

WISCOMP

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Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama

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Greetings from WISCOMP!

As the first *Update* of 2007 prepares to go to press, we at WISCOMP are engaged in both consolidating cumulative lessons of the last eight years and devising new approaches to understand security and build peace. WISCOMP's sustained initiatives in conflict transformation and peacebuilding have proven to be trailblazers for individuals and organizations working in the area.

Over the years, WISCOMP has contributed to a corpus of knowledge – both empirical and theoretical – on issues in security studies, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, particularly their intersection with gender concerns. This academic and action research is available in the

form of WISCOMP publications: *Perspectives*, *Discussion Papers*, *Special Projects*, the series *Kashmir: Building Constituencies of Peace*, and *Resource Books*. Each of these publications brings forth a new issue or perspective: it has been WISCOMP's objective to tell stories that remain untold, to initiate discussion and debate on issues that have been neglected, to hear voices that have been long suppressed, and to understand and present the world as it is – complex and dynamic. Seeking to place gender concerns squarely within the parameters of the evolving discourse on security, WISCOMP conducts and facilitates research on a range of themes such as Identity and Armed Conflict; Gender and the Politics of Water Security; Gender and the Dynamics of Displacement; Gender and Terrorism; Women and Peacebuilding; and Gender and Peacekeeping. WISCOMP's work recognizes the binaries of traditional and non-traditional approaches to security and seeks to understand the linkages between the two.

WISCOMP's Fellowship program has provided South Asian scholars and practitioners the resources and guidance to engage in research. The WISCOMP *Perspectives* and *Discussion Papers* present their work, along with the *Special Projects* series. The India-Pakistan Conflict

Transformation program; *Athwaas*, the action research and peacebuilding project in Kashmir; symposia; roundtables; and workshops; have led to the publication of reports, research monographs and working papers. The large geographical ambit of the issues that the publications examine is matched only by the depth which the scholars bring to the discourse. Available in the public domain, these publications form an invaluable resource for researchers, academicians, policy-makers and conflict resolution practitioners.

This edition of the newsletter provides a glimpse into the profile of WISCOMP's work and reviews recent publications on refugee law and violence against women; women in the armed forces; and impact of violence on women's education in J&K.

The newsletter also details recent events organized by WISCOMP – the Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding Workshop (December 12-14, 2006; Chennai) and the Peace Journalism workshop (30 and 31 March, 2007; New Delhi). As WISCOMP seeks to forge partnerships and collaborations with institutions in Pakistan, the newsletter describes WISCOMP's first step in this direction: a WISCOMP team consultation with Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore.

– The WISCOMP Team

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WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) is an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, New Delhi. The Foundation brings together people of different faiths, creeds, professions and nationalities in a manner that respects and encourages diversity of beliefs and practices and promotes and devises strategies to transform this commitment into an instrument of social change. It works to develop nonviolent methods, improve communication between religion and science, and secure human rights and democratic freedom.

Building discourse... Enriching praxis

One significant component of WISCOMP's mission has been theory-building and innovative research on holistic paradigms that addresses the transformation of conflicts, and encourages new thinking on concepts of security. WISCOMP offers a broad range of resources in the form of in-house publications, bibliographies, research studies, capacity building modules, and training programs.

WISCOMP has conducted extensive **in-house research**. It has also documented the proceedings of its workshops, conferences and seminars which have been witness to inclusive, nuanced discussions on issues such as reconciliation and justice, peace journalism, women reporting conflict, and multi-track diplomacy. More than 35 resource books and reports have been published till date.

In addition to in-house research and writing, WISCOMP has commissioned research projects through its fellowship program *Scholar of Peace*. The fellowship publications are authored by individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds including academia, social movements, gender studies, peacebuilding, diplomacy, human rights, defense, law, business, media and the arts. In the last six years, WISCOMP has awarded over 60 fellowships in the three delineated categories: Academic Research, Media projects and Special Projects. The outcomes of the Academic and Media Research fellowships constitute the growing body of WISCOMP work published as *Perspectives* and *Discussion Papers* which now number 26 and 16 respectively. Several of these publications have since

been reviewed in the print media and have been widely circulated and discussed at various fora. The academic studies undertaken provide **comprehensive information** on hitherto neglected issues and offer options for nonviolent transformation in regions of protracted conflict. Media fellowship awardees publish a stipulated number of articles in established publications and this **collection of articles** is then reproduced as a compilation of reports and features on a particular issue.

Further, the Special Projects employ various media including theater, art, dance, dialogue groups and the visual and print media, to develop inclusive and gender-sensitive perspectives. Special project awardees may also choose to write **monographs that accompany the creative product**.

In addition to the *Scholar of Peace* fellowship program, each program at WISCOMP has generated a body of research and led to invaluable research spin-offs. The publications often offer policy recommendations that pave the way for a socio-political environment marked by security, equity and just peace.

A significant milestone in WISCOMP's effort towards **engendering security** is the South-Asian collaborative research project titled, *Transcending Conflict: Gender and Non-traditional Security*. This initiative facilitated research, published as monographs, by scholars from **Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and India** on areas of conflict within the country of their residence.

The **Conflict Transformation workshop** reports are published as resource books on the theory and practice of Conflict Transformation. The Conflict Transformation working papers series focuses on particular issues and themes in the field of Conflict Transformation. Scholars and practitioners of



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“Giving Peace a Chance” WISCOMP Peacebuilding Workshop, Chennai

WISCOMP in association with Anasuya Foundation and MOP Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai, organized a peacebuilding workshop on December 12-14, 2006. The workshop, conducted by Ms. Manjrika Sewak, Senior Program Officer, WISCOMP, was attended by 22 participants, both students and faculty members, from streams as diverse as Mathematics, Business Administration and Journalism.

- The participants were introduced to **Peacebuilding** as a field of engagement. The discussions were punctuated by the screening of films, *Journey to Understanding* (Jewish-German dialogue) and *The Enemy has a Face* (Israeli-Palestinian dialogue).
- The participants practiced elementary **skills of conflict transformation** – active listening, dialogue and negotiation. They also participated in conflict analysis exercises wherein they analyzed the Tamil Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka, the polarization of opinion on affirmative action in India, and inter-personal conflicts.
- Bringing to the foreground the interface between **gender and peacebuilding**, the workshop facilitated thinking on gender roles in conflict, and what specific roles women can play in peacebuilding.



Ms. Manjrika Sewak (extreme right) conducts the peacebuilding workshop

The participants said that the workshop made them feel empowered to “give peace a chance.” Following the success of the workshop, WISCOMP and Anasuya Foundation are now exploring possibilities for collaboration on peace education curriculum development, and establishment of a peace research-praxis center in Chennai.

Wherever John Lennon is, he's smiling.

With inputs from workshop participant Poorva Chakravarthy.



Congratulations!

Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder & Hon. Director, WISCOMP, has been awarded the Padmashri by The President of India for her distinguished contribution to the field of Literature and Education in India, in the civilian honors announced by the Government of India for 2007.

She is also Principal, Lady Shri Ram College, which under her stewardship has been consistently rated as the best women's college in India and amongst the top five overall. She serves on several boards including co-chair of the Academic Council of the UN University of Peace, Costa Rica; Governing Board of Co-Existence International, USA; Centre for Policy Research; The Shri Ram School; Regional Centre for Strategic Studies; Centre for Peace & Conflict Resolution etc. She has authored the book *Pakistan in Transition* and has contributed to various books and journals. She was the first woman member on the National Security Advisory Board, and is a member of several multi-track peace initiatives especially in Kashmir and between India and Pakistan. She has also received the Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi Award, the Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Education, the Shiromani Mahila Award and the Delhi Citizen Forum Award etc.

Exploring Peace Journalism: A Workshop

WISCOMP organized a two-day workshop, *Exploring Peace Journalism*, on March 30-31, 2007, in New Delhi. It was conceptualized to help translate the principles of peace journalism into concrete tools for action, especially in the context of media reportage on Jammu and Kashmir. With this workshop, WISCOMP initiated a new project, seeking to engage with approaches to conflict reportage in the media - focusing on Jammu and Kashmir. Acknowledging that media can powerfully shape discourses around conflict, the project seeks to explore alternative media frameworks that could contribute to promoting peace in the region.

Facilitating interaction between media students, and journalists from Jammu and Kashmir, and Pakistan, the workshop aimed at developing a new media lexicon for regions affected by protracted conflict. Some of the resource persons at the workshop included Head of News of Radio Kashmir, Bashir Malik; Islamabad-based journalist and researcher, Zafarullah Khan; Karachi-based journalist Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri; faculty members from universities in Jammu and Kashmir; and former television journalist Alpana Kishore, among various other journalists from national media organizations.

The workshop looked to providing an enabling space to:

- Appreciate the basic principles of peace journalism and identify its scope
- Comprehend the history of peace journalism and how it has developed as a field. Examine how insights from conflict theory can advance the lucidity of peace journalism
- Translate the principles of peace journalism into concrete tools for action
- Critically interrogate the goals and principles of peace journalism



Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, WISCOMP, and Ms. Nidhi Razdan of NDTV, share their insights with the participants

Peace Journalism is a new approach to reporting conflict that is a fairer, broader and more accurate way of framing stories. **It is not passive reportage of a violent event and does not gloss over casualties.**

Some of the learnings from the workshop included:

- **Violence needs to be placed in context** - framing a story to not only emphasize the bloodshed but also to explain the reasons for its cause, shed light on the invisible effects of conflict, and encourage an understanding of the issues behind the hostility.
- Instead of focusing merely on flashpoints of overt violence in a conflict, media reportage must highlight the need, and efforts, to build peace in a conflict-affected region.
- While reporting on a conflict, drawing on conflict theory paves way for better analysis. For instance, **conflict mapping exercises** could make for important journalistic tools to analyze the conflict and the multiple stakeholders therein.
- Semantics play a crucial role in how a party or conflict is perceived. The choice of words used in a media report can significantly sensationalize, demonize or even exonerate an individual/group involved.

Lynch and McGoldrick's film, *News from the Holy Land*, provided an informed perspective on the role of a peace journalist. The students were also provided with an opportunity to interact with leading television journalist Nidhi Razdan of NDTV, who shared her experiences of traveling to Pakistan-Administered Kashmir.



Participants engage in a group exercise during the workshop



Participants and Resource Persons along with the WISCOMP team

Cross-border Collaborations: India-Pakistan Youth Initiative

Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath and Ms. Manjrika Sewak visited **Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore**, Pakistan, in April 2007 as part of WISCOMP's efforts to build multi-level, sustainable, civil society partnerships between India and Pakistan.

Since the inception of the WISCOMP India-Pakistan Conflict Transformation Workshops in 1999, Kinnaird College has been a partner with WISCOMP in building dialogue between third generation Pakistanis and Indians. It has contributed a sizable contingent of participants every year for the Workshops in Delhi. WISCOMP sees Kinnaird College as a natural ally in its efforts to take forward this peacebuilding initiative, establishing a unique synergy between civil societies in the two countries.

The goals of the WISCOMP team visit to Lahore were:

- ✓ To strengthen the strategic partnership between Kinnaird College and WISCOMP in their efforts to **facilitate dialogue and build trust** between third generation Pakistani and Indian women and men.
- ✓ To explore the possibility of transforming the annual Delhi-based Conflict Transformation Workshop into a **bi-annual, collaborative initiative**, located in both Lahore and New Delhi.
- ✓ The first collaborative initiative between the two institutions – a Convention titled **People Building Peace** scheduled for October 2007 – will seek to widen the constituencies for peace by facilitating a three-track interaction between:
 - Kinnaird College faculty, staff and students and WISCOMP delegates;
 - Pakistani and Indian alumni of the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshops; and,
 - Diverse sectors of Pakistani civil society and the Indian delegates.

Dr. Gopinath met with Prof. Mira Phailbus (Principal, Kinnaird College) and with Faculty to discuss plans for the *People Building Peace* Convention in October 2007.

The Convention will seek to:

- ✓ Lay the foundation for building Conflict Transformation Workshop **alumni partnerships** (such as the idea of a cross-border peacebuilding journal, joint writing projects, and dialogues and workshops co-facilitated and co-taught by Pakistani and Indian alumni);

- ✓ Develop proposals for **collaborations between Colleges** in the two countries to introduce **degree/diploma/certificate programs in peacebuilding** for undergraduate students as well as to those professionals who would like to return to a university context to acquire analytical and practical skills in conflict resolution that can be applied in their respective areas of specialization.

Over the last six years, the WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Workshop has received feedback from workshop alumni on the need to shift the geographical location of the youth trainings and dialogues – which have so far been held in New Delhi – to Pakistan. This would **broaden the circle of engagement** to include diverse civil society actors from Pakistan. The *People Building Peace* Convention, to be hosted by Kinnaird College, is a response to this articulated need.

In addition, WISCOMP held meetings in Lahore to explore how it could facilitate partnerships between educational institutions in India and Pakistan. Beginning with Kinnaird College for Women (Lahore) and Lady Shri Ram College for Women (New Delhi), the initiative will gradually expand to include several more colleges and universities in the two countries. Titled *Educating for Peace*, this initiative will provide a context for college students to spend at least a month at an educational institution in the other country – engaging with the worldviews and beliefs of young people from across the border.



Prof. Mira Phailbus, Principal, Kinnaird College for Women; and Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, WISCOMP, in Lahore, Pakistan

This cross-border partnership has been forged and nurtured with the belief that “education is a conceptualization of our experiences”. In other words, although conflict transformation can be taught in the classroom, it is more effective when the learner can actually experience the process and reflect on it. This is the assumption with which the above mentioned face-to-face dialogues have been designed.

Having met the goals we set out for ourselves six years ago, we hope that our new peacebuilding initiatives, located in Pakistan, will influence the direction of our collaborative endeavors with civil society groups in Pakistan and India. In this respect, the WISCOMP team visit to Lahore in April 2007 and the *People Building Peace* Convention in October 2007 represent the finale of our six-year old Conflict Transformation initiative and mark the commencement of a **new phase in the lifecycle of our peacebuilding work in South Asia.**



Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath and Ms. Manjrika Sewak with the Kinnaird Organizing Committee

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Peacebuilding, such as Prof. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Prof. Kevin Clements, Mr. Bernd Papenkort, and Dr. S.P. Udayakumar, have contributed to this series. Also the Collaborative Research Award instituted by WISCOMP has led to the publication of a joint study by an Indian and Pakistani, Michelle Baxter and Zahid Shahab Ahmad, titled *Attitudes of Teachers in India and Pakistan: Texts and Contexts*. More such collaborative studies are in the pipeline.

WISCOMP's project in **Kashmir** which has sought to engage particularly with women, mediapersons, and educationists, has contributed vastly to WISCOMP's action research component and process documentation. The *Stakeholders in Dialogue* series documents the workshops and conventions conducted by

WISCOMP as part of the program which has taken a lead in bringing together people from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

WISCOMP's symposia and roundtables lead to publication of issue-specific reports. Some of the published work deals with the changing contours of diplomacy, and reconciliation in South Asia.

The publications provide inputs and insights to scholars, practitioners in the area of security and peacebuilding, policymakers, diplomats and educationists. These seek to stimulate engagement between policymakers and civil society groups in ways that strengthen efforts for peace and security.

WISCOMP Update, a bi-annual newsletter, provides information on WISCOMP events and projects; facilitates networking among WISCOMP alumni and individuals working in the fields of gender studies, peace and security; foregrounds the work of young entrants; and highlights recent research findings in fields such as security and conflict transformation.

WISCOMP Perspectives and Discussion Papers, series of research publications, showcase the work of the *Scholar of Peace* Fellows on a range of subjects such as *Women in the Kashmir Peace Process*, *Gender Sensitive Alternative Dispute Resolution Models*, *The Role of the Media in Facilitating an Inclusive Security Discourse* et al. The series seeks to build linkages with the larger regional and international community working in similar areas.

WISCOMP Resource Books present the highlights of programs and projects such as the South Asia symposia, the Conflict Transformation program, Kashmir: Building Constituencies of Peace and other roundtables and conferences. These books include information on the outcomes, lessons learned, best practices and recommendations for praxis and policy.

The Website provides information on the activities and programs of WISCOMP including internship and fellowship opportunities. It also offers links to organizations, scholars and practitioners working in the areas of gender studies, security, conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Louise Vella, WISCOMP Intern (February-March 2007), reflects on her time at WISCOMP...

Sitting on a tram in Melbourne, I try not to constantly compare my life in Delhi to the one I have here now that I am home. While Melbourne is so familiar, I am now seeing it through new eyes, with new knowledge, visions, and experiences. Having spent the last year away from Australia, I was fortunate to get the opportunity of completing a five-week internship at WISCOMP. Being a student of Peace Studies, particularly interested in Conflict Resolution and Transformation, and with an emerging curiosity about gender and the roles women play in conflict and its resolution, the opportunity to intern at WISCOMP immediately appealed to me.

Studying nonviolence and conflict resolution can be a hard journey. At the same time while learning of these worthy and inspiring frameworks for peace, one is faced with a world seemingly full of conflict, war and violence. While trying to maintain optimism and hope, it is hard to not be discouraged by the cynical reaction to the possibility of peace. Not surprisingly, I was very keen to work for and be involved with a respected organization that similarly cares for women, conflict resolution and transformation, and peacebuilding.

My time at WISCOMP presented three different and varied opportunities of learning for me. One was the practical work and research I was asked to do for the office. This included writing a concept note for an upcoming workshop on Peace Journalism and doing some research on Pakistan for a conference. Peace Journalism presented to me a new component of peace studies that I was previously unaware of. Researching the way the media can present stories, seemingly objectively, but with an obvious slant for war, has made me aware of the importance of responsible reporting, especially, but not only restricted to, times of conflict.



Seeing the obstacles, the effort and energy, the routine work, and the daily administration of the office provided me with a window to understand the working of not-for-profit organizations. The biggest lesson I learnt was in regards to the (then) upcoming conference in Lahore, for alumni of WISCOMP from India and Pakistan. Due to the inability to obtain visas for all of the

participants, the conference was unfortunately canceled. This was the first time I saw the conflict between India and Pakistan actually affect the day-to-day plans of people I knew living in Delhi. It demonstrated how hostility between nations is not only limited to or located in situations of violence and conflict, but can also be delivered with more subtle disruptions.

Finally, the internship at WISCOMP gave me the incredible opportunity to live and work in Delhi. Being submerged into a culture that in many ways mirrors my own, but with many obvious and subtle differences that one cannot put one's finger on, I was able to learn so much purely by observing and living. Getting to work every morning in an auto-rickshaw, watching the streets, the activity, the life and the routine, I was constantly filled with emotion and wonder. While life for me in Delhi was in many ways familiar, comfortable and fun, now that I have returned to Melbourne, I am beginning to understand and register many of the differences. Besides the obvious tangible changes (no more autos or cycle-rickshaws!), I am beginning to comprehend the subtle differences in ways of communication, and sense of time and space.

It is with this new framework for understanding society, the new critical lenses I have developed through my research at WISCOMP, and the experience of being in an office environment, that I now return to the routine life in Melbourne.

WISCOMP's India-Pakistan Conflict Transformation program has, since its inception in 2001, grown to Here, alumni Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri and Sharmeen Irfan, share their learnings from the Conflict

Thinking anew on Kashmir

When it comes to diplomacy, Kashmir is always one step forward and three steps back. Both India and Pakistan have learnt to live with it. While India inhibits from relinquishing the trauma of carrying on with Kashmir's burden, Pakistan's new-found pessimism has boiled down to the following equation: demilitarization of the entire Kashmir region and self-governance. This may mean anything: independence, exercise of joint sovereignty, or realizing All Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's doctrine of United States of Kashmir.

All said and done, Kashmir is still far from being resolved. It continues to sabotage prospects of harmony and reconciliation between India and Pakistan. The establishments of India and Pakistan, respectively, are quite adept at sustaining the status quo – which, of course, serves their vested interests.

Irrespective of the partnership that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President General Pervez Musharraf have carved out in realizing the dream of around 1.5 billion people of the region for attaining peace and prosperity, India-Pakistan relations are, in one way or another, hostage to domestic compulsions. No political constituency has come to fore, neither in Pakistan nor in India, that can boast of a departure from its stated positions. Nonetheless, some courage has been exhibited by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference leadership – but that is again subject to the *realpolitik* of India and Pakistan. Kashmiris, on either side of the border, are thus clueless about their ensuing future.

In such an equation, opportunity is likely to be seized by international actors and with the passage of time India and Pakistan will

come to lose the argument that the lingering dispute is bilateral to the core.

The earthquake of October 8, 2005, unfolded renewed diplomatic options that otherwise would not have been possible. By opening up the LoC at five points, both the countries, for the first time, broke the tendency to preserve the status quo. The opening of points at the LoC has not been easy to stomach in either India or Pakistan: conservatives on both sides insist on the preservation of the status quo. India is worried about the flow of "terrorists" across the LoC, while Pakistan does not want uncontrolled access for India.



Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri

The master CBM of opening the LoC needs to be cashed in on. It can bring about political and economic bounties.

If the words of APHC Chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq spoken in New Delhi on November 16, 2005, while addressing the Hindustan Times seminar on leadership, are taken as benchmark for any evolutionary dialogue, then both India and Pakistan are not far from reconciling on Kashmir. Mirwaiz said, "...the plan should be such which neither promotes nor rules out any conceivable settlement of the dispute – accession in whole or in part to India or Pakistan, the eventual joining or separation of any two regions,

independence or quasi-independence etc."

Subsequently, Azad Kashmir's Prime Minister Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan broke the ice on behalf of the Pakistani establishment and called for "demilitarization of the whole Kashmir region and self-governance."

Moreover, credence has been supplemented by President Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, when they respectively voiced support for 'joint supervision' and a 'peace treaty doctrine'. Though both the agendas are not free from irritants in the decorum of sovereignty argument, but at least this brings relief for the constituencies in India and Pakistan which have been canvassing for a break in status quo. Countless NGOs, civil society leaders and the intelligentsia find a safe room in such notions of reconciliation, away from the eye-ball to eye-ball stand off of 2001-02 on the borders of India and Pakistan.

Reading between the lines, both the leaders from either side of the divide seemed to have dumped quite a number of traditional options that were otherwise repeated as mantras for the last 58 years. The crux of the issue lies in Islamabad and New Delhi deciding to take the Kashmiris on board and converting the 'bilateral dialogue' into a 'triangular affair.'

A new thinking on Kashmir has dawned in. And both sides have come to embrace it to a great extent. At least two common denominators may be identified: a) to demilitarize the arena of conflict and; b) move away from stated positions. That is what one can assume from India's doctrine of "out of box" settlement, and making the "borders irrelevant", and Pakistan's desire for "walking an extra mile."

encompass a network of 150 alumni from the two countries.
Transformation workshops and their views on the peace process and the challenges ahead.

Dreams lost, Destinies unfulfilled

The new realization is an outcome of both domestic and international compulsions. Overlying all these are the broader economic, social, political, demographic and resource crises looming in the near future. While Kashmir is an 'emotional issue' for the *ihadis* and for many ordinary Pakistanis, strategists recognize that the critical conflict is over the region's water resources. Pakistan will suffer an acute shortfall of water well before 2010, unless new resources and reservoirs are made available, and on the bounteous Chenab, these can only be safely and advantageously constructed in Indian J&K.

Finally, the external environment is changing dramatically, and even the qualified 'tolerance of terror' extended by the United States is now being diluted, as Washington seeks radically improved relations – military, economic and technological – with India. Islamabad has learnt to swallow the bitter pill. Therefore, it is not making much ado of the new nexus and is trying to explore new avenues of reconciliation with Tel Aviv – a smart chess mate, indeed.

Similarly, there is reason to believe that China's incentives to encourage Pakistan are being progressively diluted by growing interests in trade with India, and in regional stability, as Beijing single-mindedly pursues its goal of economic reform and expansion.

These factors are now being recognized by the thinking Pakistani, and are acutely confining President General Pervez Musharraf's room for maneuver. The "Kashmir front" is no longer sustainable, as multiple "internal & external fronts" open up. This is the key to Pakistan's increasing "reasonableness" on Kashmir. Let Delhi respond in a statesman-like way!

October 26, 2006: I and a couple of fellow Pakistanis arrive at the Delhi airport. It has been a little above a year since we last saw this bustling place, always full of activity. It feels good to be back again as the coming ten days promise another invigorating interaction and the memories of last year help lift the spirits even higher.

There are still two days before the Conflict Transformation workshop officially begins and in these we try our best to visit all *unchartered* shopping places that we surprisingly missed last time. As a result, our bags threaten to burst open even before our official visit begins.

On the first day of the workshop we find ourselves seated in the familiar lecture hall that bore witness to an exchange of ideas and heated debate last year. A glance across the length of the room showed a much lesser number of participants than the last workshop, which as the workshop unfolded, proved to be a blessing as we were able to interact with one another at a more personal level. At WISCOMP interactions, the fact that Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris sit side by side, willing to discuss issues with an open mind, tells us how far we have come on the path of strengthening the bond that we, as humans, share with each other.

The workshop sessions provided us valuable insights. An important learning was the understanding of the emerging area of "geopolitics of peace" – how changing cartographies can lead to a new perception of the ideas of war and peace. However, the session that touched me the most delved into the fractured realities of

Kashmir – the visual journey spanning over three films all of which showed the plight, the sufferings and the "life" that the people there are now accustomed to (if the word "life" can be used for endless shooting sprees, rotting bodies, and a sense of constant fear).

The workshop modules equipped us with the knowledge of the ways and means of reaching PEACE but what "peace" really means was made evident by watching the films on Kashmir which portrayed what the absence of "peace" entails. Peace is not just about signing accords and treaties. Peace, for me, is not only the absence of war. It means facing the world with one's head held high, without fear and insecurity.

When I saw the films, what shocked me the most were not the continuous killings but to see how people, even children, accepted the bombings, firing and killings as a regular part of their life. Children's walk to school was past a road with dead bodies lying around, their

playgrounds littered with mines, and their nights spent with the continuous lullaby of firing. This is the cruel reality of the life of the people of Kashmir.

When I recall the ten days I spent in Delhi, apart from the kind hospitality offered by our hosts, that one day, that one session, was what really touched me. Now, Kashmir, to me, has a face – the face of a man seeing the last dawn of his life, the face of a woman widowed after a few months of marriage, the face of the child bereaved of all the family he knew but still with hope in his eyes, the face of humanity asking for a normal life filled with love and happiness. Is this too much to ask for?



Sharmeen Irfan

Title: Engendering Persecution: Refugee Law, International Protection and Violence Against Women in South Asia (WISCOMP Discussion Paper 13)

Author: **Oishik Sircar** is a human rights lawyer and independent researcher.

Reviewer: **René Wadlow** is the representative of the Association of World Citizens to the United Nations, Geneva.

Year: 2006

Pp: 64

Oishik Sircar, a human rights lawyer and campaigner, has written a useful discussion paper as part of the WISCOMP series. The monograph discusses the situation of **Afghan and Burmese women refugees in Delhi**. Sircar provides a broad overview of the difficulties of women refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in South Asia. Although women and children make up the bulk of refugees and internally displaced persons – an estimated 75 per cent – it has taken the international community and individual states a long time to focus on their specific problems. It was not until 1991 that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) adopted guidelines for the protection of refugee women.

Guidelines, however, are only effective if they are put into practice. UNHCR staff is often overwhelmed by the number of refugees. They must use local people who are not necessarily well trained and who may reflect local attitudes towards women. UNHCR does not have a mandate in dealing with **internally displaced persons**, which in some cases such as Darfur, Sudan and Somalia are much greater than the number of refugees – that is persons who cross an international frontier. The UNHCR does not have a mandate in countries which have not signed the **1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol**. The states of South Asia have not signed the Convention, claiming that its provisions are “Eurocentric”. It must be admitted that the first motivation of the Refugee Convention was to deal with refugees displaced by World War II, followed by the massive expulsion of ethnic Germans from Poland, Central Europe, and the Baltic states. However, by 1950 when the Convention was being drafted in Geneva, there had already been the large-scale population movements between India and Pakistan following partition, and the 1948 Israel-Arab war had led to the uprooting of Palestinians and of Jews from the Arab countries. Thus the drafters of the Convention, while dealing with the consequences of World War II, were well aware that issues of refugees were not limited to Europe. However, modifying international law is a slow process, and it is only the 1967 Protocol to the Convention which makes it a universal instrument.

If the 1951 Convention is “Eurocentric”, this fact did not push South Asian states to develop adequate national legislation on refugees – much less common standards. Thus when the UNHCR provides help in South Asian countries, it does so on

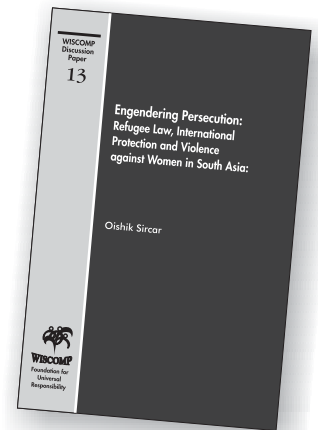
the terms set by the individual state. As Sircar notes “[E]fforts should be geared towards developing comprehensive national laws that uphold the universal principles of international refugee protection while taking into account the distinctive traits of the region... [C]ivil society institutions must urge states that are not signatories to these other international human rights law instruments, to accede to them and also press those states that have acceded but have not made enabling legislation to do so.”

People flee their countries for a variety of reasons and usually as a result of a combination of factors: wars and insurrections, the breakdown of law and order, oppression, persecution, denial of opportunities, and search for a better future. Ethnic or religious minorities may be forced out.

Oishik Sircar looks at the **three stages in the refugee-displacement process** and the ways in which each stage may impact women directly. The first stage is the home-domestic starting point. In addition to factors which influence both men and women, gender-based violence and discrimination may lead to flight. These may include direct violence such as rape, genital mutilation, and domestic violence; and structural violence in the form of repressive gender-discriminatory laws and social mores.

The second stage is that of flight and resettlement in camps. The conditions of flight are usually difficult and may involve facing violence by militias, and lack of food and water. Camps can result in physical, sexual and/or psychological harm despite the best efforts of NGOs administering the camps. The third stage involves leaving the camps for permanent resettlement in the host country. The refugees need to go through long and difficult administrative processes. The problems of women refugees get compounded if they are illiterate and have children to look after.

Two programs of action arise from Sircar’s discussion paper. The first is to create conditions which would **discourage flight**. This requires ways of preventing armed conflict (Afghanistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Sudan), of modifying long-lasting dictatorships (Burma, North Korea) and fighting deep-rooted poverty (Nepal, Bangladesh). The second program is to create better asylum



policies and **better structures for socio-economic migrants**. NGOs must be better prepared to set up camps for the displaced and to offer advice on how refugees can organize themselves.

Governments need to prepare themselves for population flows instead of building fences. Sircar has a sad annex of a visit to a town on the West Bengal-Bangladesh border where electrified

fencing has been set up to prevent infiltration. But as illustrated by walls between Israel and Palestine or Mexico and the USA, walls do not keep people from moving if violence pushes and a vision of a better life pulls. This discussion paper provides a useful framework for developing these two programs.

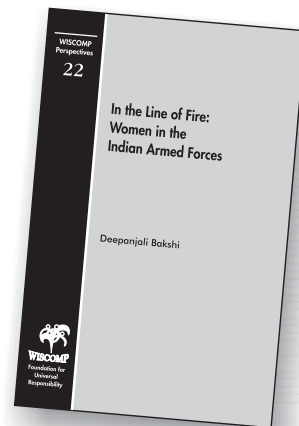
Title: In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces
(WISCOMP Perspectives 22)

Author: Deepanjali Bakshi joined the Indian Armed Forces in 1995 as a short service commissioned Officer. She attended a Women in Leadership and Management course at University of Bradford. She has been selected to attend the Changing Faces Women's Leadership Program at the East-West Center in Hawaii, July 2007. Deepanjali has a Master's degree in English Literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Reviewer: Lt. Gen. Shankar Prasad, PVSM, VSM (Retd.) served for 40 years in the Indian Army in the combat arm of the infantry. He commanded a brigade of the Indian Peacekeeping Force in Sri Lanka.

Year: 2006

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In the Line of Fire: Women in the Indian Armed Forces is a well-researched document which deals with a complex subject in a systematic and convincing manner. The title itself is quite trendy: "In The Line of Fire," later made popular by Gen. Pervez Musharraf's recent book. The phrase "Line of Fire" in military parlance relates to specific chain of combat responsibility in the field.

The chapter, "Men, Women and the Armed Forces", highlights the **connections between military, masculinity, and biological and social determinants**. It will be hard for anyone to contest the logic presented. There can be no two opinions that women are in no way inferior to their male counterparts. Even if women and men are made to look different, it is due to the traditional upbringing of the two genders in societies all over the world.

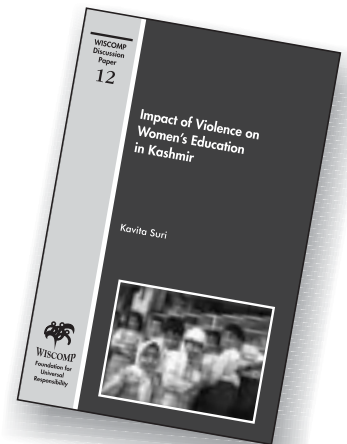
In the context of women's position and role in the armed forces, **combat exclusion** is perhaps the most debated issue. The chapter "Combat Exclusion and Women in the Indian Armed Forces," deals with this issue of women's absence in the Infantry, Armored Corps and Artillery. This debate generates greater interest for it not only brings into focus the issue of gender equality but also involves understanding the job content of combat. The author has covered this aspect brilliantly. The conclusions drawn by her are worthy of praise. However, it will be worthwhile to note that Infantry, which is the largest branch of the Army is perhaps, the most unpopular wing of the Army amongst cadets. The reason and logic is simple: the life is tough, not only physically but also psychologically, with actually no visible compensation for the protracted hardships. It is very difficult to comprehend the nuances of the life of an Infantry officer, unless one has actually experienced it. For anyone to form a view or

opinion on it, it would be necessary to go through the experience. Only when the account of such an experience is provided by an individual or organization, would this debate be set to rest.

The chapter "From Margins to Mainstream – Barriers to the Integration of Women Officers" is worth reading for all policy-makers in the armed forces. Bakshi makes a case for encouraging women officers in the rank and file of the Army, and having "Mahila Battalions" just as in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). However, to effectively analyze the possibilities of accepting women in all fields and branches of the Armed Forces, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the experiences of women joining as sepoy. Such an experiment will equip the policy formulators with inputs to put a long-term policy in place. As regards retaining women officers in service for longer than 14 years, the complete structure of career planning will have to undergo a change. There is no harm in experimenting with this initiative, however.

The **stress** factor has been discussed well by Bakshi. However at each stage of the argument, stress is attributed to individual attitude/choice or is mentioned as a stray case. The issue may get magnified if the numbers become large. It must be commended that all possible irritants have been identified and this may assist decision-makers in taking a long-term policy view of the matter.

On the whole, Bakshi's monograph is a well presented and painstakingly researched paper which needs high commendation. Her logical presentation and in-depth analysis is capable of creating a conflict in the mind of the staunchest male chauvinist.



Title: **Impact of Violence on Women's Education in Kashmir**

(WISCOMP Discussion Paper 12)

Author: **Kavita Suri** is Special Correspondent, *The Statesman*. She has a doctoral degree in Education from the University of Jammu.

Reviewer: **Neerja Mattoo** is a senior educationist, and former Principal, Government College for Women, Srinagar.

Year: 2006

Pp: 91

The Kashmir valley has been in the grip of insurgency for more than a decade and a half. The violence unleashed as a result, has affected the lives of the inhabitants in ways that the people of the rest of the country will find difficult to imagine. Of course deaths and the flight of a section of the population are talked about and sympathetic noises made, but what it actually means for women to survive and **pursue educational goals in the vicious circle of militancy**, where militant and State violence feed upon each other, is little known. All kinds of weapons are used to subjugate people, particularly the women, and terrorize them into obedience. Rape, death, acid attacks, ostracization, with resultant trauma, are some of these. The tattered social fabric, where even the normally taken-for-granted family support is absent with lists of 'disappeared' family members growing, has left the women vulnerable, and their dreams of pursuing education have turned to dust.

Kavita Suri's volume in the series of WISCOMP Discussion papers, documents the impact of all these factors on women's education. The fear of the gun appeared in late 1989 and the first targets of militancy were educational institutions. The buildings were burnt down, the infrastructure collapsed and the flight of a large number of competent Kashmiri Pandit teachers reduced the institutions to an empty, broken shell. The diktats of the militants and **frequent strikes** turned the

academic year into mockery. With examinations being constantly postponed, the little enthusiasm in the students that remained, also evaporated. For women the situation was far worse. First, there was risk to life if caught in the crossfire between the militants and the 'security' forces while traveling to school or college. Then they also became direct targets of fire if they dared to disobey either of these agencies' orders. All this brought nothing but despair. The psychological damage is immeasurable among widows – whole villages of victims of rape, and orphans.

How poverty, insurgency, lack of facilities – or even an awareness of this lack, and Government apathy, can sink a whole population of women into a deep morass of despondency is well documented with valuable statistics. Among the interesting and rather disconcerting facts that emerge is that the Srinagar district, once ahead of the other districts in the state in literacy, is now far behind Jammu, Kathua and Leh. The only districts behind it are the always-educationally-backward Kargil and Kupwara. Another revelation is that the statistics of the **displaced Kashmiri Pandits** look much healthier now. This is surprising considering that their educational prospects were in shambles in the early nineties, with admissions to Jammu institutions being denied to them; in which case they were only able to attend make-shift camp schools and colleges.

Suri has traveled in the militancy-infested districts of Kupwara, Budgam and Anantnag, listening to the tragic stories of women's lives blighted by the various forms of violence. She presents facts that have remained buried so far and hence her report should be compulsory reading for all those who are concerned with women's issues anywhere. Written in the form of news dispatches, it does, however, get repetitive and there is scope for better editing. **Statistics** are the strength of this volume, but the report could have benefited from their analyses. It is not easy to reach forgotten little villages in the remote areas of the Valley, putting life and limb at risk, but with a true journalist's zeal for the 'real story,' Kavita Suri has done it and she deserves credit.



Photo: Kavita Suri

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- As part of the series, *Yogis – The Mystic Masters*, FUR invites you to a talk on Sri Ramana Maharshi, followed by a film screening, July 18, 2007, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm, at India International Center Auditorium, New Delhi.
- Applications are invited for WISCOMP's **Sixth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop**, December 16 - 20, 2007, to be held at India International Center, New Delhi. Interested applicants should send a CV and a 500-800 word essay explaining why they are interested in participating, what they hope to learn from the workshop, and how they will use this learning in their work. Applications can be mailed to Manjrika Sewak at wiscomp2006@gmail.com or posted to the FUR office. Application deadline is August 06, 2007.
- WISCOMP invites contributions for the first edition of its **Annual South Asia Peacebuilding Journal**. Contributions should be mailed to WISCOMP at wiscomp2006@gmail.com by August 13, 2007, with "peacebuilding journal" in the subject line.

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