



# MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN ON A NEW DAWN AT 60

**Fifty-nine years on, have we redeemed our pledge in any substantial measure? Ten 1947-born Indians, whose lives embody the aspirations of independent India, take stock**

∇ **DEEPAK CHOPRA**  
SPIRITUAL GURU

## Waiting to Exhale

As one of midnight's children born just before Independence, I feel giddy at times with the success India has achieved. Emerging into the sunlight of prosperity and promise feels like a fairy tale, but the sun casts shadows too. And they are particularly dark in today's go-go India. Economic disparities are increasing. One in three Indian children still goes to bed hungry. The past haunts our future as racial prejudice, caste divisions, and religious violence fragment us. The political system is synonymous with corruption and cronyism. India must **look at its spiritual heritage afresh** and try to take it beyond narrow-minded nationalism. It may look like a tribal clash of opposites, but we are the only culture who see reality above opposites. There is an underlying spiritual need that people want to fill, and they won't do it by returning to the very faiths they left behind in their rise to modernism. Something new wants to be born. My hope is that India expands her spiritual legacy and shows humanity the reality of transcendence—the key to ridding ourselves of the miseries of materialism.

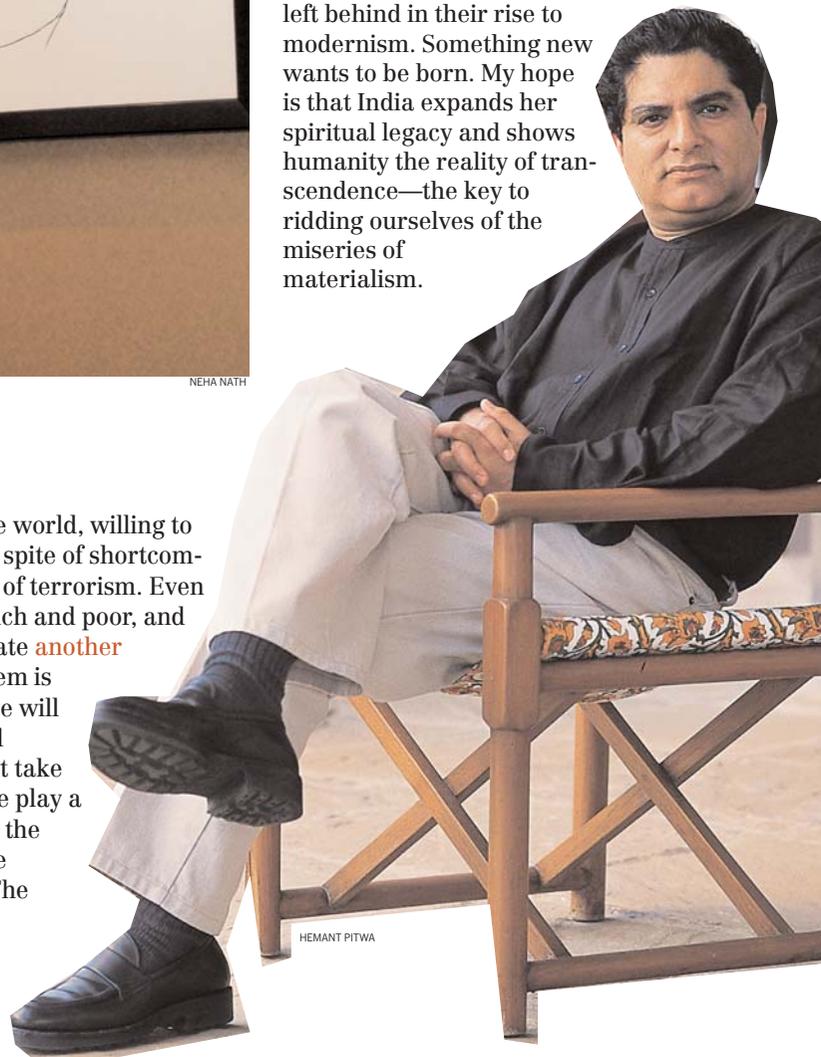


NEHA NATH

∧ **RANDHIR KAPOOR** ACTOR

## Blurring Divisions

Today, we are on the threshold of opening up to the world, willing to take on and embrace international competition, in spite of shortcomings like our huge population and the rising threat of terrorism. Even though there's always been a divide between the rich and poor, and different castes, the government now wants to create **another divide in the name of reservation**. If the quota system is implemented in the country's premier institutes, we will produce non-qualified professionals and the global community will shun us. Why can't the government take a leaf out of show business? Look at us. One day we play a Muslim, the next day a Parsi. Our biggest stars are the Khans and I'm very proud of them. There are more opportunities now than there were 30 years ago. The possibilities are endless. Let's not stand in the way.



HEMANT PITWA



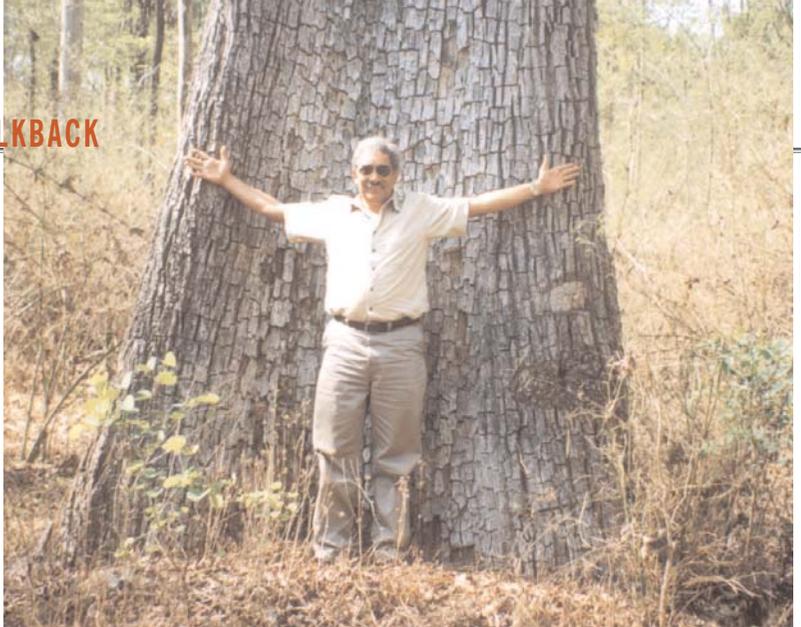
## INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL TALKBACK

» BITTU SAHGAL CONSERVATIONIST

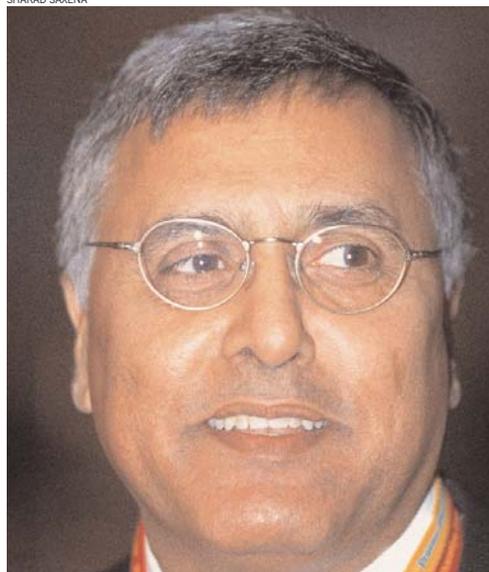
### Clean Up Drive

Born in the afterglow of Independence, my strongest memory is of people expressing their love for their country. Now I don't see it except in NRIs, but they are too far to really see things for what they are. I'd like to see people more in love with the country and less in love with money. We need a **resurgence of old values coupled with today's pragmatism**. The first sign of development would be if I could drink water from a river, rather than a bottle.

SHARAD SAXENA



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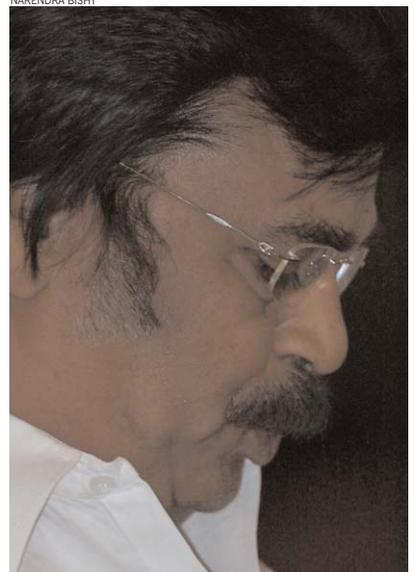
PRAMOD THAKUR/FOTOCORP

« UJJAL DOSANJH  
CANADIAN LEGISLATOR

### In a Void

As someone who left India, and not fighting the fight, it might not be fair for me to criticise. However, I think India **has made no moral progress**. It has degenerated into corruption. And I don't mean just financial corruption, but also ethical corruption. Pollution is a corruption of the environment. We can't have a fair, just, inclusive society unless we tackle corruption at its very basis.

NARENDRA BISHT



“ The only thing I want to change is the **lack of honesty and the culture of bribery** prevalent in our country. Otherwise, I am very proud of India and to be Indian. It has made tremendous progress in every field possible. But if people were more honest and selfless, we would grow at a much faster pace. ”

« MUMTAZ ACTOR

∧ DASARI NARAYAN RAO  
FILMMAKER/POLITICIAN

### Lot to Learn

Having acquired moderate education and spurred by the inner fire to make it big in life, I took to theatre and cinema and did reasonably well in both. But I am not at peace when I take stock of the India of my dreams. Only about 60 per cent of my countrymen are educated in varying degrees and the women are faring particularly faring badly. **Education is an empowering and liberating human experience which is being still denied to about 40 per cent of my fellow citizens**. If quality education is not accessible to all, society will remain unequal. I want an India in which everyone is enlightened by a quality of education.



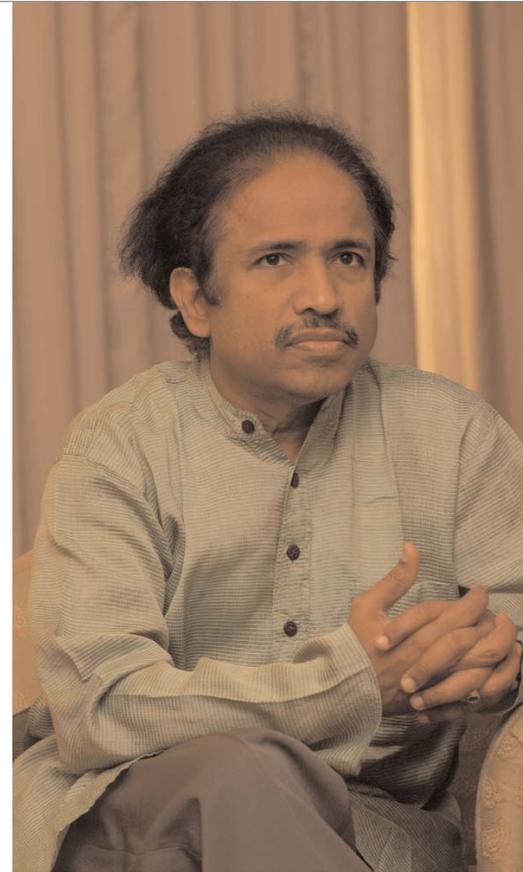
## INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL TALKBACK

“ The one thing I would like changed in today’s India is the procedure of election to public offices. **Everyone, from the sarpanch to the president, should be directly elected.** Much of the political and social resentment can then be controlled because people would have elected the government they deserve. ”

➤➤ **DIGVIJAY SINGH** POLITICIAN

SUBIR HALDER

NARENDRA BISHT



YASBANT NEGI

⤴ **L. SUBRAMANIAM** MUSICIAN  
**Brain Drain**

Despite all the ills we face, India has shown the world that it has brain power. Our minds are among the best in the world, whether it be in science or art. What worries me is the **brain drain**. We have to retain our cultural strength despite it.

RAVI S SAHANI

“ Even today, the yawning gap between the rich and poor is yet to be bridged. The poor only get poorer, while the rich get richer. **Poverty is robbing people of their dignity** because it pushes them to commit the lowest acts just to keep body and soul together. Everyone deserves equal opportunity, if not equal success. ”

➤➤ **AJIT PAL SINGH** HOCKEY PLAYER

