

LATE S. M. ALI

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## Latest spin to Delhi's propaganda offensive

BJP-led govt whips up alien bogey against Dhaka

T first it was al-Qaeda and ISI association related imputations against Bangladesh by India apparently designed for global consumption. These did not cut ice externally, but one would have thought that the card was played to an impeccable success in the Gujarat elections, though. Modi, 'the great divider', the sobriquet given to him by the highly reputed India Today magazine, has emerged as a phenomenon in Indian politics. There is a lot on the electoral plate of India anyway to be chary about.

The absurdity of New Delhi's claim that 20 million Bangladeshi immigrants are staying illegally in India is self-evident. It is curiously self-deprecatory for India also in that so many 'aliens' could, for the argument's sake, overstay in India throwing dusts in the eyes of her administrators. What is regrettable, as far as we are concerned, it is an affront to Bangladesh, which is made so much the worse for the fact that the number of illegal Pakistani immigrants was also cited alongside. As if bracketing the two countries in everything has become a fixation with the present BJP-led coalition government in India. That unquestionably is a clear sign of the top BJP leadership kowtowing to the extremist right in the unwieldy bandwadon.

Some Indian state elections are on the cards, the NDA coalition needs the chemistry to work unfazed for sometime yet and the national elections are not too far away either. The Gujarat formula which is so close to the heart of the BJP hardcore leadership is upping its ante, so it seems.

Detractors of the BJP-led government stretches the point to say that even the SAARC summit fell victim to it.

It is dumbfounding that such highly placed people in India like no less a person than L K Advani for one are being so notional about something so sensitive that they are putting the figure at nearly two crore infiltrators, something like one seventh of Bangladeshi's population making it to India and illegally staying there. And what are they going to do with this notional figure of so-called illegal immigrants: they are said to be intent upon hounding them out and deporting them to Bangladesh. It is the same dreadful spectre of push-in exercise about to rise that Indian central government undertook some years ago over the head of the West Bengal government which spoke with a different voice. Even from a train compartment allegedly Bangladeshi immigrants transported from a western India state were rescued by their compatriots in West Bengal.

What is the cut-off point that the BJP government in India is trying to invent here? The last time that 10 million Bangladeshis had crossed over to India against the backdrop of a genocide committed by the Pakistani occupation forces on the then East Pakistan returned to free Bangladesh in due course. It is a recorded fact of history. Is the BJP up to unsettling it?

We would very much like to believe that it is not an Indian reaction to Bangladesh's giving an East-ward thrust to her foreign policy directions. India remains a major foreign relations player in Asia, so that in all generosity she should be only appreciative of Bangladesh's move to become a bridge-head to South East Asia. Besides, India herself has a status in the ASEAN. Need we remind BJP-led India that it's against international norms and practices to even entertain the notion of expelling citizens of one country to another, let alone doing it in real-life situation? In present-day parlance, expulsion of people has all the pejorative connotations that no civilised nation can countenance. If New Delhi at all has any point to make on the issue, let her give the details of the so-called illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in India to our government so that their particulars can be verified at our end.



HASNAT ABDUL HYE

IME magazine has published a full-page essay on the living French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. It is tantalizingly titled: Life with the Father of Deconstructionism. The occasion that called for the essay was the making of a documentary on the life and works of Derrida. The event became news because he is no ordinary celebrity like a rock-singer, a sportsman, not to speak of a film star. Philosophers and philosophy are not the stuff that films are usually made of and Derrida's brand of philosophy is complex enough to deter rendition in another medium. Even in the midst of arowing recognition and popularity that has come late in life, he continues to be derided for his arcane ideas and convoluted exposition. The sharpest criticisms on his thinking have come from philosophers belonging to the analytical tradition in the English-speaking Anglo-Saxon world. The dislike of the analytical philosophers for continental philosophy, particularly the French version, is well known. It did not disappear even after compromises were made in drawing up academic courses in British and American universities. Given this prejudice, the making of a documentary on the

most controversial of the contemporary continental philosophers is nothing short of unexpected. The surprise is all the more because the film was made in Hollywood and in Enalish

Derrida, of course, is not the first philosopher to become the subject of a film. The first was Wittgenstein, who was posthumously commemorated in a documentary by Derek



space to the homo-erotic relationship between Wittgenstein and the economist J. M. Keynes, as if to prove the fashionable point that a celebrity's life is not complete without a dash of sexual aberration. Like Derrida, Wittgenstein is also difficult to understand, particularly with his cryptic aphorisms, like, "The world is all that is," that appear in his first book Tractatus in a ledger-like format. But unlike Derrida, he was fortunate to be introduced to the

to organize philosophy courses for teaching came to be enmeshed with ideological prejudice of political geography. This conflation of philosophical tradition with political geography led to the ideological stereotyping and distortions that can be found in such labels as "British empiricism," "French rationalism" and "German metaphysics". These labels served to widen the gulf between philosophical traditions and hindered the possibility of dialogue between them.

Observing changes in under-



ise in continental philosophy and many more in America. It is also seen that the influence of continental philosophy in the Englishspeaking world, particularly in its more recent Franco-phone versions, is arguably much stronger outside philosophy departments than within them. It has decisively influenced many theoretical expositions in the humanities and social sciences. For Derrida recognition in the English-speaking philosophical establishment, however, has not been easy, it having been given

grudgingly, even though among

students his ideas became widely

popular. One has only to look at the

Derrida affair in Cambridge in 1992

where certain prominent members

of the university opposed his nomi-

nation for an honorary doctorate

That he now teaches at British and

American universities not only

highlights the non-geographical

location of continental philosophy

but also is a vindication of his ideas

that were ridiculed widely not so

Derrida is an unusual philoso-

pher and hard to categorise. He

himself said: I am not happy with the

word philosopher. Are his texts

rather to be read and understood as

literary? To this his reply was: I will

say that my texts belong, "neither to

the philosophical register, nor to the

literary register". This brings out the

most striking aspect of Derrida's

contribution to intellectual tradition:

it is not philosophy in the straightfor-

ward sense. Derrida has not so

much re-defined philosophy, the

standings of Derrida, by both philosophers and non-philosophers. The difficulty in respect of his writings demands a delicacy of reading and is a challenge to readers, which goes some way towards explaining the attraction he has held for students with analytical bent of mind in various disciplines. In over forty books and many more essays Derrida has presented his complex and challenging ideas and continues to do so tirelessly. But his name has become closely associated with the philosophical concept and

practice denoted by the term 'de-

construction'. He chose the word

from Heidegger and like him used it

to mean 'dismantling' and not

destruction of the traditional con-

cept of western philosophy. When

he chose the word he had little or no

idea of the importance it would

assume for his later thinking.

Although first developed as philoso-

phy, it has spread into literary, arts

and film criticism and theory,

tion is the reading of texts in terms of

their marks, traces, indistinct fea-

tures, margin, limits or frameworks

and in terms of their self-delimitation

as texts. It means that deconstruc-

tion is concerned with offering an

account of what is contained in a

text -- not by seeking out its compo-

nent parts or its implications but

rather by marking off its relations to

other texts, its contexts and

subtexts. Deconstruction thus

seeks to show how a text's explicit

includes. The beauty of the concept

To put it in a nutshell, deconstruc-

psychoanalysm and social theory.

is that deconstruction can be under stood through texts, just as texts can be understood through it. Unlike many philosophical ideas it provides a basis for practice, too. In all his books and essays where deconstruction has been used as analytical tool, Derrida appears as a patient and scrupulous reader determined to bring to light what is concealed in the text. It differs from the standard philosophical technique of finding fault with an argument because the objective is to reveal an underlying incompatibility between what the writer believes to be arguing and what the text itself actually says. The gap between authorial intention and textual meaning is a key focus of deconstruction. The concept has opened a whole new world of intellectual and philosophical

nquiry into meaning and truth.

It has been contended by many that it is not possible to-day to be a well educated intellectual without knowing at least something about Derrida and the way of reading most closely associated with him: deconstruction. Indeed, the vogue for deconstruction has spread from France to England, the United States and far beyond. To day Derrida may well be more appreciated outside France, than inside it. Critics may grumble about the sheer difficulty of his texts and philosophers may continue to be suspicious of his deliberate attempt to mystify, but the number of readers goes on increasing all over the world. It is most assuring to find that Bangladesh is not lagging behind in this trend. Bookshops in Boi Para at Shahbag Avenue regularly bring his books for sale and these do not gather dust. Most of the buyers are young and from middle class families with academic backgrounds other than in philosophy. There is no doubt that when the film is available in Dhaka many will see it eagerly After the experience even the weakat-heart may say: who is afraid of Derrida?

Hasnat Abdul Hye is a former secretary formulations undermine its implicit novelist and economist. aspects. It brings out what the text excludes by showing what it

## Today Derrida may well be more appreciated outside France, than inside it. Critics may grumble about the sheer difficulty of his texts and philosophers may continue to be suspicious of his deliberate attempt to mystify, but the number of readers goes on increasing all over the world. It is most assuring to find that Bangladesh is not lagging behind in this trend. Bookshops in Boi Para at Shahbag Avenue regularly bring his books for sale and these do not gather dust.

long ago

Anglo-Saxon philosophical establishment early in his career. Taken under the wings of the leading British philosopher Bertrand Russel, he could distance himself from the continental philosophical tradition, assuring early recognition by the analytical philosophers. To understand the unfavourable reaction to Derrida's thinking by the philosophers of the Englishspeaking world one has to remember the distance that was created between analytical and continental traditions. Although there is no consensus

on the precise origin of continental philosophy it is more or less agreed that it started with philosophical writings after Kant, he being the final great figure common to both the analytic and continental traditions. The distinction was articulated in the gradually unfolding professional self-description used by the departments of philosophy to organize their curricula and course offerings. It also led to the declaration of broad intellectual allegiances under the two schools. This is how professional self-description meant

**Death like a camera** 

phy courses in the English-speaking world before the 1970s it is seen that during the post-war period continental philosophy was broadly synonymous with phenomenology(the world as experienced in consciousness) and existential philosophy(a version of phenomenology). The reason why 'phenomenology' was replaced by the rubric "continental philosophy" is not clear. It could have been introduced to take account of the various Francophone schools of philosophy (e.g. post-structuralism) that asserted their difference from phenomenology. Derrida, along with Lacan and Lyotard, was in minor opposition to it, while Fucoult was in complete disagreement. Be that as it may, there is now near-complete professional hegemony of analytic philosophy in the English-speaking world where types of non-analytic philosophy, like phenomenology, is obliged to define their position in relation to this hegemony. Despite this questionable dominance, there are universities in the UK. Ireland. Canada and Australia that special-

graduate and postgraduate philoso-

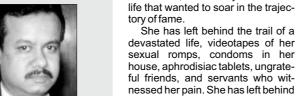
traditional task of philosophy. as rendered it indefinite (also difficult). This is the cause of many misunder-That doesn't mean people are not going to have a personal life. One

> between what is shown and what is hidden, because human relationships cannot be based on surprises all the time. That is a comfort the loved one brings and the stranger doesn't, a friend does and an enemy

death has changed everything for her. It flung open the doors and windows of a dungeon where she was condemned to live a tormented life. Death brought her the release, the escape, her last breath putting an end to the agonies of a life of the living dead.

It is hard to tell how people who knew her are going to remember her. It is hard to tell how the man who killed her is going to reconcile in his mind the cruelty of his act and the memories of having made love to victim of this tragedy, when she will grow up in an inverse relationship with rest of the world. When everybody else is going to forget the mother, the child will come closer to her memories as matured thinking will magnify the ability to reconcile with the past. Where will this child go between a living father who let other men sleep with his wife, and a dead mother who left behind the reputation of a slut?

Lots of water will flow under the bridge where she was found dead and the lecherous men, who nibbled on her body like vultures on cadavers, will find fresh preys to satisfy their lust. In the concourse of conspiring and condescending men, we might never know who killed her. because there is double standard in



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

T worked like the click of a camera as death captured the image of life before the shutter closed on the aperture. A beautiful woman looked sordid in that image,

morgue for days before anyone shroud of mystery, and revealed identified it, a rude way to finish the how respectable men and women were engaged in despicable ways of life. One thing led to another, and it She has left behind the trail of a peeled off the surface to expose the underside of a nefarious world where money and drugs had reduced life into a sensual extrava-

ganza! But more than anything, her death brought us face to face with relatives who are embarrassed, a husband who wanted to push her to each other. It showed us how decent other men and an alleged lover who people are not always so decent and how they hide their duplicitous

doesn't have to show everything to others. At the same time one doesn't have to hide everything from others. But there must be an honest link doesn't.

This woman forever lived with

India under the BJP-led government needs to weigh her options very carefully. Should she burn the boats to normal relations with Bangladesh? What about the Track-II diplomacy between the civil societies of the two countries that has a vast reservoir of a catalytic role to play in removing irritants in the Indo-Bangla ties?

Nobody meaning friendship between the two countries would like to see any fresh complication arise in their relationship.

told a grisly tale the surface of her glamour. She was a pawn in the hands of men who passed her around like salt at din-

In death, the woman got posthumous recognition for her life: how she lived got known only after she died. She was the child of a broken home, and she left behind her own child in her own broken home as if to perpetuate that tradedy in a vendeful manner. She was a woman who had bum rap with all the men in her life. The father abandoned her, the husband pimped her, and the lover exploited her. In between other men used her for ribald pleasure. If closely looked, her life was just

another flavour that stoked the appetite of sex-hungry men. And if she lived for that grottiness, she died for it too, a glamour girl killed and hurled under a bridge like an expired toy. Her body lay in the her body like vultures on cadavers, will find fresh preys to satisfy their lust. In the concourse of conspiring and condescending men, we might never know who killed her, because there is double standard in the man's world. They will be rotten, yet they will want to be respectable.

CROSS TALK

She has left behind a father who watched it all like an inanimate object. He was often forced to sit through tasteless altercations between two men, the husband and the lover of his daughter. They talked about her infidelity, and coerced her to confess her relationship with other men. In the feat of anger, one of them once tore the clothes of the daughter as if to condemn the flesh, which came from the father.

is a suspect in her murder.

Her death opened a little trapdoor, and let out ominous secrets of seedy impulses like bats flapping out of a dark basement. Her death was a sacrifice that lifted the forth in the back of one's mind

enemies and strangers. She slept characters behind the mask. It makes you worried if the girl next door, or a colleague at work or other people you meet everyday are alright, whether the wholesome faces they put up to you are what they look, whether we can take people by the face value anymore. And that is tremendous erosion of trust, because next time when you see your neighbour or an acquaintance, you cannot help thinking of people having two dimensions in life: people as they are seen and people as they are. That makes one paranoid and nervous because one

would be forever going back and

with men she didn't know too well. because they gave her money and favours. But then she also slept with men she thought she knew because she loved them. We don't know which of the two kinds of men eventually killed her on that fateful night. but all of them had put her on a slow deathwatch. All of them had already killed her long before she died.

May be everything would have been fine had she lived on. May be more men would have passed her amongst them until she got tired of them or they got tired of her. We don't know what would have happened to her if she were alive. But

her in the past. Let us face it, she is not the only woman who might have been killed by her lover. But she must be one of the few whose death would be haunted by life.

But there is someone else who will be haunted by the life that haunts the dead woman. It is the child she has left behind who is going to grow up in the shadow of her flesh and murmur of her blood.

Her mother had left her in the care of others when she was a child, and now she has left behind a child in the care of others. In her way, she has closed her circle of life, but opened a new one for the child.

And this child will be the true

## Wider implications of the Gujarat polls

## A R SHAMSUL ISLAM

ECULAR India has received a severe jolt at the Gujarat polls. What many probably understood as a 'silent wave of Hindutva' that dictated the polls was in reality an 'outwardly silent but inwardly sonorous' wave of 'Hindutva'. As there are now hectic attempts to turn it out as a surging flood all secular forces of India need to join hands post-haste to contain this

Hasn't the hardline Hindu nationalism won a fabulous prize in the Gujarat polls? There are some critics going to the length of terming it as most crucial of the elections in India in the last decade. Time will say how far their observation is correct.

Of course there is still a section of moderate critics who have tried to ease the tension of the nation by advising not to overestimate the consequences of the Guiarat polls on the future political landscape of India. They argue that ever since the BJP seized power at the centre in 1998 it is the Congress that was voted to power in fifteen states. three as coalition partners, and the Gujarat polls simply halted Congress's winning streak.

They have contended that the

Congress erred in studying the sentiments of the electorate and providing effective palliatives. It pathetically failed to full-throatedly counter the use of sentimental Hindutva agenda by the BJP. It could not properly answer the BJP's projection of terrorism issue by adequately focusing on the dismal failure of the BJP government at the centre and in Gujarat to effectively

address the problem. While the formal report from the Congress highest policy making forum, the working committee, on the results of the Gujarat polls is yet to come the party general secretary attributed the defeat to a 'silent wave of Hindutva' that steamrolled all other factors. Be it silent or sonorous, unfortunately the Congress top leadership together with many other forums of India including a section of media, survey polls, exit polls that predicted a photo finish of the results, failed to gauge the things to come.

The BJP's poll plank in Guiarat was straight, unvarnished, unashamed. It was Hindutva in its most virulent form. One of its potent slogans, was 'Modi' or 'Musharraf'. It meant that if voters preferred the Congress candidate Shankersingh Vaghela it would amount to a victory of Pak President General Pervez

Musharraf signifying that the timid attitude of the Congress towards Pakistan would be of no use to protect the national interest of India. It emphasized that only the hardcore Hindu nationalism could effectively counter Pak fundamentalists' machination to destroy India.

What seems to have stunned all is not the results of the Gujarat elections but the attitude of success of the BJP on one hand and the degree of defeat of the Congress on the other. Chief Minister Narendra Modi was accused of turning a blind eve to the worst communal riots in Gujarat that left about 2000 dead. most being the Muslims. But guite inversely, this inhuman act paid Modi rich dividends in the snap polls that he brought forward with a tailor's precision to ride on a wave of Hindu nationalist sentiment.

Narendra Modi has been figured up as a national hero not only in Guiarat. His charisma seems to have exercised far beyond that. He has ascribed pointblank the Guiarat victory to Hindutva. However Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee declared that Gujarat win was subscribed by development works of the BJP government.

But the Modi brand of the BJP gave a sound slap on his version by deriding him as 'pseudo-secularist'.

Many think that the aging Vajpayee seems poised for exit. Modi with the venomous Hindutva card in hand appears to be gorgeously placed in no time at the centre stage of the BJP now leading the alliance government of India.

Understandably, had Vajpayee and Advani garnered more than enough guts to take action -- in far excess of sounding threat to -against Modi by imposing president's rule in Gujarat, the situation could have possibly been averted. Now the whistle appears blown not only for the exit of Vajpayee but more damagingly the packing up of India's much vaunted secularism. The way Modi launched election campaign by openly projecting the tenets of Hindutva was a clear violation of Indian constitution that guarantees secularism as one of the most sacred principles of the Republic. The election commission tried to uphold the constitution but could not cut through the teeth of the surcharged sentiment.

What accounts to be more worrying to the secular forces of India is the victory of the BJP in polls outside Gujarat both in Loksabha and state assemblies. The three by-election defeats in the Congress ruled state of Rajasthan in the hand of the BJP is particularly discomforting for the Congress as it faces assembly elections in 10 states, seven of which are now ruled by the party. The congress needs to work out a positive and newer plank than the stereotyped one to woo the voters against the BJP who would certainly throw in the aggressive form of Hindutva plus anti-incumbency factor to turn the table in its favour.

Romped to undreamed of success in the Gujarat polls the BJP is all out to replicate the feat in the coming assembly polls and in national polls in 2004 as well by pouring down its hardline Hindutva message into the ears of the electorate. They have already started preaching that the politics of the opposition political parties is apt to reduce nation's stature and honour by compromising on issues that weaken national security. They repeat that the assembly elections in Guiarat clearly showed that the nation had rejected 'the pseudosecular forces.'

The new world political situation has also favoured the Hindu chauvinists of India to flourish. It is said that after 9/11 (Twin Tower disaster) a new world order has set in. The extraordinary expounding of President Bush's government of a new political philosophy of 'war on terrorism' has threatened many a nation

with war horrors launched by the lone superpower the US aided, sometimes forcibly, by other countries. In the process the Taliban government of Afghanistan was blown away amidst colossal destruction of the country. Saddam Hussein of Iraq is being drawn closer to facing the firing line of the US. But tragically enough the mission is proving to be counterproductive in some cases in as much as fundamentalism -- religious, sectarian, political, social etc -- that promotes in no mean way terrorism which obviously obstructs progress has been found to take roots in some countries across the world after 9/11 carnage. In the last October polls in Pakistan the MMA. an alliance of six Islamic fundamentalist groups, sprang surprise by performing wonderful results. The BJP. another religious fundamentalist group, stunned everybody by bagging 127 out of 182 (minus one kept postponed for death of a candidate) seats in the state assembly. Bangladesh too presents a picture where a religious fundamentalist political party the Jamaat-e-Islami has forced entry into the council of ministers. Like instances are witnessed even in most advanced countries of the west. The Republican Party, considered conservative

in approach and application compared to the democratic party, surprised the world with its overwhelming victory in the midterm

polls of the US. In an attempt to lengthen its shadow all over India to garner larger number of votes in the Indian national polls in 2004 the BJP has extended its activities to the seven sister states of the northeastern India. It will certainly cause concern to Bangladesh. Though it is doubtful how far the BJP will be able to thrive politically in this region, its activities and the consequent counter-activities of the predominant political parties there may aggravate the political and ethnic problems of this strife-torn region that will surely impact on Bangladesh. This may thicken the accusations launched by the BJP government at the centre that Bangladesh is providing indulgence and protection to the separatist rebels of those seven states of India. Understandably the major brunt

of fighting the evils of aggressive Hindutva falls on the shoulder of the Congress, it being the main opposition. Unfortunately it has not yet shown as much sense of urgency in this regard. The Congress seems drowned in restoring composure after the Gujarat debacle. It is not known when will the Congress

Lots of water will flow under the bridge where she was found dead and the lecherous men, who nibbled on the man's world. They will be rotten. yet they will want to be respectable.

> I for one pray that the mother's soul should rest in peace, and the child should grow up to have a normal life. An English novelist named Christopher Isherwood writes in Goodbye to Berlin, "I am like a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking." The least the lousy father can do now is help the child grow up thinking, so that when the shutter goes down on the aperture it doesn't capture the grotesque image of another life.

Nohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker

assess that even if it wins the majority in the elections in all the Hindispeaking states of India it cannot get at the magic figure of 273 in the 545member parliament. So it will probably run after to lead a national alliance like the present one in the national polls of 2004. On the other hand, the Congress, probably blinded by the vision of its past glories, suffers from the complex (illusion?) that it can go alone, it needs no other party by its side, whereas all other opposition parties do have the need to stand with the Congress. Obsession of this sort is suicidal not only to the Congress but sometimes to the greater causes of the nation also. It is not anyway

respond to the wake-up call to take

the lead in mustering all secular

forces of India against the radical

The BJP is shrewd enough to

Hindu elements.

desirable that the secularism crisis that the Gujarat polls have portended will be left unaddressed by the Congress till it is too late.

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