

problems, and to practices such as arranged marriages and "dowry deaths" (suttee). India has not yet ratified the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Child labour is endemic in India despite provisions in the constitution to protect children from this practice. Over 40% of children work, many under inhumane conditions. Poverty and lack of access to basic education are the main reasons for child labour. Despite laws prohibiting child marriage under the age of sixteen, the practice is widespread. India has, however, ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

India's National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), established in 1993, has demonstrated a willingness to take up controversial cases and has focused on critical human rights issues. It promises to become even more effective over time. Other human rights non-governmental organizations have also made valuable contributions to improved respect for human rights.

### CANADIAN POSITION

Canada continues to encourage the efforts of the Indian Government to improve the human rights situation in their country and welcomed the establishment of a National Commission on Human Rights in 1993. Canada has also welcomed measures taken by India aimed at normalising the situation in Kashmir and reducing human rights abuses there.

Bilaterally, Canada maintains a dialogue on human rights with the Indian Government, both at the national and state levels. Most visibly, Prime Minister Chretien raised human rights concerns during his January 1996 trade mission to India. Canada has also offered support to Indian human rights NGOs and grassroots development organizations. Canada's contributions to India's sustainable development and growth help to address the poverty which helps to retard the development of a human rights culture.

Canada has stated its concerns about the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir in its UNGA Third Committee country situations speech. There has been little action regarding this situation undertaken in the UN Commission on Human Rights, though the High Commissioner for Human Rights has urged India to allow access to the region by an international human rights investigative mission.