

## EASTERN Eye THE VOICE OF BRITISH ASIANS COMMENT

### BOLLYWOOD MUST SHOW VISION

IT appears as though everyone was riding that *Slumdog Millionaire* feel-good wave.

But almost suddenly Bollywood finds itself staring into the abyss, relatively speaking, of course. Shah Rukh Khan or Kareena Kapoor are unlikely to find themselves destitute, even if producers want them to slash their fees. But the success that is Bollywood seems to have come to an abrupt halt, like a lot of other things in India right now. What's different is that for the first time, Bollywood studios in the UK are having to make cut backs. Their business model has been one of almost uninterrupted growth, with many paying increasing attention to the market outside India, when once upon a time it was no more than an indulgent afterthought.

There is a danger that they will retreat now inwards and focus exclusively on the home market. That would be a mistake. The UK needs Bollywood, even if Bollywood is cooler about the West. It is a creative, financial, dynamic, practical relationship that the success of *Slumdog* has thrown a brilliant spotlight on. There is no reason why Indian filmmakers can't produce the sort of film that could work for a global audience in the way that *Slumdog* does. Of course, it demands a certain risk – just as director Danny Boyle took when he made a film in a country he did not know and with a largely foreign crew (to him).

Slashing budgets, cutting jobs, and limiting releases does not encourage risk-taking. But that's the point. Faced with these challenges in India itself, Bollywood film producers should not give up on the UK market. Western audiences often demand more in the way of plot and characterisation and when Bollywood has delivered, it has often turned the film into a global blockbuster.

The message from the cinema seat is don't be scared, don't be cowed, don't retreat unnecessarily. People need entertainment and escapism – *Slumdog Millionaire* has shown that. Invest in emerging talent (it's often cheaper), develop new forms of story-telling that are different and compelling and for all the gimmicks and glitz, solid characters, powerful performances and stylish production will always attract audiences.

### Reaching for the stars

In many areas, Asian educational achievement in the UK ranks among the best, and increasingly, even traditionally disadvantaged groups are making great strides. But space exploration remains the last frontier. There are increasing numbers of scientists and engineers but few of them see a role in space research, which is a huge shame. It's great there are groups out there now pushing youngsters and urging them to reach beyond the stars.

### Tell us what you think

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# PEACE AMONG MEN

**The difficult ability to forgive is being lost in a world where violence is predominant, but it is needed now more than ever before, argues the author of a new book, *No Enemy To Conquer***



**MICHAEL HENDERSON**  
JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

**FOR an author to find that the events making the subject matter of his book are even more relevant should be a source of satisfaction.**

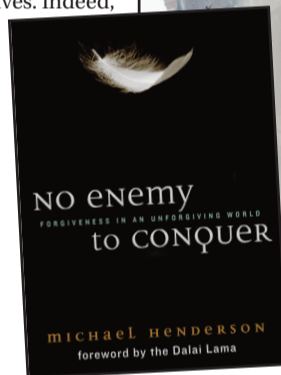
For me, in many ways, it is not. The wanton violence in Lahore and Mumbai (pictured) will surely make forgiveness more needed than ever before, but it will also make it more difficult, and the demonising and blame will be more widespread.

It has been my good fortune, over the years, to report on humankind at its best, not its worst, and since my younger days in South Asia, I have been able to tell the world some of Asia's reconciling initiatives. Indeed, my first article, in 1952, was for a Calcutta (now Kolkata) newspaper, and my first book, in 1972, was *From India With Hope*.

The title of my new book is *No Enemy To Conquer*, which Hindus will know recalls the moment when Rama, the divine prince, reminds us of the chariot which will lead to victory: valour and fortitude are its wheels; truthfulness and virtuous conduct are its banner; strength, discretion, self-restraint and benevolence are its four horses, harnessed with the cords of forgiveness, compassion and equanimity. 'Whoever has this righteous chariot, has no enemy to conquer anywhere.'

One aim of my writing has been to bridge the divide between people of different faiths. This desire goes back to the experience of my mother. In 1922 at the time of Irish independence my family was chucked out of Ireland. We were from a Protestant family and my grandfather was told 'Leave Ireland by the end of the week or be shot.' Many years later at a centre of reconciliation at Caux, Switzerland, she made an apology to a Catholic senator for the indifference we had shown to Catholics over the years. This led her and us into the world of peacemaking.

One of the first stories I wrote for *No Enemy To Conquer* was about a Muslim friend in Gujarat, Jazar Bandukwala. Despite just escaping with his life, he continues to stand up for his community without a trace of bitterness. He even refused to name the policemen who had joined a mob in burning down his



home. After the 2002 riots, he emailed me that if the passion for revenge can be turned into reconciliation and brotherhood, the world will have gained a great deal.

Another is about a Hindu friend, Sushobha Barve, from Mumbai. Her work for reconciliation in Kashmir and with Pakistan began with facing up to the 'invisible wall' she had allowed to grow between herself and a Muslim fellow student. 'Since that day, prejudice towards Muslims has never entered my heart. I realised that if understanding was to come between communities, I must try to understand history from their viewpoint.'

In an essay, Rajmohan Gandhi warns against believing that Muslims are uniquely predisposed to violence and terrorism: 'Forgiveness is an issue that Hindus should frontally face. We have harmed fellow Hindus as well as non-Hindus. Often such harming was avoidable. Hence we need to be forgiven. Often, we have been harmed, too. So we need also the difficult ability to forgive. Luckily, Hindu tradition upholds forgiveness.'

I am grateful that Benazir Bhutto, shortly

before she was assassinated, shared her own journey of forgiveness following the deaths of her father and brothers. 'The need to forgive both at a personal and political level is as great as it ever was. Today our focus of attention is on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, where there will be more widows, more fathers and mothers grieving for the loss of their loved ones; they, too, will be seeking the strength to learn to forgive,' she said.

Such stories exemplify the chariot-like qualities we need, whether it is in South Asia or Sudan, Congo or Chechnya. In a foreword to my book, the Dalai Lama writes, 'When something terrible happens, instead of finding some individual or group to blame, fostering hatred and a desire for revenge, we should try to take a broader view and consider the longer term. Much more constructive than stoking feelings of resentment and revenge is to forgive and transform the negative event and its consequences into a source of inner strength.'

*No Enemy to Conquer*, Michael Henderson, Baylor University Press/Alban Books, £10.99, out this month.



JOY: Jay Sean with his awards

## UKAMAs: A night to remember for Jay Sean

*SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE* fever caught up with the Asian music scene when AR Rahman added yet another trophy to his collection.

The double Oscar-winning music maestro was honoured with an Outstanding Achievement Award by B4U Music at the UK Asian Music Awards (UKAMAs) last Thursday (5).

Rahman was not present to collect his award but his message of *Jai Ho* rang out at the Royal Festival Hall in London amid performances by some of the biggest Asian acts from Britain and the US, including Juggy D, H-Dhami and Nisha Kataria.

But ultimately it was Jay Sean's night, who walked away with three

by ADITI KHANNA

awards for Best Male Act, Best Album and Best Urban Act.

It was the award for his album, *My Own Way*, that got the 27-year-old r'n'b star most excited. 'This one means the most as it comes after a gap of three years. I produced it under my own label and got a record deal with a big label like Cash Money on the back of it,' he said.

Music producer Rishi Rich, who bagged the Commitment to the Scene award, presented an impressive lineup of singers under his Rishi Rich Productions banner, such as Mumzy, Tasha Tah, Veronica and H-Dhami.

The annual event, hosted by singer-actress Karen David and B4U VJ Salil, was packed with music fans, with organisers claiming the credit crunch had not affected ticket sales.

'In times of economic turmoil, creativity flourishes as people become far more selective in what they release as record labels, and what they buy as customers,' said popular Radio 1 presenter Nihal Arthanayake.

Co-presenter Bobby Friction, who won the award for his BBC Asian Network radio show, summed up the awards: 'Just because there is no bhangra in the Top 10 charts, it does not mean British Asian music is dead. In fact, it is more alive than ever.'

### WINNERS' CORNER

Best Producer – Rishi Rich  
Best Club Dj – Dj Vix  
Best Female Act – M.I.A  
Best Male Act – Jay Sean  
Best Act – H Dhami  
Best International Act – Miss Pooja  
Best International Album – Gurdas Mann  
Best Alternative Act – Nitin Sawhney  
Best Newcomer – Jaz Dhami  
Best Video – Jazzy B  
Best Album – Jay Sean  
Best Urban Act – Jay Sean  
Best Radio Show – Bobby Friction  
Commitment To The Scene – Rishi Rich  
Outstanding Achievement – AR Rahman