

WISCOMP

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Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama

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Over the last few months, WISCOMP has initiated a process of reflecting on and reorienting the trajectory of its work on issues of peace, conflict and security. This has led to the conceptualization of the WISCOMP **Peacebuilding Program**, which reflects the diverse range of activities that now make up our peacebuilding canvas. The Program has in its fold a broader range of issues such as human rights, transformative development, nonviolent action, peacekeeping, restorative justice and transitional justice, to name a few. WISCOMP strives to contribute to these issues by directly engaging at the grassroots and by **initiating collaborations** with policy makers, the media, NGOs, other grassroots workers and educationists.

WISCOMP believes in nurturing and nourishing its partnerships. Our collaborations with those who share the vision of a peaceful and just society are established, secured and augmented over time. All of WISCOMP's initiatives, therefore, seek to provide space for continued learning and innovation. This edition of *Update* provides an overview of WISCOMP's **'networks of peace'** and our efforts towards **nurturing them**.

In 2007, WISCOMP brought together scholars, practitioners and activists for a roundtable titled *Creating Spaces for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation in Gujarat*. This Roundtable was part of **our sustained efforts to explore the possibilities of a peacebuilding project in Gujarat** – a state which had witnessed unprecedented communal violence in

2002 and continues to be polarized. Our efforts began in 2002 with the hosting of a *Discussion on Civil Society Initiatives in Gujarat* to look at the implications of various citizens' reports. We then collaborated with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) to study the contributions made by the international community to the field of reconciliation. This led to a joint symposium on *Reconciliation in South Asia: Exploring the Terrain* in 2005. In 2006, WISCOMP supported an independent research project by Harsh Mander (Convenor, *Aman Biradari*) to identify the challenges and opportunities for justice and reconciliation in Gujarat. The findings of this project foregrounded the discussions at the Gujarat Roundtable held in 2007.

In Kashmir, we have further strengthened our *Athwaas* initiative by organizing workshops along themes of *Gender, Violence and Human Rights* and *Creating Stories for Children in Jammu and Kashmir*. Through the year, we have also convened follow up meetings of three of the four Working groups that had been constituted following the Kashmir Convention in 2006.

Over the last eight years, WISCOMP has worked persistently to **bolster networks of peace across and beyond borders**. The Conflict Transformation workshops organized annually are an important facet of our engagement in this process. In 2006, alumni from the previous workshops had come together to deliberate on the strengths and shortcomings of the Indo-Pak peace

initiatives and to reflect on the larger peace processes in South Asia. Building on these insights, the Sixth Annual Conflict Transformation workshop brought together young professionals from India and Pakistan to **work towards coexistence and trust-building**.

In addition to these events, several recent WISCOMP publications have contributed to the discourse on peace, conflict transformation and security. This *Update* carries reviews and abstracts of our most recent publications.

Our staff members also participated in various conventions and conducted workshops across the country and in the South Asian region on the developing discourse on human security. We share with you the proceedings of these events and those on peace education that we hope to bring to fruition in the near future.

It is with deep sorrow that we bring you, news of the demise of WISCOMP Fellow, Bina Srinivasan. Bina's association with WISCOMP began with her research project, *Taming the River: Gender Displacement and Resistance in Anti-dam Movements*, which was awarded the Scholar of Peace Fellowship in 2001. During the term of her academic project, and through her subsequent participations at various symposia, Bina developed strong bonds of friendship with many of us at WISCOMP. Her work will continue to inspire us all. In this edition of *Update* we pay tribute to Bina – the vibrant and passionate "activist-scholar".

– The WISCOMP Team

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.

Gujarat: Creating Spaces for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation – A Roundtable

WISCOMP convened a Roundtable titled *Gujarat: Creating Spaces for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation* on July 28, 2007 at New Delhi. At WISCOMP, we have been exploring the possibilities of starting a peacebuilding project in Gujarat and with this Roundtable we took a step forward in this direction. The Roundtable hosted over sixty practitioners, academicians, intellectuals, and civil society leaders working on different aspects of justice and reconciliation.

The Roundtable began with introductory remarks by Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Honorary Director, WISCOMP. She emphasized WISCOMP's history of drawing on diverse points of view, "to facilitate learning and sharing in a dialogical non-confrontational space." Gopinath acknowledged the wide range in definitions, methodologies and strategies of reconciliation, and the fact that it was a slow, complex and difficult process. She stressed on the **transformative implications of 'reconciliation'**, before concluding with the hope of insight and guidance from the participants on the subject.

Harsh Mander's research on justice and reconciliation in Gujarat provided the focal point for discussions at the Roundtable. Supported by WISCOMP, Mander's research sought to provide a broader picture of **the challenges and opportunities for justice and reconciliation in Gujarat**. In his forthcoming monograph, *Frozen Compassion: Justice, Healing and Reconciliation in Gujarat*, he addresses the complex relationship between the three processes, both theoretically as well as in the specific context of Gujarat.

The presentation by Mander outlined the four **prerequisites to reconciliation: acknowledgement, remorse, reparation and justice**. Of these, he argued that none had been achieved in Gujarat, and in fact, each of them was being actively resisted by the state and by the majority Hindu community. He averred that justice was the most important, even if the most contested element of reconciliation. He highlighted that people like him working towards legal justice were often confronted with accusations of prolonging the problem and not allowing people to forget and move on. However, Mander argued that this view was rarely expressed by victims of violence. Drawing from his experiences in Gujarat, Mander recounted that he had



Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath (Founder & Honorary Director, WISCOMP) giving the welcome address at the Roundtable. Also in the picture (sitting left to right) Mr. B.G. Verghese (Visiting Professor, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi), Mr. Harsh Mander (Convenor, *Aman Biradari*, Gujarat), Ms. Akanksha Joshi (Filmmaker, New Delhi)

repeatedly encountered people who viewed **justice as a prerequisite for forgiveness and reconciliation**.

The discussion following Mander's presentation was both animated and insightful. Invaluable contributions came from those who had been working and living in Gujarat, and had seen the situation unfold since the initial violence in 2002. They raised concern over how Muslims in Gujarat were forced to live a **life of compromises** – from being compelled to constantly negotiate their citizenship to dealing with the erection of new 'borders'.

Participants further deliberated on issues and questions of identity politics. They sought to locate the realities of Gujarat within the larger processes of **politicization of religious identity** at both the national and state levels and the concurrent breakdown of democratic institutions. Overall, there seemed to be a consensus that 'reconciliation' could not be theorized in abstraction.

One question that repeatedly came up during the discussions was that of the **exceptionality of the violence in Gujarat**: was it an entirely new phenomenon, or was it a continuation of an existing pattern of violence, nationally and globally? While many people acknowledged that the violence in Gujarat was unprecedented, many others drew attention to historical and political continuities.

Participants also engaged with the varied problems of Muslim women in Gujarat, from the nature and range of violence inflicted upon them at the familial, inter and intra community level to the violence perpetrated by the state.

School education and particularly the **content of textbooks** was seen as vital to understanding the perpetuation of communal animosities. The point was repeatedly raised that the culture of hate began at an early age and therefore, participants underscored the need to **rethink school curriculum**.

Another theme that emanated from discussions was the role of liberal Hindus and of Hindu civil society. It was noted that a distinction **between Hinduism and Hindutva** was a prerequisite to any discussion on these questions. One participant argued that while Hindutva was an immediate threat to Muslims and

Christians, in the long run it would threaten the liberal Hindus and damage the democratic and secular ethos of India. A number of people therefore, asserted that there was a pressing need for dialogue between “those Hindus who showed courage and compassion and the other Hindus.”

The discussions were followed by a photo presentation by filmmaker Akanksha Joshi. Her presentation titled “*Profiles of Courage and Compassion*” weaved together different narratives from Gujarat to recollect experiences of people who had fought and resisted the growing culture of hatred and violence. Further tracing the journey of *Nyaya Pathiks* in their pursuit of justice, this collage of photo narratives reasserted the need to ‘engage’ in the ongoing processes of justice and reconciliation.

Underscoring WISCOMP’s commitment to develop and take its work forward in Gujarat, the participants asserted that processes of reconciliation and justice required active engagement at various levels. Despite myriad opinions shared, the overarching sentiment that found expression at this Roundtable was that “to not engage would be morally indefensible”.



Participants from Gujarat and Delhi at the Roundtable



Reflections on Reconciliation

“First, about Gandhiji. He took a stand all his life against injustice, but disapproved of the British legal system, which continues in India. In South Africa, he set up his own informal dispute resolution (reconciliation and recompense) processes and encouraged litigants to settle their cases out of court. However, as it was rightly pointed out, he fought against unjust laws. Now civil society has to fight for implementation of just laws. But that does not rule out popular activism or bypass the negativities of litigation. This is not to say that litigation is not necessary (PILs have been at times outstandingly successful), and a just case won in the courts [can provide] satisfaction to both litigants and society in general. But it can perpetuate hard feelings. No doubt a judicious use of both the processes of popular activism and litigation would be useful, depending on the circumstances.

Second, I think the Gujarat problem has regional, national and international ramifications. Much of what was said at the Roundtable was anguished reportage from the grassroots. Others spoke of structural faults – political and social (the economic [faults] were not much discussed but they also influence social behaviour). Dr Vinay Lal hinted at the social complexities of Gujarat society: communal riots have frequently occurred there from at least 1969 onwards. I think these structural problems probably need to be more deeply studied. Ashutosh Varshney’s study of the pattern of communal riots reveals both riot-prone and peaceful communities living together. He tried to find reasons for the differences. Politically, of course... the problem predates the BJP and the BJS. As Harish Khare said it is ‘bad politics’, and ‘bad politics’ has plagued us for a long time: we have been going downhill from independence onwards.”

– Dr. Madhuri Sondhi (one of the invitees) in an email response to the deliberations at the Roundtable

Gender, Violence and Human Rights

At WISCOMP, we believe that an understanding of the different forms of violence against women within a framework of human rights helps create a dialogue around culture, violence and vulnerability in a manner that foregrounds agency and equips participants with problem solving and negotiation skills. Keeping this in mind, WISCOMP organized two workshops on **Gender, Violence and Human Rights** in **Bijbehara** (Distt. Anantnag) on **September 27-28, 2007** and at **Jammu** on **November 24-25, 2007**. Both these interactive workshops were facilitated by Sunita Menon of Breakthrough.

The Bijbehara *Samanbal*, supported by WISCOMP since 2004, is a center for healing and reconciliation. Here, an attempt has been made to provide an open and safe space to college students for expression. WISCOMP has facilitated a number of workshops on **teambuilding, use of puppetry and storytelling for healing** within this *Samanbal* space. The workshop on violence against women was organized in response to an expressed need of the young students. During the workshop, the participants had the opportunity to interact with Hafiza Muzaffar, Secretary, State Commission for Women and members of a lawyers' network.

The workshop at Jammu drew its participants from the Purkho *Samanbal*, located at one of the many camps where the displaced



Students presenting their ideas at the Bijbehara Workshop

Participants with Ms. Sunita Menon of Breakthrough (sitting extreme right) at the Jammu Workshop



A group of students work on their Human Rights Tree



Participants enjoy some light moments at the Bijbehara Workshop

Pandit population from the Kashmir valley is currently settled. This workshop primarily used visual media to establish and discuss **how gender based violence cuts across different socio-economic backgrounds**. By the end of the workshop, participants were able to come to terms with their own identity, prioritize their roles, define violence, and draw out linkages between violence against women and violations of human rights.

Aims of the workshop were to:

- Understand violence against women as part of a larger human rights discourse.
- Help make sense of the everyday violence that is part of daily lives for women living in Jammu and Kashmir, understand where it is coming from so that responses to it can be framed in their homes, organizations and communities.
- Find a safe space to articulate experiences of violence encountered at the personal and community level perpetuated by non-state or state actors.
- Formulate responses to acts of violence and move beyond victimhood to a feeling of agency in the wake of violations.
- Understand the array of legal rights available in Jammu and Kashmir.

Creating Stories for Children

Intended to garner an intellectual response to the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir and to create a safe space for expression, the WISCOMP writers' workshops, held alternately in Jammu and Srinagar since 2004, are part of a larger vision of **re-initiating dialogue between different communities** that make up the mosaic in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Writers' Workshops have evolved into a forum where different forms of the literary genre have been used to initiate a dialogue on coexistence, the notion of exile, the angst of separation and polarization, and the anxieties and everyday insecurities of life due to the increasing militarization of the state and society.

In the last workshop held in December 2006 in Jammu, WISCOMP brought in a new dimension – **storytelling as a form of healing**. This workshop sought to explore how writers – those who started writing during the ongoing violent conflict in Kashmir as well as those who had been writing in the pre-conflict period – could bring this genre of writing into the formal curriculum for children. The writers at the Jammu workshop felt that there was a paucity of quality literary works for children in Jammu and Kashmir. It was in this context that the **Writers' Workshop on October 27 – 28, 2007 at Srinagar** attempted to generate resources for children in the form of stories that could be used in classrooms, at home, or shared over the radio.

The focus had so far been on the Valley and Jammu and an **attempt was now made to be more inclusive – to seek and solicit literary voices that captured the reality of life after the**



Ms. Neerja Matto and Ms. Qurrat-ul-ain (Members, *Athwaas* core group) at the workshop

Kargil war for instance, or the tensions of life in **Doda, Poonch, Rajouri** as well as the life experiences of the **Ladakhis**. Consequently, an engagement with writers writing in Dogri, Punjabi, Ladakhi besides Urdu, Kashmiri, English and Hindi was sought.

At this workshop, WISCOMP also brought together participants who could, with their experiences and expertise, contribute to not only writing stories but also help in broadening the outreach for the stories generated.



Ms. Ashima Kaul (Coordinator, *Athwaas*) at the workshop



Participants of the workshop

Teaching Peace as a Value

WISCOMP participated in a Seminar-cum-Workshop titled *Higher Education Sector: Quality Value-based Education* organized by the Government Degree College, Bemina, Srinagar, on September 10– 11, 2007. Sponsored by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, the Workshop brought together faculty and students from educational institutions across the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Manjrika Sewak, Senior Program Officer, WISCOMP, conducted an interactive session on the *Role of Value-based Education in Building a Culture of Peace*. The purpose of this session was to engage students to **generate awareness on the role of values** such as human dignity, respect for life, notion of inter-dependence among human beings and gender equality in building a culture of peace.

This interaction with students and faculty at Bemina College, Srinagar helped generate a discussion on the culture and context-specific values that resonate for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir, and how these might be used to build a culture of coexistence. An important learning from this interaction was that any discussion on the role of values in promoting coexistence, must take into consideration the **ground reality of regions torn by violence**. It was felt that in order to put into practice the values mentioned above, the peacebuilding community would need to simultaneously address the multiple layers of conflictual relationships and transform the systemic causes of conflict and the different manifestations of cultural and structural violence in society.



Mr. M.S. Pandit (Chairman, J&K Public Service Commission) delivers the Valedictory Address



(Left to Right) Prof. Zahoor Ahmad Chatt (Seminar Organizing Secretary, Bemina College), Prof. Zeenat Ara (Principal, Government College for Women, Srinagar), Dr. N. D. Wani (Director Colleges, Department of Higher Education), Prof. Tadzim Joldan (Principal, Bemina College), Ms. Manjrika Sewak (Sr. Program Officer, WISCOMP) at a panel discussion during the Seminar

The WISCOMP workshop drew attention to the several ways in which educational institutions contribute to peacebuilding:

- Teach young people to choose dialogue and active listening over violence;
- Help the youth to become promoters of peace, upholders of moral values and spiritual strength, and agents of social change serving the interests of the community;
- Prevent the outbreak of violence between different communities;
- Reduce prejudices between hostile groups; and
- Build trust, understanding and relationships between young people from different communities, cultures and nations.

The WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Program seeks to empower the “next generation” of leaders to become agents of constructive social change in their families, communities, nations and the South Asian region. As a preliminary effort in this direction, WISCOMP’s annual conflict transformation workshops provide a *space* where young Indians and Pakistanis can engage in *face-to-face dialogue* to build a future based on trust, respect and coexistence.

The sixth workshop in this series, titled **Coexistence and Trust-Building: Transforming Relationships** was held in New Delhi from **December 16– 20, 2007**. The participants represented diverse fields such as media, education, NGO, activism, law, theology, conflict resolution, business and research. An important feature of this Workshop was the representation of young professionals from different regions of Pakistan, such as Hyderabad (Sindh), Quetta (Balochistan), Multan, Gujranwala and Muzaffarabad.

Opening with an introduction to the field of peacebuilding with a special emphasis on the framework of conflict transformation, the panel discussions at the Workshop revolved around various themes including:

- o Education for a Culture of Peace;
- o Understanding Differences, Acting on the Commonalities: Coexistence in Practice;
- o Stereotypes in Multicultural Societies;
- o Religion, Conflict and Peace;



(Left to Right) Ms. Seema Mustafa (Delhi Bureau Chief, Asian Age), Mr. Sumanta Banerjee (Correspondent, EPW), Dr. Sumona DasGupta (Assistant Director, WISCOMP), Ms. Alpana Kishore (Researcher) at a panel discussion

Coexistence and Trust-Building: Transforming Relationships – A Workshop



Participants with the WISCOMP team

- o Role of the Media in Conflict Generation and Conflict Transformation; and
- o Military CBMs and Inter-Action on UN Peacekeeping Missions between India and Pakistan.

The relationship between **Trust-building and Conflict Transformation** was a central theme of the 2007 Workshop. Nicholas Wheeler, an international scholar in the new and dynamic field of Trust-building, conducted a daylong module on this subject. Drawing on inter-disciplinary research from his



(Left to Right) Workshop resource persons Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan, Joint Secretary, MEA, GoI, Mr. Tahir Aziz, a conflict resolution practitioner from Pakistan Administered Kashmir, Prof. Nicholas Wheeler, Aberystwyth University, UK, in conversation

recent book *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics*, Prof. Wheeler used multiple formats including lecture, group discussion, role-plays (with Indian participants role-playing Pakistani policymakers and Pakistani participants doing the same for India) and reflection exercises. The purpose was to explore joint initiatives that might promote trust and cooperation and be catalysts for sustainable peace between the two countries.



Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan, Joint Secretary, MEA, GoI speaks at the workshop on Public Diplomacy and Trust building

The participants also had an opportunity to interact with T.C.A. Raghavan, Joint Secretary (PAI), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Highlighting the interface between policymakers and civil society groups, Raghavan shared his perspectives on the peace process between the two countries – the prospects and challenges, as well as the threat



(Left to Right) Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath (Hon. Director, WISCOMP) Mr. Tahir Aziz (Conciliation Resources, UK), Father Cedric Prakash (Director, PRASHANT, Gujarat), Prof. Gurpreet Mahajan (Center for Political Studies, JNU), Ms. Raheel Raza (Writer and Interfaith Advocate), Prof. Vinay Lal (Director, University of California Education Abroad Program – India)



Participants engage in a discussion at the workshop

posed by “spoilers”. He also emphasized the role that “public diplomacy” could play in building a more inclusive peace process.

Navina Jafa, an expert on performing arts in development programs and a Workshop participant, performed *Ibadat*, a dance choreographed on a piece of Sufi music written by Hazrat Amir Khusrau. The performance drew on the shared heritage of Sufism, which emerged as a syncretic force, fostering harmony and coexistence in the subcontinent.

In addition, this workshop sought to consolidate reflections and insights from previous years through the alumni-led session *Closer to Ourselves: Stories from the Journey to Peace in South Asia*.

Javed Jabbar, Filmmaker, Writer & former minister from Karachi, Pakistan captured the spirit of WISCOMP’s initiative towards **Trust-building and Conflict Transformation**, by expressing hope that “from such small groups will grow a small but catalytic critical mass that will, God willing, one day make us better able to cope with the duality of human nature, and the dual dimensions of our interstate relationship.”



Dr. Navina Jafa performs *Ibadat* at the workshop

“Healing hearts... strengthening minds” Counseling Skills for Teachers – A Workshop

Traal *tehsil* (sub-district) has been epicenter of active violence in South Kashmir, since the early 1990s and the persisting violence has deeply affected the lives of people in this region. In September 2007, WISCOMP facilitated a workshop on *Counseling Skills for Teachers*, as a follow up to a previous workshop conducted in November 2006. Hameeda Nayeem, core member of *Athwaas* brought together teachers – both men and women – from various schools in Traal for these training programs.

The 2006 workshop focused on the changing **role and attitudes of teachers** in Kashmir. This workshop also addressed questions around **the notions of victimhood and survivorhood and how trauma affected children**. The participants through their feedback conveyed that they took back the message of acknowledgement, positive thinking, empathy and hope.

To reinforce the content of this workshop, the same group of teachers met again in September 2007, to discuss their classroom experiences, the ways in which they had applied the learnings from the previous workshop and the challenges faced by them.

Trained therapist and counselor Arvinder Singh, who had facilitated the initial workshop, conducted the first session.

The trauma experienced by the teachers in this region was reflected in many personal narratives and testimonies. In this session, participants shared the trials and tribulations of working in an area marred by conflict. The location of schools in close proximity to makeshift interrogation centres and the pressures of conducting and completing examinations on time (given the uncertain nature of cordon and search operations by security forces), caused widespread anxieties among teachers and students. The denial of easy access to schools due to the



Ms. Arvinder Singh conducts a workshop session

systematic destruction of infrastructure including roads and bridges further aggravated the problems faced by them. In addition, there was a constant and overbearing threat of losing their school premises to armed men- sometimes militants, sometimes security forces.

Given the complexities of **teaching in a region affected by conflict**, the discussions at this session reiterated the need to broaden the role of teachers. The second session focused on the need to equip teachers with certain pedagogical tools with the specific objective of training them in counseling. Leading theater personality, Balwant Thakur introduced the idea of **using theatre with school children, as a tool of catharsis and self expression**. He demonstrated how simple exercises could be employed in the classroom to elicit responses, create alertness and quickness of thinking and provide space for children to express their feelings. He motivated teachers to engage students in such activities and thereby, work towards ‘creating everything out of nothing’.

While at one level this workshop brought out the varied problems faced by teachers in areas of conflict, at another level it asserted

the need for teachers to be resilient counselors, motivating students to contest feelings of hopelessness and submission – in the process **healing hearts and strengthening minds**.



Mr. Balwant Thakur (leading theater personality) facilitates the discussions



Participants at the workshop in Traal

Cultural Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation in Kashmir

In August 2006, WISCOMP had brought together men and women from across Jammu and Kashmir for a Convention titled *Women in Dialogue: Envisioning the road ahead in Jammu and Kashmir*, in New Delhi. This Convention provided a space to civil society members to articulate their vision of the road ahead to policy makers. The participants were divided into four working groups- Politics, Law and Governance, Economic Development, Health and Psycho-social Healing and Cultural Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation.

The meeting of the Working Group on Cultural Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation was convened by WISCOMP at Srinagar on November 12, 2007. It brought together 40 participants from the three regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh as well as from New Delhi. Sumona DasGupta, Assistant Director, WISCOMP, set out the agenda for discussion and initiated the proceedings. DasGupta affirmed the need to critically engage with the discourse on culture and cultural rights and the manner in which violations of cultural rights precipitate conflict and violence. The participants then engaged in a vibrant discussion on the notion of *Kashmiriyat* (the ethos of religious and cultural harmony of the Kashmiri people), its subsequent decline in the face of the ongoing Kashmir conflict, the manner in which it had been politically appropriated and its importance in the present circumstances. Ashima Kaul, Coordinator of the *Athwaas* initiative, shared the *Athwaas* and *Samanbal* experience with the participants during the course of the meeting.

This was followed by small group discussions on a range of issues raised at the Convention of 2006. Neerja Mattoo, member of



Members deliberating at the Meet

the *Athwaas* core group and leading educationist, moderated the group discussions. Each of the small groups made short presentations on how they could carry forward a plan of action over the next six months. Some of the steps suggested during the presentations were:

- Start **educational initiatives on culture** in schools and colleges;
- Provide new directions to **writers' workshops** initiated by WISCOMP in Jammu and Kashmir;
- Initiate projects by the **media on culture and arts**; and
- **Revive the arts**, including performing arts, by holding a series of small workshops with trainee teachers as a first step.

Celebrating Peace Day

To celebrate the **International Day of Peace (September 21, 2007)**, WISCOMP collaborated with Kriti, a Delhi-based development communication initiative. WISCOMP set up a stall at a book exhibition titled *Women and Peace*. The exhibition sought to highlight the work of women peacebuilders and raise awareness on issues concerning gender, development, conflict and violence. Through this initiative, WISCOMP was able to share its work and publications on peacebuilding with peace researchers, practitioners, mediapersons and students who participated in the event.



Ms. Seema Kakran and Ms. Tanvi Sirari of WISCOMP at the Peace Day Celebrations

Engendering Security

WISCOMP is committed to conducting and facilitating research to place gender concerns squarely within the parameters of the evolving discourse on security. Building further on this commitment, WISCOMP joined with thirteen other research institutes and thinktanks from across Asia to establish the **Consortium on Non Traditional Security Studies – Asia** at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. The Consortium aims at building long-term and sustainable regional capacity for research on non-traditional security (NTS) issues and mainstreaming and advancing the field. During the course of the year, WISCOMP presented its own learnings on NTS at various workshops and conferences organized by the Consortium to extend its work in this area.

Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Honorary Director, WISCOMP, participated at the inaugural meeting of the Consortium on January 8-9, 2007. In her presentation titled “Gender and NTS Formulations in South Asia”, Gopinath emphasized the need to acknowledge that security was a contested concept. She shared with the Consortium, WISCOMP’s learnings from its project **Transcending Conflict: Gender and Non-Traditional Formulations of Security** and foregrounded the need to take on board gender as a cross-cutting issue in the formulations on non-traditional security. She concluded her presentation by reiterating WISCOMP’s commitment to be an active member advancing the Consortium’s goals.

In August 2007, the Consortium organized a training course titled **NTS Training course for Indonesian Police Lecturers, Doctors and NGO Leaders** at its Secretariat in Singapore. The purpose of the training was to share research findings on new



Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder & Honorary Director, WISCOMP (seated extreme left) with the NTS-Asia network members

issues of security with members of civil society including those belonging to the “security sector” such as members of the police force or lecturers who train the police. This marked a step towards sharing findings on security challenges in Asia and its impact on state and society with civil society activists and those associated with the security sector in some form or another.

Sumona DasGupta, Assistant Director, WISCOMP, was invited to make a presentation **linking gender with new issues of security**. Her presentation elicited responses on participant understandings of notions of gender, gender roles, gender activities as well as their ideas on what constitutes new issues of security in Indonesia, before seeking to map the interface between these. Other presentations included modules on transnational crime, communal violence, insurgency, maritime

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Dr. Sumona DasGupta of WISCOMP (seated right) with resource persons and the participants at the Non-Traditional Security Course, Singapore



Ms. Manjrika Sewak, Sr. Program Officer, WISCOMP (seated left) makes a presentation at the First Annual NTS-Asia Convention, Colombo

Building Peace through Education

“Education is peacebuilding by another name... We have a mission to stimulate large numbers of students to reflect seriously on human conflict, its causes and its consequences, and ways to prevent its deadly outcome.”

– Kofi Annan

The former UN Secretary General’s statement captures an important dimension of peacebuilding, which forms the focus of our work. WISCOMP has been working with *next generation* state and civil society leaders to empower them with the values, skills and knowledge to transform conflicts and build peace in the South Asian region.

Employing diverse methodologies – academic research, training, facilitation, community work, advocacy and publishing – we have always tried to use a “multi-track” approach to respond to the challenges that contemporary social conflicts present. One of the most significant in this context has been the adoption of a “generational approach to peacebuilding” which has drawn our attention to the need for **peace education in schools and colleges**.

We believe that the young should be familiarized with the values of peacebuilding and conflict transformation (nonviolence, dignity, mutual respect, coexistence, to name a few) so they can grow into adults who are motivated to transform the current culture of violence and contribute to realizing a peaceful, just and equitable society. Children and youth are more open to new ideas and perspectives as their beliefs, attitudes and worldviews have not concretized. Face-to-face dialogue with perceived ‘others’, prejudice reduction and coexistence work can produce better results and turn the young into “**bridge[s] of peace**”, connecting, and bringing into the peacebuilding fold, many more actors and institutions.

Informed by this belief, WISCOMP plans to expand its work in this crucial area by organizing **peace education modules for students and faculty in schools and colleges** in the Subcontinent and the South Asian region. In addition, we also envision a national conference for teachers which would provide space for reflecting on inclusive teaching methods and sharing best practices on teaching peace. Two important dimensions of our work in this context have been – and will continue to be – **curriculum development** and **synergizing and networking** in peacebuilding.

Our **Peace education program** strives to:

- Build capacity for **lifelong commitment** to peacemaking;
- **Facilitate experiential learning** on peacebuilding;
- **Teach** nonviolent communication skills;
- **Promote dialogue** among young people, NGOs and educational institutions within local communities, states and the South Asian region;
- **Assist partner institutions** in formulating syllabi and course material keeping in mind the local context of the institutions;
- **Provide resources** like books, journals, teaching manuals, films etc. in the field of peacebuilding;
- Develop proposals for **collaborations between schools and colleges**;
- Emphasize **prejudice reduction**; and
- Foster a **culture of coexistence** at every level.

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Engendering Security

security, poverty, environmental security and a presentation on gender and security, which examined how gender could be seen as a cross-cutting issue in each of these.

The most recent step towards WISCOMP’s collaboration with the NTS-Asia Consortium was a presentation by Manjrika Sewak, Senior Program Officer, WISCOMP, at the **First Annual Convention on November 5 – 6, 2007** at the Regional Center for Strategic Studies, Colombo. Manjrika’s

presentation, *Women’s Roles in Peacebuilding* focused on WISCOMP’s *Athwaas* initiative in Jammu and Kashmir. At the Convention, the members as well as Colombo-based civil society groups expressed interest in WISCOMP’s peacebuilding initiatives and possibilities for future collaboration. In addition, Prof. Mely Anthony, Secretary-General of NTS-Asia invited WISCOMP to share its expertise with the Consortium on the subject of developing curriculum and teaching materials in the fields of NTS and Peacebuilding.

Excerpts from Pratap Bhanu Mehta's Introduction to Ananya Vajpeyi's, Prolegomena to the Study of People and Places in Violent India WISCOMP Perspectives 26(2007)

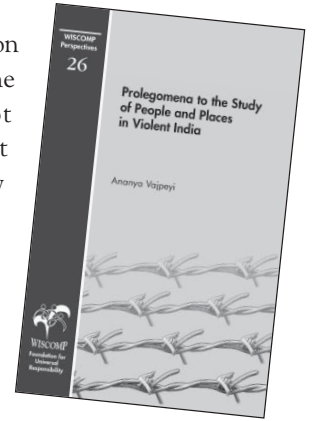
Letter to Giorgio Agamben is a brilliantly conceived and resourcefully argued meditation on the nature of modernity. It can be asserted, with some justification, that the true character of modernity is nowhere revealed more powerfully than in the existence of the “camp” – a banal rendition of the horrific physical and metaphysical realities of modernity. Whether treated as an institution or as a metaphor, the camp brings forth the aporias of modernity in more ways than one can list. In the first instance, the camp is a lawfully created site of lawlessness, a juridically sanctioned space for the existence of almost unbridled discretionary power. Its inhabitants are defined by various legal regimens, yet they themselves have almost no legal standing. They are reduced to, in Agamben’s phrase “bare life.”

...The great virtue of this essay is that it frontally wrestles with one of the most important questions of our time: to what extent do the so-called margins of modernity define the center? To what extent can the presence of the dark spaces of modernity like camps alter the meaning and import of our central aspirations? Vajpeyi’s purpose in raising these questions is not to erase the historical specificity of various experiences of catastrophe and loss. It is rather to explore more fully the entangled webs of responsibility and vulnerability that we too often disavow.

In some ways the camp reveals the limits of modern political philosophy; it is the point at which our metaphysical invocations of the “human” break down. This essay is, in my judgment, a provocative meditation on this theme. It dwells not just on camps but on every site of modern politics where the limits of the invocation of the term “human” are revealed. It ranges broadly, from Auschwitz to the pogroms in Gujarat; from jihad to Guantanamo. It discusses, in great depth, the figure of the outsider in its various tropes. It provides a poignant discussion of witnessing in the face of cultural catastrophe. It dwells on the various modalities of violence through which the boundaries of the modern are secured. It subtly explicates the ways in which theory can illuminate our condition and more clearly render visible what is often occluded by our conventional vocabulary. But all these different strands of argument finally converge on one profound question: What does it mean to be a human?

The starting point of this essay is an engagement with the work of Agamben who, more than any other thinker, has provided a route into asking some of the most profound and disturbing

questions about modernity. Emerson once famously said that what one soul can give another is not instruction but provocation. In that spirit, Vajpeyi does not seek to apply Agamben. Rather, his text provides the occasion for her engagement with a wide range of materials and themes drawn from a rich array of sources. This is a work comfortable in many traditions; it rests on deep linguistic and philological learning, and displays an enviable grasp of more literatures than one can list. While the substance is profound and illuminating, the genre in which it is written is itself revolutionary.



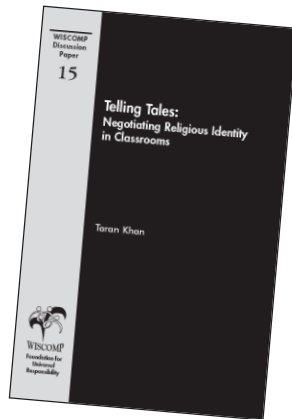
Theorists working in India often face the burden of a kind of intellectual excess. They not only have to reflect on a complex historical predicament (that of South Asia), they are also expected to engage with the best of European and American social theory. Most of the work produced ends up erring in one of three ways. Either it subordinates the Indian experience to the logic of theory derived from elsewhere; or it simply brushes aside the demand for theory and retreats into a kind of Indian exceptionalism or worse, nativism. Or, as is most often the case, we cope with this enormous burden by simply giving up.

Here at last is an essay that takes the responsibilities of theory and of the complex historical realities of India seriously, and gives each their due without affectation or cant. It is an important step in the globalization of *theory*, a form of social self-knowledge that is interactional and engaged. It provincializes European theory but at the same time recasts and reappropriates it....

What makes this essay powerful is that it contributes to a form of self-reflection that has all but disappeared from public argument in India. Although it is a *Letter to Agamben*, it really is a letter to all of us. Or at least to all those who worry about the violence at the heart of modernity, the forms of memory and recollection through which human beings survive cultural catastrophe, and the quotidian ways in which we become complicit in limiting the scope of the term “human”.

Taran Nishat Khan, *Telling Tales: Negotiating Religious Identity in Classrooms*, WISCOMP Discussion Paper 15 (2007)

WISCOMP has commissioned several research projects through its Scholar of Peace Fellowship program during the last seven years. *Telling Tales* is the outcome of a special project undertaken in 2004. In this paper, Taran Khan explores the **manifestation and negotiation of communal tensions and issues in the classroom**. Employing multiple pedagogical tools, she initiates conversations among students to probe the interface between gender, religious identity, personal friendships and the outbreak of communal tensions in Aligarh. This paper is a compilation of unmediated expression of ideas and arguments by the participants – a core group of fifteen Hindu and Muslim teenage girls at the Aligarh Muslim University Girls' High School, Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh).

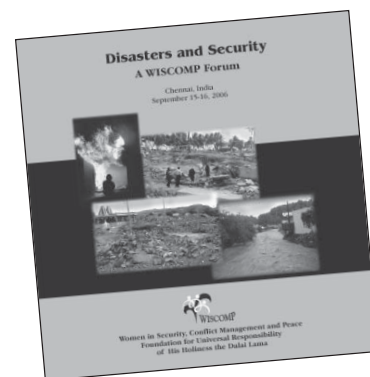


Collaborative Explorations: Fifth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop – A Report (2007)

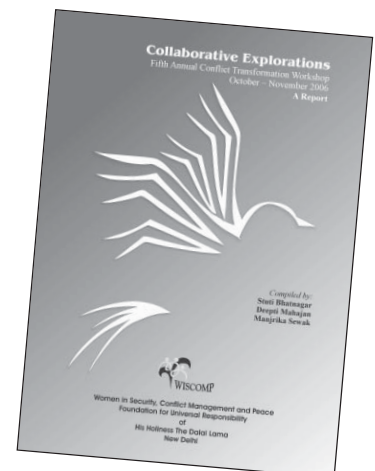
The Fifth Annual Conflict Transformation Workshop held in October- November 2006 in New Delhi brought together workshop alumni from India and Pakistan and the WISCOMP team to envisage a future course for WISCOMP's India-Pakistan peace initiative and deliberate on the larger peace process in South Asia. **Collaborative Explorations – A Report** is based on the proceedings of this workshop. The Report is structured along thematic modules of the workshop, which dealt with issues of Geopolitics of Peace, Building Synergies, Regional Identity and Security, Women's Initiatives for Peace, Media and the India-Pakistan Relationship, and School Curriculum and Pedagogy in India and Pakistan. Highlighting the usage of multiple formats at the workshop, the Report details the installation, *Encounters – A Photo Journey* by Kashmiri Artist, Veer Munshi and foregrounds the comments and insights from films like *Crossing the Lines*, *Autumn's Final Country* and others. It enumerates suggestions made by the participants to transform the Indo-Pak conflict and also includes a proposal for peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir.

Swarna Rajagopalan and Nandhini Parthib, *Disasters and Security: A WISCOMP Forum*, (2007)

WISCOMP believes that there can be no lasting peace without security. We therefore strive to **build a people-oriented discourse on the issue of security**. The Disaster and Security Forum in 2006 brought together practitioners and researchers to study the wide array of responses and initiatives taken by states and civil society actors in the



aftermath of the Southeast Asian tsunami (December 26, 2004) and Kashmir earthquake (October 8, 2005). The Forum identified the theoretical areas where these initiatives and lessons must produce change. It also sought to capture and anticipate new themes and trends in human security scholarship. This report provides an overview of the issues raised at the forum, a summary of the sessions, a select bibliography and future agenda for research and praxis.

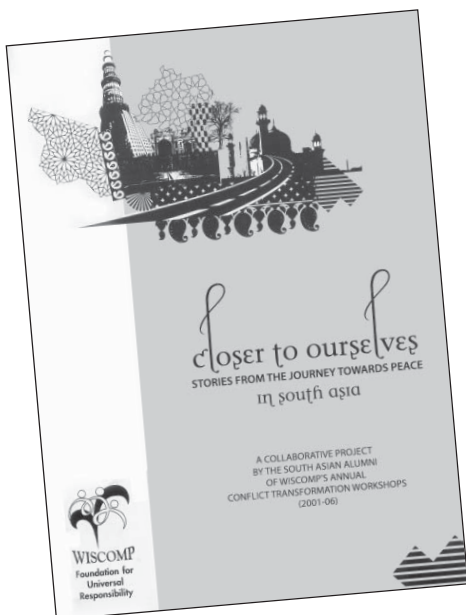


Closer to Ourselves: Stories from the Journey towards Peace in South Asia

Over the last seven years, WISCOMP's Annual Conflict Transformation Workshops have propelled several journeys of trust-building, mutual sharing and sustained dialogue amongst its participants. These encounters have facilitated changes at various levels- personal, relational as well as social.

In 2006, WISCOMP embarked on a collaborative project to draw out from the alumni, such experiences of **personal and social transformation; tracing and capturing the challenges and victories of peace-building**. These first-person accounts from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan telling stories of generations and shared geographies, have been weaved together into *Closer to Ourselves: Stories from the Journey towards Peace in South Asia*.

A book on these stories, compiled and designed by Anupama Sekhar, an alumna of the CT workshops, is forthcoming. An exclusive *Closer to Ourselves...* website is operational and can be accessed at www.wiscomp-ctstories.net



Memories of Bina.... the activist-scholar

Ms. Bina Srinivasan passed away in the early hours of August 13, 2007. As a WISCOMP Scholar of Peace Bina had forged strong bonds of friendship with many of us. We deeply mourn her sudden demise and pray for her departed soul. The passion and zeal with which she fought for the rights of the marginalized will continue to inspire us. Here Sumona DasGupta shares her memories of Bina.



When I first met Bina in 2001, I was struck by the intensity emanating from her fragile frame. It was an intensity born of passion, conviction, and an unflinching commitment to social justice. The impression grew with every conversation and e-mail exchange over the last 6 years or so – it was there in the way she talked, her body language, her expressions, and of course her writings.

A gifted writer, Bina pulled no punches, made no attempt to paper over cracks. She was direct and graphic, not hesitating to speak her outrage whenever she saw an injustice happening. Indeed Bina felt injustice with every fibre of her being. It left her restless and filled her with the compulsion to engage at different levels with the victims of injustice, take unconventional stands and very often use nothing but the courage of her convictions to walk a lonely path.

My association with Bina began in 2002 when she applied for the WISCOMP fellowship and our first interactions were located in this specific context. Over the years our communications went far beyond exchanges on the Narmada Bacho Andolan on which part of her fellowship work was based (and in which she actively took part). She would send e-mails about her home state Gujarat that left her with scars that never healed, about mega development projects that displaced people with callousness and with complete disregard for the way of life it was destroying, about her work with slum dwellers and then as she moved to New York and Sri Lanka, over other rights based issues that would constantly agitate her mind.

Gujarat was Bina's home turf. She left it for short while only to return. Probably nothing had a more profound impact on Bina's mind than post 2002 Gujarat. It left her angry, outraged, at times hopeless, and as time passed, profoundly wounded. I believe she never really recovered "from Gujarat".

The anguish was to stay with her at all times. Whenever she participated in WISCOMP seminars and panel discussions she brought in a reality check – the need to combine activism with academic work. She excelled at both and was in every sense the scholar-activist or rather, the activist-scholar. At the roundtable designed to generate discussions on justice and reconciliation in Gujarat, just two weeks before she tragically passed away, Bina said: "we should not be here... we should be out in the streets."

Bina's impassioned concern for justice and rights prompted her to carry multiple crosses on her shoulders – crosses that weighed far more than what most human beings are able to support in a lifetime. She quietly accepted personal dilemmas and made difficult choices as part of the path she had chosen in life. The uncharted road always comes with its share of struggles, but I cannot imagine Bina take any other way. That is how I will always remember her.

– Sumona DasGupta

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
FOUNDATION FOR UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY OF HH THE DALAI LAMA

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WISCOMP UPDATE is the newsletter of Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace. WISCOMP is an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, New Delhi. We see our role as creating the space to 'engender' an inclusive, conceptual vocabulary on issues of peace and security. WISCOMP works to facilitate the participation and leadership of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and to leverage support for this at the national, regional and international levels.

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Applause for Athwaas

Peace Direct, a London based international organization that focuses on grassroots peacebuilding in areas of conflict across the world has selected **WISCOMP's Athwaas** initiative for its **Champions Project Award**.

The *Athwaas* initiative is an innovative program that seeks to build spaces for Dialogue and Reconciliation in Jammu and Kashmir by facilitating women's agency in peacebuilding to transcend conventional divisions of region, ideology, ethnicity and class.

WISCOMP

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