

## Envoy's memoir

heavy reliance on imports. India also is a more open society, with access to bureaucrats, politicians and the business community virtually unrestricted — as compared to the more regulated existence one leads in the neighboring country.

Yet Pakistan during the period of my own posting had its own advantages. The Pakistani bureaucracy, with military muscle behind it, tended to be more efficient than the Indian. The technocrats appointed to the Pakistani cabinet were generally very well versed in their subjects and very competent ministers.

India was by far a more difficult country to work in. Democracy perhaps had much to do with it. In Pakistan when an immigration officer refused a visa, the applicant usually bowed and politely took his or her leave. In the similar situation in India, the discussion had only begun once a visa was refused — and it was the visa officer who had more reason to draw sympathy than the applicant. In Pakistan the system catered to the needs of the foreign and domestic elite, whereas in India even the high and mighty escaped the bureaucratic mire only with much ingenuity — a feature which at least in philosophical terms I found attractive. Democracy in India has also inspired a tendency towards a rather rough form of do-it-yourself justice: the actor in a street theater group did such a good job in representing an avaricious landlord that he had to be rescued by police when the spectators began pelting him with stones.

### Indian miracle

Indian democracy is an enormity, and by any reasonable standards it should not work. Every member of parliament represents approximately one-and-a-third million constituents. Corruption, manipulation, bureaucracy, red tape are not the exclusive preserve of any one society or area of the world. In India however, sheer size and weight of numbers combine to produce a veritable jungle through which one must find a path. Pakistan's smaller size and the government's command structure made life relatively simple for the resident envoy. In India national and state politics operating in a democratic framework produced a churning cauldron and created formidable challenges for the diplomat. For example, if one were to speak to fifty service clubs and other groups in Pakistan, one would have covered a good cross-section of Pakistan's influential people. In India one could speak to a hundred groups and still

only have scratched the surface. In the circumstances, of overriding importance was the need in India to identify national interests and priorities, and to pursue them rigorously.

Enormity is perhaps the best term for describing India as a whole. Forged out of the United Provinces and a multitude of princely states in 1947, the country is scarcely understood by those who are its citizens let alone by outsiders. Feuding Christians in Kerala, several shades of Communists in teeming Bengal, lamas from Ladakh, sadhus from the Himalayan ashrams, Ongies from the Andamans, Akalis, Nihangs, tribals, Kashmiris and Sikkimese who still talk of "going to India" when they leave home, all combine to create this incomparable patchwork.

### Canada's relations

Canada enjoys high standing in Pakistan and India. Commonwealth connections — or, as in the case of Pakistan, former connections — and cooperation in development had generated bonds which were valued and appreciated in both countries. The establishment of contacts was thus extremely easy.

At the same time, the differing circumstances of the two countries generated distinctly different perspectives on their relationship with Canada. Pakistanis were invariably full of gratitude for Canadian assistance. In India the attitude, at least at the official level, was more likely to be: "You owe it to us." Pakistan, under pressure on both its borders, conscious of its vulnerability to domination by its larger neighbor, and reliant on Western goodwill, was generally responsive to Canadian interests and concerns. India, acutely aware of its increasing power and influence on the international scene, presented a much more formidable challenge in terms of promoting one's national interests.

Indo-Pakistani relations continue to be a minefield which one must tread warily and with great discretion. Volatility is a constant and as has been said before, the only predictable thing is the unpredictable. Yet I left India fundamentally optimistic in terms of the future. The leadership on both sides is highly rational and conscious of the desirability of détente and the benefits it can bring.

As for the dominant personal impression after five years in India and Pakistan: If color, excitement and variety are the spice of a diplomat's life, then the subcontinent must be as close to paradise as one can get. □