

# Looking at Pakistan — with Concern and Dismay

## BOOK REVIEW

**WAITING FOR ALLAH: (Pakistan's Struggle for Democracy) by Christina Lamb; Viking Penguin India, B4/246 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi, 110029, India: 286 pages**

Reviewed By **NANCY WONG**

Pakistan's democracy to a stock exchange? After eleven years of Zia's oppressive military rule it appears that the forces of democracy rammed open the dam of suppression releasing all kinds of elements; some with vision as well as the flotsam and jetsam of humanity. This hard-hitting chapter is appropriately entitled — "The Superpatronage Roadshow."

Pakistan today is plagued with the spectre of ethnic violence, the scale and pervasiveness of which is witnessed in the strife-torn city of Karachi. Here Sindh's eye Punjabis with outright hostility, Pathans hate Punjabis and Muhajirs resent Sindh's bitterly — all these seething feelings erupt often in pitched battles of fierce gun fire. Yet, they are all Muslims. This does not seem enough to forge a national identity. As Lamb analyses: "Even in Pakistan today its people call themselves Sindhis, Baluch, Pathans first, Muslims second and finally Pakistanis. Until that order can be reversed, the country has no hope of developing, as no one will put the country's interest before their own — a factor which shows up in every area, from the burgeoning growth of the black economy, to the unfair distribution of inputs for agriculture, to refusal to pay income tax, to the suppression of the peasantry by the ruling zamindars."

The author travelled extensively throughout Pakistan, interviewing politicians of all shades and opinion, bureaucrats of many Government ministries, ordinary people in town and villages; and saw for herself the impoverished existence of peasants and the unemployed. Her caustic wit and humour ("Sharif told me once that he fancied himself as Mughal king, but with his balding head and short stature, he resembled more a little

Buddha") is lavished on the high and mighty, who reside in high walled, marbled, colonnaded palaces protected from the majority of their countrymen in crowded, dilapidated shanty towns. Here candour towards problems which outsiders can probably see more clearly is refreshing. This is illustrated in her views of the powerful mullahs: "Most of the time the interests of the mullahs and the elite coincide: neither wants power to fall into the hands of the masses, so they keep them subjugated — the elite because they fear progress will bring threats to their privileged positions, the clergy because they see democracy as incompatible with Islam." The tight grip which the mullahs exert on the masses (especially in the villages) is attested by the fact that they continue to maintain control over millions of lives (one reason why family planning has made so little progress in Pakistan) despite being trounced in the country's three elections. The brand of religion fed by them serves to keep the ignorant poor in their place (Allah's will being a convenient and off cited reason for their station in life). For them time stands still with no glimmer of relief from relentless grinding hardship... "And so life goes on in most Pakistani villages, doing time in the struggle against ever-shrinking resources, and *Waiting for Allah*."

Lamb's scornful humour is reserved for those in power who plunder the country's resources, her compassion is bestowed upon victims of a grossly unequal social structure. The chapter "Dial-A-Kashnikov" depicts the lot of an impoverished village boy driven by circumstances to try his luck in Karachi. Nadeem (as he names him) is literally

flung into the vortex of violence upon his first entry into a virtually lawless city where guns, mortars and bombs are in plentiful supply. His fearful experiences together with his battle for survival in a totally alien environment is imaginatively handled. The subject of dacoits is also sympathetically portrayed as they are presented as latter day Robin Hoods, the majority of whom are forced into banditry by a social system of sheer exploitation by the zamindars, lack of job opportunity, corrupt police force, illiteracy and above all — dehumanising poverty. The author justifies: Among many of the poor villagers of Sindh, natural revulsion against crimes was forgotten in the case of dacoits, who were spotted in in hushed admiration, glamorous men who by dastardly plans rob from the rich to give to the poor."



The Afghan war brought unprecedented aid to Pakistan: it became the third largest recipient of American aid (after Israel and Egypt). It came as a boon to Zia's military regime whose fundamentalist stance was wearing quite thin with the Western powers. Because of her strategic location, Pakistan became the darling of Western democracies who saw the country as a bulwark against communism. That being so, billions of dollars were poured in along with huge shipments of arms of all varieties. But while some sections of the country benefited from this windfall, the country as a whole suffered massive demoralising effects. The enormous

proliferation of arms led to considerable destabilisation and escalated the fighting among ethnic groups. Another fall out was the frightful increase in drug smuggling the cancerous effects which permeated society, furthermore eroding law and order. Corruption reared its ugly head with as much as forty per cent of the arms designated for combat being siphoned off for sale in the domestic market and abroad. All the political, economic and socio ramifications of trying to influence Afghanistan into being a client state is critically examined. Benazir Butto's victory stirred much hope throughout the country change at last after eleven long stifling years of Zia's regime. Her father's slogan: "roti, kapra aur makan" (bread, clothing and shelter) was remembered and the millions of villagers took heart and danced for joy in the countryside. Yet once again their hopes were dashed, promises broken and the poor remained as before — for them, nothing changed. They were still "Waiting for Allah."

# Paralysed but Painting with Pulsating Colours

by **Fayza Haq**

**A**NIS, who has had 11 operations of the head, and cannot use his right hand, had a solo exhibition at the Shilpakala Academy. There were 95 pieces in the expose, including oil, water colour, mixed media, with steady sale of his paintings and sketches.

"The Face" was a fascinating depiction in an impressionistic form, with lines and squiggles forming the important part of the highlight of the composition. It brought Qayum Chowdhury to mind. The colours used were beige, with a fair touch of reds and blues.

An ink and water creation was found in "The Vanquished", on buff paper, with

green and ochre "saris", with bangles at their wrist, and an air of merriment with their dark hair tied back tight. There were more colours in the background which harmonised with the clothes the women wore. The painting was rich in colours, thematic conception and composition.

"Delight" was a pink and red pastel combined with ochre and it showed a delightful maiden dancing in ecstasy with her tresses strewn out in poetic swirls. The buff paper used was a suitable media for the subtle work.

"Spring" was a semi-abstract creation with soft blues

people of Bangladesh. It had a universal appeal too with its theme of the rebirth of nature, with warm days ahead.

"Vivacity" had a young woman prancing on the fields. It would certainly have pleased the heart of the English Romantic poets to see the beauty of simple things in life and nature — away from the grist and grime of the city life. It had a woman dancing in vermilion. Her complexion was dark and yet she appeared the epitome of charm and unspoiled beauty. The sky and the fields had been brought in with soft touches of pink and blue and green in the backdrop and a mass of red, ochre, grey and pink in the foreground. There was a lot of white and buff to play up the subject.

"The Piper" showed the traditional musician with his green "lungi" and scarlet head band. It appeared natural and harmonious, with the high-lights of the trees of the forest at the back. A field was suggested as well with touches of brown, yellow, and shades of green. It was a mixture of pastel and water-colour.

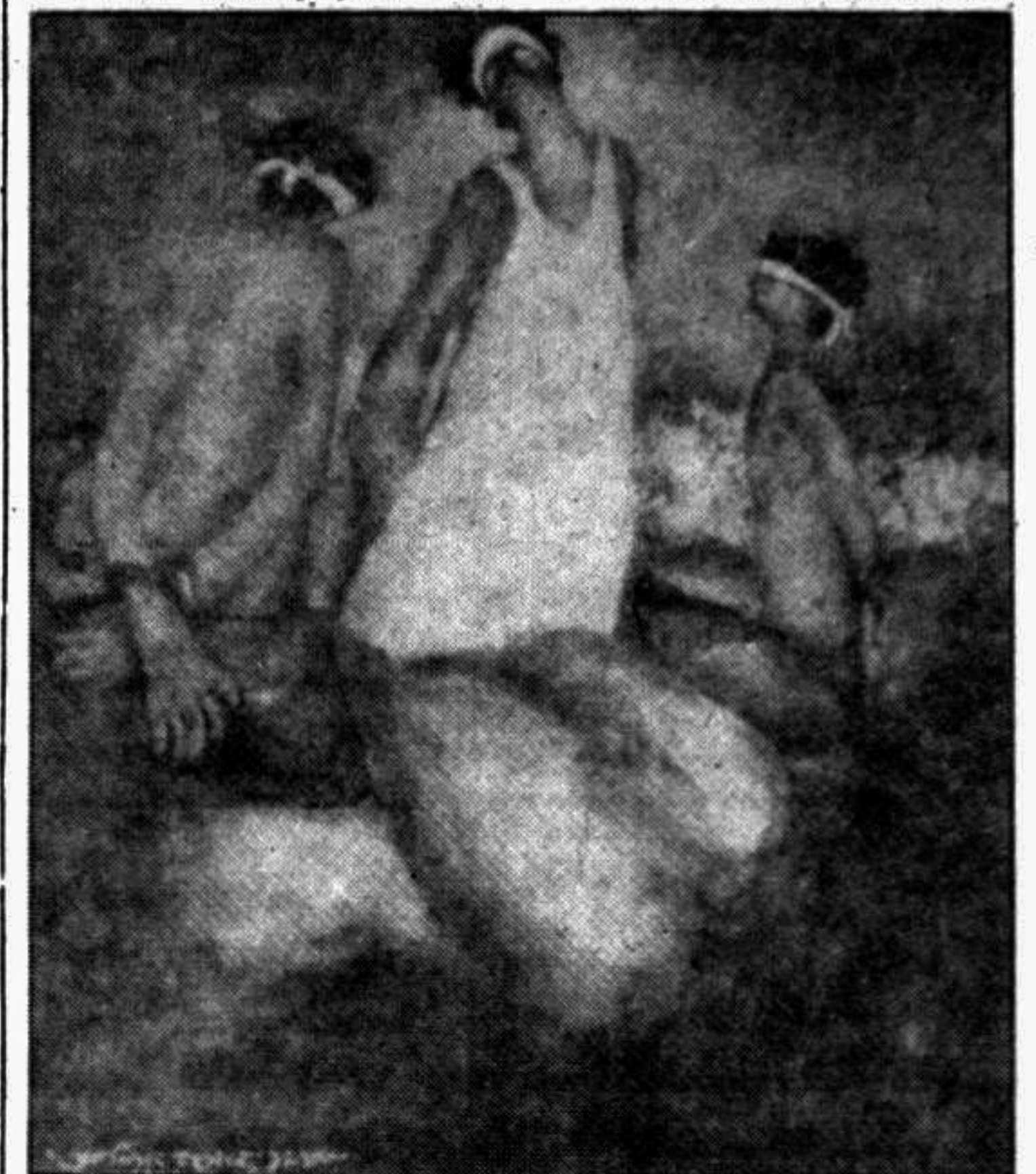
"Faithful-4" was a depiction of a dog resting. Its face and tail were highlighted with darker strokes. The clean strokes spoke of an artist who knew his craft and his subject well and who could handle his brush with mastery.

Bangladeshi people hurrying in the rain was depicted well in the piece "In the Rain". Despite the pouring rain there were no signs of distress or panic in the painter's work. The blue, brown and pink shades created a placid and optimistic atmosphere as in all Anis's works.

Another delightful impressionistic creation was "Boats" in which the boats and waves had been carefully and cleverly juxtaposed. One saw sweeps, lines and curves of blue, ochre and brown on white paper, and yet could perceive the details of the life of a boatman and the condition of the passengers on a turbulent river with its masses of waves. The black played up the soft use of the pleasing hues.

The boat people were once again the theme of "Anchored" which showed a boat that had been brought home after a troublesome journey. The boat was presented with simple, left lines. The boatmen too were hinted in brown and purple strokes. Simple swirls of soft blue depicted the waves in a stylised and poetic manner.

Anis's subjects, more idyllic than solemn ones, spoke of a profound mental agility and creative drive. It is not easy to be handicapped and yet have such powerful strokes and a clear vision of the world around you.



**FOR INDEPENDENCE**

powerful lines and strokes. It was apparently simply done but had used lines that were effective and powerful. "Structure" was similarly done with black lines on a buff page and delineated a female figure. The head, hands and torso were suggested and recalled Zainul Abedin's economy of lines.

Three figures shown in "For Independence", were bound at the hands and eyes. The red background and the dark foreground offset the figures well. The torment and agony could be clearly seen in the faces of the captured freedom fighters.

"Nabanna-2" had depicted women powdering rice to make 'pitha'. And the poses of the women were natural and dignified. It brought in well the life of the countryside, seen at an idyllic angle. The women were in bright blue,



**PAIR**

combined with ochre and vermilion and brought in the joy of the spirit of spring in the heart of the traditional

# Ravi Shankar Blends Rock and Indian Music, Fuses East and West

Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

His stunning interpretations have helped to restore classical Indian music to robust popularity, enriching India and the world with his sublime mastery of the sitar and with music that 'colours the mind'



provision. The Hindu word for musical fundamentals means "ancestor" while the microtones between are called "descendants." Both past and present are conveyed by a performer working within the precepts of his ancestors at the same time improvising. As in other music, the raga conveys messages to the audience while the performer may add further comments during a performance.

Critics have noted that although Ravi Shankar is deeply rooted in the traditions of Indian culture, his initial exposure to classical music was more through Western symphonies, concertos and solo compositions.

Ravi Shankar was born in 1920 to a Bengali Brahmin family. As a boy he followed his older brother Uday to Paris where the latter was forming Europe's first Indian dance company. Ravi Shankar became an acclaimed solo dancer and a competent player of sitar, sarod, bamboo flute and the drums. He moved in the orbit of Europe's best young musicians and travelled in Europe, England and America.

"In my childhood in Paris, many famous Western musicians came to our house — Enesco, Segovia, Toscanini, Paderewski, it was fantastic," Mr Shankar recalls. They all said they liked Indian music but found it monotonous, that it went on and on.

"That hurt me very much. So I began to compose different kinds of music that would bridge the gap between our music and theirs."

At 18, Ravi Shankar returned to India, shaving his head and placing himself under the stern rules of discipline under a renowned master of the sitar, Ustad Allauddin Khan. He became a favourite pupil, married his guru's daughter and after seven and a

half years of ceaseless study, started his career in Bombay. It was no easy job to earn one's daily bread and support a wife and child. He became a versatile musician, performing classical ragas as well as experimenting with new music for dance, radio and films. He composed hundreds of songs for All India Radio.

He won acclaim for his ballet opera based on Jawaharlal Nehru's "Discovery of India" and his film scores for Satyajit Ray's seminal Apu trilogy of films — Pather Panchali, Aparajito and Apu's Sansar. At the Berlin Festival, he won the Golden Bear Award for Tapan Sinha's film Kabuliwala.

He was commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation to provide the musical score for Alice in Wonderland. In recent years, he composed the music for the award winning film "Gandhi."

With Western musicians he initiated an East-West dialogue, performing alongside virtuosos such as violinist Jean-Pierre Rampal, and the likes of conductors Zubin Mehta and Andre Previn and (in a very recent recording) with composer Philip Glass.

forming the sitar internationally in 1956 and soon attracted large cosmopolitan audiences. The guitar is about the same as the sitar, etymologically and structurally. The sitar, however, is far more complicated, with both primary and resonating strings.

He was driven, he says, to make Indian music intelligible to non-Indian audiences. "In India I have been called a destroyer," he says. "But that is only because they mixed my identity as a composer and a performer."

"As a composer, I have tried everything — even electronic music and avant garde — everything. But as a performer, I am getting more classical and more orthodox. It is the same mind but a different expression."

It was perhaps through the Beatles that Ravi Shankar's sitar music was popularised in the Sixties as a time when the West was fascinated with meditation, as well as India, its culture and music. Beatle George Harrison was a student and Ravi Shankar also appeared at Woodstock, a music festival that celebrated Western rock and roll and folk songs, protests and the hippie culture.

A concert he organised with George Harrison in 1971 for the new nation Bangladesh raised over US\$25 million in New York.

In time, he became a celebrity in the global mass culture of electronic music. Patiently, and with wit, he explained his music before he played it.

In India, he remains active, providing the signature tune for Doordarshan, the state-run television network, and the nationalist song "Saarey Jahan."

To him also goes the credit of evolving the Indian orchestra. He helped found the All-Indian Orchestra which plays ethnic instruments (including violin) and other foreign instruments like the cello and clarinet.

Today, Ravi Shankar remains a purist and adheres not to the fixed form of the raga. But he is still a brilliant innovator.

"The remarkable spontaneity of his playing, the complex, psychological undertones that make his music feel so modern — these effects are achieved through improvisations that occur wholly within the raga's traditional framework," reads his Ramon Magsaysay award citation.

"His stunning interpretations have helped to restore classical Indian music to robust popularity in India and to inspire a new generation of disciples."

Ravi Shankar is recognised for "enriching India and the world with his sublime mastery of the sitar and with music that 'colours the mind'."

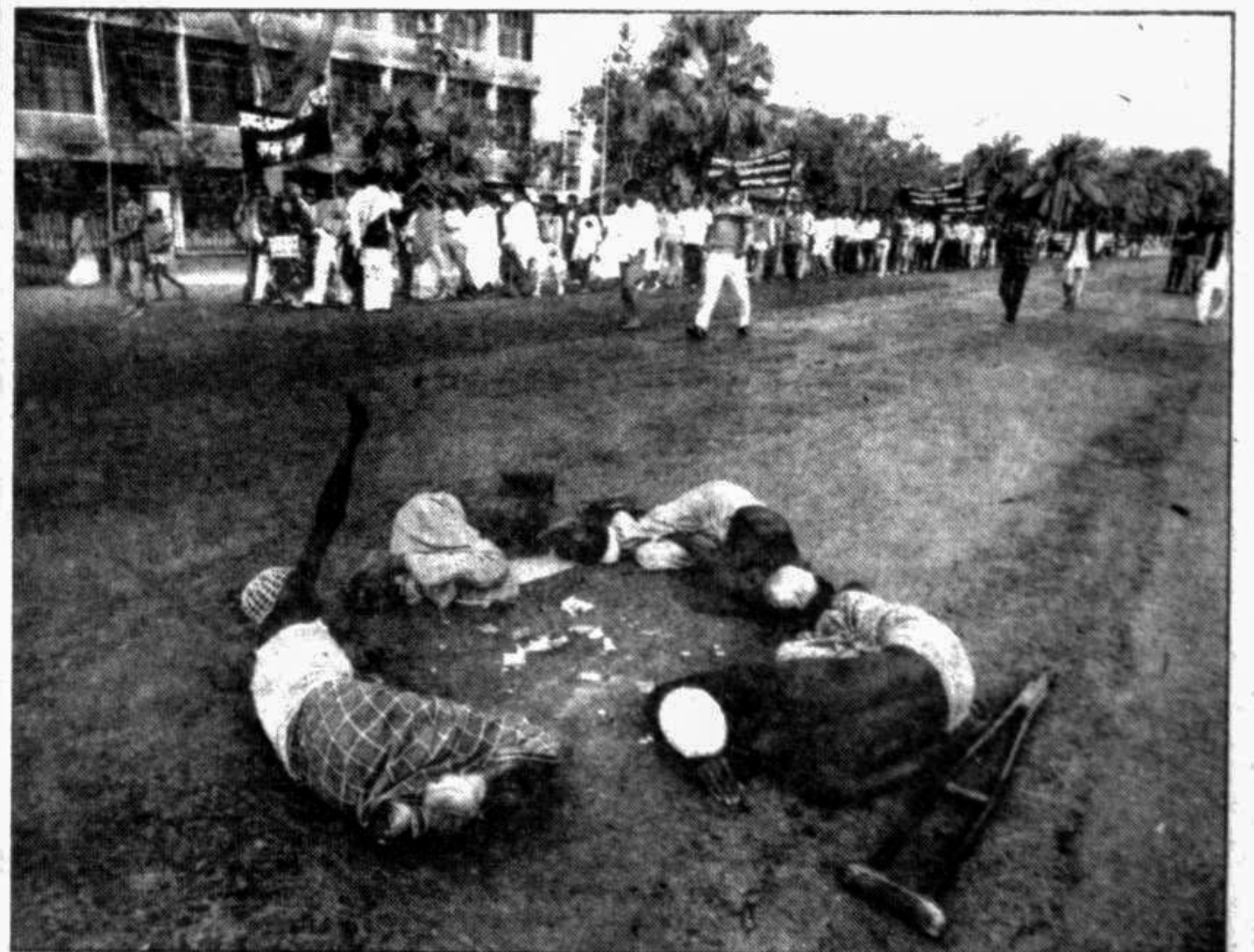
— *Depthnews Asia*

# The 'Piracy' of Intellectuals

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The Christian Bible tells of the miracle of the loaves, when Jesus and his apostles were gathered one night with 5,000 followers and had only five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish on hand. A fisherman like the apostle Peter was understandably worried, because whenever he gave a piece of fish, he always ended up with one fish less. But Jesus kept distributing the fish and bread, and after the 5,000 had been fed, they gathered what remained and found that they had 12 baskets of food left.

Our Muslim and Buddhist brothers will doubtless recall similar stories: the miraculous dates and milk, or the jar that



Dhaka Portrait: Dhaka University, 21 February

Photo: Anwar Hossain

# The Indian who Made it

Continued from page 9 name of India to thank the British people that they have made it possible for an Indian to occupy this position and to speak freely of any grievance which India may be suffering under.

As an MP — nicknamed Mr Narrow Majority — Narojji campaigned for Indians to be able to sit the Indian civil service exams in India, rather than travel to Britain. With the help of a snap vote by backbenchers in the House of Commons, he was, partially successful.

Mahatma Gandhi had then gone to South Africa and Narojji urged him to stay there to fight a proposal to deprive Indians of the vote.

He was concerned that Indian industry was mainly British-owned and he encouraged some fellow Parsis, the Tatas, to set up a steelworks. This was the start of one of

India's biggest companies. Narojji, inspired by his mother's help as a boy, was a lifelong advocate of education for girls. In Bombay, he started classes for them in the homes of friends.

He campaigned for votes for women, and against arranged marriages between children.

He himself was engaged at the age of 11 to Gulbat, a girl of seven. They married as adults, but found they had different interests. However, he refused to divorce her.

Narojji died in Bombay in 1917.

Zerbanoo Gifford, three times a Liberal parliamentary candidate, has written a book about him intended for school use.

DAVID SPARK was assistant editor of Britain's Northern Echo, and then editor of the National Press Agency, Tatas, to set up a steelworks. This was the start of one of a freelance journalist.