Underscoring Peace ‘as’ Hospitality in Indo-Pak Relations:
Toward Alternatives of Conflict Resolution in South Asia

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ABSTRACT Our paper investigates present-day Indo-Pak problems in the context of Jacques Derrida’s idea of hospitality that helps analyze conventional issues of international relations in an unconventional manner. Derrida’s hospitality theory contends that any kind of interaction, to be ontologically meaningful, has to be underpinned by a spectrality that requires the guest, the host and hospitality. The purpose of our paper is better highlighted if we consider the recent ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir unilaterally declared by India, and developments that have followed India’s decision that this ceasefire would be effective, pending review, till 26 January 2001 (if not further). But India as the host would also like Pakistan as the guest to hospitably reciprocate this dialog and not miss the second diplomatic bus. The first such diplomatic bus was missed by Pakistan due to its “alleged” involvement in Kargil, an unofficial Indo-Pak military engagement that had failed to either coordinate or even defer the uncoordinated otherness(es) of the signifiers involved in India and Pakistan.

The objective(s) of our paper would be further clarified if we consider the recent ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir unilaterally declared by India, and developments that have followed India’s decision that this ceasefire would be effective, pending review, till 26 January 2001 (if not further). But India as the host would also like Pakistan as the guest to hospitably reciprocate this dialog and not miss the second diplomatic bus. The first such diplomatic bus was missed by Pakistan due to its “alleged” involvement in Kargil, an unofficial Indo-Pak military engagement that had failed to either coordinate or even defer the uncoordinated otherness(es) of the signifiers involved in India and Pakistan.

Horatio. If there be any good thing to be done, that may to thee do ease and grace to me, speak to me. If thou art privy to thy country’s fate, which happily foreknowing may avoid, O, speak! Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life extorted treasure in the womb of the earth, for which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death, speak of it. Stay, and speak.

Our paper interrogates present-day Indo-Pak problems in the context of Jacques Derrida’s notion of hospitality (Maiti and Chattopadhyay, 1997-98; Maiti, 1999a) that may be employed to understand traditional concerns of international relations in an unorthodox, post-postmodern manner. Derrida’s hospitality critique argues that any kind of interface, in order to be ontologically relevant, has to be essentially informed by a necessitating spectrality that would ordinarily require two principal actors and a mutuality, i.e. the guest and the host and hospitality.

The Guest and the Host

We would do well to keep in mind that hospitality as a rather ‘dynamic’ organon is not just limited to the specifics of the host but depends equally on the guest, too. The guest is the unknown specter, the “ghost”, who has to be effectively accommodated by the host. This hospitality is to be accorded entirely on the terms of the guest and not otherwise.

So the exercise of hospitality is all about openness and free play of the signer terms of discourse as well as their signified sets of meanings, associative cues/linkages, symbols and the like. There is an aspect of “mystery” and suddenness about the guest that can be irksome and even a bit disquieting, but such organic specifics (of this most fascinating relationship) have to be set aside by the host to piece together a (working) symbiosis.

The next logical enquiry may be posed in the following manner: but why does the host at all go out of his/her way to cohere an ensemble of mutuality with the guest? The explanation lies in the fact that there are possibilities the host would be able, at some point or the other, to benefit in
ways more than one from this relationship. This is not to suggest, however, that benefits are unilateral so far as hospitality is concerned. Moreover, we would not be able to talk in terms of moves and countermoves in the spectral domain of hospitality simply because the latter is all about a different reality comprising altogether different terms of discourse that are rather (skewed and) incongruous in the domain of international diplomacy.

**Our Preoccupations and Provocations**

Hospitality is nearly all about accepting the otherness of the other and providing openness to others. This simply means that the "other" is an unknown actor who has to be entirely accommodated on his/her own terms of discourse. The host cannot afford to control the sovereignty or the regime of "otherness" of the other. This would in its turn tend to ensure an equity of sorts between the guest and the host. This equity is efficacious in sustaining networks of trust (Maiti, 1999b) between these actors that ultimately tend to facilitate better international understanding.

A period of (flexibility and) relaxation of tension can be noticed whenever the host country accepts the otherness of the other country. This means that the two countries are now engaged in a "tensile" diplomacy that can creatively test the possible limits/stretch of endurance without, however, jeopardizing the prospects of a meaningful relationship in the future. Providing openness to the other, it follows, would indicate an exercise in the free play of associations and possibilities that can be obtained during the passage of building up such a relationship of hospitality. This openness is a (dialogic/interactive) space that may be effectively shared between the guest and the host.

Present-day telecommunications and information technology have reduced human civilization to a global village. Citizens and the State have now been redefined as netizens and the cyberspace (that is without any techno-legal precincts whatsoever) that are really notions of hospitality when "dynamically" interpreted. The worldwide web/"www" that generally introduces a netizen to an Internet website can be regarded as the host that actively - and in an innovative manner - accommodates the unknown "spectral" (guest = ghost?) browser without any preordained structure of control(s). Hospitality, it would appear in Derrida's worldview, is nearly all about such flexible spaces and welcoming fuzzy/inchoate realities. ²

**Idea of "Difference"**

Hospitality as a methodological construct is a derivative of Derrida's original technique of deconstruction that deals with - among other related issues - the uncoordinated conflict(s) that arise among the signified meanings of a given signifier word. It is almost a "carnival" where one is bereft of any fixed patterns/preconceived notions among a babel of other voices. As if suddenly one has been transported to a fairy tale, make believe world that is without the frontiers of learned and/or shared experience.

A carnival is essential for any possibility of hospitality, especially the bilateral kind that has to be imaginatively inlaid into the structure of Indo-Pak relations. Many voices are to be encouraged in the course of diplomacy, and the text of Indo-Pak bilateralism has to be approached like a readerly text open to many interpretations/heuristic analyses. This suggests that not one official but many other civil societal voices (being raised from the civic spaces of India, Pakistan and elsewhere) have to be accommodated within a different regime of Indo-Pak relations.

From differences in etymology to differences in the "other", the range of deconstruction is disquietingly vast and undefined. So when we try to problematize hospitality as a notion inspired by deconstruction in general and difference in particular, we have to also examine and "reinterpret" the other in an enabling manner to piece together some (working) rationale that justifies this difficult analytical exercise. Difference exists between reality and virtuality in the domain of technology as well as between corporeality and spectrality in the domain of hospitality. This is the creative space of flux and/or indeterministic chaos that opens up an entire range of (fluid) possibilities without which no regime of discourse can perhaps be either structured or sustained in today's postmodern reality.

This suggests that there can be more than one reality in the context of a given discourse. And if this discourse happens to be one informed
by hospitality then it would be somewhat plausibly to extrapolate that a given host may have to encounter plural guests and thus engage his/her hospitality in multiple avatars. So difference is the logic force that stimulates the dialog of hospitality. Without difference there can be no other, and without the essential other there cannot be any guest (in the event of whose absence there can be no hospitality in absolute terms). We have established, therefore, that difference is an imperative to the very possibility of hospitality.

This has to be kept in mind when we try to read hospitality into Indo-Pak relations because the basic terms of reference/discourse of these politics are so “different”. They are the central “other” vis-à-vis one another. India has tried to remain a “secular” (Smith, 1967; Maiti, 1998) parliamentary democracy while Pakistan has generally witnessed Army rule - punctuated by short-lived democratic interludes - informed by the triumvirate of power comprising the military, the bureaucracy and the clergy.\textsuperscript{7}

So the language and compulsions of politics in India and Pakistan differ to the alarming extent that they do not really tend to follow each other’s idiom. Moreover, Kashmir as a “flashpoint” has posed a problem that can (notionally, at least) only be mediated by playing out a zero-sum game. Such a possibility contains threat perceptions for South Asian security in terms of nuclear warfare and a disturbance in the structure of most delicate regional power balance. We find that India’s immediate neighborhood is more or less typified by an order of governance that is incongruous to the Indian tradition of rule. Such a situation is untenable for India’s domestic as well as foreign affairs. The country has to encounter Pak-aided subversion within and Pak-engineered propaganda without.

The fact that India and Pakistan have repeatedly gone to war (both officially and unofficially) - coupled with a section of the international community’s general perception of Pakistan as a rogue State with nuclear capability - can seriously disrupt the incipient bases of any creative guest-host interface between the neighbors. However, this enterprise ought to be sustained and even “justified” at the diplomatic level(s) for the sake of a longue durée view of history. This is in spite of Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis regarding the so-called “clash of civilizations” (Huntington, 1996; Mitra, 1999) and Immanuel Wallerstein’s premonition that the twenty first century would witness growing religious fundamentalism across the globe (Wallerstein, 1990; Maiti, 1997).\textsuperscript{8}

But Pakistan really has no reason to bask in the security of a make believe Islamic Brotherhood that has so far not been noticed in Chechnya, Iraq or Libya. Moreover (provided it ever was), the Islamic world is no more a monolithic affair; this contention has been vindicated by the nature of the recent change of guard in Iran (February 2000). It can be suggested, therefore, that the “dynamic” notion of world citizenship is imperative in order to contemnorize hospitality in international relations. What is required today are not regional (Fukuyama, 1998)\textsuperscript{9}/global or strategic/military alliances but international institutions\textsuperscript{10}/platforms like the World Trade Organization where countries can come together and structure a meaningful dialogue.

Internationality and Hospitality

It follows from the above that there cannot really be any effective internationality without hospitality and vice versa. Any situation of hospitality has to be informed by an essential element of surprise without which the very imperatives of hospitality are discouraged. For the host has to accommodate the guest in a creative manner in the event of the latter’s sudden and most unexpected arrival. The guest can arrive physically, electronically/electrically or even virtually. Whatever the case may be, the host has to exercise originality of vision in his/her hospitality.

This element of surprise is the compulsion of hospitality. The guest has a stranger identity, and this outsider has to be attended by the host. This is not to suggest, however, that the host can also appropriate the guest. That would indeed subvert hospitality in absolute terms. Moreover, while hospitality in real terms cannot be tied down by any condition(s), the guest (in order to sustain a “viable” interface of symbiosis/mutuality) has to always keep in mind the host’s ground realities. Whatever happened at Kargil (1999) can be described in this context as an element of surprise, but Pakistan (as the guest) has
to also keep in mind India's ground realities, and should not, therefore, disturb the very bases of hospitality.

But politics is more about the "is" rather than the "should". We would perhaps do well in this connection to treat the subject of capital as specter in the wider context of the spectrality of liberalization: one cannot doubt for an instance that capital can be treated as a specter in today's "postmodern"/unipolar (Ray, 1996a)11 world of liberalization, privatization and globalisation. Here capital arrives and leaves at will just like a specter. Consider whatever had happened in South East Asia in the late 1990s (Fukuyama, 1998). David Williams reminds us (in a somewhat related context) that recent changes in the aid policies of developing countries, especially the emergence of a concern with democracy, human rights, and "good governance", is best understood as a return to pre-World War Two patterns in the relationship between the West and others. The imperatives of state sovereignty are being increasingly overridden by the drive to make others in the West's own image. This drive characterised colonialism and, arguably, all encounters between the West and others since the discovery of America.12

So it is rather imperative that India and Pakistan, in order to build up a nascent hospitality of sorts, "should" invite the specter of capital in South Asia and should treat it like a common guest to be accommodated almost entirely on its own terms. This can begin by according each other the "Most Favored Nation" status in a manner that makes sense. The neighbors can very well do without a lot of ceremony or decorum in bilateral relations, and can seriously work toward a symbiosis that would be mutually beneficial. If successfully implemented, this would be the case of a three-fold hospitality: regional/ global capital vis-à-vis India and Pakistan; Indian capital vis-à-vis Pakistan's market and vice versa.

We have to also keep in mind that such hospitality would have to be eventually worked out against the background of the spectrality of liberalization. This spectrality is all about an emergent, yet-to-be-defined space of action (and con-templation) that is defined by seemingly endless possibilities. Indo-Pak hospitality would not only involve mere financial capital but has to also pre-occupy itself with cohering a regime of both political13 and social capital in South Asia [Price, 1996; Mitra and Rothermund (eds), 1997]. Management of internal affairs in an effective manner would ensure "good" governance; this is, however, absent in varying degrees in both India and Pakistan. While India has to primarily face subversion from within and insurgency from without, Pakistan is up against ethnic tension, civil societal violence and corruption, economic instability and political uncertainty (among other complications).

These problems actually arise from the "original sin" of a flawed14 approach to nation building and identity formation. India was a State-nation in 1947 while Pakistan happened to be "prosthetic" system of politics that was based upon the "false" consciousness15 of Islam (as ultimately proved in 1971). But preciously nothing much was done to employ State sponsorship in the domain of the civil society in order to imaginatively16 "recreate" an Indianness or a Pakistani identity.

We already know that the problem of governance has been a recurrent theme in Indian as well as Pakistani internal politics after Independence (1947). This is so very typical of a postcolonial democracy (Ray, 1989, 1996b) in the Third World [Kohli (ed.), 1986; Manor (ed.), 1991]. We can also cite Hamza Alavi’s analysis of the "overdeveloped" State in Pakistan where State building had outreach nation building to underscore the problem:

It might be said that the "superstructure" in the colony is therefore "over-developed" in relation to the "structure" in the colony, for its basis lies in the metropoli-tan structure itself, from which it is later separated at the time of independence . . . The post-colonial society inherits that overdeveloped apparatus of state and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled.17

Nation building and decolonization have remained as problems for the Third World. Problems of governance are organically linked with
these problems. Problems of rule are also linked with larger problems of the nation, the State, institutions, multiple loyalties and identities.

"Other" Issues

The issue of human rights in Indo-Pak relations tends to acquire especial significance. Other (related) issues of legitimacy (as hospitality), diplomacy/foreign policy, international law and bilateralism have to be also interrogated within our given framework of hospitality. Indo-Pak hospitality has to be bilaterally institutionalized without outside facilitation, i.e. only the "able" bases of guest-host interface and nothing else should (ideally) inform the security environment in this part of South Asia. We cannot possibly make hospitality coterminous with any ghost/stranger/outsider intervention. But there can always be "nuances" in hospitality structured by reconciliation, resistance, affiliation and complicity as strategies.18

These are, however, underpinned by the imperatives of globalization discussed elsewhere in this paper. It has been observed that (Manor, 1991: 8-9) "In recent years, many Western aid and development agencies have increasingly emphasised the need to promote 'good government' in their programmes . . . Many scholars . . . regard 'good government' agendas and the conditionality that goes with them as an example of latter day imperialism. Many also worry that some of these agendas entail considerable hypocrisy on the part of Western funders . . . The contents of some 'good government' agendas are rather curious. Some place enormous stress on the need for market forces to predominate, which is not everyone's idea of 'good government'. Some mix that emphasis and pressure to enact structural adjustment programmes with pressure for democratization, decentralization, respect for human rights, legal reform, poverty alleviation, transparency and accountability. There is a degree of dissonance between some of these varied elements . . . Capitalism requires the existence of state institutions, no matter how many free marketers loosely claim that what it most needs is the disappearance of government. As economic liberalization proceeds, there is a greater need for contract law and for judicial and executive institutions to ensure that it actually makes an impact."

Can India and Pakistan Dialog Hospitably?

Il n'y a pas de hors-texte (there is nothing outside the text) . . .

Jacques Derrida.

It is apparent (even after President Bill Clinton's tour of the subcontinent in March 2000) that India and Pakistan can never veer around to any sort of hospitality without having played out a comprehensive zero-sum game in Kashmir in the form of a full-fledged war, conventional or otherwise. This would suggest that hospitality and game theory are compatible notions; but this is a fallacy as hospitality cannot really conceive of any move or countermove between the guest and the host.

Pakistan claims Kashmir to be its own legitimate concern that ought to be informed by multilateral "facilitation" while India has traditionally maintained that Kashmir is an integral part of its own sovereign territory, and that only a bilateral discourse would be allowed to sort out any tension therein. India does not officially recognize that there is any problem of disintegration in Kashmir despite all the violence and insurgency. All that India admits has to do with transborder terrorism and subversion as threat perceptions to its own internal security; this has arguably led to excesses and human rights violation in Kashmir. Such a "problematic" policy stance has been further aggravated by the geopolitical ambitions of Pakistan, an actor who has projected itself as a ghost rather than a guest in the framework of mutual hospitality.

The discourse of Indo-Pak hospitality does not appear to be a viable proposition on the threshold of a new millennium. But this is not to suggest that hospitality as a symbiotic exercise is without any future at all in the subcontinent. It is the specter that has to be properly accommodated and contemporized within the intrinsic context of bilateral relations and, that too, on its very own terms.

One cannot possibly dictate the course or logic of hospitality because it is an interface that has got quite fuzzy and inchoate parameters associated with its dynamics. Hospitality in the subcontinent has a lot of possibilities in today's
global reality of democratic agenda and "good"
governance – these have to be actively utilized
as so many strategies within the structure of Indo-
Pak bilateralism. Both India and Pakistan as the
guest as well as the host have certain real life
accountability – they are accountable to one
another and even to the greater concerns of
development and peace in the subcontinent.

NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark
   (1603-04). Act I, Scene 1. Jacques Derrida has
   employed a passage from this play (Act I, Scene
   5) in "Spectres of Marx" (from Derrida’s lecture
   series, Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt,
   the Work of Mourning, and the New International;
   tr. Peggy Kamuf), New Left Review, May-June
   1994, p. 31, and further wonders: “Then, if the
   spectre is always animated by a spirit, one won-
ders who would dare to speak of a spirit of Marx,
or more serious still, of a spirit of Marxism. Not
only in order to predict a future for them today,
but to appeal even to their multiplicity, or more
serious still, to their heterogeneity . . . What mani-
фests itself in the first place is a spectre, this first
paternal character, as powerful as it is unreal, a
hallucination or a simulacrum that is virtually
more actual than what is so blithely called a liv-
ing presence . . . . Haunting belongs to the struc-
ture of every hegemony . . . If there is something
like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this
reassuring order of presents and, especially, the
border between the present, the actual or present
reality of the present, and everything that can be
opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effect-
vity, inactuality, virtuality, or even simulacrum
in general, and so forth. There is first of all the
doubtful contemporaneity of the present to it-
self. Before knowing whether one can differenti-
ate between the spectre of the past and the spe-
tre of the future, of the past present and the
future present, one must perhaps ask oneself
whether the spectrality effect does not consist in
undoing this opposition, or even this dialectic,
between actual, effective presence and its other . . .
If we have been insisting so much since the
beginning on the logic of the ghost, it is because it
points toward a thinking of the event that neces-
sarily exceeds a binary or dialectical logic, the
logic that distinguishes or opposes effectivity or
actuality (either present, empirical, living – or
not) and ideality (regulating or absolute non-pres-
ence). This logic of effectivity or actuality seems
to be of a limited pertinence” (pp. 31, 32, 34, 36
and 45-46). Derrida’s rejoinder critiques Francis
Fukuyama’s “controversial” The End of History
and The Last Man (New York: The Free Press,
Interest, Summer 1989).

2. As a logical corollary, can democracy - when
treated as a dialogic space - be organically re-
lated to Mikhail Bakhtin’s (linguistic) notions of
polyphony / heteroglossia or even Derrida’s idea
of hospitality?

3. Cf. Norman Birnbaum, Toward a Critical Sociol-
Birnbaum writes that “Some of us still seek to
make sense of the modern tradition, others ask if
anything at all remains of bourgeois culture, yet
others suppose that a new culture must await a
new politics” (p. 361). Birnbaum here addresses
Theodore Roszak’s The Making of a Counter-
Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society
and Its Youthful Opposition (New York: Garden
City, 1969).

4. As a trope of modern literary criticism (inspired
by Bakhtin).

5. Indicative of a poststructural reality where the
hegemon author is dead, facilitating the sover-
eignty of the reader/interpreter in the context of a
one-to-one interface.

6. Cf. Craig Calhoun, ‘Social Theory and the Public
Sphere’, in Bryan S. Turner (ed), A Companion
to Social Theory (Oxford / Malden, Massachu-
setts: Blackwell, 1997), Part 5, Ch. 15, p. 459:
“The public sphere, (Hans-Jürgen) Habermas tells
us, is created in and out of civil society. The
public sphere is not absorbed into the state, thus,
but addresses the state and the sorts of public
issues on which state policy might bear.”

7. See Hamza Alavi, ‘The State in Post-Colonial
Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh’, New Left
Review, No. 74 (July-August 1972) (reprinted in
Harry Goulbourne (ed), Politics and State in the
Third World (London: Macmillan, 1979)). Alavi
writes about “the dominant position of the bu-
reaucratic-military oligarchy in the (Pakistani)
state; it has been in effective command of state
power . . . from the inception of the new state”
(p. 45). Also see M.J. Akbar, India: The Siege
Within (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin,
8 Wallerstein’s paper is a rejoinder to Roy Boyne’s “Culture and the World System” [which, in turn, is a critique of Wallerstein’s ‘Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System’ in a Theory, Culture and Society special issue (Sage: London / Newbury Park, 1990), Vol. 7] in Theory, Culture and Society (1990), pp. 57-62.


10 “The general problem of bargaining raises specific issues about how institutions affect international negotiations, which always involve a mixture of discord and potential cooperation . . . . Even as scholars pursue these areas of inquiry, they are in danger of overlooking a major normative issue: the “democratic deficit” that exists in many of the world’s most important international institutions . . . . As we continue to think about the normative implications of globalization, we should focus simultaneously on the maintenance of robust democratic institutions at home, the establishment of formal structures of international delegation, and the role of transnational networks. To be effective in the twenty-first century, modern democracy requires international institutions. And to be consistent with democratic values, these institutions must be accountable to domestic civil society. Combining global governance with effective democratic accountability will be a major challenge for scholars and policymakers alike in the years ahead.” See Robert O. Keohane, “International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?” Foreign Policy, Spring 1998, pp. 89, 91 and 94.

11 However, Huntington would ordinarily argue that the new international (world) order resembles a uni-multipolar model.


13 A “high” stock of political capital would indicate a corresponding degree of political viability in both domestic governance as well as foreign affairs.


15 Cf. Georg Lukács (History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, 1928; orig. 1923). N.D. Batra writes that “Pakistan is a Muslim homeland without history, a Muslim nation without Islamic heritage. There is a terrible sense of emptiness in Pakistan.” See Batra’s Cyber Age in The Statesman (Calcutta/New Delhi), 20 March 2000, p. 9.


18 “Much of what goes on in world politics revolves around interactions between governments – two or more states trying to gauge the rationales behind the other’s actions and anticipate its next moves. Here, the critical issue is how leaders assess the intentions and attitudes of their foreign counterparts. Are these assessments derived from personal interactions with the leaders of the other state, are they filtered through other peoples’ lenses, or are they hunches and guesses based on the past behavior of that state, a shared identity, or national interests? Leaders tend to extrapolate from their own perspectives in solving problems when they have had little or no contact with their counterparts on the other side. But even with contact, a decision unit led by a crusading leader, for example, will see what that leader wants to see . . . . Adding to that complexity is the realization that leaders must not only engage in this two-level game of balancing their own perceived domestic and international pressures, but must simultaneously try to comprehend the nature of the balancing act in which their counterparts are engaged.” See Margaret G. Hermann and Joe D. Hagan, “International Decision Making: Leadership
Matters," Foreign Policy, Spring 1998, pp. 133-134.

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