

Responses to Manushi

Masterpiece of Journalism

This is in response to the article *Hell of a Cure* by Anjana Mishra in MANUSHI issue no.120. It is no exaggeration to say that the article constitutes a masterpiece of journalism (though, ironically enough, Ms. Mishra is not a professional journalist).

The article is deeply significant for two reasons:

- a) It is written by a person who was perfectly sane and yet was forced to spend over nine months in what purports to be a mental hospital but is in fact a veritable hell.
- b) It is a description of what a typical mental hospital (assuming the Central Institute of Psychiatry to be a typical one) in this country is all about.

I ask you and your readers to consider the fact that both India and Pakistan have spent fortunes in building up nuclear arsenals while their 'maddies' live in 'hospitals' that are worse than medieval torture chambers. Just who is insane?

After reading Anjana's article, the Hollywood film 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' seems like a very tame affair. The article deserves to be very widely read and I hope it will find a vast audience. Do I have your permission to try and get it published abroad? Please convey my heartiest

congratulations to this courageous and gutsy lady.

S.A. Owais, Srinagar

A Disappointed Reader

This is in response to some of the articles written in MANUSHI by Madhu Kishwar in the last two years.

First, the article titled *Wargasm* in Issue No. 106 with that smutty cartoon of prime ministers of India and Pakistan showing their genitalia, each boasting that his is bigger than the other's. It was sexist, cheap, literally below the belt and demeaning a serious nuclear debate, dragging it down to male-female level. If, at the time of these nuclear tests, the PMs of India and Pakistan were Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Ms. Benazir Bhutto and if you had titled your article 'Pre-Menstrual War-Syndrome' with a cartoon showing the women lifting their lower garments, saying to each other 'I made you bleed more', it would still have been equally sexist, cheap, below the belt and demeaning the nuclear debate.

I am sure a well informed and accomplished editor like you knows that when the first underground nuclear test in India was conducted in 1974 Indira Gandhi - a woman was the prime minister. On the Pakistani side, Madam Bhutto also was quite busy during her tenure building the Pakistani nuclear arsenal, getting

technology from China, stealing from the US and buying from every available source. She didn't do that because she was a woman. Dragging the nuclear issue to male-female level is a distortion. It was probably prompted by the Indian Foreign Minister's comment: "We are not *chhakkas* (eunuchs)!" You thought it was the Minister (being a man after all) who brought the issue down to its sexual context. The cartoon embarrassed me because I started two-three MANUSHI lifetime subscriptions in India for the teenage, female children of my closest friends and relatives.

We have a cry-baby reputation in our relationship with Pakistan. India failed to inflict decisive victories against Pakistani aggressions of 1949 and 1965 until Mrs. Gandhi accomplished that task in 1971. And yet, all Indian leaders - even Mrs. Gandhi - always lost diplomatic wars with Pakistan. India, the victim, had no supporters in the international political war, except Soviet Union and the Communist block. While Pakistan was a Western (SEATO) ally and being an Islamic state, was supported by the Middle East. India had no religious or ideological friends.

Until recently, Pakistan and its leaders, whether dictators or elected prime ministers, always proved too smart for India in the international arena for our naïve, peace loving

leaders. Whatever the failures of the current BJP government, Kargil was the first war that India won both militarily and politically. Today, India has gained a lot more credibility in international circles after Pakistan's Kargil mis-adventure. Like every Indian leader and people of India, I wish Pakistan well but I also wish they would leave us alone. That will not happen until Pakistan realizes one cardinal rule: those who live by the sword, die by the sword.

Your *Wargasm* article lacked awareness of this historical perspective. The nuclear issue did not come up suddenly just because both the PMs happened to be men. I have proved that by my reference to Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto.

Here's the historical perspective. When China attacked India in October 1962, Indian defense factories were producing tin cans instead of bullets—all because Nehru believed in *Panchsheel* so blindly that he did not see China's perfidy coming. We were far from ready. Nehru had always sided with the Soviet Union in most of the international issues, but Russia's Khrushchev then declared that India may be an ally and a friend, but China was its brother. So poor Nehru had to run to the US for help. Help arrived, thanks to President Kennedy, faster than you could expect even from a close political ally.

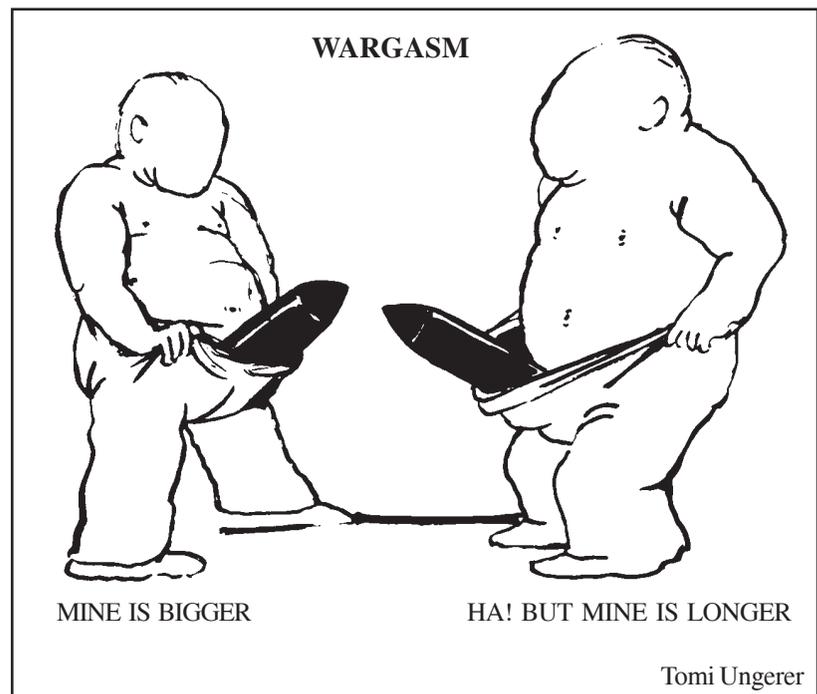
After humiliating India, China unilaterally withdrew, though not from all of the land it occupied. Thus, China won both in war as well as in peace. India, with all its talk of world peace, lost its face in the international community. Subsequently, China conducted nuclear tests in 1964. In the light of the Chinese nuclear tests (despite their own millions starving)

and the earlier NEFA invasion, I applaud the Indian leaders for not rushing to join the nuclear club until 1999, when we were compelled by Pakistan to develop these weapons.

In this context, it is irrelevant how many Indians were/are starving. Going nuclear is not a matter of national pride but of national defense. India went nuclear 35 years after its invading neighbour China did so and many years after the emergence of China-Pakistan nuclear axis and their theft of nuclear secrets from the US. We were not the first in the sub-continent to go nuclear but the last. We were unwillingly pushed into going that route. Your *Wargasm* article ignored all this. We all make mistakes, but ignorance is not bliss in politics. And in matters of national defense, it amounts to murder of the soldiers who fight for the country.

Now I come to another article – *Thanks to Smugglers*. I quote from your article: “the rulers in each country have cynically manipulated

people's emotions and anxieties for their selfish electoral purposes and deliberately generated hysteria..... in the name of protecting national interests against enemies across the border”. Then you repeat a joke by an office bearer of the Peshawar Chamber of Commerce about the enmity between India and Pakistan implying that it is the fault of politicians, that they promote wars and bloodshed to keep the people of both countries frightened of each other. What you say is true of Pakistani government and its leaders, though may be not of its people. But it is certainly not true of the Indian government. Implying agreement with that joke, you violated the basic responsibility of a good reporter: ‘It is the duty of a reporter to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.’ To equate the Indian government and its leaders with those of Pakistan, is to equate the victim with the victimiser. If the Pakistani people have also been victims in these wars, the



blame squarely lies with the Pakistani leaders-military and democratic, not with India or its leaders.

India has never attacked any country but has been attacked thrice by Pakistan and once by China. The threat of these two countries has been hanging over India's head like a sword. Every Pakistani I meet here, blames India for breaking Pakistan into two pieces. India or Indira Gandhi (much as I disliked her for raising sycophancy into an art form) did not butcher the millions of East Pakistanis. Nor did she push out the millions who poured into India from East Pakistan. It was Yahya Khan's butchery. I am sure you, Ms. Kishwar, don't mean to contradict the late Mujibur Rehman or Jack Anderson of New York Times or the United Nations records of what happened then. And what about the 1965 war in the Ran of Kutchh? Prime Minister Shastri (the most honest Prime Minister we ever had) did not start that war and bloodshed between the two countries for his own electoral purposes. And what about Pakistani marauders overtaking Kashmir soon after Independence? If your writing is to be believed, then Nehru started that invasion to start the enmity that he needed to stay in power. And let us take the fourth war, Kargil. Vajpayee did not plan the whole thing, while he was on his Lahore bus tour. By equating Indian and Pakistani leaders and governments, you are not only trampling on the graves of Nehru and Shastri, but on the graves of millions of Indian soldiers who died for this country.

In the same article *Thanks to Smugglers* there is another howler. I quote: "... one cannot escape becoming aware of how unwelcome Indians are virtually everywhere.



People are either ignorant about or indifferent to India, or ..have deep prejudices about us ('Indians') as a people...except in Pakistan." I can't vouch for your 'experience' in Pakistan. But you are wrong to say Indians are unwelcome virtually everywhere. I say this from my own experience and from the many articles I read on Indians in America, some of which I have sent you. Indians are occupying high positions in the US. Same is the case in Britain and countries like Hong Kong. That could not be without the appreciation and recognition of their peers and superiors. Indians are prospering in America, in England and almost everywhere else, except in India. And from what I hear from my daily interactions and discussions with my American friends and colleagues (I have only American friends), Indians as a people are definitely held in higher esteem than those from Muslim countries, including Pakistan.

A few years ago, that 'greatest of the great' spokesperson of Indian politics, Shabana Azmi, on a visit to the US, was asked who should take the first step towards peace bet-

ween India and Pakistan. Her sanctimonious (and instant) reply was that India being the big country should take the first step, and should understand Pakistan's fears about its bigness. Just how often is India supposed to take the first step? Nehru took the initiative after Pakistan's invasion in Kashmir soon after Independence by going to the UN. Shastri took the lead after the Pak perfidy in Kutchh, which led to the Tashkent agreement. Even Mrs. Indira Gandhi took the lead again after the Yahya dagger in Bangladesh, which culminated in the Simla agreement. And Pakistan has violated every agreement and every good faith India has shown over the years. Recently, Vajpayee took the lead with his bus diplomacy and the result was Kargil. Just how often do you shake hands with a neighbour who (unbeknown to you) has a gun in the other hand pointed at your forehead? And how often does one develop a friendship with a fist? How often does one have peace talks with a country that has a history of violence and terrorism against India?

I have met a few Pakistanis during my twenty-three years' stay here in the US. I always avoid political discussions with them. But none of them can avoid politics and anti-India rhetoric without any provocation. In fact, after listening to his raving and ranting about India, I told one Pakistani office-mate of mine that we should leave the enmity and the politics of the sub-continent out of our discussions. No such luck.

The last Pakistani friend (let's call her 'Sameen') I had, now lives in Canada. When she was here, we were good friends (just friends). We talked regularly on the phone and went out for dinner or lunch occasionally. On

those occasions, she would bring up Kashmir. After keeping quiet and changing the subject a few times, I finally disputed the things she said. When she blamed India for not holding a plebiscite in Kashmir (as you did sometime back), I pointed out (as I did to you) that a plebiscite was conditional to Pakistan withdrawing its forces from occupied Kashmir. When she denied that, I got a copy of the UN resolution to prove my point. Her response? “Well, my brother told me something contrary, and I believe him.” Every time Sameen’s mother came to visit her (I never met her mother), I had to listen to even more of anti-India rhetoric after she left. Once she said, her mother regularly visits her relatives in India (somewhere in Gujarat), and according to her mother, all the Muslims in India want to migrate to Pakistan, if only Pakistan would allow them. I doubted that and said the Muslims of India have to be either ignorant or stupid to want to move to Pakistan when Pakistani economy is in much worse straits than India’s. She said the common bond was religion – Islam. I was waiting for that. I asked her if that was so, why did Bangladesh break away from Pakistan? She said, “Oh! That is India’s fault. India provoked the Bangladeshis into breaking away from Pakistan!” We were back to square one. Again India is to blame for all of Pakistan’s woes, including the freedom of Bangladesh from the oppression of Pakistan. When I told her to read the Jack Anderson papers of the *New York Times*, she said she didn’t need to read that because America is anti-Islam and, therefore, anti-Pakistan. How does one reason with that? About Kargil, she said, “We were winning in Kargil. That stupid Nawaaz Sharif had

to go to the US and obey their orders because he got bribed.” Her howlers are as bad as yours. And these are the Pakistanis who love India and Indians!

In the same article, you talk about Indian films and songs being so popular in Pakistan. But the reason is obvious. Every Indian knows that Pakistan does not have a film industry worth a dime. None of the big singers, actors and actresses who moved to Pakistan achieved half as much glory and success as those who stayed here. Whatever happened to Noor Jahan? Dilip Kumar was smart. If he had moved to Pakistan, he would have ended up doing some inconsequential films and the world would have lost one of its greatest actors. I know some Indians in America who have now started watching Pakistani videos. Why? Not because they love Pakistan or Pakistanis, but because their quality has improved significantly. If the people of Pakistan are so India-loving, and are helpless against their own dictators, how did this hatred and anti-India rhetoric continue even under the supposedly democratic leaders of

Pakistan? And one of them was a woman!

Pakistan has four provinces. And without the force of the army and the dictators, many of them, in a free vote would opt out of Pakistan. These are games that India too can play. But India has consistently behaved in a responsible manner. If Pakistanis’ love was so overflowing, how come the number of Hindus has almost disappeared in Pakistan since 1947 and the number of Muslims in India keeps growing? I would also recommend that you read Pakistani historian K.K. Aziz’s book *The Murder of History in Pakistan*. The entire history of both countries since Independence, is full of one sided mischief. Even the Maulana Syed Ali of Shia Jama Masjid agrees: I quote him: “The aim of Pakistani rulers since its inception has been to disturb peace in India. Therefore, all such ‘un-Islamic’ activities (like continuous brutal killings of Sikhs and other minorities not only in Kashmir but all over India) should be condemned by the followers of Islam.”

I can give you many examples that are contrary to your ‘experience’ in Pakistan. Pakistani women who recently came on a peace mission to India recently went back to be branded as traitors! Indian women returning from Pakistan did not obviously receive such abhorrent treatment. The Hindi movie *Border*, created near riots in Britain because the Pakistanis objected to the movie. Now are these the same Pakistanis who love India? What about all those non-governmental Pakistanis who bring up the Kashmir, and the oppression of minorities’ issue, even in non-political international forums where it is irrelevant?



The father of India's freedom movement, Lokmanya Tilak, in his paper *Kesari*, in the context of our British rulers' continuous oppression, asked: "When are we going to get mad?" It is time to get mad at people who propagate such naïve assumptions of Pakistani goodwill towards India and Indians. After years of denying that their own soldiers were supporting the Mujahadeens and sponsoring terrorism, now the world has finally seen the ugly face of their duplicitous policies. Their own commander admitted that Pakistani soldiers were indeed fighting in the guise of Mujahadeens in Kargil. We cannot and should not have friendly relations or peace talks with a country that sponsors terrorism against us.

We are not the fools we were under the Congress rule. Why do you think a party like BJP has come to power? Not because of some convenient political alliance. Why did it get the muscle to form such alliances? Is it because majority of Hindus have suddenly turned communal and agree with the BJP on everything? No. The general populace is sick and tired of the pseudo-secular policies of the Congress and other leaders which have brought nothing but international humiliation and cost us thousands of innocent lives.

For the first time in the history of Independent India, there is respect for India in the international circles. India now enjoys better credibility with almost every country in the world, except, of course, the Muslim countries who will always see everything through a religious eye. The BJP is taking a tough stand that should have been done a long time

back. It is sad that we are not equally firm with China, as well, who still occupies our land. China and Pakistan are the two most untrustworthy countries in the world. One day, the world (and you) will come to regret coddling Pakistan and China. Think of what China did to Tibet. No, Ms. Kishwar, you are backing the wrong horse, and you are barking up the wrong tree. I don't believe in "My country, right or wrong", but since 1947, we have been bending backwards to improve relations with Pakistan and have been stabbed in the back every time. It's time we stopped all talk of building bridges with Pakistan. A bridge needs at least two foundations. One of them is missing and only Pakistan can do something about it. The talk of Pakistani 'goodwill' will leave doors open for another dagger in our back.

I am disappointed to see that your 'independent' eye is not so independent after all. I sent you an article by a French writer on the attacks on Christians. I also sent you an article titled *Lack of Good Governance Seen As Country's Bane* by J.N. Dixit, our former Foreign Secretary. I am sending you some clippings – one where a Christian, pastor Watts says that some of the criminal elements arrested in recent attacks on churches and Christian groups vindicated New Delhi's charge that these attacks were orchestrated by foreign organizations (read Pakistan) to destabilize India. I have also sent you a news clipping that says that a Muslim IAF officer has been held in church blasts. Then there is the article by Harold Gould, a Professor at the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Virginia. These are the kinds of articles I expected from you.

I look at MANUSHI as a magazine for social change. I realize it is not always possible to stay away from politics while trying to affect social change. But if you are going to write about politics, for God's sake, tell us the truth, and the full history. Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it and God knows, how many times we have repeated that past, in our relations with and handling of Pakistan and China. Someone said: There are three sides to a story, your side, my side and the facts. I see in your writings your version of 'truth' based on your one-sided 'experiences', 'observations' minus history and balance. I am disappointed.

D.V. Gokhale, Los Angeles, USA

Response

You got it wrong if you think I equate Indian and Pakistani leaders on these issues. Pakistan has indeed played foul time and again. However, our leaders have not been very astute and far sighted either. If we put our own house in order, the Pakistani ability to create trouble would be greatly reduced. As for your criticism of the wargasm cartoon, you are wrong in assuming that the two boastful men represented the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers. This particular cartoon is one of a whole series of cartoons by German artist Tomi Ungerer, published in 1984. It is a general statement on nuclear race rather than a comment on Indo-Pak relations. I still hold that it is one of the most perceptive statements on the mindset that goes into governments escalating such a deadly competition for destructive potential.

—Madhu Kishwar