

CVOTER

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OVER 80% OF RESPONDENTS TO A CVOTER SURVEY FAVOUR INDO-PAK TALKS. MORE THAN THREE QUARTER SAY PAK'S TERROR POLICY AGAINST INDIA IS THE ONLY REASON FOR CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

INDO-PAK TALKS IN THIMPU SAARC SUMMIT



DO YOU KNOW THAT PMs OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN MET IN THE RECENTLY HELD SAARC SUMMIT AT THIMPU, BHUTAN?

Can't Say	3
Definitely yes	26
Yes, although	
I have heard about it,	
don't know the details	27
No, not at all	45
Total	100

The legacy of partition has been a bitter one. While Pakistan may be its twin, separated at birth, for India, the country created as a religious homeland for the subcontinent's muslims on a sharply different premise from a "secular", THOUGH Hindu-majority India has been its worst enemy. Common people across the border may share much in common, including their culture, cuisine, language and the warmth that marks out an Indian or Pakistani in a foreign land, but politically, the two countries have been at loggerheads ever since their creations.

26/11 or the horrific attack on Mumbai, for instance, parallel to 9/11 in its scale and audacity, was planned on Pakistani soil and executed by Pakistani-origin militants. This has been India's consistent stance, with Kasab, the lone gunman captured alive from the attack, just having been sentenced to death by a court in Mumbai. Parallel to this, India has been asking for access to interrogate David Headley, allegedly one of the masterminds of the attack, who lived in Mumbai in the months immediately preceding the attacks and recced several targets across the country, who was captured in the US some time ago.

With India alleging the role of Pakistan, or at least some rogue elements in that country, in the attacks and asking the neighbouring government to take strict action against those responsible as a pre-condition to any diplomatic ties between the two nuclear states, Indo-Pak ties had reached an all time low after 26/11.

Recently, however, there was some thaw at Thimpu, when Dr Manmohan Singh and Yousuf Raza Gilani, the prime minister of Pakistan, met each other at the sidelines of the South Asian Association for Regional Corporation (SAARC) summit in Bhutan. The two reportedly had a "good meeting" and Dr Singh agreed to begin talks with Pakistan that were suspended after the Mumbai attacks. In return, he got an assurance from Gilani that Pakistan would act against the sources of anti India terrorism.

While, cynics point to the futility of this whole exercise predicting that the talks will break down once again once the next batch of terror attacks arrives, others decried the move saying that India has shown itself to be a "soft state" once again by giving in to Pakistan's demands without having seen any action by it on bringing the perpetrators of the Mumbai attack to justice. Then, there are still others who question the prudence on any dialogue with Pakistan at all, when it is not clear whether the government there has any clout never mind will to stop terrorism against India.

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INDIA AND PAKISTAN CAN NEVER BE GOOD FRIENDS.

Can't Say	8
Yes	48
No	44
Total	100

PAKISTAN'S TERROR POLICY IS THE ONLY REASON BEHIND INDO-PAK TUSSE.

Can't Say	11
Yes	76
No	13
Total	100

REGULAR TALKS SHOULD BE ARRANGED BETWEEN AUTHORITIES OF BOTH THE NATION TO RESOLVE THE GRUDGES.

Can't Say	6
Yes	82
No	12
Total	100

On the other hand, those supporting Dr Singh's stance point out to the prime minister's larger vision, wherein he believes that peace with Pakistan, however impossible, is a necessity for India if it has to have a larger role in global economics and politics.

A recent CVOTER survey seems to support the Prime Minister's stance, with over 80 per cent of respondents coming out in support of talks with Pakistan. A huge number, 82 per cent of the people who were surveyed responded that they believed that there should be regular talks between the authorities of the two countries to resolve their respective grudges.

At the same time, more than three quarters of the respondents (76 per cent) felt that Pakistan's terror policy was the only reason behind the India Pakistan conflict. This unequivocally stresses what has emerged a regrettable global reality that the Pakistani soil and state is being used to breed terror and firmly shuts the door on Pakistani propaganda on Kashmir being the cause of tension between the two states. As a corollary to this perhaps, 77 per cent of respondents felt that Pakistan "is the father of terrorism".

Awareness on the Thimpu thaw, on the other hand, was relatively low: Only 26 per cent of respondents "definitely knew" that the prime ministers of the two countries had met recently. However, a further 27 per cent replied that "yes, I have heard but do not know the details".

The developments may be low key in one sense unlike the hullabulloo that marked talks at the time of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, however a majority of people seem convinced that the divide is only political. When asked to comment on: "Whatever be the situation at the government or administrative level, the common people (of the two countries) are united," a majority of 74 per cent of the respondents replied "yes".

It is also interesting to see in the light of this response the answers of the people when asked whether they believed that India and Pakistan could never be friends. While 48 per cent replied in the affirmative – that they believed the two countries could never be "good friends", almost an equal number (44 per cent) replied in the negative and 8 per cent said "don't know".

Clearly, when it comes to people-to-people ties, there is hope yet. And therein lies the hope for peace! Late Benazir Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, had once stirred controversy by observing: "There is a little bit of Indian in every Pakistani and a little bit of Pakistani in every Indian." But controversies apart, people-to-people ties and a decisive boost in cultural exchanges is perhaps the only way that India and Pakistan can bury the hatchet and move ahead to resolve more pressing problems in their respective economies like poverty and unemployment.



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AN OVERWHELMING 80% OF RESPONDENTS IN A CVOTER SURVEY FEEL THAT CORRUPTION IN THE ARMED FORCES HAS RESULTED IN A RISE IN TERRORIST AND NAXAL VIOLENCE

A MATTER OF HONOUR... & INDIA'S SECURITY



DO YOU THINK THAT CORRUPTION IS ON THE RISE IN ARMED FORCES?

Can't Say	13
Definitely Yes	44
Yes, but the situation is under control	28
No, not at all	16
Total	100

RECENT NEWS ABOUT INVOLVEMENT OF SENIOR ARMED FORCES OFFICIALS IN LAND SCAM AND CRPF MEN SELLING ARMS AND AMMUNITION TO NAXALITES HAVE GIVEN A JOLT TO THE HIGHLY RESPECTED IMAGE OF THE ARMED FORCES.

Can't Say	13
Fully agree	60
Agree	13
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	6
Fully disagree	8
Total	100

As a democracy, one of India's biggest achievements surely has been the fact that its army has remained firmly an instrument of the state not the ruler for the state subverting the legislature, as we have seen in our immediate neighbourhood, post Partition.

In the years since the creation of the Indian republic, the Indian Army has been looked up to by the people of this country not just for its might but also as an upholder of moral and ethical values. The disciplined life of an armyman is the stuff of legends and unlike the image of the police, another instrument of the state but widely perceived to be ineffectual or corrupt or both, the army's reputation has been untarnished. Both the man on the street, as well as Bollywood, that reflector of society at large and its mores, have celebrated the chivalry and honour inherently associated with our men (*and women*) in uniform. But alas, it is an image that seems to be finally getting tarnished. In the last few years, allegations of scams, financial (*not to mention sexual*) misconduct levied against some of the most senior army men in the country have seriously stained the Indian Army's spotless reputation.

The recent Sukna land scam, for instance, where a section of the Army's top brass was embroiled can be seen as a blot on the reputation of the armed forces, serious also because of the security implications that such financial irregularities involve. As many as three lieutenant generals (*including military secretary and aide to the army chief Deepak Kapoor Lt General Avadhesh Prakash*) and one major general were found culpable by an army court of inquiry. The case involves issuing of a no-objection certificate (NOC) to a realtor, who falsely claimed to be an affiliate of Mayo College, for setting up a school on private land adjacent to the Sukna military station in Darjeeling district.

Among the issues that need to be determined are whether rules and procedures were bent in granting the NOC and if there were security implications in doing so, given the area's proximity to the border. Apart from the moral and economic implications, corruption in the armed forces has an obvious bearing on security and the only way to check this may be to have a zero tolerance policy.



LOW PAY ALLOWANCE AND HARSH WORK CONDITIONS FORCE ARMED FORCES TO BE CORRUPT.

Can't Say	10
Yes	64
No	26
Total	100

ARMED FORCES, EVEN TODAY ARE THE MOST RESPECTED JOB.

Can't Say	3
Yes	84
No	13
Total	100

ON THE WHOLE WHOM DO YOU HOLD RESPONSIBLE FOR CORRUPTION INCIDENTS IN ARMED FORCES?

Can't Say	8
Corrupt system	14
Harsh working conditions	16
Government	1
Social pressure and increasing competition	6
Greed for money	34
All of the above	18
Others Specify...	2
Total	100

HUNGER FOR QUICK MONEY IS THE MAIN REASON BEHIND THE CORRUPTION IN ARMED FORCES.

Can't Say	9
Yes	72
No	19
Total	100

Unfortunately, in the Sukna case, the army's image seems to have been further dented by the perceived reluctance of the top bosses to take sterner action against their errant colleagues. Army Chief, General Deepak Kapoor, for instance, was widely seen as reluctant to act firmly against his aide Lt. General Avadhesh Prakash, despite the army Court of Inquiry (CoI) reportedly citing prima facie evidence to the effect that Lt. General Prakash was the key figure in the case. General Kapoor was in favour of milder administrative action rather than a court martial but changed his stance upon the intervention of Defence Minister AK Anthony, who "advised" that the case should be dealt with sternly that apparently persuaded the Army chief to court martial Lt. General Prakash.

While the Sukna case grabbed headlines in the first few months of the year, most recently it was another shocking case where two CRPF constables were found supplying naxals with arms that has led to further eyebrows being raised. While the CRPF is not the regular Indian army, it is nonetheless involved in sensitive tasks related to the country's internal security, including fighting off the naxal threat. Ironically, the CRPF men who were brutally massacred at Dantewada may have been killed by the same arms supplied by their unscrupulous colleagues to the naxals. Naturally, such financial irregularity is not merely a case of "corruption", something that we in India have learnt to live with in our day to day lives so pervasive is it in our society. Instead, with the country's very security at stake, the need is for much sterner action that we may have seen before in such cases.

A recent CVOTER survey found that a majority of Indians were worried about the security implications of corruption in the armed forces and attributed the rise in terrorist and naxal violence within the country to corruption in the armed forces. An overwhelming 80 per cent of respondents replied in the affirmative when asked whether they felt that corruption in the armed forces was responsible for the rise in incidents of terrorism and naxal violence.

When asked whether corruption was on the rise in the armed forces, a majority of 44% replied in the affirmative while a further 28% said yes, but suffixed this with the perception that "it was under control". Thus, nearly three fourth of the respondents (72%) actually felt that there was a rise in corruption in the army, pointing to the fact that the earlier spotless image of the defence forces was tarnished in the common man's eye. That the recent cases such as the Sukna land scam and the incident of CRPF men supplying arms to the naxals had given a severe jolt to the respected image of the army was further underlined by the fact that while 60% of the respondents "fully agreed" with this suggestion, a further 13% "agreed", making this an unequivocal majority of 73%. So, what are the reasons behind this rise in corruption? When asked who or what they felt was "over all" responsible for this situation, many respondents blamed external factors such as a corrupt system (14%) and harsh working conditions (16%) as well as the government (*only an insignificant 1 per cent thought that*) but a majority of 34% thought that it was plain and simple greed for money.

Following up on these suggestions, when the surveyors further probed the respondents and asked whether it was "hunger for quick money" that was responsible, a huge majority of 72% replied in the affirmative, signalling the harsh social reality of 21st century India where huge disparities in wealth are being blamed for many of our ills. To whether the rise in corruption was due to poor pay and harsh working conditions, nearly a two third majority (64%) replied in the affirmative, taking a rather lenient view of the compromising actions of some of the senior most officers in the land. This perhaps is linked to the fact that the Army has always been widely seen to be an honourable institution, above reproach, regardless of its black sheep. In an linked question as to whether being in the armed forces was still considered the most respected of jobs in the country, a mammoth majority of 84% replied "yes". It's an image that the armed forces must take as an honour and uphold it.

81% OF RESPONDENTS IN A CVOTER SURVEY ARE AGAINST THE CONCEPT OF “HONOUR KILLINGS” FOR COUPLES MARRYING OUT OF CASTE 57% WANT CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE PERPETRATORS OF SUCH CRIMES

NO HONOUR IN KILLINGS...



DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SUCCESS OF INTERCASTE MARRIAGES?

Can't Say	5
Definitely Yes	39
Yes, but I'm a bit skeptical about it	20
No, not at all	36
Total	100

HONOUR KILLING IN THE NAME OF SAVING SANCTITY AND PRIDE OF CASTE IS JUSTIFIED.

Can't Say	3
Completely Agree	11
Agree	2
Neither Agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	13
Completely Disagree	68
Total	100

As part of India, the economic superpower of the world, middle-class Indians can claim to be proud global citizens: English-speaking, well-educated, high achievers when it comes to academics or entrepreneurial merit. Beneath the veneer of stupendous economic achievement, have we, the global Indians, “progressed” beyond our medieval selves? That’s a question that begs to be answered as we ponder over the increasingly disturbing phenomenon of “honour killings” in a society that may have acquired the superficial trappings of middle-class affluence but is at heart getting more and more regressive. The big question, of course, remains what exactly is “progress”.

Till just a few years ago, honour killings was a concept that middle-class Indians may have associated with the grim, fundamentalist Islamic world or with villages of rural India, particularly in Punjab and Haryana, notorious for their skewed sex ratios. Alas, it is not so easy to be blind to this reality today as it comes to haunt us right in our midst. The recent, alleged, honour killing of Nirupama Pathak, a journalist from Jharkhand, who dared to fall in love with a man of another (lower) caste, has sent shock waves amongst the urban elite. What is often dismissed as a mere rural, or regressive, medieval phenomenon struck close to home shaking up middle India. Here, after all, was an independent, working girl belonging to an educated family, certainly no country bumpkin. And if she didn't have a right to choose her own partner or to exercise her free will in democratic, free India who did?

Arranged marriages are, of course, very much a part of Indian society. And despite increased westernization and globalization, they are thriving as a social institution, even in the age of the Internet. The younger generation, comfortable in their Prada and Pepe, open to dating and more, still turns to family elders when it comes to the question of marriage. These are the images that bombard us even in our films and ads: A young, stylish girl driving a car with both her parents ultimately gives in to the prospect of an NRI groom arranged for her; albeit because of some tempting jewellery! There are other such subliminal messages we are bombarded with everyday, reinforcing status quo. At heart, we remain a conservative people. While younger people may opt for arranged marriages out of convenience, it becomes more problematic when one solitary individual dares defy this kind of an essentially patriarchal set up. In Haryana, a state caught at the crossroads of quick prosperity and medieval mindsets, we increasingly have instances of the khap panchayats,



IT'S BETTER TO MARRY YOUR LOVE, THAN GETTING MARRIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOCIAL NORMS AND HAVING AN EXTRA MARITAL AFFAIR.

Can't Say	6
Yes	84
No	10
Total	100

GOVERNMENT SHOULD COME UP WITH SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR PROTECTION OF PEOPLE GOING IN FOR INTERCASTE MARRIAGE.

Can't Say	5
Yes	83
No	12
Total	100

THERE SHOULD BE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR PEOPLE INVOLVED IN HONOUR KILLING.

Can't Say	9
Yes	57
No	34
Total	100

extra constitutional, illegitimate power centres, who hound, and worse, kill couples for marrying within the same gotra. Often, as media reports have found out, this is merely an excuse to prevent people from getting into "love marriages", and reaffirm patriarchal power. On the other hand, we also have honour killings of women daring to transcend boundaries by marrying out of caste.

On the face of it, Nirupama Pathak's has been exactly one such case. Found dead at her native place at Chitra Gupta Nagar, Jhumri Tilaiya, on April 29, the journalist was about 10 weeks pregnant. According to her boyfriend, also a fellow journalist, the couple had prepared for a wedding without the consent of the girl's parents when she was called back home, ostensibly because her mother was seriously ill. Ironically, it is her mother who is today suspected of having smothered Nirupama to death though the family initially claimed to have found her hanging from the ceiling of her room. Her family opposed the alliance, incidentally totally legal, according to the law of the land because it was opposed to the centuries old "sanatan dharm". As the Koderma police investigates the case, murder or suicide, and even as there are questions being raised about ambiguities in the autopsy report (the civil surgeon did not preserve the viscera), what is hugely disturbing is the fact that some Indians, despite their education and supposed modernity, still think that it is wrong for a girl in particular to choose her own life partner. Whether or not such a mindset, a necessarily patriarchal one where a women's sexuality is equated with family and societal honour, translates into actual crime is another matter.

A CVOTER survey conducted recently in the aftermath of the death of Nirupama Pathak to ascertain the feelings of the middle class Indian on the matter of inter-caste marriages, found that three quarters or 75% of the respondents agreed that despite our education, the centuries old mindset still prevails in India. Nearly the same per cent (71%) felt that with more and more couples turning to love and inter-caste marriages, such incidents were likely to be reported more frequently. However, the last finding does not mean that the people of the land validate honour killings. In fact, according to the survey, an overwhelming 81% of the people polled, unambiguously stood against any notion of "honour killings": 68% said a vociferous "completely disagree" when asked to clarify their stance on the concept. Obviously, it seems, it is just a handful of regressive mindsets holding the nation to ransom.

The stance of the people at large was more ambiguous on the concept of inter-caste marriages per se. While 39% said they believed in the success of such marriages, 36% said that they believed such marriages didn't work out at all. While 20% admitted that though such marriages could work, they were skeptical about them: This means that a majority of 56% was skeptical or didn't believe in the success of inter-caste, love marriages proving what we have all along been claiming. That when it comes to marriage, the Indian society remains conservative. However, the fact that India is also a society in transition comes across in the response to another question: While most people may have questioned the success of inter-caste marriages, a huge majority of 84% of the respondents, however, felt that it is better to marry for love than due to societal pressure and then have extra marital affairs later!

That a majority of India does not condone violence by self-styled keepers of morality came through in the answers to the suggestion that the government should have special provisions to protect people going in for inter-caste marriages. A huge majority of 83% of the respondents endorsed this suggestion. Finally, more than half (57%) of those surveyed also felt that there should be capital punishment for those involved in honour killings. Clearly, being conservative and being criminal are two different things and the Indian audience sees the difference clearly.

