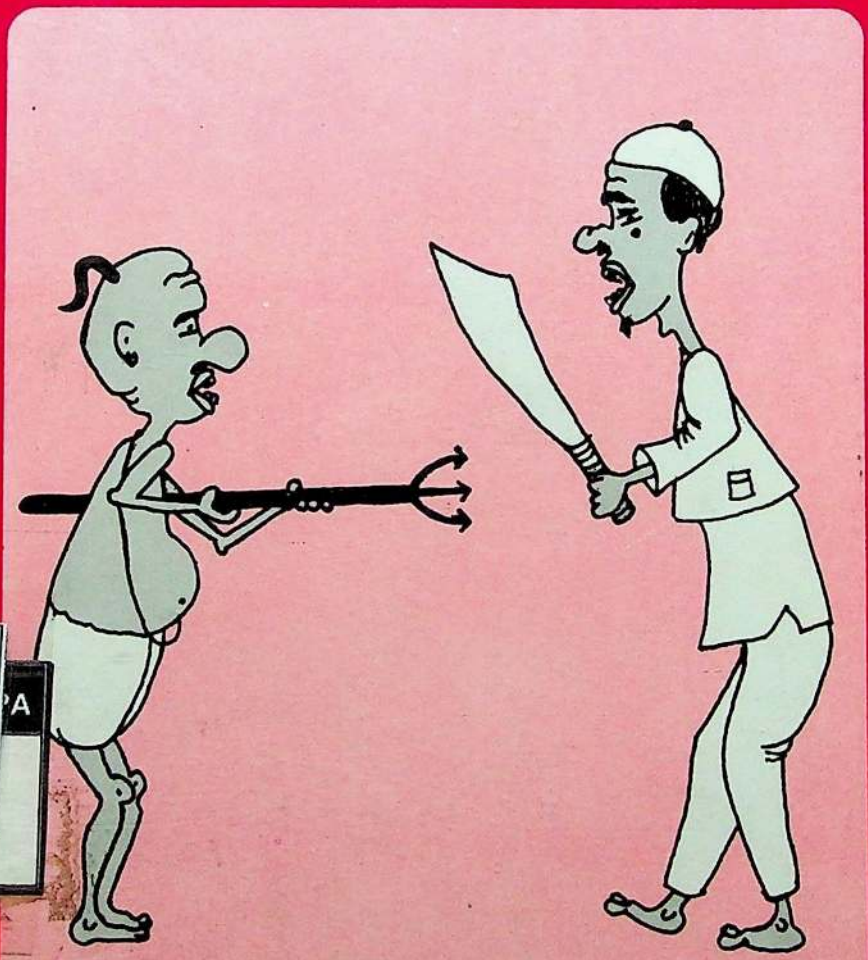
EMERGING SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

Edited by
Mohiuddin Ahmad



RARIA
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The Alliance of Hope must not be merely an alliance of institutions, networks, or other organized formations. Alliance of Hope must truly become people-to-people alliance. This is specially critical in South Asia where trans-border interaction of ordinary citizens is severely restricted due to inter-State hostility and consequent erection of non-porous `walls' on the borders. These `walls' need to be overcome more concertedly. People-to-people process and widespread citizens' involvement are, in fact, necessary ingredients of overcoming these `walls', because most existing institutional formations have also become partisan in inter-governmental divisions and hostility.

PUSTA
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Emerging South Asian Perspective

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Dedicated to the memory of

Sanwara Begum Sara
Prakash Kaphley
Gamini Apa
Mohsin Ali

WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR

WHERE the mind is without fear and
the head is high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world ha not been
broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from the
dept of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches
its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the dreary
desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by
thee into ever-widening thought and
action -
Into that heaven of freedom, my
Father, let my country awake.

Rabindranath Tagore
(Noibedya, 1902)

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PREFACE

Is South Asia an antiquity, a nostalgia, a utopia, a dream, or a reality? Sentiments and perceptions may differ. But there is perhaps no doubt that there exists a South Asian Perspective in the fragmented scenario. There are commonalities and divergences among the billion population in the region. But the commonalities outweigh the differences.

State of the people are same across the borders. They are poor, malnourished, oppressed, discriminated and divided by the hegemonic forces of the elite and their institutions. People want to come closer to each other to shape their own future. Their attempts for cooperation, solidarity and empowerment are obstructed by the power brokers in the guise of nationalism and security. Now such obstructions are being challenged by the people.

PP21 (People's Plan for Twenty First Century) is an ongoing movement which promotes trans-border alliance between the people. The South Asia Initiative of PP21 has been facilitating people-to-people alliance and solidarity in the region. Within its framework, a series of consultations have so far been held. Some serious and urgent matters of concern for the people of the region have been discussed in some of these meetings and participants representing grass-roots groups, indigenous communities, mass organizations and other social formations have been trying their utmost to bridge the existing gap and to define a common perspective. As a result of this process, some charters and declarations have been drafted and disseminated.

Some changes have taken place in the regional spectrum since the commencement of the South Asian Initiative of PP21 in early 1993. It would be useful at this juncture to look back, to see what our pledges were, and to assess what we have done so far, so that our efforts for understanding, solidarity, empowerment and progress become more meaningful.

As a part of this endeavour, this book has been compiled. This primarily includes reports and declarations of some important meetings held within the framework of various South Asian initiatives. Some of the meetings, though important and relevant, might have been left out in this text, because reports on those meetings have not been available. Despite this limitation, the compilation represents ideas and actions of major actors of the region who are involved in the process of trans-border alliance of the people.

The book is the result of combined efforts of a host of PP21 partners and citizens' groups of the region. Most notable among them are ACHAN, ASPBAE, CDL, INSEC, RRN and ACFOD. Some of them have spent a lot of time and resources to propose ideas, to organize forums and to prepare reports. The editorial advisors have been instrumental in sharpening thoughts and drafting reports in different forums. Besides, many friends were involved in the process of generating ideas and documentation. Particular mention may be made about Rajesh Tandon, Om Srivastava, Boonthan T. Verawongse, Ranabir Samaddar, Arjun K. Karki, Biplab Halim, Naoman Naqvi, Tarsisus Fernando, Rajendra Kumar Sail and Kawaljit Singh. Their contributions are acknowledged with gratitude.

Mohiuddin Ahmad
February 1996

EPILOGUE

PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT

The present growth-oriented development model have failed to contribute to the well-being of the masses and the prosperity of the grass-roots communities. When the whole world is at the door-step of the twenty first century, many people are is still trapped in the world of hunger, poverty, marginalization and lopsided development. The situation has been further aggravated as natural resource base is being indiscriminately exploited by high-tech projects undermining its sustenance and long-run negative impact on the people. Particular mention may be made about the forests, the watersheds and the rivers which have been systematically destroyed by state-sponsored projects. The life and livelihood of the millions in different regions have become vulnerable.

The PP21 (People's Plan for Twenty First Century) process envisages that the people form institutions voluntarily to serve the purpose of the people. Hence it is the people who should be at the upper rung of the ladder. The institutions and the intermediaries should perform responsibilities, and are not mandated to exercise power over the people. So, the PP21 intends to turn the existing balance upside down to make the people more visible.

ALLIANCE OF STRUGGLE, SOLIDARITY AND HOPE

The twenty first century is at our door step. The People's Plan for Twenty First Century (PP21) has been conceived as a continuous process of people's empowerment. It is a movement to change the present state of things. The implicit features of this movement are:

- It has emerged as a people's program organized by a broad coalition of NGOs and people's movements and organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and in other parts of the world.

- It is an ongoing process which has evolved through a fruitful interaction of the peoples across political boundaries who forge themselves in an ALLIANCE OF HOPE, aiming to create an alternative human society free from all dominations and discriminations.

- It is an international program of action rooted in the people's movements and communities focussing on issues based on present day realities with positive vision of the future.

- It is more a process than a plan and has to be continued and sustained, and the people's movements should continue to weave networks of communication, friendship and solidarity in their struggle for a better life.

The PP21 in Japan in August 1989 which culminated in the formulation of the Minamata Declaration was a new style and type of movement. It helped strengthening the awareness that the people should, and can, act not merely to resist the imposition of anti-people ideas and systems, but to create an alternative future for themselves. It projected a fundamental change in the modus operandi of NGOs and people's initiatives to think and act on a trans-border basis. It has been possible to stimulate the creation of new networks for trans-border collaboration and action.

The PP21 movement was further accelerated and strengthened by the events of 1992 in different parts of Thailand. Participants of the PP21 convention in Bangkok took a fresh vow for an alternative human society. The Rajchadamnoen Pledge of December 1992 reiterated the commitment to build trans-border alliance of the peoples in struggle, solidarity and hope.

SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE

Citizens' groups and NGOs of South Asia region have been involved with the PP21 process since its inception. The region became the focus of various activities for the promotion of trans-border people-to-people alliance since the beginning of 1993. The South Asia Initiative has evolved from the ongoing process of interaction and alliance-building and is passing through a crucial phase characterized by intra-regional political rivalry between the governments on the one hand and pervasive globalization on the other.

In the absence of healthy social development, violence of the dominant groups is unleashed to weaker groups in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, caste and gender. The powerful sections of the society with their strong grip on the state and its institutions impose their own brand of ideology and statehood to oppress and plunder the people through both "constitutional" and extra-constitutional modes. They use a system of a highly centralized planning and administration which are top-down, bureaucratic, coercive, exploitative and immoral. The overwhelming majority of the population are diminished to a body of taxpayers without any right of participation in the determination of their own destiny.

In the absence of healthy social development, violence of the dominant groups is unleashed to weaker groups in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, caste and gender. The powerful sections of the society with their strong grip on the state and its institutions impose their own brand of ideology and statehood to oppress and plunder the people through both "constitutional" and extra-constitutional modes.

Ethnic and religious chauvinism is on the increasing scale. The state is

provoking chauvinism in many respects. The Hindu-Muslim riot, the marginalization of the Dalits by Brahminism, the discrimination of the ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples by the majority community, all these are manifestations of a civil society which can hardly claim itself civilized.

States are at loggerheads which obstruct free flow of information and of the people. The right to information and the freedom of movement are basic human rights. These rights are being curtailed in the pretext of "national security".

In the backdrop of this situation, a South Asian Perspective is slowly evolving within the framework of the PP21. A host of processes and events have already taken place where the concerned persons, groups and communities have endeavoured to come closer, define a common perspective and work out a common agenda.

PEOPLE'S CONVERGENCE

People are the locus of the PP21 movement. Who are the `people'? They have already been made dehumanized commodity. They are the cheapest raw materials for politics, research and development. The people have been sold and resold from time immemorial by organized gangs of intermediaries. They claim themselves to be representatives of the people. There are intermediaries of different sizes, shades, creeds and vocabularies. One recent vocabulary has been "to make the people visible". This has been the lexicon of the 1992 PP21 Assembly in Bangkok. Since then, what happened to the people? They continued to be poor, malnourished, displaced, marginalized and discriminated. They continued to be sandwiched by the power brokers and the intermediaries. On the other hand, brokers and intermediaries are becoming more and more visible.

PP21 is supposed to be a genuine people's process and this has been emphasized time and again since its inception. The ordinary citizens, women and men, without the banner of asso-

ciations or institutions, were visible source of energy and support at Minamata in 1989. That strength of PP21 requires even greater challenge now. The "Alliance of Hope" must not become merely an alliance of institutions, networks, or other organized formations. "Alliance of Hope" must truly become people-to-people alliance. The genesis of PP21 should not be a network of existing intermediaries, a super NGO, but should become a movement for People's Convergence.

NEW WORLD NEW ORDER

The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope.

We were born in a world divided into hostile groups. If we want to survive collectively, then these divisions must be overcome. We have met in Minamata and found in each other the will to overcome the structures that divide us.

Here, then is our assertion: the 21st century must not be built by these forces of degraded development, but by the forces resisting it. Only then is there hope, not otherwise.

There is another reason for hope. The present system has begun to undermine itself by creating its own contradictions: growth against nature, militarism against need for collective security, uniformity against cultural diversity, alienation against human dignity, mindless consumerism against humankind aspiring to regain lost values.

New conditions support these aspirations. We have the knowledge and the technology. We also have the grass-roots organizations, people's spirituality and values, reaffirmed, rediscovered and newly created in the struggle for survival in the face of the collective suicide imposed by the present pattern of development.

A new logic is emerging against the logic of growth, transnational companies and elitist power. This is the true logic of the majority. The majority here do not mean the majority as measured in polls and elections, but the global majority, the most oppressed. It means that they must have the prerogative, and

this requires a new set of priorities based on human values and in harmony with nature, culture, gender, indigenous people and other ethnic groups.

A new internationalism is being born out of these local, national and regional popular struggles confronting common enemies. These new movements are growing up within the context of a peculiar contradiction involving the role of state. The state seeks to protect itself through intensification of repression and violence.

One of the words which has been stolen from the people and corrupted is the word "democracy". Originally, democracy meant the autonomy, the self-determination, the empowerment of the people. To many people in the Third World, however, it has come to be the label for a facade of "civilian government" disguising state terror and repression in a poly to claim legitimacy for the state to serve the interest of the powerful. For indigenous peoples and other minorities, democracy has been the ideology of "majority rule" that has denied them as "minorities" who could be legitimately ignored.

On the other hand, democracy is something millions of people are fighting and dying for. We need to retrieve it to serve the people's struggle. We must begin with the premise that the state and the institutions that it pretends constitute `democracy', cannot be relied upon

One of the words which has been stolen from the people and corrupted is the word "democracy". Originally, democracy meant the autonomy, the self-determination, the empowerment of the people. To many people in the Third World, however, it has come to be the label for a facade of "civilian government" disguising state terror and repression in a poly to claim legitimacy for the state to serve the interest of the powerful.

to bring us peace, justice, security and dignified life, or an end to ecological destruction. Only the people's movements themselves, independent and autonomous, can do this. And here we are talking about a democracy that honours human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples and other minorities.

At the same time, democracy can no longer be achieved within the limits of the state. Today, the lives of millions of people are being controlled, shattered, deformed and destroyed by decisions made outside their communities, even outside their countries. These decisions are made by foreign governments, by transnational corporations, by agencies such as the IMF, the World bank and big power summits.

We declare that the people, especially the oppressed people, have a natural and universal right to criticize, oppose, or prevent the implementation of decisions affecting their lives, no matter where those decisions are made. We declare that this right, as a people's right, is more fundamental than any artificial law or institution established by the state. We declare that this right means the right of the people to cross all borders, national and social, to carry their struggle to the exact sources of all power seeking to dominate or destroy them.

We need to make clear that this right must never be interpreted as justifying actions of the powerful crossing borders to oppress, exploit and dispossess the people. On the contrary, we are asserting that the people have a right to counter these interventions which are going on all time.

We recognize that the struggles of subjugated peoples for self-determination, independence and to establish their own governments, or of people to change or improve their governments, are crucial. At the same time, we believe that in the long run, it is the trans-border political actions of the people and marginalized states countering the power of the international capital, will produce the 21st century that we hope for.

We have no illusion about the present condition of the people of the Asia-Pacific region. The ruling powers maintain themselves by dividing the people and encouraging hostility among them. The rulers not only seek to rule us, but also to manage our mutual relations, depriving us of our right to do this for ourselves. This we must reject and overcome. Trans-border political action, support and solidarity campaigns across borders will gradually develop a new "people" that transcends existing divisions, especially between people living in the North and in the South. (excerpts from the Minamata Declaration, PP21, August 1989)

SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE



FOUNDING CONSULTATION

During the PP21 convention in Bangkok in December 1992, South Asian participants informally discussed the idea of initiating a PP21 process in the South Asia region. As a follow-up of this discussion, South Asian groups met in Kathmandu on 16-17 February 1993 to discuss pertinent issues. Discussions focussed on three major areas:

- South Asian realities and challenges, particularly communalism, poverty and effectiveness of SAARC;
- Reflection on PP21 Thailand;
- Action agenda.

As a process, participants felt that PP21 could play a strengthening role in the ongoing efforts of the people in South Asia through facilitating wider sharing of ideas and experiences and forging solidarity alliance across the borders.

The Kathmandu meeting identified the following areas as the basis for further action strategies:

1. Promoting communal harmony and combating religious and ethnic violence;
2. Environment: sustainable development and river water issues;
3. Economic issues: structural adjustment and its effects on the people, possible alternatives;
4. Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities;
5. Demilitarization and denuclearization;
6. Human rights;
7. Overall South Asian perspective and future vision.

Seven working groups prepared a preliminary outline. The basic thrust was to identify groups and organizations who have been working on these issues and set up a mechanism whereby they could help the specialized groups elaborate the proposal further.

A coordination committee was formed to work until the extended meeting to be held in the later part of 1993. Members of the committee were Luithui, Om Srivastava, Prem Chandran John, Sushil Pyakurel, Nighat Said Khan, Majid Mallik, Abdus Sabur and Rajendra Wijetunga.

ACHAN volunteered to provide secretarial services. It was agreed that preliminary work will be done in each country to increase contacts and invite groups and movements to join in the PP21 process.

List of Participants:

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Minar Pimple
Tapan K. Bose
K.M. Thomas
Prem Chandran John
Ch. Preetha
Buddhadeb Chaudhury
Biplab Halim
Ranjit Roy Choudhury
Thomas Kocherry
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Rajesh Tandon
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Justice P.N. Bhagawati
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Habibur Rahman

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Boonthan T. Verawongse

BHUTAN
Om Dhungel

PP21 SECRETARIAT
M.A. Sabur

CONVENTION ON COMMUNAL HARMONY

A people's convention on Communal Harmny was held in Dhaka on 23-24 July 1933. The Coonvention was organized by PP21 Bangladesh, The the Convention was attended by representatives of NGOs, political parties, cultural organizatins, human rights grups and many other social formations. On the second day, many victims of communal violence narrated their story of agony, plight and persecution. In the final session, a declaratin was signed by the participants which reflects a people's perspective on the issue.

Participants of the Convention on Communal Harmony, Dhaka.

INDIA
Buddhadeb Chawdhuri
Sumita Chawdhuri
Ronjon Mukharjee
Arghya Kusum Datta
Kailash Sthyardi
Bithal Rao

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Mohiuddin Ahmad
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Ahmad Rofique
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Kashem Chowdhury
Amita Dey
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Ayesha Parul
Kamal Udden
Mohsin Ali
Selim Jahangir
Shirin Akhtar
Sharif Nurul Ambia
Ayesha Arshad
Bhagaboti Ghosh
Ajoy Roy
Fazlul Haque Ripon
Abu Sayeed Khan
Ali Sanowar
Beby Maudood
Wahida Banu
Ferdous Azim
Kamrun Nahar
Abu Hasib Khan
Shadhana Das Gupta
Iqubal Majumder
Tofazzal Hossain
Abdus Sabur

(100 more people participated from Bangladesh)

DECLARATION OF THE CONVENTION ON COMMUNAL HARMONY

23-24 July 1993
Dhaka, Bangladesh

People's Plan for Communal Harmony

South Asia is the birth place of many religions and a region where people from different faiths have lived amicably together for centuries. Despite its historical rise and fall, the sub-continent has also succeeded in safeguarding its secular institutions and some of the values, beliefs and practices of such institutions have made a significant contribution to human civilisation.

The destruction of the Babri Masjid last year, however, meant destruction of the symbol of India's secular identity. The Babri Masjid was a symbol of the sense of security of Indian Muslims. In its destruction, a large section of the Hindu population misguidedly saw a vindication of their right to assert their dominance over the Muslim minorities. The shock waves from the demolition have rapidly travelled across the country and its frontiers carrying in their wake, bloodshed, fear and anger.

Although, following these events, the urban areas soon became tinder boxes of communal tension; in rural areas, the century's old bonds between the two communities to a large extent endured. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the carefully woven tapestry of peaceful co-existence has been stretched and in many areas the fabric held only by a slender thread of sanity.

If the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6 was a watershed, then the continuing blood-bath, carnage and looting in Bombay, Karachi and Bhola was the flood. In what is one

of the poorest regions of the world where millions of children sleep hungry on the streets, do not get a square meal in weeks and often do not have access to pure drinking water; self-seekers, power hungry politicians and their cohorts went on the rampage with the result that everything including age-old traditions of communal brotherhood, came down. As the crisis developed, States and governments took a rear seat as observers hoping to reap some benefit in the aftermath of the carnage.

PP 21, after a careful analysis of the events have made the following observations :

a. The people, especially the minority communities have developed a deep sense of anger at, and distrust of, state systems i.e. the bureaucracy, parliament and the judiciary; the police (who instead of protecting the victims, often connived with the perpetrators), all of whom they feel have failed them. They also include the politicians in their anger, since for the most part, they refused to risk their safe seats by calling for sanity and humanity.

b. The States have failed to protect their people by refusing to act to enforce the Rule of Law, or to protect and safeguard the interests of minority communities. It was observed that the States instead of acting, have merely reacted and even this was painfully slow.

c. Established political organisations which uphold secular and democratic values, have failed to live up to their commitments and have not extended effective safeguards to minority communities. Nor have they succeeded in mobilising public opinion in favour of communal harmony. Their commitment to the poeple has seldom graduated from rhetoric.

d. The existence of a strong communal bias in our ideology has significantly influenced the politics of governments in the sub-continent. This has led to massive militarisation in the region including intense competition for production of nuclear bombs. Increased allocation of funds

to the military has meant less resources available for social sectors thus undermining and efforts towards development and the alleviation of poverty.

e. The institutionalisation of a form of democracy where institutions are solely concerned with vote-seeking in order to demonstrate state sanction for activities which only serve the interests of those with resources and power, and the failure of this democracy to address the interests of ordinary people, have resulted in a political vacuum in which religious fanaticism and fundamentalism have thrived.

f. The impact on the morale of minority communities of the violence and loss of life and property, has generated a deep sense of insecurity which has seriously undermined their long-term commitment to their countries. This has, in turn, affected the economic and social investment plans of these communities leading to under-development.

g. Since the state has monopolised all decision-making processes and the people have been marginalised; the forces of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism have gained the upper hand and, as always in situations of confusion and uncertainty, vested interest groups have moved in fast with carefully designed instruments for profiteering. In the process, society has been polarised between the State and the Government on the one hand and civil society on the other. While the dominant interest of the former remains power, including state power, and wealth, the civil society agenda focused on democracy and development.

h. Areas such as urban slums, with low-literacy, high unemployment and poor sanitation were the worst hit.

i. Rural areas with a lower concentration of conflicting interest groups, experienced less violence and intimidation.

j. Some sectors of civil society, with or without institutional support, and often risking their lives, moved in and helped by trying to mobilise community support, protection for the minority families, resettlement, food, shelter and services and enlisting media support. The students, lawyears, film stars and media people, all played a humanitarian role.

k. The unfortunate events which followed the controversy surrounding Rama's birthplace in Ayodha, calls fir the increased trans-border political action of civil society in the form of human rights education, support to and solidarity with, the campaign for communal harmony and promotion of human values across cultures. These issues must be regarded as outside the province of what is usually seen the internal affairs of sovereign states. Such people's action across borders must be seen a new begining towards resolving such issues at the peoples level and, as such will contitute a great step towards materialising our common dream of a People's SAARC.

In view of our shared observations, we the participants from different nations of South and South East Asia, at the end of a 2-days Convention on communal harmony held in Dhaka on 23-24 July, 1993 at the initiative of PP 21 Bangladesh, make the following appeal to civil society as well as the governments of the region for their support in achieving what must be seen as our common objectives :

1. We appeal to all governments of this subcontinent to compensate the victims of the communal disturbances since 6th December 1992 for loss of life and property and to take stern action against the perpetrators of crimes.

2. This conference calls on the people of South Asia to exert pressure on their respective governments to bring about constitutional changes which will result in the separation of the state from religion. This separation should be

introduced in all spheres of public life especially education and mass communication.

3. We appeal to all the people of this region to come forward and build strong cultural bonds between communities to avert future communal discord.

4. We appeal to all the people of this region to develop and strengthen networks in order to widen the scope of SAARC and make it functional for people in general.

5. This conference proposes the complete removal of all types of travel restrictions within SAARC.

6. We appeal to all governments of this subcontinent to call a complete halt to further militarization, and to undertaking the gradual disarmament and transfer of military expenditure to the social sector in the whole region.

7. We appeal to all the people of this region to oberve a Communal Harmony Day every year across South Asia thus building a human chain of communal fraternity.

PP21 SOUTH ASIA CONVENTION

Madras, August 1993

The PP21 South Asia Convention was held on 26-28 August 1993 in Madras (India) and was the culmination of efforts to bring the spirit of Minamata and Bangkok to the sub-continent. As never before in the history of South Asia, is this spirit sorely needed, to correct the aberrations in the body politic of the region and to bring about grassroots democratization. About one hundred delegates from seven countries spent three days: the first day in communion with three hundred peasants, child labourers, dalits, tribals and others, looking in depth into the common problems of the region and making positive action plans to set in motion transformation processes. Alliances between believers and transcending borders will form the basis of this hope.

Introduction

People's Plan for the twenty first Century (PP21), a movement towards grass-roots democratization which began in Japan in 1989 is seen today as a process of building an alliance of hope across borders of countries and regions through the mobilization of people's initiatives and actions. Global events of the last two decades which have resulted in the centralization of power and the rule of patronage and the consequent hegemony of the ruling class over the majority of the people in Asia had turned the latter into puppets in the hands of the state. More recent happenings of significance, i.e., the opening of third world economies by the North, have resulted to a handful of powerful corporations and states coopting the ruling elite of the third world to protect and further their interests at the expense of the vast majority of humankind. Today, huge sections of the

population of Asia do not enjoy basic social, economic and political rights. Their nations are unable to exercise their right to free expression in international forums, especially, if they are heavily indebted to multilateral aid agencies and banks from the North.

In fact, in some parts of Asia, people have been so marginalised that they have had to turn to bonded labour, child labour, child prostitution and other forms of contemporary slavery for their survival. In this dismal scenario, military expenditures of governments have risen sky-high and drastic cuts in social spending were made to ease the pressure on the budgets. In addition, in many states political diversity and democratic opposition is no longer tolerated resulting in the aggressive suppression of the inalienable and democratic rights of the people.

In such a context, PP21 events in Japan (1989) and in Thailand (1992) helped to raise several issues facing the Asia-Pacific region and have raised hopes that the existing oppressive situation will change through people's action for self-reliance. The formation of cross-border `Alliances of Hope' was envisaged as a means of strengthening people's organizations to take an active role in local, national and international concerns extending beyond boundaries.

South Asia Initiative

Several South Asian participants of the Bangkok happening discussed the possibilities of bringing the spirit of PP21 to the sub-continent. With this aim in view, a meeting was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, in February 1993. Sectarian violence, religious fundamentalism, economic dependance and all-pervading poverty were identified as the main issues facing the South Asian region. The meeting went on to name seven areas for concentration in future action strategies. These are:

- Communalism,
- River water and environmental issues,

- Structural adjustment programs,
- Indigenous people and ethnic minorities,
- Demilitarization,
- Human rights,
- Overall South Asian perspective and future vision.

Madras Convention

The first of the series of planned actions of the PP21 South Asian partners was held in Madras on 26-28 August, 1993. The meeting was organized by ACHAN. The meeting brought together nearly 100 participants from the Asia-Pacific region who, on the first day, interacted with over three hundred peasants, fisherfolk, slum dwellers, tribals and members of other disadvantaged vulnerable communities and activists working among them, in a series of sectoral workshops that addressed the issues that confronted these communities today. The discussions that emerged from these interactions (which provided invaluable insights into the perception of the poor) formed the basis of the proceedings of the second and third day and the preparation of a plan of action.

The organizers of the Madras meeting had envisaged this process to bring together a diverge gathering from different walks of life, such as, decision-makers and planners of the NGO establishment, activists and representatives of people's movements and members of people's organizations in South Asia, to facilitate the interaction and sharing of perceptions of citizens from various levels of the society. Particular emphasis, however, was placed on the need for planners, decision-makers and administrators or so-called `prominent citizens' to listen to the poor and understand the stark realities of their day-to-day existence. The encounter was intended to sensitize them to take cognizance of peoples' perceptions in the planning processes.

Participants welcomed enthusiastically the space provided in the workshop for them to share their perceptions of today and of their future, i.e., the twenty first century. The hopes and aspirations of the oppressed (as expressed by their representatives) who have traditionally been denied all opportunity to

express their ideas, gave impetus and inspiration to the proceedings of the workshop over the subsequent two days.

The differing perceptions of the future, of the marginalized and vulnerable and those who had enjoyed the benefits of society, were more apparent than ever.

The consequences of recent events such as the globalization of third world economies under the influence of the World Bank and the IMF structural adjustment programs have adversely affected the lives of hundreds of millions of people in Asia. Under the new economic policies, national development plans are oriented towards a few groups of `advantaged' people and are dependent on external aid. Export agriculture and mega developmental projects have alienated communities (especially ethnic minorities) from their land, culture and social heritage, apart from causing large scale environmental degradation and food shortage. All these are taking place at the cost of human dignity and rights.

In this context, PP21 South Asia Convention was also a call to planners and administrators in the NGO sector to work towards initiating alternative development planning processes within their structures, which are decentralized, people oriented and aimed at sustainable living for all, especially the poor, the tribals and the so called outcasts. The entire agenda was aimed at forming a South Asian Alliance of NGOs, people's organizations, movements and activists towards people-oriented development planning for a more just and humane world order.

At the end of the first day, the sectoral workshops concluded in a plenary session where the discussions were summarized and the recommendations were presented. The discussions of the next two days were based entirely on these perceptions and therefore, hopefully, more down-to-earth and relevant. The details of these workshops are given below.

FIRST DAY: WORKSHOP

Women

Women from various regions, castes and class backgrounds raised issues of village, national and regional importance. At the outset, strong protests were registered against the total absence of women in the PP21 National Coordination Committee. The group also observed that no male participant had opted to join this workshop on women.

After deep and prolonged discussions lasting over several hours, the participants of the workshop recommended the following:

- That violation of women's rights should be treated as a violation of human rights.

- Steps to stop family, societal and state violence against women should be taken. Discriminatory laws, especially those which perpetuate unjust social practices, need to be amended. Religious fundamentalism in all forms should be condemned seriously and women's consciousness be raised against its misogynistic and patriarchal character.

- Alternative educational processes need to be initiated by women's groups to facilitate and strengthen women to deal with their oppression.

- "We want partners not masters" and "be human" were slogans that participants coined for men to take note of.

The workshop also condemned the present differential wage structure under which women are paid lower wages than men, the bias in the health care system which enables technology to be used to abuse women's body, curb women's mobility and participation in the public sphere, the sale of alcohol which perpetuates violence and poverty in women's lives and the increasing number of caste and communal clashes in which

women are the worst affected. Violence against women, of all ages and all forms, were discussed.

Fisherfolk

The workshop emphasized the need for programs to build awareness among the fisherfolk about their civil rights as well as to develop leadership in the fishing communities in order to facilitate their empowerment. The need to form strong union/ federation of fishers was also stressed.

Among the several suggestions that emerged for their upliftment was the need to check sea erosion so that they can pursue their occupation without hinderance, development of fish markets with water, lighting and telecom facilities, provision of credit facilities, especially for women, facilities like schools and fair price shops and cooperations and services such as vocational training for women, supply of improved motorized catamarans, housing rights, transport services, drinking water and electricity.

The workshop took note that increasing incidence of alcoholism in fishing communities was blocking their progress.

Industrial Workers

Structural adjustment programs of the World Bank, IMF and ADB and the conditionalities imposed on governments to privatize industries have resulted in millions of people being retrenched. Forms of contract-labour and bonded-labour persist due to the shift in production from formal to informal sectors denying workers facilities and benefits that the organized work force is entitled to.

Workers' protest against economic liberalization has been quelled by the state by invoking repressive laws. Relaxation of labour policy and exemption from labour laws in free trade zones and export processing zones have denied the workers

their rights to a secured livelihood. Constitutionally recognized rights to form associations are generally not accepted. The trade union movement is further fragmented on ethnic, religious and sectarian lines.

The participants of the workshop recommended that PP21 should initiate a vigorous movement against the SAPs of the IMF and World Bank and, for this, a single united organization for all workers of South Asian countries should be formed.

Democracy, Development and Human Rights

The workshop identified problems facing today's civil society and discussed strategies to defend civil liberties. The issues raised were protection of the rights of industrial workers, vis-a-vis, IMF/World Bank Programs, communalism and ethnicity and programs for peace.

Protection of the human rights of women, especially within the home, through ratification of CEDAR by South Asian governments has been emphasized.

Urban Issues

Participants representing slums in Madras city and NGOs working on urban issues stated that the cities breed and maintain slums to provide cheap labour. Slum development today means the right to housing, decent job opportunity, drinking water facilities and other health facilities, opportunities for education and recreation. Suggestions for action that emerged from the workshop were:

- Regular campaign to build awareness among slum-dwellers;
- Continuing existing people's struggles;
- To reflect on the process and the results of past strategies and to develop an agenda for further action based on that.

Peasants

The representatives of peasants, non-government organizations and mass organizations from different South Asian countries attending the workshop discussed the need for implementation of genuine land reforms to resolve landlessness and increased budgetary allocation for rural development to enable poor farmers to enhance their production. Laws have to be enacted and implemented to ensure that agricultural labourers are paid minimum wages. They also said that development of sustainable agriculture would help in the recovery and preservation of the environment, as well as, eliminate problems caused by pesticides and fertilizers imposed by trans-national agri-business companies. A broad alliance of solidarity against the designs of the IMF and the World Bank is necessary to protect the rights of peasants. The need for organizing credit management programs at the grass-roots, women's participation in decision making and fighting the market economy for the liberation of peasantry from exploitation was also discussed. South Asian governments must recognize the right of the people to information and technology across artificial boundaries, they said.

Indigenous People

Representatives of tribal communities in Northeast India, South India, Nepal, as well as members of several non-governmental organizations, participated in the workshop. The outcome of the workshop was mainly as follows:

Participants stated that the present development policies and programs lack a long term development vision for the indigenous people resulting in the destruction of their cultural, social and economic ethos.

Participants made an appeal to South Asian governments to formulate and implement development programs adopted in the Vienna Conference and ratify ILO Convention 169 and other related International Conventions.

Environment

The workshop on environment stressed the need to develop an environment-friendly, people-oriented development perspective that will influence all development activities in the future. The construction of large dams and large multi-storied buildings was particularly criticized.

Alliance-building among the victims of large dams on a trans-border basis, formation of a people's commission to monitor and assess the impact of environmentally hazardous projects, were considered for immediate action. Organic farming was recommended as an alternative to using chemical pesticides and fertilizers produced by big corporations.

Human Rights and Child Labour

Participants working among child labourers in Nepal, Bangladesh and India stated that public apathy and lack of political will of the governments of South Asian countries to enforce legislation have helped to perpetuate this practice.

As a first step towards elimination of child labour, participants recommended the formation to strong advocacy groups and networks to campaign against this evil. Political parties must also include the elimination of child servitude on their agenda. Any attempt by governments to legalize this form of exploitation must be strongly opposed. Among the recommendations were:

- To form strong networks of SACCS (South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude) to lobby and campaign against child servitude;
- To ensure that all political parties include the elimination of child servitude on their agenda.

Participants emphasized that a time frame for elimination of child labour should be set. Campaigns to sensitize the public on the issue, setting of commissions on child labour and legislative action for universal education were also recommended.

Dalit

The inhuman treatment meted out by the upper caste to the dalits is appalling. Even today, the dalits are not allowed to enter common areas, collect water from common wells or cremate their dead in common burial grounds. Such acts of untouchability have to be condemned and punished. But these continue to be practiced. Dalits do not have adequate representation in the government. Education is also dominated by the upper caste people.

The main issues discussed at the workshop were dalit representation in the electoral system, benefits of reservation and increasing atrocities on the dalits by members of the upper castes.

Strategies for a more equitable distribution of resources, effective functioning of the system of reservation and ways to protect civil rights of the dalits were elaborated.

Displaced People

The term "displaced people" as understood in the immediate or narrow sense refers to those people who have been physically displaced for one reason or the other. The other interpretation of the term refers to those who remain displaced from the decision- making processes that concern their lives and never have a chance to become masters of their own destinies. This displacement is further perpetuated by governments that have become servile adherents of the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank. Increasing marginalization and oppression of the poor and discrimination of the minorities have led to social tensions, racial/religious conflicts, civil wars and so on. In such situations, governments use police and military repression which has result in large scale displacement. Sri Lanka is a typical example where a civil war has been continuing for more than 10 years. There are over 700,000 displaced people apart from about 300,000 refugees in India and other countries of the world.

When planning mega development projects, the people to be displaced are never consulted, nor are their genuine and strong protests paid heed to by the respective governments. On the contrary, they have resorted to repressive measures to silence genuine democratic protests.

The participants suggested that PP21 South Asia Initiative should start a rapid extension program so as to offer collective resistance to all such anti-people measures.

THE SECOND DAY

The Process

The discussions on the second and third days were on the perceptions and the vision of the poor as expressed by them in the sectoral workshops on the first day. To take a comprehensive look at the state of the region today, with special reference to critical issues, such as, rising fundamentalism, there was a structured input by way of a long speech by Sailendra Nath Ghosh. This was followed by group discussions. Suggestions and conclusions in group discussions were brought to a plenary session at the end of the day.

"South Asian People Facing the Nation State": the theme for the opening session on the second day was presented by S.N. Ghosh. Crucial issues facing South Asia, that is, communalism, fundamentalism, degraded environment, state oppression, marginalization of the poor, increasing national debt and the consequent servitude to the North, unrestricted entry of transnational corporations and the globalization of the economy, the unregulated entry of western media into every nook and corner of the region, were all looked into in depth, their historical roots uncovered and the part played by the ruling structures and the nexus between them and international bourgeoisie were identified and analyzed.

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Following the input session, participants went into country groups, viz., India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan and Bangladesh, to discuss, identify and prioritise issues that faced their respective states. The outcome of these workshops are discussed below:

Pakistan

Militarization: Pakistan has been under martial law for 60% of its existence. The bureaucratic machinery has made it impossible for democratic institutions which will influence policies and events to emerge.

Communalism: Events in India, particularly of 6 December 1992 and after, have had a fallout in Pakistan. There too, minorities were victims of religious fundamentalism. Their homes and places of worship were vandalized as a consequence of trans-border political happenings.

Human rights: Imprisonment without trial, police excesses, curbs on meetings and processions, restrictions on the press, victimization of minorities and women and, most importantly, the Islamization of laws and their use as a weapon of repression, are reported.

Labour: The small size of industrial units, lack of education among workers and resultant ignorance of laws, non-implementation of existing laws by the authorities and employers, the contract labour system, etc., are other major barriers impeding unionization of the bulk of Pakistan's labour force. Bonded labour continues to persist and such workers have no rights of any kind.

Women and child trafficking: Pakistan, for its growing market for slave trade, receives migrant women workers from Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Burma. These women and children are also liable to Pakistan's Islamic law and victims may be held guilty of `adultery'.

IMF and structural adjustment: Rapid liberalization and opening up of the economy to TNCs have resulted in a threat to physical survival of the majority, unacceptable affluence of a few, indecent spread of consumerism and a grossly polluted environment.

India

National security laws: Sweeping legislation under which even innocent people can be detained without trial for months under the guise of combating terrorism and anti-national activities (TADA laws) are indiscriminately being enforced. Genuine democratic struggles of the people are violently suppressed by using such black laws. All these are legitimized by a subservient bureaucracy and state-controlled media, such as, radio and TV.

Protection and promotion of human rights: In India, large-scale abuse of human rights has been reported, particularly in areas affected by military/secessionist movements. Under the guise of cracking down on militants and their sympathizers, security forces resort to extra-judicial killings, fake encounters and repression of innocent civilians. In Kashmir, for instance, civilian casualties are high. Some are caught in the cross-fire, but others are victims of reprisal by security agencies invariably after a particularly audacious militant strike (e.g., the Sopore incident in January 1993, where the BSF men burnt down civilian houses in which they suspected militants were hiding). Armed with draconian powers and citing `difficult circumstances', the government brutally puts down democratic movements (e.g., the anti-Narmada stir). During the naxalite uprising, many innocent persons were branded as `extremists' and were killed in fake encounters.

SAP, World Bank conditionalities, Dunkel Draft, etc.: The Structural Adjustment Program being implemented in India under the tutelage of the World Bank-IMF combine has, as elsewhere, hurt the weaker sections the hardest. Cuts in the social welfare budget and withdrawal of subsidy on food in particular have pushed up prices of commodities supplied

through the public distribution system. The strategy of export-driven economic growth has created scarcity of commodities including food items in the domestic market fuelling inflation. Facing increasing competition from the TNCs following the lowering of import duties, domestic industries have been under pressure to cut costs. And an exit policy is being drawn up to enable them to `hire and fire' employees at will which would increase the level of unemployment. The Dunkel Draft, especially its provision on seed patents which the Indian government seems to abide by, has so threatened farmers' livelihood, that it has whipped up a backlash in Karnataka where farmers have even vandalized the headquarters of Cargill Seeds, a leading grain dealer in the global market.

River, water and environment: Countless ecologically-ruinous mega dam projects have been taken up in India in recent years despite anti-dam campaigns by environmentalists. The Tehri Dam, built in a seismically active region in Uttar Pradesh and the giant Sardar Sarovar Dam across the Narmada are two of the latest examples. Entire villages have gone under water, as also vast forest areas with their diverse flora and fauna, and tens of thousands of tribals forcibly displaced without being rehabilitated. Ironically, the benefits of such massive projects costing billions of rupees, accrue to minuscule percentage of the people who are already prosperous or better off, while the tribals and other weaker sections bear the entire cost in human terms.

Human rights education and media on people's issues: The press in India, with some notable exceptions, is by and large insensitive to people's issues. The bulk of the mainstream press pay no more than mere lip service to human rights. Even when they do take up such issues, they tend to sensationalize them, showing an utter lack of understanding and sympathy. Besides, the very perspective is oriented towards the industry and the upper class whose interests they reflect in their columns.

Communalism: At no time has India faced as serious a threat from communalism as in the recent past. Right-wing religious fundamentalists with pseudo-nationalist pretensions

have launched an onslaught on India's secular foundation, falsifying history and purveying hatred with a deceptive mix of myth and facts. By `uniting' a caste-ridden Hindu society against an `external threat', the upper castes, in fact, seek to perpetuate the subjugation of the `lower castes'. The atmosphere of large-scale unemployment and increasing despondency provides them with an ideal breeding ground.

Nepal

Trafficking of women and children: Thousands of Nepali women and children are trafficked and sold to India every year. Laws against trafficking and prostitution, though enacted, are not enforced. NGOs and women's organizations who are concerned about the rights of women have tried to organize campaigns around this issue.

River, water and environment: In Nepal, 95% of total energy demand is met by traditional resources which accelerate the process of deforestation. History has also shown that water-projects between India and Nepal have served the interests of those in power in the name of `national interest'. But water induced disasters hit the people, not governments in power.

Communalism: Nepal generally does not suffer from communalism to the extent other countries in the region do. There is a lot of resentment against people of Indian origin in the Terai who are perceived as usurping arable land in the region which is the most fertile in the country.

Indigenous people: The indigenous people in Nepal lead a life of impoverishment, deprivation, subordination and underdevelopment. The mono-linguistic policy of the government poses a threat to their culture. Women of the indigenous communities have become victims of trafficking and prostitution. The present state mechanisms offer no space for indigenous peoples to participate in the developmental and decision making processes which affect them.

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Sri Lanka

Economic issues: The SAP which was introduced in 1977 has resulted in loss of jobs due to privatization. Rise in price of essential goods due to the devaluation of the rupee and perpetuation of the rise in cost of agricultural inputs have affected the livelihood of small farmers. Small industries have had to close due to competition from large TNCs. Plantations have been privatized. Food insecurity due to shift in production front, cash crops for export, etc., have resulted in changes in food habits and this is causing malnutrition among women and children. Other offshoots from these changes have been increasing consumerism and environmental degradation.

Political issues: Violation of human rights have been further intensified with a series of Draconian laws, such as, the `prevention of terrorism act', which empowers the state to perpetuate gross injustice on its citizens in the name of protecting national security. Amendments in the electoral system has brought on the erosion of democratic processes and the growth of an authoritarian trend. Emergence of private para-military group and youth militancy is seen all across the island as the country gets more deeply engulfed with the ethnic issue. Exclusion of women from decision making at all levels of society is also evident.

Cultural issues: There is a lack of political awareness among the people which has made it possible for political interests to fan the flames of ethnic bias, communal hatred and religious fundamentalism. Consumerism has further contributed to the degradation of cultural values. The government uses the mass media to promote its own ideology and that of the ruling communities.

Bangladesh

Communalism and ethnic violence: Taking advantage of mass illiteracy, the ruling classes for their own dubious ends exploit the religious sentiments of the people and creates grounds

for fanaticism to breed. Moreover, peculiar and abstract notions of secularism have failed to take note of the liberating aspects of religion. Both have contributed to the rise of religious fascism.

River water and environment: River water disputes with India and large scale deforestation resulting in environmental degradation have caused untold misery for the poor. For the large majority of Bangladeshis, the issues of mere survival is so acute that ecological concerns are rarely considered seriously. As a consequence, natural calamities have become a regular and accepted phenomenon.

Militarization: The strong communal ideology that has influenced politics has led to massive militarization in the region. Increased allocation of funds to the military has meant less resources available for social sectors thus undermining any effort towards development and the alleviation of poverty.

Women and children: Women and children of the economically weaker sections are the worst affected by the total stagnation of the economy and the unrestricted violence in the society at large. With reference to trafficking of women, the law does not prohibit prostitution but prohibits the procurement and sale of women into it. In other words, prostitution in reality is not legally banned and is practiced on a fairly large scale in this pseudo-Islamic state.

Economic issues: Under the privatization process, jobs of thousands are at stake. Among the affected are workers of textile, chemical, sugar and fertilizer industries and state transport sectors (road, river and railway).

Maldives

Environment: Two issues are involved. One is local whereby reef destruction and over-exploitation of those resources end up in coastal erosion. The large and most dangerous issue is one of global warming. As most of the country lies barely above the sea level, it has been predicted that the Maldives will

be the first in the world to be submerged if there is any significant rise in sea level.

Women: Though Maldives is an Islamic state and the laws consist of a mixture of Islamic and secular precepts, the status of women is relatively better compared to other Islamic states. Women are quite `visible' in public, especially in economic activity, though, of course to talk of equality will be far fetched.

The economy: Fisheries, tourism, and shipping are the three main economic sectors. Recently, tourism has replaced fisheries as the main foreign exchange earner with all the attendant ills. Export-oriented garment factories and the fish canneries have been established and, like everywhere else, have benefitted only a few. The gap between the rich and the poor and the gap between the capital island and the atolls are significant, resulting in a massive influx of people from the atolls to Male.

Civil administration: Since 75% of the population are thinly scattered in 203 islands, administration, follow-up, reporting back, etc., are problematic. Therefore, decentralized democracy is logically possible. The Chief of each island is the authority through which administration is done. Homogeneity of race and language has been a cementing factor, but discontent has been rising.

THE THIRD DAY

On the final day of the meeting, working groups were formed based on issues identified and prioritized through the processes of the previous two days. These issues were considered of major importance and necessary to be addressed immediately in the South Asian Region. These are: militarization, women and child trafficking, communal and ethnic violence, river water and environmental issues and human rights. The groups consisting of members from different countries in the

region worked towards making specific time-bound action plans for collection of information, networking, organizing of conventions, formation of trans-border peoples' commissions and preparation of reports on specific issues. These were later presented as follows:

Demilitarization

As militarization is a major issue confronting the South Asian people to be handled immediately, PP21 partners decided tentatively to hold a consultation at Delhi in January 1994 to discuss strategies for future action.

Mayeen Uddin Badal of Bangladesh was identified as the contact person for this consultation with Tapan Bose from India to provide necessary assistance.

Women and child trafficking

The working committee stressed the need for networking and dissemination of information on issues broader than the topic suggested. These are:

- To identify groups working on women and child trafficking in each of the South Asian countries and collection of relevant current materials. This is expected to take 3-6 months and will be coordinated by a working committee. Rosaline Costa of Bangladesh was nominated coordinator of the working committee.
- Discriminatory right to a dignified existence is recognized as a major problem in South Asia. Religion was also identified as a vital cause of violation of women's/human rights. ACFOD will take responsibility to provide information on these issues based on discussions in a seminar to be organized by them in Pakistan in November 1993.
- Population and reproductive rights is another area of focus. APWLD will help the working committee on this issue.

Communal and ethnic violence

Several recommendations and action plans were put forward. As part of the PP21 process, a convention on communal harmony will be hosted by Pakistan in 1994. The responsibility to organize this was accepted by Madeha Gauhar of AJOKA. A coordinating committee consisting of Madeha as contact person for Pakistan, Kailash Satyarthi for India, Majid Mallik for Bangladesh and P. Tamong for Nepal was formed.

The group declared that any communal disturbance taking place anywhere in South Asia shall be denounced by NGOs, political forces, people's organizations, social and cultural groups. The group felt that the ethnic problems in Sri Lanka, North-Eastern part of India and Bangladesh should be discussed with the local people and the issues should be examined in their various dimensions. The group urged NGOs, political forces, people's organizations, social and cultural groups to protest and pressurize the governments of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh to resolve their ethnic problems.

River water and environment

A short term action program was developed consisting of the formation of a follow-up group for South Asia comprising Mohiuddin Ahmad of Bangladesh, Biplab Halim of India and Arjun Karki of Nepal, which would follow up the activities planned:

- Formation of trans-border Peoples' Commission on river and environmental issues by September 1993;
- Preparation of an interim report by the Peoples' Commission by March 1994;
- South Asian Convention on River Water and Environment Issues in Bangladesh by March 1994;
- South Asian Convention on Peoples' Cooperation for Afforestation in the Watersheds of Nepal in June-July 1994.

Mohiuddin Ahmad was named the Coordinator and contact person for all correspondence on this issue.

Human rights

The working committee, consisting of Tapan Bose of The Other Media, Sushil Pyakurel of South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), Shiva Hari Dahal of Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) and Ravi Nair of South Asian HR Documentation Centre (SAHRDC) developed the following Plan of Action:

- A meeting on Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in exceptionally difficult circumstances will be organized either in India or Nepal in early 1994; with the cooperation of SAFHR, INSEC and The Other Media.
- A report bearing a critique of Security Laws in South Asia will be published with the South Asian Human Rights Documentation Centre of India and APKHD of Malaysia.
- A critique on the report submitted by South Asian governments to the UN will be published by SAMRDC and INSEC.
- The South Asian Charter on Human Rights will be drafted by SAFHR.

A steering group for PP21 South Asian Collective consisting of the following was formed: Abdus Sabur (ACFOD), Om Shrivatsava (India), Sushil Pyakurel (Nepal), Karamat Ali (Pakistan), Mohammed Zahid (Maldives), Abdul Majid Mallik (Bangladesh), Rajendra Wijetunge (Sri Lanka), Prem Chandran John (India). ACHAN was nominated to continue as the South Asia Clearing house for PP21. Their address is:

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Post Bag 1404
Madras 600 105, India
Tel and Fax: 91-44-827 0424
Cable: HEALTHNET, Madras 105

ACHAN will also help produce and distribute ALLIANCE OF HOPE, PP21 newsletter. Participants were requested to send addresses to those who would like to or receive Alliance of Hope. There is a need to keep people informed on a continuing basis and to keep up their interest. It is important that the spirit of PP21 does not sag and is kept alive in the South Asia region.

Steering Group meeting will be held as regularly as possible and almost always along with some other program/seminar/meeting to save travel costs.

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USA
Clarence J. Dias

A PROPOSAL ON SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE

[As a follow-up of the Madras Convention of August 1993, a core South Asian working group met in Kathmandu on 7-8 November 1993. in connection with a conference sponsored by the YUVA. The main objective was to prepare a draft proposal for PP21 South Asia Initiative for discussion in the forthcoming meeting of the Coordinating Team of PP21 to be held in Seoul in late November 1993. The working group consisted of Prem Chandran John, Abdus Sabur, Karamat Ali and Mohiuddin Ahmad. This was the first attempt to outline the conceptual issues of the South Asia Initiative.]

CHALLENGES AND REALITIES

South Asia is the land of one-fifth of the humankind, an agglomeration of diverse nationalities, ethnic communities and cultures, which inherited a common legacy from the centuries-old pre-colonial and colonial period. There are numerous elements of unity in diversity. While there had been some attempts at the state level to foster regional cohesion through the institutionalized forum of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), it has not yet been able to go beyond mundane rhetoric.

Democratic institutions with the acceptable level of accountability and transparency are very weak in the region and are still confined within the narrow limits of franchise. The vast majority of the population are treated as mere objects by the state and its self-declared local and global guardians. The states, as they exist today, are hegemonic to their peoples. Due to their divisive policies and coercive activities, South Asia has become

a hot bed of communal and ethnic violence, trafficking of women and children, wasteful arms race and state terrorism. The people at the grassroots are increasingly being marginalized by the states and its dominant classes supported and promoted by the global hegemonic systems.

The people are losing their rights over their resources and constituencies and are being uprooted from their social and economic base. The right to life and livelihood are increasingly being threatened. The biggest challenge for the people in South Asia now is to fight back, to combat divisive ideologies and coercive institutions imposed on them and to assert power as free members of a civil society. To achieve this, the people need to have a vision for the future, their own agenda and concerted action.

In the South Asian setting, PP21 is not only relevant, but is a necessity. It opposes the present model of development that divides and marginalizes the people. It proposes a new paradigm for development in harmony with nature. The PP21 is now envisaged as the emerging trend in people's movements and coalitions in the fragmented South Asian scenario.

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THE ONGOING PROCESS

The South Asia region was once rich in almost all human faculties. Today, it is one of the poorest regions of the

world as defined under conventional yardsticks. About a billion people in this part of the world are still struggling to earn a square meal. The days of the pursuit for indigenous science are gone and the society is now flooded with imported high-tech industries. Self-sustaining rural communities have been disintegrated paving the way for the supply of cheap labour to the TNCs. The ideal of non-violence has long been buried by the forces promoting conflicts between ethnic groups and nationalities. There is a growing awareness that the present state of things must change.

PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSE

The South Asia region has been subject to political and social fragmentation for many years. In order to foster solidarity, understanding and cohesion among the people, concerted actions are necessary at the level of ideas and institutions in order to put forward an alternative view and paradigm. In this backdrop, and in the context of the realities of the region, series of activities are required in several broad areas as follows:

- Environment and people's right on natural resources;
- Human rights and demilitarization;
- Ethnic/communal harmony and right of the ethnic/religious minorities, dalits and other oppressed groups;
- People's perspective on development alternatives.

Already many activities are going on in each of the above-mentioned areas by different forums and groups at different levels. However, there has been little coordination between these activities, as well as among the actors, at the trans-border level. As the PP21 conceives itself a process combining the activities of all social groups and integrating them with ongoing and potential social movements, planned trans-border actions are necessary in order to accelerate social activism both at the local and at the regional level.

STRATEGY FOR ACTION

It is expected that after necessary preparatory work in each of the areas mentioned above, the pertinent issues would surface with their real trans-border character and would no more be narrowly handled by the people with state-biased ideologies. This is very important in the context of present day realities of South Asia where states and their institutions have so far failed to address these issues because of political rivalries and other vested interests.

It may be mentioned that the state of women in South Asia is precarious. However, `women' has not been bracketed as a separate agenda, as it may make them non-visible in other fields of intervention. It has to be borne in mind that each issue has a gender perspective, be it human rights or environment or militarism. This perspective needs to be brought in every stage of study, campaign, networking and social mobilization.

A two year action plan is proposed to prepare the ground for a fruitful interaction of the peoples of the region. The plan envisages activities at three levels: at the level of ideas, at the level of activists, and at the level of the peoples in the grassroots. These three levels are not mutually exclusive but are perceived to be complementary to each other. The implicit methodology would be sequential as follows:

It has to be borne in mind that each issue has a gender perspective, be it human rights or environment or militarism. This perspective needs to be brought in every stage of study, campaign, networking and social mobilization.

- Study and information communication on pertinent issues;
- Interaction and exchange between social activists;
- Interaction and exchange between people's groups;
  Solidarity and networking between people's groups;
- Solidarity and networking between social movements;
- Influencing policy-makers through campaign, lobby and formulation of alternatives.

This two year preparatory phase would be followed by a grand convention of PP21. The time and venue of the proposed grand convention would be decided at a certain stage of development of the preparatory process.

GOAL

The PP21 process in South Asia basically aims at achieving a higher level of people's unity for a better quality of life in a socio-economic-cultural environment in harmony with nature. One immediate objective is to develop and accelerate critical awareness for trans-border flow of information and people. PP21, thus, vows to fight out all obstacles hindering freedom of movement of the common people across the border by artificial barriers created by dominant groups and classes. This is perceived as the basis for the "People's SAARC".

SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE



DRAFT DECLARATION

[In the PP21 Madras Convention of August 1993, formulation of an overall South Asian Perspective was identified as an important task. As a follow-up of the Madras Convention of August 1993 and Kathmandu Working Group Meeting of November 1993, a meeting was organized by ASPBAE at the PRIA campus in New Delhi in April 1994. A team of South Asian representatives met in a two days' session to draft a declaration on South Asian Perspective for PP21. Among them were Kailash Pyakural (Nepal), Mohiuddin Ahmad and Abdus Sabur (Bangladesh), Rajesh Tandon, Ranabir Samaddar, Om Srivastava and Maria Lourdes Almazan-Khan (India) and Villipuram Thirunavukkarasu (Sri Lanka). The declaration was aimed at developing, strengthening and updating conceptual foundation and guideline for the South Asia Initiative. The draft declaration had subsequently been endorsed by the participants in the extended meeting of the PP21 held in Bangkok in May 1994.]

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

For situating the ideal of the People's Plan for Twenty First Century (PP21) in the regional context of South Asia, it is necessary in the first place to define the region, to articulate its regionality, as well as to combine the current ethos of regionalisation with the spirit of people's plan for the twenty first century.

South Asia forms a single, uninterrupted mass of land connecting the deserts of West Asia and the rich fertile soil of the Near East, and the lower part of the mountains of Central Asia with the Pacific region of the continent - the South East and the Far East. It is a huge land mass with large river basins, undulated plains being cultivated, intricate water networks, of almost same topography and climate and home of some one-fifth of world's population. Richness in natural resources and abject poverty exist side by side.

In human development index, the countries of South Asia occupy almost the same position. Widespread illiteracy, low position of women, child malnutrition, low wages, poor health services, heavy incidence of external debt, unfinished agrarian reforms, fall out of structural adjustment programme at the behest of the Fund-Bank, high military spending, discrimination of the indigenous peoples and the minorities, communal tension, migration - all these are but some of the problems facing South Asia region as a whole.

There are very noticeable differences also. Differences in size of territory, population and natural resources endowment are high. Ethnically, countries are diverse from each other. Development of civic politics and of popular movement for democracy and justice also vary from country to country. These differences rule out any standard prescription of development for all the countries of South Asia. Particularly, differences in economic strength remains a forbidding factor towards regional integration. Narrow delimitation of South Asia is another such deterrent.

Yet, similarities, override the dissimilarities and differences. They demand that a regional perspective be adopted for people's plan for the next century. Only that way, that is, by defining South Asia regionally, geographically, geo-economically and geo-ecologically, the countries and the peoples of this region can negotiate the arrival of the twenty first century and can have meaningful dialogue with other parts of Asia and the world.

The similarity in the countries of the region raises the significance of commonalities with regard to some of the most pressing issues. Governments are becoming increasingly coercive reflecting crises in governance and lack of governability. Civil rights issues are, hence, everywhere gaining importance in people's agenda. The IMF-dictated structural adjustment measures and the GATT-dictated agreements are causing economic dislocations resulting in the destruction of the grass-roots communities, more inroads of trans-national capital, shrinkage in

employment opportunities, fall in the standard of living of the working masses, withdrawal of state support to the vulnerable sections, lifting of controls on monopolies and a more repressive policy to coerce the people to accept these changes.

Corruption is rampant throughout the region. Centralization of power resulting in marginalisation of autonomous voices of the people can be found in all the countries. Police and military methods are being used everywhere. The state is increasingly regulating social life. The result is less state in terms of responsibilities and more state in terms of oppression. Again, throughout the region we find nationalist ideologies are being used by the regimes to strengthen their existence and, thereby, add legitimacy to their positions. Thus governments talk less of the region, more of their respective nations against other nations of South Asia. Bilateralism is the smoke screen of such a vicious reflective nationalism.

Again, because of a shared past, problems of communal violence, ethnic unrest, language conflicts and eviction cross State boundaries and become regional problems. Migration, water sharing, energy harnessing, combating fundamentalism, protecting minority rights, and such other issues have to be tackled both bilaterally and multilaterally, in other words regionally. There is the imperative of sharing knowledge, skill, resources and abilities, even if at a gradual pace, in the context of a dominant agrarian milieu, natural and man-made disasters, drought and flood, energy crisis and adverse terms of trade with the North.

In this age, when knowledge itself is an important component of power, such sharing of knowledge and at a primary level, is important. Therefore, whether for intra-region trade, or for support to economic activities, solidarity with democratic activism and upholding commonalties, the sharing of information and knowledge becomes crucial at all levels. Sharing is the first step towards forming an agenda of people's planning in and for South Asia.

Yet, can we rely on the states of South Asia to steer this process of sharing? These states have only brought misery, fed on rivalries, nurtured chauvinism and jingoism, supported mutual conservatism, have looted natural resources, arrogated to itself all power while selling their own dignity to the masters abroad. The existing power structure stands in direct opposition to all the popular movements, forces and formations and the various empowering attempts of the people. The elites and the ruling oligarchy in South Asia do not have faith in the destiny of their own region. They look to the Northern powers for succour, in as much as these powers today consider South Asia a hopeless region, marginalised and damned possibly for ever.

The existing power structure stands in direct opposition to all the popular movements, forces and formations and the various empowering attempts of the people. The elites and the ruling oligarchy in South Asia do not have faith in the destiny of their own region. They look to the Northern powers for succour, in as much as these powers today consider South Asia a hopeless region, marginalised and damned possibly for ever.

People's planning thus implies opposing reactionary forces everywhere in South Asia, criticizing the existing power structure, plans and programmes and suggesting an alternative paradigm. This process has started in the countries of South Asia sporadically within the limit of national boundaries. The People are on the move in all the countries struggling for empowerment, livelihood and dignity. The task is to bring out the regional imperatives in this process, regional dimensions of all future-building activities. PP21 in South Asia signifies this spirit and responds to this imperative. It is not a monolithic structure or an attempt. It is a moral urge upon the peoples of South Asia to

realize the identity of South Asia, as well as to reflect South Asian plurality.

It is necessary thus to briefly recount the process of PP21 and capture its spirit.

THE PP21 PROCESS

PP21, since its inception in 1989, has been conceived as a dynamic and creative process of interaction within and among communities and people's coalitions, networks and movements in relation to the issues and realities affecting them. Japan being a major actor in the global scene was an appropriate venue for the people who came from different parts of the world to witness the struggle of the people, the victims of development within Japan and emerging people's movements. The participants could identify themselves as one people fighting against a common enemy, the oppressive global structure.

It was a forum to assess the role each one was playing. It provided the opportunity to participate and express views. It was a canvass to draw and depict the vision for a future. It was an occasion to commit to future tasks. It opened the possibility of a new relationship and cooperation transcending all narrow walls and boundaries.

(a) The Spirit of Minamata

The PP21 in Japan in August 1989 which culminated in the formulation of the Minamata Declaration was a new style and type of movement. It helped strengthening the awareness that the people should, and can, act not merely to resist the imposition of anti-people ideas and systems, but to create an alternative future for themselves. It stimulated the creation of new formations and networks for trans-border collaboration and action.

(b) The Rajchadamnoen Pledge

In the absence of an appropriate mechanism for follow-up, the process itself sometimes has lost its direction. But the ideas, the dream and the vision that the Minamata Declaration contains were the driving force for action. The PP21 movement was further accelerated and strengthened by the events of November-December 1992 in different parts of Thailand. The process of interaction among the peasants, workers, urban poor, women and the indigenous peoples further consolidated the process. The Rajchadamnoen Pledge of December 1992 reiterated the commitment to build trans-border alliance of the peoples in struggle, solidarity and hope.

(c) South Asia Initiative

The news of the demolition of the Babri Masjid came as a shock to the South Asian participants in Bangkok PP21 assembly. They immediately decided to respond to the situation and act to build understanding, confidence and trust among the billion population.

In the South Asian setting, PP21 is not only relevant, but is a necessity. It opposes the present model of development that divides and marginalises the people in this region. It proposes a new paradigm for development in harmony with nature. The PP21 is now envisaged as the emerging trend in people's movements and coalitions in the fragmented South Asian scenario.

(d) The Ongoing Process

A group of representatives of concerned people's groups met at Kathmandu in 16-17 February 1993 to identify trans-border issues of common concern. As a follow-up of the Kathmandu meeting, the "South Asia Convention on Communal Harmony" was held at Dhaka in 23-24 July 1993. The participants in a joint declaration vowed to combat communalism and fundamentalist forces in the region through a series of campaigns, networking and solidarity actions on a trans-border basis.

A day long workshop on "River Water and Environment Issues" was held at Calcutta on 24 August 1993. Participants decided to address the river water issues with a people's perspective on the basis of catchments and people's need and not on the basis of political boundaries. The idea of forming a People's Commission was floated and accepted by the participants as an initial step in a series of interventions required in the field of environment. The People's Commission held its first meeting in Dhaka in November 1993 and initiated an integrated action programme on the Ganga basin.

More than a hundred participants from the South Asia region representing different NGOs, political parties, cultural forums, social movements and grass-roots groups joined in a meeting at Madras during 26-28 August 1993 in search of a South Asian perspective for PP21 and to concertize strategies and actions for future. Separate workshops were held on areas identified at the Kathmandu meeting and specific recommendations were formulated for each areas of concern. A working group meeting at Kathmandu in November 1993 further synthesized these recommendations and prepared a draft on South Asia Initiative for concerted interventions in specific areas.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

In order to become an Alliance of Hope, PP21 faces certain specific challenges in the South Asian perspective. The manner in which these challenges are handled and responded will, to a large extent, shape the character of the Alliance.

(a) Enhanced Interaction

Within the vast array of progressive formations in the Civil Society, certain types of interaction patterns have set in. NGOs interact among themselves; voluntary agencies have their own networks; women's groups have created their communication channels too; political formations and social movements also interact among themselves or with other types of formations. But interactions across these formations have been largely limited. Besides, interaction with other formations like popular

social movements, local and sub-regional traditional structures, media and cultural groups, academia and students' movements have been mostly non-existent.

As an Alliance of Hope, PP21 must stimulate this process of wider interaction across such formations. Otherwise it runs the risk of remaining a narrow alliance of the most organized and vocal formations. South Asian perspective necessitates such a broad-based interaction.

(2) People-To-People

The ordinary citizens, without the banner of an association or an institution, were visible source of energy and support at the birth of PP21 in 1989. That strength of PP21 requires even greater challenge in South Asian perspective. The Alliance of Hope must not be merely an alliance of institutions, networks, or other organized formations. Alliance of Hope must truly become people-to-people alliance. This is specially critical in South Asia where trans-border interaction of ordinary citizens is severely restricted due to inter-State hostility and consequent erection of non-porous `walls' on the borders. These `walls' need to be overcome more concertedly. People-to-people process and widespread citizens' involvement are, in fact, necessary ingredients of overcoming these `walls', because most existing institutional formations have also become partisan in inter-governmental divisions and hostility.

The Alliance of Hope has the most striking and lasting potential if it reaches ordinary citizens in various South Asian countries and stimulates and supports the process of trans-border civic relations. This is a tremendous challenge in South Asian perspective since stimulating a people-to-people alliance is far more complex, painstaking and long-term process than mere networking of existing institutions in various fraternities.

(c) Solidarity in Diversity

The South Asian perspective demands an appreciation of and respect for cultural and social diversity. This diversity has been a source of great strength in building resilience and vigour

in South Asian societies. However, recent years have witnessed a growing intolerance towards diversity. Sensitivity towards and co-habitation with dissimilar others is rapidly declining in the region. The socio-ecological nature of diversity and cultural strength of plurality need to be reemphasized in the South Asian perspective. PP21 can truly become an Alliance of Hope if it is able to promote tolerance of and respect for such diversity. It is necessary that PP21 not merely accepts this diversity but also actively promotes and facilitates it.

A related challenge is building solidarity in face of such diversity. Most gestures, networks and mechanisms of solidarity merely extend to similar and familiar others. The South Asian perspective necessitates strengthening processes, gestures and spirit of solidarity within the Alliance of Hope across diverse and dissimilar nature of formations in the civil society. Solidarity in diversity is a truly momentous hope in PP21.

(d) Shared Alliance-Building

The very essence of PP21 is a process of building and rebuilding the alliance. It is a dynamic process which has already acquired a certain character and shape. In the South Asian initiatives, some of these have been reflected. The challenge of building an Alliance of Hope requires shared responsibility among multiple actors. Such an alliance can not, perhaps should not, be built from a centralized location or secretariat. The interaction and communication stimulated and encouraged by PP21 becomes the fundamental basis of building the alliance. This demands sharing of responsibility across sectors, political boundaries and formations.

The sharing of responsibility must also contend with the need to overcome politics of knowledge and participation. While growing movements and expanding participation is critical for alliance-building, the value and contribution of knowledge and analysis needs to be emphasized.

The challenge is to ensure coherence, while following the `shared' approach. This is possible only when `sharing' is

demonstrated by acts of responsibility. Sharing in responsibility for building and nurturing the alliance also demands accountability with respect to these actors. The alliance-building process must ensure this.

(e) Positive Agenda

Finally, the Alliance of Hope needs to present a positive agenda based on the aspirations of ordinary citizens about their desired way of life. The current situation presents an opportunity to proactively define the agenda for the future of our peoples, communities and countries, instead of merely reacting to the agenda set up by the Governments, national and international agencies and institutions of the market.

Popular movements and new struggles continue to emerge throughout South Asia. While struggle, protest and resistance are integral elements of strategies for survival by most people in South Asia, it is significant that PP21 attempts to present a positive agenda which reflects the aspirations of ordinary, struggling people. That will become the basis for elaborating People's Plan for the twenty first century.

THRUST AREAS

In order to make positive interventions and to foster solidarity, understanding and cohesion among the people, concerted actions are necessary to put forward an alternative paradigm. In the context of the realities of the region, series of activities are required in several broad areas as follows:

(a) Environment and People's Lives

The natural resource base is being indiscriminately exploited by the profit-seekers undermining their sustenance. Particular mention may be made about the forests, watersheds and rivers which have been systematically destroyed by state-sponsored projects. The state has failed to protect the rivers and the habitat. Structures are being built in the name of "green

revolution" and "modernization". These have obstructed the natural flow of the rivers, displaced the people, denied their customary rights over natural resources and destroyed their livelihood patterns.

(b) Ethnic/Communal Harmony and Right of the Women, Minorities, Dalits and Other Oppressed Groups

Violence of the dominant groups is unleashed to weaker groups in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, caste and sex. The situation of women in all countries of the region is precarious. The hegemony of the powerful sections of the society with their strong grip on the state is manifested through their brand of ideology and statehood. The state is provoking and promoting chauvinism in many respects. The principles of secularism and ethnic harmony are set aside by hegemonic groups and classes. The millions are denied of right to livelihood and cultural autonomy.

(c) Human Rights and Demilitarization

Human rights record in the region is poor in any acceptable standard. States are at loggerheads which obstruct free flow of the people and information. Rights are being curtailed and the militarism is rationalized on the false premise of "national security". There are increasing investments on military hardware and software and meagre resources are allocated for education, health care and employment generation. The people want an end to political rivalry, hatred, mistrust and divisive policies of the states across the region.

(d) Globalization, Structural Adjustment and People's Economy

The power of capitalism and the TNCs is now more than ever before. Although they are in crises, they are trying to overcome it by changing faces and becoming more and more ruthless. The latest prescription to revitalize global capitalism has come in the form of "structural adjustment facilities". These resulted in large-scale unemployment, destruction of livelihood

patterns and plight of the millions at the grass-roots. The stats in South Asia have become partners of the hegemonic multilateral agencies and the TNCs to marginalise the disadvantaged communities in the name of growth, efficiency and modernization.

(e) People's Perspective on Development Alternatives

Development models prescribed by the North have failed to deliver benefit to the people. In spite of all pessimistic developments, many communities at the grass-roots have been able to protect and promote indigenous values and survival strategies. Such a value system and strategies are important and relevant in the context of a sustainable society which has became a dream for the new generation of people and development activists. It is important to derive lessons from sustainable options which already exist and strive for alternatives which would bring a conducive environment to live in peace and in harmony with nature.

COMMON SLOGANS

In all these five broad areas, already series of interventions have been made. In order to devise an effective process for alliance across the region, it is necessary to establish horizontal linkages with all types of people's formations. In this backdrop, it is necessary to build Alliance of Hope around slogans of common concern irrespective of political boundaries:

- Right to free flow of the people and information;
- Moratorium on all state-sponsored projects which undermine the environment and cause involuntary displacement of the people;
- Stopping arms race and to foster collective security for the people;
- South Asian common market based on the needs and aspirations of the people and grass-roots communities;

- Adoption of a uniform charter of human rights based on the principles of secularism, gender equity and cultural plurality.

An effective trans-border alliance would develop and would be strengthened if meaningful interactions and actions are facilitated around these slogans at the level of ideas, activists and social movements. This would form the basis for a sustainable people's alternative at the South Asia level which would lead us to the twenty first century.

TOWARDS A SOUTH ASIAN FORUM ON CHALLENGING DESTRUCTIVE INTERNATIONAL AID

[In January 1994, an Indian national consultative meeting of CAWBADIA (Campaign Against World Bank and Destructive International Aid) was held at Badbani of Madhya Pradesh, hosted by the Narmada Banchao Andolan. This was followed by a South Asian level meeting in New Delhi. It was then decided to hold the South Asia Forum on Challenging Destructive International Aid (SAFDIA). Accordingly, representatives from different forums across the region gathered at Dhulikhel, Nepal, on 19-21 July 1994 to discuss issues pertaining to destructive aid and peoples' movements. This was indeed a gathering of people with multiple backgrounds - trade unions, peasant organizations, human rights groups, women's movements, fishers' unions, organic farmers, research scholars, academicians, political workers and social activists. The meeting was jointly organized by the CAWBADIA and the RRN. The meeting concluded with the formal launching of SAFDIA. Following is the summary report of the meeting.]

Introduction

Representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and observers from the United States of America and the Netherlands sat together for three days and discussed various forms of international aid and their destructive nature. A declaration was issued at the end of the meeting. It was concluded that all the regimes of South Asia had entered into agreements with the World Bank and IMF and other bilateral donors. Most of these agreements were in violation of the human rights. Such agreements with strong conditionalities and national importance were neither publicly disclosed nor debated.

So the focus in this gathering was to look at both the international scenario and the national scene. After all, why was it necessary and even possible to have implemented such policies which were not in the interests of South Asian region as a whole and more specifically of those who are already marginalized? Many a times, we reminded ourselves, what is the class/gender/ethnic composition of the ruling elites that makes them so oblivious of the gross inequities and the perpetuation of such reality through new economic regimes. The general feeling was that such policies are in fact conducive only to the narrow interest of the ruling elites.

The prevailing question was: why south Asian ruling elites were ready to accept the World Bank and IMF conditionalities? Some felt that recourse to IMF and World Bank seems unavoidable. Some felt that unconditional aid with due share was necessary for developing countries including South Asia. Some felt that South Asians need to evolve an altogether different civilizational perspective. Deliberations were highly reflective and meaningful in the sense that we were looking both inward, towards our own political culture and outward, towards the global financial regimes. It is thus necessary not only to find monstrosity in multilateral organizations but also in the regimes of corruption and unaccountable acts by ourselves, our national bureaucracy and even peoples' organizations.

The Ongoing Movement

Despite diverse backgrounds, several things in common were identified among the participants. First, the participants were all working with those sections of populations who had been adversely affected by the new economic policies. Second, all were involved, either as intellectuals or as activists, to organize concerned people to resist adverse impacts. Trade unions in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are active in this direction. Peasant organizations in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal are experiencing extreme impacts on the lives of peasants.

Another side was revealed as how the European and American tax payers were reacting to the new economic policies.

Although majority of citizens still might believe that aid to developing economies is an act of charity and it is their privilege to make profit, there are by now some tangible public opinions built against such devastating policies. A US campaign in 1994 under the title "50 Years is Enough" may be cited in this respect. Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the World Bank and IMF, this campaign slogan has been chosen to express the strongly held belief by a growing number of people around the globe that the type of development WB and IMF have been promoting should not be allowed to continue.

The campaign has proposed five preconditions for the WB-IMF to consider including openness and full public accountability, to reorient economic policies in line with equitable development and an end to environmentally destructive projects. The role of organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund and International Rivers Network have been very positive in creating a sympathetic public opinion in the donor countries towards peoples' movements, such as, the Narmada Banchao Andolan in India, Arun III in Nepal and the Flood Action Plan in Bangladesh.

This gathering represented two axis of struggles. While some are involved in reforming the policies, some are actually mobilizing people resisting such projects/policies.

Enough grounds for dialogue and building solidarity were found. As one participant put it, "I found that peoples/groups are talking about common problems in a most free and frank manner without having inhibition about the participants from another country. This is indeed a new beginning in South Asian dialogue. Because many of us have experienced how national chauvinistic such deliberations used to be."

Thanks are due to several other initiatives in South Asian dialogue, such as, the People's SAARC, South Asian Forum on Human Rights and the South Asian Indigenous Peoples' Conference. Finally, the participants shared a common hope that "people to people" dialogue can bring about significant understanding,

sharpen vision and prepare grounds for collective action. Given the pervasive impact of the global economic regime, such collective actions are indeed a necessity today.

Workshop Structure

Participants of each country presented their position papers outlining the beginning of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) and other measures imposed by the international financial institutions. During the first day, each country assessed the overall impact on national policies and specifically on the weaker sections of the society. Peoples' responses to these measures and struggles and movements were highlighted on the second day. The half day session on the Third day was given to outlining future plan of action at national and regional level. The grand final of the meet was the Dhulikhel Declaration.

Country Experiences

There were some common points of convergence with some variations in country experiences. A common recognition was that, for South Asia region as a whole, the globalization process has not been at all benign as it is so much conditioned by the global processes of monopolization of capital. As it relates to participation in global economy, South Asian case is paradoxical indeed. South Asia's share in world trade has consistently declined over last forty years. For example, the seven SAARC member countries had a share of merely 0.89 per cent in global exports and accounted for 1.16 per cent of total world imports. Yet it is not free from the global financial crunch. Now it no longer has control over the content, speed, velocity, acceleration and direction of its own economies.

The irony of this situation is that globalization has rendered so hopeless that South Asia has no option but to keep on feeding the richer countries in the guise of debt, structural adjustment and debt repayment. The global disparity of wealth is widening faster. As the 1992 Human Development Report

states, over the last decade alone the Northern economies have received $1.3 trillion from debtor nations. In 1992 alone, there was a net outflow of $19 billion even from the poorest towards the richest countries. While the low income countries received $16 billion in aid, they paid $35 billion in debt repayment and interests. The total debt of these poor countries now accounts for more than 50 per cent of their GNP. The bitter reality of being "wrenched upon" lingers on. The conscious people who have worked among the poorest are getting suffocated.

Two dimensions can be singled out from the issues raised in the country position papers and subsequent deliberations. First, national economies in the region were undergoing massive restructuring because of the policies imposed by the global financial institutions and other bilateral donors. Restructuring had most severely affected those who are at the margins of mainstream economics: women, peasants, slum dwellers, indigenous communities and artisan groups.

Economic Crisis

All countries have experienced crisis in external as well as internal economies. A prominent feature of economic crisis is the balance of payment deficits. Each country experienced a high rate of inflation during the liberalization period. For example, the rate of inflation was as high as 21 per cent in Nepal during 1991/92. The Economic Survey of India 1991/92 similarly admits that the rate of inflation was more than 16% for primary articles, nearly 18% for food articles and as high as 23% for food grains. Low growth rate was another common phenomenon. Sometimes, there was negative growth, specially in agriculture sector. For example, agricultural growth rate in Nepal during 1991/1992 was negative by 1.2 per cent. The growth of output of major import-substitution industries was also negative in 1992/93. As a consequence, every country was having low rate of investment.

While the internal economy has been squeezed because of low rate of investment, dependence on foreign aid is perpetu-

ating itself. Bangladesh for example, has now a total foreign debt of about $13 billion (as of June 30, 1994). The external debt liability to GNP has increased from 37 per cent in 1982 to 50 per cent in 1994. In Nepal, the situation is worse. The share of outstanding external debt which was 53 pen cent of GDP in 1989/90 has gone up to about 65 per cent within three years of economic liberalization (1991-93). It is simply scary to accept a Bangladeshi economic scenario where the debt burden constitutes half of GNP and debt service payment represents 2 per cent of GDP. As a result, the total aid disbursement is always reduced by debt amortization. In 1994 for example, the estimated net disbursement has been 26 per cent lower than the actual amount.

Several common features were noticed within the stabilization plan. These included: cuts in aggregate demand, reduction in subsidies, reduction in imports and raising revenue through increase in tax rates. The adoption of user charges was having direct adverse impact on the poorest. For example the pricing of essential services (water, electricity, sanitation, health and education) made these services inaccessible to those who needed these the most.

After the stabilization plan, Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) including devaluation of currency was introduced. Privatization was another catch word. The 1994 WB-IMF conditionalities to Pakistan's economic reform package included trade reforms including the elimination of multiple exchange rate practices, full conversion of Rupee and the reduction of maximum tariff rates to 35-50 per cent over the three year period, further excise duties on utilities and elimination of subsidies on agricultural inputs. In the same vein, the Indian union budget for 1992/93 made severe cuts on social sectors, especially water, sanitation and the bio-mass development. Pakistan's performance was relatively better than others because although there were severe cuts in subsidies, total government spending on social sectors had gone up from 9.6% in 1987/88 to 15.8% in 1993/94.

The privatization of the public sector was a commonly experienced phenomenon. In Bangladesh and Nepal, public

sector companies were sold out at unbelievably low prices. In India, the total assets were transformed into shares and sold in the stock market. In free trade zones, 100 per cent equity is allowed for multinational companies. In other zones, MNCs can have as much as 51 per cent share. As South Asian economies are competing with each other to attract foreign investment, the MNCs have entered the key sectors with organized management and determined prices.

This has led to massive cut in jobs. This means decreasing employment for the poorer sections of the society. This also led to sharp rise in inequality in rural areas relative to urban areas.

One of the impact of privatization has been the de-legitimation of trade unions. Workers are retrenched and labor laws have been changed in order to facilitate stricter control by the MNCs.

Many private sector factories have been closed after they were taken over from the public sector. Small scale factories are forced to close because they cannot compete with the bigger ones.

Diminishing Livelihood

More than half of the world's poor live in South Asia and they are getting poorer in the sense that their fundamental sources of livelihood - water, forest, land and employment - are diminishing day by day. There is a direct connection between appropriation of bio-mass in the free market and immisarization of the poor. As land, water and forest are exploited for profit, the poor are forced to depend on the market where the prices for basic food, energy and services are going up.

According to UNDP report, as much as 86 per cent of the population in Bangladesh remained below poverty line during 1980-88 followed by 60 per cent in Nepal, 48 per cent in India and 30 per cent in Pakistan. And theses proportions are increasing at an alarming rate. For example, the poverty level in Nepal has Jumped up to 71 per cent in 1989/90 and 76 per cent in 1993/94. In India too, the annual rate of decline in rural poverty was much

higher in 1970s than the 1980s when SAP began to have its impact. Sri Lanka, which had one of the most progressive redistributive mechanisms in the 1960s, has become one of the countries with the sharpest increase in poverty during last twenty years.

A more distressing fact is that the richest 40% of the developing world gets twice the per capita assistance given to the poorest. In Pakistan, the burden of taxes on the poor increased by 10.3 per cent while that on the richest group declined by 4.3 per cent in 1987-88. This is the way in the free market arrangement where the worse off are squeezed off to feed the richest. SAP has been followed by food riots and social unrest all over the globe.

SAP in Agriculture

SAP's impact on agriculture is the most serious one. Prices of agricultural commodities have gone up to such an extent that local incomes can no longer consume staple food stuffs. As agricultural production is geared towards export crops, dietary and nutritional patterns have changed. Average daily calorie intake in terms of requirement has been estimated to be 83% in Bangladesh, followed by 93% in Nepal, 97% in Pakistan and 100% in India. Poorer people are increasingly dependent upon market for their daily consumption. Hence their diet is getting poorer. The adivasi and poor rural households are the worst victims because their food sources from forest habitat are also depleting.

The case of Sri Lanka is most telling as it even converted its three fertile agricultural districts of Monaragala, Vavuniya and Manner as "Agricultural Promotion Zones" in the early eighties. In the Mahaweli project area, a massive de-peasantization has taken place forcing the small and middle farmers to abandon their agricultural land to join cheap labor force. Those who opted to continue as farmers have been overburdened with credit and declining prices of their products. So far 15 peasants have been reported to have committed suicide because they

could not repay the loan which they had taken when a 75% refinancing facility by the Central Bank existed. They faced acute crisis when that facility was withdrawn around 1980. Almost half of the peasants in Chitwan in Nepal were reported to have sold their land to repay loan taken from Agricultural Development Bank.

These silent suicides have a loud message. There is something deeply wrong about using ourselves, our ecology and culture into the capitalist grinding machine. Crisis in South Asian agriculture is perhaps the best indicator of SAP performance. This calls for a moral reawakening and struggle against SAP and liberalization which benefit nations' comprador and international monopoly capitalists and the MNCs.

Taking away one's life just because one has no means of livelihood is nothing less than deliberate murder by the dominant sectors of our society. The dominant sector is no longer local or even national but firmly grounded on the global capitalist system.

Levels of Analysis

Discussions covered different levels of analysis. What is the nature of global economy in its recent version of GATT and SAP? What are the driving forces in it? What is the role of our own nation states in it? Are they the forced participants in this game or willing participants? Then the question is, why are the ruling elites opting for such policies? Do we have an option or not?

One of the significant question is how the international development aid is indeed used by the state in quelling internal dissent. Each country in South Asia have had this experience. A meaningful discussion was built around whether the donors should put conditionalities of human rights in giving foreign aid. The reaction was mixed. For the immediate purpose of such human rights condition was conducive to the people's struggles, such as, the Bhutanese peoples' aspiration for democracy. In 1990 political change, the Nepalese people had also pressurized

the donor agencies to stop aid until a democratic change was ensured. But this kind of intervention also limits sovereignty and we might be inviting for other new kinds of interventions after the political change.

Thus a fine line has to be drawn between seeking international intervention in the name of human rights and continuing struggles for national sovereignty. We are all aware of the fact that however benign the capitalist democratic states may look like, their interests are inextricably tied with the exploitation of developing countries in various forms. As we have seen, the same seemingly democratic states have used the human rights leverage to allow free access to MNCs in the region. This double standard is to be exposed and the complexity understood.

Some participants were also eager to redefine the parameters of human rights which so far were monopolized by the legalistic concerns. One proposal was to redefine the parameters of human rights from a South Asian perspective. Another proposal was to broaden the scope of human rights to include survival, cultural identity, access to and rights over local ecologies.

The Nation-State

South Asian states are involved in a working alliance with the western capitalist countries without consulting the people at the grassroots. It is also true that the states are perpetuating these policies even when there are popular protests. So the role of the state is crucial.

One pertinent remark was made about the decline in states' accountability to their own people in South Asia. The challenge is how to democratize the state. It is generally agreed that the present "representative democratic system" dominated by the vested interests and reactionary forces is not delivering goods to the people. Therefore, this system has no interest to resist the global capitalist development patterns. It seems as if the present nation-states which represent the comprador, bu-

We are all aware of the fact that however benign the capitalist democratic states may look like, their interests are inextricably tied with the exploitation of developing countries in various forms. As we have seen, the same seemingly democratic states have used the human rights leverage to allow free access to MNCs in the region. This double standard is to be exposed and the complexity understood.

reaucratic and international monopoly capitalist class is, in fact, feeding the financial resources that flows in from foreign aid in the name of development.

Democratization of World Bank

Most of the presentations aimed at democratizing the global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, and now the World Trade Organization (WTO). Whether it is possible within the present global equation of power still remains to be seen. However, except for a few movements towards de-linking from the global market, most of the peoples' struggles represented in the meeting were trying to lessen the burden and not trying to change the system as such. Some realized that although such struggles to democratize global financial institutions are welcome and urgent, reforming such institutions could also be a futile exercise. In case, such institutions are irreparable and unreformable, what alternative options do we have? This needs a serious thought in the upcoming deliberations of this kind.

Regional Conflicts

Although there are some positive events, such as, the gathering of this kind, to discuss common problems, respective nation-states are engaged in strategic war with each other. There is ample evidence that the restructuring of global economy is directly related to the escalation of conflicts. As each nation-state is poised to achieve a greater advantage in the global market, they are in logger heads with each other. In essence, this is how the MNCs work by putting developing countries against each other and getting undue advantage in the terms of trade.

The second level of conflict that has exasperated after the restructuring of global economy is among the poor. As much as global financial institutions are playing one national economy against the other, so are the national policies pitting one section of the poor against the other. For example, rural poor had come into collision with the urban slum dwellers. However, both are

the victims of the same process of penetration of capitalism in agriculture. the Hindu-Muslim tensions and conflicts related to gender (such as dowry deaths) are also the result of increasing consumerism.

South Asian Perspective

While we are equally appreciative of the struggles to get our fair share in the global economy, most of us feel regretful that in the name of liberalization, autonomous development paths have been abandoned. Some of us also feel that most probably the rat race of capitalist development is a dead end. We need to develop our own vision of who we are, what are our areas of strength and how to evolve a South Asian Perspective.

A sad but necessary conclusion was drawn that we could no longer rely on our present forms of nation-states represented by reactionary forces to save us from this unfolding tragedy. Although the dominant actors in today's global economy might have considered South Asia a basket case, our elites and ruling oligarchies have not abandoned their infatuation with the theory of trickle down. Their dream of catching up with the North still lingers on while the South Asian people's lives are sinking in despair. People's struggles and movements in various forms will help us to come out of this impasse. As the hitherto oppressed people are rising and are no longer accepting their conditioned fate, there are reasons to be hopeful.

Regional Action Plans

Several new programs and areas of joint deliberations were identified at the end of the meeting. Some of these are as follow:

a. coordinated action at the regional level on mega projects including displacement;

b. comparative studies on South Asian economies;

c. cultural programs at regional level;

Although the dominant actors in today's global economy might have considered South Asia a basket case, our elites and ruling oligarchies have not abandoned their infatuation with the theory of trickle down. Their dream of catching up with the North still lingers on while the South Asian people's lives are sinking in despair. People's struggles and movements in various forms will help us to come out of this impasse. As the hitherto oppressed people are rising and are no longer accepting their conditioned fate, there are reasons to be hopeful.

d. closer collaboration with the "Fifty Years is Enough" campaign which has been initiated by several groups in the USA;

e. a critical look within this umbrella about the Indian aid and its impacts on neighboring South Asian countries;

f. active participation in the upcoming conference entitled Impact of SAP on Peasants and Women to be held in Kathmandu. Coordinators are Biplab Halim (Calcutta) and Pradeep (Kathmandu);

g. act towards forming a people's parliament at the South Asia level.

h. need of South Asia Forum against Destructive International Aid (has been realized).

South Asia Forum against Destructive International Aid (SAFDIA) Steering Committee

Organization	Country	Contact person
CAWBADIA	India	Kavaljit Singh, Smitu Kothari
CDL	Bangladesh	Mohiuddin Ahmad
OSLAN	Sri Lanka	Senaka Weerasinghe
PFHR	Bhutan	R.P. Subba
PILER	Pakistan	Karamat Ali
RRN	Nepal	Arjun K. Karki

RRN has been nominated as the secretariat.

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DHULIKHEL DECLARATION AGAINST DESTRUCTIVE INTERNATIONAL AID AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

We, the representatives of people's movements, trade unions, citizens' organizations, scientists, academicians, journalists and other professionals met in Dhulikhel in Nepal from July 19 to 21, 1994 to collectively assess the implications of Structural Adjustment Programs, developmental projects and programs and the wider process of globalization under the dictates of the World Bank, the IMF, international financial institutions and other bilateral donors. We also attempted a comprehensive understanding of the activities of the WB and IMF and their impacts on the lives and cultures of the peoples of South asia.

We have concluded that all the regimes of South Asia, in total violation of democratic practice, have entered into agreements with the WB and the IMF and other bilateral donors. Most of the conditionalities have never been publicly disclosed and debated.

Based on the country studies, we have come to the conclusion that the SAP policies are having far-reaching adverse impacts on the economies of the region. In the name of structural adjustment, so-called market oriented policies have been implemented in these countries with benefits primarily to the national and international monopoly capitalist classes, the ruling elites and trans-national corporations. As a result, the disadvantaged and oppressed people of this region have been further marginalized and impoverished. After the implementation of SAP, not only unemployment

and poverty has increased rapidly, but also external dependency has exacerbated enormously with additional danger of manifestation of new economic colonization of the South Asia region by the northern capitalist countries.

The alliance between the global and national economic and political elites have not only turned a blind eye to militarization and confrontation between the states of South Asia, but perpetuated undemocratic policies over the people within the state boundaries.

We, the participants in this South Asia forum, demand from our governments, international financial institutions and bilateral donors that aid should not be linked to conditionalities. We also demand that the outstanding external debt be written off. We are of the opinion that we should consciously pursue autonomous developmental policies arising endogenously from the region as a whole that strengthen national and regional self-reliance and that promote social justice and ecological sustenance. A South Asian civilizational alternative has to be evolved. Towards this end, we pledge to work together for strengthening the alliances of South Asian peoples' organizations and movements. We commit ourselves to create wider awareness on the adverse impact of the new economic regimes and to mobilize our peoples to struggle for an alternative development in South Asia

List of Participants

BANGLADESH
Abdus Sabur
Mohiuddin Ahmad
Farzana Siddique
Harun-ur-Rashid
Sharif Nurul Ambia
Muniruzzaman
Tafazzal Hussain

BHUTAN
R.P. Subba

INDIA
Dalip Swami
Smitu Kothari
Kavaljit Singh
Jaya Srivastava
Dinesh Abrol
J. John
A.J. Vijayan
Valiathura Trivandrum
D. Barreto
Awadesh Kumar
Meghnad

THE NETHERLANDS
Lisa Jordan

NEPAL
D.R. Khanal
Pramod Parajuli
Shiva Maya Tumbahangphe
Parshuram Tamang
Ashish Gurung
Tej Ram Poudyal
Ganesh Ghimire
Bimal Chapagain
Gopi Upreti
Arjun K. Karki
Parthibeshwar P. Timilsina

PAKISTAN
Shahrukh Rafi Khan
Karamat Ali
Ismat Shahjahan
Prof. Karamat Ali
B.M. Kutty

SRI LANKA
Senaka Weerasinghe
Jayaratna Maliyagoda
D.A. Jayawardana
M.S.R. Wijetunga

USA
Lori Udhal

PEOPLE'S COMMISSION ON RIVER WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

The watersheds and rivers had been the lifeline of the people of South Asia from time immemorial. About half a billion people are being served by the three major river systems: the Brahmaputra, the Ganga and the Meghna. These rivers are very important for the ecology and the economy of this region. Any distortion or undue intervention in their catchment areas is bound to produce adverse effect.

Thousands of kilometers of embankments have been constructed along the river banks and their tributaries. These constructions minimized the original flood plains and now repel more flood water to other areas. Still more demanding are different hydraulic structures. All these are made in the name of development, either for irrigation as embodied in the model of "green revolution", or for producing electricity for urban enclaves and big industries which is conceived essential for "modernization". These not only obstruct the natural flow of the rivers, but also displace people and destroy their livelihood.

It is clear that appropriate environmental impact assessment (EIA) has not been done before executing river control structures, or to put it in a different way, the effect in the region and among the people outside the jurisdiction of the state sponsoring the project has not been considered. This is also true in case of post-project appraisal. The EIA is not yet state-neutral, nor the ecological movement. This is the crux of the problem in the environmental movement in South Asia.

The state has failed to protect the rivers and the habitat. This has been manifested through the execution of different mega projects. In order to mobilize effective campaign and movement against such projects which undermine the environment and destroy people's livelihood, it is necessary to promote a higher level of awareness about the problem, understanding of the situation and trans-border interaction and action of the affected people. In this backdrop, the idea of a trans-border commission on river water and environment was floated.

FORMATION OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSION

Within the framework of PP21, a group of representatives of concerned NGOs and people's groups met in Kathmandu in 16-17 February 1993 to identify trans-border issues of concern. The meeting identified "river water and environment" as an area of concern and action.

A day long workshop on River Water and Environment Issues was held in Calcutta on 24 August 1993. The workshop was organized by the IMSE (Institute for Motivating Self-Employment). Participants from India, Bangladesh and Nepal decided to address the river water issues with a people's perspective on the basis of people's need and not on the basis of political boundaries. Mohiuddin Ahmad of Bangladesh presented a paper entitled Let the Rivers Flow, where the formation of a

Still more demanding are different hydraulic structures. All these are made in the name of development, either for irrigation as embodied in the model of "green revolution", or for producing electricity for urban enclaves and big industries which is conceived essential for "modernization". These not only obstruct the natural flow of the rivers, but also displace people and destroy their livelihood.

People's Commission on the Ganga was proposed. The proposal was accepted by the participants as an initial step in a series of interventions required in the field of environment.

More than a hundred participants from the South Asia region representing different NGOs, political parties, cultural forums, social movements and grassroots groups joined in a meeting in Madras during 26-28 August 1993 in search of a South Asian perspective for PP21 and to concertize strategies and actions for future. The idea of the People's Commission on River Water and Environment was further crystallized in the Madras meeting and a core South Asian group was formed comprising Mohiuddin Ahmad (CDL, Bangladesh), Biplab Halim (IMSE, India) and Arjun Karki (RRN, Nepal). It was decided to form a People's Commission to plan and implement activities at the regional level. It was also decided that the CDL would work as the secretariat for the Commission.

STUDY ON THE GANGA BASIN

The People's Commission held its first meeting in Dhaka on 26-27 November 1993 and decided to study the Ganga basin in its entirety. The meeting was organized by the CDL and was attended by water resources experts, social scientists and community organizers from India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The main tasks of the Commission were decided as follows:

(1) To make an inventory of all state-sponsored interventions in the Ganga basin;
(2) To study the impact of these interventions on the people and their environment;
(3) To interact with institutions which are working in this field and with grassroots groups who are affected in various ways by these interventions;
(4) To prepare independent country status report on the Ganga basin by Commission members from respective countries by June 1994;
(5) To meet in Kathmandu in July 1994 to discuss three country status reports and decide about the integration of the reports;

(6) To launch campaign and solidarity actions on the basis of the study as a part of the endeavour to change state policy in favour of the right of the people on river water.

The Commission, after threadbare discussion, formulated the following statement as the focal point of its endeavour:

The Commission after discussion on past, present and emerging problems pertaining to the use of the Ganga water, strongly feels that viable and acceptable alternatives for optimal use of water resources by the people of the Ganga basin is possible only and if only integrated developmental programmes are drawn up and implemented taking the basin as a unit. The Commission is endeavouring to make the people aware of the problems, need for adjusting to changed concept, practices and cultures as warranted in the alternative approach, benefits which might be accrued and sacrifices to be made in the interest of the greater benefit of the larger population.

Already there are campaigns and popular movements against some projects which are considered to be detrimental to the people. The campaigns against Sardar Sarovar Dam in India and Arun 3 project in Nepal have been able to draw a lot of support and solidarity across the region and have also been able to spearhead and strengthen people's organization and network for sustainable alternatives. The campaign for a sustainable society needs to be consolidated and expanded.

Participants of the meeting of the People,s Commission held in Dhaka in November 1993:

NEPAL
Arjun K. Karki
Dr. Shree Govinda Shah

INDIA
Biplab Halim
S.B. Sen Sharma

BANGLADESH
Dr. Dilip Kumar Barua
Harun-ur-Rashid
Mohiuddin Ahmad

CONVENTION ON RIVER WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

The South Asian Convention on River Water and Environment was held in Kathmandu on 16-18 July 1994. The convention was jointly organized by the People's Commission on River Water and Environment and the Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN). This event coincided with the second meeting of the People's Commission. Besides the Commission members, the Convention was attended by representatives from citizens' groups, political parties, social movements, indigenous communities, NGOs and research institutions from Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and Japan. In total, thirty five persons attended. The structure of the convention was as follows:

16 July: morning

The former Chief Justice of Nepal Mr. Basu Dev Sharma was the guest of honour. The inaugural session was addressed by one representative from each participating country.

16 July: afternoon

Case studies on water related harmful and destructive projects were presented by participants from different countries. Case studies were presented on Kalabagh dam (Pakistan), Narmada project and Subarnarekha dam (India), Arun III hydroelectric project (Nepal), Flood Action Plan (Bangladesh) and Mahawelli project (Sri Lanka). Other relevant issues of research, campaign and social mobilization were also discussed.

17 July: morning

Findings of independent country status reports on the Ganga basin prepared by Bangladesh, India and Nepal groups were presented. The session was rounded up with open discussion on issues raised in this session and also in the previous sessions.

17 July: afternoon

A declaration on South Asian perspective on river water and environment was presented which was approved in principle by the participants. The session ended synthesizing the discussions and decisions. Among the decisions taken were:

(a) To form working groups for study and campaign in different areas of concern related to river water and environment. One working group was formed to study the impact of mega projects on indigenous communities. Prof. Buddhadev Chaudhury of the Department of South and South-East Asian Studies, Calcutta University, was assigned to coordinate the work.

(b) Integration of the report on the Ganga basin by the People's Commission.

(c) To hold an extended meeting of the People's Commission in early 1995 to finalize the integrated report on the Ganga basin. A suitable place on the bank of the Ganga in northern India has been proposed as a venue for the meeting.

(d) Concerted campaign against state-sponsored mega projects which destroy natural resource base and livelihood of the peoples would be launched across the region through linking existing social movements.

18 July

Participants joined a field exposure trip to Sankoshi Barrage, about 80 km from Kathmandu.

List of Participants

NEPAL
Arjun Karki
Ashish Gurung
S.G. Shah
Ganesh Ghimire
Pramod Parajuli
Gopi Upreti
Netra B. Chhetri
Bharat Sharma
Nanda P. Joshi
Jhalanath Khanal

BANGLADESH
Farzana Siddique
Mohiuddin Ahmad
Dilip K. Barua
Sharif Nurul Ambia
Muniruzzaman
Harun-ur-Rashid
Abul Haseeb Khan

INDIA
Meghnath
Ghunshi Soren
Samir Das Gupta
Biplab Halim
Buddhadev Chaudhury
Smitu Kothari
B.N. Aich

SRI LANKA
Jayaratna Maliyagoda
Seneka Weeresinghe
D.A. Jayawardhana

PAKISTAN
Mohammad Taj
Haider Hayat

THAILAND
Dilok Sarawadi
Thongjareon Srihtham
Vanida Tantinitayapitak
Abdus Sabur

INDONESIA
M.S. Zulkarnaen

JAPAN
Kuwabara Mamoru

PEOPLE'S SAARC

PAKISTAN-INDIA PEOPLE'S FORUM FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

Introduction

The idea of a Pakistan-India people's convention grew out of the recognition among large sections of people of both countries that a people-to-people dialogue across the borders can effectively reassert the voice of peace and sanity over the cries of war hysteria of the governments of the two countries.

Actual preparatory work for such a convention on peace and democracy began with a meeting in Lahore on September 2, 1994 where a group of concerned citizens from India met with their counterparts in Pakistan, and agreed on four basic demands around which a campaign could be launched in both the countries - outlawing of war and attempts to create war hysteria, denuclearization and reversal of arms race, a peaceful and democratic solution of the Kashmir problem involving its people and curbing of religious intolerance. The Lahore meeting which set up the People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, wa followed by a series of regional meetings by the Forum in different parts of India, as well as Pakistan, evoking tremendous response among democratic rights activists, trade unionists, environmentalists, gender rights activists, artistes and social workers in both the countries. This led to the second meeting of representatives of these groups and committed individuals from India and Pakistan in Delhi on 25-26 November 1994, where along with the members of the Pakistan delegation, representatives of many Indian organizations and individuals signed a joint statement

asking their representative governments to honour their wishes for genuine peace and friendship between two countries; a democratic solution of the Kashmir dispute and the signing of an unconditional no-war pact between the two governments. The Delhi declaration was endorsed in pakistan by organizations of doctors, academics, journalists, lawyers, trade unions, writers, theatre personalities and social activists.

The increasing pace of activities around the desire for a people-to-people dialogue found its ultimate expression in the Pakistan-India People's Convention on Peace and democracy convened by the Forum. In New Delhi on 24-25 February 1995, the first of its kind in the sub-continent, where 100 delegates each from Pakistan and India freely discussed issues like Kashmir, demilitarization and politics of religious intolerance, and demonstrated thereby the popular urge in both the countries to come to an agreement on these contentious issues which have kept the ruling elites of the two countries locked in a never-ending conflict.

Recommendations

On the most sensitive and controversial problems of Kashmir, the plenum of the Pakistan-India People's Convention called upon the governments of India and Pakistan to recognize that it was not merely a territorial dispute between the two, but concerned the lives and aspirations of the people. It therefore reasserted the need for a peaceful and democratic solution involving the peoples of Jammu and Kashmir, and recommended that the two governments must take positive steps to establish democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir. It appealed to human rights organizations and people's movements in India and Pakistan to mobilize public opinion to exercise pressure on their respective governments - India , to stop violation of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, and in Pakistan, to take all possible measures in stopping the supply of arms by all forces which leads to violation of human rights of the civilian population of jammu and Kashmir.

On the issue of demilitarization, the Convention recommended that Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy should sponsor exchanges of scientists, artistes, professionals and trade unionists between the two countries, as well as simultaneous peace marches in both the countries, in order to make the two governments responsive to the objectives declared by the Convention - a mutual and balanced reduction of conventional forces by the two governments, restraint on their nuclear preparations, a move towards regional disarmament by the two independent of the control of other nuclear weapons states, and a comprehensive test ban treaty between the two governments without waiting for a global treaty.

In order to combat religious intolerance in India and Pakistan, the Convention recommended that the legislative, judicial and executive organs of the state in both the countries should be free from religious influences and dictates, removal of myths and prejudices perpetuated in the respective education systems of the two countries, inclusion of a secular curriculum in education in religious institutions to inculcate a spirit of openness and enquiry, reforms in the discriminatory personal laws to meet the common needs of women in both Pakistan and India. In this context, the convention called upon citizens organizations to put constant pressure on their respective governments to reduce harassment of ordinary people and grant visas with greater ease, and stressed the need for better exchange of information on secular and democratic struggles and alternative voices across the border to combat the misinformation and propaganda perpetuated by governments and sections of the media. As a concrete measure, it was proposed that thousands of letters must be exchanged between India and Pakistan every week to pressurize the two governments to open up channels of communications and telecommunication.

A fourth set of recommendations is related to issues of governance in the two countries. The Convention emphasized the necessity of repealing anti-democratic laws and reducing oppressive role of the police and the military in dealing with democratic movements in both the countries, and democratiza-

tion of domestic governance by strengthening the institutions of a federal nature, greater decentralization of power, increasing the accountability of politicians to the people. It also recommended that both the governments must pay attention to the need for breaking up the political-criminal nexus in their respective states and undertake the task of not fomenting the forces of hatred and animosity that are currently at work in the two countries which aggravate tensions between the two. An important recommendation was that a vigilance group of citizens should be set up which could move freely across the borders in order to monitor violations by the border forces of both countries.

From the first meeting in Lahore in September 1994 to the Pakistan-India People's Convention in New Delhi in February 1995 - this short period of five months has thus not only generated wider support for the venture, but has also seen the evolution of concrete steps and measures on the popular level to roll back the destructive process of military confrontation in which New Delhi and Islamabad are indulging, and to initiate instead a people-to-people dialogue for peace and democracy in the subcontinent that with organized mobilization in both the countries can surely prevail over the mutually hostile militaristic impulses of the two governments.

List of participants in the India-Pakistan people-to-people dialogue held in Lahore on 2 September 1994:

INDIA

Nirmal Mukherji
Rajni Kothari
K.G. Kannabiron
Prof. Dinesh Mohan
Gautam Navlakha
Kamal Mitra Chenoy
Teesta Setalvad
Tapan K. Bose
Amrita Chachi

PAKISTAN

I.A. Rehman
Khaled Ahmad
Prof. Haroon Ahmad
Karamat Ali
Mubarak Ali
Prof. Mehdi Hasan
Shahid Kardar
Madeeha Gohar
Nighat Saeed Khan
Hussain Naqi
B.M. Kutti
Anees Haroon
Iftikharul Haq
Prof. Rashid Ahmad
Mubashir Hasan

List of Participants of the India-Pakistan people-to people dialogue held in New delhi on 25-26 November 1994:

PAKISTAN

Mubashir Hasan
Prof. Haroon Ahmad
Beena Sarvar
Madeeha Gohar
Karamat Ali

INDIA

Nirmal Mukherji
Prof. Dinesh Mohan
Sumanta Banerji
Gautam Navlakha
Tapan K. Bose
Kamla Bhasin
Teesta Setelvad
Achin Vanaik
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Anuradha Chenoy
Rita Manchanda
Amrita Chachi
Smitu Kothari
E. Deenadayalan

TOWARD PEOPLE'S SAARC

Representatives of peoples' movements and NGOs assembled at Kathmandu on 18-19 May 1994 to discuss ways and means to foster cooperation, solidarity and action at the people-to-people level in the fragmented South Asia region. The meeting was organized by the South Asian Forum on Human Rights (SAFHR). The participants jointly drafted a Statement of Concern and marched in a procession to the SAARC Secretariat. A copy of the Statement was handed over to the SAARC Secretary General. The participants decided to initiate a series of activities across the region to foster interaction and cooperation at the people's level. The SAFHR has been nominated to work as the interim secretariat for the process of the People's SAARC.

Toward People's SAARC: A Statement of Concern

We, the representatives of mass organizations, citizen groups and concerned individuals from South Asia met in Kathmandu on May 18 and 19, 1994 and have taken stock of the problems in the SAARC region. We are slowly and modestly evolving regional cooperation at a people-to-people level and have now pledged ourselves to widen national and regional dialogues towards forming and strengthening people's SAARC.

We would like to express our deep concern regarding the following problems. We submit that urgent strategies will have to be evolved by states, by SAARC, and by people's organizations to constructively address these outstanding issues. Only then can regional cooperation have a lasting meaning.

1. Severe restrictions on the movement of people and information within the SAARC region. Also, the need for uniform valid travel documents.

2. Militarization: Both the increase in internal militarization and nuclearization as well as escalating intra-country conflicts. Not only does escalating expenditure on arms and advanced military technology in the name of defence and national security inhibit the realization of regional cooperation and democracy, it severely limits the realization of people's security.

3. Violation of sovereignty by state forces of another country. For instance, as evidenced by the recent actions of the Indian police in Nepal.

4. Communalization of the polity: Growing ethnic and inter-community strife, tension and conflict as well as state repression of religious and ethnic minorities.

5. Severe trans-border ecological crisis: For example, the outstanding conflicts surrounding the sharing and management of river water (e.g. Ganga and Kosi).

6. Increasing trends towards export-oriented commodity-based agriculture at the cost of sustainable and equitable food production.

7. Discrimination, exploitation and exclusion of women as equal partners within the family and society, including the imposition of intrusive contraceptive devices. Also statutes which violate gender equality particularly concerning inheritance, marriage, divorce and guardianship.

8. Discrimination against and assimilation of indigenous and tribal people, ethnic and linguistic minorities. Also discrimination on the basis of caste.

9. Continuing incidence of bondage and slave labour, sale and trafficking of women and children and repression of workers' movements.

10. Criminalization of politics: The degeneration of political culture and the increasing influence of black money and mafia forces.

11. Destructive development: Politics and projects which create displacement, economic dependency and environmental degradation in the name of development.

12. Increasing pressures from international and regional economic powers, financial institutions and transnational corporations at the expense of not only national and regional interests but particularly against the interests of social justice and ecological sustainability in the region, including unjust and unfair agreements like GATT which undermine both national and international sovereignty as well as the realization of a strong and self-sufficient South Asian region. Also escalating external debt which accentuates dependency on the dictates of multinational interests.

13. Growing cultural pollution through western-influenced mass media.

14. Trade barriers and discriminatory trade policies and practices.

15. The continuing violation of democratic rights: Particularly the rights of refugees. Also bilateral and multilateral treaties and conventions that are contrary to the principles of justice, equality and sovereignty.

17. Non-implementation of the conventions and agreements on land-locked countries.

18. The decision of SAARC not to concern itself with serious bilateral problems.

This is not a comprehensive list but is indicative of the range and complexity of the problems that severely restrict the realization of a just and peaceful region. It is in this context that we believe that a wide range of people's movements, citizens' groups and individuals are attempting not only to respond to these realities, but to evolve a people-to-people relationship towards envisioning a democratic and peaceful South Asia. We

are joining them in their efforts towards strengthening regional cooperation.

List of Signatories

BANGLADESH
Abdus Sabur
Mohiuddin Ahmad
Justice K.M. Subhan
Mayen Uddin Badal

INDIA
D. Prempati
Smitu Kothari
Anand Swaroop Verma

PAKISTAN
Karamat Ali
B.M. Kutti
Joseph Francis
Hanif Baloch
Ashraf Khan
M. Mateen
Jawed
Bukhat Zameen
S. Shahid

NEPAL
Sushil Pyakurel
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Gopi Upreti
Krishna Upaddhaya
K.P. Siwakoti
N.B. Singh
B.K.Mainalti
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Pramod Kaphley
G,K. Siwakoti
Meena Sharma
Shiva Hari Dahal
Chandra Sreshtha
Meena Poudel
P.L. Biswakarma
Shanti Kafle

BHUTAN
Jiwan Pradhan
Setu Nepal

ALTERNATIVE AGENDA FOR SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLE'S SOLIDARITY

A five day consultation of the representatives of various people's organizations of South Asian countries was held in New Delhi during July 21-24 to discuss the "Alternative Agenda for South Asian People's Solidarity". It is widely felt that the SAARC has not been able to meet the aspirations of the people of these countries. During its one decade of existence, on plea of not entering into bilateral discussions, the SAARC has, in fact, ignored the basic issues of the people.

It was in this background that the representatives of the people's organizations of SAARC countries held this consultation to explore an Alternative Agenda. The consultation was jointly organized by INSAF, PILER, INSEC and PP21. Representatives participating in the consultation belonged to various grassroots-level struggles, campaigns and movements and people's representatives. The Steering Committee for the consultation comprised of Rajendra Sail, Anand Swarup Verma, Abdus Sabur, Mohiuddin Ahmad, Karamat Ali, Sushil Pyakurel, Sarath Fernando and Tenzing Zangpo.

The concept of People's SAARC has been discussed by the participants to emphasize the need for people-to-people cooperation in South Asia. The idea is to help strengthen the forces of the region which seek to contribute to peace, freedom, democracy and equality in the larger interest of the people of South Asia. Drawing upon the region's common history, shared eco-system and fundamental values, the participants from various fields expressed that there are strong bases for extensive regional cooperation.

The participants observed that the official SAARC which started off with quite an idealistic approach has failed to reflect the interests and aspirations of the people of the region. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop a united response from the masses of the SAARC region to face the challenges posed by the situation.

The consultation felt that the following issues need to be dealt with immediately:

A. Curbing cross-border trafficking of women and children through cooperation between both the receiving and sending countries;

B. To revise the SAARC charter to include discussion of bilateral issues;

C. To launch a signature campaign to mobilize people's opinion regarding the most urgent bilateral, as well as multilateral, disputes existing within the region.

Participants decided to consolidate and strengthen the process of the People's SAARC in respective countries. A Coordination Committee comprising Country Coordinators was formed to steer the process till a broad-based convention is held in next six months to one year period. The Country Coordinators are Mohiuddin Ahmad (Bangladesh), Tenzing Zangpo (Bhutan), Anand Swarup Verma (India), Sushil Pyakurel (Nepal), Karamat Ali (Pakistan) and Sarath Fernando (Sri Lanka). INSAF has been nominated to work as the interim secretariat for the People's SAARC. The address is:

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DECLARATION OF THE PEOPLES' SAARC

While the need for regional co-operation in South Asia becomes ever more urgent, and the recognition of this fact grows at the people's level, the States of South Asia continue to persist in their anachronistic conflicts and animosities. The official body for regional co-operation, the SAARC, has failed to bring about any meaningful cooperation between seven States of South Asia, and has failed to address the real concerns and aspirations of the people of South Asia. It is, therefore, time that the people of South Asia take the initiative in their own hands to build a people's alliance.

We, the representatives of people's movements, mass organizations, citizens' groups and concerned individuals, affirm yet again the urgent need for regional cooperation. The process towards a People's SAARC had been going on for the past few years. The last meeting was held in Kathmandu in May 1994, and adopted a Declaration expressing the concerns of the people. We endorse the Kathmandu Declaration and express our disappointment with the fact that practically no steps have been taken to address the concerns, and realize the objectives expressed in that Declaration.

Indeed, if anything, our States have in the meantime further relinquished their responsibility to their people, and became even more co-opted by the process of recolonization that is presently underway. The interests of international financial institutions, the IMF, the World Bank and transnational corporations, have become ever more entrenched. The result has been that unprecedented level of poverty, inequality and social and ecological disruption now hold sway over the Southern countries in general and South Asia in particular.

Responding to the urgency of the need for pooling our resources to meet the challenge posed to the people of South Asia by this hostile inter- and intra-national order, there has been a spurt of people's initiatives in recent years. South Asia Initiative

of PP21, Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, Bangladesh-West Bengal People's Dialogue, India-Bhutan People's Dialogue are only some examples. We welcome and endorse all these initiatives and seek to build up their efforts.

The People's SAARC affirms the need for an alternate agenda that will address the concerns and aspirations of our people, rather than those of a microscopic elite. Such an agenda must reflect the struggle for empowerment, livelihood and dignity of the South Asian people as a whole. To this end we believe that the following objectives must be realized:

The People's SAARC affirms the need for an alternate agenda that will address the concerns and aspirations of our people, rather than those of a microscopic elite. Such an agenda must reflect the struggle for empowerment, livelihood and dignity of the South Asian people as a whole.

1. At present there exists in South Asia severe restrictions on the movement of people and information. This must end. As a first step, all states in South Asia must ensure the people of South Asia a vis-on-arrival facility.

2. Violent means of resolving inter-State conflict must be renounced. Growing nuclearisation and militarisation in the region poses the greatest threat to the security of the South Asian people. We demand that our States commit themselves to a nuclear-free South Asia, and denulcearise immediately. Steps towards radical demilitarization must also be taken now, and scarce and precious resources presently

wasted on so-called defense expenditure be redirected towards social development.

3. Inter-State relations must be based on respect and equality, and all unequal treaties should be annulled. Above all, States must respect each others' sovereignty. Miliary intervention and espionage operations on each others' territories is the most glaring violation of this sovereignty.

4. The South Asian region has long been known for its unity in diversity. In the colonial and post-colonial period, however, there has been an unprecedented increase in communal and ethnicity-based politics. Such trends of inter-community strife, tension and conflict must be reversed, and State repression of ethnic and religious minorities must stop. Also, the principle of sovereignty must not be used to legitimize the violation of human rights.

5. The South Asian region constitutes an integrated eco-system. The management of natural resources which the States of South Asia share must be a joint and cooperative effort. The eco-system and the livelihood of communities tied to it must not be disrupted by unilateral interven-

The South Asian region constitutes an integrated eco-system. The management of natural resources which the States of South Asia share must be a joint and cooperative effort. The eco-system and the livelihood of communities tied to it must not be disrupted by unilateral intervention by any State.

tion by any State. In this context, we call for a moratorium on all State-sponsored projects that cause displacement of people and degradation of the environment.

6. Patriarchal structures presently in existence in the region must be dismantled, and all forms of discrimination and exploitation of women must end. Women of the region must be recognized as equal partners in the life and development of society.

7. The rights of indigenous and tribal people must be recognized sacrosanct, and all forms of discrimination and forcible assimilation of their communities must stop.

8. Bonded and slave labour, the trafficking in women and children and the repression of workers' movements are some of the most dehumanizing practices that now exist in the region. All such exploitative practices must end.

9. Even those States of the region that have democratic structures in place can hardly claim to be truly representative and democratic. All States must commit themselves to democratic decentralization. The criminalisation of politics that has badly damaged representative democracy in the region must end.

10. The States of South Asia must resist encroachment by international and regional economic powers, financial institutions and transnational corporations, and protect the interests of the people against these neo-colonial powers. To counter these powers, trade barriers and discriminatory trade policies must be removed to facilitate the creation of a South Asian common market.

11. The people's rights to self-determination must be recognized as inviolable by States.

12. The convention and agreement on land-locked countries must be implemented, and transit routes opened up.

13. The South Asian States must show their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and a joint

people's tribunal for adjunction of human rights violations must be set up.

14. The SAARC Charter must be revised to allow the discussion of the bilateral issues, and must reflect the aspirations of the people.

(Issued in New Delhi on 24 July 1995 by the Coordination Committee of the People's SAARC)

List of Signatories

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Lutfur Rahman Shahjahan
Mohiuddin Ahmad
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Dilmaya Subba
Ratan Gazmere
Om Dhungel
Sukh Bahadur Subba
Hari Adhikari Bangalay
Tenzing Zangpo

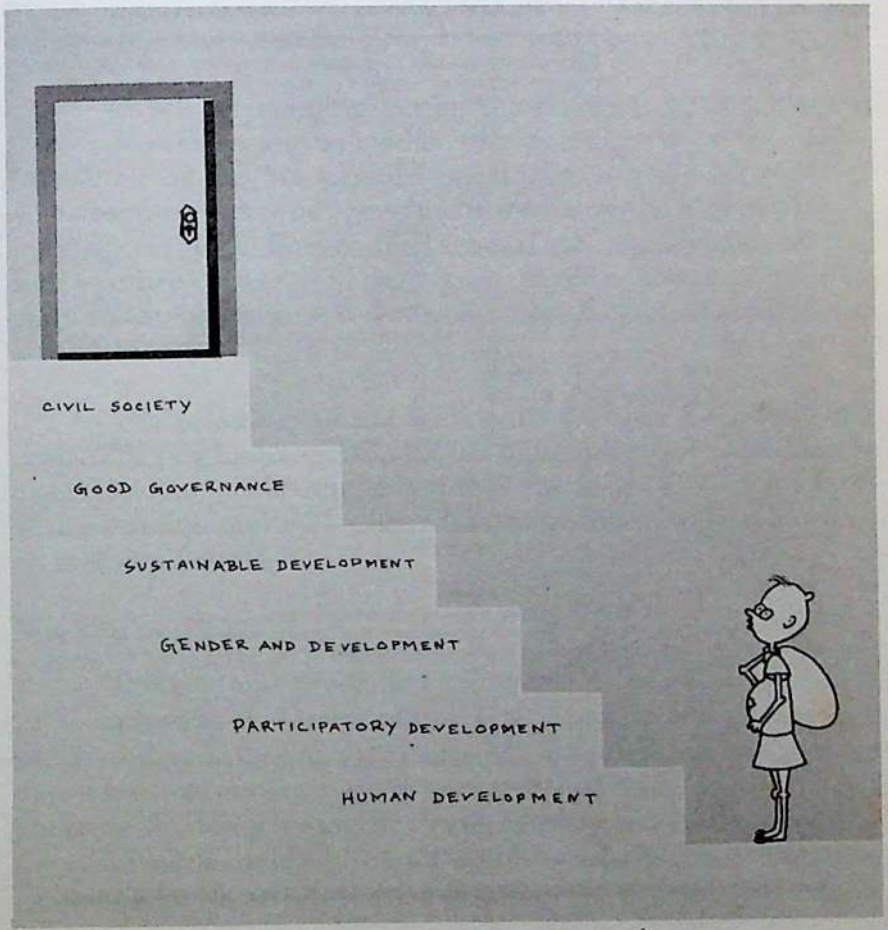
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People's Convergence SHAPING OUR FUTURE



PLANNING MEETING IN SRI LANKA

May 1995

[A Planning Meeting of the PP21 was held at Kamkaru Sevana, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka on 16-17 May 1995. The main objectives of the meeting were to review the preparatory activities and to plan the agenda and structure of the next General Assembly. Following is a report on the meeting.]

In a brief opening ritual, the children from Kamkaru Sevana Kindergarten welcomed the participants with a song. On behalf of the Sri Lankan organizers, Jagath Siriwardene delivered the welcome speech, emphasizing the significance of the proposed PP21 Forum and General Meeting for Sri Lanka, as well as other countries in the region, in the context of the socio-political and economic developments now taking place in the host country.

The sessions commenced with Bantorn Ondam in the chair. The proposed agenda for the meting was presented to the assembly and it was suggested that the meeting should begin with a briefing on PP 21 since Minamata, followed by a briefing on ongoing events.

Briefing on PP21

Robert Reid presented an overview of PP21. The first PP21 gathering in Minamata in 1989 came as a response to a statement made by a former Prime Minister of Japan to the effect that the next century would be the Asia-Pacific century. Our Japanese friends felt that the Prime Minister was not expressing the vision of the people, but of the elites and, as such, it had to be challenged with an alternative vision of the people. The NGOs

and POs sought to focus on the maldevelopment in the Asian region brought about by an anti-people and anti-planet development paradigm. Events took place all over Japan in which participants from the Asian region took part. These events culminated in a gathering in Minamata, a seaside town, which had come to symbolize the adverse effects of the dominant development model (toxic effluent discharged into the bay from a nearby chemical factory moved up the food chain to cause havoc in a fishing community). For the participants, it was a moving experience, meeting those involved in the long struggle for justice. The Minamata meeting issued a declaration calling on the peoples of Asia to forge an alternative vision for the next century.

With Japan aggressively pushing a growth-oriented development in the region, it was decided to convene another PP21 assembly in a country where this type of development was being pursued. Consequently, in 1992, the Bangkok meeting took place. Much of the discussion in Bangkok was on the need to keep the PP21 process alive with minimal coordination. The need for people's initiative and involvement in determining their future was brought home about a year after the Bangkok meeting. The military-dominated government in Thailand was brought down by a mass upsurge.

The South Asia Initiative took off from the Bangkok meeting. Since Bangkok there had been several meetings of the Coordinating Team (CT). In May 1994, an extended meeting of the CT was held in the campus of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. At this meeting, interim guidelines for the CT and PP21 partners were evolved. Another outcome of the extended meeting was the setting up of the PP21 secretariat in Bangkok. The participants also agreed to hold a general meeting of PP21 partners every 3 years, though not on the same scale as that of Minamata or Bangkok. The Sri Lankan delegates at the Bangkok meeting offered to host the next general meeting.

South Asia Initiative

The PP21 briefing was followed by a presentation by Mohiuddin Ahmad on the South Asia Initiative. On their return from the Bangkok meeting, South Asian participants took steps to promote the PP21 process. These efforts were being took a concrete shape in the form of South Asia Initiative. Since 1992, several meetings were held in Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. These meetings focussed on several key issues affecting the sub-region, viz., communal and ethnic violence, trafficking of women and children, poverty alleviation strategies of the SA governments, environmental degradation, impact of SAPs and GATT, equitable sharing of river water, SAARC's relevance to the people, militarization, people-to-people dialogue, and so forth.

Sri Lanka Situation

Sarath Fernando then made a presentation on the situation of Sri Lanka. He said that after a prolonged struggle, the people of Sri Lanka have achieved a political change. They are now at a turning point once again. Until 1977, successive governments had to follow a path to development quite different from the one being followed in recent years on the directives of the World Bank and the IMF. It was well-organized people's movements that made the difference. Since independence in 1948, the people used the ballot to change governments and, thus, had a strong say in the country's development. We have seen the country moving away from the capitalist integration in 1956 and in 1971. The youth insurrection in 1971 was a clear manifestation of the frustration of the people at the slow pace of socialist-oriented development.

Some have said that the 1977 victory of the UNP was a people's mandate for open economy. It is true that at that time, there was widespread dissatisfaction with the then government. But what the people wanted was not a capitalist integration. The suppression of youth, students and workers and finally the brutal state-sponsored terrorism that resulted in the disappear-

ance of 60,000 persons under the UNP regime debunks this theory. It was a period of terror, corruption and repression. The overwhelming support the People's Alliance (PA) received in the 1994 election, on the other hand, was a vote against the `free economy'. But, the economic policies of the PA government are made by advisors and experts who want the free economy to continue. The people are now saying that this form of development is destructive and anti-people.

In this context, people-centered approaches to alternatives are crucial. And the PP21 process has great relevance in the search for alternative development models. It can help raise people's awareness and give them confidence and hope in their struggles. They certainly need hope and confidence. PP21 could point to a new beginning for our people. Do we want peace out of fear? As Mahatma Gandhi said, "It is better to fight for what is right than to be a non-violent person out of fear".

In a separate presentation, attention was drawn to certain aspects which are important in the search for alternatives. PP21 speaks of the people coming together. In South Asia, the people are far away from this stage. They are seeking to assert their separate identities and look to the State to concretize these identities. In the case of Sri Lanka, and in South Asia in general, the process of coming together of peoples is not yet a reality. And how people want to live - live together or separate - will determine the type of economic development. These issues are also linked to democracy. Lack of democratic structures lead to frictions and ultimately to divisions along communal lines.

Peace and democracy are essential to the evolution of alternative development models. They require a certain democratic space. Without it, getting together and discussing things together are not possible. So an end to war and dreaming of peace are fundamental. The problems involved, however, can only be discussed within democratic structures. The economic system depends on the political system which, in turn, depends on the society. In other words, the economic and political systems reflect the state of society.

Thus, the development of alternative economic programs requires a coherent society which respects not violence but peace and a political system that respects different views.

Proposal for General Meeting

Robert Reid explained the proposal for the PP21 Forum and General Meeting: "Asia-Pacific People's Convergence: Coping with the Present and Planning the Future".

It was proposed to make the whole South Asian region the focus of the PP21 General Meeting and schedule various events and processes to take place in different locations in the sub-region so that they would all culminate in a main forum in Sri Lanka.

The Process

1. Devote the first six months to build alliances through solidarity action, deepening awareness and identifying commonalities of oppression of the victims of the present-day growth-oriented development. Such victims are the peasants, fishers, plantation workers, urban poor, migrant workers, women, children and all those who consider themselves victim of debt, privatization, racial conflict, denial of human and democratic rights. These alliances could be regional and/or sectoral. The existing organizational committee should be further expanded to enhance its capability to coordinate, monitor and direct these activities.

2. In the four weeks preceding the Forum, participants should organize rallies/consultations related to identified actors/problems. The main aim of these consultations should be to identify the main mechanisms of oppression and exploitation and oppose them as a joint front. Tactically, these events will lead up to and draw attention to the main event.

3. Culture should be an integral part of this event. Hence cultural groups and artists should be involved together with the South Asia Theatre Festival.

Support mechanisms

1. Coordinating Team: Overall coordination and fund-raising;
2. International Secretariat: International and regional information dissemination, coordination of regional events;
3. Sri Lanka Secretariat: It will focus on preparations at the local level;
4. Partners: organizational and solidarity support;

Things to be done

1. A brochure for the 1996 General Meeting;
2. Dissemination of the proceedings of the planning meeting;
3. Proposals for fund raising: jointly by Sri Lankan Secretariat and International Secretariat;
4. Communication and info-sharing: identify a contact person in each country;
5. CT meetings to include key persons from Sri Lankan Organizing Committee and from each programme, e.g., APEC, Micro/Peoples' Alternatives, South Asia Initiative;
6. Invitation to become PP21 partners: Organizations will be invited to join PP21 Forum in keeping with the guidelines for partnership.

Coordinating Team will meet to discuss outstanding issues at the end of July/early August after the proposed South Asia Initiative meeting. Another CT meting is scheduled to be held after the APEC meeting in Osaka.

The Sri Lanka Event

Venue: Bandarnaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), Bouddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7.
Date: 8-10 March 1996.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The programme should strike a balance between celebration and analysis of issues.

2. Culture should not be relegated to evening entertainment but be integrated in a way that it would run through the whole event.

3. Criteria for participation: there is no need for special criteria, as guidelines for partnership will suffice.

4. Participation of Tamil and Muslim groups, especially women's groups, is essential. Some pre-Forum events should be held in Tamil and Muslim areas.

5. Devote one session for a discussion on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, so that experiences of other countries could be brought to bear on the problem.
6. South Asian Theatre Festival: The SAT Committee has decided to hold the Festival during the Sri Lanka Event. Similar activities could be organized by the Sri Lanka Secretariat.

7. The proposed activities in the agenda need to be well defined so that they would be integrated with the whole process.

The participants agreed that the proposal for the Sri Lanka Event would serve as the basic working document. However, there was some disagreement on the proposed theme: "Asia Pacific People's Convergence: Coping with the present and planning for future". The term `coping' was felt to be too negative and not really reflective of the people's responses to present-day realities. After some discussion, it was agreed to change the theme to read: People's Convergence: Shaping our Future.

List of participants

SRI LANKA
R.B.G. Menike
Paul Perera
Ananda Dharmaratne
B.L.M. Francisca Perera
Chandara Dawanarayana
Anton Mihindukula
Chandralatha Kumudini
D.L. Abdul Razak
Kumarie Kumara Gamage
Gnanawathie Menike
K.P. Wijayaratne
M.S.A. Perera
Grashon Godfrey
Wimal Fernando
Freddy Gamage
P. Subasinglu
Irangani Magedaragamage
V.I.S. Jayapalan
Sriyani Pathirage
K.M.T. Parera
Gamini K. Haththotuwagama
G. Kularatne
Jayathilake Bandara
Patrick Fernando
Jagath Siriwardene
Upali Magedaragamage
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Ed Tadem
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Bantorn Ondam
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Abdus Sabur

INDONESIA
Fernando Manullang

MALAYSIA
Narinder Kaur

New Zealand
Robert Reid

Canada
Ian Hamilton

USA
Jeannine Guthrie

NAGARKOT MEETING
October 1995

A General Assembly of PP 21 will be held in March 1996. The theme of the General Assembly is, PEOPLE'S CONVERGENCE : SHAPING OUR FUTURE. The entire South Asia region will be the locus of a series of forums. All these will culminate in a main forum to be held in Colombo on 8-10 March.

The Forum Conveners met at Nagarkot (Nepal) on 14-15 October 1995 to discuss about proposals for events that would take place in connection with the PP21 General Assembly. The meeting was held within the framework of the South Asian Initiative. Proposals for some forums were finalized by the participants after two days' discussion. Each proposal included a concept paper, programme itinerary and budget. Two working groups held intensive discussions to suggest future structure of PP21 and tentative agenda for PP21 main events (8-11 March 1996). Besides, the meeting also discussed issues corresponding to the General Assembly, such as, the number of participants who can be accommodated in Colombo, possibility to hold a film festival, to initiate a peace dialogue with Tamil groups and to explore whether a separate forum on Women could be organized.

The meeting discussed a wide range of issues which arose in the meeting. Experiences on the Women Conference in Beijing were shared and the necessity to have the follow up meeting of Beijing Conference during the Colombo 1996 Assembly was emphasized. It was also emphasized to ensure gender balance in all kinds/levels of participation.

Briefing on current situation in Sri Lanka was also held in order to understand the reality. Questions were also raised regarding the possibility for the PP21 contribution toward the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Question was raised about the necessity to include the Fishers and Indigenous Peoples at the Colombo 1996 Assembly. It was decided that the scope for proposing forum is still open and it is also up to the concerned groups to initiate such forums. The participation of the dalits and Tamil people was also suggested. However, this is not an exhaustive list. There will be few more forums. Details of those forums could not be presented here as they have not yet been ready or available. Conceptual framework of the key forums discussed in the meetings are presented below.

WRITERS' CONVENTION

Writers are perceived as vanguards of social progress. They sketch the lives of the people, their livelihood, their aspirations and their struggle. While doing this, they are often subject to harassment, torture and other atrocious acts by the State and coercive institutions. Writers, though come from different segments of the population, perhaps belong to an identifiable entity in as much as they represent the conscience of the society. The writers, in the ultimate analysis, think for the people, speak for the oppressed and write for the humanity. They strive to erect bridge between the peoples and social movements across the political boundaries.

The world is fragmented. The people, that is, the toiling masses, the grass-roots communities, the freedom-fighters, the youth, the vulnerable minorities, victims of gender discrimination, all are endeavouring to come closer. The process of convergence is obstructed by divisive forces of the State and global hegemonic forces.

The present world has transcended beyond communities and States. It is now being splintered and reorganized in economic and political blocks under the ordain of global forces of the market. Entities and phenomena like EU, ASEAN, SAARC, APEC, NAPTA, SAPTA, etc., are becoming more real and monstrous. Freedom and autonomy at the level of individual and community are withering away.

The collapse of the bi-polar world has changed the scenario to a significant extent. People's struggle for livelihood, autonomy and dignity, which used to derive some strength from the inner contradictions of the multi-polar world, is expected to assume new identity in form and content. The forces of peace and progress which had hitherto been augmented by contending and antagonistic nature of the world order have now been slowed down. The quest for equity and social justice which used to glean its life-blood from the ideals of socialism is believed to be functionally over.

Have the conditions of existence of the people changed? No, they have not. Coercive forces have continued their hegemony unabated and, in some respects, have tightened their grip. Communities are systematically being persecuted through ethnic cleansing. Progressive ideas in general and women in particular are increasingly being victimized by religious bigotry and fundamentalism. The plight of the dalits and other oppressed groups is still continuing by the cruel forces of cast chauvinism. Struggle for people's political self-determination is being quelled in the name of national security.

Particular mention may be made about communal and ethnic strife which has escalated in different parts of the world more than any other period in the contemporary history. South Asia has been a hot-bed of communal tension and violence for many years. This has not only threatened the delicate political balance in the region, but also made millions vulnerable. During last fifty years, more than twenty million people have been displaced from their economic and social base against their will. The demolition of the Babri mosque and the subsequent carnage has demonstrated how fragile the social balance is.

On the other hand, ethnic strife has intensified. Majority chauvinism in the form of discrimination, persecution and ethnic cleansing is now taking a heavy toll. Bosnia, Jaffna, Kashmir, Karachi, Chittagong Hill Tracts, East Timor and many other parts of the planet are now burning.

In this situation, how one would act in the intellectual domain. The pertinent questions is, will there be any shift in the

catalytic role of the writers at this juncture? More particularly, how the writers would intervene and contribute, not as an exogenous entity, but as a part of the people's process?

PEOPLE'S POLITICS: CIVIL SOCIETY, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The present-day world finds it hard to define Democracy. In most cases, it has limited itself to the representation of people through periodic elections. The "representation" does not extend to the representation of all the interests and aspirations of the people. This has posed serious challenges to the people at large. Non-representation of their interests coupled with the lack of transparency on the part of the governments have contributed to the failure to keep up to the expectations of the people. It is important, in this background, to initiate discussion and dialogue among various people's and mass organizations and people's representatives on Politics and Governance.

- The discussion should encompass People's Politics, its needs, goals and strategies. The discussion may concentrate mainly on the prime concerns of people's politics organization, structure and future plans.
- The political empowerment has far reaching effects in the lives of the people and society. The political empowerment and its ideology should be given enough considerations in devising the strategies of People's Politics.
- It would be imperative to look into the roles of already existing people's and mass organizations and their coordinated efforts.

People's Governance must reflect the efforts to represent people's interests and aspirations. The discussions should address the governance in the context of people's empowerment in various spheres of political lives. There may be policies, mechanisms and measures to materialize this concept. These include respect for people's opinion and people's participation in decision-making, political empowerment, education, health and social security.

- Economic aspects of life are also important. People's Politics and Good Governance must include the aspect of global capitalism and people's alternative, national economy for the protection of the under-privileged and economically unrepresented, community resource management system and social security. The discussion should also cover the issue of transparency in the government in executing its duties concerning the activities and decisions of the government.

- An intensive discussion on human rights should be included in the programme. The discussion may concentrate on global cultural hegemony, cultural survival, spirituality and cultural liberation. Discussion on conflict resolution may be included in the programme.

HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

Over two years after the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the global situation is not very encouraging. As a result of serious human rights violations, millions of people are being made homeless within their own countries while others are forced to leave their country and live the life of refugee. Many are denied of their fundamental rights and of their rights to asylum. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 23 million refugees worldwide by the end of 1994. A large proportion of them are in the Asia-Pacific region.

The region is also faced with the daunting task of dealing with many other human rights issues. The problems associated with ethnic and religious minorities and human rights abuses related to National Security Laws, Special Powers Act, etc. are some of the common scourges prevalent in the region.

In this backdrop, there is a need to continuously publicize human rights violations and address their root causes. Trans-border alliance building with organizations having common areas of interest can contribute to raising mass awareness.

FORUM ON NATURAL RESOURCES: RELATIONSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
Land - Water - Forest

The world today is deeply concerned with ecological issues. People for their ever growing needs use natural resources. In this way they promote development. The use of natural resources and the initiation of development produce changes in ecology. The nature of changes in ecology manifests the character of development. The character of development, again, determines the use of resources. The pattern of use of resources reflects to a certain extent the path of development that a governing group decides to follow. Although the issues have to be analyzed from different points of view, the role of human being as an agent of change has to be taken as a focal point.

In the relationship between development and environment, adjustment is the need, but conflict is generally the outcome. Industrial, agricultural and infrastructural developments have created many ecological problems due to wrong understanding of the system in nature. The development programmes of many countries are guided mainly by the government planners. In the planning model, the ecological issues are not adequately considered in the past. This process must stop. The process of planning and concomitant administrative decisions should attach top priority to a resolution of the contradiction between development and environment.

Different natural resources, namely, forest, land and water, have their own specificities and ecological characteristics. A discourse on the relationship between people and these natural resources in different geographical regions will contribute to an understanding of the human-nature balance, marked by both adjustment and conflict.

Quite often, big development projects were planned in the name of national interest. The opposition from the local people in the context of many such big development projects naturally raises a very vital question. In a welfare state, can there

be a basis of contradiction between local interest and national interest? One very important component of knowledge to be generated in the sphere of human-nature relationship is the perspective of local inhabitants. It may so happen, that what planners and decision makers consider significant are subordinate to other factors in the view of local inhabitants. But one should understand and know the experiences and problem solving ideas of local people.

Some voluntary organizations or researchers engaged in an intimate interaction with people on crucial ecological issues in different areas, may be in a position to appreciate and communicate the local peoples' aspirations and experiences. These experiences are extraordinarily valuable in understanding the human-nature relationship from below. If one gives mor emphasis on only one issue without considering other soci economic factors, a somewhat unbalanced view of the who ecological issues may emerge. Adequate emphasis should be given on linking the ecological factors with economic, political, social and historical forces.

With the end of colonial rule in South and South-East Asia, a number of `nation states' were created and various models of development programmes were initiated depending on the concerned state power and consequent development strategy. Development programmes initiated in many areas often adversely affected the way of life, economy and habitat. This is frequently followed by the encroachment on land by outsiders. As the exploitation of natural resources became more intense, it generally affected the eco-system of the area.

The people in most countries are primarily concerned with the three major natural resources: land, water and forest. These resources were enjoyed and exploited by the people in harmony with nature. During colonial and post-colonial periods, they have been increasingly controlled by the state where quite often the people's interests are ignored in the name of national interest and often creating conflict or tension between peoples of neighbouring states. The sharing of the Ganges river water may be mentioned in this context.

The questions that may be examined are:

a. In a welfare state, can there be a basic contradiction between local interest and national interest?

b. Is it possible to consider an area in isolation without having any influence on wider national or international interest? Then what should be the strategy to protect people's interest?

c. The policies, largely influenced by the fund-giving agencies, look after the interests of the Northern countries or interest of the industrial sectors of the concerned countries. How to protect people's interest?

d. When the local people try to assert their rights, it may be rejected on the pretext of environmental consequences and wider national interest. How to strengthen people's initiative?

TOWARDS TOLERANCE AND PEACE

In view of growing communal and ethnic conflict and violence, it is necessary to address issues of tolerance and peace with due emphasis. This necessitates intensive dialogue and understanding between community leaders, people's representatives, social activists, media personnel, human rights activists and cultural activists. There is an urgent need to formulate a positive agenda for conflict resolution.

The main theme will be to look at:

1. A comprehensive analysis of the economic, social and foreign policies affecting communal and ethnic strife.

2. The modes and forums of intervention by communal forces within the civil society and the possible linkages between such forces at the regional level. Such identification will help people of the region to effectively expose their retrogressive forces and will help to devise strategies to counter them.

CHILD WORKERS' MARCH: FROM KATHMANDU TO COLOMBO

The entire Asia-Pacific region and especially the South Asian countries have witnessed an unprecedented socio-economic and political development and the society is getting transformed from an agrarian to the industrial one. This transformation is characterized by GNP growth, globalization and regional integration processes. The people from rural areas are migrating to urban centres. The huge supply of unskilled workers including children and women has seriously affected the wage structure. The average family income has also declined considerably. Due to the lopsided development process and neglect of the village economy, millions of people are forced to abandon their rural base and are migrate to the urban/industrial centres in search of jobs.

Due to low wages, the people are suffering. They ar compelled to send their children to work. The government doe not make adequate arrangements for education, health care and other facilities for the poor people. In the absence of infrastructural facilities and social security systems, a large number of children are deprived of basic human needs and are subject to various forms of exploitation and slavery.

It is estimated that there are 80 million child workers in South Asian countries. Most of these children are working as bonded laborers in agriculture. A sizeable number of children are also employed in hazardous industries which includes brick kiln, carpet, glass, diamond cutting, chemical polishing, plantations, tanneries and leather work, rag picking, brass-ware and lock making, slate making, bidi-cigar making, stone quarries and mining, construction, etc. Besides, there are many forcibly engaged in prostitution.

In these occupations and processes, the children are forcibly inducted in the work and are to work 16 hours a day or more. In most of the cases, they are not paid any salary. They are

deprived of education, health care, recreation and other basic ingredients of childhood. Thus the members of the future generation are becoming sick, retarded and helpless.

To wipe out this black blot from the society, a number of initiatives have been take up by different agencies. Despite all these efforts, very little is being achieved in this regard. Thus there is a need to launch concerted efforts to eliminate this social evil.

The South Asian coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) of more then 200 organizations is working for the eradication of child slavery in the region. More then 27,000 bonded child labourers have so far been rescued and rehabilitated. The ongoing programmes of SACCS is to cover a greater number of bonded child labourers in the coming years.

The SACCS has involved parliamentarians, trade union leaders, student activists, religious leaders and journalists for the eradication of child servitude. In 1994-95, SACCS organized marches (padayatra) from Nagar Uattari to Delhi, Kanyakumari to Delhi and in the entire capital territory of Delhi. By organizing such programmes, a considerable amount of pressure was mounted on the government to take steps for the eradication of child servitude.

With the objective of making a strong intervention to eliminate the practice of the employment of child servitude, the SACCS and ACFOD jointly plans to organize a Child Workers' March from Kathmandu to Colombo and finally the participants will join the General Assembly of the PP 21 in Colombo. Child workers from Different South Asian countries will assemble at Kathmandu or join at convenient points along the route to Colombo. This March will enable to highlight the plight of the working children in the region. Along the route of the March, public meetings, press conferences, and audio-video programmes will be organized in selected city centres to sensitize the people and the media on issues relating to the problem of bonded children.

The participants at the meeting shared their thoughts and proposals and made some comments and suggestions to improve their proposals. Two working groups were set up in the Nagarkot meeting to suggest future structure of PP21 and tentative agenda for PP21 main events (8-11 March 1996) respectively. Besides, the meeting also discussed issues corresponding to the General Assembly, such as, the number of participants who can be accommodated in Colombo, possibility to hold a film festival, to initiate a peace dialogue with Tamil groups and to explore whether a separate forum on Women could be organized.

The meeting discussed a wide range of issues which arose from the presentation. Experiences on the Women Conference in Beijing were shared and the necessity to have the follow up meeting of Beijing Conference during the Colombo 1996 Assembly was emphasized. It was also emphasized to ensure gender balance in all kinds/levels of participation.

Briefing on current situation in Sri Lanka was also held in order to understand the reality. Questions were also raised regarding the possibility for the PP21 contribution toward the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Question was raised about the necessity to include the Fishers and Indigenous Peoples at the Colombo 1996 Assembly. It was decided that the scope for proposing forum is still open and it is also up to the concerned groups to initiate such forums. The participation of the dalits and Tamil people was also suggested.

List of participants

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Buddhadeb Chaudhury
Biplab Halim
M.Z. Shahid
Karamat Ali
Sheema Kirmani
Mohiuddin Ahmad
Majid Mallik
Mayenuddin Badal
Nurur Rahman
Govinda Singh Rawat
Sushil Pyakurel
Madhabi Basnet
Om Dhungel

1996 PP21 FORUMS

Forum	Date	Venue	Organizer	Contact person	Address
Writers Convention	1-3 March	Dhaka	Jointly by NABODHARA and ALTERNATE MASS MEDIA	Mohiuddin Ahmad	59 North Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh. Fax: (8002) 810254
Towards Tolerance and Peace	4-6 March	Karachi	PILER	Karamat Ali	P.O. Box 8032, Karachi 75400, Pakistan. Fax: (9221) 4557009, 4548115
People's Politics: Civil Society, Governance and Accountability	2-4 March	Kathmandu	INSEC	Sushil Pyakurel	P.O. Box 2726, Kathmandu, Nepal. Fax: (9771) 270551
Human Rights Forum	5-6 March	Kathmandu	BHUTANESE COALITION FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS	Om Dhungel	Post Box 172, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal. Fax: (9771) 523819, Attn: BCDR
Forum on Natural Resources: Relationship and management	2-5 March	Calcutta	IMSE	Biplab Halim	244 Jodhpur Park (2nd Floor), Calcutta 700068, India. Fax: (9133) 4730236
Asian Women Peasants Coming Together	4-6 March	Colombo	Jointly by BAWPA and ACFOD	Nurur Rahman	P.O. Box 26 Bungthonglang P.O. Bangkok 10242 Thailand Fax: (662) 3740464
People's Health in People's Hand	1-5 March	Madras	ACHAN	Prem Chandran John	702-B Shivalaya, 16 C-in-C Road, Madras 600105, India. Fax: (9144) 8270424
Habitat and Marine Ecology	1-3 March	Male	YUVA	M. Z. Shahid	117/8, Dr. Beliga Nagar, Jasmine Mill Road, Mahim (East), Bombay 400017, India. Fax: 4135314/2044223/ 2088348 (Attn: YUVA)
Child Workers' March	22 Feb-7 March	Calcutta to Kathmandu	Jointly by SACCS and ACFOD	Kailash Satyarthi	74 Arvali Apartments, DDA, Kalkaji, New Delhi 110019, India. Fax: (9111) 6420029
Integrating Alternative Development Efforts in Asia	1-4 March	Kerala	Jointly by ARENA, JCNC/PP 21-RUA KSSP-IRTC	Muto Ichio Ed Tadem	Fax: ARENA (852) 2504 2986 RUA (813) 5273 8667

APPENDIX

Population Projection

Country	Population (in thousand)		
	1995	2000	2020
Bangladesh	121,110	132,417	172,900.
Bhutan	1,605	1,811	2,771
India	934,228	1,016,242	1,304,263
Maldives	251	292	487
Nepal	21,406	24,151	35,731
Pakistan	129,704	148,012	224,826
Sri Lanka	18,079	19,035	22,923
SA total	1,226,383	1,341,960	1,763,901
Asia	3,443,274	3,703,172	4,648,772
World	5,692,210	6,113,680	7,742,124
SA as % of Asia	35.62	36.24	37.94
SA as % of World	21.54	21.95	22.78

Source: World Bank, World Population Projection 1994-95, Jhon Hopkins, Baltimore, 1994.

Life Expectancy at Birth

Country	Life expectancy at birth	
	1990-95	2015-2020
Bangladesh	55.5	64.6
Bhutan	48.5	56,7
India	61.1	69.6
Maldives	62.4	70.8
Nepal	53.5	61.9
Pakistan	59.0	66.6
Sri Lanka	71.6	76.6
Asia	65.3	71.0
World	65.9	70.7

Source: World Bank, op cit.

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