsible for the killing of their own children by Israeli soldiers, responsible for refusing to make concessions for peace -- has been accepted almost totally by the media. Only yesterday, a BBC World Service anchorman allowed an Israeli diplomat in Washington, Tara Herzl, to excuse the shooting of stone-throwers -- almost 200 of them -- by Israeli soldiers on the grounds that "they are there with people who are shooting". If that was the case -- which it usually is not -- then why were the Israelis shooting the stone-throwers rather than the gunmen?

The murder of Israelis rightly receives much coverage. The killing of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah police station was filmed only through the courage of one camera crew. The Palestinians did their best to seize all picture coverage of the atrocity. Yet when an Israeli helicopter pilot fired an air-to-ground missile at a low-ranking Palestinian militiaman on Friday, it also killed two totally innocent middle-aged Palestinian women. In its initial reports, BBC World Service Television reported that. Yet by yesterday morning, the BBC was able to refer to the "assassination" of the Palestinian without mentioning the two innocent women -- 58-year-old Azizi Gubran and 55-year-old Arachme Shaheen -- blown to pieces by the same Israeli missile. They had been airbrushed from the story.

Then we have that old bugbear the "clash". Palestinians die "in clashes" -- as if they are accidentally shot rather than targets for Israeli snipers. The use of that word -- and the opportunity it affords journalists of not stating that Israelis killed them -- is little short of a scandal. Take Reuters' report from Jerusalem on 30 October by Howard Goller, which referred to five Palestinians "wounded in stone-throwing clashes" and the funerals of Palestinians "killed in earlier clashes". Yet, in a report on the same day, Goller wrote of an Israeli shot dead by a "suspected Palestinian gunman", while his colleague on Reuters, Sergei Shargorodsky, referred to "Palestinian shooting attacks on Jewish settlements" and an Israeli man stabbed to death, "presumably by Palestinians". Funny, isn't it, how the responsibility for the

killing of Israelis tends to be so explicitly -- and rightly -- apportioned, while blame for the killing of Palestinians is not?

But on we go, reporting the Middle East tragedy with all our own little uncontroversial cliché and amnesia and avoidance of "controversial" subjects. Such journalism is already leading --despite the extraordinary casualty figures --to a public view that the Palestinians are solely responsible for the bloodbath, that they are generically violent, untrustworthy murderers. I think this kind of reporting helps to condone the taking of human life.

Appendix f: HOSTILITY & RECONCILIATION

Gallerie, India, Jan 2001

Praful Bidwai and Beena Sarwar

To us, an Indian and a Pakistani, our countries present a peculiar paradoxes. India-Pakistan is the only part of the world which has witnessed a continuous hot-cold war for half a century, which shows no sign of abating—unlike between the Eastern and Western blocs, Israel and much of the Arab world—barring Palestine—and now even North and South Korea. Indeed, our states' appetite for confrontation shows no sign of exhaustion although most of their people hunger for food, shelter, bare survival.

After the May 1998 nuclear tests, the Indian subcontinent has become the world's likeliest site for a nuclear conflagration. Intoxicated by hubris and hatred, its rulers stalk each other at every conceivable forum seeking mortal combat, while parodying and ridiculing each other's policies and intentions, doctrines and professions.

Yet, individually, Indians and Pakistanis can be spontaneously friendly towards one another, even effusively so. Hatred, fear and suspicion, which routinely mark Israeli-Palestinian encounters, are absent in their personal interactions. Indians and Pakistanis celebrate their Independence from the British with pride and pomp. But we have not yet come to terms with the Partition that attended that very Independence.

Partition's wounds haven't healed for the many millions who lived in British India's north and northwest—awkwardly, sometimes back-to-back, but within a cultural continuum. Yet, today, there is an unmistakable urge to overcome the past, forget it, leave it behind.

However, many of us who want reconciliation realise that it is impossible to 'leave' the past behind. You can't leave it, it has to become irrelevant to you. It has to stop bothering, nagging, you. That can only happen if you confront all its bitter, sour and sad truths. That is the first process. Only then can you transcend it and liberate yourself. The second process involves creating a new politics of understanding and reconciliation.

The Second Process has begun. In fact, it has been under way for almost a decade—through citizen-to-citizen contacts, cross-border women's initiatives, Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy, South Asians for Human Rights, Track II-plus diplomacy, meetings between social activists, scholars, feminists, anti-nuclear campaigners, trade unionists, journalists, even former generals. The protagonists of the process are serious about breaking the South Asian gridlock of

hostility. In radically questioning the assumptions that underlie that hostility, they take considerable personal risks and often face ridicule.

But the Second Process has entered a phase of stagnation. It has neither reached sufficiently downwards, to draw in numbers. Nor is it reaching upwards, to influence policies. It has not generated the critical mass to become self-propelling. One reason for this may be that IT has not been sharp enough in outlining alternatives. Sometimes, these sound naive or oversimple: e.g. a 25 percent troops reduction seems too much at odds with the reality of mutual hostility.

However, the Second Process has run largely solo, unsupported by the First Process of confronting the past, which has not really taken off. There have been some feeble attempts to reconstruct the past and recall its commonalities, but perhaps not its divergences.

We are yet to see incisive analysis or truly candid films, plays or contemporary novels—anything approaching a collective lore—about Partition, what caused it, just who was responsible. We don't have a common India-Pakistan story of Independence/Partition. More important, we don't even have an internally consistent Indian or Pakistani story.

In India, the dominant reconstruction of history, barely challenged by radical dissenters, Partition is betrayal. It is an aberration in the inclusive Freedom Movement the Indian National Congress had built. The Two-Nation Theory and the separatist Muslim League leadership wrecked the Movement. Mountbatten spun his own Machiavellian designs on these "distortions". Ergo, Partition shouldn't have happened. (In reality, the Congress can't be absolved of responsibility. It refused to accommodate Jinnah's radical federalism. And it didn't sufficiently combat Hindu communalism, Two Nations' progenitor.)

In Pakistan's dominant discourse, Partition is liberation (from Hindu "domination"). The "Hindu" Congress craftily refused to accommodate legitimate "Muslim" aspirations. Jinnah was forced to demand a separate nation.

Both accounts are wrong. They homogenise across, glide over, differences. They deny the syncretic, multi-cultural and multi-religious character of pre-Partition India. They reproduce a peculiarly homogenising cultural-religious majoritarianism. Strangely enough, otherwise rational, secular liberals from both sides of the border, who oppose national chauvinism and celebrate the pluralism of each society, end up denying that very pluralism before each was severed from the other! The desire to construct a homogenising national identity can be overwhelming. All manner of myths subserve it—from a "continuous" 5,000-year-old "Hindu civilisation", to history itself beginning with Islam's "arrival" in India.

Such myth-making can be combated only if it is challenged both intellectually and in experiential life—through a radical counter-culture which subverts relations of dominance and subordination. To be subversive, the First Process must creatively promote dialogue.

Such a dialogue, regrettably, has only barely begun in India and Pakistan. It must proceed to scrutinise and interrogate many received beliefs. Many protagonists of the Second Process naively assumed that reconciliation would be possible without addressing the structural causes of "differences", refracted through received myths and beliefs. They would posit identity and similarity where there are divergences and differences. Half a century on, Indians and Pakistanis are more different than they were. Their societies have evolved divergently. It is necessary and possible to reconcile these differences, but they must first be recognised. Dialogue, analysis and reconstruction of the truth are indispensable if we are to be free of history's burden.

Unfortunately, this burden is perpetuated daily through mainstream political rhetoric in both societies. The constant demonising of ‘the Other’, based on religion, has expanded India-Pakistan’s Right-wing constituencies. Their agendas feed on each other, furnishing excuses for sabotaging the First Process.

Yet, it is symptomatic of the peculiar love-hate relationship between India and Pakistan that even at the height of the 1999 Kargil war, the Lahore-Delhi bus continued plying booked to capacity. The bus alone isn’t symbolic of the desire for friendship. The vast majority of cross-border travellers use the Samjhauta ('conciliation') Express train that makes the arduous India-Pakistan journey 24 hours long with customs and security checks—in place of the eight hours necessary. The train goes packed both ways. As do flights. As Pakistani human rights activist Asma Jehangir puts it, if visa restrictions were lifted, there would be a traffic jam!

This is so despite the journey’s hardships, the humiliatingly long visa queues, compulsory reporting at police stations on arrival, and occasional harassment by intelligence agencies. Our friends tell us interesting stories of how customs officials from these ‘enemy countries’ share bribes with each other in mutually untradeable currencies. The border guards even share their food—the same men who put on a spectacular, well-rehearsed, show of hostility during the flag-lowering and -raising ceremonies at every sunrise and sunset.

So what explains the enduring India-Pakistan "official" hostility? Why has it got exacerbated over 50 years? Why is it that policy-makers and opinion-shapers truly believe more than earlier that India-Pakistan peaceful co-existence is impossible? That the one or the other must perish?

The explanation lies in the crises of legitimacy and of the presiding ideologies of both states. In India, the eclipse of the Nehruvian paradigm (of democracy, secularism, non-alignment and "socialism"—i.e. a modicum of distributive justice) has entailed the shrinking and distortion of the original project of building a modern, secular, plural and open society with a degree of equal opportunity. Nothing coherent has replaced this paradigm. But increasingly, the elite has embraced a highly dualistic model of development, which makes it impossible to address the basic needs of the vast majority of the population.

Right-wing policies have ensured the persistence of mass-scale poverty and deprivation, widening economic disparities, abominable discrimination against women, communal tension and a horrifying ecological crisis. Once-secular parties, which flourished under the Nehruvian paradigm, have gone into decline, while the viciously intolerant Hindutva parties have gained currency.

Although these forces are nowhere near commanding political majorities (the Bharatiya Janata Party’s vote is less than a quarter of the total), they influence, indeed set, political agendas. Unremitting hostility towards Pakistan has been central to these agendas. Indeed, the BJP—a creation of the quasi-fascist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh—is inspired by a rabidly anti-Muslim ideology which rejects India’s plural, multi-religious, multi-cultural character. Sectarian politics has been an important driving force behind the hostility towards Pakistan.

The festering Kashmir issue is again a victim of both the quarter-million-plus Indian troops that occupy the Valley (pop. Four million), and fanatical guerrillas driven more by jihad (holy war) than by azadi (freedom or sovereignty). Both India and Pakistan cite Kashmir as a "legitimate" cause of enmity—enmity that can plunge them into instant war.

India-Pakistan have fought four wars in 53 years, including Kargil in 1999—this as the world's newest nuclear weapons-states. Kargil was a far grimmer conflict than believed. Indian and Pakistani officials exchanged no fewer than 13 nuclear threats during that seven-week period. U.S. defence secretary William Cohen says they were pulled back from the brink of a nuclear confrontation by external intervention.

Pakistan's crisis is similar, if worse, and powerfully driven by religious identity politics. Its ruling elite has rationalised Pakistan's existence by stressing its "Islamic" identity religion right since 1947. For those who benefited from access to lucrative business, property and politics in the new country, it was vital to stress the differences between 'Hindu' India and 'Muslim' Pakistan, ignoring India's sizeable Muslim population.

Starting from Jinnah's demand for Pakistan (against secular Muslim opposition), through Liaqat Ali Khan's Constitutional amendment making Islam the state religion, to Z.A. Bhutto's 'Islamic socialism' and Gen. Ziaul Haq's martial law, Islam has been used to mould an identity separate from India's. The fanning of religious passions has ensured that attention is distracted from the real issues facing the people, i.e. health, education, employment. In Pakistan, illiteracy stands at 65 percent, while unemployment has doubled and poverty increased by 40 percent in the late 1990s.

The manipulative use of religion is so deeply internalised that even the so-called progressive Bhutto resorted to it when his power was weakening. He made Friday the weekly holiday, banned horse-racing, and imposed prohibition. Bhutto was displaced by Zia who took Islamisation much further. Zia's long innings was insured through US indulgence by the Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation. Zia invoked Islam to justify his rule: through a "holy war" against Communists, and a promise to make Pakistan truly Islamic. Pakistan's Islamic identity is consciously promoted through education (especially, mandatory "Pakistan Studies") and culture. For instance, classical music and dance are castigated as 'Hindu'/'Indian'. As state-defined homogeneity was imposed on diverse cultures, the space for dissent decreased. The 'cleansing' of 'high' art and culture was reflected in the discouragement of 'popular' Sufi Islam, which Zia controlled by appointing government-paid keepers at shrines.

Perhaps some India-Pakistan differences could have been sorted out had it not been for state support to the religious right under Zia, as well as Hindu nationalism's ascendancy in India. Zia's years left Pakistan with militant jihadis who have grown from strength to strength. His patronage of one school of Sunni Muslims fanned bloody sectarian rivalry. Various Islamic countries began funding groups closest to their beliefs. Such sectarian violence has claimed hundreds of lives.

Meanwhile, the skewed development policies of successive governments, which criminally neglect health and education, ensure that Islamic seminaries flourish. Ironically, the Islamisation phenomenon is fed by India's own identity politics. A turning point was the razing of the Babri Masjid in 1992. This led to "retaliatory" attacks on Hindu temples in Pakistan, dealing a blow to tolerance. Additional pressure on Pakistan's minorities comes through the separate electorate system imposed by Zia, which divides electors by religion. Christians in a particular village, for example, may end up having no local representation: the candidates they favour live at another end of Pakistan. This spells political exclusion. Gen. Musharraf had indicated that this system would be revoked, but there are yet no signs of this.

India and Pakistan have evolved divergently in social structures, economies and political processes. Their identities stand even further apart than 50 years ago. Even their "common"

languages, Hindustani/Khadi Boli/Urdu, have evolved in different directions, Hindi becoming Sanskritised and purged of "Islamic" (Persian/Arabic) influences, and Pakistani Urdu doing just the opposite.

Yet, there is a lot in common between India-Pakistan. They belong firmly to the bottom quartile of the world ranking of the Human Development Index. Yawning inequalities, persistent deprivation, absence of economic opportunity, ethnic strife, and growth of parochial ideologies have led to the growing militarisation of daily life. India-Pakistan's ruling elites are equally in favour of huge military budgets. This ensures that this region—despite its vast human potential and unique pluralism—remains a social and cultural backwater, a morass of strife and permanent war.

It is imperative to break the India-Pakistan gridlock of hostility, and work towards reconciliation and peace. This process can only mature when both societies liberate themselves from identity politics and elitist development, return to neglected social agendas, and move towards emancipatory change.

The process has begun. Large numbers of Indians and Pakistanis are voting for peace. Initiatives like the Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy bring them together. A constituency that could pressurise governments to move towards cooperation is being mobilised.

There are joint India-Pakistan efforts to revise communal textbooks and erase images of hatred. One project aims to bypass officialdom by posting a joint history of India-Pakistan on the Web. These activities, including joint research, journalistic ventures and social activism, are flourishing as never before. Such projects may yet generate the pressure needed to change state-level perceptions.

However, the state remains a vital piece in the puzzle. All steps allowing the two governments to retreat from their hard-line positions without losing face must be welcomed and complemented by confidence-building measures, including reduction in defence spending and nuclear restraint. The new tentative opening in Kashmir must be seen in this perspective as a good beginning.

Above all, the two ruling elites must be persuaded to see the virtue of economic cooperation, especially in agriculture, trade and energy. Their economies are in many ways complementary and can form the fulcrum of a vibrant regional bloc. Their shared colonial systems of administration, railways and internal trade can facilitate a unique kind of integration.

What is needed for this is a bold vision, one that is uncompromisingly pluralistic, humane and tolerant, which reaffirms the great potential of joint endeavors between more than a billion human beings with a meeting of their hearts and minds. It is not impossible to envision a South Asia without borders, passports and visas. If Europe, after centuries of war, can aspire to that, South Asia can at least try.

(ends)

Appendix g:

Desperately seeking Pakistan

Teens Today in India Today, March 2000

Desperately seeking Pakistan

Right in the middle of cross-border ire and fire, 19-year-old Anand was in Pakistan on an edu trip-and guess what he found?! That, perhaps, he never left!

By Anand Vivek Taneja

The History Society of Ramjas College went to Pakistan. We are back safe, sound and shappy (shocked + happy, from a mid-80s American sitcom) from our eight-day trip to Lahore, Islamabad, Taxila and Peshawar. Now it's time to think of theme songs. Theme songs, you see, are very important for endeavors thought to be brave, noble, courageous, foolhardy, or all of the above. Before the 13 of us set out for Pakistan everyone else voted for 'all of the above' and with the hijacking and all the rest of it, they didn't seem to be wrong. Our theme song would be "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" by U2. ... I have run, I have crawled I have scaled these city walls Only to be with you But I still haven't found what I'm looking for... We scaled mountains of bureaucracy, crossed the electrified border at Atari Wagah, braved Indian and Pakistani customs, but we did not find the Pakistan we were looking for...

NOT IN LAHORE. LAHORE IS JUST ANOTHER DELHI WHICH REMEMBERS URDU

If there are any two cities that can be said to be 'separated at birth', it is these two. The Lahore Station, to begin with, looks like Old Delhi railway station. Same Victorian Gothic architecture. It was as if by catching the Samjhauta Express, we hadn't travelled at all and as we travelled around Lahore, the temptation to sue for copyright violation grew. The Lahore Fort, for one, looks like the Red Fort. It also includes a Diwan-i-Aam, Diwani-i-Khas and a Moti Masjid. The Badshahi Masjid is so similar to the Jama Masjid that one could be excused for mistaking one for the other. The old, walled part of Lahore is the old, walled part of Delhi. (Delhi Gate? Kashmere Gate? You name it, they've got it.) Anarkali Bazaar is Chandni Chowk, only much better. The Mall is Connaught Place, straightened out. The cities are physically and historically so similar that when you cross the Ravi you come to, hold your breath, Shahadra (both Shahadaras are equally pathetic). There's even a Shalimar Bagh in common; and Gulberg, where we stayed, could easily pass off for Def Col in Delhi (with even a flyover thrown in). The people you encounter reconfirm that you have not left Delhi. Some cities are born Punjabi, some acquire Punjabiness, and some have Punjuness thrust upon them. While Lahore belongs to the first category, Delhi belongs to the latter. In Lahore, if not for the predominance of salwar-kameez, you can quite easily believe that the border is just a mirage. The effect is heightened when you meet teenagers who listen to U2 and Led Zep, think Junoon is ultimately cool and talk in Mumbhaiya slang because they've freaked out over Sanjay Dutt in Vaastav. When you hear about dating hangouts and drinking binges, you feel slightly disappointed at having come so far and never to have left home.

PAKISTAN WAS ALSO CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE IN ISLAMABAD. "Islamabad," in the words of one venerable gentleman, "is a very nice city. It is only 10 minutes away from Pakistan." Islamabad is an enigma-it looks as if it were imported from midwestern America and dropped on to the Potwar plateau. Broad roads, wide avenues, tall trees, spiffy supermarkets, ultramodern houses, all surrounded by hills-spectacularly beautiful, and spectacularly dead. Jahangir's tomb in Lahore has more life than the whole of Islamabad. You feel that a possible explanation for the frequency of coups and other political upheavals in Pakistan is that the ruling elite require regular doses of tension and excitement to relieve them from the maddening boredom of Islamabad. The most exciting thing in the city is the Faisal Mosque. It looks like a spaceship trying to pass off for a tent trying to pass off for a mosque, and succeeds in looking like nothing on Earth.

NO PAKISTAN IN PESHAWAR. ALMOST LITERALLY.

After crossing the Indus at Attock, another land starts. Foreign not just to us, but to any Pakistani, too, from Lahore, Islamabad or Karachi. Peshawar is very Central Asian, being just 30 miles

away from the Afghan border. Walking through the narrow alleys of Kissa Khwani Bazaar (The Story Teller's Market-harking back to the days when caravans from Central Asia stopped here, and travellers and merchants told their stories) and rubbing shoulders with huge bearded Pathans speaking guttural Pushtu is a bit unnerving to begin with. But the legendary hospitality of the Pathans soon rids you of your fears and what follows is a general freakout. Gallons of kahwa, mounds of Kabuli pulao, and piles of kebabs and karhai gosht. Also, splurging on dry fruit, on woollen caps from Chitral valley, and on traditional Peshawari sandals. Which is not all that can be bought in and around Peshawar-because immediately to the west of Peshawar are the territories of the tribal agencies, the only law is tribal tradition. And since these territories are smack next to the porous Afghan border-you can buy anything, cheap. It is said that in Darra Adam Khan, 10 kilometres from Peshawar, one can buy an AK 47 for eight thousand rupees! We contemplated bringing one back as a souvenir!

NOWHERE IN PAKISTAN DID WE ACTUALLY FIND PAKISTAN-

the 'enemy' country we were expecting to see. Pakistan was hospitality. Pakistan was Mr Irfan Urmani, teacher at Government College, Lahore, who waited all evening for our train and landed up at the Youth Hostel at 11:30 pm to greet us, and showed us around Lahore for three days. Pakistan was Beena Sarwar, the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Friendship, Reza Kasim, Haroun Sheikh, Dr Mubarak Ali and Naheed Siddiqui in Lahore; Amit Baruah, Dr A H Nayyar, Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy and Sudhir Vyas in Islamabad; Afrasiab Khattak and Khwaja Waseem in Peshawar-who all went out of their way to make our travel comfortable, our evenings memorable, and to stuff us way beyond capacity with food so delicious, it was an insult to refuse. Pakistan was 'since you are from India....' Since we were from India, we got: ... discounts in cassette shops. ... permission to take photos in Taxila. "I don't let foreigners take pictures," said the caretaker, "but you're Indians..." ... apologies from policemen. One who searched our luggage on the way to Islamabad said, "I shouldn't be doing this. You're guests. But I have to do my duty. I hope you don't mind." ... booze. During Ramzan. In an officially dry country. Pakistan was concern. "I hope everything is all right in Delhi. I hope people are not upset by the hijacking," said the caretaker of Jahangir's tomb. "No, no. Pakistan will lose," said the people in Islamabad who'd invited us to tea on the day of the first India-Pakistan cricket match in Australia. Everyone stayed away from the TV-we didn't want to get tense; they didn't want to hurt our feelings.

SO WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ENEMY?

What happened to the enemy who killed our soldiers in Kargil, whose main export to us is terrorism, and whose secondary export is propaganda via PTV? After some initial confusion you realize that there is a very marked distinction between the Pakistani people and the Pakistani state. The Pakistani state has put huge replicas of Chagai Hills and Ghauri missile outside Lahore Station. The Pakistani state supports the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the like, who openly walk on the streets of Lahore, asking for donations for the cause of 'Azad' Kashmir. While we were there, the Lahore Division of the Lashkar-e-Toiba had plastered posters all over the city, saying, 'Congratulations on the release of Maulana Masood Azhar'. But the same Pakistani state did not stop us from roaming around in Lahore, past midnight. Strange.

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Appendix h: Anand Patwardhan

Filmography (with notes by Patwardhan, in correspondence with the writer, Dec 2000.)

Business as Usual, (13 mins. B&W, 16mm, 1971), on fund-raising efforts for Bangladesh refugees.

Waves of Revolution, (30 mins. B&W, 16mm, 1974), on an anti-corruption movement in Bihar which led to a state of Emergency being declared in India.

Prisoners of Conscience, (45 mins. B&W, 16mm, 1978), on political prisoners in India before, during and after the Emergency. (*Tyne Award, Tyneside Festival, U.K. 1982*)

A Time to Rise, (40 mins. Colour, 16mm, 1981), on the efforts of Indian immigrant farmworkers in Canada to form a union. (*Silver Dove, Leipzig, Germany, 1981; Tyne Award, Tyneside, U.K. 1982*)

Bombay our City, (82 mins. Colour, 16mm, 1985), on the daily battle for survival of Bombay's slumdweller. (*National Award, Best Non-fiction, India, 1986; Filmfare Award, Best Documentary, India, 1986; Special Jury Prize, Cinema du Reel, France, 1986*)

In 1985 I submitted it to Doordarshan (DD, at that time this government channel was the only channel on air in India) and they sat on it. In 1986 after the film won the national award for best documentary (though this is a government award it showed that the jury had some genuine independence!) we filed a case in the Bombay high court to get it telecast. Our grounds were that my freedom of speech and the public's right to information were being arbitrarily curtailed by not showing a film that had won the country's highest honour. After two years we won and the high court ordered the film to be shown on DD. DD went in appeal to the Supreme Court, which threw out the appeal and the film was finally telecast in 1989. Of course DD played it dirty and showed the film at midnight! With very little warning time. Still for perhaps the first time a clearly critical voice (*ye jhoota raj hai bhai*) was heard on TV across the nation.

In Memory of Friends, (60 mins. Colour, 16mm, 1990, on the efforts of a group of Sikhs and Hindus to rebuild communal harmony in strife-hit Punjab. (*Silver Conch, Bombay Documentary Festival, 1990; Special Jury Prize, Mannheim, Germany, 1990; National Award, Best Investigative Doc. India, 1990*)

*This film also was lucky enough to win a national award on the strength of which we again went to the Bombay High Court on the same grounds as before with eventually (this time it took four years)-- the same result. Only this time the judges were aware of the loophole of midnight telecast and ordered the screening to be at prime time. DD this time did not go to Supreme Court and complied with the order in 1995.

In the Name of God, (92mins. Colour, 16mm, 1992), on the rise of Hindu fundamentalism as reflected in the temple-mosque conflict in Ayodhya which resulted in nation-wide carnage. (*Filmfare Award, Best Documentary, India, 1992; National Award, Best Investigative Doc. India, 1992; Ecumenical Prize, Nyon, Switzerland, 1993; Documentary Prize, Freiburg, Switzerland,*

1993; *Citizen's Prize, Yamagata, Japan, 1993*)

Ditto as above except for the dates. Filed before the Bombay High Court in 1992. Finally telecast in 1997. Point to note: as there were three different governments during the case I had made attempts to appeal to the "democratic and secular" parties to voluntarily show the film in the public interest rather than force me to move the courts but failed in this attempt. Finally it was only through the court that the film was screened (again at prime time). But before the film was telecast the bjp mps in parliament issued dire threats of communal violence if the film was shown and urged the United Front government to scrap the screening. However the film was shown and no violence was reported anywhere. And though in some areas BJP workers forced people to shut their tvs and cablewalls in their control stopped the relay, the ratings achieved for the telecast was 18% which in 1997 with innumerable entertainment channels to compete with, is extremely high.

Father, Son and Holy War, (120 mins. Col. 16mm, 1995), on the patriarchal roots of violence in India and the relationship between male insecurity and religious conflict. (*National Award, Best Investigative Documentary, India, 1995; National Award, Best Social Documentary, India, 1995; Special Jury Prize, Yamagata Intl Film Fest, Japan, 1995; Frist Prize, Jerusalem Intl Film Festival, Israel, 1995; Special Jury Prize, Vancouver Intl Film Festival, 1995; International Jury Prize, Bombay International Film Fest, 1996; Second Best Film Award, Film South Asia, Kathmandu, 1997*)

*Still in court after five years. Same grounds, same lawyer (P.A. Sebastian an indefatigable champion of human rights who has worked for subsistence wages for a wide variety of litigants - slumdweller, workers, riot victims and families of encounter death victims).

A Narmada Diary, (60 mins. Video, 1996), on the struggle of the people of the Narmada Valley against the Sardar Sarovar Dam and all unjust, unsustainable "development". (*Filmfare Award, Best Documentary, India, 1996; Grand Prize, Earth-Vision Film Festival, Tokyo, 1996.*)

We Are Not Your Monkeys, (5 mins. Colour, Video, 1996), a song composed with the late Daya Pawar, giving a dalit ("untouchable" caste) perspective to the Ramayana story.

Occupation: Millworker, (22 mins, Colour, Video, 1996), on an attempt by workers to forcibly occupy and restart a closed mill after a four year lock-out by management.

Fishing: In the Sea of Greed (45 mins, Video, 1998), on the fish workers' fight against huge foreign fishing vessels that deplete the seas, and against industrial aquaculture, pollution and tourism that threaten the survival of the world's coastal communities.

* These films are usually shown through activist groups and peoples movements across India (those fighting communal violence, or for housing rights or against big dams for instance) and at educational institutions (schools and colleges) and seminars etc. outside India they also are included in the curricula of many U.S. university departments, and are also used by expatriate groups of South Asian origin.

(ends)