



ISSUE 48

faith

INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY
CELEBRATING OUR 23RD YEAR

**"Every formula that
expresses a law of nature is
a hymn that praises God."**

**Maria Mitchell:
First female astronomer
USA 1818–1889**

Building Bridges Across the Divide

Keynote

Science and Spirituality

Exploring Truths

Faces of Faith

Intertwining Values

WINNER
SHAP AWARD 2011

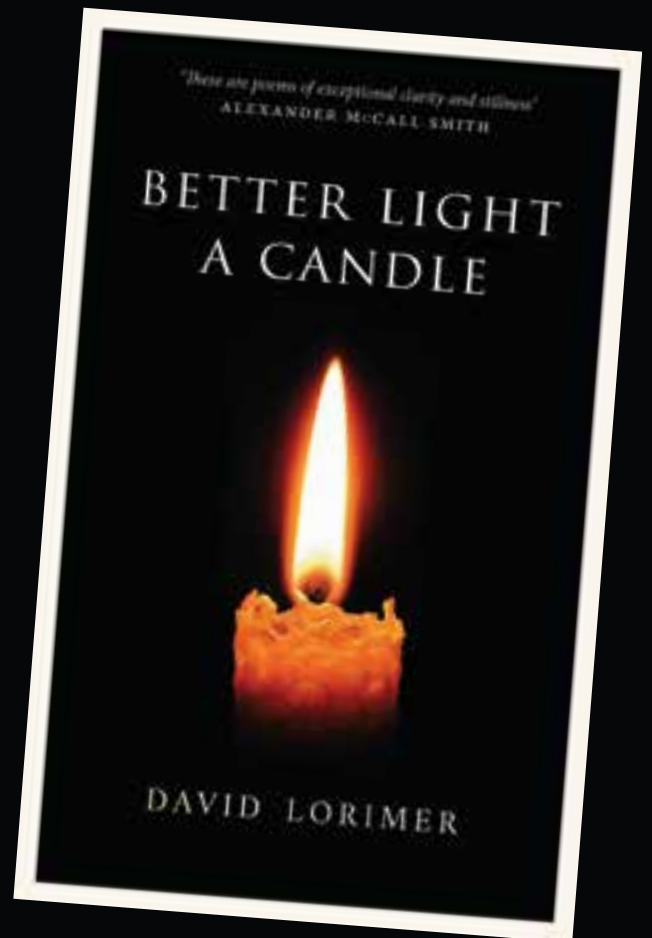
WE ARE HERE TO LOVE

We are here to love and not to hate,
To seek the paths of peace, not war,
To forgive and not to avenge,
To learn deep life lessons
From each other.

We are here to learn the laws of Love,
The laws of Wisdom,
The laws of Truth,
The laws of Justice,
The laws of Goodness,
The laws of Beauty,
The laws of Freedom.

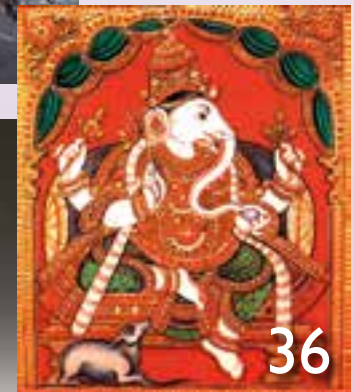
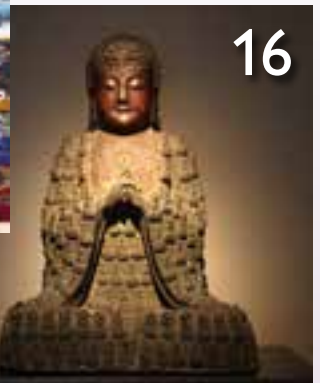
We are here to learn the practice of kindness,
The practice of compassion,
The practice of empathy,
The practice of trust,
The practice of reconciliation.

We are all here for each other,
Entwined with the whole of Life –
With animals, with birds,
With insects, plants and fungi –
Here for a short time together,
Here to awaken,
Here to be, here to act together.



*Buddha says: Light the candle of awareness in your heart,
and your whole being will radiate compassion.*

04	INSIDE FRONT COVER David Lorimer – <i>We Are Here to Love</i>
04	EDITORIAL Heather Wells
05	KEYNOTE Jo Berry – <i>There Is No Single Truth</i>
07	LAMENT Shiban Akbar OBE – <i>I Am Every Child of War</i>
08	POEM Janet Wilkes – <i>Poppies</i>
09	POEM Rebecca Bilkau – <i>Cease</i>
10	FAITH & EDUCATION David Rose – <i>Privileged Meetings</i>
13	SCIENCE & SPIRITUALITY
14	Dr. Louise Livingstone – <i>Heart-Centred Enquiry</i>
16	Michael Lewin – <i>The Truths Within Us</i>
18	Olivia Rathbone – <i>Melding Faith and Science: Promoting Community Interplay</i>
20	FAITH & LEADERSHIP Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson – <i>Women Leaders in Faith and Interfaith</i>
22	INDIGENOUS FAITH AND NATURE Athamis Bárbara Barbosa – <i>Shamanism and Children: Planting Seeds for the Next Seven Generations</i>
24	LANGUAGE OF ART Jill Stevens & Melissa Grossman – <i>Faces of Faith</i>
30	POEM Martyn Halsall – <i>Memory of Rain</i>
31	SUBSCRIPTION FORM
33	POEM Zanib Rasool – <i>Dupatta</i>
34	ANIMAL SYMBOLISM IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF
34	Dr. Sulekh C. Jain & Dr. Payal Seth – <i>The Jain Path of Respect, Non-Violence and Compassion: Harmony and coexistence between humans and animals</i>



36	Dr. Nanditha Krishna – <i>Hinduism Past & Present The Importance of the Spiritual Heritage and Reverence of Animals</i>
39	FAITH & LEADERSHIP Chris Chivers – <i>Amen, Old Friend. Amen.</i>
42	SPIRITUAL INSIGHT Marilyn Monk – <i>Scientist, Poet and Mystic: Complementary Ways of Knowing and Being</i>
46	FAITH MUSEUM Amina Wright – <i>The Faith Museum</i>
48	FAITH AND THE ARTIST Asma Khan – <i>A Lifelong Love of Faith and Culture</i>

editorial

Our keynote writer, Jo Berry, is an international peace and reconciliation campaigner who suffered the loss of her father, and injuries to her mother, in an IRA bomb explosion in Brighton in 1984. As a young person, having to break the news to her younger siblings, she knew that she could never go back to the person she was before the tragedy; and recognises that part of her inner self died with that bomb. These words have resonated with me as I have watched the horrific scenes of bombing in Gaza: very young children covered in blood and dust, searching for loved ones. I constantly wonder how they will recover from the trauma, the terrible injuries and the sight of death and destruction that surrounds them. They are living their lives not knowing what the next minute will bring, it must be the greatest insecurity anyone can imagine. If these children do have a future, what will that look like. It seems that leadership, on both sides of this conflict, is giving no consideration to the wellbeing of this generation or the next; or that the military route now being taken will only nurture more hate and insecurity, helping radicalisation, on both sides, to thrive for many years to come. As adults we owe it to children to provide hope and security, in some form or another, but how can we do this. Jo Berry found that letting go of a desire for revenge, following the major trauma in her life, was a way of liberating her power to be able to seek other ways of finding peace. She discovered that with an open mind she was able to meet and listen to the person who had planted the bomb that killed her father; and by listening to the narrative of his life, and that of others, she has realised that there is no single truth, that everyone comes with their own story of how and why they have lived the lives they have. It seems that listening, and engaging with others, recognising their humanity, and developing empathy is the only way to find a peaceful resolution. Tragically, with the devastating noise of war dominating any opportunity of dialogue, how can, even a fraction of any part of the leadership in this conflict, do that. Hope must lie in the possibility of a genuine ceasefire when, in the silencing of the bombs, the voice of wisdom, and the human capacity for empathy, will rise above the futile talk of mutual destruction, and a peaceful resolution will be found.

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.



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

Sr Maureen Goodman

Shiban Akbar OBE

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Eda Molla Chousein

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 49 Themes:

1. Roles in Chaplaincy
2. Sacred Spaces

Front cover image: Grain of sand from Morecambe Bay: by Microphotographer & Sand Gazer Jenny Natusch please see www.sandgazer.com and issue 36 of this magazine p 24–26 for an insight into the artist's work.

Front cover quote: Maria Mitchell was named to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 1848, and elected to American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1850. Source: www.sciencemeetsfaith.wordpress.com

Back cover: *Live and Let Live*

<https://thesouthasiacollection.co.uk/object-in-focus/jain-panel-live-and-let-live-late-20th-century-india/>

Design & Print: H&H Reeds T: 01768 864 214

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 JWatts (2002) Pub.Hermes House,
London ISBN 184308 973 7

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

THERE IS NO SINGLE TRUTH

Relecting on the world today, with all the suffering and demonisation, I think of the event that changed my life nearly 40 years ago. My father, Sir Anthony Berry MP, was killed on the 12th of October 1984 in the IRA Bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton, where the British Conservative Party were holding their annual conference. The Prime Minister at the time, Margaret Thatcher, was the intended target, along with the rest of the Cabinet, but she survived the bombing. However, five people were killed in the bombing, and over 80 injured. It was a massive shock for me, and within an hour of getting the news after hours of waiting, I had to tell my little brother and sister that their Dad was dead, and their Mum was injured.

Two days later, I realised I hadn't just lost my father, who I was very close to, but I was catapulted into a conflict I knew nothing about, and I couldn't go back to being the person I was. Part of me died with that bomb. I could feel the pain of war, the pain of every bomb that went off, the pain of terrorism. I made a very silent, private vow that I would find a way to bring something positive out of what had happened, and I'd find a way to contribute to peace. I would try and understand those who had killed him.

Three months later, I found myself sharing a taxi with a random person in the street who was from Belfast. I asked him if he knew anything about the IRA as I was trying to understand why they had killed my Dad. He replied that his brother had been in the IRA, and last year was killed by a British soldier. We should have been enemies; we were from different divides, and yet we saw each other as human beings who dreamt of a world where people didn't get killed. As I left that taxi, the words came to me, I can build a bridge across the divide – that's what I can do.

Patrick Magee was the only person to be charged with planting the Brighton bomb, and after he was released from prison I decided to meet him. I did not want to meet him to change him or tell him he was bad, but to see him as a human being. That would restore something in me which was lost in the bombing. The first meeting was three hours long, with no-one else in the room. He began by giving me a lot of political justification. I listened to him; I was curious and wanted to see him beyond the political rhetoric. I then shared a poem I had written for him, 'Bridges Can Be Built' and could see he was touched.



Then something happened where he stopped talking justification, and said to me, "I don't know who I am any more, I don't know what to say. I want to hear your anger and your grief, what can I do to help? I have never met anyone as open as you and with so much dignity."

In that moment, he had taken off his political hat, opened up to me, and become vulnerable: and I could see that he was a sensitive and intelligent person. For the next hour and a half he shared something very different. Our conversation changed; no longer was it about my need to see him – a new journey had started, one that I'm still on today. Patrick later said he was disarmed by the empathy I'd shown him. He would have found it easier if I had argued from a position of being right and him being wrong. Then, he could have stayed in a safe, familiar place of righteousness; instead, his heart was touched.

“I can build a bridge across the divide – that's what I can do”

“I am transforming my pain into passion for peace”

Since that first meeting, Patrick has said he was guilty of demonising others in the same way that he was demonised. When he planted the bomb, he did not see any people in the hotel; he just saw legitimate targets. He has learned of the humanity of my dad through listening to me, and now he knows he killed a wonderful human being. He is regaining his humanity. In conflict, all sides dehumanise each other, which enables them to hurt.

I am transforming my pain into passion for peace, my heart is slowly opening more and more as I increasingly see humanity in others. Letting go of my judgement, my fear and my need to be right, allows more love to flow through me. My heart can contain complex viewpoints, hold differences of opinion, and see the truth on all sides. We are all capable of hurting others, and we all have the potential to transform our pain with the proper support and conditions. Patrick is now my friend, and I am grateful to him for his courage to meet me not just once

but many times. I am being transformed through our dialogue and increasing my compassion and ability to love.

Sometimes, the urge to be vengeful is so strong that stopping it feels like trying to stop gravity. I understand why people want revenge. It may look like an attractive option, a short-term solution for our pain, but actually, we are twice hurt. First there is the original event which causes pain, then we lose some of our humanity by going for revenge, and have someone responsible for our pain living in our head, rent free. We are connected to them in an unhealthy way, inextricably linked, forever reminded that someone has hurt us. When we give up revenge, we take our power back and become liberated from the person who has hurt us. We may not have had a choice with what happened to us, but we can choose how we respond. We can't change the past, but we can change the future by taking responsibility for our healing, which empowers us.

“Seeing truth in all narratives”

We are all born into sides, narratives, and communities with their own stories, but when we open to hear each other's stories, we know we are connected through our shared humanity. Our narratives result from everything we've been through, and when we listen to others with empathy, we gain an understanding. At times when I have listened to Patrick, I've learned that if I'd lived his life and gone through everything he had been through, who knows, I may have made the same choices. I've also had that same experience with someone who had been a Loyalist paramilitary, and someone who had been in the British Army: three sides to the same conflict. What I've learnt about this is that actually when I hear people's stories there is no single truth. At that moment, there is no enemy and no 'other'.

I believe in the power of empathy, for when I empathise with you, what I want for you is all I wish for myself and my loved ones. Being empathic is a call for action. This is the beginning of a new story. When we see beyond the individual situation, when we are not attached to any truth, when we see truth in all narratives, we create a new story for the world. This new story sees the humanity in all, and asks us to challenge behaviour without using blame, shame or violence. Then the questions are

how do we prevent violent conflict, how do we heal trauma and shame, and how do we build bridges across the divide? How do we create a peaceful world?

I passionately believe that there is humanity in everyone, and every time we demonise the “other” we are delaying the onset of peace in this world. Once we find our own humanity, and we see the humanity in the other, then we are going to want them to have their human rights, their good housing, food, medicine, education and freedom to be themselves, to be safe and secure. We will want for them all that we want for ourselves. Peace happens when we treasure everyone, all creatures, our land, our planet, and work together to find solutions in which everyone wins.

Patrick and I have been speaking in many different places including Lebanon, Rwanda and Israel and Palestine. We have been all over Europe and in the UK we have spoken in schools, universities, religious groups, youth groups and many organisations.

I am now focused on working with young people and empowering them to be positive changemakers for a more peaceful world.

“We can't change the past, but we can change the future”

Jo Berry is the Founder of BUILDING BRIDGES FOR PEACE: please see www.buildingbridgesforpeace.org

She is also: an international speaker and workshops facilitator; executive committee member of United for Peace; on the Board of the Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace; she is working to create a Department for Peace in Europe; and is founder member of Survivors Against Terror.

I AM EVERY CHILD OF WAR

I am every child of war.
I am every daughter and every son of war.
Nameless, as all names stand exhausted,
Nameless, as I am far too many to number.
I am a long list now and counting.

I lie in the rubble of elite military might.
I lie cold, mutilated and disfigured.
I lie buried in the midst of molten iron rods and
broken glass.
I lie unburied in the putrid heat with no marked
grave to call my own.

A spanking new corpse I lie warm in the arms of
compatriots, who mourn me.
I lie in the arms of foreign aid workers whose heart
and soul have touched mine.
I lie screaming in the care of frantic doctors trying
their utmost to cope.

You see me on unbiased News channels; but no
affront to your genteel senses that I come with a
warning every time I flash across your screen –

How I died in sacred spaces, or at home, in schools,
souks, refugee camps and on the beach.

How I was blown apart in my sleep while cooped up
like a battery chicken in a hideout; or while running
out-of-doors, made restless by the eerie blasts.

How the bloody seal of hate and hegemony lie
stamped over my motionless body.

But, what does it matter?
I am soon to be yesterday's news.
From a land far away from you,
I am of a different hue.
(Though, war-makers are fathers too.)

Displaced, defaced, dehumanised, but with a spirit
held high, I am the blood-spattered child of war.
You can seize my land . . .
You can raze me to the ground . . .
You can wipe out town after town . . .
But I rise from the dark grey ruins of home.
I live in those I leave behind.

On the heels of aid and many promises of replenishment,
chosen investors gather for gainful ventures.
The grey ruins are perfect for makeover.
You bomb me to remodel, once a land of plenty.

With new players, a new war has begun.
Sinister offensive spreads without borders.
I am every child of every faith, for all faiths lead to God.
But you kill me anyhow by erecting new gods.
You behead me in the mountains,
You bury me alive in the foothills,
You bring me big toys of big boys,
Precipitated to grow up before my time,
My little life is bounded with your wanton play.

I am every child of every war.
Like the century old unnamed soldier, I see 'the
blood swept land and seas of red' that haunt me.

Your tributes of poppies flourish; our trade of
carnations and chrysanthemums perish.

You put out the lights to mark the centenary of
World War 1; I am snuffed out many times over.



Poppies

In the stamens of red poppies
See the eyes of dead men marching,
See the glitz and glam of Empire,
All the swagger, stomp and strutting,
All the bugles, drums and bagpipes,
Swirling kilts and horses clopping,
Nostrils twitching smelling battle,
Hearing thunder from afar and,
While the smoke ascends and darkens,
Hungry, hawk-eyed vultures gather
Over fields disturbed by conflict
Where swathes of blood-red poppies grow.

Janet Wilkes

Cease

Will you sit with me? The floor is wide, or
wide enough, and look, there is a cushion
spare: fold yourself onto its red softness,

stop your exploding thoughts, fall into now.
You may tell me the moment, your present,
is invisible, drowned in red, the gore

of the destroyed here, and there, and there
and here. That now. And you might twist hair
round your finger again and again, anxious,

asking *where is peace* and *why can't we ever
learn*. Here is an answer: what is your peace?
Is it the same peace as mine? No? You don't

know? Then how can it last? It is like colour:
the cushion is blood red to you, to me
it brings all the peonies of early May. Let

us sit, wordlessly contemplate our cease-
fire, where this peace we make into anthems
disentangles from our little vision of victory.

If it does. My friend, my peace disagrees
with your peace, and knowing that I admit
my seeds of war. Shall we sit? Make a start?

REBECCA BILKAU

PRIVILEGED MEETINGS



As a photographer who loves to travel, engage with faith communities, and explore local wildlife, I have always had Madagascar, with its multiple species of lemurs and birds, on my list of places to visit. Hence my interest was sparked when, during a church service in London last year, a visitor from Madagascar, Rev. Berthier Lainirina, was invited to address the congregation. He did so providing an inspiring insight into the work of the Christian theological college in Toliara, of which he is Dean. There were two points of his talk especially that I felt demanded a personal response from me. The first was the financial situation of the students in his college who lived on the equivalent of \$1US a day... and the second was that the college welcomed lecturers from overseas. It felt as though God was nudging me in their direction. Here I was long into retirement from teaching in schools and lecturing in Roehampton University, wondering whether I could fit the bill. My assigned task would be to deliver a 4Credit BA module, training ministers and evangelists. Encouraged by my wife, Gill, also a photographer and who would travel with me, I responded positively and immediately undertook a Duolingo course to improve my French – the medium for teaching at the college.

With the help of friends, we eventually embarked on the journey to Madagascar, but with no real idea of what awaited us. Nor was there time to acclimatise in any way as we flew 600 miles from the capital Tana to the city of Toliara, which is to the south of what is the 4th world's largest island. We had been advised to fly as the journey by vehicle may well have taken 3 days due to the state of the country following the double typhoon two weeks previously.

As well as the heat, college conditions were challenging. We were warned that electricity might be erratic, and so it was, but fortunately the wooden teaching hut had survived the typhoons. Instead of the 37 students we were anticipating however, there were 52, and on finding that some students did not speak French, the medium became Malagasy, using three translators. The first morning held a delightful surprise for us: seemingly, before each teaching session, students gather and start to sing. The singing is loud, boisterous and quite a sight and sound to behold, with the volume increasing as more and more students enter the hut.

The students are eager to learn and the module was delivered in one week of intensive teaching, with students actively participating in small groups. Their training included practical visits to nearby churches, and as our trip coincided with Easter my wife and I took the opportunity to travel 20 miles up the coast where 3 students were working with their Pastor-tutor. The cooler air, and the smell and sight of the sea were extremely welcome.

Our modes of travel varied and a ride on a bullock cart with two local guides, enabled us to visit one of the two remaining Baobab forests in Madagascar. We learned that 'bao' means above and 'bab' below, and the height of the tree is replicated in the root system below ground. The trees are very slow growing. The oldest tree we saw was more than 1,600 years old. We saw spiders, snakes and a few local indigenous birds, but where were the lemurs that we had expected to see? None in that forest in daylight.



**"I COULDN'T
HELP BUT
MARVEL AT THE
RESILIENCE OF
THE STUDENTS IN
PURSUING THEIR
EDUCATIONAL
JOURNEY."**



By way of compensation, we were told we could do a nocturnal visit to the forest. The following evening it was arranged, and despite a constant bombardment of flying insects, attracted by our torch and bare limbs, we left the bullock cart in pursuit of a nocturnal lemur. We became especially excited when our guides were saying 'can you see it? can you see it? The answer was no, initially, but when we were informed it was a mouse lemur, we focused our gaze and were delighted to have sight of this tiny creature.

The following day was Easter Sunday, and we attended a newly formed church in a local school classroom where there were bench seats and desks nailed together. This was the work of three students and their Pastor-tutor, and nearly 50 people gathered to attend the lengthy service which was conducted in Malagasy by the three students – all robed – and the college Dean. It included a Mass, as well as energetic and joyful singing and after a couple of hours I was surprised to be invited to deliver a sermon – totally unprepared, I found myself seeking divine assistance... most thankfully I must have received this as the sermon seemed to meet expectations.

Monday bank holiday found us on the beach with hundreds and hundreds of locals, but they did not sit down on the sand, as we are inclined to do, everyone was walking back and forth with the hawkers selling their wares, a very colourful sight.

On the following Wednesday we left Toliara and flew back to Tana where we learned that a few miles away was a Lemur Park which we could visit. There were no cages, all lemurs were free to roam but as they were fed regularly, they did not stray away. Our guide took us in a small group around the estate set apart for them on a mountain side with a river below. We were thrilled to see 6 species, all of which were rescued from 'poor homes' or had other issues making their life difficult beyond the realms of the park.

Reflecting on our visit to Madagascar, and the challenge I had found in teaching under such conditions, I couldn't help but marvel at the resilience of the students in pursuing their educational journey. I feel privileged to have met each and every one of them, and maybe, to have contributed in some small way to help them reach their goal.

SCIENCE &



SPRITUALITY

HEART-CENTRED enquiry



I have been working with the Scientific and Medical Network (SMN) for the past two years, developing a project to grow young person engagement in the Network (I have a background in Careers Consultancy and student engagement at a UK red-brick university).

The Young Person community

is now known as the New Paradigm Navigators (NPNs), which is a subdivision of the SMN. This community comprises students, postgraduates and early career professionals.

When I first came into the Network, there was already a postgraduate discussion/social networking space online where people could come together and share information and research. Since January 2022, I have been working to expand our offering to this community to encourage more engagement, including developing a range of educational webinars including *finding, applying for, and funding a PhD*. We also offer two years free affiliation to the SMN for students and postgraduates so that they can access all the wonderful benefits within the SMN during their studies – including the webinar library, book reviews, networking opportunities and much more.

Birth of the New Paradigm Navigators and the Students of Spiritual Science Symposium

Our biggest project so far has been the development of an online Students of Spiritual Science Symposium, which took place over the weekend of Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd July 2023. This project began early in 2022 when I collaborated with SMN Board member, Dr Joan Walton, to discuss how we could meet young people where they are and support them to explore issues that are affecting them. The methodology that underpinned this enquiry was participatory/collaborative enquiry and an approach called Heart Sense, which I developed as part of my own PhD research. We sent out a call to the younger members of the SMN community to attend a webinar called *Living in Uncertain Times: Exploring Possibilities For Young People to Take Positive Action In The World*.

This enquiry created a safe, heart-centred space for deep sharing and deep listening where students and young people were able to come together to explore practical ways to respond constructively to issues that are affecting them on an individual, societal and global level. Each month since last Spring, a core group of around ten younger people have been meeting in a spirit of open and heart-centred enquiry, developing ideas for individual and collaborative projects. Through this enquiry, the young people agreed upon a new community name –

The New Paradigm Navigators. They also wanted to develop a symposium with an aim to expand their community and build bridges between different ways of knowing and experiencing the world through sacred ritual, conversation spaces, presentations, creative offerings, and workshops.

The symposium showcased the work of the next generation of spiritual science students and practitioners who wanted to make a real difference in the world. Academics, thinkers, artists, musicians and ceremonialists that care about the world we are manifesting for new generations were part of the symposium. Topics and themes included new paradigms for consciousness, new earth technology, social justice, eco justice, heart resonance, feminist perspectives in Transpersonal Psychology, holistic practices that support evolution, plus transformational music and art that carries a message for uncertain times.

The symposium was a resounding success, uniting education, learning and transformative change. All participants had an appreciation of the importance of the scientific method in a practical sense, but were open to explore and expand, in a spirit of open and critical enquiry, frontier issues at the interfaces between science, health, consciousness, wellbeing, love and spirituality; exploring how to rediscover a meaningful spirituality to help rebalance life. The core NPN team are now editing the recordings from the event, and they should be ready for viewing soon on the NPN Youtube channel (see useful links on page 14).



Message from the NPNs

“We are the next generation of spiritual scientists who are exploring the new paradigms that will herald in a new way of being on the Earth. We are the system changers, merging transpersonal practice and study to bring about dynamic and heart-centred solutions to the uncertain times we live in.”

Ongoing Development

As well as the Symposium, the NPNs are running a regular salon hosted by one of the NPN team on a rotating basis. The salon provides a safe space for live discussions about living in uncertain times. Previous conversations have been based around the theme of beauty and eros, feminism, as well as a Summer Solstice online celebration.

In addition, the SMN is offering funding for the NPN community for individual projects up to the amount of £1000. Several members of our community have already succeeded in gaining funding:

- ▶ Remo Eerma – developed a transpersonal psychology podcast and Tik Tok channel.
- ▶ Rainbow Goddess – ran a project titled ‘The Village’ focussing on maternal wellbeing.
- ▶ Alice Letts – produced an e-poster and presentation for the Symposium exploring the Tibetan Wheel of Life through archetypal psychology.

Projects that are currently running include:

- ▶ Natalia Sanchez – developing the SMN’s resources for the SMN’s Spanish speaking community
- ▶ Vyushti Jouhari and Jasmine Shah – developing a podcast and research paper exploring stages of the soul and demystifying the soul’s journey.

Phase two of the NPN project is beginning in Autumn 2023. At the upcoming meeting, the existing NPN community will be joined by ten more young people from educational institutions across the world. The growing community will then move back

into the collaborative/participatory, heart-centred enquiry space, coming together to explore future project development. Projects will emerge out of deep listening and deep relating, as well as heart-to-heart connection, as we honour the wisdom of each person, the wisdom of the community and the wisdom of the project space. Previously identified ideas for future development include:

- ▶ Magazine or journal
- ▶ Expanding educational offerings
- ▶ Mentorship programme
- ▶ Expanding the NPN website
- ▶ Supporting further individual projects
- ▶ Book club

The enquiry process will bring specific projects into being that suit the interests and skills-set of each individual within the community, ensuring everyone has a voice, while at the same time uniting the community in a shared project vision.

Concluding Thoughts

This is such a wonderful project to be working on and I am incredibly proud of the wonderful, passionate, dedicated, committed young people that are working hard to bring about dynamic and heart-centred solutions to the uncertain times we live in.

If readers have been inspired by the vision and activities of the New Paradigm Navigators project, please find out more via the Scientific and Medical Network’s website by checking out the weblinks below. This project is made possible through the kind support of donors and members.

Dr. Louise Livingstone is Young Person/Student Support Manager at Scientific and Medical Network.

In the early 1990s, Louise succumbed to viral myocarditis. This enlarged her heart leaving her with numerous physical ailments. Louise went on to study for a BA in Business, and then began working for the University of Birmingham as a Careers Consultant. In the 2000s, Louise experienced further cardiac issues because of her earlier illness, and she sought to engage with the illness both with, and beyond, Western medicine. This began a long journey of recovery; learning to listen to the soft whispers of her heart’s wisdom and guidance. This meant un-learning almost everything she was taught about the world through the contemporary Western approach towards knowledge; along the way gaining an MSc in Holistic Science from the Schumacher College and a PhD in Transformative Education from Canterbury Christ Church University. During her research, Louise listened to the teachings of her heart, developing a process that she calls Heart Sense. Through the Heart Sense Research Institute, Louise now runs group personal development journeys and works individually with clients. Louise also has the honour and privilege of working for the SMN as the Young Person/Student Support Manager, supporting the development of the NPN project. The SMN’s work and vision is closely aligned with Louise’s, and it is wonderful for her to be involved with the network and to be supporting the next generation of spiritual scientists as they evolve into the future.

Useful weblinks:

NPNs – www.newparadigmnavigators.community
 Student/researcher free 2-year membership – <https://scientificandmedical.net/students-and-postgrads/>
 NPN Youtube channel – <https://www.youtube.com/@newparadigmnavigators>
 NPNs Instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/scimednet/?hl=en>
 SMN standard annual discounted membership – <https://scientificandmedical.net/register/standard-annual/?coupon=GOLDEN>
 Project donation – <https://scientificandmedical.net/donate/>

Thank you so much for reading. If you would like to reach personally, please write to: support@scimednet.org

The Truths Within Us

Science purports, through the rigorous, empirical methodologies that it employs, to tell the 'truth' about our world. It sets up working hypotheses to make statements about how it operates. When these hypotheses are rigorously supported, in a repeatable, systematic manner, they eventually become laws that take their place in the accumulated body of scientific knowledge. Where no support is evident, then the hypotheses can be re-worked and re-tested to find fresh support. If this is unavailable then the hypotheses can be abandoned because they are deemed to be false. This then, is the traditional perspective on science and its relationship to truth. A perspective that has become embedded in our world view to influence all our lives.

Not everyone, however, has accepted the scientific canon in its entirety. Karl Popper (1902–1994), the Austrian philosopher, systematically studied the nature of scientific inquiry only to be led to the conclusion that science was, in fact, a myth. *"We can only refute scientific laws, we cannot confirm them"* is Popper's basic message. To use the nature analogy – we may accept the statement that: *"All crows are black"* (because in the history of ornithology, no one had yet spotted a crow that wasn't black), but this doesn't mean to say that a white one is not hiding in a hedgerow somewhere, waiting to be spotted. Because scientific laws have always proved to be right in the past (and the balance of probability is on their side considering the weight of evidence) it doesn't mean to say that they will ALWAYS hold up in the future. One authentic sighting of a white crow is enough to seriously challenge our knowledge.

Popper, in his quest for metaphysical clarity and understanding, extended his arguments into many fields. For instance, he challenged Freudian psychoanalysis, arguing that all the clinical observations that Freud undertook, to support his theories, had no rigorous, external validity *"...as for Freud's epic of the ego, the super ego, and the id, no substantially stronger claim to scientific status can be made for it than Homer's collected stories from Olympus."* Despite Popper's remarks, however, we must not infer from them that he was somehow anti-Freudian, because he wasn't. Indeed he felt that Freud had made important contributions to our understanding of human behaviour. He just wanted to make the point that Freud's clinical observations and conclusions could not, in themselves, be objectively validated. Any 'findings', Popper argued, were open to a number of different interpretations, all of them warranting attention.

"In the high country of the mind one has to become adjusted to the thinner air of uncertainty and to the enormous magnitude of the questions asked."

R Pirsig

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Popper asked uncomfortable and awkward questions at times. Fundamental questions about the nature of 'truth' and how it comes to be established within the context of the scientific paradigm. He had ventured into an intellectual territory that many scientist have since acknowledged as being inspirational for their work, but when you consider the critical, scientific and philosophical ferment in which he lived, you realize that he could do nothing else...

It does not deny the power of scientific discovery in uncovering 'truth', but what it does argue is that this very 'truth' is provisional and tentative.

Buddhism and Reality

Buddhism has much to offer us in our understanding of truth. It does not deny the power of scientific discovery in uncovering 'truth', but what it does argue is that this very 'truth' is provisional and tentative. This is the same conclusion that Popper had reached, but Buddhism approaches it from a different angle. Rather than focussing on the possibility of refutation, as Popper did (the accurate sighting of one white crow would refute the statement: "All crows are black"), Buddhism outlines the nature of impermanence (annica) in our universe.

We live in a vortex of change, indeed it could be argued that the only real constancy in the known universe is change itself. So if change is all powerful, touching everything, then it must touch the very 'truth' that science offers up. There is no fixed, permanent truth that science can reveal to us, Buddhist teachings argue, because there is no fixed, permanent world from where

it could arise. Buddhist teachings also argue that because 'truth' is partly a product of subjective interpretation, science, with its exclusive focus on objectivity, is rather one-sided and limited.

Buddhism, traditionally, speaks of other truths, perhaps greater truths that science cannot touch. These truths however, are not necessarily validated externally by scientific 'objectivity' but they are validated internally. They are the truths WITHIN us. The truths that need no external supports. The truths that we reach when we tread a spiritual path and develop our wisdom mind through meditation, the study of sutras and reflective, considered thought (Yoniso Manasikara).

***"If you do not get it from yourself,
where will you go for it?"***

Zen saying

The Prajnaparamita Sutras (The Perfection of Wisdom)

Within the Mahayana tradition there is a collection of texts, the Prajnaparamita Sutras, in which the concept of Sunyata is given much consideration. Sunyata (ultimate reality) is seen as going beyond the dualism of subject and observer, objectivity and subjectivity (the very substance of science), going far beyond our world of mundane, conditioned existence and understanding, onto a transcendental journey that takes us to the heart of mystery...

Sunyata is seen as an infinite 'emptiness', but not a 'nothingness'. It is devoid of dualism, devoid of the conditioned and unconditioned, devoid of any form of conscious awareness that supports the notion of a real self, devoid of time and space.

Sunyata is simply way beyond anything we can grasp because the mind cannot operate outside of its conditioned existence. It simply cannot confirm what is beyond itself.

Because sunyata is beyond our experience, beyond scientific scrutiny, beyond support or refutation, Popper would have had a problem with it. Anything conjectural or speculative must be treated very carefully he would say. But how do you prove the unprovable? How do you test the untestable? In the spiritual life we are, of necessity, placed in a position where we have to accept some things at face value, and in Buddhism it is the teachings of the Buddha.

A Working Blueprint

After his enlightenment, which made him confront directly the nature of ultimate reality, the Buddha turned his life to the Dharma (teachings) and the alleviation of suffering. When a group of the Kalama people approached him, asking how they could tell when the truth was spoken to them, the Buddha replied:

"Come Kalamas, do not be satisfied with hearsay, or with tradition, or with legendary lore, or with what has come down in your scriptures, or with conjecture, or with logical inference, or with weighting evidence, or with liking for a view after pondering it over..."

"When you know in yourselves 'These ideas are (unskilful), liable to censure, condemned by the wise... leading to harm and suffering', then you should abandon them... When you know in yourselves 'These things are (skilful)...' then you should practice them and abide in them..."

The Buddha

This discourse from the Buddha (which puts the onus on individuals to seek out the truth for themselves, in a systematic and rigorous way) is still relevant to our modern lives, I believe, as it was in the Buddha's time, 2,500 years ago. It provides a pragmatic guide for all of us to follow that will take us down a life

path of skilful living. It will bring truth into our lives to develop us and enlarge us. And if the scientific exposition of today (which is already under 'attack' in our post-Einsteinian world) can endure and still serve us as long as the Buddha's exposition has, then we will be the richer for it.

Popper may not have been a Buddhist, but my feelings are that the Buddha's discourse would have found an appeal with him, because it is coherent and testable on a personal level – where it really matters. Popper's training as a philosopher, like the Buddha, was forged in the fire of experience and he was very careful not to reject anything out of hand.

Within us all there is a strong desire for some form of permanence. It's our secret craving, buried deeply, that never really leaves us. Yet impermanence is the reality of the cosmos that sweeps everything away eventually, including you, me, and the very 'truths' that we cling to in our understanding of the world. My personal commitment is to the Buddhist path, but I do recognize other paths, others teachings, other truths that can nourish and sustain individuals. There is no real 'best' path for everyone, only 'your' path so whatever one you have chosen in life, have a wonderful journey and may you find truth, peace, joy and inner contentment along the way.

MELDING FAITH AND SCIENCE



EQUIPPING
CHRISTIAN
LEADERSHIP in an
AGE of
SCIENCE

The fields of theology and science share a number of similarities, but to many people they are frequently perceived as complex or abstract; seemingly reserved for those with exceptional intellect capable of understanding the nuances and intricacies of the subject.

This entrenched idea excludes many who might be willing to explore how the two are actually incredibly intertwined. It's often perceived that science and theology believe different things about the world, and that therefore, if they believe different things, one has to be right, and one has to be wrong.

However, both disciplines are fundamental to our legacy as humans, and understanding that the two are not mutually exclusive makes it all the more important that we continue to break down the barriers that exist between them.

At ECLAS – *Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science* – we've been working for almost a decade to advance this cause: aiming to provide senior Christian leaders with the tools, context and skills they need to engage confidently with science in their ministry.

And in the early months of 2020, we were very kindly supported by a multimillion-pound grant from Templeton Religion Trust to continue to meld theology and science and provide church leaders with the confidence they need to engage with both areas.

With this grant, we've been able to supplement our "Scientists in Congregations" programme, aimed at providing resources for churches at a local level to engage in the science-faith dialogue, we've awarded grants for innovative events, theatre pieces, lectures, and more. The ECLAS project has distributed £757,776 to 74 churches through its "Scientists in Congregations" programme since 2014.

ST. EANSWYTHE AND THE "THREE DAYS IN JANUARY" PROJECT

One of our most illuminating projects funded by this grant was the St Eanswythe project. A previous ECLAS grantee, the St Mary and St Eanswythe church in Folkestone received £20,000 to launch the "Three Days in January" project.

Exploring the relics of a skeleton left inside the Church for over a millennium, it was long suspected and hypothesised by the town of Folkestone that the remains found inside the Church belonged to St Eanswythe – the founder of one of England's earliest nunneries in Folkestone in about 660AD, and the granddaughter of Ethelbert, the first English king to convert to Christianity.

For the archaeological team investigating, this was a brilliant opportunity for 21st century science to throw light on the community's unanswered questions.

Most interestingly, even before the remains were verified, Eanswythe's existence had fascinating remnants of continuity and remembrance. Not only had Eanswythe's memory survived in the fabric of the community, it had thrived in art, history and legend that lived on long after the Reformation had destroyed her shrines.

And so, across three days in January 2020, archaeological and historical

experts from Kent, working with Queen's University in Belfast, confirmed that human remains kept in this Church in Folkestone were almost certainly those of St Eanswythe.

The results confirmed that long-held faith had been well founded, and made tangible and accessible the focus of fourteen centuries of veneration. This speaks volumes about the character of the community – in the face of an uncertain outcome, their faith in Eanswythe's existence was unwavering.

What the archaeological team found remarkable was not the science alone but rather the feeling that these three days of attentive study of the relics had left with them.

Two years on from the verification of the relics, the "Three Days in January" project was launched, to better understand this experience and to ask in what ways some objects and sites appear to retain a sense of connection, encounter or timelessness.

As the Revd Lesley Hardy, Co-Director of the Three Days in January project said: "We want to ask why and how, in 'an age of science', ancient and holy places and objects still matter so much to us".

For ECLAS, this was a hugely significant project, which received national media coverage and, most importantly, a genuine bridging of the theological and scientific communities – fundamental to our aims.

Promoting Community Interplay

MESSY CHURCH DOES SCIENCE

Messy Church Does Science, a programme funded by ECLAS through our “Scientists in Congregations” grants, exemplifies this melding of science and faith.

Beginning in 2017, Messy Church Does Science developed a series of science-based activities that would enable people to learn more about faith through encounters with the natural world.

Centred in key themes - water, air, plants, light, the body - and with input from both scientists and theologians, these projects help people discover scientific facts and principles through practical hands-on experience of testing hypotheses and constructing experiments.

At the same time, participants are supported in reflecting on the philosophical and theological implications of what they are doing, and what it means for their broader understanding of the world around them. While they're primarily aimed at children and families, anyone can take part.

A key idea behind this project is the notion that in the 21st century, a church can be a place where science happens.

Understanding differing perspectives, whilst delving into the

intricacies of nature and its role in nurturing a network of ecosystems, offers incredibly symbolic parallels in interpreting religious narratives, concerning the bond between individuals and their social and ecological environments.

Messy Church has done great work engaging future generations in the Church, whilst promoting awareness of the key issues that will impact their lives. They've even launched their own resources. Funded by our “Scientists in Congregations” grant, Messy Adventures is a document consisting of materials to give all leaders the tools and confidence to engage science and religion outdoors.

They have a brilliant channel on YouTube consisting of a dozen short videos, such as “Wild and Weedy” – discovering more about God through how plants grow and how God provides vegetation and food that sustains our planet.

Messy Church Goes Wild has been able to involve a number of congregations nationally with their work, successfully engaging the next generation in how science and faith can come to complement one another.

COME AND GET INVOLVED

The two projects above are among my personal favourites from the ECLAS “Scientists in Congregations” programme. They engage every generation, challenge existing ideas and promote greater appreciation of the interplay between science and faith, which is what we're all about.

In the past, we've seen projects that explore the health benefits of music in worship, or how Christians can better support those experiencing trauma and addiction. There's a whole host of various projects from up and down the country doing some great work, supported by our grants.

It's why we are delighted to announce that the “Scientists in Congregations” programme is now accepting applications for its next round of grantees. Applications will remain open until 30 April 2024, with successful applicants being announced in July 2024.

We're offering £10,000 each to eight congregations to partner with a professional scientist and host these projects

which will have far-reaching impacts in their communities. It's really important to us here at ECLAS that we continue to expand and explore how we can break down the barriers that exist to many between science and religion.

It's why we want to see applications from a greater breadth of communities. The ECLAS unit itself is incredibly diverse. We're made up of astrophysicists, sociologists, theologians, clergy and professors from various disciplines, as well as a dedicated team of researchers from universities around the country.

We'd love to see this reflected in our applications, and will be keeping a keen eye out for applications from more diverse communities. We welcome applications from all Christian denominations across the UK and Republic of Ireland.

If you'd like to find out more about the ECLAS project, come and take a look at our website to find out about the work we've done, and how you can get involved.

“We want to ask why and how, in ‘an age of science’, ancient and holy places and objects still matter so much to us”

Thank you **Hounslow Friends of Faith** for your kind invitation to give this talk in Interfaith Week. It is an honour to be here at Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha.

Women Leaders in Faith and Interfaith



My first experience of real interfaith engagement was during my PhD studies at the University of Birmingham in the late 1990's. I shared a study room with Ghada, a Muslim woman from Egypt, who had come to the UK to pursue her PhD in linguistics. We got to know each other well and often shared food and hospitality.

She invited me to break the fast with her during the holy month of Ramadan, and I invited her to my house for Christmas. Five times a day Ghada would get out her prayer mat, and pray facing Mecca. She asked if I minded. I said I did not, and in fact when she prayed I would commit to pray too, alongside her. Ghada and I used to talk theology in our coffee breaks, comparing what the Bible and the Qu'ran said about our shared heritage, and where we differed. We differed especially in how we understood the life and actions of Jesus in particular – for Ghada Jesus is a prophet and for myself the Son of God. These crucial differences for each of us illustrated that our religions were not the same. She thought I was wrong, and I thought she was wrong. But that was OK. We still shared coffee and prayed alongside each other.

From my relationship with Ghada I learned that genuine Interfaith engagement is first and foremost about connecting with my brother and sister as a person: a person made in the image of God, I believe, with the same joys and challenges, relationships and ways of living. By spending time together

Ghada and I were able to listen and understand each other's stories and perspectives. In this way we were able to base our perceptions of each other's religion through real lived experience, rather than hearsay or wrong impressions gained from media reporting, or social media. We were able to see the best in each other, rather than the worst; recognise our differences and being honest about them; seeing them as a source of colour and interest and strength, rather than a cause for antagonism or judgement.

I believe that women can play a vital role in interfaith work, especially as peacemakers in our communities. One reason for this is that I have found many women to be particularly good at listening, a crucial element of interfaith dialogue. If one is to enter into the experience of another, and seek to understand their perspective then one has to listen to their stories. In this way we learn of shared values and principles, like love, and kindness and compassion, peace and justice.

Women are also good at sharing experiences, and co-operating across religious boundaries which enables them to give focus to the experiences of those who do not have a voice, who have been oppressed, suffering poverty or oppressive practices. Bringing their voices into the room is empowering women in particular, who are normally underrepresented at the tables of power.

Interfaith dialogue led by women, encourages us to address issues related to women's rights and empowerment within religious communities. In interfaith conversation we need always to remember that women's experiences and concerns are not uniform. Other factors like gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality intersect with religious identity to shape women's experiences and perspectives. Women can be catalysts for change and transformation in homes, faith groupings, communities and society as a whole.





Indeed women are ideally placed to engage in what is termed “the dialogue of everyday life”. These are not the formal interfaith initiatives, but the occasions when people in a neighbourhood or community make contact and meet each other. Sometimes where politicians or religious leaders fail to find agreement on issues that divide us along religious lines, women can be the ones to meet in the spaces of home, and other community spaces to find a way forward.

However, the fact that women do often find easy connections outside the corridors of power, should not be an excuse to exclude us from the formal structures. We need women at the boardroom table as well as the kitchen table, in the committees and synods as well as the coffee shops and school gates. Women’s groups should be encouraged not only to discuss home issues but also to discuss wider faith issues that relate to men as well as women.

Alongside my role as Bishop of Kensington I have the privilege of being the Chaplain to the Worldwide Mothers’ Union. For those of you who don’t know it, the Mother’s Union is an extraordinary organisation. Founded in a village in Hampshire, in 1876 by Mary Sumner to support mothers bringing up their children, it now has over 4 million members in 84 countries. The movement is linked to the Anglican Church and carries out amazing work, especially to improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls across the world

in promoting a healthy and stable family life. Through this work the movement provides a sense of belonging to those women who are stigmatized and vulnerable. The Mothers’ Union adopts a theme for each triennium and the theme for this triennium is **Transformation Now**. Transformation is a good word to use when we are thinking about women and interfaith work because transformation is the goal.

When I encounter someone of a different faith perspective to me, I seek to be transformed myself. We are changed by the interactions we have in gatherings such as this, and then we can seek to transform our communities for the better together.

As I present this talk to celebrate Interfaith Week, I am conscious that today is World Kindness Day. Kindness is a quality that is sorely lacking in today’s world, and one which people of faith can so easily bring to the fore. Listening and engaging is an act of kindness. I recently met some women who have made a home in Feltham, having had to flee their homes in Iran. One of them told me that they had encountered a warm welcome in one of our churches, and she said: “*Kindness is a concept that needs no vocabulary*”.

As we think about interfaith engagement it is worth remembering that some of the most profound acts of kindness will be those that cross language and cultural barriers – and need no words at all.



Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson is Bishop of Kensington

Resource: The Inter Faith Network for the UK: Research Report: “*Deep connections: Women’s local inter faith initiatives in the UK*”

Extract of a talk given on the 13th November 2023 at the invitation of Hounslow Friends of Faith during Interfaith Week 2023: Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Hounslow hosted the event.



SHAMANISM AND CHILDREN

Planting Seeds for the Next Seven Generations



“Fire is important. It is the element that nourishes our fire within and stimulates us to be warriors for our Mother Earth.”

Everything that is done in Shamanism, is done for the next seven generations, and our children are the first of these seven generations. We, ourselves, are the link between our parents, grandparents, great grandparents... our ancestors and our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and onwards for 7 generations and more. By passing down to our children and grandchildren what we have learned from our ancestors we honour them, and the tradition we live in and by.

I grew up in Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas, located in the middle of the largest forest in the world. Manaus did not look kindly on me being indigenous. There I was raised to be white, Christian, with my native ancestry well hidden, almost erased. I didn't imagine that something was missing until I went through a situation so painful that it felt like my soul had been disconnected from my body.

Almost twelve years later, it was the Ojibway Tradition from Canada that brought my soul back, the moment I was taught to live in harmony with the Earth and its cycles. The Ojibway tradition, as with many ancient worldviews, brought me back to the awareness that we all come from Mother Earth, and that she is part of us; that everything has a spirit and that we are a part of the Great Spirit that permeates all of creation.

I learned, year after year, from the Ojibway people, how to conduct rituals and rites of passage; and there came a moment when I felt the need to create a centre for native traditions where I now live, in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It was a way of honouring them, and of honouring my ancestors. My goal was to create a place where people from the city could connect with nature through ancestral rites, and where they could search for and heal their own, often broken, souls.

This was how Nowa Cumig, Centre for Native Traditions was born in 2013. It was blessed by the Ojibway warrior and sage Dennis Banks (co-founder of the American Indian Movement), who gave it his own spiritual name, Nowa Cumig. The centre offers courses, rites of passage, individual and collective healing, and also engages in the defense of indigenous rights and the struggle for religious freedom and interchange. It was the beginning of a tribe. However, a tribe cannot survive without a new generation and I, who already have a long experience of working with children – especially children from the favela communities – along with other members of Nowa Cumig, created a cycle of events called “Shamanism and Children”.

The focus is to talk about nature, its changes and how this relates to our own inner being. These events are for children from 5 to 12 and are held on the solstices and equinoxes. Praying, singing and participating in fun and artistic activities, we seek to teach children about how changes in nature are reflected in our bodies, and to suggest natural ways of adapting and preserving our health. Children learn alongside their parents, seeing them connect with nature in a respectful way. They honour the seasons and the four fires: the sun, the magma in the earth, the sacred fire and the fire in our hearts. Fire is important. It is the element that nourishes our fire within and stimulates us to be warriors for our Mother Earth.

Innovation lies in the fact that we carry out this work in a large and vibrant city, with more than 8 million inhabitants. We take advantage of the fact that Rio has the largest forest in the world in an urban centre, and a phenomenal flora that provides us with healing herbs and fruits all year round. Looking with love at our surroundings, with respect for our planet as our mother, creates in children and in adults the certainty that we are all siblings, children of the same mother. This also encourages us to have respect for others who think and relate religiously to the sacred in a different manner from us.

Nowa Cumig's retreats have also always been open to families. In this way children experience Shamanism directly, living Shamanic rituals and processes. The children are invited to enter the sweat lodge, a place of communal prayer and healing; they are invited to participate in a feather circle, in which we thank Mother Earth for her blessings; and to sing to support those who are fasting.

The work of Nowa Cumig extends beyond the centre and includes children and young people in schools. The children are invited to participate in round table discussions with a group of religious leaders. Each leader presents their religious tradition and responds to questions subsequently raised by the young people. This gives the children and the students the opportunity to encounter and explore different religions, including Shamanism. This is also part of our interreligious work.

Once a seed is planted it must be cared for and protected. I understand that the creator has asked us to plant this seed in the hearts of children of all walks of life, as they will be the ones to guarantee the future of Mother Earth, for generations to come.

“For all our relations”

Athamis Bárbara Barbosa is Hummingbird Woman of the Thunderbird Clan.

The Nowa Cumig Centre assists several indigenous projects monthly and responds to requests for help throughout the year in matters of ecological catastrophes involving indigenous peoples. Its resources come from courses, the sale of indigenous crafts and donations from friends and contributors.

Editor's Note: Athamis Bárbara has written previously for this magazine, contributing to our theme on the 'Eternal Fire'. See www.faithinitiative.co.uk issue 13... and Faith and the Artist issue 39, and the inside front cover of issue 42.

Photographs: Regina Capano



Interfaith
Scotland
EXHIBITION

FACES OF FAITH

Over five million people live in Scotland and we each have a story to tell. This exhibition is a showcase of Scotland's diverse religious and cultural communities. Freedom of religion and belief is a key part of Scottish society, but few are aware of just how many beliefs are practised here, or of the diversity within each community. Through the stories of sixteen people, we explore the joys, challenges, and complexities of living as a person of faith in Scotland, and the impact these communities have on a local, national, and international level.

The common thread weaving through each story became clear to us with every interview. Our many religious communities may be diverse in culture and practice, but our values are intertwined – we all hope for, and are working towards, a better future for Scotland and the world.

We spent the summer getting to know each of these sixteen people and this exhibition is the culmination of many moments of connection. In these photographs, we hope you will see not photos of strangers, but of the friends we came to know. Thank you to the sixteen people who generously shared their stories and time with us.

This is an exhibition funded by Interfaith Scotland for Scottish Interfaith Week.

SUJAN

Nepalese Buddhist, Monk, Acting Abbot, Chaplain, Ajahn (teacher)

The weather was not the coldest part of Sujan's arrival to Aberdeen in 2011. Originally from a Hindu family in Nepal, Sujan spent eight years training to be a Theravada Buddhist monk in Thailand before he was seconded to the UK. But he did not receive the warmest welcome here.

Sujan is proud of the orange robes, known as Kāṣāya, that he wears to represent his faith and beliefs. He stands out in any crowd, but particularly among the subdued grey raincoats of Aberdeen's locals. While exploring the city he received many comments on his appearance, some kind and curious, and others less so.

Quickly, Sujan decided on how best to address the public's curiosity and commentary on his presence. He resolved to make himself as visible as possible. Those who live in Aberdeen have likely seen Sujan walking around in his orange robes and talking with the locals, making himself a vibrant part of the city's tapestry.

The young monk's presence is felt not only through his visibility but his actions.

Sujan voluntarily cooks food and distributes food parcels with the Instant Neighbour charity, providing nourishment to people experiencing homelessness and those struggling to eat due to poverty. The first time Sujan felt welcome in the city was when a homeless man approached him on the street and warmly thanked him for his support.

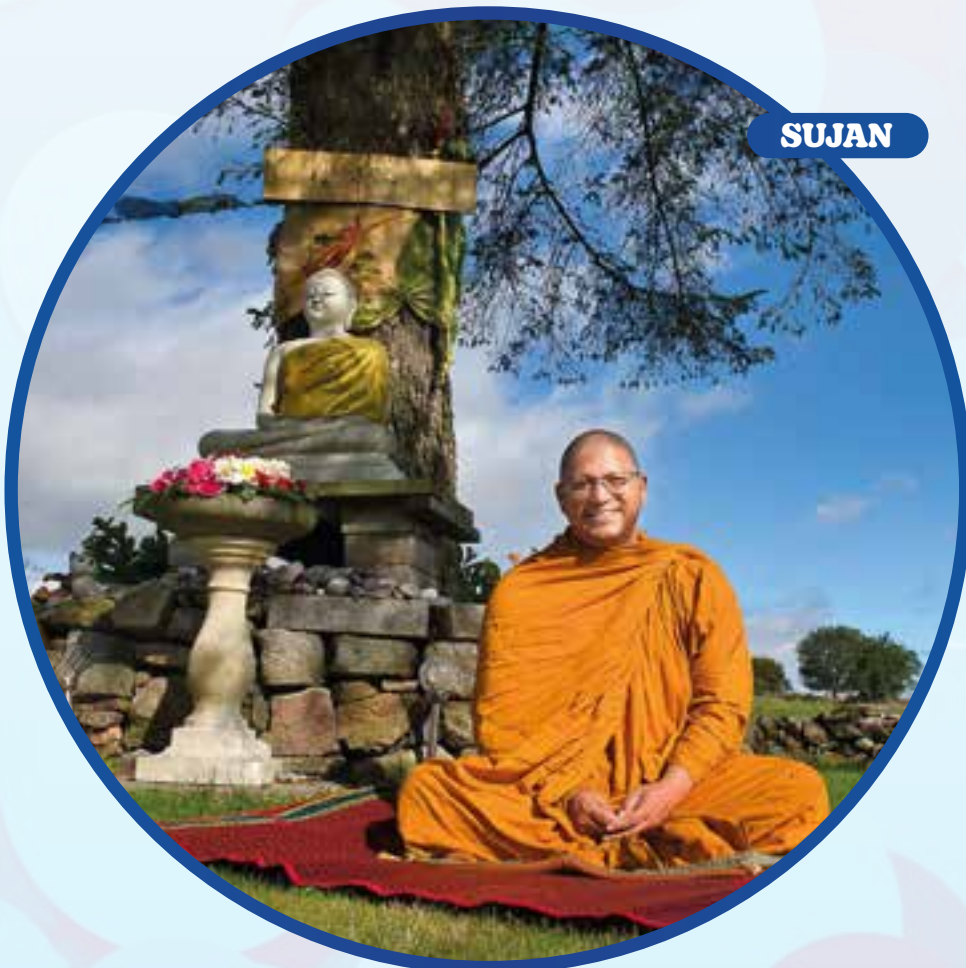
In collaboration with the NHS Grampian Multicultural Health and Wellbeing Forum, Sujan has been offering meditation sessions to those facing difficulties in their lives since 2015, including members of the public and NHS staff.

Developing the Varapunya Centre, a temple and place for meditation in Aberdeen, has been an important aspect of Sujan's work. He currently acts as the temple's abbot, running meditations and rituals that anyone is welcome to partake in. When someone finds peace or happiness through a Buddhist practice that Sujan has taught them, it brings him joy. Over the first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, Sujan offered free meditation sessions regularly and gave uplifting talks to hundreds of people every night online. He never missed an evening.

Sujan's alma mater, the University of Aberdeen, made him an honorary Buddhist chaplain in 2018.

When he first told his parents that he wanted to become a Buddhist, they agreed on one condition, that he would not travel far from home. But this was not in the plan for Sujan who has now lived abroad for 25 years and is happy in his home of Scotland.

Sujan's hope for the future is that everyone will be accepted for who they are and will be valued for their presence, wherever they are in the world and whatever they believe.



SUJAN

SAMEEHA

Muslim, Educator, Volunteer, Baker, Photographer

The idea for Sameeha's award-winning social enterprise, Ubuntu, came to her at the age of twelve.

She witnessed many of her classmates being left behind by the education system, while others were provided with every opportunity to thrive. Driven by this inequality, she entered a proposal into a business competition at school. She imagined an enterprise which actively supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn life skills.

Years after reaching the final for the competition, Sameeha's proposal came back to her when it was needed most.

When the first Covid-19 lockdown began, Sameeha was a recent graduate voluntarily tutoring children in kinship care. She organised videocall accounts for each child so they could continue with tutoring online. But many of them stopped receiving homework from school. When she inquired about the work, the schools were dismissive. The teachers said the children were not academic enough and were unlikely to do the work from home.

Sameeha was infuriated by this response. By a stroke of luck, she discovered her original business proposal while cleaning out a cupboard shortly after and resolved to make the idea a reality.

Now at the age of twenty-three, Sameeha runs an award-winning social enterprise alongside her day job as a Chief

of Staff in the UK Parliament. She holds a Scottish Young Achiever of the Year award and was recently in the running for Scotswoman of The Year.

Her social enterprise, Ubuntu, supports hundreds of children and their families across Glasgow and Lanarkshire. Ubuntu offers free workshops in life skills such as budgeting, communicating, and working with people of different backgrounds. The enterprise recently won the Young Scot Enhancing Education Award 2022.

Uniquely, instead of inviting professionals from charities and businesses to run workshops, Sameeha encourages local community members to share their lived experience with the young people. Sameeha believes it takes a community to build a school and to educate a child. The name 'Ubuntu' is an African philosophy which literally translates as "I am because we are".

Originally from Kenya, her family's cultural background has inspired more than just the philosophy of her business. Sameeha's faith as a Muslim has motivated her work and volunteering for many years.

Sameeha's hope for the future is that schools in Scotland develop a holistic approach to education and that no young person is left behind because of their background.

SHARANDEEP

Sikh, Anaesthesiologist, Volunteer, Optimist, Foodie

Growing up in the Sikh faith inspired Sharandeeep to become a doctor, and it is also the reason he is passionate about volunteering.

For Sharandeeep, using his skills and energy to help others is a crucial way to put the Sikh faith into action.

Sharandeeep and his older brother, Charandeeep, have been viewed as leaders and organisers in the Scottish Sikh community for years.

That is why, on a cold Saturday morning in March 2020, sitting in pyjamas in their Glasgow home, both of their phones began to chime and ring. Friends of the brothers were eager to know how they could help the community as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold.

As a doctor, Sharandeeep had an insight into the pandemic's impact and who might suffer the most. It was then the brothers decided to start The Sikh Food Bank.

The brothers gathered the Sikh volunteering network and partnered with the local Baptist church at Queen's Park to operate the food bank.

People of all ages and backgrounds volunteered to help. Young professionals on furlough made the bulk of the volunteer base but they were also joined by pensioners, parents with their children, and even two Royal Air Force pilots on leave.

The initiative went on to deliver over 100,000 food parcels

to people who were struggling to access food due to poverty and isolation.

Sharandeeep and his team were determined to provide a holistic service which met the needs of the people they were helping. He believes that charity support should be conducted with dignity and compassion so that recipients are not left feeling dehumanised.

Those receiving food parcels were asked for their feedback on favourite foods and specific needs, and over time, they developed friendships with the volunteers.

More than two years on, the food bank has seen a dip in the number of people needing support, but unfortunately, the numbers are rising again. The cost-of-living crisis is putting pressure on people across Scotland who are facing difficulty paying for food or even finding suitable food on empty supermarket shelves.

Sharandeeep believes that humanity has the capacity to eradicate poverty and inequality. He says that all humans have a divine spark within them – the potential to be changemakers – and that by using our skills and strengths we can achieve incredible feats together.

Sharandeeep's hope for the future is for humanity to respond collectively in times of crisis and compassionately support those in need.

HENRY

Jewish, Educator, Holocaust Refugee, Chef, Lover of Classical Music

Henry arrived in Glasgow as a refugee fleeing Nazi Germany in 1939. He was fifteen, alone and did not speak English.

Henry's mother had secured him a place on the Kindertransport, a humanitarian aid programme transporting Jewish children from Germany to the UK before the outbreak of World War II.

Henry was warmly welcomed into the home of Mrs Hurwich, a member of the local Jewish community, and started school.

A year later Henry was charged with 'corresponding with the enemy' for trying to send a letter to his parents informing them of his wellbeing. He was suspected of being a spy and was traumatically interned on the Isle of Man, despite being too young.

After several tribunals, Henry was released. He returned to Glasgow and worked as a chef for high-end restaurants, following in the footsteps of his grandparents who had run a successful catering business. In 1941, Henry's father died of a heart attack during an air raid in Germany. Two years after the war, Henry's mother was able to join him in Scotland.

Henry met and fell in love with Ingrid who had also come to Glasgow by Kindertransport and lost many of her own family and friends in the Holocaust.

The couple soon married and had two daughters. They lived busy lives running a catering business and raising a family, but they both knew they needed to share their stories.

Together, Henry and Ingrid made it their lives work in retirement to educate others, particularly young people, about the Holocaust and where unchallenged prejudice and discrimination can lead. They educated hundreds of school pupils and spoke to thousands at events across the country.

Ingrid received an award for her services to Holocaust education and Henry was awarded an MBE for his work with limbless veterans.

Henry sadly lost Ingrid in 2020 after 75 years of marriage.

His Glasgow flat is adorned with photos of Ingrid, their daughters, and grandchildren. On a living room shelf stands a black and white photo of a teenage Henry in a bowtie with his parents, next to it sits a photo of grinning twin toddlers, two of his great-grandchildren. His third great-grandchild is one year old.

To this day, at the age of 98, Henry continues to provide his first-hand testimony of being a Holocaust refugee and raise awareness of the current refugee crises. He is keen to highlight how millions of children continue to be uprooted from their homes in wars and conflicts around the world today, most recently in Ukraine.

Henry's hope for the future is for all young people to learn about the dangers of discrimination and to take responsibility for challenging intolerance and prejudice.



SAMEEHA



HENRY



SHARANDEEP



ISADORA



UMUTESI

ISADORA

Bahá'í, Feminist, Mother, Humanitarian, Baker

Think of all the large-scale crises which have happened around the world in the last fifteen years; Isadora was probably there.

Through her role at CARE International, Isadora is involved in providing humanitarian aid to countries facing poverty, disaster, and conflict.

She has worked with communities in Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, and the Congo, to name a few. While she supports people living through some of the world's worst atrocities, Isadora finds it empowering to be part of the front-line response.

Isadora is specifically tasked with working for gender equality within communities going through crises. During a particularly volatile stage of the Syrian civil war, Isadora worked on the border between Turkey and Syria. The situation was too dangerous for Isadora's team to enter the country and she was forced to try to understand the challenges facing Syrian women from the outside.

Through this experience, Isadora created a tool called Rapid Gender Analysis which has since been used in more than seventy countries. The tool provides information about the different needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys, and girls in a crisis situation. It is used by humanitarians all around the world.

Most of Isadora's stories from work are challenging to hear, but she warmly reflects on her time with a group of South Sudanese refugee women in Northern Uganda.

The women had been secluded to a designated area of a refugee camp, known as Village 6. The women in Village 6 created an empowering group for women of all Christian denominations in the camp to meet, talk and take action in things like adult education and on preventing domestic violence.

When Isadora visited the camp, she discovered that the women had constructed their own Catholic church and were delighted to share their ideas with her. Isadora's team was able to create an empowering group for women of all Christian denominations in the camp to meet and talk.

Isadora's passion for gender equality developed around the same time as her curiosity for religion. She grew up in a Scottish Chinese family in Methilhill in Fife, her parents were not religious but sent her to Sunday school every week. As a young adult, she spoke with people from many faith backgrounds. While living in the Democratic Republic of Congo she discovered the Bahá'í faith and has been a member ever since.

The Bahá'í teachings state that through gender equality the world will be a more peaceful and harmonious place. Isadora believes the world has a long way to go to achieve gender equality but that everyone has a responsibility to make it happen.

Isadora's hope for the future is to see a world with more vibrant, equal, and peaceful communities.

UMUTESI

Christian, Mother, Gardener, Cook, Fashion Follower

Umutesi was born to a single mother in Rwanda in the 1980s during a time of increasing political unrest.

She lived with her mother and grandparents in a mountain village and was the second eldest of four children.

The country's majority Hutu population and minority Tutsi population were in constant conflict with each other at the time. A conflict which had been heavily influenced by European colonisation.

When the ruling Hutu president died in a plane crash in 1994, tensions between the groups erupted into violence. Umutesi was twelve years old and witnessed unimaginable horrors in the days that followed.

More than one million people died in the 100 days of the Rwandan genocide, primarily Tutsis but also moderate Hutus. Around two million Rwandans fled the country during or immediately after the genocide.

With her mother and siblings, Umutesi fled towards the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her eldest sister was lost in the initial days of the genocide and her mother was killed on the journey out of Rwanda.

Umutesi was left to care for her three younger siblings aged seven, four and six months. They walked for three months until they reached the Congo, sadly losing their brother to malnutrition along the way.

For five years, Umutesi protected her sisters while they lived in the jungle in a state of constant fear and hunger. The Congo was experiencing its own conflict, and rebels roamed the jungle inflicting physical and sexual violence on those they encountered.

After years of suffering, Umutesi decided that if she was going to die, she would die in her own country. She returned to Rwanda with her sisters and discovered that forty of their relatives had died in the genocide.

Umutesi began piecing her life together and made friends with a German researcher who sponsored her to complete a nursing degree.

In 2012, Umutesi met Iain, a Scottish man working in Rwanda. They bonded over a love of music and later got married. She moved to Scotland in 2015 and they had two daughters together. Umutesi is happy in Scotland and feels ready to share her story. She hopes it will help others who have experienced similar trauma to know they are not alone.

Throughout her life, Umutesi's Christian faith has supported her. She has always felt that someone was watching over her, giving her the strength to carry on.

Umutesi's hope for the future is to see people happy and living in peace, and for humanity to learn from the mistakes of the past.

BILL



NICOLA



HAILEY



TRISHNA



ANISH



NEIL



MALA



LINSAY



ASTRID



SRIHARI



Memory of Rain

Some days he would hitch a life out of his village
far as the tarmac road draped over the veldt,
squatting under the tree with its layers of shadows,
his knobbed staff- the one forefathers left-
pointing towards the south, and the memory of rain.

Brown ground was dust and grit, he felt his feet
grate with each footstep into his fraying sandals.
Barely a breeze to rattle the armoury of grass,
barely a cloud in the form of a zebra or kudu,
no hut or kraal in sight; barely a shadow,

and the land and sky moving away together.
He had more than seventy summers on the notched stick
but moon change between rainy seasons had grown longer.
Someone who read had told him the good rains
were falling even less in faraway places.

He toyed with the crisp of a leaf; a bushman crossed
the road with his quill of spears, and the tailing skirl
of a desert bird spiralled in a hunting thermal.
Noon heat bounced down like a mortar when maize was pounded.
He reached for his water skin like a half-forgotten

song, conjured from damp caves underground;
creatures in charcoal and ochre, the ancestors'
daily familiars, become just a skull or a shin-bone
found on the edge of some scrubland once yielding a pasture.
Grateful for shadows nesting in remaining leaves,

he sang into the long, blue emptiness
spells of how spirits of the children came
dancing in downpour, how the water-holes
doubled giraffe as they lowered jibbed necks to drink,
until, on a strange wind, crackling lightning came.

Martyn Halsall

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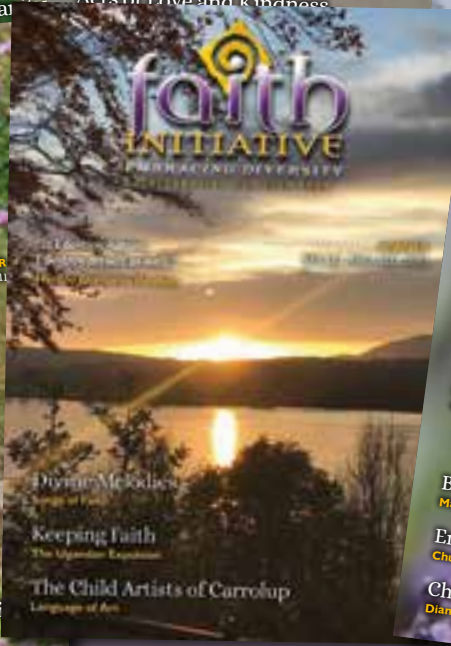
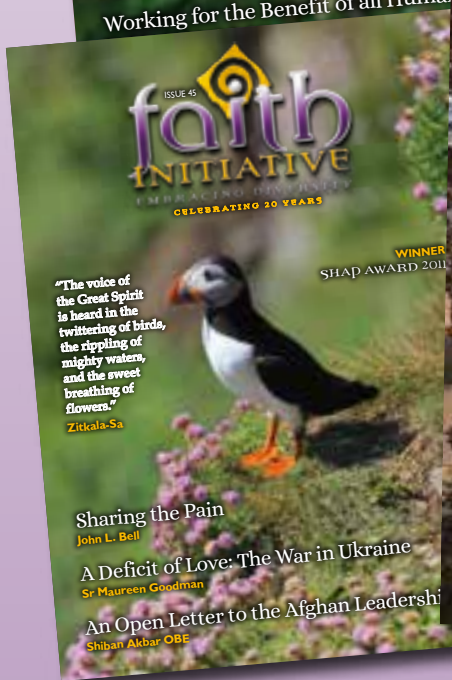
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Dupatta

My dupatta of red and gold lace hides many secrets yet to be told.

It covers my long, dark raven hair from preying eyes.

It wraps around me like a protective shield.

I wear my dupatta with pride, holding my head high
as I walk through the cities of the world.

My dupatta covers me through the stages and seasons of my life.

It blows gently behind me in the wind.

It hides me from the heated gaze of the sun.

It keeps the rain away from me.

My dupatta is the veil that hides many emotions yet to be expressed.

I wore red as a bride, white as a widow, and many colours in between.

The dupatta once highlighted the silky smoothness of my face,
now hides the deep wrinkles of age.

My dupatta is a statement of the woman I am.

Zanib Rasool



The Jain Path of Respect, Non-Violence and Compassion

Harmony and coexistence between humans and animals

Jains believe that every living being, no matter how small or inconspicuous, possesses a soul (*jiva*) and therefore deserves respect. This belief extends to animals, and one of the most visible symbols of this respect is the practice undertaken by Jain monks and nuns to cover their mouths with a cloth to prevent unintentional ingestion of insects while speaking or breathing. This simple act symbolizes their unwavering commitment to non-violence and respect for even the tiniest of creatures.



Compassion (*karuna*) and Non-Violence (*ahimsa*) Towards Animals

Compassion is one of the central tenets of Jainism. Jains believe in the practice of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, in thought, word, and deed. Hence, since early childhood Jains are encouraged to develop deep empathy and compassion for all living beings. This drives them to make righteous choices throughout their life. Jains understand that animals can suffer, just as humans do, and this awareness fuels their commitment to protect and preserve animal life. They engage in acts of charity and service to animals, such as funding shelters, feeding strays, and participating in rescue and rehabilitation efforts.

The Jain tradition offers profound and timeless examples of how respect and compassion can shape our interactions with animals. The tradition's unwavering commitment to *ahimsa* and *karuna*, the compassionate treatment of all life forms, set a remarkable precedent for how humans can coexist with animals in a spirit of harmony and mutual respect: especially in today's world, where the exploitation of animals is a pressing concern.

Jainism is replete with stories and teachings that exemplify the profound respect for animals that is central to the tradition. Jain educational institutions often include teachings on animal welfare and the importance of non-violence in their curricula. Jain scriptures, particularly the Puranas (ancient texts) and other texts,

contain various historical stories that emphasize the significance of compassion and respect for animals. These historical stories exemplify the Jain principle of non-violence and emphasize the profound respect for all life, regardless of size or species. They serve as timeless reminders of the importance of empathy and kindness toward animals and the interconnectedness of all living beings in the web of existence. This helps instill a sense of deep responsibility that we as humans have towards animals since early childhood.

We Share a Few of Our Favorite Stories

An elephant, the leader of a large herd, was caught in a raging forest fire. Seeking shelter, all animals crowded around a lake, leaving no room for him to maneuver. After a while, the elephant raised one



This story depicts not only compassion but compassion endowed with personal sacrifice. It serves as a poignant reminder of the values and ethics upheld within the Jain tradition, emphasizing that true spirituality is not limited to rituals or meditation but is also expressed through kindness, compassion, and the active protection and welfare of animals.

In the Jain tradition, the story of Lord Mahavira's compassion for animals is often cited. It is said that Mahavira once came across a group of people who were about to kill a swan for a sacrifice. Mahavira, witnessing the animal's suffering, was deeply moved by compassion. He preached to the people about the sanctity of all life and convinced them to spare the swan's life. This exemplifies the profound sense of *Karuna* (compassion) that Jains hold for all creatures.

King Shrenik and the Ants: In another tale, King Shrenik, a devout Jain, was walking through his garden when he accidentally stepped on a line of ants, killing many of them. He was distraught at causing harm to these tiny creatures and ordered his soldiers to pour sand over the ant hill, so as to avoid further injury to the ants. This story illustrates the Jain concept of "Aparigraha" or non-possession, as the king's actions reflect his willingness to relinquish his attachment to his possessions for the sake of non-violence.

*True spirituality is not limited to rituals or meditation
but is also expressed through kindness, compassion,
and the active protection and welfare of animals.*

Acharya Hemchandra and the Starving Dogs: The 12th-century Jain scholar and monk, Acharya Hemchandra, was known for his immense compassion for animals. It is said that once, while walking through a village, he came across a group of starving dogs. He couldn't bear to see their suffering and decided to feed them by giving them the food he had collected as alms. This act of selflessness demonstrated his deep respect and compassion for all living beings.

The Legend of Bahubali: One of the most iconic images in Jain art is that of Bahubali, a central figure in Jainism, and the son of the first Tirthankara, Rishabhanatha. Bahubali is standing in meditation, covered with vines, and surrounded by animals. Vines and creepers grow around him, and animals, including snakes, birds, and other creatures, seek refuge around him. This remarkable statue symbolizes the ideal of harmony and coexistence between humans and animals, as well as the spiritual pursuit of enlightenment and non-violence.

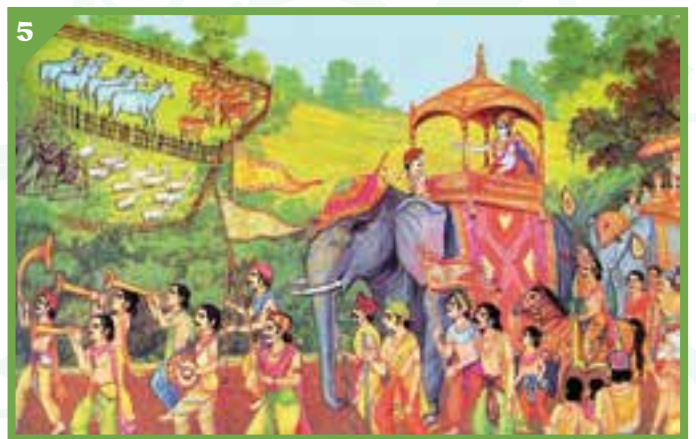


The Mouse and the Lion (The Mahabharata of Jains): In this story, a lion spares the life of a mouse who accidentally ran over its paw. Later, the same mouse rescues the lion from a hunter's trap by gnawing through the ropes. The story teaches that acts of kindness and compassion, no matter how small, can have profound consequences and that one should never underestimate the worth of any living being.



Our final story is of “Nemu Rajul”, a popular Jain folktale that illustrates the deep care and concern for animals within the Jain tradition. I don't know of any Jain who is not familiar with the 22nd Tirthankar Nemi Nath and his bride Rajul. As the story goes, the marriage procession of Neminath is proceeding with all royal pomp and show towards the palace of Rujul.

Rajul too is watching the movement of the wedding party from the windows of her apartments. Both Neminath and Rajul are excited. Suddenly, Neminath notices lots of animals in cages by the side of the road where his marriage procession was passing. He asks his aides why these animals are there, and what purpose they serve. The aides reply that they are for the dinner of all the marriage participants. Hearing this, Neminath ji is shocked and starts feeling the pain and suffering and finally, feels compassion for their lives. He could not bear it. How can he get married when so many of these poor and helpless creatures will become part of the celebration.



Right there and then, with the feeling of their pain, Neminath- ji stops the marriage procession, removes all his clothing, renounces the world, and becomes a Jain monk.

Seeing this and realizing that Neminath ji has become a monk, renouncing all possessions, including human relationships, Rajul decides to do the same and becomes a Jain nun.



Cow and lion drinking from the same tub of water is titled 'Live and Let Live,'

Dr. Sulekh C. Jain is the Founder/Co-Founder of more than a dozen organizations and institutions in North America that deal with Jainism, an ancient religion in India that focuses on living a life of harmlessness and renunciation. **Dr. Payal Seth** is an economics researcher at the Tata-Cornell Institute, Cornell University.

Images:

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Hinduism Past & Present

The Importance of the Spiritual Heritage and Reverence of Animals

The ancient religions of India - Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism - have never differentiated between the soul of a human being and the soul of an animal. All life forms are subject to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The liberation of the soul depends on one's karmas or actions, and one goes through several births till the soul realizes the truth. Thus, a human being, animal or insect are equally part of the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Finally, when good karmas lead to self-realization, the soul is liberated from the cycle of *samsara*. This is *moksha* or *nirvana*, the ultimate liberation of the individual soul, leading to oneness with the Supreme Being or Brahman. Everything that has been created by the Supreme Being, comes from the Supreme Being and returns to the Supreme Being. Animals are sacred because people identify with them, they too are subject to the laws of karma and rebirth. By recognizing their divinity, Indian religions gave them a unique position which helped to protect many animal species.

The deification of a particular animal did not depend on its numbers, but on the qualities that it symbolised. This led to its protection, a safeguard that was lost in the British period when many animals were described as vermin and were killed, thus exterminating the cheetah and bringing others like the lion, tiger and leopard to near-extinction.

Animals were revered for what they symbolise. The elephant, a keystone species, is the remover of obstacles in the jungle: the elephant-headed Ganesha is the remover of obstacles in life. The langur (monkey) is a fellow primate: Hanuman the monkey was deified for his intelligence and total devotion to Lord Rama. The tiger is the top predator: Vaghdeo, Vaghoba and Huliraya are tiger deities revered for their importance in conservation. The cow is the source of milk: she is a Divine Mother.



Ganesha the elephant-headed deity

The blackbuck is essential for the survival of the khejri plant, which is the mainstay of the desert. The dog is a wanderer: he is the companion of Bhairava (Shiva). The lion is a symbol of royalty and power: he is the vehicle of Goddess Durga who destroys evil. Each animal is a symbol of the role it plays in life, therefore, it is revered.

**“Animals are sacred because
people identify with them”**

“The Upanishads represent an advanced state in the evolution of Hinduism. They were against animal sacrifice and spoke of *ahimsa* or non-killing”

Some animals became *vahanas* or vehicles of the gods, symbolizing the close proximity between animals and divinity. Nandi the bull is a draught animal and the vehicle of Lord Shiva. Lord Vishnu’s vehicle is Garuda, the eagle. The swan is the vehicle of both the Creator Brahma and Saraswati, Goddess of Wisdom, and the lion of Goddess Durga. And so on. In time, the *vahana* became a symbol of the deity.

‘Avatara’ means ‘one who descends’. It is believed that whenever Dharma or the Law of Righteousness is in danger, Vishnu incarnates himself to save the world from evil. Four of Lord Vishnu’s incarnations are as animals. The first is the fish or Matsya, who saved mankind from the great Flood. The second is the tortoise Kurma, who was a totemic deity of the Bhil tribe. Varaha the boar ploughed the soil and taught people agriculture. And the half man-half lion Narasimha was yet another tribal totem. They are symbols of evolutionary markers that distinguish the period when the ten Avatars, or incarnations of Lord Vishnu, descended on earth. Vishnu’s incarnations perform the three roles of Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, for he destroys evil and re-establishes *dharma* and, as divine incarnations, symbolize the Supreme Being himself. In the *Bhagavat Gita* (4.7–8), Vishnu, as Krishna, promises to incarnate himself:

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānamadharmaṣya tadātmānam srijāmyaham.
paritrānāya sādhunām vināśāya ca dushkritām
dharma samsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge.*

O descendent of Bharata, whenever there is a decline in religious practices,

And a predominance of irreligion, I descend myself.

For the deliverance of the pious, for the annihilation of the miscreants,

To reestablish the principles of righteousness, I appear, millennium after millennium.



Nandi on Shiva's flag

This stanza is one of the main tenets of the Hindu religion, promising divine intervention and tying together all creation. The most important aspect of Hindu theology is the sanctity accorded to different species through reincarnation. *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* (1.3.5) says: ‘This form is the source and indestructible seed of multifarious incarnations within the universe, and from the particle and portion of this form, different living entities like demigods, animals, human beings and others are created.’

Kashyapa played a major role in the creation story. He married the thirteen daughters of Daksha, who gave birth to the gods, demons and all creatures. Aditi was the mother of the Adityas (gods); Diti was the mother of the Daityas (demons); Danu was the mother of the Danavas; Krodhavasas the mother of Kamadhenu, the divine cow, and all cows and elephants; Vinata was the mother of Aruna and Garuda, divine eagles; Kadru of the Nagas or snakes; and Sarama, the Vedic dog of Indra, the mother of all canines. By making Kashyapa a divine progenitor, gods, people and animals became siblings. This is another symbol that humans are not higher than animals: all are equal.

The concept of *ahimsā*—non-violence in thought and deed—is India’s unique contribution to world culture and a symbol of the ideal in Hinduism. The Vedas and Upanishads were the first to speak of *ahimsā*. *Rig Veda* (10.87.16), condemns all forms of killing, even the drinkers of milk:

*‘The yatudhāna who fills himself with the flesh of man,
He who fills himself with the flesh of horses or of other animals,
And he who steals the milk of the cow:
Lord, cut off their heads with your flame.’*



Stone statue of Nandi, the bull, vehicle of Lord Shiva, from Mysore



Matsya or Fish, the first incarnation of Lord Vishnu

Ahimsā was first mentioned in the *Rig Veda* (10.22.25) 5000 years ago. *Kapisthala Kathā Samhitā* of the *Yajur Veda* (31.11) specifically uses the term *pashu ahimsā* for non-killing of animals. 'No person should kill animals helpful to all and persons serving them should obtain heaven' (*Yajur Veda*, 13.47). According to the *Atharva Veda* (12.1.15), the earth was created for the enjoyment of not only human beings, but also for bipeds and quadrupeds, birds, animals and all other creatures. The emergence of all life forms from the Supreme Being is expressed in the *Mundakopanishad* (2.1.7): 'From Him, too, gods are produced manifold. The celestials, men, cattle (animals), birds.' The *Manusmriti* (5.45) says, 'He who injures innocent beings with a desire to give himself pleasure never finds happiness, neither in life nor in death.'

In the course of Indian history, certain individuals contributed to elevating the status of animals. The best-known are Rama, Krishna, Mahavira, Buddha and Ashoka. Rama (about 1000 BCE) is the hero of the *Rāmāyana*: his associates included Hanuman the powerful monkey, Jambavan the wise bear, Jatayu the self-sacrificing vulture and the tiny squirrel who contributed to the construction of the bridge to Lanka by carrying sand and tiny stones. Each symbolised a quality. As the cult of Rama developed,

the animals he associated with developed their own sanctity. Krishna of the *Mahābhārata* was the hero of pastoral tribes and the reverence for the cow owes much to the deification of Krishna. She became a symbol of the Divine Mother.

Animal sacrifice was a part of Vedic rituals, but the seers of the Upanishads revolted. The Upanishads represent an advanced state in the evolution of Hinduism. They were against animal sacrifice and spoke of *ahimsa* or non-killing. This is the ideal that influenced Mahavira and the Buddha, founders of Jainism and Buddhism respectively. *Chandogya Upanishad* bars violence against "all creatures" (*sarva-bhūta*). Mahavira (599–527 BCE) established *ahimsā paramo dharmah*: (non-violence is the highest religion) as the basic tenet of Jainism. *Jeevdayā*, compassion for all living beings or the gift of life, was its prime philosophy. Gautama Buddha (563–483 BCE) preached compassion. The Mauryan king Ashoka (304–232 BCE) can be credited with the mass propagation of *ahimsā* in India. His grandfather Chandragupta had renounced his throne to become a Jaina monk. Ashoka's edicts on rocks and free-standing pillars stand testimony to his adoption of *ahimsā* as his state policy, and to his preaching of compassion towards and non-killing of animals as essential to *dharma*. In Jainism, vegetarianism is mandatory for everyone; in Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism it is promoted as the symbol of a higher form of life, but it is not mandatory. In later Hindu literature, killing animals and eating meat were considered to be such heinous sins that neither prayers nor pilgrimages nor bathing in holy rivers could mitigate the sin.

The *bhakti* (devotion) movement, or belief in a personal god, started in Tamilnadu in the early centuries of the present era. *Bhakti* totally rejected meat eating and asserted that the liberation of the soul was to be attained by the individual; and that animals were a part of the cycle of *karma* and rebirth. Several medieval Indian saints all over India preached devotion to a personal god, equality of man and animals, and vegetarianism. Animals became a symbol of a higher existence for human beings.

Today, the thriving international wildlife trade is threatening the survival of wildlife in India. Habitat destruction, unchecked development, corruption and bureaucratic apathy are sounding the death knell of India's wildlife. Intensive animal farming for the growing meat market is a disaster for the environment. India's spiritualism secured animals in the past. The loss of spirituality is bringing untold cruelties such as intensive factory farming and the destruction of wildlife, causing great stress and distress to the animals. This is totally against all that the Hindu scriptures have said, but the modern world has lost its faith.

"India's spiritualism secured animals in the past"

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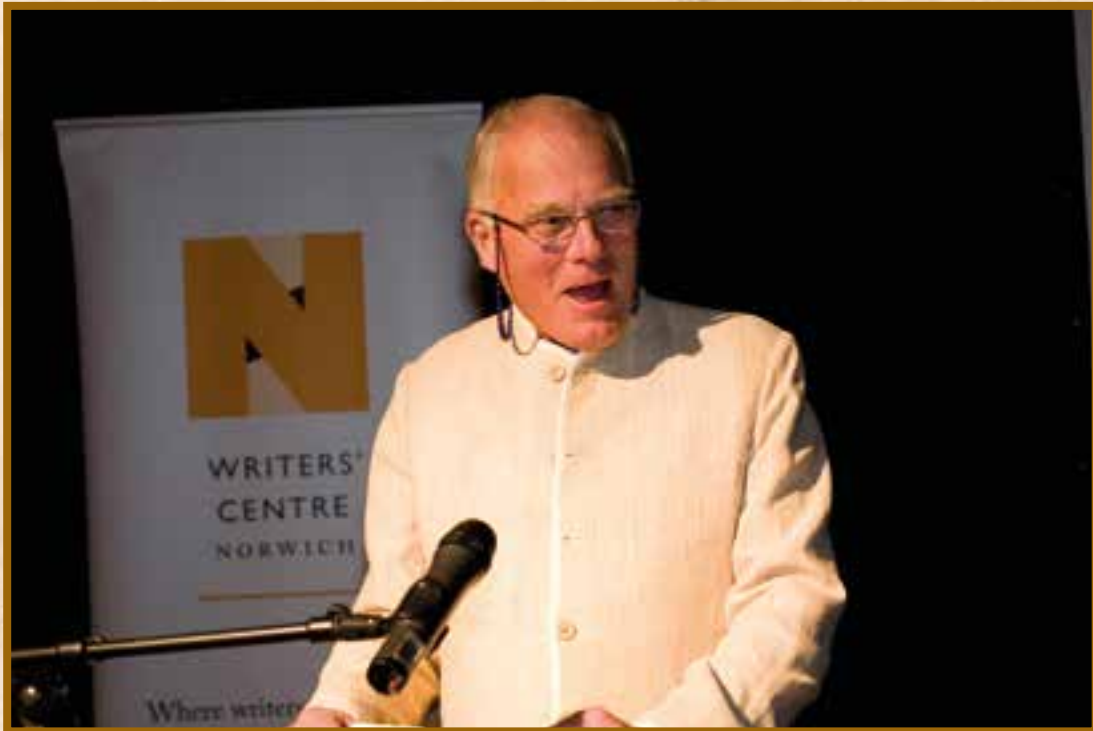
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*Amen, old friend.
Amen.*

Among the heroes of the struggle to defeat apartheid, many stood tall; but none perhaps physically taller than CJ Driver, known to many as Jonty.



Born 1939 in Cape Town as the Second World War began, he emerged from a childhood in Kroonstad, then Cradock, and finally Grahamstown (now Makhanda), a giant at nearly 6 foot 4 inches. In three distinct yet interwoven spheres – political activism, education, and writing – he towered above many of his contemporaries in terms of insight and achievement on any reading of his rich life. But though an imposing figure – who could be extremely direct and assertive in decision-making – he was the gentlest and kindest of souls.

His father – an Anglican priest as had been his grandfather before him – nurtured in him a strong sense of justice, a passion for the development of young minds, hearts, and bodies – even at sixty Jonty was still to be found ‘flailing’ – as his distinct running style was called – around a school playing field – together with deep literary interests which he shared

with his sister Dorothy, professor of English successively at UCT and Adelaide University, and her husband, the Nobel Literature Laureate, JM Coetzee.

Schooling at St Andrew’s College Grahamstown, with its traditional combination of muscular Anglicanism and Scottish-style military marching band, would one day find obvious fulfilment and echo in his leadership of Wellington College, where the sons – and more recently daughters – of the military continue to be shaped by the same vigorously Anglican spirit of self-sacrifice and service.

In Jonty, one of the most reflective people one could meet, the first opportunity to deploy these in leadership terms came through his engagement at UCT with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) of which he became President in 1963-64.

It is easily forgotten, at this distance, quite how pivotal was the role of student leadership at this point in the anti-apartheid struggle. The ANC leadership was either in exile or in the process of being sentenced to long stints in prison. It was natural then that students should fill the gap in leadership opened up by this situation. Articulate, charming and handsome, as well as tall, Jonty was exactly the right man in the right place at the right time. He already had a shrewd sense of how institutions functioned – this was later to make him a revolutionary headmaster at three successive schools: Berkhamsted, The Island School, Hong Kong, and Wellington College – and he exuded that combination of natural authority and a thoughtful ability to listen and engage which made people want to follow him. He needed all these emerging qualities since he found himself at the centre of a series of very tricky crosscurrents.

uMkhonto we Sizwe – MK, the ANC's armed wing – had been exiled or gone underground. The question of whether to advocate armed or passive resistance filled the late-night conversations of students. Driver found himself on the edge of a group of students who were certainly members of the African Resistance Movement. His predecessor as president, Adrian Leftwich, was one of these. He had recruited many students to the ARM and they had undertaken acts of sabotage – including the Johannesburg railway station bombing by John Harris about which Jonty would later write a short memoir. NUSAS had always been against violent resistance. But when Leftwich was arrested and broke under interrogation, out tumbled the names of many a NUSAS student, including that of Jonty – not a member of ARM – who was to spend a month in solitary confinement in the cells at Sea Point following his arrest.

Though never charged, this most formative and traumatic of experiences was to send him into an exile in the United Kingdom where for some years – his South African passport having been withdrawn – he was to be a stateless person. But in the cells of Sea Point, accompanied by the beauty of the King James Version of the Bible – the then Archbishop of Cape Town, Robert Selby-Taylor having been prevented when he visited Jonty from leaving with him the concordance that Jonty opined 'would have made the theology easier to grasp' – this terrifyingly isolating time for Jonty was nonetheless filled with a degree of creative possibility – the sheer beauty of language – on which the rest of his life was so richly to make good.

Crucial mentors or supporters coming at just the right time for Jonty – a role he was subsequently to play for so many himself – once released from the cells he was swiftly to find

himself in possession of an air ticket to England, and then through the offices of Robert Birley – the former headmaster of Eton who had been a professor at Wits University and very aware of Jonty's situation, not least the fact that Jonty's father had died just before his arrest and detainment – a job at Sevenoaks School.

Schoolmastering – as it would then have been called – was an obvious choice for Driver. His father had been a much-loved chaplain at St Andrew's College. Jonty had all the qualities that would make for a great teacher. Initially Sevenoaks was but a springboard however to Trinity College, Oxford where Driver undertook the degree of Master of Philosophy. But if he thought of pursuing a career in academia, this thought soon gave way to a consistent call to the classroom and to the shaping of institutions that in turn make possible the shaping of citizens with a strong sense of service and social justice.

Stints at several schools – including at a comprehensive school on Humberside – saw Driver honing his craft as a teacher but also, as he married and became a father, seeking to make sense of the complex feelings of exile which were never quite to leave him, and which were woven into the fabric of his emerging writing. Initially, a volume of poetry shared with the distinguished South African poet and novelist, Jack Cope, followed by four novels – developing themes that came directly from his South African context and well received by the critics (they remain in print as *Faber Finds*) – must have proved somewhat cathartic for him. They established a distinctive, formalist voice in their use of language and structures, a formalism that was to be a hallmark. Time at the University of York made possible the development of this voice and also his excellent biography of Patrick Duncan, the famous opponent of apartheid.

If these works helped to establish a distinctive and nuanced voice, the obvious preoccupation with the context he had been forced to leave – and from which he felt so strongly an exile – was only to give way to a less obvious yearning for home when the preoccupations of headmasterly office – to which he brought a combination of brisk decisiveness, immense compassion, old fashioned straight forwardness, and strategic insightfulness – together with a complete change of context to Hong Kong, produced a set of Hong Kong portraits, that rooted him compellingly in the place and with the people he was then most immediately experiencing. It was as if only now could he find an identity in a holistic sense beyond that which he had forsaken.

This terrifyingly isolating time for Jonty was nonetheless filled with a degree of creative possibility – the sheer beauty of language – on which the rest of his life was so richly to make good.

Novels had already given way to poetry – no doubt the pressures of time were too great amidst the strains of the headmaster's study with its relentlessly quick-fire decisions. As the 1990s dawned and he made his final move in headmastering terms to Wellington, he did so at a time when the South Africa he had so painfully left was changing rapidly, and at a point when he had mastered all the poetic forms that he was to deploy so memorably for the rest of his life.

The advent of democracy made possible a return to the nation that had retained his name on a list of banned persons until the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC and other anti-apartheid organisations made return possible. In response to this completion of what was almost a biblical trajectory of departure and return for so many, he wrote voraciously, not simply evoking but immersing himself anew in the landscape that had been such a crucial part of his hinterland from his earliest years and which was now singing a song of freedom for him and his contemporaries not one of persistent misery and injustice. This all elicited his very best poetry. Whether in free form iambic pentameter or sonnet or haiku – he achieved an ebullience on the one hand and a poignancy on the other that made his one of the most compelling voices writing in English in the period since the end of apartheid.

So-called retirement from Wellington at sixty saw a veritable Indian summer in writing. A fifth and final novel, a memoir about the schools he had served – and shaped – memoirs of an historical kind, one for *Granta* prompted by a photograph of his friends in the 1960s or, most recently, by the obvious debt he felt to Robert Birley.

To the last years at Wellington belonged perhaps one of his finest works, *Requiem*, a beautiful sequence of poems in which some of his most consistent themes – memory and exile, the power of family and the landscape among them – found consummate expression.

It was really through this sequence of poems that I came to know Jonty well. We had met through a shared love of haiku. He had been perhaps over-generous in writing about my own attempts at the genre – he never of course lost the teacher's desire to encourage nor the ability to do so. But when I read *Requiem* for the first time, I saw the chance to do something creative with it. Jonty had explained that Brahms' *German Requiem* – a much more 'secular' requiem than the liturgical texts usually set had been the inspiration for him. It seemed obvious to me to wrap music around the poetry. So I asked the cellist Guy Johnston, then a recent winner of BBC Young Musician of the Year, to weave a Bach cello suite 'around' Jonty's poetry. It was one of those happenstances in

response to which you could hear a pin drop, as an entranced congregation of hundreds in Westminster Abbey one Sunday evening paid rapt attention to both music and text, and found in them a depth of spiritual encounter that was as moving for them as for the author and Ann, his wife of almost fifty years to whom he was so devoted. When, later, I suggested that Jonty himself be asked to read in the Abbey – lines of Shakespeare at the conclusion of the Thanksgiving Service for the life of Nelson Mandela – he was both thrilled, honoured, and humbled.



These experiences bound us together. We repeated the Bach-Driver combination several times, Jonty reading *Requiem* himself one Good Friday when it represented an imaginative reworking of the middle hour of a traditional Three Hours' Devotion.

In one of those inexplicable coincidences that life throws up, I had reached for my copy of *Requiem* and was halfway through reading it when I learned of Jonty's death, at the age of 83. The stanza I had just read could not have been more apposite:

*One shouldn't feel sad for this kind of end,
But I mourn his passing, and miss his friendship,
The funny letters on ballet and books,
And the straight talking. Amen, old friend. Amen.*

CJ Driver will be missed by so many for a rare combination of straight talking, deep learning, and transforming friendship. Through it all, he offered a distinctive and rare example of the very best sort of leadership, the kind you cannot learn from books but is engraved in flesh. His passing surely prompts us to give great thanks for this and to hope for political and educational leaders who also possess such courage, insight, and grace. Amen, old friend.



Scientist, Poet and Mystic

Complementary Ways of Knowing and Being

The Scientific and Medical Network (SMN) was originally brought into being in 1973 by George Blaker (civil servant at the Department of Education and Science) together with Dr. Patrick Shackleton (physician), Sir Kelvin Spencer (former chief scientist at the Ministry of Power) and Dr Peter Leggett (mathematician and aeronautical engineer and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey) with the aim of establishing an interdisciplinary network for discussion of wider issues beyond science and medicine. The vision, in the words of George Blaker, was to achieve 'a new renaissance of human creativity in all directions, and, in particular, and most crucially, to an understanding of the paramount importance of the utterly neglected spiritual dimension which alone could transform intellectual knowledge into wisdom'. The SMN today continues its holistic purpose as an interdisciplinary networking forum and educational charity exploring science, medicine, philosophy and spirituality.

In practice, orthodox science and medicine have always been confined to testable hypotheses concerning how things work. Both scientific and medical research involve a rational, logical, experimental approach to provide reproducible results based on factual evidence. This is the definition perhaps of objective truth – 'reproducible by anyone anywhere'. This methodology must be used in the spheres of science and medicine for our material world to work safely for us in every way. At the same time, these rules of scientific research impose considerable restrictions on scientists and medics in the way they think and go about their work. However, despite these rules, there is no denying that there are moments in research when an intuitive sense of knowing, a 'gut feeling' or a 'hunch', seem to want to inform

one's experimentation and interpretation. In addition, a serendipitous event – some transmission of a universal knowing from the whole – may lead to an unexpected breakthrough in one's research. But, due to the aforesaid need for reproducible objective truth to ensure safety in technological and medical progress in our lives, we learn early on, as budding scientists and physicians, that we must not bring the subjective and the supernatural into the lab or the clinic. We may feel or sense other forms of knowing but we do not speak of them. To experiment on humans, or technology supporting human life, without proof of reproducibility and safety can be disastrous and, indeed, criminal. So, in the early days the SMN was a sort of secret society with members joining by invitation.

So why did I join the SMN? This is simple for me to answer. Looking back, I was aware as a child that life was expansive and multifaceted. I was always a scientist – a biologist observing and experimenting with the lifestyles of ants and worms and spiders and loving all the wild animals I encountered as I rode my pony through the Australian bush. And I was always a poet – writing poetry, painting, drawing, playing the piano and ballet dancing. And I was always a mystic, feeling more 'at home' with the animals and the trees in the temperate forests of the mountains, or lying on the lawn outside our house at night gazing up at the milky way and watching the shooting stars, so wondrous and awesome with the sense of being transported out of one's personal self. Then as, my life took the path towards science, and I moved to live in the city, I was aware of a loss of the other parts of me – the poet and the mystic – and especially as these parts of my being seemed to be prohibited in the realm of science.

'Man is a three-dimensional being', he said – 'scientist, poet and mystic'

Three realms of knowing and being – Scientist, Poet and Mystic

But then an expansion of consciousness returned to me in the 70s when I was introduced to an ashram in India and chose to live there for several months each year. Here, through meditation, group activities, and communal living, we were encouraged to de-condition ourselves back to moment-by-moment authenticity in the present. I learnt that I need not consider myself programmed to be only the scientist. I could be all three parts of me – the scientist, the mystic and the poet. But back in the lab there were difficulties living with this expansion of consciousness. So, next time I was at the ashram, I questioned the spiritual teacher about this problem. In response, he answered in one of his daily discourses.

'Man is a three-dimensional being', he said – 'scientist, poet and mystic'. He made it clear that these three realms are separate and complementary ways of knowing and being. I understood that it was important to be appropriate – not to take my poet and mystic into the lab, not to take my scientist into loving relationships – and to know from which of these three ways of knowing and being I was coming from. Problem solved. So liberating! I could live in these three realms - separately and alternatively with their different meanings, activities and friendships. But was there a place – an organisation – where they could be alternatively and equally expressed?

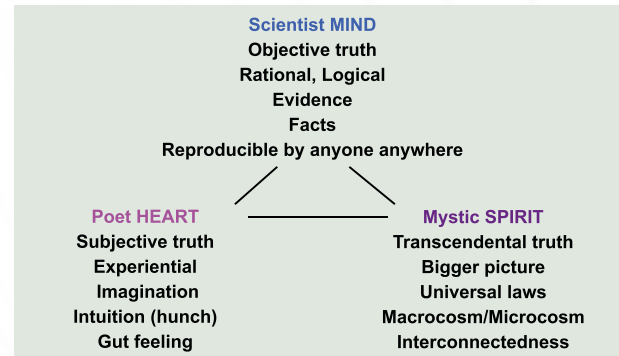
Conflict between science and spirituality?

In the early 80s, while visiting the Open University to give a lecture there, I met Mae-Wan Ho – then a lecturer in genetics at that institution. Mae-Wan amazed me with her open-minded breadth and depth of knowledge in biology and genetics and her ability to question the current dogma and consensus reality in every way. She was also an artist and a poet. It was Mae-Wan who introduced me to the Scientific and Medical Network (SMN) – a wonderful network providing a wide umbrella to encompass these three aspects of ourselves – our scientist, poet and mystic – with openness, rigour and respect. I felt like I had come home. I also became clearer about the divisions between these realms in the outside world. Often they are pitted against each other – science versus religion, mysticism and the paranormal versus science, science versus the humanities. In the latter case, we remember the two cultures with contributions from C P Snow of 60 years ago about the increasing division between humanities and science. And we even see these rifts within the SMN today. Science may be criticised as reductionist, materialistic, mechanistic – the home of sceptics. Spirituality and mysticism may be criticised as ‘flaky’, ill-defined, subjective and lacking evidence and proof. For example, the conflict between orthodox science and the paranormal.

These differences between science and spirituality are real. Science is materialistic because it is concerned with the material world of existence. Science is reductionist because in research we can usually only examine one variable at a time in order to research what that particular part is doing in the whole (although with new high-throughput techniques this is changing). Scientists are sceptics but surely scepticism is needed to keep our world safe. On the other hand, mysticism is not delving into parts of things and how they fit together, but is concerned with expansion beyond our individual consciousness – outside of our individual selves – into a realm of all-knowing interconnectedness. Mysticism is seeing from the greater whole rather than knowing from the parts. Both science and mysticism are concerned with the unknown – science approaches the unknown from observation of the parts and mysticism approaches the unknown by dissolving into the all-knowing whole. But does that mean they need to be in conflict with each other? Certainly not within the SMN. Surely these different ways of knowing and being are complementary. However, the SMN is rightly very concerned about the significance of the imbalance of science and mysticism in our lives and seeks to expand our consciousness into the whole for greater balance and overall wisdom.

In 2017, the SMN Mystics and Scientists conference was concerned about the conflict between science and spirituality. The subjects under discussion were ‘the quest for unity and integration’ and the question – ‘how are we reconciling science and spirituality?’ Given my own lifetime experiences, and the contribution from my spiritual teacher 40 years earlier, my contribution at that conference – covered here in this article – arose from those statements. I questioned whether science and spirituality could be unified and integrated. And, do they need to be reconciled? I could already see that science and spirituality are separate and complementary realms of knowing and being. In a way they are opposites. Science is effort and concentration, and

spirituality is dissolving into the unknown. Science is the reproducible-by-anyone-anywhere objective truth that makes our material world work safely for us. Our mystic is transcendent into the cosmic all-knowing interconnected whole. Then there is our poet – the lover of beauty and affairs of the heart – our creative inner experiential subjective realm. What is the problem? And, in particular, I wondered whether the problem could be within us as well as out there?



I represented my scientist, mystic and poet in a triangular relationship as shown in the figure above. For me, the three realms of knowing and being are three aspects of truth. The scientist is concerned with objective truth – rational, logical, relying on facts and evidence, and reproducible by anyone anywhere. The poet is subjective truth – experiential, imagination, intuition and gut feeling. The mystic is transcendental truth – seeing the bigger picture, universal laws of microcosm and macrocosm, and the interconnectedness of the whole. I propose that all three realms are of equal importance to us individually and collectively. However, today it is clear that the three realms are out of balance due to the predominance of materialistic science. But could these parts be out of balance, or even in conflict, within us as individuals? Certainly, there is evidence of conflict within. My scientist may weigh up the pros and cons of a life decision such as moving job or location – the finances, the housing, travel arrangements, and so on – and then my poet may object emotionally to a move away from family and friends and local activities. Thankfully my mystic can see the bigger picture and may be able to resolve the issue by looking further down either road in time when results of opposing choices may be clearer.

I propose that everyone lives in these three realms of knowing and being. One is a scientist when following a cooking recipe or weighing up the pros and cons of making a life decision. One is a poet in making life more beautiful – a beautiful house, a beautiful garden, loving dancing, singing and playing. One is a mystic in being aware of the wonder and beauty of creation. So, looking at these three parts within ourselves we can begin by asking “Am I mainly scientist, mystic or poet?” What determines these realms within ourselves in any case? And then we could ask – are these realms ever in conflict within? And remembering - “if a house is divided against itself that house cannot stand” (Matthew 12: 22-28).

Both science and mysticism are concerned with the unknown – science approaches the unknown from observation of the parts and mysticism approaches the unknown by dissolving into the all-knowing whole.

Who am I anyway and do I have a choice in that?

So, we could look at these three realms of knowing and being within ourselves and ask – am I mainly scientist, poet or mystic in my approach to life and the way I live my life? What determines who we are anyway? This question could inform a separate discussion

but to summarise here – we are determined by the interplay at the interface between our genes and our environment. Epigenetic programming of our genes (regulating expression ON or OFF) is determined in our adaptation to our experienced environment

(physiological and psychological) throughout our existence – in the womb, in early childhood, and in our service to local community. In the latter environment, we each take on a role and wear the uniform and behaviour of that role (all the while programming expression of our genes to fit the role). In addition, we are programmed by the adaptation to life of our ancestors passing by epigenetic gene programming through eggs and sperm (so-called Lamarckian inheritance). It is a fact that each one of us is just one in hundreds of possible versions of ourselves we could have been according to these variable environments. I would be an entirely different person if I were brought up by Bedouins in the desert or in a Mexican drug cartel.

You are just one version of 100s of possible versions of you. It might appear that you have no choice in the matter. But is this entirely true? Could we take charge of our thoughts and behaviour? Is it possible to change the programming of our genes, our selves, and our future? Could conscious change in our selves, through learnt skills in self-mastery, even lead to directed evolution of future generations aimed

at maximum wellbeing? The bad news is that changing who we have ended up being in life is very difficult. Such a change is called a 'turning point' and is very rare. Turning points are known to happen when an individual is completely removed from his or her origins and needs to re-invent themselves to fit in with a new environment. For example, a turning point might be observed in young men after a prolonged period of military service. The barriers to change include habit – we are stimulus/response machines in that the way we respond to a particular stimulus gets wired in (so that we don't have to think about it). Also, even if the way we respond to a particular stimulus may be wrong – inefficient and lacking pleasure – we have established faulty sensory perception in that what is familiar feels right. In addition, peer group pressure keeps us from changing as people who know us expect us to stay the same. However, the good news is that self-mastery leading to change can be learnt and practised, it can lead to a change in habitual response to a stimulus, and result in a change in heritable epigenetic gene programming.

Self Mastery and the Alexander Technique in the realm of science

Frederick Mathias Alexander, an Australian actor, had a problem in that he would lose his voice due to acting on stage. Unable to get help or advice from the medical world as to how to solve this problem (other than resting his voice), he set out to carefully analyse what he was doing when reciting on stage that might be causing this problem. He noted that he tended to take up a theatrical position that might restrict his voice box. So he tried doing something different in response to the stimulus to speak. This did not work. Eventually he found that the solution was not doing something different in response to the stimulus to speak, but to 'not do' what he was habitually doing in taking up his acting position which was pulling the heavy weight of his head back and down on the delicate vertebra at the top of his spine. The essence of his work is 'eliminate the wrong and the right will come through of its own accord'. Poised and balanced use of the self is our birth-right. The effort to get things right – the effort to end-gain (the 'doing') – is the problem.

From these painstaking experiments came the Alexander Technique for poised and balanced use of the self in daily life and its activities, whether these be physical activities, thoughts or emotions. Essentially it involves what Alexander called 'inhibition' – which is putting a pause or hiatus between stimulus and response, then giving powerful directions from the mind to eliminate any unnecessary tension and thus restore the natural postural reflex (passing through

the spine) and then – continuing these directions as a highest priority – choose appropriate relaxed and poised response to the stimulus. One can initially anchor Alexander Technique practice to particular stimuli – using a pen, cleaning teeth, reading a book, answering the phone, hitting a golf ball – whatever – and then spread it to more and more activities so that eventually the new choice of response is wired into the brain as a new chosen and better habit. It is about 'being the best me I can be'. So change is possible with the application of such a technique of self-mastery. Neuroscience is beginning to see the value of the Alexander Technique and has invented a new term – 'Free Won't' – and considers 'Free Won't' to be even more important than 'Free Will'. Of course, Alexander technique belongs in the realm of Science. One of Alexander's books is entitled 'Conscious Constructive Control of the Self'. I found this title and the book so inspiring that I undertook the three-year daily training in Alexander technique in the 80s, while at the same time continuing work in my lab at UCL (so very long days). There is a lot more to say about the technique and its relevance to how we live our lives but here we will return to the three realms of knowing and being. Although Alexander Technique belongs to the realm of science, we can see how it intersects with the realm of mysticism – for example right-mindfulness, awareness, consciousness, alertness, watchfulness and witnessing.

Eliminate the wrong and the right will come through of its own accord

More on science

Although one does not have to work in a lab to spend time in the realm of science, this has been my own major life activity – 60 years of scientific research in universities in Melbourne, Edinburgh, Paris, and London. I started work on DNA replication and repair in Melbourne, then in London and Edinburgh, working with bacteria and their viruses and plasmids. In the 70s, I moved to the more interesting (in terms of tricks and 'clever' behaviour) slime mould amoebae and established the parameters of its aggregation into a higher order multicellular structure. Then I was transferred, after an MRC Unit closure, to University College London where I established techniques of single cell molecular biology in order to study the regulation of gene expression (epigenetics) in embryonic development. I always found it amazing how things happened by serendipity – like gifts from 'out there'. For example, I made a mistake with a concentration of isotope which led to the technical breakthrough of the first single cell molecular techniques applicable to the very few cells in the study of embryology.

Other times I would start researching an hypothesis and the results would prove my hypothesis wrong and then take me way out into an

entirely new discovery about something else that was ground breaking (e.g., paradigm shifts of late origin of the germ line, and deprogramming in development – one knows when one has made a paradigm shift in science because nobody believes you). An added bonus of a technical or theoretical paradigm shift is the immediate clinical applications – in my case, the pioneering work on gene expression in early development and establishing preimplantation diagnosis of genetic disease, the discovery of epigenetic deprogramming to stem cells and regenerative medicine, and the isolation of new embryo/cancer genes hopefully leading to a prophylactic cancer vaccine in the future. Although I obeyed the rules in orthodox science, and kept my poet and mystic visibly out of the lab, I was so influenced by my poet (the love of the beauty of life) and my mystic (who kept sending me the serendipitous gifts). Certainly, the ways of knowing and being in science are not solely reductionist, mechanistic and materialistic. Sceptic? Yes – but surely that's good. I see my bench science as born of wonder and driven by curiosity – a creative exploration of the unknown. Certainly, science does not de-mystify existence. By expanding the boundaries between the known and the unknown science makes the mystery ever bigger.

About the realm of the poet

One does not have to have paintings in a gallery, novels and books of published poetry, symphonies and ballets to one's name, in order to occupy the realm of the knowing and being of the poet. For me, it is the creative process that I love – painting, making tapestries, playing the piano, planting flowers – so many ways to be creative. Creative activity is very human – although not exclusively human (e.g., the effort some birds take to make a beautiful bower to attract their mate). In terms of life activities in the realm of the poet, my own best example is the training I undertook as a Psychosynthesis Counsellor in the 90s. This training was devised by Assagioli, who was influenced by Freud, and then Jung, and then eastern mysticism. Like the SMN, psychosynthesis is a very wide umbrella. Psychosynthesis covers past childhood issues, present existential issues, and future potential (what makes your heart sing). It has a strong spiritual input and an emphasis on the inner subjective experience (in the realm of the poet). To quote Assagioli – *“Before being able to communicate psychosynthesis to others we must have experimented with it in depth on ourselves – intellectual knowledge is not sufficient”*. The influence of the science and the mystic on the realm of the poet is well known in art – paintings from the west, like those of Picasso, taking things apart, and paintings from the east where everything is present together – people, animals, forests – all busy in various activities together. My own paintings that adorn the walls of my house are mainly of my beloved horses, two of which are included below.



“Before being able to communicate psychosynthesis to others we must have experimented with it in depth on ourselves – intellectual knowledge is not sufficient”

And the realm of the mystic

We are all spiritual. We are all mystics. One cannot escape the influence of the whole – of creation to which we belong. We all have the occasional peak experience of ecstasy from out of the blue – the exhilaration of just being alive and part of the whole. Some of us choose to meditate. Some of us join others on a mystical or spiritual path – e.g., follow a spiritual master, join the local church or other religious community. My major experiment in

this realm was my time during the 70s in the ashram in India where I joined in the meditations – some of them traditional meditations like vipassana and zazen, and others specifically designed for westerners. The ashram attracted a number of group leaders from Esalen in the States and there were many new-age groups one could attend. I guess one could say that the ashram at that time was a meeting of East and West in a blending of techniques that heighten awareness.

Finally

I have presented the idea here that the whole human being is three-dimensional – living equally in three realms of knowing and being. The realms of scientist, poet and mystic are separate, opposite and complementary ways of knowing and being. It is important to experiment and know where you are coming from. Certainly, the scientist, poet and mystic talk to each other – influence and inform each other. But it is inappropriate to attempt a synthesis, to attempt to merge, blend, integrate, or reconcile. They are already reconciled. It may be useful to consider the origin of conflict as aspects of the self, as discussed here, which are then reflected in the external

world. As within so without. and ‘a house divided against itself cannot stand’. I wonder whether there is a need for a balance of the three realms for optimal wellbeing, both at the individual and collective levels. But, outside of our individual selves there is clearly a problem of imbalance in respect to the three ways of knowing and being in our collective humanity and this imbalance is causing huge problems in our lives and on our planet earth. The SMN is facing up to these problems today – not by denying the value of our science and medicine but by shifting emphasis in the direction of wisdom from the greater whole.

Marilyn Monk is Emeritus Professor of Molecular Embryology at University College London and, previously, Honorary Professor at Melbourne and Monash Universities in Australia. Her research began in the 60's with studies on DNA replication and repair, followed by mechanisms of cell signalling, and then to gene expression and its epigenetic regulation in mammalian early development. In the clinical arena, she applied her single cell molecular techniques to pioneer pre-implantation diagnosis of genetic disease, to the discovery of epigenetic deprogramming to embryonic stem cells, and to the isolation of embryonic genes re-expressed in cancers towards a prophylactic cancer vaccine. As well as her science career, Marilyn is a regular painter, a Psychosynthesis Counsellor, an Alexander Technique Teacher, and she has carried out voluntary work with children in Place2Be and Riding for the Disabled.

This article first featured (in part) in Paradigm Explorer 2021. Based on a presentation at the Mystics and Scientist Conference of the Scientific and Medical Network, 2017. Paintings by the writer.

THE FAITH

The Faith Museum, which opened earlier this year, explores the myriad ways in which faith has shaped lives and communities across Britain through rarely seen objects, national treasures, personal testimonies, and contemporary commissions. The museum sits at the heart of The Auckland Project's unique cultural destination in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, which includes historic buildings, art galleries, gardens, extensive parkland, and a heritage railway.

The Faith Museum is part of the wider restoration and redevelopment of The Auckland Project, which has been made possible with a £12.4m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which was raised by National Lottery players.

Leading visitors on a journey through British history, the museum comprises a series of dynamic gallery spaces with an active programme of rotating displays and temporary exhibitions. The ground floor traces a path through 6,000 years of faith, beginning in the Neolithic period with the powerfully tactile Gainford Stone and ending in the year 2000.

The thematic displays feature objects on loan from 50 national and local institutions and private lenders which complement The Auckland Project's own collection.

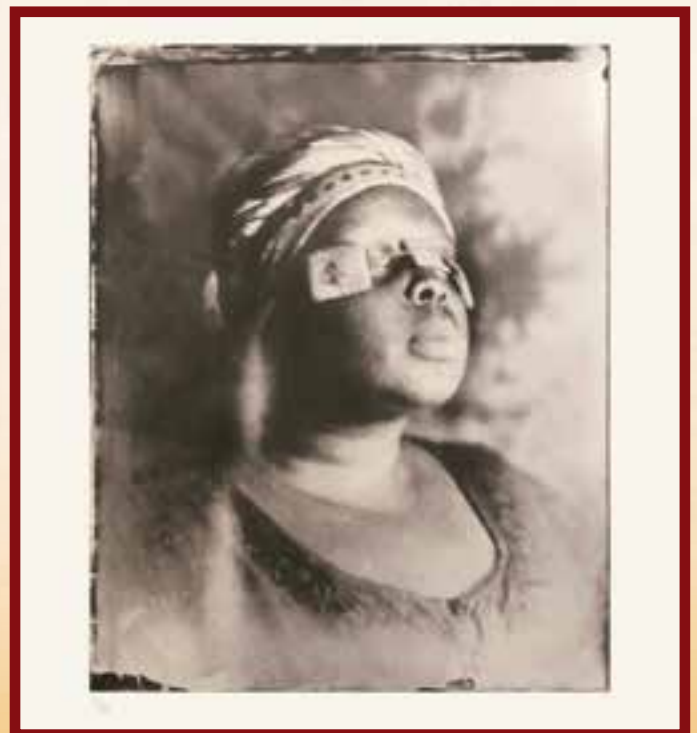
The objects are sometimes beautiful, sometimes high-status, often enigmatic, and often poignant; they are witnesses which cut through to deep reverences and customs which speak directly through time to us today.

The upper floor of the museum houses a diverse programme of temporary exhibitions and installations, reflecting contemporary issues and timeless ideas. The galleries opened with a display of works by ten contemporary British artists, offering their individual perspectives on faith today.

For many, faith is associated with a power bigger than ourselves. The challenge of defining the nature and impact of something seemingly intangible is a foundation of the museum, which does not seek to force a definition of faith but rather invites visitors to consider how people across history have described and demonstrated it. This style of presenting objects is suggestive – often powerfully so – but the power of suggestion is located within the viewer, who is not directed towards any particular interpretation or conclusion. Local faith leaders, academic specialists and community groups have provided thoughts and perspectives throughout the development process; the museum aims to welcome visitors from all walks of life, whether they identify as religious, spiritual, or neither.



Binchester ring. Photo by Jeff Veitch, Durham University



Teere. © The Estate of Khadija Saye, London In memory: Khadija Saye Arts at IntoUniversity

MUSEUM

The challenge of defining the nature and impact of something seemingly intangible is a foundation of the museum

Walking through galleries housed in the 14th-century Scotland Wing of Auckland Castle, a never-before-displayed object found less than a mile from the Castle is one of the smallest and most remarkable items on show: the Binchester Ring. Excavated in 2014 at the Roman Fort Vinovium, this extraordinary silver ring with carved carnelian stone featuring images of an anchor and fish is rare early evidence of Christianity in Britain.

Other highlights in these galleries include:

- An early example of evidence of Jewish communities in Britain seen in an extraordinary object from the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, the 13th-century Bodleian Bowl: this decorated bronze vessel is inscribed with the name of Joseph, son of Rabbi Yechiel, a famous scripture scholar of Paris. Joseph lived in Colchester and may have given this bowl to the Jewish congregation there before leaving for the Holy Land.
- A copy of William Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament from 1536, one of only a small number to have survived. The publication of Tyndale's Bible was a key moment in English history, helping spread the ideas of the Reformation and serving as the basis for the King James Version.
- A set of 20th-century prayer beads owned by Lord Headley, believed to be the first Briton to have legitimately completed the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, having converted to Islam.

Upstairs, visitors will encounter contemporary expressions of faith in a series of temporary exhibition displays. Dominating the Great Gallery upstairs, with its high-pitched ceiling, is a dramatic installation by Mat Collishaw, specially created for the space. This large-scale work is complemented by more intimate pieces in the adjacent galleries, inviting us to consider how faith can be both awe-inspiring and public, yet personal and private. In a gallery looking out across the Castle's walled garden, a collection of paintings by artist Roger Wagner depict Biblical scenes in modern landscapes in a poetic juxtaposition.



Statuette of Mars, AD 100-200, bronze. The Faith Museum, Bishop Auckland. Photo The House of Hues



Bodleian Bowl © Ashmolean, University of Oxford



The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments in the Arabic Language, The Faith Museum, the Auckland Project



Eidolon, Mat Collishaw, The Faith Museum, Bishop Auckland

Where do I belong? How do I live? and Am I alone?

The final gallery space invites visitors to reflect on three central questions present throughout the museum: Where do I belong? How do I live? and Am I alone? Among the artists featured are Newcastle-based artist Mani Kambo, Nicola Green, The Singh Twins, and Khadija Saye.

The 740sqm museum has seen extensive conservation work undertaken on the historically significant Grade I listed Scotland Wing of Auckland Castle, with refurbishments overseen by Purcell architects. The new purpose-built extension designed by Níall McLaughlin Architects takes the form of a medieval tithe barn and follows the line of the original perimeter wall of

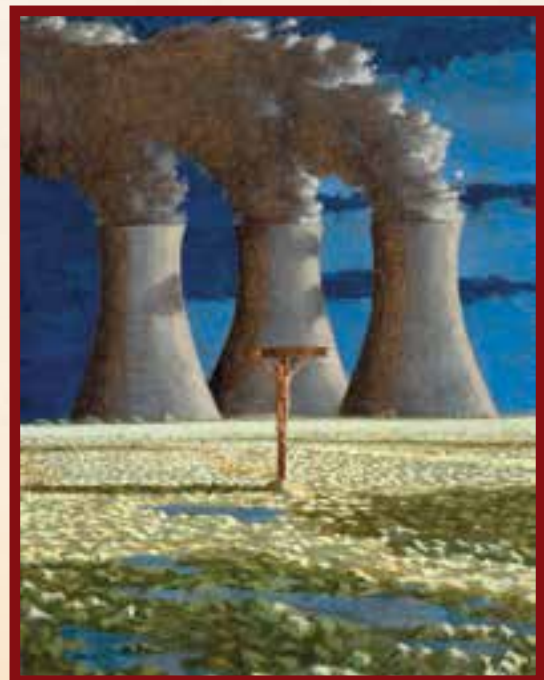
the castle. Conceived as a sacred storehouse, the monolithic, pitched roof building was constructed using Cop Crag sandstone, local to the North East, and the same as used at Durham Cathedral.

Programming will be a central part of the museum going forward, with events, talks and workshops enabling yet more stories to be told and more perspectives to be explored. Educational sessions for schools will ensure children of all ages are able to have their learning enriched by inspirational visits.

The Faith Museum is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Jerusalem Trust.



Torah Finials, Rimmonim, Courtesy of Jewish Museum London



Roger Wagner, The Crucifixion, 1990, oil on canvas. Private Collection

A LIFELONG LOVE OF *Faith* AND *Culture*

As a visual artist I was inspired by the cultural splendour of Lahore where I was born and raised. It is considered the cultural capital of Pakistan and its second largest city. I particularly loved its historical architecture: especially the 17th century marble and sandstone Badshahi mosque; the unending alleyways of the old city; and the national monument Minar-e-Pakistan. As a child I was fascinated by colours, and was always immersed in drawing, painting and music. The rich cultural beauty of what life had to offer, entwined with the creation of human endeavour, was all around me and inspired me. I started to take part in workshops and competitions, testing my ability as an artist, and slowly but surely my confidence grew as I expressed in painting, the rich cultural heritage that surrounded me.

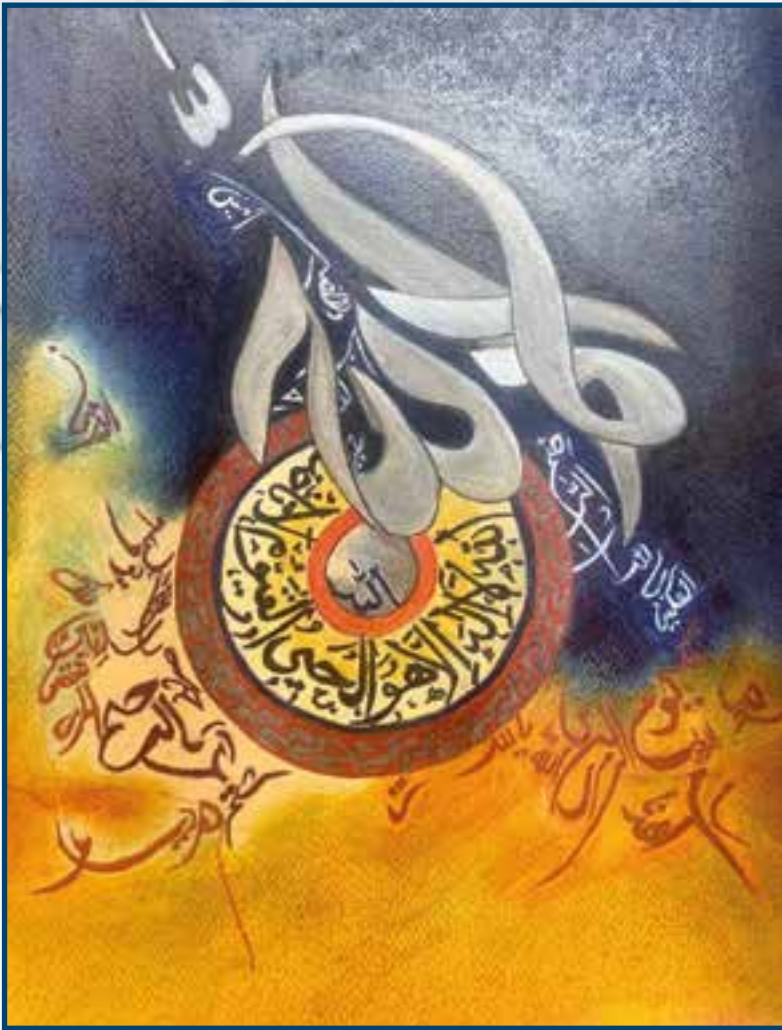
Being so connected to my religion and culture, I gained great inspiration for my work within the early Islamic arts, and by the personal endeavours of Muslim artists often displayed within mosques and their furnishings: as well as the architecture and works of art produced under Muslim dynasties for patrons of the Islamic faith. As Islam became a way of life, the religion fostered the development of a distinctive culture, with its own unique artistic language and style that is now distinctly identifiable in art and architecture throughout the Muslim world and beyond.

My love of Islamic art and culture led me to reading a Bachelor's Degree in fine arts from Punjab University. The famous Pakistani calligrapher Ismail Gulgee also inspired my work at this stage of my academic study of Art. After graduating, I went on to undertake a two-year diploma in drawing and painting under the stewardship of Khana-e-Farhang – a renowned Islamic Artist.

I have been on an artistic journey of discovery since my early childhood and the adventure continues. It is within the backdrop of this lifelong love of religion and culture that I have created these four paintings.

I GAINED GREAT INSPIRATION FOR MY WORK
WITHIN THE EARLY ISLAMIC ARTS, AND BY THE
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Faith and the Artist

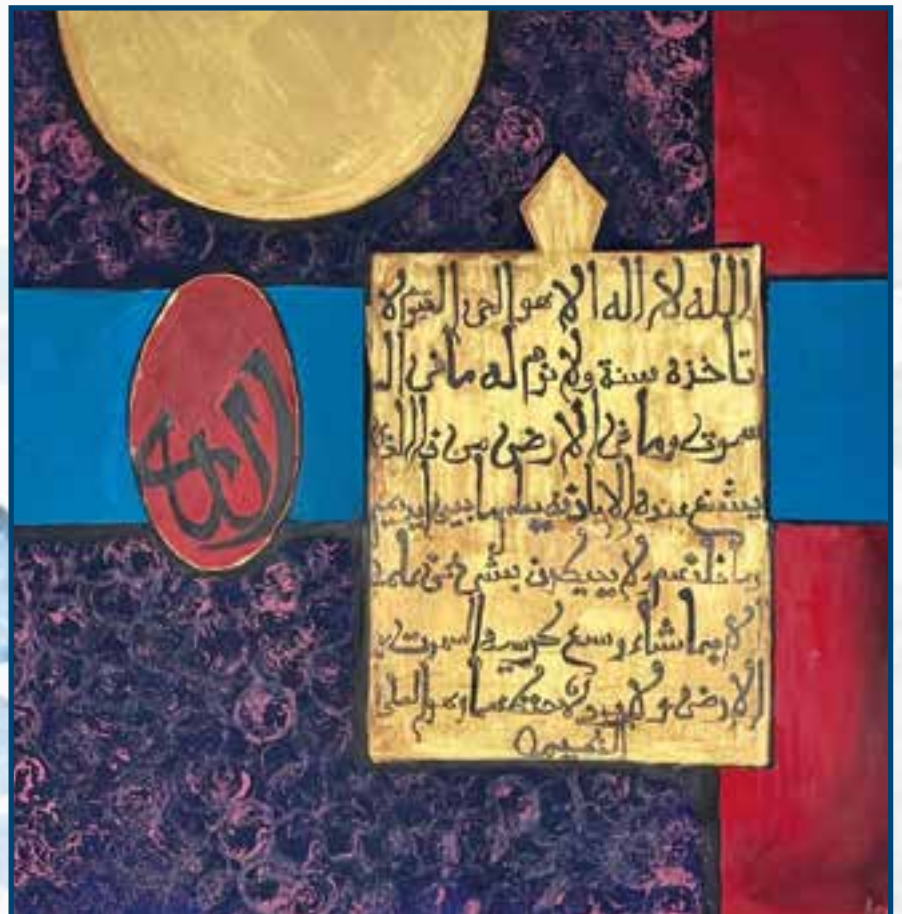


‘SURAH OF THE QU’RAN’

The Ayatul Kursi (أَيُّسُرُّكُلُ قُذِّيَا), also known as the Throne Verse, is the 255th Verse of Surah Al-Baqara (قُرْقُقُ بِلَا), the second chapter of the Qu’ran. This verse speaks about how Allah (هَلَلَا) is the one and only God and that there is nothing that can compare to Him. The Throne Verse is recited by Muslims around the world for its spiritual benefits.

‘SURAH OF THE QU’RAN’

Aesthetically using mix media with passionate calligraphy strokes I amalgamated the holy inscriptions creatively with a blend from a richly coloured palette. I worked slowly, with each process taking two months, and found the creation of this close up of the Ayatul Kursi an artistic and spiritual voyage of discovery.





'RAMADAN MUBARAK'

A saying familiar to many Muslims around the globe is, 'Ramadan Mubarak' which simply means 'Blessed Ramadan', the holy month of fasting from sunrise to sunset. Another commonly used term is 'Ramadan Kareem', which translates to 'Generous Ramadan', both terms are from Arabic origins.



'EID MUBARAK'

After Ramadan we celebrate Eid ad-Fitr which commemorates the end of the fasting period with prayers and communal festivities.

Live and Let Live



Traditional Jain teaching on respect, non-violence and compassion.