



ISSUE 39

# faith

## INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

**"Live and allow  
others to live;  
hurt no one;  
life is dear to all  
living beings."**

**Mahavira (born c599 – died c527 BCE)  
Last Jain Tirthankara**

**Face to Face**

**Overcoming Hatred through Faith**

**Through a lens, clearly**

**Language of Art**

**Religion and Animal Ethics**

**Focus**

**WINNER:**  
SHAP AWARD 2011

# Rukh - Trees

Some trees look like sons to me.  
 Some like mothers.  
 Some are daughters, some brides,  
 Some like brothers.  
 Some are like my grandfather,  
 Sparsely leafed.  
 Some like my grandmother  
 Who feeds sweet cakes to the crows.  
 Some trees are like the friends  
 I kiss and embrace.  
 One is my beloved  
 Sweet yet painful.  
 There are trees I would like  
 To put playfully on my shoulders,  
 There are trees I would like  
 To kiss and then die.  
 The trees sway together  
 When strong winds blow.  
 I wish I could render  
 Their verdant, leafy language.  
 I wish that I could  
 Return as a tree  
 And if you wanted to listen to my song  
 I would sing it in the trees.  
 The trees are like my mother,  
 May their shade live forever.

Shiv Kumar Batalvi's poem translated from original Punjabi by Charanjit AjitSingh

Photograph: Heather Wells

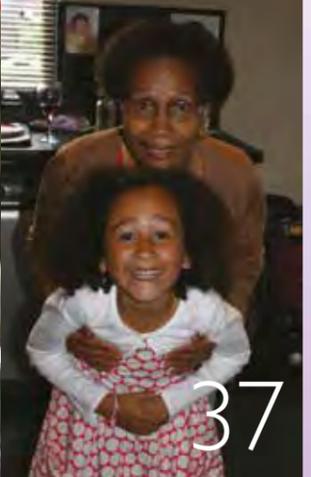
A Hawthorn tree, a tree of religious and spiritual significance, was planted in February in Lampton Park, Hounslow, to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week 2019. The planting ceremony, inspired by Hounslow Friends of Faith 'to bring together faith communities, organisations and wider members of the community to contribute to preserving the environment' included the reading of this poem and other words and blessings from members of the Sikh, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Brahma Kumaris traditions.



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# editorial

My first reading of the piece written by Zerbanoo Gifford on Modern Slavery awakened memories of a freezing cold February night in 2004, when 23 Chinese men and women were drowned by an incoming tide in Morecambe Bay. They had been taken far out onto the sands at low tide by truck to rake for cockles, and left there late into the night by their gang master: by the time the water had started swirling around their feet it was too late for them to escape. They were victims of human trafficking, forced to work in the most dangerous conditions for meagre returns, whilst their gang master and his cohorts profited hugely from their labour – cockles are greatly valued as a delicacy in Spain and other parts of Europe. I had witnessed the workers many times leaving the shore and assumed that they were making the choice to work in such conditions. Cockling is traditionally a seasonal occupation carried out by local fishermen on a small scale, so to see large groups of people out on the sands was something of a spectacle. It never occurred to me that they were being exploited, but of course that is the crux of the problem, slavery is often carried out in plain sight and it seems part of everyday life until tragedy happens. The following morning the Bay was calm and as magnificent as ever, as though the tragedy had never happened, but the deaths of these men and women – who sought only to earn money to send back to their families living in poverty in Fujian Province of China – remains indelibly in the memory of all local people, and especially the search and rescue crew who worked for 22 hours to try to save them. Their families will grieve their loss forever. Professor Gary Craig of Durham University estimates that upwards of 10,000 people in the UK, at any one time, are working in conditions classed as 'modern slavery' so it is not a phenomenon taking place elsewhere, it is here in our own country. Sometimes, but not always, human trafficking is organised by international crime gangs, from many parts of the globe, so slavery is unlikely to diminish as long as poverty continues to grow, especially in developing countries. It is a dilemma for us as consumers to always know for sure that the products we buy, or the service we receive, is not contaminated by exploited labour: we have to rely on the integrity of shop owners, and service providers. But, as Zerbanoo suggests, we can make choices, and allow ourselves to be guided by symbols such as 'Fairtrade'. Wherever in the world it exists, there is no doubt that slavery is as abhorrent today as it was in the West Indies and the American South in the 18th and 19th century, and beyond.

Heather Wells

**We thank all our contributors** - writers, artists, poets and photographers – and of course subscribers. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of donors, who wish to remain anonymous. To sustain and develop the magazine however we need regular financial donations. If any readers know of Trust Funds, Grants or private donors who may be willing to help with funding, however small, the Editor (Heather Wells) would appreciate your advice and/or recommendations. For contact details please see above.

faith  
INITIATIVE

www.faithinitiative.co.uk

Initiative Interfaith Trust

Registered Charity No. 1113345

Trustees: Heather Wells, Lorna Douglas  
and Charanjit Ajit Singh

Object:

**The promotion of religious harmony by:** Providing educational resources and information to promote a better awareness of the causes and consequences of inter-religious tensions and conflicts; and educating the public in the diverse nature of religious belief.

**Faith Initiative: Embracing Diversity Magazine**

Editorial Panel

Editor: Heather Wells

Co-Editor and Design Consultant: Lorna Douglas

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Charanjit Ajit Singh

Shiban Akbar

Sr. Maureen Goodman

Umm Hanié Rebler

Jehangir Sarosh

Poet in residence: Rebecca Irvine Bilkau

**Aim:** The aim of the magazine is to open windows on the beliefs and practices of people of different faiths and cultures: to foster understanding and reduce racially and religiously motivated violence.

**Statement:** Whilst the contents of this magazine will always be in accordance with the 'object' of Initiative Interfaith Trust there will be freedom of expression.

**Invitation:** We invite you to contribute articles, poems, letters, artwork and responses so that the magazine reflects the religious communities it seeks to serve.

Editorial guidance can be obtained from

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Issue 40 Themes:

- Religion and Social Justice
- Religious Icons

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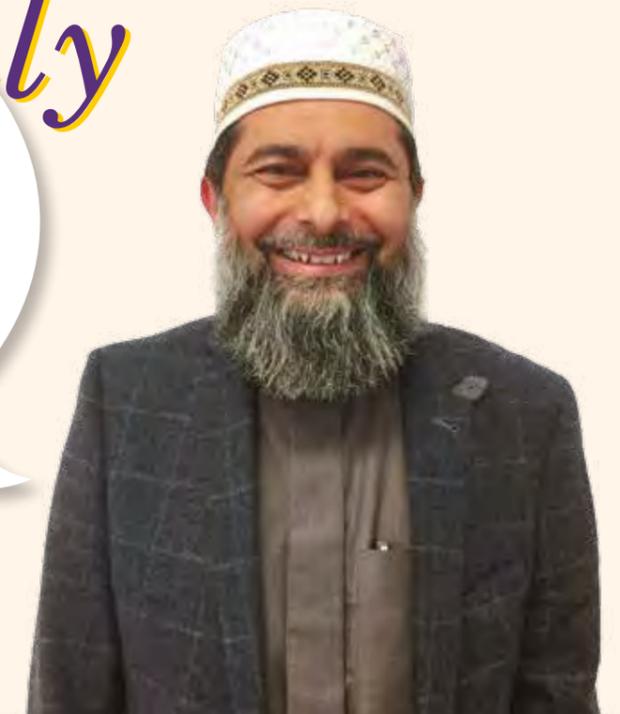
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**SPIRAL:** "This is an ancient symbol that reminds us of the womb and the protective mothering nature in all of us. It takes us from the broad sweeps of the outer life to an infinitely small centre where we cease to exist."

Cited:  
*Mandalas: Spiritual Circles for Harmony & Fulfilment*  
Laura J. Watts (2002) Pub: Hermes House,  
London ISBN 184308 973 7

The spiral logo was designed by Caroline Jariwala for Initiative Interfaith Trust

# Speak Only Good Or Remain Silent



There is a verse in the Qur'an that captures a dialogue between God and the angels in which they are informed of God's decision to place a steward, a human being, on the earth. I have tried to picture this august and majestic gathering of angels in the presence of the Almighty Creator. Angels, who we believe God created out of light, are always in the service of God, obedient and free of sin. They have no bodily and physical needs and will live until the Last Day. No other creation could be superior and better than the angels. At least that is what the angels thought, as is apparent from the dialogue that ensued God's announcement. The verses read:

*'And when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place on the earth a vicegerent." They said, "Are you going to place on it someone who will cause corruption on it and shed blood, whereas we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" God said, "I know what you do not know."*

*And He taught Adam the names of all things. Then He presented them to the angels and said, tell me the names of all these, if you are truthful. They said, "You are exalted; we have no knowledge except what You taught us. Indeed You are the Knowing, the Wise." He said, "O Adam! Inform them of their names." And when he had informed them of their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed." And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam." So they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became one of the disbelievers.' (Qur'an, 2:30-34). Thus God established the superiority of man over His entire creation. 'And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created.' (Qur'an 17:70).*

God's creation is incredibly diverse. He designed and planned this diversity. With regards to mankind, the Qur'an says that if

God willed He would have made everyone into one community (16:93). *'Had God willed He would have made you one community, but He intended to test you in what He has given you; so race to all that is good; to God is your return altogether, and He will inform you about the things in which you disagree.'* (5:48). The Qur'an reminds us that the diversity in creation is a sign of God. *'And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variations and differences of your languages and colours, indeed in that there are signs for those who know.'* (30:22). And in case anyone attempts to prove their superiority based on colour, language or race, the Qur'an has set the criteria. *'O People! We created you from a single male and female, and made you into races and tribes, so that you may know each other. Indeed the most honoured of you before God is the most righteous of you.'* (49:13). In his last sermon and parting message to his followers, the Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, *"O People! Indeed your Lord is One and your father (Adam) is one. Indeed there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a non-Arab over an Arab, or of a red person (white) over a black person, or of a black person over a red (white) person, except in terms of righteousness. Have I conveyed this message?"* They said: *"The Messenger of God has conveyed the message."* (Hadith, Musnad Ahmad).

Islam, like all other faiths, teaches its followers to respect everyone and stand up for justice, and come to the aid of the oppressed. The Qur'an highlights the importance of people standing up for one another. If they do not do that then the consequences can be destructive for everyone. *'Those who have been driven unjustly from their homes only for saying, "Our Lord is God." If God did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, where God's name is much invoked, would have been destroyed. God is sure to help those who help His cause – God is strong and mighty.'* (22:40).

To promote harmonious co-existence the Qur'an highlights the importance of verifying information in order to establish whether it is true or not. In the age of 'fake news' the need for this has never been more compelling:

*'O believers, if a disobedient one comes to you with information, investigate, in case you harm a people out of ignorance and regret what you have done.'* (49:6). *It goes on to lay down further principles. 'O, Believers! Let not a community ridicule another community; who may after all be better than them; nor let women ridicule other women; who may after all be better than them; and do not speak ill of one another; and do not call each other by offensive nicknames. How bad it is to be called a mischief-maker after accepting faith! Those who do not repent are the evildoers. O, Believers! Avoid making too many assumptions – some assumptions are sinful – and do not spy on one another and do not backbite each other: would any of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother? No, you would hate it. So be mindful of God: God is ever accepting of repentance, most merciful.* (49:9-12).

Muhammad said that those who carry tales and thereby create discord between people would not enter heaven. He forbade jealousy, enmity and the breaking of promises. He taught kindness for all and said, *"The merciful ones are shown mercy by the Merciful One, therefore show mercy to those on earth and the one in the heavens will show mercy to you."* (Sunan Al-Tirmidhi). He did not want to be associated with those who do not show kindness to little ones and does not recognise the honour of the elders. He encouraged peaceful coexistence and said to his followers, *"None of you shall enter heaven until you believe; and*

*none of you shall believe until you love one another. Shall I not show you an act, which, if you do, will lead you to love one another? Spread peace amongst yourselves."* He said that the best of people are those who are most beneficial to others. He described a person having the most complete of faith as being the one who is the best in character.

Growing up I remember singing 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me'. How wrong that is according to Islam. Muhammad stressed the safeguarding of the tongue because the hurt caused by it can leave deep wounds on the hearts, which do not heal easily or quickly enough and may also never heal. He said, *"Whosoever believes in God and in the Last Day, let them say something good or remain silent."* (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim). He described a Muslim as that person from whose tongue and hands others are safe. He said the most despised and hated person before God is the one who is most quarrelsome and argumentative (Sahih Al-Bukhari). Muhammad himself never shouted nor did he repay evil with evil but rather he would pardon and forgive. He said, *"He has not believed whose neighbours are not safe from his harm."* (Sahih Muslim). He taught people to love and care for one another and said, *"None of you is a believer until he loves for his brother or neighbour what he loves for himself."* (Sahih Muslim).

We now all describe our world as a global village – everyone on this planet is a neighbour. Let us remember what Jesus (peace be upon him) also taught, *"Love thy neighbour"*.

***"The Qur'an highlights the importance of people standing up for one another. If they do not do that then the consequences can be destructive for everyone."***

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra is a member of The Muslim Council of Britain, the Christian Muslim Forum, Religions for Peace UK, the European Council of Religious Leaders and the World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace. He is also a Faculty member at St. George's College in Jerusalem.

# *A Caring Leadership of Action*

From relative obscurity, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has emerged as a world leader. One of New Zealand's darkest days, the 15th of March 2019, was definitely one of her finest. When I watched her address her nation, and indeed the global stage, I was taken aback in every positive way possible.

She named the massacre of innocent Muslim worshippers at Friday prayers in Al Noor and Linwood Mosques in Christchurch, by a white supremacist, as an act of terrorism. She did not attempt to cloak the atrocity in words that would hide its true nature. The world media, and other world leaders, were compelled to follow suit.

Importantly too, she reduced the perpetrator to a nameless person by urging everyone not to call him by his name – thus stripping him of his birth identity in the world media, and denying him the callous and disdainful notoriety he wished to court.

Then she called the attack as an attack on "us", as in 'on all New Zealanders'. The victims were therefore given an identity as an integral part of that country; and the attack as being no different to that of an attack on non-immigrants. With the eloquence of her language, and her inclusive stance, she had put into motion, from the very start, the process of healing amidst the disbelief, the trauma, uncertainty and terror.

She also made it clear that New Zealand was chosen for the terrorist attack, not because it is a racist country but precisely the opposite, because it is a country that welcomes those who choose to make it their home, and as such New Zealand stood for everything the terrorist hated. In so doing, Jacinda Ardern essentially called upon her people to stand with her, and unite in defending the proud heritage of inclusivity and kinship of their nation. They responded whole-heartedly, with understanding and compassion; with floral tributes; a vigil at the following Friday prayer; and the ceremonial posture dance of Haka, where the participants stamped defiance to the Australian terrorist.

She demonstrated her common humanity by being visibly moved when she delivered her first speech to the nation in the aftermath of the tragedy; and when consoling the families of the victims with shared tears and genuine hugs. Furthermore, in the wearing of a simple black ethnic stole as a head cover, she demonstrated respect for the culture and religion of the people who had lost loved ones, and those who suffered injury.

Yet, a confident Prime Minister, her actions were forceful and compelling too. She ordered the livestream video of the actual killing to be taken off the internet. She announced gun law reform in order to ensure "this never happens again". And, on 10th April, 2019 New Zealand Parliament voted to pass 'The Arms Amendment Bill' by an overwhelming majority vote of 119 to 1, banning all military style semi-automatic weapons and all assault rifles.

We have world leaders who spout bold but insincere rhetoric, and brandish a spurious sense of purpose. Not so, with Jacinda Ardern. She has not been merely the politician Prime Minister, but a scrupulous and caring leader of action. So far, she has done everything right and serves as an example to all world leaders.



*she had put into motion, from the very start, the process of healing amidst the disbelief, the trauma, uncertainty and terror.*

# Being Bold

I watch with great admiration, yet profound sadness, as school children take to the streets to stress how the conventional power structures of the world are whittling away their futures by a failure to seriously address the destruction of our planet: God's planet. This bold, unexpected global movement, inspired by the actions of Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, has re-awakened the need for serious debate that has been allowed to slide off into the edges of political discussions. And it might just be in time, if we listen.

In late April and early May, 2019 the 17th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, a gathering of the most senior members of the worldwide Anglican Church will have been held in Hong Kong. Forty provinces of the Anglican Communion (which has 70 million members) will have met to discuss, amongst other things, the agenda for the once in a decade meeting of the Lambeth Conference, to be held in July/August 2020: the Lambeth Conference brings together all Anglican bishops, and Archbishops, from around the world and is fundamental to how the Church responds to the needs of its people for the decade to come. The theme of that conference is to be: God's Church for God's world.

The vast majority of Anglicans today are in the developing world – especially Sub-Saharan Africa. Here the impact of environment destruction, pollution, wiping out of forests, desertification of the land, scarcity of water and other impacts of our environmental and climate crisis are acute. One would have expected therefore that environmental issues, and especially climate change, would be central to the 17th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. But it seems that none of these issues will have been key to the discussions of this august body. Can they – unlike school children from across the world – really be so removed from the on-going threat to our planet, and all life upon it.

The Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si* has started to transform the worldview of the Catholic Church around the world. The issuing of fatwas – the strongest religious teaching in Islam – against the illegal wildlife and forestry trade – is another strong indicator that sections of the Muslim community are taking the plight of our world seriously. And many of the recognised religious investment funds are shifting from fossil fuels – and here the Church of England has taken a powerful lead. The creation of a new faith-aligned investment organisation – FaithInvest – signals the desire of hundreds of religious investment funds to be proactive in supporting projects and products that are nature based and reusable.

The anger and frustration of this remarkable youth-led movement has primarily been directed at governments, but perhaps it is time to ask them to turn their attention also to the faiths. Here they will find some allies, as previously stated, but also some institutions, such as parts of the Anglican Communion, where leadership is failing. I pray that these young people of the world will extend their protests to include the faiths that have positively failed to grasp that they need to be key partners in addressing this climate change crisis. As Jesus says in the Gospels, those who welcome a child welcomes me, and those who put an obstacle in their way is doomed. Time to listen now.

Having said that, should we really be placing such a heavy burden on only the young... what the world needs now is a mass movement dedicated to action against climate change, which reaches across ages, across faiths, across politics and across borders – because anything less will fail to achieve the massive shift we need to make to save our planet.

*“I pray that these young people of the world will extend their protests to include the faiths that have positively failed to grasp that they need to be key partners in addressing this climate change crisis.”*

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Helping 12 faiths make long term plans to protect the planet.  
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Photograph:  
David Rose

# Women of the League

The Jewish League for Woman Suffrage (JLWS) which was the only Jewish women's organisation in England – and the world – devoted exclusively to obtaining both national and Jewish suffrage for women was founded in 1912 by a group of distinguished female and male communal leaders, and its twin goals were: “to demand the Parliamentary Franchise for women on the same line as it is, or may be, granted to men, and to unite Jewish Suffragists of all shades of opinion for religious and educational activities... [It will also] strive to further the improvement of the status of women in the [Jewish] Community and the State.”

Linking feminist goals with Jewish loyalties, the League members equated their campaigns with Anglo-Jewry's efforts to obtain: political emancipation for Jews; to overcome continuing social discrimination; and to fight repression against Jews worldwide. The League redefined the concept of Anglo-Jewish womanhood to include secular, religious and communal feminist goals. Indeed, the League's strong feminist commitment became quite clear as its members joined secular national and international suffrage organisations.

The existence of the League was rooted in upper-class social status, family networks and the distinction of its leadership – factors which gave the women involved the self-confidence that enabled them to face the intense antagonism generated by their suffrage activities. At the same time, their elite social status made the League women acceptable to the Christian-dominated suffragist movement. Its executive council featured a bastion of upper-middle-class Anglo-Jewish women and social reform activists, including male supporters, beginning with the founders who were Sir Leonard Franklin OBE, a barrister, banker and Liberal Party politician, and his wife Laura. The Franklins' closest advisers in the League were Leonard's cousins, the pioneer educator Henrietta Franklin, nee Montagu, and her sister Lily Montagu. Henrietta was a leading advocate for advanced education for women. She supported the rise of women in professional life and became president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies from 1916 to 1917.

Lily, meanwhile, became a vice-president of the League in 1913 and provided spiritual inspiration for the League's campaign – she often led the League in prayer before its meetings and



Lily Montagu



Henrietta Franklin



Eleanor Marx

public assemblies. She was a social worker, a magistrate in the London juvenile courts, a writer, religious organiser, and spiritual leader who in 1911 founded, and long remained the driving force behind, the Liberal Jewish movement in England. Her involvement with progressive Judaism caused an irrevocable split with her strictly orthodoxly observant father, the Baron Swaythling, but for Lily, her conviction that orthodoxy offered her, and other women, little room for religious self-expression, would not let her conform to the restrictions of orthodoxy.

The women of the League did make important feminist strides by demonstrating that barriers of religion and culture could be broken down to achieve leadership positions in English suffragist organisations, and by challenging the authority of the male led leadership of the Jewish community. In 1912 the League mounted a campaign for votes for female synagogue seat holders, supported by Liberal Jewish ministers who believed the synagogue should mirror society's concerns. Despite the outrage of traditional synagogue and communal leaders, Jewish women did secure a voice in synagogue management and a quasi-religious sanction for representation on Jewish communal boards. The League, however, failed to convince the orthodox United Synagogues body to grant the vote to women throughout all congregations – that would take a post-war campaign by the Union of Jewish Women to expand the religious franchise further.

The League did not actually think of itself as being ostensibly radical, but its members were clearly visible, marching and demonstrating for votes for women in England and it did have radical militant members – they disrupted Sabbath worship services in several synagogues in London from early 1913 until the outbreak of World War I, demanding religious as well as political suffrage for women. These women were forcibly removed from synagogues for disrupting services and castigated in the Anglo-Jewish press as “blackguards in bonnets”. Several League members became “martyrs” for the cause when they were arrested, imprisoned and force-fed in English prisons for taking part in violent demonstrations.

Other women who decided that a more militant approach was needed were Edith Zangwill, a writer, and her stepmother, the eminent scientist Hertha Ayrton (born Phoebe Sarah Marks, who, in 1902, was the first woman to be proposed for the fellowship of the Royal Society). Initially, they became active members of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies but frustrated by the lack of progress in achieving the vote they decided to join the more militant Women's Social & Political Union in 1907. Hertha's daughter Barbara became organiser for the Women's Social and Political Union, and in 1912 she was imprisoned in Holloway for smashing windows. In 1914 Hertha gave £100 to help form the United Suffragists, which included both men and women – Hertha was a vice-president and her daughter Barbara the honorary secretary.

The majority of the Anglo-Jewish community were appalled and terrified by these actions, fearing that Jewish suffragists heralded the breakdown of the institution of the home, a rise in antisemitism in England and an end to Jewry's social acceptance in England. The controversy filled the Jewish press for two years. Anglo-Jewish men of all classes feared the spectre of government by “irrational” and “emotional” women while Jewish working men feared that suffrage would give women more power to impose middle-class reformist controls on their lives. This fear made it difficult to recruit working-class Jewish women into the suffrage campaign.

It was extremely significant that the Jewish women's movement was involved in every aspect of women's public activities between the 1880s and 1930s. Winning votes for women gave Anglo-Jewish women their first taste of real political power in national, religious and communal life. They hoped to win acceptance in wider society and suffrage became a vital symbol of their social acceptance as Englishwomen as well as of their political, religious and communal emancipation – but they were always aware of the need to avoid inviting antisemitism – the fear of antisemitic rejection by non-Jewish feminists was always present. Thus, their actions were at times cautious, especially so in class conscious

England – and they did experience tensions on several levels. The well-known division between the established German-Jews of the UK and those flooding in from the Russian Empire between 1880 and 1941 was pronounced, as German-Jewish feminists sought to aid in the acculturation of the newcomers. Tension, too, sprang from engaging in non-traditional activities which were viewed as threatening to the male hierarchy of Jewish institutions and which symbolised the conflict between Judaism and feminism.

Many Jewish feminists abandoned Judaism, like Eleanor Marx, the English born youngest daughter of Karl Marx who was a socialist activist and is known by some as “the mother of socialist feminism”. She was a supporter of women's suffrage, but thought it a bourgeois movement, and put her energies into pressing for the rights of working-class women.

You may have noticed that so far, I have focused on the women's suffrage movement in England – this is because we have no evidence of women from the Jewish community in Scotland being active in this field.

We're not sure why there was a lack of involvement, but it may be because the Jewish community was far less well established in Scotland in the 19th century. There was a marked increase in the Scottish community in the period from 1880 to 1914 but the majority were poor immigrants from the Russian Empire who were almost entirely orthodox in their practice. There was certainly radicalism amongst their numbers, but it was mainly manifested in fighting for improved working and housing conditions. I would like to introduce you to two radical Scottish Jewish women: their names were Sadie and Bessie Span, born in 1899 and 1901 respectively.

They were brought up in the slums of Glasgow with their widowed mother and an elder sister and worked variously in the tobacconists' trade, as kilt makers, as tailors, in a munitions factory and in an engineering works. They were influenced by the radical politics of Glasgow and the Russian Revolution, becoming social activists who turned first to socialism and then to communism. They were committed life-long trade unionists who were no doubt feminists but that was only a part of their fight for equality on all levels. They were my husband's great aunts.



Sadie Span (picture from her MI5 file!)



Bessie Span in older age

**...they disrupted Sabbath worship services in several synagogues in London from early 1913 until the outbreak of World War I, demanding religious as well as political suffrage for women.**

Extract of a talk given for Interfaith Scotland and Religions For Peace event in Celebration of the UN Interfaith Harmony Week 2019.

Sources: Linda Gordon Kuzmack – *Women's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States: 1881–1933*. Columbus, Ohio: 1990

Jewish Chronicle, January 25, 2018: “How Jewish women helped win the vote”

Jewish Women's Archive <https://jwa.org>

Scottish Jewish Archives Centre <https://www.sjac.org.uk>

Fiona Brodie is Vice Chair of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities; a Director of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre; lay leader at Glasgow Reform Synagogue)

“Darkness cannot drive out  
darkness only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive out hate  
only love can do that.  
I have decided to stick to love...  
Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

**Dr Martin Luther King Jr**  
Quote from Sermon given at  
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church  
Montgomery  
November 17th 1957

# Lessons from the Holy Land

**W**e may live relatively near to one another, and perhaps even shop or work in the same places, but we know little about one another. Yet we always maintain an image of the ‘other’ in our mind, what we lack in facts we complete with prejudices. Many of these prejudices originate from our initial sense of alienation towards someone that looks different to us, reinforced by what we hear about them through the media. As such, these prejudices grow in negativity, resulting in suspicion, and maybe even worse, hatred.

When we analyze the disapproving attitudes that many in our communities have for each other, we realize that these are not the result of an educated decision that it is not possible to live together. On the contrary, such attitudes result from the generalization of individual cases of negativity, this in turn generates prejudice and creates off-putting stereotypes of the ‘other’. The problem with such negative images is that they are, or at least become, psychologically rooted, and it is not enough to explain the actual reality to counteract them. In order to uproot negative images of the ‘other’ we need an experience that will make an impact psychologically.

History has taught us that when different communities live in close proximity, and physical interaction between them is easy, the quality of their inter-communal relations depends more on good neighbourly relations, than on the law or agreements made between their respective leaderships. Therefore, the process of building peace in the Holy Land must include a strong emphasis on grassroots inter-communal relations if it is to be successful and sustainable. The interfaith encounter, in which participants truly and deeply meet the ‘other’ face-to-face, provides such an experience and can be profoundly transformative.

*Our Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA) is fundamentally an educational and social bridge-building tool. When neighbours and friends meet, and learn about each other’s religions, cultures and lifestyles, and when people look each other in the eye – magic happens. Through deep and positive interaction, stereotypes, prejudices and misperceptions fall away, and are replaced with real knowledge and genuine understanding of each other. In this way, I believe interfaith encounter makes a real contribution to an improvement in the quality of life of its participants, and to the building of peaceful relations between their communities.*

Interfaith Encounter focuses on themes that relate to the foundation of respective cultures, and touches on issues that have deep existential meaning for the participants, even for the most secular among them. Talking together on how each of us relates to religion, tradition, faith and/or culture, and to associated texts and ideas, allows us to address core issues of identity and meaning, and to find shared values. The discussion becomes much more intimate than just an exchange of opinions, and provides space for the humanity of the ‘other’ to be revealed. Moreover, this intimacy brings into focus large degrees of similarities between



the traditions of participants: the notion of discovering shared values may sound pedestrian, but it is extremely meaningful to those taking part. In contrast, this approach also allows for a constructive way to discuss differences as participants train themselves to develop friendships with people they disagree with. This is the real challenge that we face.

Consequently, the interfaith encounter is not only relevant for those who enjoy interfaith dialogue, or learning for its own sake, but is important for any person who lives in a split society. It gives ordinary people an avenue to make an actual contribution towards real peace – directly, without being dependent on their leaders. Knowing and understanding the ‘other’ directly, in turn, alleviates fear of the unknown, ie the ‘other’, from members of their community, and thus improves the quality of life for all.

In his address on 15 October 1962, in Cornell College, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. expressed similar ideas in his powerful words: “...I am convinced that men hate

*each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don’t know each other, and they don’t know each other because they don’t communicate with each other, and they don’t communicate with each other because they are separated from each other. And God grant that something will happen to open channels of communication... because men of good will will rise to the level of leadership.”*

It is important to note that our approach in the Holy Land differs from many peacebuilding approaches in its strong emphasis on the grassroots inter-communal relations, and in its true inclusiveness. It refrains from supporting a specific political model, and instead invites supporters of all models to work together on the human infrastructure that is required for their success. This inevitably has a huge impact on their political beliefs as well, because while participants usually retain their existing political views, they seek ways to apply them in ways that care for, and honour the humanity of the ‘other’. Rather than advocating specific political parties, or models, we transform all of them to be more humane and care for the well-being of everyone.

You are all invited to join us and there are many ways to get involved. Please visit our website [www.interfaith-encounter.org](http://www.interfaith-encounter.org)  
We look forward to partnering with you.

# A Theology of Peacemaking

Corrymeela is Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation community which came into existence in 1965, before the outbreak in 1969 of what we euphemistically call "The Troubles". It was founded by a Presbyterian Chaplain at Queen's University in Belfast, named Ray Davey. Ray had joined the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) as a Chaplain to troops during the Second World War, and was captured in North Africa and held in several prisoner of war camps before ending up in Dresden just before that war was coming to a close.

He witnessed the bombing of Dresden and it changed his life in that he became convinced of the futility of conflict and war, and of the need to find better and more healthy ways of resolving conflict.

After the war, as a minister and Chaplain, he worked with students to create a community committed to faith, peace and dialogue in the face of difference. What became the Corrymeela Community was therefore already in place when the simmering sectarian tensions in the Northern Ireland of the sixties erupted into bloody violence.

Since that time Corrymeela has been active in places where the barbed points of division between traditions and cultures cause the most hurt and tension. In the context of Northern Ireland we are conscious that often this tension and conflict is discernible within and between Christian faith traditions. Our intent at these contested places is to transform division through human encounter.

We seek to test the possibility that, as people of faith, we might find a route to discussing our differences in ways which could, ultimately, inform the ongoing discussions about faith in contemporary Ireland. We are also realistic enough to know

that many would view faith as a primary source of conflict, but remain hopeful that, through careful and thoughtful practice and determined effort to remain in dialogue, faith and theology can be curative of our many hatreds and divisions.

As many will be aware Northern Ireland's main parties signed a peace agreement in 1998. It was finalised on Good Friday 1998, and is sometimes referred to as the Good Friday Agreement. It could be argued however, that although we reached agreement to end violent hostilities, we still have not reached a place of reconciliation.

Tensions have been heightened in recent years by negotiations around Brexit, and by the ongoing centenaries marking significant events that affected society here one hundred years ago. In the next few years the island of Ireland will be marking the centenary of the so-called War of Independence, our Civil War and the partition of the island. Differences in remembering threaten to plunge the island back into conflict.

Corrymeela is concerned to find ways of using the resources and histories of our faith traditions as a way of hosting complex and painful discussions on issues of public concern. One example is our Crossing Borders project which was sparked by the result of the Brexit referendum in 2016, and the subsequent triggering of Article 50 in March 2017, setting the timetable for withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (EU). These momentous events exposed fault lines in UK society, and also reignited tensions in relation to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

We have sought to enter the conversation, or the silence, in faith communities in relation to Brexit, and the borders we establish between ourselves, not to re-run the referendum, nor to debate the rights and wrongs of our various borders, but to ask ourselves what kind of a society we aspire to be in the future, beyond these contested issues.



*"We have sought to enter the conversation, or the silence, in faith communities..."*

To do this we have been hosting conversations throughout the UK and Ireland using materials we developed based on the sacred text of our Christian and Jewish communities, because this seemed the sensible thing to do. To date, more than 3,000 people have participated in workshops on the issues of borders and belonging. Putting our shared text at the centre of conversations enables us to navigate the complexity and the pain of the dialogue we need to have.

The resources we have been using are based on the biblical book of Ruth in the Hebrew Scriptures. Now this short story would not ordinarily be a book that people would flock to for wisdom and advice on contemporary issues of borders, belonging and Brexit. The stereotype we often carry is that this is a romantic book of the young, beautiful woman fallen on hard times who meets a good man, they fall in love, get married and have children, or at least a child. Of course, there is some questionable activity as the heroine seduces her soon-to-be husband, but by and large this can be glossed over, and at least it is tasteful, though only barely.

Perhaps the most well-known part of the story, is the transcendent declaration of loyalty by Ruth to Naomi, the mother of her deceased husband: "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me...if even death separates you and me." (Book of Ruth 1:16-17)

In her declaration Ruth conveys a loyalty and love that will overcome hatred and fear of the 'other'. She is a Moabite and Naomi an Israelite, and their story illustrates that when 'difference' is overcome, and only the goodness of the divine spirit is seen in the face of the 'other', all barriers can be broken. The two women create a powerful force of good for themselves, their family and their community.

As we engage deeper with the characters and their lives, there are other profound elements that reveal themselves. Like the mystery of relationships between women. Like the trauma of surviving one's children, of childlessness and marriage and patriarchy.

And of course, as we think about Brexit and our various belongings, we see that the story features a number of border crossings. Naomi and her husband Elimelech, and their two sons leave Bethlehem due to famine, and move to Moab, a place of plenty but also the place of the traditional enemy. The sons marry but once again the family falls on hard times and Elimelech and

the two sons die. The women are left alone and when Naomi decides to go home to Israel Ruth declares her loyalty to her, but everything changes for Ruth. She becomes a woman in a man's world, a foreigner in a country that dislikes her ethnicity and her religion, childless in a society that requires sons, a widow in a family-based culture, and poor in a community that lacks a safety net.

The Book of Ruth can be read as a form of counter-narrative to other extant political aspirations of the time, by telling a story where ethnic and religious purity is perhaps not as critical as might have been claimed. In Jewish tradition it is read at Pentecost alongside the reading of the ground-shaking events of Sinai, and the giving of the Law of Moses. This story thus preserves the importance of the ordinary lives of individuals alongside great world-making events, and dares us to find ways of making personal what could otherwise be overwhelming.

The book challenges us on the issue of welcoming the stranger; on redrawing our stereotypes through encounter with those who are 'other'; on finding the gaps where compassion can thrive in the midst of technical debates about law and tradition; on carrying losses that cannot really be grieved. It presents us with questions of how to protect the rights of vulnerable minorities, particularly those who are politically and socially marginal to the mainstream, and also the responsibility towards the poor of those who are financially and socially secure.

The story features those who are forced to migrate to another country because of poverty or famine and encourages communities to face the question of what constitutes national identity and belonging to the tribe.



*"...faith and theology can be curative of our many hatreds and divisions."*



There are many questions ahead for us in the light of the political choices made in 2016 which may take a generation to wash through. And when we are done these islands will be profoundly changed. In Corrymeela we are committed to ensuring that the imaginative, creative and caring voices of people of faith are heard clearly in the debates to come. We want to ensure that our voices are informed and shaped by our sacred texts, as well as by the, sometimes, disorienting fog of expert political opinion.

The book of Ruth may not deliver answers, but will help form better questions for us to explore together as communities of faith, and also empower us to take an effective place in the public square where decisions are being made that will affect the whole community. As we engage diligently with the text of Ruth we are being led into complex discussions and debates about the issues at the core of our national debates; about the exact nature of national identity and who belongs; about the rights of EU citizens in the UK, and of UK citizens remaining in EU countries; about our commitments to human rights; about combating racism and xenophobia; about legislation to

protect the environment and the future of our rural areas; about migration and immigration; about inequality in wealth distribution; and of course about relationships between these islands on the western edge of Europe.

Having a year of these workshops behind us now, and having met with a wide diversity of people throughout the regions of the UK and in Ireland, we are more convinced than ever that careful and sustained conversations about, within and between faiths can be healing for us, and can strengthen us for the long walk towards a more compassionate and gentle society.

*Transforming division through human encounter*

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Kathleen and Ray Davey, Founder of Corrymeela

# The Power of the Tongue

These days we have a word for it: hate speech. Yet, until recently, that phrase wasn't such a common phenomenon in our common spaces. Sadly, because of the prevalence of language of hate on digital platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, the average person is more than a little familiar with the idea of language that harms. To some people this may seem like a development that transcends the simple primary school chant of "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me". However, to me, it has a greater resemblance to the Jewish concept of *lashon ha-ra*. Literally, 'speech of evil,' *lashon ha-ra* has long existed as a category of criminality in Jewish legal sources (*halakhah*). The seriousness with which hurtful words are taken by Jewish thought is fascinating, and it certainly has implications for how we can understand a world in which 'hate speech' is an expression now familiar to young and old alike.

Anyone with a cursory familiarity of Judaism will tell you that Jews are obsessed with talking – talking in synagogue, talking about synagogue, talking about talking, and of course, making

rules about talking. Famously, Judaism is one of a few ancient legal systems to spend a great deal of breath lambasting the danger of speech. Chief of the Sages, Rabbi Akiva, in *Pirké Avot*, reminds us: 'Silence is a fence for wisdom'. Nearby, Tanna Sage, and leader of the Jewish people, R' Shimon ben Gamli'el, who surely knew what he was talking about considering his father was the Exilarch, says: "All my days I lived among the rabbis, and never did I discover something better for a person than silence".

Yet more than just praising silence, the rabbis also go to great lengths to introduce categories of prohibited speech: *lashon ha-ra* (the speech of evil) is only one form, there is also: *rekhilut* (gossip), and *motsi shém ra* (defamation of character). Today's world is full of accusations of libel, slander, and defamation of character – but for an ancient semi-legal system to spill so much ink reminding us about the dangers of speech, belies a deeper and better truth. Beneath it all, our Sages believed, and perhaps we today join them in doing so, that language has power.

At its root, this idea probably can be traced to the monumentally important, but consistently overlooked, Mishnaic mystical masterpiece, *Séfer Yetsirah* (Book of Creation), which proposes that all creation takes place through nothing other than letter and vowels. Taking seriously the statement of Genesis, that God spoke the world into being, the Book of Creation endorses a model of the universe in which all things are, at their most elemental, linguistic. Quite literally, the text imagines the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to be approximately what we today understand as the Periodic Table – the basic building blocks of all life, and of Creation itself. When some are combined in the right way, life blossoms and blooms. When others are combined, their chemical reactions provoke explosive energies, disastrous combinations of elements, or letters, which can be responsible for catastrophes and cataclysms.

Thus, for our Sages, our words (themselves combinations of letters) are like molecules, each one representing a particular power in the world around us. If we use the right words in the right way we can create diamonds, but other words may combine into a more explosive substance, likened to TNT. If we accept this basic premise: that the root of all existence is language itself – then it is no great surprise that the rabbis put such a high premium on literacy, and such a severe punishment on *lashon ha-ra*. Obviously, this kind of thinking has had a deep impact on a religion which is known for praising literacy and legality above all else, an academic faith which prizes language as a tool to demonstrate one's ability to argue one's position rather than prove one's faith.



“If we use the **right words** in the **right way** we can create **diamonds**”

Yet the idea that ‘speech of evil’ constituted prosecutable offenses is not new within the system of Jewish ethical and legal frameworks we call *halakhah*. The rabbis who formulated this position had a great deal of sources to rely on. Proverbs 18:21 states, *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*. Psalm 34:14 reminds us to, *keep your tongue from evil*. The rabbinic sources that follow are full of references to the power of silence, and the admonitions to practice *shemirat halashon* (guarding of the tongue). Maimonides devotes considerable space in his legal code (*Mishneh Torah*) to proper behaviour (*Hilkhot De’ot*), and there writes:

A person who collects gossip about a colleague violates a prohibition as Leviticus 19:16 states: “Do not go around gossiping among your people.” Even though this transgression is not punished by lashes, it is a severe sin and can cause the death of many Jews. Therefore, [the warning]: “Do not stand still over your neighbor’s blood” is placed next to it in the Torah [ibid.]. See what happened [because of] Doeg, the Edomite!

Who is a gossiper? One who collects information and [then] goes from person to person, saying: “This is what so and so said;” “This is what I heard about so and so.” Even if the statements are true, they bring about the destruction of the world. There is a much more serious sin than [gossip], which is also included in this prohibition: *lashon ha-ra*, i.e., relating deprecating facts about a colleague, even if they are true. [*Lashon ha-ra* does not refer to the invention of lies;] that is referred to as defamation of character. Rather, one who speaks *lashon ha-ra* is someone who sits and relates: “This is what so and so has done;” “His parents were such and such;” “This is what I have heard about him,” telling uncomplimentary things. Concerning this [transgression], the verse [Psalms 12:4] states: “May God cut off all guileful lips, the tongues which speak proud things...”

The manner in which Maimonides identifies what *lashon ha-ra* is about is important: it is not lies, but truths. Evil speech can come about through absolute truth. What matters is not the

veracity of what we say, but the purpose with which we say it. Elsewhere in his codification of Jewish law, Maimonides tries to underline the seriousness of speaking ill of people by comparing *lashon ha-ra* to an arrow – once it is shot, you cannot bring it back. A similar sentiment is relayed by a common Chasidic story meant to illustrate the danger of *lashon ha-ra*:

A man went about the community telling malicious lies about the rabbi. Later, he realized the wrong he had done, and began to feel remorse. He went to the rabbi and begged his forgiveness, saying he would do anything he could to make amends. The rabbi told the man, “Take a feather pillow, cut it open, and scatter the feathers to the winds.” The man thought this was a strange request, but it was a simple enough task, and he did it gladly. When he returned to tell the rabbi that he had done it, the rabbi said, “Now, go and gather the feathers.” Stunned, the man began to protest when the rabbi said: “You cannot gather the feathers again any more than you can make amends for the words which you have spoken.”

Clearly, we can relate to these common-sense understandings of the power and danger of language. In our day, you may be able to delete your tweet, but the words remain out there eternally, engraved on some server somewhere. Quite literally, we cannot take back what we say, especially when we say it online. In today’s world, in which we are struggling to respond to increasing violence of language, online and off, when ‘hate speech’ is a commonly-understood phrase, perhaps we can learn something from the rabbinic notion that underpins all of the sources we have seen: language is that which creates the world and destroys it. God spoke the world into being in Genesis, and we, who possess that self-same power through our own words, need to be doubly careful to not casually destroy it through twitterstorms and Facebook rants. Perhaps today more than ever we should assume to be true to that basic maxim that our Sages made a centrepiece of Jewish ethics: death and life are both, quite literally, in the power of the tongue.



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# Hatred’s Song

It goes without saying that hatred has its political, social and religious drivers. Similarly, we all have our own sense of moral duty with regard to how to address hatred, and what personal or moral obligations we have in that regard. I am not looking to explore those questions, but rather to reflect on the nature of hatred, and how it is expressed in song.

The seminal American musician, Johnny Cash, was driven by an intense anger in response to what he saw as social inequality. He spoke up for prisoners, and for first nation Americans amongst others. This is why he presented himself as the ‘man in black’, using his music largely as a protest platform, in contrast to the more saccharin songs he also wrote.

But in “Folsom Prison Blues” he is not expressing social anger. Instead, when he sings “I shot a man in Reno just to see him die”, which he sang to a large crowd of prisoners at Folsom Prison in 1968, he is articulating his belief in a universal capacity for man to act out of non-specific, but all pervasive, hatred. It was 1955 when he first sang:

*When I was just a baby  
My Mama told me, "Son  
Always be a good boy  
Don't ever play with guns, "  
But I shot a man in Reno  
Just to watch him die...*

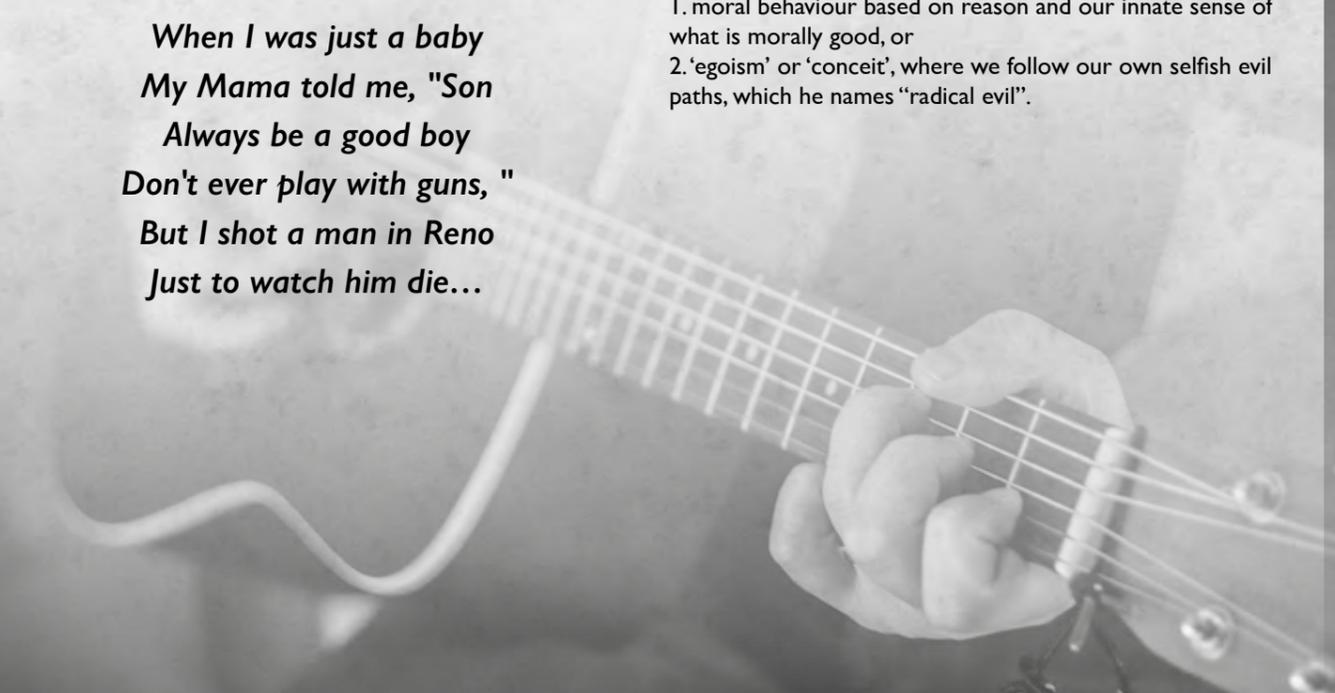
Semantically, to my mind here, Johnny Cash is expressing the notion ‘to hate’ as an intransitive verb: in other words ‘to hate without a specific object’... the ‘hero’ did not hate the man he shot, but killed him “just to see him die”: revenge of any kind is not an issue. At the end of the verse Cash sings:

*“When I hear that whistle blowin’  
I hang my head and cry”.*

The implied remorse is not for the crime, not for the victim of the murder, but a meditation on personal loss of freedom: the “whistle blowin’” is a reference to the ‘railroad train’ – a great symbol of freedom and movement across the vast expanses of the USA – and which the ‘hero’ can hear from his prison cell.

Where exactly, did Johnny Cash’s hero in the song derive his hatred? The answer may be found in the philosophical nature of hatred, described in Immanuel Kant’s idea of ‘radical evil’. Simplified, Kant gives us two alternative routes to follow:

1. moral behaviour based on reason and our innate sense of what is morally good, or
2. ‘egoism’ or ‘conceit’, where we follow our own selfish evil paths, which he names “radical evil”.



**“ to counter hatred and injustice, you have to be active politically, rather than purely reflective in a philosophical, artistic or political sense ”**

Towards the end of his life, Johnny Cash made the album American IV, 'The Man comes Around', featuring the song "Hurt" by the band 'Nine Inch Nails'. The video that accompanies the song serves as a platform reflecting the different stages of Cash's life, with its highs and lows. His religious faith is expressed in a painful way, suggesting that his sense of man's capacity to hate, expressed in "Folsom Prison Blues", lived on in him to the end. Although he had embraced Christianity, a deep sense of foreboding is reflected in the black and white melancholy of the video. He is searching for redemption, but there is no sense that he will actually find it, as throughout his life he encountered hatred without cause.

So, what does this tell us about our comprehension of the nature of hatred? Karl Marx wrote: *'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.'*

These words are echoed by the Marxist philosopher, Theodor Adorno, who wrote the following about music: *'One who weeps does not resist any more than one who marches. Music that permits its listeners the confession of their unhappiness reconciles them, by means of this release, to their social dependence.'* In both cases, the underlying political point made is that to counter hatred and injustice, you have to be active politically, rather than purely reflective in a philosophical, artistic or political sense. The role of philosophy (and art, including music) is to allow the time and space to drop preconceptions, social mores or the superficial, and look at the 'thing in itself' as Kant did, as a 'transcendental' phenomenon.

Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues", provides a glimpse into the true nature of hatred. It stands alongside other great songs about hatred or evil, like John Lennon's uncompromising track "Gimme some truth". Both present the listener with a meditation on hatred, and live on forever as great examples of the iconic art of 20th Century song writing.

David Gilbert is Chairman of Creative United for the Arts Council of England, and Chairman of the Association of Illustrators and DigVentures Archaeology. He lectures in Philosophy and the Arts.

# Unchilding the Child

A conference was held on 8th and 9th March 2019 at Birkbeck College University of London, addressing the issue of Palestinian Childhoods: Human Rights, Mental Health and Resistance. It was a joint conference sponsored by the Birkbeck Institute for Social Research (BISR) and co-organised by the UK Palestine Mental Health Network (UKPMHN), it was also sponsored by Friends of Birzeit University, and the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities. Featured guests were from Palestine, including leading academics and young people, as well as youth workers. The conference addressed the mental health of children and families in occupied Palestine, exploring the psychological and relational impacts of oppression, and the denial of human rights. This focus on childhood included experiences of arrest and imprisonment, as well as children's participation in Palestinian social and political life, and their modes of resistance to occupation.

The conference began with a film showing of "Surviving Childhood" and a discussion panel with young Palestinians who are members of the Children's Parliament. The programme was extremely thought-provoking and shed light on aspects of the Israeli repression that are rarely if ever exposed to scrutiny. Podcasts of key speeches will be available on the websites of BISR or UKPMHN. The conference was opened by playwright, journalist and campaigner Victoria Brittain, who compared and contrasted the experience of the Palestinian children with that of children, she had spoken to, who were brutalised by South Africa's apartheid government.

The keynote address was by Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kervorkian, author of "Security theology, surveillance and the politics of fear" from the Hebrew University, and soon to be Chair in Global Law at QMU. She proposed the notion that children are being systematically "unchilded" – not just with bullets but educationally, emotionally and psychologically – the latter by their family life and family security being constantly under attack by the Israeli state. The conference heard that whether Muslim or Christian, the Israelis' monopoly of power exerted even over life and death – Shalhoub-Kervorkian said that her Uncle had died while visiting the West Bank, he was denied burial rights in Jerusalem because he did not have his permit on him at the time of his death. A child who is born in Jerusalem is often not granted a birth certificate, as a consequence he/she can be easily singled out and deprived of residency rights. In Haifa, graveyards she saw as a child now have Israeli buildings on them. So, collective memory and history is also under attack.

As part of the research for her books Shalhoub-Kervorkian has interviewed families and recorded what they say: she found that the uncertainties of everyday life profoundly affected children, and motivated their actions and their longings. They had no safe space to just be, and just be happy. She recorded the mother of a Gaza-based child who asked these questions of the child, at the Professor's request: "Why do you want to go back to Haifa; you've never seen it" Child replied: "I've seen it; I've seen it in your eyes, in my grandparents' eyes and in your hearts".

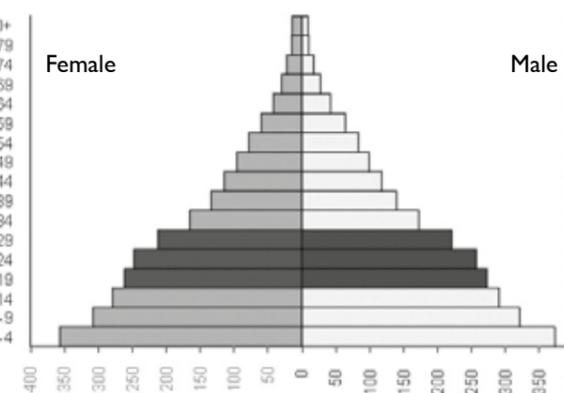
Photo: Jaber Thabet of Palestine Trauma Centre



Another child said: "I go to the march because I can play, I can't play at home, it's prison"; another "you want me to stay at home and be safe, where is home? Where is it safe?" The Professor deduced that "return" for many of the children means trying to have a childhood that they have lost. Going to the march is an opportunity to be free. Another child, who does not go on the march, said she wanted to study and achieve as she wanted "to return to her homeland alive and not crippled": she has been witness to people being killed and crippled by deliberate and targeted Israeli fire. Another child had said, "They have every power, they steal everything but they can't steal our memories and our longing". Having said that, with the Nakba Law, the commemoration of Nakba of 1948 is forbidden; this is a systematic and determined attack on Palestinian collective memory – as if by erasing memory, Israel can claim total victory, she said.

Dr Samah Jabr Psychiatrist, academic, writer and member of the Health Ministry was the second keynote speaker. The first, and vital point she made is that the age profile of Palestinians is actually a pyramid, with a huge base of a young population 0-19. It is totally unlike the profile of age spread in other countries.

Population Pyramid in Palestine, Mid-2017



From: PowerPoint presentation of Dr Samah Jabr/Palestine Health Ministry.

Young people are extremely vulnerable to their parents being brutalized and humiliated, and by the authority gap that results from this; one consequence is that children grow up very fast – too fast – often being a support to a parent if their partner is incarcerated or killed. This ongoing psychological pressure is understood, but barely catered for, by the health system. The fault though is not just with the Israelis, and the West – the Palestinian Authority itself spends 27% of its budget on protecting settlers, more than the 18% and 11.5% on education and health. As a result, there is an impossibly low number of mental health professionals to meet a massive need: there are no children's beds in hospital psychiatric wards: there is a ratio of 0.04% psychiatrist/100000 Palestinians and 1 student counsellor/780 students. There is also physical deprivation which affects mental health, for example, malnutrition and anaemia is very high among Palestinian children. Matters would be very different if the Authority would recognize that mental health and education is key to wellbeing and stability of the whole society, but as it is the children have totally inadequate support for the daily traumas that they go through.

Dr Jabr said that Palestinians traditionally have had nothing of value to trade, in order to gain revenue, other than a highly educated population which they can export to the Middle East. However, in recent years, education has become a lottery – first there is no pre-schooling and then schools are being deprived of money – funding is only offered by the Israeli Education Ministry if the school environment and the curriculum is Judaized. Pupils suffer humiliation and oppression in what should be the second safest place after the home.

Children are often brutalized even on their journey to and from school, and so there is a large drop-out rate because children are being intimidated. There was a graphic description of such an experience given by Dr Shalhoub-Kervorkian, who participates in direct action – she accompanies children on their way to school between 7 and 8 am in Jerusalem. She said she has often documented specifically sexualised and gendered violence by soldiers against school age girls and boys: all of this will be documented in detail in her new book *"Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding"* which is due out in July.

Reflecting on some of the people she works with in Palestine, Dr Jabr said that she has seen imprisoned and tortured children who have become traumatised; emasculated and disempowered fathers (and mothers) who create a vacuum within the family; youngsters who feel the need to fill this vacuum in order to restore dignity to themselves and others in their family. Children often become the means of support to a mother whose husband is in prison, and thus they lose their childhood. The same process occurs when parents, especially fathers are imprisoned: they

Sarah Sheriff works in adult education and has had a longstanding interest in Middle East Politics and History. She worked for a number of years as a regular columnist and reporter for the Muslim monthly *The Muslim News* and contributes to the work of the Muslim Community Helpline.

<https://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2019/04/palestinian-childhoods-human-rights-mental-health-and-resistance/>



are not able to defend their families, their authority is fatally undermined, and so children, especially vulnerable teenagers look to other "heroes". They do not have positive role models, and being impulsive and sometimes reckless, they see as heroic the direct action taken by peers e.g. the spate of stabbings that followed on from that by a very promising student, who had witnessed the murder of relatives. Dr Jabr believes that this copy-cat behaviour was totally driven by emotion. Adolescents all over the world need guidance, but especially so in such an oppressed place as Palestine. In response to Israel's jailing and intimidation of children, more are driven closer to the edge. It is important to realize, the conference heard *"it is not just gun to body, but gun to mind, emotion, childhood and to hope"*. The situation has now been exacerbated with the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility to 12, yet the young people who came to speak at the conference kept saying *"we're not terrorists"*. The very fact that they have to state this is indicative of the pressure on them to prove their innocence.

The conference continued with a response to the keynote addresses from Professor Jacqueline Rose, and then Panellists answered questions from participants in the audience.

Many issues arising from the presentations were addressed but for Professor Shalhoub-Kervorkian, the primary issue is to correctly label what is happening to Palestinian children:

**Palestinian children are being "unchilded"; cruelly dispossessed of their childhoods. Hence the role of the international community and global citizenry is to challenge what is going on, and call it out for what it is: a systematic violation of the human rights of Palestinians, especially affecting the long-term mental wellbeing of Palestinian children.**

**"it is not just  
gun to body,  
but gun to  
mind, emotion,  
childhood and  
to hope"**

## Nameless

First she hears steps like creeping boulders.  
Behind, a shuffle like shod mist. The scrape  
of keening scree is the voice of the wind.

She tries not to peer through to the lane,  
but it's hard not to see, now the gas lamps  
light the path, even up here, the village end.

She gives up, fidgets to a window. Sees  
a nick in the damp moon. Plays at scaring  
herself with the worst bogeys she knows:

the prophesy of magpies, the vengeance of owls.  
Spreads the chilly thrills, til mam pulls her close,  
holds too hard. Come dripping dawn, she watches

the dog worry a rock knocked from the drystone wall.  
Spies a flap of sacking caught there. It's child's play,  
her shinny into the cemetery. The stumble

into knowing isn't. She i-spies divots shoddily stamped  
over a mound that hardly shows above the ground.  
Already levelling to invisibility. No matchstick cross.

No name. She becomes the seer of rag shrouds.  
Of unsuckled nipples. Of hefty shepherds trudging  
on stone feet. Too skint for church burials

of kids who barely lived. She notes the granite  
superiority of the dead rich. Kicks a headstone.  
Yelps with the pain of knowing. Well. *It won't wake baby.*

*Inspired by the gentle and compassionate memorial  
to babies buried in unmarked graves in Arnside cemetery.*



# Voting with your feet

## SANATAN DHARMA AND FEMININITY

Hinduism is one of the oldest Faiths still practiced, and this is reflected in its name of Sanatan Dharma – the Eternal Faith; if one counts from the birth of Lord Rama, at around 5100 years BCE, then we are looking at 7000 years of continuous practice. Counted by the number of adherents Sanatan Dharma is also the 3rd largest Religion in the world today. The majority of adherents still live in the region of origin, the Indian sub-continent. It is also one of the only world religions that worships God as female, however the treatment of earthly females sometimes leaves something to be desired.

There are practices, rituals and traditions that date back to when Lord Rama walked the earth. There are rituals and traditions which have been retained from time immemorial, and are practiced by the more orthodox. More liberal practitioners however, set up new traditions and paramparas, and those who struggle with the orthodox and ritualistic moved to the liberal and ultramodern. This is a migration that happens in even the newer traditions of all religions; there are rules such as the use of the Mikveh in Orthodox Judaism, or rules around menses for Muslim women, and rules around sexual intercourse and cleanliness before prayers in many religions.

In Hinduism we have deities for every occasion, different needs and different groups. Even different temples for men and women, separation by gender in some temples, and rules around interaction with deities, approaching altars or entering temples. For example, in some temples, many young men will go on Saturdays to honour the Lord Hanuman, when women may have been told not to attend. However, in another temple, it may be the norm that women attend and offer Sindhoor to Lord Hanuman, and worship him more than the men do. Each temple/tradition/Sampradaya is usually autonomous and makes its own rules and traditions.

In many Orthodox Hindu homes, families follow the custom that a menstruating woman does not enter the home temple, and

in many cases the kitchen as well, until after the Ritual bathing at the end of her Menses. Some would cite the Mahabharata, and the attempt to disrobe Draupadi, as the incident from which the separation of women in menses came from. In this episode in the Mahabharata, Draupadi has not appeared in public for many days as she is menstruating; she has not washed her hair, offered prayers etc., as she would only do these once she bathes at the end of her menses. This is taken as direction by many adherents who follow this tradition, to avoid contact with sacred objects and places during this time. I have often proposed the question in debates: "Do you think the Goddesses stopped their work for one week in every four?"

I have met women who do not put their hands in the sacred Sindhoor during menses, and their husbands place it on their foreheads for them at this time of their monthly cycle. Most of these rituals and traditions go on quietly in people's homes. Traditions such as these are passed on from one generation to the next. I may not necessarily agree with them all, but I respect the wishes of the families and communities to carry on with them, as long as they understand the reasons behind them. Of course, most of the menses traditions started from a perspective of hygiene, and health, and I often explain to women that these have now improved so much that one no longer has to fear leaks, or contamination. Even so, regularly in my work as a Prison Chaplain, I come into contact with women who will not step into a sacred space when it is their time of the month.

In the case of the Sabarimala temple this issue has been given wide media coverage, stimulating discussion across the world by Hindus and non-Hindus alike – each wanting their say in whether women of menstruating age should be allowed to enter this temple. The Sabarimala temple is dedicated to the bachelor Deity Ayyappa, and as such is the bastion of male worshippers, extended to include old women, and young girls under the age of puberty only, for many centuries. Protests that evoked the rule of

Law, and public outrage, were brought into the debate. Millions of people formed human chains for and against the Temple committee's ban on women of menstruating age entering.

At one point in time, I was receiving WhatsApp messages and Facebook posts of protests many times a day about this issue. Two have stuck in my mind, one was a quiet demonstration by Keralans in support of the Temple committee, dressed in the traditional temple attire of white and gold, carrying puja thalis/deepam, they stood quietly miles after mile in protest at the High Court imposed verdict; and the other, Hindus, and non-Hindus who formed a chain in support of the court verdict to open up the temple. One thing that struck me about this second chain was, when an interviewer asked some women, who were veiled and not Hindu, why they were in the chain, their reply was that they did not know, only that they had been told by their husbands to do so. Given this response, it would seem that their demonstration was not on religious grounds, but more likely they were being used as pawns in a political game, with the Subaramala temple at the centre.

As we all know, at the culmination of this issue the committee of the temple, in line with the High Court judgement, bowed to the Rule of Civil Law, and to public pressure, and reversed the temple tradition of several hundred years. They are now allowing all women and girls to enter the temple. Who will go? The curious and the tourists, the true female devotees of Ayyappa, will in all honesty not go, they will go to the temples that are traditionally known to be open to women.

There are many temples that still do not allow menstruating women to serve the deities, or even allow women through the door. There are many places of worship of other faiths that do the same. There are many places of worship of many different Religions where the congregation is split, either, males and females on different sides, or, females behind the male and vice

versa. Just as one is free to change one's Religion, one is free to choose the place of worship too. We can choose to offer our patronage, or not, based on whether we like the rules of that particular place of worship, and tradition. As long as each person has the power of choice, and makes an informed decision, I see no issue. My personal opinion is that each Temple committee/ leadership is free to make its own rules and traditions. There are many temples and traditions, Orthodox and traditional, Liberal and modern to choose from, women will continue to go to the one that welcomes them.

The saddest part of this whole issue is that a protest, staged locally at the Subaramala temple in Kerala, and led largely by non-Hindus, for their own political or religious reasons, has been blown into a global typhoon by the mass media, giving rise to criticism and derision of Hindu belief and practice. But this is not the first time this has happened. A few years ago, I was invited on BBC Asian Voice to discuss this very issue - Menstruating women not being allowed into the temples, and religious services - and I made the same point: If any Hindu women feel strongly about this, vote with your feet, do not go to the temples that enforce these rules, and go to others which are more liberal. At the end of the programme when the well-known presenter was walking me out, I said to him "You know this is not only a Hindu issue, Muslims and Jews also have rules around menstruating women." His response: "My researchers have not found any such thing." Either his researchers are not doing their job properly or there is an underlying prejudice that distorts the integrity of programmes such as this.

Bharti Tailor is currently Vice-President and Trustee Religions for Peace UK and Member of the Core Group of the Global Hindu Foundation

# Through a lens, clearly

It is something of a paradox that I have to thank my art teacher for driving me away from painting, and inadvertently encouraging my interest in photography: my paintings did not meet with her approval “you do not see things like that” she shouted at me. I had been influenced by the work of Marc Chagall, a modernist, and she obviously did not appreciate his work – she implied that I needed to wear glasses. To this day I have not attempted painting, but rarely go out without a camera.

With ambitions to become a teacher and take photography into the classroom, I went through an in-depth process of learning about shutter speeds, apertures and the mysteries of the darkroom. All of which helped me appreciate and develop my sense of purpose and determination in effectively using visual imagery within an educational context.

As a teacher of Religious Education, I now find that the visual image is often more powerful than the written word, but what is seen must be focused and have educational value for its inclusion: sometimes this will precede artistic beauty, although it is a bonus when they coincide. I also find that books are often too simplistic in their faith descriptions, so I have sought to challenge stereotypes with a wide variety of images, and encourage dialogue and discourse for other teachers of RE and their pupils. Knowledge of my own faith has also grown and developed as I have experienced it in the context of other cultures and religions.

My desire to educate through imagery has taken me to 120 countries in all parts of the globe, and although I am always conscious that my perspective is founded in my Christian faith, I have benefitted greatly, in every sense of the word, by looking at the faiths of others. I have seen beauty and diversity wherever I have travelled. No one country stands out as ‘better’ than another, each country is unique and this is true of people the world over, including the pupils and students that I have worked with.

In choosing images to convey my love of photography I have delved into my photographic collection of mountains, deserts, oceans, birds, animals and people that convey joy and celebration of life on our planet.

This photograph, taken in a Pentecostal Church in SE London, is not posed, yet it captures perfectly, the innate love of music and rhythm experienced by these children. ‘Make a joyful noise to the Lord’ the Psalmist encourages, and this seems to be a staple aspect of Pentecostal worship.

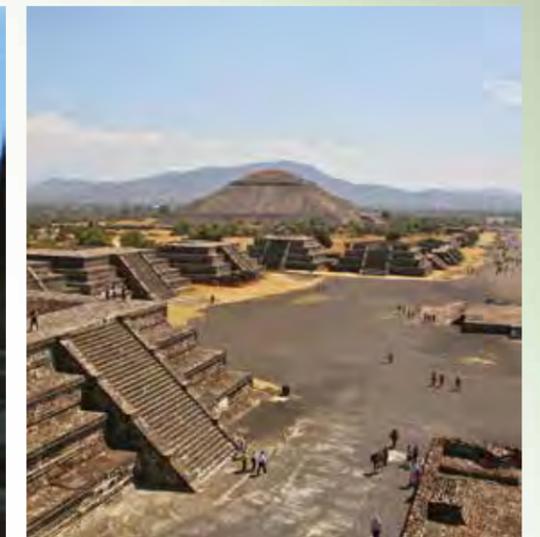


I have included this image of the Huli wigmen, indigenous people of the upper highlands of Papua New Guinea, because I felt challenged in many ways by the simplicity of their lifestyle, especially perhaps by the significance of their elaborate body paints. We are all part of God’s creation, yet our differences are

enormous. I realized from my trip that we, in the ‘developed’ world, would do well to recapture the simplicity of such peoples, and extend our understanding and responsibility towards them so that they can survive and maintain their way of life.



There are many historical places in the world that are truly amazing, yet full of mystery that inspires curiosity for the modern mind. The world heritage site of Borobudur in Indonesia, especially at dawn, has its own fascination, not least its scale. A 9th century Mahayana Buddhist temple built on a hill, its pyramid has 5 levels crowned by a stupa with access via stairways. To walk



the terraces and stairways to the top is to travel nearly 6km. Of an earlier age are the pyramids in Mexico and Egypt. These are testimony to cultural traditions of the highest order. Situated North East of Mexico City is Teotihuacan, with its pyramids and avenue of the dead.

LANGUAGE OF ART

There is something majestic about the mountains of the world. This image of Mt. Taranaki in New Zealand, a dormant (but not extinct) volcano, shows the magnificent beauty of nature. Situated in North Island it has snow on its peak for most of the year, creating its own micro-climate nearby. Estimated to be around 120,000 years old, the mountain is considered, in Maori culture, to be a living ancestor.



By contrast this image near Jomson in Nepal, marks the start of a trek my wife, Gill, and I made to Mustang on the Tibetan border in the Himalayas. We were already at 12,500ft., the trek rising to nearly 16,000ft. As we proceeded I was reminded of the writer in Psalms (121:1) who said 'I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where does my strength come?'. He believed help comes from the Lord, the Creator. In Judao-Christian tradition the mountains represent stability, yet for Buddhists there is a belief in impermanence, and this became evident to us. After a storm in the Anarapura range, which we had observed in the distance as we traversed this mountain desert, the small river we crossed barefoot a few days earlier, had become a series of raging torrents when we returned. The paths we had walked on the way in were not there on our return.

“the visual image is often more powerful than the written word”

One of the first lessons I learned about people on my travels, occurred during a visit to South India, Tamil Nadu. Gill and I were visiting an ancient temple with its ruined Mandir, which had 2-3 levels of carvings remaining. I was suddenly aware of an old man wearing a loin cloth, bent double using a staff, standing beside me. My initial reaction was to wonder how I could help him. He looked up at me and asked “do you understand what you are looking at?” I replied with a negative, at which, he seemed to come alive, and he climbed amongst the various religious statuary telling us the epic tales. He related

one tale to “Moses – in your Bible”. Then later pausing in mid flow asked “did you see Wimbledon this year?”, later “do you know Professor X from Oxford University?” The lesson that I have sought to apply subsequently is the old proverb ‘do not judge a book by its cover’, but also, always be ready for the unexpected. Travel is a pilgrimage of continuous learning. I have gained insights into faiths, cultures and practices that have enabled me to challenge stereotypes, and, I hope, have encouraged dialogue and discourse for teachers and pupils of Religious Education.

Raptors – birds of prey – hold a fascination for me, whether it is this sea eagle in Scotland, or the kites in Mongolia. Whenever I see raptors I am reminded that ‘those who wait on the Lord shall rise up with wings like eagles .....’ (Isaiah 40v31) My wonderment, and hope, is strengthened when watching them glide through the skies. Whilst sea eagles were nearly eliminated from the Scottish islands, Mongolia in its vastness is essentially unspoiled (it is as large as Europe). Kites are as common in Mongolia as sparrows used to be in the UK. It was a wonderful feeling when this kite wheeled into my camera vision and the shutter released.



Mongolian Kite

The Galapagos Islands are famed for their range and variety of marine and bird life. Amongst this is the large wing span Albatross. The wingspan can reach 3.7 metres and for many months of the year they may be out in the ocean. Mating involves a ‘ritualised dance’ (seen here). Yet they mate for life and manage to return to each other annually.



Albatross



Magellan Penguins

In Southern Chile, parental love and nurture finds expression with the Magellan penguins. Whilst there are many species of penguin, these may be found on a small island at the base of the Magellan Straights, near Cape Horn.



Greek Swallowtail Butterfly

This underwater image was taken when I was introduced to ‘drift’ snorkeling in Polynesia. A channel from an atoll allows the tide in and out. About 3m in depth it was a sensational experience to drift on the current through the channel, almost literally bumping into hundreds of fish and trying to avoid the sharp corals. I was reminded of how little we know about the wonders of our oceans, especially the depths.



So much of our planet is under threat from ill-advised human activity: in the form of pesticides and chemicals, or in careless disposal of plastics. There is an urgent ongoing need to recognise our responsibilities towards our planet, before it is too late. Whilst human workmanship may have its own beauty, in reality the natural world excels anything that can be manufactured. Whether it be the smallest of creatures – insects or butterflies – or the largest mammal – the blue whale – each is profoundly significant for our eco-system, be it on the ground, in the air, or under the seas.

# Remembered Images

Agnes Mary Katarina Franklin, my grandmother, was born in 1884, in India, like her mother and grandmother before her. They came from a British military family who lived in India during the period of the Raj. She was christened in Mount Abu, Maharashtra in Rajasthan, which was also her birthplace. Mount Abu was one of the hill stations used by the British for rest and relaxation. She told us tales of how all the European families went up to the cooler hill country, north of Calcutta, during the hot summer months. The train taking them from Calcutta was so slow that as it wended its way up to the hills the younger passengers alighted from it and picked wild flowers beside the railway line.

Mary, or Mollie, as she was called, had several brothers and one sister, called Mabel. They all played together in the large garden around the house, with the girls being free to run wild with the boys, even climbing trees, despite their long Victorian dresses and sashes. We listened to the tales and visualised an uncomplicated and calm childhood interrupted only by the occasional snake hunt – led by the gardeners and a pet mongoose – usually for a cobra detected in the undergrowth. Their freedom to play with their brothers was curtailed once the girls reached puberty and from then on they had to behave as young ladies were expected to act, with decorum at all times. We never tired of listening to our grandmother, whom we called Nanna, and whenever we could, we asked her again and again to tell us more about her girlhood in India.

We learned that when Mollie was in her late teens and early twenties her parents decided that she should get married, so they selected several young men whom they thought would be suitable. Several suitors were presented to her, none of whom she found interesting enough to qualify as a husband. Finally, she decided to marry my grandfather, William Bernard MacCabe, a man much older than herself, who was an engineer from Dublin, where he had designed the city water supply. He had come to India, as the chief engineer of the Calcutta Municipal Works, to design a new reservoir for the water supply of Calcutta. Indian firms were to construct an overhead reservoir, which was

required to give the water a head, as Calcutta was situated on a plain in an earthquake zone. My grandfather's great contribution to this engineering feat was that he did not anchor the concrete block which the tank was built upon. Thus, during an earthquake, the tank would slide and shimmy, but was not rent asunder. It has remained unchanged since he designed it in 1909 and the reservoir, Tallah Tank, is still in use today. It has the capacity to hold nine million gallons of water and is the largest overhead reservoir in the world.

My grandparents were married in 1908 in Calcutta, when he was forty three, and she was twenty four. My mother was born in May 1909 in Calcutta. She was an only child, which she felt very keenly. She was looked after by her Indian nanny called Fatimah. I once saw a photo of Fatimah bathing my mother as a small child. It was a very moving photograph of a young Indian girl in a sari and a little blond toddler in her tin bath. I sense that my mother loved Fatimah more, and was closer to her, than anyone else. She was born at a time when children were to be seen but not heard, and she suffered very much from the fact that she only saw her mother at certain, set times of the day. Thus, there was no closeness at all between her mother and herself. She and my grandmother were to suffer from this coldness and lack of rapport throughout their whole lives.

A portrait of my great grandmother, who was very beautiful, hung on the wall in Nanna's bedroom when we were children. She kept all her old photographs and other treasures in a leather cabin trunk, which we children loved to look inside when she opened it up. She had Victorian silver engraved hairbrushes, a silver hand mirror, bottles for perfume with silver tops engraved with the family initials. She also had some fine old pieces of Victorian jewellery, which she used to tell me would be mine one day. The suitcase had a very special smell of lavender about it. Whenever I smell this fragrance of old lavender I always recall my beloved grandmother with her dignified ways, and her calm, intelligent manner. She read widely and was very interested in comparative religions. From remarks which she later made to my

brother, it seems that she had a leaning towards Buddhism, but she was intrigued by the beliefs and practices of other religions, and the way of life of people who followed those traditions. As children, our imagination was fired about life on the Indian sub-continent where we always hoped to travel one day.

When my grandfather retired he took the decision to emigrate to Tasmania. He had a house, which he called 'Kismet', built on land which he had never seen, at Clarence Point, on the River Tamar. The house, built in the colonial style, had fourteen bedrooms and a large amount of farmland around it. The family moved from India to Tasmania in 1916. My grandmother found it very difficult to adapt to her new circumstances, having spent her whole life being looked after in India. To arrive in a strange land and live out in the country, with very little, or no help, must have been a formidable challenge for this gentle woman. She, who had been brought up in the rarefied atmosphere of the Raj, and had never done anything but socialise and, perhaps, play the piano, read and sew, suddenly found that she was in charge of a large farmhouse. She had to cook, which she had never done in her life, and run the house with its fourteen bedrooms, often with only a housekeeper to help her. Sometimes she also had to work in the garden if they could not get gardeners.

My mother was seven years old when she arrived in Australia. She led a very lonely life on the farm where they lived on the River Tamar. She seems to have spent most of her days alone, riding around the countryside on her pony. She was fascinated by her father, whose wit she appeared to have inherited. I never met my grandfather, but I loved my grandmother very much and respected and admired her for her tolerance, dignity and steadfastness through difficult times.

I was brought up by my mother to be proud of my lineage. However, I struggle with more recent revelations of conditions under the Raj and feel some gratification that the family had left India prior to Partition. The legacy of the engineering work carried out on the Tank at Calcutta by my grandfather is, however, remarkable, and I am proud to consider that he ensured that Calcutta would have water for over 100 years. The tank withstood the great earthquakes of Bihar and Bengal in 1934, and developed only 14 leakages in 108 years.

So famous was the Tallah tank that it has been part of "enemy plans" not only during World War II, but also the subsequent wars and conflicts with Pakistan. On one occasion, the authorities planted artificial grass as a cover on the roof of the tank to make it look like a playground to the pilots of enemy aircraft.

Unfortunately, I no longer have any of the photos of my grandparents taken during their time in India. My father died when I was twenty-one, when my mother got the idea into her head that all our photographs, including those of historical interest, should be destroyed. I don't know whether this is an Irish tradition, or whether she was emotionally unstable following the shock of my father's sudden death. In any case I and a friend were ordered to put them all in the incinerator, something which my brother constantly blamed me for over a long period of time. I should have been cleverer and pretended to burn them, having hidden them somewhere else. However, I was brought up to be obedient and scrupulously honest, so this idea simply did not enter my head. Do I regret it now, yes but only because I would treasure a photograph of my dearly loved grandmother, which I could pass on to my own children.

<http://www.thebeaconkolkata.co.in/tallah-tank/>

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/west-bengal/tallah-ales-inside-the-goliath-39-s-belly/cid/1505718>

*"She kept all her old photographs and other treasures in a leather cabin trunk, which we children loved to look inside when she opened it up."*

# Towards a pluralistic mindset

There is both historical and contemporary evidence that differences in religious philosophies, culture and practices can stir intolerance and violence at individual, community, national and world levels. In this background, the major objective of promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding is to inculcate religious tolerance at all levels leading to nonviolence and peace.

It is found that the philosophy of pluralism (Hick, Ramakrishna) which (logically) establishes that two or more religious world views are equally valid led to "interfaith" scriptural research, which corroborated the pluralistic point of view. There are other direct routes such as community activities where members of different religious faiths meet each other, learn to get along and make new friends contributing the formation of a pluralistic regime.

In the context of recent findings that religious violence is on the rise, Governments, Civil Societies and international bodies need to redouble their efforts in exploring all avenues for disseminating pluralism which is a "proactive instrument" for increasing religious tolerance, and thus reducing hatred and violence.

What could be a future strategy for carrying the promotion of "interfaith understanding" forward? While all the instruments viz legislation, teaching, preaching, education, community activities, formal and informal networks are to be used to their fullest extent, it is the experience of the author that interfaith education especially at the early school level holds the strongest potential for creating "future citizens with a pluralistic mindset".

The recognition and evolution of the power of education in promoting true interfaith understanding is very aptly described in the following paragraph.

"In communities around the world people struggle to find positive ways to establish a shared commitment to community, co-operation, mutual understanding, the respect for the rights of others and the corresponding responsibilities that we each share as global citizens amidst a sometimes-dizzying array of diversity. There is no power greater than education to develop the future cadres of citizens, scholars, professionals, and public servants, essential to cohesive and vibrant societies. But not just any education; education that transforms students into global citizens... Too often the answer to the conundrum of engaging diversity in education (especially religious and spiritual diversity), has been to mute particularistic voices in favour of a single normative identity, whether this be religious, nationalistic, or secular in nature. This reaction to the complexity of religious diversity

in society continues in today's political world whether it be debates over school curriculum, dress, or national identity. But gradually an educational experience has been envisioned that offers students the experience of reconstructing themselves in ways that make them better at seeing religious diversity as a resource rather than a barrier to healthy and peaceful human community".

In designing Interfaith Courses in Schools the 'Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools' prepared by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, discusses the issues such as relationship of interfaith education with neighbouring concepts such as: interreligious education, multi-religious education, and (inter) worldview education in a comprehensive manner.

Courses on inter-religious education prepared according to Toledo Guidelines are expected to yield major outcomes which include:

- an ability to connect issues relating to religions and beliefs to wider human rights issues (such as freedom of religion, and freedom of expression) and the promotion of peace (i.e. the capacity of religions and beliefs for solving and preventing conflicts);
- a core knowledge about different religions and belief systems, and knowledge of the variation that exists within all religions and beliefs, with reference both to the local/national context as well as to larger geographical areas.

Whereas until quite recently the syllabus of religious education (R.E.) in countries where it is taught was

predominantly based on the dominant religion of the country, recently with the application of Toledo Guidelines it is more likely, or at least expected, that religion will be taught in a plural context, involving the study of major teachings from several world religions. In some countries, it is also becoming increasingly common, especially in urban areas, for school parties to make visits to various places of worship, to watch, ask questions and even attempt some practice, thus gaining first-hand knowledge and understanding on what life can be like in another faith.

In higher education (19+), there are more courses becoming available on the study of world religions, and quite a number are using the term "interfaith". The syllabuses for such courses encompass a lot of contemporary issues, particularly regarding the issue of Global ethics.

**interfaith education especially at the early school level holds the strongest potential for creating "future citizens with a pluralistic mindset"**

Hiren Sarkar is an independent development consultant, former Chief of Development Policy Section, Economic and Social Commission for Asia, and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok.

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## Re-Emergence

Remzije (Rema) Sherifi, Director of the Maryhill Integration Network in Glasgow, sits behind her desk, it is the end of the day but there is noise and movement in the meeting room just behind us. Preparations are in hand for choir practice later in the evening. The building is a busy community hub bringing migrants, refugees and local people together for various cultural and arts initiatives. Rema is very much at home here in this community, though it might be truer to say that Rema has made it her home. She has been tirelessly active in this community since her arrival in 1999.

As an ethnic Albanian, Rema had fled persecution and war in Kosovo with her husband and three sons to a refugee camp in Macedonia. It was there, that she and her family learned, by some strange twist of fate, that they were to be sent off in a new direction, to a new future and a new homeland. Medics had confirmed what Rema already knew, her breast cancer was back and she needed treatment.

It was only when she was actually on the plane, that she was told she was heading for Glasgow, Scotland. The thing that struck Rema most on arriving at Glasgow Airport was that people were smiling, and she realised that for a long, long time, smiling faces had been missing from her life, and that of her family.

They and their fellow Albanians were met by interpreters, and quickly sent to what would become their new homes. Rema said she will always remember how moved she was by the kindness of a stranger who had left a bowl of fresh fruit, chocolates and flowers on the kitchen table to welcome them to their new home. That night under a solid roof, with soft beds, and no fear or sounds of war, they all slept peacefully. One of her sons, so exhausted, slept solid for 24 hours.

How had it come to this? In 1989, Slobodan Milošević came to power in Serbia and old hatreds of ethnic Albanians who lived in Kosovo began to re-emerge, accompanied by a growing fear of their increasing power within Serbia and Yugoslavia. Rema herself had been one of the first women radio journalists in Kosovo at Radio Gjilan. Her generation had seen growth and potential in Kosovo, not least with the establishment of the University of Pristina where education was taught in Albanian, the language of 80% of the Kosovan people. But slowly, Albanians began to lose their jobs in all spheres of life, and most profoundly their education. Rema's sister Sherife, who was a teacher, and women's rights activist at the time, said to Rema "If you want to destroy a people, this is the way to do it. Put a stop to education". Indeed, destruction of the Albania people was at the very core of Milošević's regime.

Soon curfews were imposed, stories of ethnic Albanians being tortured, and disappearing, became common place; their human rights began to erode into nothingness, and there was no longer any right of appeal. Police and army presence increased in the streets, until at last, persecution of individuals escalated into full



*"In those ten years all our dreams started to fall apart as if they were being packed away in a box"*

scale war. What becomes apparent in talking with Rema, as she reflects back over the years, is the intensity of this decline: how subtly her people were silenced, their language, culture and voice fading to silence within media and educational establishments. Fear had begun to seep into all aspects of their lives. There was however, Rema tells me, always the hope that at some point the world would take serious notice of what was happening to the Albanian people, and that "the world would stop it".

Despite the persecution, Rema says that there was a strong sense of community and survival in those years. Children were sent to individual homes to be taught by ex-teachers; people were supportive and innovative, trying to make money in new businesses. But no amount of community support and innovation could bring back what had been lost, or stop the reality of their situation. All parents want to see their children thrive and have a better, or as good a life as themselves, Rema explains, it is a universal parental feeling. So, when as a parent you begin to realise the opposite is actually happening, that all your striving for something better, safer and more equal for your children is being destroyed, it is really scary, and touches something deep within you. "Life," says Rema "was shrinking not growing... In those ten years all our dreams started to fall apart as if they were being packed away in a box. There were always stories of atrocities circulating, giving rise to fear of - rape, torture, death, of yourself or your family, friends and children." One day Rema's son came home to say that there was paramilitary activity in the surrounding areas, and it was heading to their town. They spent that night in a basement - with tensions and emotions escalating beyond fear - Rema says: "it was the longest night of my life."

Terror raged outside, but luckily they all survived. Announcements advising people to get out into refugee camps in Macedonia were now the only signs of hope for survival of Rema and her family, and so they made their escape from Kosovo, leaving all they had known behind.

Safe within the refugee camp, but still in earshot of the noise of war, Rema heard unimaginable stories of horror. She says: *"It was hard to imagine, and to take in what you were hearing, how people could imagine such cruelty to inflict on others."* Within a short time, Rema, her family and many other Albanians were sitting in a plane to Glasgow, where a new life awaited them. Rema reflects on how it is strange to think back to that journey and how just three hours travel in a plane was the distance between war and peace.

For sure, Rema is not a person who dwells in the past, but in the future. Treatment for breast cancer now behind her, Rema wasted no time getting involved in community work to help young children get their childhood back after the trauma of war. She was aware of the need to also work with women to help them rebuild a new life for themselves and their families in this new community in Glasgow. Dance, drama and football groups began to emerge to heal and rebuild a sense of community. Interpreters were a great lifeline, but were normally only around for important events or problems, not for the everyday conversations that needed to happen with the new host community. With no, or limited English, communication relied on a heightened interpretation of actions and reading facial expressions. Rema said that *"the Glasgow people were incredibly warm and hospitable, and in time you began to realise the possibility of new life – a normal life. The sense of who you are begins to re-emerge – not a person living in fear and persecution but a person who is of equal value and free to live"*.

The community began to flourish, becoming more and more integrated with the surrounding host community, each offering help to one another. Rema volunteers for a Woman's group in the city, making crafts and cards. She said that she felt the need to give something back to what seemed to her like a second chance

in life. In time she even started thinking and dreaming again – such is the feeling of freedom. Rema became a development worker for the Maryhill Integration Network to help develop the community as a whole, both local and incomers. Art and culture are used as a way of bringing communities together. Drama, art, dance and the sharing of food needed no words to express stories about the human need for understanding, acceptance and belonging.

We touch on the subject of religion, Rema tells me that she was brought up in a communist state. Her mother was Muslim, and would practice her faith in a quiet way in a household of communists. Spirituality on the other hand radiates from Rema, and her life is testament to her sense of a 'universal faith' that connects us all. She highlights that Albanians are predominately Muslim but there are also Catholic, Orthodox and Bektashi. For centuries, territories populated by Albanians, including Kosovo, have been remarkable for a unique interfaith tolerance. But, the interest of the nation has always been primary in relation to religious matters, being Albanian first is paramount. Rema believes that there is much the world can learn from the Albanian's experience in respecting freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, and achieving inter-religious harmony. She says: *"You cannot change the things that happen to you in life, but you can change your circumstances and follow a new path. We can find strength and inspiration in other people as well as ourselves. Each of us can take action to make a society a better place. We are each like little drops in the ocean."*

In 2017 Rema published a book 'Shadow Behind the Sun' that tells the story of her life, and the historical background which shaped it. She has also received nominations and awards for her contribution to society and community initiatives. In 2009 she was nominated Scotswoman of the Year, and in 2013 she was the Refugee Woman of the Year. She would say that these recognitions are also an acknowledgement of the support of her family, and all the many people who have helped her on her life's journey. *"The key to moving on,"* Rema says, *"is accepting help, which is not always an easy thing to do."*



Maryhill Integration Network (MIN) since 2001 brings communities together through, art, social, cultural and educational groups and projects, offering people a chance to learn new skills, meet new people, share experiences and take part in worthwhile activities to improve their communities.

Min works in partnership with local public and third sector partners with the city's settled and new communities to plan jointly for the future, to meet the needs of communities becoming more diverse as a result of the arrival and settlement of the asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from mainland Europe.



Staff and Volunteers at Maryhill Integration Network (MIN)

MIN's main activities include a carefully designed, and user-led, weekly programme focusing on community involvement, participation, and empowerment. This programme of activities runs alongside regular support and advice, community events and outreach partnership projects which are coordinated across the city, focusing of the arts as a tool for integration and social cohesion, as well as promoting opportunities for participation in local community volunteering opportunities.

# Spring Sunshine and Optimism

It was 1962 when I left the Caribbean Island of Dominica to come to England: a journey that fulfilled a promise made to me by my mother when she had left Dominica the year previous to join my stepfather. He had been part of the Windrush generation and chose to live in Bradford, close to some of his relatives. In the intervening period, I lived in a boarding house in Roseau and attended a Convent High School, with my father and uncle keeping watch over me – I was 17 years old, rather shy and timid.

Everyone played a part in my travel arrangements, even the Chief of Police, who was a friend of my mothers, and the nuns – teachers in my school – who told me to avoid the pubs. Friends and family waved me off – I was to travel to London via Antigua and was dressed in a cotton top with a pleated skirt, stockings, black small heeled shoes and carried a raincoat – all of which became very significant later. Never having left Dominica before I was very nervous of this undertaking and had to place my trust in the staff of the airline, fellow passengers and my family in England. I was assured that my stepfather would be waiting for me at Heathrow airport with a warm coat.

We landed in Antigua as planned to find my connection to London had already left. I had to spend the night in a hotel and await the next flight to the UK. I was scared of staying in the hotel on my own and so was unable to enjoy the luxurious surroundings, the beautiful gardens and good food – despite efforts of the helpful staff I was unable even to give them a smile.

I then found that the next flight to the UK was via New York to Manchester – in one way I was quite happy with the final destination being Manchester as this was nearer to Bradford. It was a busy flight and I noticed that all of the passengers had thick coats, cardigans and scarves etc. I only had my raincoat – which fortunately had a fur collar. I held on to the comfort of knowing that on my arrival in the UK I would have a warm coat.

We landed in New York and I had to walk down the steps of the plane, onto the forecourt and into the airport. I had never felt anything like that temperature in my whole life...the freezing wind went through to my bones, even my teeth became painful, and I started shaking. My body went into shock and I could neither eat nor drink. I huddled my miserable self into a chair in the transit lounge, wrapped myself in a blanket and waited for my flight.



My stepfather was informed of the changes and the airline staff suggested he pick me up in Manchester but he declined as he was already on his way to London by train. Consequently, I had to board another plane for Heathrow – the waiting area for this flight was outside and it was then that I discovered that Manchester was wet, foggy and damp. Within hours I had travelled from an Island that had natural hot springs and tropical rainforests to find myself in totally inadequate clothing in near freezing temperatures. I felt that the cold had seeped deep into my being and that I would never recover.

**“there was a lot of scepticism and ignorance with regard to the black community”**

As promised, my stepfather presented me with a warm coat at Heathrow but no one seemed to realise how much the cold had affected me, mentally and physically. Even as I sat in the train to Bradford I was shocked at how grey the skies were, and how dark it became in the carriage. The journey seemed to go on forever and I missed the colour and warmth of home.

My arrival in Bradford of course meant a joyful reunion with my mother, I loved her very much and was pleased that she had settled in well to life in England. She had become an active member of St. Mary's church community – her Christian faith was always an important aspect to her life. Her love and celebration of Caribbean culture mainly manifested through her musical taste and her cooking otherwise she had worked hard to fit in with British culture and the way of life. But there was a lot of scepticism and ignorance with regard to the black community. As individuals and as a community we were not made to feel overly welcome, and integrating wasn't easy at first, but we were determined to integrate. 'No Irish, no coloureds, no dogs', this was a sign seen frequently when we looked for places to rent.

The few days following my arrival were especially hard, the cold had a deep impact on me which made it difficult to function in day to day life. My taste buds had suffered from the shock of temperature change, and food held no temptation for me. My mother's house had a coal fire and paraffin heaters but I felt cold all the time and was constantly shivering. Worst of all the toilet was outside and covered in icicles. Fog, smog and black ice only added to my misery and snow proved to be a massive disappointment, looking so beautiful from inside the house but treacherous on the outside. The winter of 1962 – 1963 was the

coldest on record and blizzards caused snow to drift halfway up our front door in March/April.

Quite an introduction to the English climate. As the snow melted however, and I began to feel some warmth in the Spring sunshine I began to feel more optimistic about my future.

An English penfriend helped me to socialise and I found a job in a sewing factory, and then worked in a nursing home, but I really wanted to make something of myself and eventually studied nursing which I loved.

But I was shocked at the existence of grime and stark poverty in England, it was totally unexpected. The English people that I had seen in the Caribbean were relatively wealthy and smart, but in Bradford, an industrial city, there was no money to spare for smart clothes. The racism that I experienced only spurred me on to do better in my life, and I made some fantastic friendships with English people. But when I became romantically involved with a young English man, his mother tried her utmost to split us up because of my colour. She did not succeed but it was a sad time in my life.

I am proud of my Caribbean heritage, I feel the Caribbean culture has enhanced British culture through its introduction of vibrant colour, distinctive spices and music that lifts the spirits. But I wouldn't say that I am British or Caribbean, I am just me. I am glad however, that I came to Britain, despite the hardships at the beginning, I can genuinely say that "I have loved every minute". I have met wonderful people and through my work as a nurse I have helped change the lives of many people. There is a lot to smile about.



Three generations of my family

# Breaking the Bonds

There can be no doubt that the institution of slavery, which was formally abolished in what was known as the British Empire over 150 years ago, has shaped the consciousness, the cultural mix and the economic situation of the contemporary world. Our ways of relating to and representing peoples of other cultures are still guided by many of the pernicious stereotypes employed to justify slavery. Racial discrimination and the suffering this causes are still major issues which the Western world must face. The diversity of ethnic and cultural groups in the contemporary societies of Europe and the United States of America is largely the result of the African diaspora which slavery and colonisation enforced. Slavery was a major aspect of the economic and social development of many, if not most, countries and the divides between rich and poor today often echo those established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

However, slavery not only continues to affect the contemporary world in these ways. Ships no longer cross the Atlantic packed with slaves from Africa but, unfortunately, this does not mean that slavery has ended. Indeed, there are probably more slaves alive today than at any other time in history. Anti-Slavery International, the descendant of abolition campaigners, such as the Christian, Thomas Clarkson, and the world's oldest human rights organisation, estimate that two hundred million people are living as slaves today – three and half times the population of the United Kingdom.

The United Nations' Slavery Convention, which was first adopted by the League of Nations in 1926, defines slavery as the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised. This means that people are considered to be slaves if they can be sold by one employer to another, or are forced to do something against their will, or cannot change jobs even when they want to. Slaves can be, and are, men and women, girls and boys.

Today, some slaves are made to work without pay by their governments in 'forced labour', while others are like the slaves of Thomas Clarkson's day, completely owned by someone who treats them as a 'chattel' or possession. In some parts of the world, women in 'servile marriages' are the property of their husbands and are counted among their possessions, with no individual status or freedom. In many places, 'child labour' is common and children are made to work for nothing or very little, rather than being free to go to school or play with their friends.

Bonded labour, which has existed for thousands of years and was used to build the pyramids of ancient Egypt, remains one of the most common forms of slavery today. This system of slavery operates on the practice of selling yourself, or members of your family, into bonded labour to pay off a debt. Most people need to borrow money at some point in their lives. Some people borrow to buy their home, while others borrow to buy expensive luxury goods. Many poor people have to borrow simply to buy basic items like food and clothing. As these people are poor, the banks do not believe they will be able to repay the debt. It is a cruel reality that the very poorest people often have the hardest time trying to borrow money and are often forced to rely on unscrupulous money-lenders, who charge very high rates of interest. With these loans, the amount owed can soon be many times the original amount borrowed, and this means that the borrower has to sell themselves for many years, often their whole lifetime.

Even death offers no escape, because the debt continues. It is estimated that many bonded labourers in India are enslaved by loans inherited from their parents while others were sold as children when their parents could not afford to feed them. Some children are simply kidnapped and sold to unscrupulous businesses.

It is estimated that there are around fifty million child labourers in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All around the world, child

**“Their lives are not so far removed from those of the young slaves working on the plantations in the West Indies two centuries ago.”**

## **“When adult workers are paid properly, their children have no need to work and support the family, and thus they can go to school.”**

workers are popular with unprincipled employers because they are easier to control than adults, and are unable to demand proper wages or working conditions. Child bonded labourers, who are often given nothing but their food and somewhere to sleep for their tireless work, are particularly attractive to such immoral employers. Denied the basic human rights of an education, time to play and loving attention, these children live miserable lives on farms and in factories and brothels.

Many such children work in the brick industry, forming the bricks from mud, carrying them into the hot sun, turning them as they bake. Despite the heavy nature of this work, they are paid a tiny amount per brick produced. Illness is common because of their unhealthy working conditions, yet any time off means the debt rises because they are still charged for their food and accommodation. Still more bonded labourers work on farms. The younger children look after animals or pick weeds, while older children do the hard, physical work. Their lives are not so far removed from those of the young slaves working on the plantations in the West Indies two centuries ago. Again, the lack of consideration for safety means that many children are injured in accidents, and if they are unable to work as a result of injury they face a very uncertain future. Others work long hours in the carpet industry; in cramped, dusty rooms, their health inevitably suffers. It is sometimes said that children make the best carpets because of their small fingers, but in reality, trained adults produce the finest work. The carpets made by child bonded labour are not produced to fulfil the demand for quality, but to satisfy Western demand for cheap handmade goods.

Just as many people listened to Thomas Clarkson when he asked them to boycott slave-produced sugar; it is important that people today refuse to buy products made by child slaves, many of which are on sale in Britain's shops. A few years ago, publicity about the treatment of animals in testing for goods like cosmetics shocked many people, and there was public demand for cosmetics that had not been tested in this way. Companies now compete to offer such 'cruelty-free' products; their profits remain steady and the animals do not suffer. In the same way, each individual can help end slavery by finding out how the things they use, and the foods they eat, are made. If you discover goods which are made by slaves, refuse to buy them and tell others why. The actions of each one of us feed into larger patterns of behaviour and structures of production and consumption. By changing our own buying habits, we can affect much wider change and make a lasting difference to others.

One particular scheme called Rugmark has been organised by groups fighting slavery in the Indian subcontinent. Carpets which are made without child labour are awarded a special mark. If buyers choose wisely, then carpets with the Rugmark will sell better than those without, and this will encourage other carpet factory owners to stop using child labour, so that they too can qualify for the Rugmark. The factories which are awarded the Rugmark are regularly inspected to make sure that they comply with the rules concerning working conditions and child labour.

In order to demonstrate our conviction to see the end of slavery and to improve the conditions of the lives of these people, we need to accept that we have to pay a fair price for the goods bought from poor countries. Insisting on an unrealistically low price for a handmade carpet, for example, brings a hidden cost in the suffering of children who work and live in appalling conditions in order to satisfy the greed of their owners, and the consumers in richer countries.

While such commercial schemes are vital to the abolition of child slavery, the deep causes of this problem also need to be addressed. When adult workers are paid properly, their children have no need to work and support the family, and thus they can go to school. Without the severe poverty, which afflicts whole areas of the world today, families would not be tempted to take out the dangerous loans which lead to bonded labour, or to selling their children into this system of slavery. It would also be harder for factory owners to bribe police into ignoring the anti-slavery laws.

It is clear that the fight against slavery is linked with the need to provide education for all. In some countries, there is a high level of illiteracy and this means that many bonded labour contracts are never written down. As a consequence, it is almost impossible to prove the terms of the debt or its repayment, and the contracts can easily be altered in favour of the factory owners. The campaign to provide universal education is a long-term goal which all who seek to abolish slavery and exploitation today, must support.

It took vision and persistence by Thomas Clarkson to turn the fight against slavery into the leading political issue of his day: the slave trade in the British Empire ended 1807, with the full emancipation of British slaves in 1834. His life shows us that one dedicated person can make a real difference to the lives of millions.

## **Waiting for the Rain Wind**

Somewhere, in the swallows' atlas, ways  
back, like memories of a Namibian January,  
re-making summer; skirled pipers over jacaranda.

And here, they return late this year, mid-May,  
over desert, ocean, and the gradual greening of England,  
from the other ends of land to a crook below slating, for nesting.

Black speed, slice of knife-sharpening call,  
carries them over. They do not look back  
but face down heat, drought. Far below them

trudge defeated columns of refugees; one child  
draped over her father's shoulder, clinging to a toy;  
one old man pushing his wife North in a wheelbarrow,

looking for the sea. Everything pauses at the coast.  
Fathers are haggling over raft space, stilled swallows  
are waiting for the rain wind to cross the quickening

direction. With keen birds' eye perspective  
aircraft scan ocean for red life jackets, braced  
against storm.

As usual, swallows summon summer for us,  
skimming out of sunlight; flapping up, hurtling to hawk.  
They create this new season, barge through like a rescue,

as exhausted people are helped ashore, alighting  
on Europe, out of reach of bombs, as birds avoid  
braced guns of laughing hunters, for the moment.

Photograph: David Rose



vegetarian, “the cow is a unique and deeply felt religious symbol for Indian Hindus.”<sup>8</sup> Following the corporation’s announcement, many Hindus began eating McDonald’s french fries. But a later news report revealed that the fries were seasoned with beef flavoring before they were shipped to be cooked in vegetable oil. Brij Sharma was among those appalled to hear the news. A resident of Seattle in the United States and a practicing Hindu, Sharma had been eating the fries in the belief that they were vegetarian. Upon learning about the beef seasoning, he told the *New York Times*, “I feel sick in the morning every day, like I want to vomit . . . Now it is always there in my mind that I have done this sin.”<sup>9</sup> In India, McDonald’s outlet windows were smashed, statues of Ronald McDonald were smeared with cow dung, and Hindu nationalist politicians called for the McDonald’s chain to be evicted from the country.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, a representative of McDonald’s said they did not propose to change the recipe. A lawsuit duly followed. Meanwhile, Sharma sought to find ways to cleanse himself, commenting, “I am now planning to go to India to take a dip in the Ganges . . . I am thinking that it should reduce my sin. But the damage is already done.”<sup>11</sup> The lawsuit resulted in a settlement of millions of dollars, the majority of which went to vegetarian groups.

As is the case with many other fast-food corporations, McDonald’s views India’s population of 1.2 billion as a major market awaiting exploitation.<sup>12</sup> At the time of the lawsuit in the United States, the corporation had already opened its first outlet in India (in 1996).<sup>13</sup> From this small beginning, McDonald’s now has “242 restaurants operating in India serving over 500,000 customers everyday.”<sup>14</sup> These outlets do cater to vegetarians, and they were the first McDonald’s outlets to serve “non-beef and non-pork items.”<sup>15</sup> In addition, each outlet “practices Vegetarian and Non-Vegetarian Segregation right from processing to serving and uses 100 per cent vegetable cooking oil.”<sup>16</sup> McDonald’s has come a long way from the ire that led to smashed windows, dung-covered clowns, and the call for expulsion from India, to gain “the most trusted family restaurant brand in the country award in 2009, 2010, 2011 by Reader’s Digest.”<sup>17</sup> But the number of outlets in India (fewer than 300) represents only a small proportion of the 35,000 McDonald’s outlets worldwide.<sup>18</sup> McDonald’s is seeking to increase its market share, and in 2013 it opened its first designated vegetarian-only outlet, and it did so in India.<sup>19</sup> Why open vegetarian-only outlets when vegetarians are catered to already in regular outlets in India? Margherita Stancati<sup>20</sup> reportedly suggests that the corporation saw “an opportunity in a very specific market: religious pilgrims,” an unexploited niche market. A spokesperson for McDonald’s, Rajesh Kumar Maini, said, “A vegetarian store makes absolute sense in the places which are famous as pilgrimage sites.”<sup>21</sup> The first vegetarian outlet is two hundred meters from the Sikh religion’s holiest site,<sup>22</sup> the Golden Temple in the holy city of Amritsar in northern India.<sup>23</sup> The manager of this outlet, Harjinder Singh, is reported to have said, “Prior to paying obeisance in the Golden Temple it is good to have vegetarian food. I request and invite people to grab a vegetarian bite before going to the shrine.”<sup>24</sup> Vegetarian-only food outlets are essential near religious shrines because “many religious pilgrims are strictly vegetarian and could take offence if others around them ate non-vegetarian food.”<sup>25</sup> However, noting that most of the customers are tourists, Singh observes that “surprisingly, many foreigners, too, have appreciated the vegetarian restaurant as nowadays many people prefer vegetarian food due to health concerns.”<sup>26</sup> The corporation plans to open

another vegetarian-only outlet in northwestern India, near the Vaishno Devi cave shrine in Kashmir, which is a Hindu pilgrimage site that attracts around ten million visitors a year.<sup>27</sup> How does this serve vegetarian ethics and religious beliefs?

### Concluding Remarks: “The Moral Malaise of McDonaldization,” Vegetarian Ethics, and Religious Beliefs

The inclusion of vegetarian items on the McDonald’s menu, UK Vegetarian Society approval of these items, and the opening of vegetarian-only outlets near religious shrines represent significant changes in the attitudes and conduct of the McDonald’s corporation and the UK Vegetarian Society, and they have a bearing on the viability of the McDonaldization thesis. Starting with Ritzer’s fourfold schema of McDonaldization (efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control), in the case of vegetarian food, the principle of “predictability” is seriously compromised. For example, although in the United Kingdom, India, and other countries of the world, the french fries are vegetarian, in the United States beef flavoring is still an ingredient in fries.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the McDonald’s US website states, “None of our products are certified as vegetarian.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, McDonald’s customers who are vegetarian and who buy french fries while traveling from country to country do *not* know what they will get wherever they buy it. In short, the food product and the service are *not* standardized and *not* predictable, not anymore. In 1993, at the time he was writing his McDonaldization thesis, Ritzer could not have foreseen that McDonald’s would become so attentive to adapting its range to local demand that it would forgo the predictability of its most popular product, the french fry. Thus, contra the predictability driver outlined by Ritzer, the quest for an increasing global market has meant that products are *not* “pretty much the same from one geographic setting to another.”<sup>30</sup> As with vegetarians, Hindus in the United States still can’t eat McDonald’s french fries but would be able to consume them if they traveled to other parts of the globe.

The McDonald’s corporation’s wish to expand its market is not surprising; what is much more surprising is that a charity that seeks to promote vegetarianism would allow its symbol to be used by a global corporation that not only does not promote vegetarianism but is responsible for the industrial slaughtering of billions of nonhuman animals used in the company’s products every year. But perhaps the stance of the UK Vegetarian Society is not so surprising, considering that it states that the charity “exists to influence, inspire and support people to embrace and maintain a vegetarian lifestyle.”<sup>31</sup> Is this reference to “lifestyle” just an unfortunate turn of phrase? Does the emphasis placed on “lifestyle” vegetarianism represent the marginalization of ethical vegetarianism – the replacement, to use Keith Tester’s words, of “the *being* of the ethical conduct of life with the *doing* of the consumer”?<sup>32</sup> In his discussion of “the moral malaise of McDonaldization,” Tester refers to Singer’s argument that vegetarians bring together “conduct and ethics”; they are not merely indulging in a dietary preference, but rather, they are conducting their lives around an “appreciation of what is taken to be the moral fact that the human interest in eating meat is less important than the preference for an animal to live a life without the experience of unnecessary pain.”<sup>33</sup> This was perhaps at the root of the formation of the UK Vegetarian Society. In recounting the history of the movement, the charity states that for its nineteenth-century originators, “though health was undoubtedly

part of their reasoning, the basis of their vegetarianism was asceticism – living as simple and morally accountable a life as possible.”<sup>34</sup> Does this original focus speak to the notion that “vegetarianism is a form of boycott”<sup>35</sup> that “turns the individual into the self-aware author of her or his own moral integrity and ethical being”?<sup>36</sup> Has this been lost?

Although it is ethical vegetarianism that is promoted by Singer, lifestyle vegetarianism is the current predominant form in the West, and this form of vegetarianism “is easily compatible with the relationship and procedures of a McDonaldized environment.”<sup>37</sup> In 1999 Tester commented that “vegetarianism itself is liable to become McDonaldized”<sup>38</sup> – and it seems he was right. He was referring to the profits that can be made from vegetarian products, and the display of the UK Vegetarian Society trademark enhances the marketing of those products. A boycott of meat is essential if we are to avoid colluding with cruel and intensive farming practices and avoid contributing to the prosperity of the owners of such industrial farming complexes.<sup>39</sup> By allowing its trademark to be displayed on vegetarian products sold by a global corporation that is making vast profits out of a range of other products that are sourced from the mass incarceration and killing of nonhuman animals, the UK Vegetarian Society is consenting implicitly to the suffering of nonhuman animals. Moreover, by authorizing the use of its trademark, the Vegetarian Society is encouraging individual customers to buy their vegetarian products from McDonald’s and thus take part in this implicit consent. The UK Vegetarian Society Approved trademark on a specific commodity allows us, in the terms of McDonaldization, to predict and to feel secure and confident that the particular product in question meets the UK Vegetarian Society’s “strict criteria for vegetarian suitability,” but it evidently does not allow anything more than that, and it certainly does not indicate that the company that is allowed to use the symbol in respect to a specific product operates more generally in accordance with the same criteria.

The positioning of vegetarian-only McDonald’s restaurants in close proximity to religious shrines does not appear to compromise the consumer who wants to eat a vegetarian product in a vegetarian outlet. But such outlets are part of a global corporation whose defining product relies on the suffering and mass slaughter of nonhuman animals. Is religious vegetarianism being undermined and replaced by a corporate-engineered, commercialized lifestyle vegetarianism, a form of vegetarianism that can be readily satisfied in a convenient McDonald’s outlet that simultaneously contrives to earn the loyalty of a significant new and sizable niche market? The meat-free market is becoming increasingly lucrative for companies, perhaps especially so when the products are approved by a charity that is widely recognized and revered for its vegetarian stance. By virtue of the speed of the production process through which fast food is manufactured and the rising profits that are a corollary of the growing global market, lifestyle vegetarianism appears to have achieved the upper hand, rendering vegetarianism as a form of boycott, whether ethical or religious, as marginal, even for the UK Vegetarian Society.

EXTRACT FROM: THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF RELIGION AND ANIMAL ETHICS  
EDITED BY ANDREW LINZEY AND CLAIR LINZEY

<sup>1</sup> S. Brook, “Vegetarian Society Backs McDonald’s Products,” *Guardian*, October 1, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Brook, “Vegetarian Society.”

<sup>3</sup> For example, see E. Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal Is Doing to the World* (London: Penguin, 2002), 47.

<sup>4</sup> K. Tester, “The Moral Malaise of McDonaldization: The Values of Vegetarianism,” in *Resisting McDonaldization*, ed. B. Smart (London: Sage, 1999), 207.

<sup>5</sup> D. Maurer, *Vegetarianism: Movement or Moment?* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> D. N. Jha, *The Myth of the Holy Cow* (London: Verso, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> G. Pitale, “Holy Cow! India’s Sacred Cow Revisited,” *Popular Anthropology Magazine* 2, no. 2 (2011): 14.

<sup>9</sup> L. Goldstein, “For Hindus and Vegetarians, Surprise in McDonald’s Fries,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Goldstein, “For Hindus and Vegetarians.”

<sup>11</sup> Goldstein, “For Hindus and Vegetarians.”

<sup>12</sup> M. Stancati, “McDonald’s Targets Indian Pilgrims,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 5, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, *McDonald’s India (North and East Region): Fact Book* (McDonald’s India, 2013), 3.

<sup>14</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, *McDonald’s India*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, *McDonald’s India*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, *McDonald’s India*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, *McDonald’s India*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Stancati, “McDonald’s Targets Indian Pilgrims.”

<sup>19</sup> But public relations functionaries of the fast-food giant deny that McDonald’s at Amritsar is the first vegetarian counter in India. They maintain that their first such outlet is the Kurukshetra restaurant where the menu was changed to all-vegetarian to comply with the extension of the zone that prohibited the sale of nonvegetarian food. U. Kaur, “McDonald’s Goes All-Veg outside Golden Temple,” *Hindustan Times*, May 5, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/amritsar/mcdonald-s-goes-all-veg-outside-golden-temple/article1-1215782.aspx>.

<sup>20</sup> Stancati, “McDonald’s Targets Indian Pilgrims.”

<sup>21</sup> BBC News, “McDonald’s Opens Vegetarian-Only Restaurant,” *BBC News*, September 4, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19479013>.

<sup>22</sup> Kaur, “McDonald’s Goes All-Veg.”

<sup>23</sup> Stancati, “McDonald’s Targets Indian Pilgrims.”

<sup>24</sup> Kaur, “McDonald’s Goes All-Veg.”

<sup>25</sup> Stancati, “McDonald’s Targets Indian Pilgrims.”

<sup>26</sup> Kaur, “McDonald’s Goes All-Veg.”

<sup>27</sup> Stancati, “McDonald’s Targets Indian Pilgrims.”

<sup>28</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, “Go On Grab One: World Famous Fries,” accessed May 22, 2014, [http://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en/food/product\\_nutrition.snackssides.120.small-french-fries.html](http://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en/food/product_nutrition.snackssides.120.small-french-fries.html).

<sup>29</sup> McDonald’s Corporation, “Go On Grab One.”

<sup>30</sup> G. Ritzer, *Globalization: The Essentials* (Chichester: Wiley, 2011), 168.

<sup>31</sup> Vegetarian Society UK, “About Us,” accessed August 3, 2014, <https://www.vegsoc.org/aboutus>.

<sup>32</sup> Tester, “The Moral Malaise,” 218, emphasis in original.

<sup>33</sup> Tester, “The Moral Malaise,” 212.

<sup>34</sup> Vegetarian Society UK, “History of the Vegetarian Society,” accessed August 3, 2014, <https://www.vegsoc.org/history>.

<sup>35</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 175.

<sup>36</sup> Tester, “The Moral Malaise,” 213.

<sup>37</sup> Tester, “The Moral Malaise,” 218.

<sup>38</sup> Tester, “The Moral Malaise,” 217.

<sup>39</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 175.

Religions for Peace   
United Kingdom Women of Faith Network

Religions for Peace (RfP) UK are supporting the event organised by the Faith for the Climate Network on **26 June 2019** in London. Climate change will affect everyone on the planet and we all need to lobby governments to make changes now.

I would urge all of you to register for the mass lobby outside Parliament and the keynote address by the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams (details given below).

Please send details of the event to all your contacts throughout UK and ensure that all faiths are represented including faith leaders.

**Mother Earth gives us everything we need. Help her to survive for future generations.**

**THE TIME TO SPEAK OUT IS NOW!**

With peace and best wishes

*Ravinder Kaur Nijjar*

Chair of UK Women of Faith Network  
Religions for Peace Global Women of Faith Network

**THE TIME IS NOW - WORKSHOPS, WALK OF WITNESS AND SPEAKER EVENT**

The Faith for the Climate Network invites you to join us ahead of **The Time is Now** mass lobby of parliament on 26th June.

Please join us for:

- Faith-based and interfaith Workshops taking place at St Martin in the Fields at 9.30am and 10.30am.
- A Walk of Witness - please join us at 11.30am in Trafalgar Square to walk along Whitehall as a witness to the care of all our faiths for creation.
- Interfaith speaker event - keynote address from former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, with Qari Asim MBE, Chair of the Mosques and Imams Advisory Board; Vishvapani, Buddhist teacher and Radio 4 Thought for the Day contributor; Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, leader of Masorti Judaism in the UK; and Christine Allen, CAFOD CEO - at Church House from 12 noon to 1.15pm.
- And then join the Mass Lobby of Parliament which is taking place 1-4pm all around Parliament. Let's tell our MPs we want new legislation to end the UK's contribution to climate change, and to build a better world for nature and people.

The Cafe in the Crypt of St Martin's will be open from 9am providing refreshments.

Meditation for the Climate will take place at 10.30am in the Dick Shepherd Chapel of St Martin in the Fields.

St Margaret's Church Westminster is also open all morning for private prayer.

As well as booking for the workshops and main interfaith speaker event, please be sure to register for the Mass Lobby itself, so your MP knows you are coming.

[www.thetimeisnowfaitherevents.eventbrite.com](http://www.thetimeisnowfaitherevents.eventbrite.com)

NEW BOOK • Marcus Braybrooke

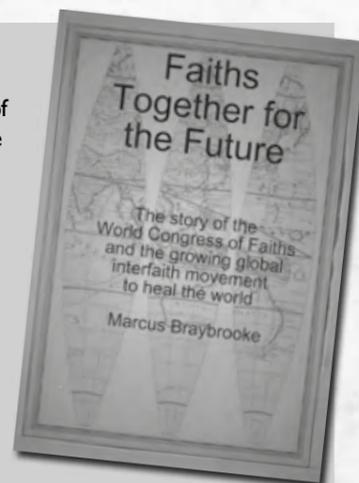
FAITHS TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE

**M**arcus Braybrooke and his wife Mary have been deeply involved in the growth of interfaith dialogue for over fifty years. Many of the insights given in this new book are gained through the writer's dedication to recording historical events, to his personal experiences and involvement in interfaith gatherings, and from relationships formed with visionaries from across the globe. There is a particular focus on the World Congress of Faiths founded in 1936 by Francis Younghusband, and of which the writer is the current Joint-President. Tribute is also paid to historical interfaith movements, and more contemporary ones are highlighted, with particular attention given to various gatherings of the World Parliament of Religions. What strikes me the most is Marcus Braybrooke's ability to span a period from the 19th century to the 21st century to remind us of the importance of past endeavours, and to inspire hope for the future in the richness of ongoing interfaith dialogue and understanding.

Heather Wells

Obtainable from Braybrooke Press, 17 Courtiers Green, Abingdon OX14 3EN

[www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) - Paperback £12 Kindle £1.99



## A Woman Like Me

A woman like me should  
get up in the early hours,  
prepare and cook good food;  
get kids ready with magic powers.  
Have a spotless kitchen, bathroom;  
a dust free house and make the beds,  
shop, wash, wipe, clean, iron, put away;  
do all daily chores with love, care and pride.  
Then go to work. Be organised and tidy.  
Help the kids with their homework,  
take them here, there, everywhere;  
serve her demanding family  
without a single frown.  
To respect all around her;  
to speak at the right time;  
know what to do at all times;  
to know her culture inside out.  
Have all the energy and never give up;  
to keep on going, serving all and everyone.  
To live like other women, behave and resemble  
proper ladies amongst an expecting society.  
Be clever, intelligent, beautiful, sensual;  
last but not least, be a goddess in bed...  
Yet to serve herself feels like a crime.  
Sometimes she does not want this  
strong, tough expectant life style;  
she wants to be somewhere  
else; someone else to sit  
and just watch herself.  
A woman like me hey?  
Except I don't know  
a woman like me,  
I only know me.

# A safe space FOR STORIES to unfold

**M**ay 2018 was the start of something new, something quite out of the ordinary for our community... it was the start of Wolverhampton's first ever Punjabi Women's Writing Group. There are a few Punjabi Shyaree (poetry) groups around the country but none dedicated to, and run by, Punjabi Women.

I have lived and experienced a Punjabi lifestyle in many different lights. I know second-generation Punjabi women living in the UK, who, like myself, have desires and dreams. These dreams have had to be suppressed through the sacrifice of being dutiful wives, mothers, grandmothers, daughters and daughters-in-law. Punjabi women who speak of a desire to express themselves in writing and other art forms, are thought of as 'time wasters'.

When I have asked Punjabi women why they don't write their stories they have answered: "We are dedicated to our families and nothing else... our passions should be devoted to our extended families without any fuss! We have to organise not only homely duties, but also take a lead role in family weddings, family parties, what to wear, keep track of relatives here and overseas, with a necessity to know what every relative is doing. This has been

the norm for many generations. Our art is in sewing, cooking, cleaning and serving all the family and relatives. Our happiness should reflect this kind of art."

I can relate to this through my own experience. Although my commitments are not as great as theirs... I'm a lucky fish, who has escaped the traditional fishing net: I have a disability, and although I have carried out the commitments expected of me, I do not have to obey all the traditional codes of living in a Punjabi family. I am not a great cook, I am unable to drive or do all the household duties expected of an able-bodied woman. But even so, it is usually before 7am, or during my lunch break at work, that I feel free to dedicate an hour or so to my writing. It's a struggle to write at the weekend: I write a line, then wash some dishes, write a word, then hang out the laundry, write another line, then attend to the children or my husband... These tasks are never-ending. During the last hour in which I have been writing this piece, I have been disturbed by children, phone calls, washing machines, cooking, and uninvited visitors... so the proof is here and this is what stops Punjabi women's stories from unfolding.

But these stumbling blocks needed to be overcome if Punjabi women are to be given a chance to tell their stories. Certainly if Punjabi women have an informal platform where they are able to talk to, and about their peers, the stories come tumbling out and these are mostly drawn from observing life around them. I think all writers are observers in their own constructive way. So although writing and Punjabi women may not be seen as an appropriate match, I believed that all it would take is encouragement and access to a safe space.

Offa's Press manager, Simon Fletcher, has played an active role in encouraging and promoting multi-cultural writing in the West Midlands for over 20 years. He is part of a multi-cultural poetry group 'Mini Mushira' which consists of 3 poets from very different backgrounds – Debjani Chatterjee, from Delhi, Basir Sultan Kazmi, from Lahore and Simon who is originally from rural Worcestershire, England.

When my work was published by Offa's Press, Simon could see from the excited reactions of many women, including Punjabi women, that there was a genuine interest in Punjabi women's stories and poems. He asked me to enquire if local Punjabi women were interested in coming together to form a writing group. It was not easy persuading women who had devoted their lives to serving their direct families, husbands, children, extended families etc. to come out of their homes for a couple of hours to

chat and write. But I managed to gather some women together who were interested in writing and telling their stories. Then I had to search for a suitable location, a safe space. We found an ideal Indian coffee shop, Zuri's in Wolverhampton city centre, and finally settled on meeting on the last Thursday of every month.

Initially the women found it very challenging to put their thoughts down on paper, but gradually they became inspired to tell their stories in writing. The more they wrote the more inspired they became, and I would be in touch with them via email or meet up on a one to one basis, to go through the work they had written.

They didn't know it but we were working towards producing some stories and poems that could be performed at a Diwali event at Central Library in Wolverhampton. My faith in our group was fully justified, and little by little they all began to produce some really good pieces of work.

The Punjabi Women's Group have now had two successful performances in Wolverhampton. The first one was a Diwali 2018 celebration and the other at the Wolverhampton Original Literature Festival 2019 (WOLF3) event at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery. The group is growing and more Punjabi women are becoming curious as to what joining a writing group can mean for them. There are exciting times ahead.

I have set up this Punjabi Women's Writer's Group with help and support from Offa's Press and we have a lot more workshops and activities planned. For more information please contact me on [kuli.kohli@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kuli.kohli@hotmail.co.uk)



Simon Fletcher, Parveen Brigue, Santosh K Dary, Nirmal Orjally, Kuli Kohli and Komlaish Achall  
<http://www.kulikohli.co.uk/punjabi-womens-writing-group>

with and the artist

# Rescuing the inner self

In the early years of the millennium, after spending some time working with disadvantaged people in Brazil, and later travelling the world as an Educator, I became engaged in the 'preventative' area of drug addiction in my home city of Rio de Janeiro. Besides counselling the young people towards getting psychological help, I was teaching relaxation techniques to those who wished to give up drugs: and sacred dances to children from the favelas, in an effort to break down harmful gang cultures that promoted drug use, and gang wars. The sacred dances were transformative, as the children learned to play, sing and laugh together they overcame the rival boundaries set by the gang leaders of their individual favelas. The task was a daunting one, as the participants would return to their influential roots after each session, but I believed I was born to try to make a difference in this world, no matter how difficult the task may be.

I was born in Rio de Janeiro but grew up in the Amazon. As a young girl, and following a family trauma, I attended a Mariapolis retreat run by the Focolari Movement in Rio. It was there that I learned to see Jesus in everyone, and it was this experience that set me on the road of helping others. But my spiritual roots are in the indigenous peoples. My ancestors are Mura from the Amazon region, but the Universe threw me on the path of the North American Indians, named the Ojibway. I had denied my connection with my ancestors who appeared to me in dreams. When I finally resolved to accept the mission that I was being given by my ancestors, I began to recognise for myself that we are happier when we discover our mission on this planet: and that our ancestors – our allies of power – and the community at large, can help us fulfil the tasks that are placed before us. I now pass on this message to others through talks and workshops.

For a long time, scholars have drawn attention to the importance of our dreams. They say that they are tools of the psyche that seek balance through compensation, or even the realization, of a desire. The Ojibway believe that when anger and rancour are at war, producing disharmony, then bad dreams are generated: and that dreams are entities, good and bad, that live in the air around us, and at night they can be captured by us, the dreamers. A sacred Ojibway object known as a dream catcher, can filter out bad dreams – but if we are to create greater harmony in this world we have to learn to “see” from this filter what can be rescued. The feminine spirit in the dream catcher is trying to help us weave the ideas, the direction, the strength, the wisdom, the vision denied us by the lack of education about the importance of dreams. Every night, every dream, every shamanic journey, according to the indigenous peoples, offers us the opportunity to rebuild our lives. When we wake up, we are in a position to act on this knowledge, but instead we may choose to continue “sleeping”, as if it were more real to live with blindfolded eyes.

Rescuing such traditions today I teach ancestral dances of various indigenous peoples, facilitate rites of passage for men and women, and use ancestral techniques to rescue the most important thing within a person: their inner self. I teach courses on Native Traditions in France, Belgium and Austria and I regularly visit North and South America working with ancestral healing techniques including traditional drum making, teaching shamanic journeying to the sound of the drum, and sacred dance workshops.

In 2013, I created Centro Nowa Cumig – Centre for Native Traditions – in Rio de Janeiro, thus providing a space where knowledge of the culture and philosophy of the Ojibway can be preserved and transmitted to the next generation, as well as the rites and ceremonies practiced by other first peoples of the Americas adapted to the present day.

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Creating a dream catcher

Photo: Maria Antonio Mello



Photo: Astrid Howard



Athamis visiting members of the Guarani Tribe south of Rio de Janeiro

Photo: Astrid Howard



Photo: Regina Capano

# *Prayer of St Francis*

Make me a channel of your peace,  
where there is hatred, let me bring your love.  
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord.  
And where there is doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is despair in life, let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness only light,  
and where there is sadness ever joy.....

Prayer attributed traditionally to St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)  
Adapted by Sebastian Temple (1928-1997)