

ISSUE 30

faith

INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

In God's wildness
lies the hope of
the world.

John Muir

NONVIOLENCE

Alternative Strategies to Peace

BUSINESS ETHICS

Moral Stewardship

LANGUAGE OF ART

What the Heart Sees

WINNER:
SHAP AWARD 2011

A Poem Dedicated To My Grandma

If You Love Something, Set it Free

If you love something set it free?...Why can't it be you, what did I do?
I don't want to let it go, I tell you "No". You look at me and smile,
you tell me people only live for a while.
I shed a tear and I ask "why?"...
you answer my question without a pause and tell me,
everything has to die.

It's not as bad as it sounds, it's what makes life life.
To die is to rest, and be at peace, a place where all are at ease.
For life wouldn't be life without excitement...
but life is a statement, everybody can find theirs,
life isn't easy, life isn't fair, but life itself is truly rare.

Look around and tell me why you had to let go?
I smile at you and say "I don't know".
You'll find out someday but till then I'll give you a clue,
everything has meaning, all you need to do,
is look at something new.

Life comes and goes, but nobody knows why,
I look at you and I sigh, I ask you if that was a lie.
No, you smile, but life wouldn't be life if nobody was to die,
it's sad for everyone, because of their loss.
I answer you smiling "so life is a precious thing you shouldn't toss".

Good Night, you're now a star,
you'll guide me in the dark, no matter how far.
You look down on me and send me the best,

for I've figured the meaning of life. Life's not a test, you cannot cheat,
but you'll be okay - just stay on your feet.

Jasmine Brown (aged 12)

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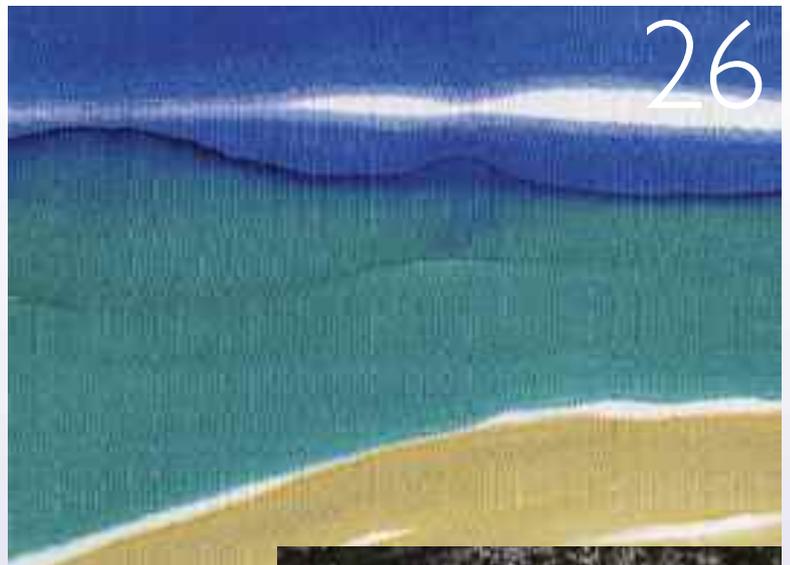
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editorial

During a study visit to India some time ago, I was startled during a lecture to hear the Muslim speaker, a man of tradition, state with feeling that “culture is a trap” – that culture can prevent a society from progressing and embracing beneficial change. He was referring to the way in which his religion – and others - is often so intertwined with culture that it is difficult to separate the one from the other; that cultural rituals and practices become synonymous with a life of faith. Over the years I have reflected on his statement, recognising it as insightful and true. Indeed I was inspired to make a study of world religions from an anthropological perspective because I had observed during my travels not only the ways in which religion had influenced culture, but how culture had impacted on religious life – often to the detriment of the welfare and freedom of women. This has resulted in a preference for boy babies over girls - leading to the heinous crime of female infanticide - also forced marriage, so called ‘honour killings’ and enforced wearing of the burqa. Recent publicity given to the practice of female circumcision has compounded this belief: there is no medical or religious reason for this procedure, unlike male circumcision, and yet it is carried out on girls as young as four. The personal story of Somalian born Waris Dirie goes a long way to explain, and highlight, the primitive and violent nature of the act, and the restrictions it places on the life of the child as she grows into pubescence and womanhood: hence it is now referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM), by those who protest against it. The fact that this ancient practice has spread from Africa and Arabia to Europe with immigrant populations, demonstrates the severity of the ‘trap’ that culture has created. It is here that the greatest irony lies - FGM is perpetuated largely by women who have themselves been subject to the violence, the pain and the discomfort because they believe that their daughters will not be accepted within the community if they do not undergo the ‘cut’, and that no man will agree to marry them without this proof of her purity: the power of men in this context is paramount. Whilst I empathise with my Muslim lecturer I do believe that culture can evolve and reform through education, but it is crucial that any reform has to come from within the community itself. Hope lies in the work and voices of women, such as Waris Dirie, who have experienced or witnessed the indignity of such a harmful practice, and seek now to eradicate it. In so doing they will not have diluted their culture but enriched it.

Heather Wells

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www.faithinitiative.co.uk

Initiative Interfaith Trust

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Trustees: Heather Wells, Lorna Douglas
and Emma Winthrop.

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 Magazine

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Aim: The aim of Faith Initiative Magazine is to open windows on the beliefs and practices of people of faith to foster understanding and help reduce 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, illustrations 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 31 Themes:

- Women and Religion
- Indigenous Systems of Belief

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

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

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for Initiative Interfaith Trust



A Humble Seeker OF TRUTH

In the Richard Attenborough film, *Gandhi*, there is an early scene where the soon to be Mahatma is speaking to the British clergyman, C.F. Andrews, about the Christian concept of turning the other cheek. To Rev. Andrews, the phrase should be read metaphorically not literally, but Gandhi politely yet firmly insists on disagreeing. To him it should mean a willingness to have courage, take blows and not to fight back. Through this willingness to accept violence without retaliation the hatred of the aggressor can be transformed into respect towards the victim. This one episode, that lasts barely ninety seconds, embodies the whole essence of Gandhi's attitude towards nonviolence. My choice of the word attitude is deliberate, as whilst Gandhi wrote prolifically about his ideas and motivations he was not a professional thinker, let alone a philosopher in the Western sense of the word. In addition, his words should always be viewed in reference to the time and circumstances in which he wrote them. He saw himself as a humble seeker of truth, and that the route to this end was one of serving humanity through his support for Indians in their campaigns against racial injustice.

Gandhi's view of nonviolence was intrinsically linked to one that held there to be an underlying unity at the heart of creation.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar in 1869, a princely state in the far west of India (in what is now Gujarat). His father was premier, initially at Porbandar and then Rajkot a larger city about 180km north east of Porbandar. These statements are important: firstly the location of his upbringing, at a port on the Arabian Sea, meant he had contact with people of all faiths and, through his father's position in the government, the contact was professional with an individual's faith becoming secondary. Secondly, Gandhi's early years in a princely state meant that although he and his family had contact with the British in India he did not encounter the full apparatus of the Raj until he had reached adulthood. Whilst not directly related to nonviolence, I personally believe that it is reasonable to hypothesise that had Gandhi encountered the Raj more directly in his formative years his outlook might have been quite different.

Though the Attenborough film somewhat glazes over it, it should never be overlooked that Gandhi's ideas and conceptions of nonviolence were consistently evolving and being adapted in light of the circumstances in which he was working. It should also

“Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed.”

M.K. Gandhi





be noted that *Gandhi's view of nonviolence was intrinsically linked to one that held there to be an underlying unity at the heart of creation.* This led to him conceiving of division as something that could be reconciled simply by working harder to discover that underlying unity.

Though he grew up in a vegetarian household there is little in his childhood to

indicate he was a *mahatma*.ⁱ in the making. He ate meat as an act of youthful rebellion (albeit at the encouragement of a Muslim friend), was a mediocre student and generally engaged in boyish pursuits. Whilst in London he spent some time as something of a dandy, taking music and dancing lessons, and by his own admission only maintaining a vegetarian diet as an act of devotion to his pious mother.

It was as a barrister in South Africa that he came to view nonviolence as both an instrument of policy to achieve his objectives, and a creed by which to live. In his campaigns for the rights of Indians he realised from a purely political perspective, that they would not be able to assert their rights through violent means. The South African authorities had the weapons to quell any insurrection and the use of violence would give them reason to do so.

Though not yet elucidated into anything close to a theory at this time (1893-1914) Gandhi recognised the need to appeal to the moral sentiments of the South Africans. It was also during this time that Gandhi read Leo Tolstoy's nonfiction work '*The Kingdom of God is Within You*'ⁱⁱ. This book was one of three modern texts that Gandhi regarded as seminal in influencing him: John Ruskin's *Unto this Last* and the works of the poet Shrimand Rajchandra being the other two. In his book Tolstoy speaks of resisting violence without resorting to violence oneself, in terms of a moral obligation.

Though Gandhi was inspired by Tolstoy through this book it would be incorrect to say that he was ready to engage in a complete renunciation of war. In 1906 Gandhi acted as a stretcher bearer in South Africa's war with the Zulus (on the side of South Africa). In addition, but for an attack of pleurisy, he would have established an Indian Ambulance Corps to support the British Empire in response to the commencement of hostilities in 1914. Though he thought hard about how to act, and was aware of the

possibility of being viewed as complicit in the conflicts, he felt that as he was fighting for equality for Indians he was obligated to accept the duties that white people had to accept. As an individual however, he could not bring himself to bear arms. He also felt that it would not be appropriate for his support to be conditional, but rather that in gratitude the British would freely give rights to the Indians.

Sadly, in the immediate aftermath of the war it became clear that such a hope was ill-founded. The British were not even going to return the liberties that had been suspended, seemingly, for the duration of the war, and that they were prepared to use violence to maintain their grip on power: the massacre at Amritsar in 1919 being just an extreme example of these efforts. From this time until his assassination, twenty nine years later, Gandhi would pursue an objective to remove the British from power in India. Though he claimed that it was always his objective to give Indians self-respect and equality, he felt that by this time, the only way to achieve this was for the British to accede control of India, and the method by which to achieve this was nonviolence. It is a moot point as to whether he would have ever

accepted British control if they were somehow able to maintain it, and present Indians with an appropriate level of self-respect and equality.

To Gandhi nonviolence was a method that was mental as well as physical, all-encompassing yet also situation specific and idealistic, yet practical. It should not be understated that the prohibition on inflicting violence upon one's foes whilst not originalⁱⁱⁱ, was revolutionary in its application in modern times, and was clearly an integral part of the method. At a mental level your

objective may seek to use feelings like compassion and pity, but in Gandhi's eyes it was to convert your opponent, not to coerce him, into feeling guilty.

Furthermore Gandhi's conception of nonviolence as a mental act went beyond discipline not to fight back, but not to feel any ill will towards ones adversary. In fact when borne in mind with Gandhi's idea of unity, your adversary would not be one at all, just a partner who has yet to realise how you can work together. Therefore Gandhi's nonviolence is a method that truly transforms interpersonal relationships. However, the realist in Gandhi appreciated that such a method needed training and instruction. His voluminous personal writings that stretch to 97 volumes are littered with lists of advice to potential followers.^{iv} His cancellation of his non-cooperation campaign in 1922, in the aftermath of the murder of twenty two policemen was in part because he questioned whether India was ready for his nonviolent tactics. Though, in time, he felt that nonviolence could

He came to view nonviolence as the weapon of the strong as it is a method that utilises the complete person.

i An honorific term suggesting a level of saintliness, popularised in regard to Gandhi by the Poet Tagore. Gandhi himself disliked the term

ii A direct quotation from the Gospel of St Luke 17:21

iii The early Christians used a similar method against the Romans in classical times

iv For a brief introduction to his writings that includes such advice, the author would recommend the Essential Writings listed in the bibliography

Image source <http://commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gandhi>

be India's gift to the world. Gandhi also believed that this fusion of the mental and the physical was vital to make the solution endure.

From what I have outlined it is clear that nonviolence had a social role, but to Gandhi it would not be worth anything unless it was personal too, by personal I mean authentic and lifelong. Hence his often quoted maxim about 'being the change you want to see in the world'. Nonviolence was his goal to achieve the victory of *Moksha*^v. Gandhi was practical enough to realise that violence against all living things was impossible, for example as one who grew his own vegetables he acknowledged that some degree of pest control was necessary, but that it should not stop one from striving to avoid this as much as possible: whilst he felt it was necessary to maintain a vegetarian diet, for health reasons he occasionally took goats milk. He claimed to harbour no ill will to one and all (though a number of commentators question his sincerity in this regard)^{vi} It should be acknowledged that some of Gandhi's own statements can be problematic, for example he once commented that he would prefer violence to cowardice, taken in isolation this can be viewed as condoning violence when in light of Gandhi's life and message, it should be viewed as a most severe condemnation of cowardice.

Though Gandhi started out in South Africa as plying nonviolence given the weak position of Indians, at least given their numbers and lack of weapons, in time he came to view nonviolence as the weapon of the strong as it is a method that utilises the complete person. Mental and physical, body and spirit are all used in nonviolence to make accomplices out of enemies, and friends out of foes.

By way of a conclusion it is perhaps appropriate to talk a little about Gandhi's own terminology to describe nonviolence. During his early campaigns in South Africa the phrase *passive resistance* was used. In time Gandhi grew to dislike the phrase as it was not Indian, and was associated with the suffragettes' movement, whose destruction of private property was at odds with his conception of nonviolence. Therefore in time he came to use the term *ahimsa* (along with the phrase *stayagraha*^{vii} to explain the motivational force behind *ahimsa*). *Ahimsa* is derived from the noun *himsa* indicating a violent act with the suffix *a* negating it. Whilst Gandhi himself was not particularly keen on the word as it was a negative one; he clearly saw something positive in his application of it. I should finally add that the author of this piece has consciously sought to use Sanskrit words sparingly, and therefore used the term nonviolence.



Through his conception of unity Gandhi viewed nonviolence as both eternal and universal, and it is in light of this that the Gandhi Foundation strives to teach people of his ideas and encourage others in this pursuit.

Gandhi Foundation, London, www.gandhifoundation.org

As Outreach Worker for the Gandhi Foundation - a registered charity - William Rhind is able to visit groups to talk about aspects of Gandhi's life and thought, and the work of the Foundation. Contact william@gandhifoundation.org

v Moksha is variously translated as emancipation, liberation and salvation in a spiritual sense, it alludes to becoming free from the cycle of reincarnation

vi Penderel Moon felt Gandhi's spiritual side was an act of political expediency, whilst Louis Fischer felt Gandhi was incapable of hatred

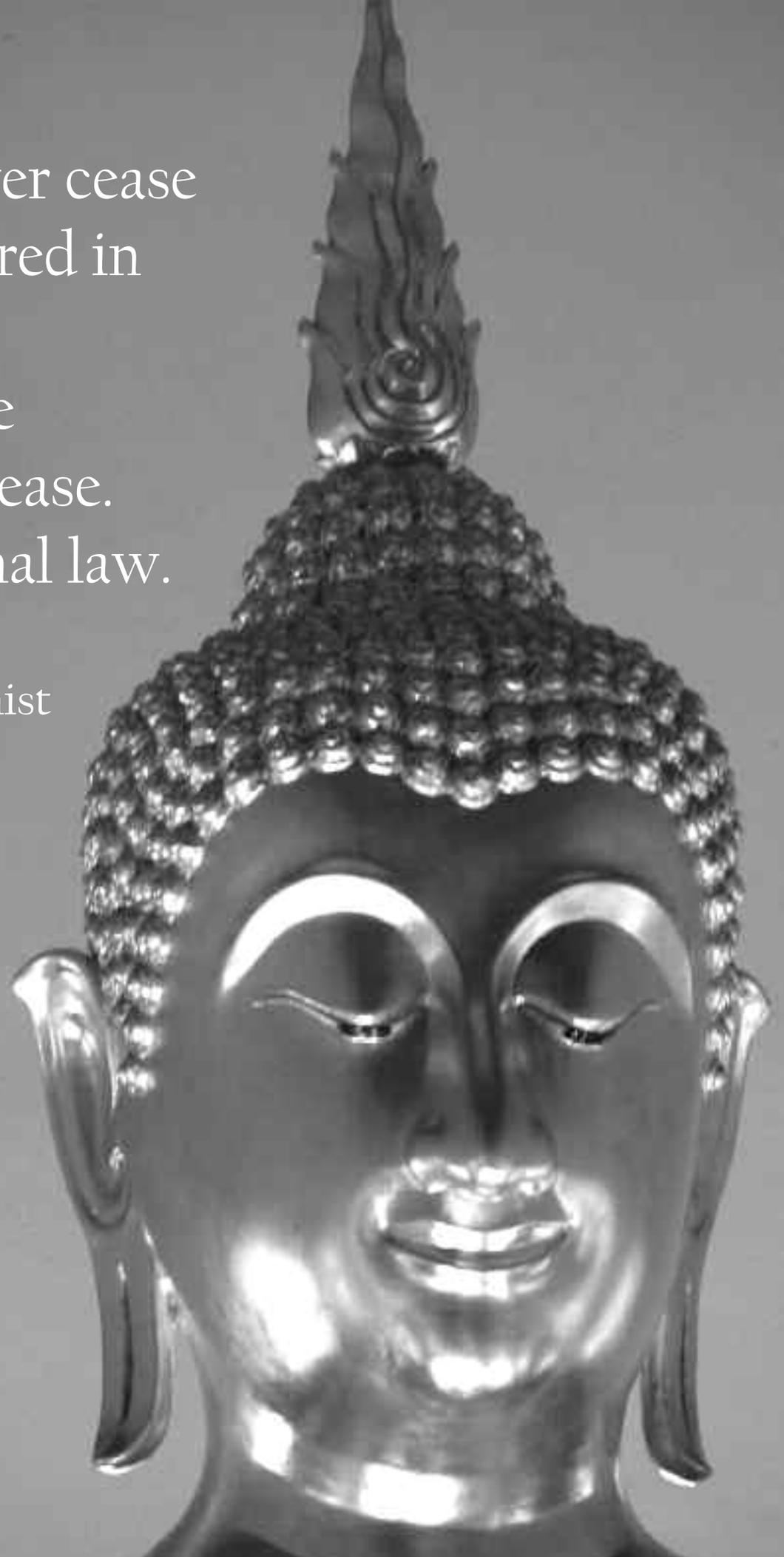
vii Literally translated it means soul force and has been the subject of treatises by itself therefore cannot be discussed here

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Hatreds never cease
through hatred in
this world;
through love
alone they cease.
This is eternal law.

From the Buddhist
Dharmapada, 5



Remembering Owen Cole

(1931-2013)

Dr William Owen Cole was well known as a pioneering religious educationist, lecturer, teacher and writer on world faiths, especially on Sikhism. His death last October came after prolonged illness and the passing away of his wife Gwynneth two months earlier – an experience of great loss and sadness for his family, friends, former colleagues and students. Obituaries written by Eleanor Nesbitt from Warwick University and Peggy Morgan from Oxford University were published in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *the British Journal of Religious Education* and the *Bulletin of the British Association for the Study of Religion*. They outline his career as a teacher, scholar and active participant in and promoter of community relations and interfaith dialogue and his impressive range of publications on world faiths and religious education.

I want to add a few personal reminiscences to these previous testimonies by relating how Owen and I got to know each other and became friends who remained in touch for more than forty years. We met in the early 1970s at a meeting of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education (of which Owen was a founder member in 1969) after I had begun teaching in the Theology and Religious Studies Department at the University of Leeds. After graduating in history from the University of Durham, Owen had first taught in a primary and secondary school and at Northern Counties College Newcastle. He was then, in 1968, appointed Principal Lecturer at James Graham College in Leeds, later to become Head of Religious Studies there. It was in Leeds that Owen made friends with several Sikhs, especially Piara Singh Sambhi, and that is how his study of Sikhism began. As Owen wrote much later:

When I arrived in Leeds in the late 1960s I was aware of two things, first that I would soon have to teach Sikhism and, second, that I had very little knowledge of it. Fortunately, my arrival in Leeds coincided, almost immediately, with an invitation to chair the Religious and Cultural Panel of the YCCR [Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations] and meetings with Sikhs who were willing to receive me with typical Sikh hospitality. I was especially fortunate to meet and become close friends with Piara Singh Sambhi, President of the Leeds Gurdwara at the time of the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak. He invited me to serve on the planning committee which encouraged students from James Graham College, where I taught, to participate in the event....when I began teaching Sikhism there were not many books that I could recommend to my students that were of an introductory nature. This one, I hope would have met their needs.

This comment, signed W Owen Cole, 2010, appears on amazon.com at the beginning of his book *Sikhism – An Introduction: Teach Yourself*, based on an earlier Hodder and Stoughton edition (1994), but now available as a Kindle book. By the early 1970s, when still teaching in Leeds, Owen was keen to pursue his study of Sikhism at a more rigorous academic level, later taking on Hindi and Punjabi and studying the Sikh scriptures. He soon expressed his desire to undertake research at Leeds University and so enrolled for an M.Phil. on 'The Guru in Sikhism', completed with distinction in 1975. This was immediately followed by a much more substantial piece of doctoral research on 'The attitude of Guru Nanak and early Sikhism to Indian religious beliefs and practices, 1469-1608' for which he was awarded his PhD in 1979. The external examiner, Professor E. G. Parrinder, of King's College, London, described it as 'a first class piece of original research' where 'Sikh texts are examined, and their theological implications are considered, in a manner attempted by few modern non-Sikh scholars'. He also called it a 'valuable contribution to the comparative study of religions and inter-faith relations' which he hoped would be published. However, Owen could only give his full attention to revising his research for publication after 1980 when the reorganisation of work at Leeds James Graham College made life difficult for him. It only became possible after he had found a new position as Principal Lecturer in Religious Studies at the West Sussex Institute of Higher Education (later Chichester University) where he became Head of Religious Studies (1984-89) and, after his retirement, remained a Visiting Research Fellow for almost a decade (1996-2005).

Darton, Longman and Todd published Owen's Leeds research as *The Guru in Sikhism* (1982) and *Sikhism in its Indian Context 1469-1708* (1984). These established his academic reputation in Sikh Studies after having already published several smaller books on Sikhism for teaching in the 1970s and early 1980s. It is well known among Owen's friends that he tended to be suspicious of 'ivory tower academics' and always saw himself primarily as a teacher. He told me early on, after I had recently returned from studying and working in India, when he enrolled as my first research student at the University of Leeds, that I didn't really fit into university life (as he understood it) because I was not one of these 'typical ivory tower types' – but that can probably be said about many women academics and about younger male ones too.

We shared a decade of working in Leeds, living in the same neighbourhood and each with a family of young girls, Owen's two daughters somewhat older than our four. We shared some of the same friends, deeply involved in community relations, especially the greatly loved and most inspiring Peggy Holroyde, who died last October, just two days after Owen, at the age of 89. We all went

to some of the same interfaith meetings, to the Sikh Gurdwara, the Hindu Temple, to Jewish and Christian meetings. We had contact with several Muslims and met in each other's houses. At Leeds University several of us started the Community Religions Project (still in existence today) which included many academic studies of



different religious communities in and around Leeds. I developed a course on 'Religions of Ethnic Minorities in Britain' which existed for many years until I later moved to the University of Bristol. It was a very memorable and happy time. Owen had been a true pioneer in undertaking research on Sikhism at Leeds University, followed by many more students working on different religious traditions. Once Owen had moved to Chichester, we only managed to see each other once or twice a year, usually at the Shap Working Party annual meetings, but we were regularly in touch by telephone, correspondence and, latterly, email, as well as occasional visits.

Owen's close friendship with Piara Singh Sambhi, whom he called 'his brother', produced several joint publications on Sikhism, such as the standard work on *The Sikhs: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1978; 2nd ed. 1995); *Baisakhi* (1986); *Sikhism and Christianity: A Comparative Study* (1993) and *A Popular Dictionary on Sikhism* (1990). For many people Owen Cole's name became synonymous with the study of Sikhism, both nationally and internationally. He was much respected for his scholarship on Sikhism by Sikhs in Britain as well as India, the USA, Canada and Australia where he had many contacts, visited several times, lectured on his research or gave conference papers. In 1983 he was Visiting Professor in Religious Studies at Punjab University in Patiala and he continued to be a prolific writer during the 1980s, 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, producing overall more than 30 books and contributing to many others. Even in the last years of his life, when illness made writing difficult, he still

produced an autobiographical account *Cole Sahib* (2009) and *The Jesus Diary* (2013).

His strong commitment to community relations and open interfaith dialogue was well known and highly respected. It led to his being vice-chair of the Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations (1976-81) and, in 1980, to his appointment as honorary Anglican interfaith consultant to the archbishops of Canterbury and York, and later as consultant to the International Sacred Literature Trust (1992-96).

Owen had a great love for his family and friends, and a great capacity for giving people unstinting support and encouragement. He was always very interested in what different people were doing in promoting interfaith relations and was often the first to suggest possible candidates for receiving the annual Shap Award, as was the case when this journal *Faith Initiative* received the award in 2011. It has been decided to present the Shap Award this year in the name of, and as a commemoration of the life and work of, Owen Cole, as has been done previously for other Shap colleagues no longer with us.

Owen's quiet, unassuming manner hid a noblesse of spirit, a strength of personality and faith, and a heart of gold. He was inspired by his father, a liberal-minded Congregationalist minister and later, by his many friendships with people from different faiths. As a conscientious objector during World War II he had met the Quakers and many years later he joined them. His memorial service on November 10, 2012 was held in the context of a Quaker meeting for worship.

For many years Owen used to send his friends an annual Christmas letter 'From the Cole Hole', which always provided a good read and update on the events of the Cole household. His letter from 2012 is still lying on my desk promising further accounts about his family life, writing and health for the next 'Cole Hole' of 2013. Alas, this never came, for he was then no longer alive to write it. But a month before his death he could still engage in deep conversation with family and friends. I feel blessed that I could spend an afternoon with him in mid-September, although I sensed that it might well be our last

'The dawn of a
new day is the
herald of a sunset.
Earth is not our
permanent home.'

meeting. I shall not forget our conversation on that day, especially when among many other things he wanted me to know how much our working together in earlier years had meant to him. I also keep on my desk the beautiful memorial card from the 'Celebration and Thanksgiving for the life of Owen Cole' which shows a touching photograph of Owen and Gwynneth together as a young couple, as well as photos of their daughters Eluned and Sian and their grandchildren Rhiannon and Ben. A fitting memory for a loving and much loved couple which, besides the 'Order of Service' includes quotations from the prophet Zephaniah, the Quaker George Fox and the Sikh Adi Granth. The last says: 'The dawn of a new day is the herald of a sunset. Earth is not our permanent home.'

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS: *different origins same idea*

When the First World War broke out in 1914 the recruiting offices were swamped with young men eager to join up. After the initial wave of volunteers, however, the British Army was in danger of dwindling away as, one by one, the volunteer army was fed into, what is now seen as, the mindless slaughter of the Western Front. Attempts to encourage more men to volunteer were failing and the British Government felt that they had no alternative but to introduce Conscriptioin.

The Military Service Act of 1916 stated that all men between 18 and 41 were considered to have joined the army. Some 16,000 men refused the call to kill on religious, political and ethical grounds - Conscientious Objectors. They would face Tribunals set up to question the strength of their beliefs followed by imprisonment, torture, the threat of execution and, for some tragic cases, death. Throughout all of these trials, COs remained dedicated to their anti-war beliefs and serve as an example today of what can be accomplished when members of different faith groups stand together.

The Peace Pledge Union's 'Objecting to War' project is aiming to bring the stories of these men to light. Working in the London area, we are uncovering the remarkable ways that thousands of men from the many faith communities of the capital resisted this call to war.

Religious faith was the motivating factor behind Conscientious Objection for well over half of the COs in London. The diverse population of the capital, even in the Edwardian era resulted in Conscientious Objectors from many different backgrounds, occupations and groups - all united in their resistance to war and refusal to kill.

Christian COs were by far the largest group and shared much common ground, using the Sermon on the Mount and other Christian pacifist teachings as their justification for refusing to be conscripted. Many of these men were Quakers, Jehovah witnesses or Congregationalists - all groups that are today justifiably proud of their anti-war heritage.

Our research on London men has revealed that many other religious groups were also represented in the CO movement. The largest non-Christian group came from the Jewish communities of the East London boroughs. It is currently unknown how many of these men objected for purely religious grounds - many were recent immigrants from Germany, Russia and what is now Poland, uneasy about fighting on the same side as the Tsar, or unwilling to fight against men who could be members of their families. We know that some were Kohanim, prohibited by the tenets of their religion from encountering a dead body. Others came from explicitly pacifist backgrounds, using the

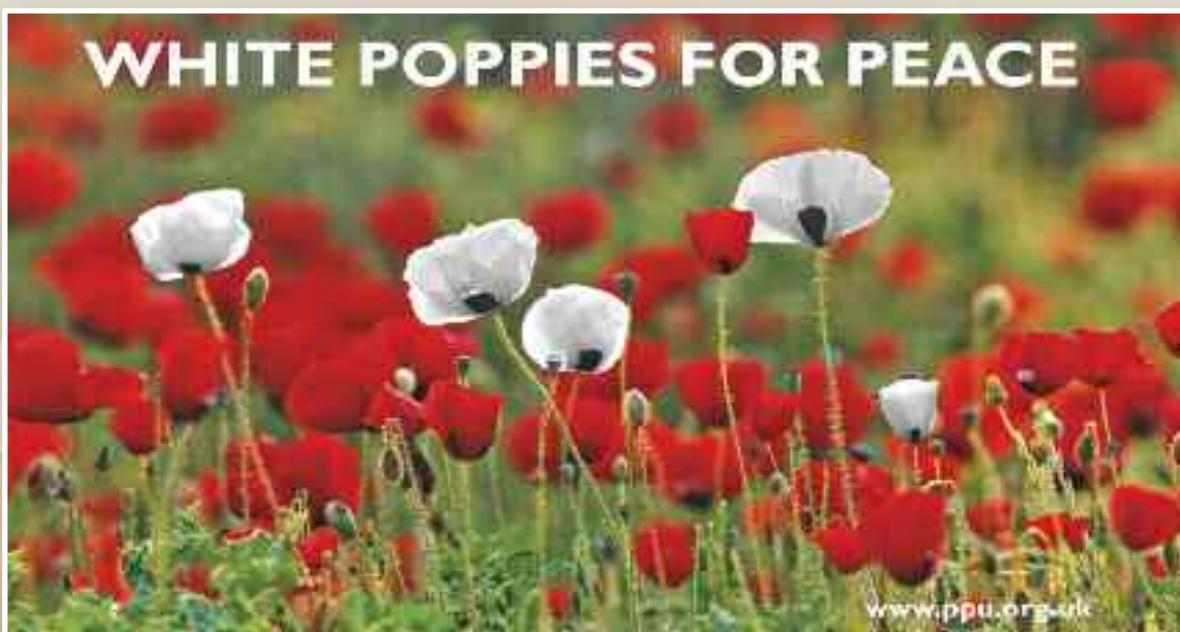
philosophy of Maimonides to explain non-violent resistance to bewildered tribunals.

Other COs in London alone include representatives of the Muslim and Hindu communities and one Buddhist Samanera.

What happened to these men?

COs would first face a Tribunal - a public hearing chaired by "worthies of the parish" who would sit in judgement as to whether a man was a genuine CO. Religious men would be asked to prove their faith refused war - a difficult task for some, given that many religious authorities, both Jewish and Christian, had

Religious faith was the motivating factor behind Conscientious Objection for well over half of the COs in London.



supported the war fully from the outset. Men would be questioned, usually in the vain hope of catching out a CO who would (usually) know the details of their theological position much better than the Tribunal members asking. A young CO in London explained that he was well versed with pacifism and “had read the New Testament in the original Greek”. This was pounced upon by the Tribunal - “AHA Greek! You don’t mean to tell me Jesus Christ spoke Greek: he was British to the backbone.”

A Tribunal’s sometimes bumbling incompetence hides the fact that they cruelly dismissed the applications of many COs for exemption. Conscientious Objectors could find themselves sent straight to the army, with no regard to their objection.

The wartime experience of Conscientious Objectors varied. Some COs would accept a decision of exemption from combat service only and joined the army as the Non-Combatant Corps, undertaking manual labour in work battalions throughout the UK and France. Many took the opportunity to work for medical units such as the Friends’ Ambulance Unit and the Royal Army Medical Corps, while others would agree to undertake work considered to be of National Importance, ranging from farm and gardening work to civil service and administration. COs who undertook some form of war work in this way were known as “Alternativists”, where their religious beliefs dictated that they could help the war effort - but not become a soldier.

Many COs, however, could not and would not support the War in any way, believing that any and all war work meant helping others to kill, and therefore was morally the same as being a soldier. These men were known as Absolutists. Time and time again they would be sent to the army, ordered to obey commands against their conscience, face court martial and imprisoned - only for the cycle to begin again once they were released. For many Absolutists, most of 1916-1919 would be spent in prison. For men facing terrible conditions in unhealthy cells where they would be fed punishment diets and fall under the ominous sounding “rule of silence”, it must have been incredibly difficult to endure knowing that, on release, you would be sent to the army and re-imprisoned. For religious and political COs alike, they were sustained by their conviction that what they were doing was not just right for them, but for all of British society - sending a message that it was possible, against all the odds, to stick to their principles.

For the Absolutist COs, prison became a familiar place - almost a meeting ground where old friends separated by release would be reunited. COs pushed the very limits of prison discipline,

holding lively theological debates and discussion groups sometimes over months in their short exercise periods and even turning the tightly rationed sheets of toilet paper into impromptu newspapers carrying the news of the day!

Some Absolutists would agree to the Home Office Scheme, whereby COs would be sent to work camps instead of prison. The first camp, Dyce Quarry in Aberdeenshire, presented COs with abysmal conditions, inadequate clothing, and much hostility from their jailers. At Dyce one of the first men to go through the tribunal system, Walter Roberts, fell ill and collapsed on the 6th of September. Though his friends at Dyce rushed to his aid - Walter writes: “all the fellows here are looking after me like bricks” - with no proper medical care and a culture of indifference to the sufferings of COs, he would die two days later. In total, around 85 British COs would die as a result of their ill treatment during the war. Walter’s motivation was simple. In his own words he had “been

In his own words he had “been taught from my mother’s knee that to hate and kill was contrary to the teachings of Christ”.

taught from my mother’s knee that to hate and kill was contrary to the teachings of Christ”.

Walter’s story, and the story of the thousands of other Conscientious Objectors of the First World War, still resonates with us today. COs were men with a passionate commitment to peace, and lived their lives as a testament to the ability of everyday people to resist war. At the Objecting to War project, we are constantly astounded at the stories of bravery, principle and commitment that we find in the lives of otherwise very ordinary men - individuals just like you and I today. Their principles and their resolute determination to stand by their religious principles shows a clear example of what individuals can do to resist militarism and work towards peace.

Whether Quaker, Jewish, Catholic or Muslim, a CO was a CO, with different origins of the same idea.

No CO could have withstood the punishments and privations they suffered without the support of thousands of other Cos, and the network of supporters and sympathisers that existed around them. In all of our research we have yet to find a single example of COs denying help to others as a result of religious or political differences. The CO movement was pluralistic and non-sectarian and anyone of any faith (and none)

could and did receive the same considerations and support as anyone else. Whether Quaker, Jewish, Catholic or Muslim, a CO was a CO, with different origins of the same idea. Conscientious Objectors as individuals undoubtedly provide an example of what an individual can do - but as a group they show that working together for peace and an end to war is always more effective than working alone.

Construction and Attraction

A Strategy of Non-Violence

In its modern usage, the concept of ‘non-violence’ stems from the project of socio-spiritual transformation outlined by Leo Tolstoy in his tremendously influential *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*.¹ His basic claim in this work is that non-violent, spiritually guided resistance is the most effective way of combatting oppression and injustice. Mahatma Gandhi famously developed his practice of *satyagraha* by combing aspects of Tolstoy’s thought with insights from the Bhagavad-Gita. Similar efforts were carried out to great effect by Martin Luther King Jr. in the U.S. civil rights movement and the late Nelson Mandela in South African anti-apartheid efforts. Today, people describe this strategy as one of non-violent civil disobedience.

nothing can
prevail against
an idea whose
time has come.

On one level, the Baha’i writings resonate with many aspects of this approach, for example, Bahá’u’lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, explains that “The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice,” and accordingly commands His followers to “Set it then before thine eyes.”² In relation to oppression, the Universal House of Justice, the supreme administrative body in the Bahá’í world, explains that the proper response is “neither to succumb in resignation nor to take on the characteristics of the oppressor. The victim of oppression can transcend it through an inner strength that shields the soul from bitterness and hatred and which sustains consistent, principled action.”³ To this, Shoghi Effendi, head of the Baha’i Faith from 1921-1957, adds that the



1 Leo Tolstoy. *The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You*. Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2009.

2 Bahá’u’lláh. *The Hidden Words*. Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1985. pp. 3-4.

3 The Universal House of Justice, Letter to the Bahá’ís of Iran, dated June 23, 2009.

Baha'i teachings prohibit, "emphatically and unequivocally, any form of physical violence."⁴ Thus, if a Baha'i "is struck he does not return the blow,"⁵ even if "the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee."⁶

But upon closer investigation we see that the Bahá'í teachings recommend a different pattern of action than that of non-violent civil disobedience. For while similarly advocating a position of non-violence and spiritual principle, Bahá'ís eschew "all divisive forms of social action, including involvement in partisan political organizing and opposition," as "oppositional strategies that pit one group against another, whether violently or non-violently, are not considered conducive to spiritual transformation and lasting change."⁷ Instead, they employ a strategy of "construction and attraction: construct a viable alternative and, to the extent that it proves itself and stands in contrast with the unjust and unsustainable systems of the old social order, it will gradually attract more and more people."⁸

A key example of this strategy can be found in the Bahá'í community of Iran. For more than 150 years, the Bahá'í community of Iran...

*has been a target of recurrent waves of hostile propaganda and censorship, social ostracism and exclusion, denial of education, denial of employment, denial of due process before the law, property looting and destruction, government seizure of individual and collective assets, arson, incitements to mob violence, arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, physical and psychological torture, death threats, executions, and disappearances—all calculated to extinguish the community.*⁹

The extent of these persecutions has spiked since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, as recognized by the U.N General Assembly, various U.N agencies, international human rights organizations, governments throughout the world, scholars and journalists, Muslim advocates of human rights, as well as many Iranian expatriates and members of Iranian society. And these observers have universally noted not only the innocence of the Bahá'ís in Iran, but also the fact that this community represents "one of the few documented cases of a minority that has managed to resist peacefully" a genocidal program of persecution.¹⁰

In recent letters, the Universal House of Justice has described the Bahá'í community's response to oppression in Iran as one of "constructive resilience" and counselled the youthful members of that community to remain staunch and faithful in their efforts to employ this approach:

*With an illumined conscience, with a world-embracing vision, with no partisan political agenda, and with due regard for law and order, strive for the regeneration of your country. By your deeds and services, attract the hearts of those around you, even win the esteem of your avowed enemies, so that you may vindicate the innocence of, and gain the ever-increasing respect and acceptance for, your community in the land of its birth... Opposition to a newly revealed truth is a common matter of human history; it repeats itself in every age. But of equal historical consistency is the fact that nothing can prevail against an idea whose time has come. The time has arrived for freedom of belief, for harmony between science and religion, faith and reason, for the advancement of women, for freedom from prejudice of every kind, for mutual respect between the diverse peoples and nations, indeed, for the unity of the entire human race... Service to others is the way... Strive to work hand-in-hand, shoulder-to-shoulder, with your fellow citizens in your efforts to promote the common good."*¹¹

While Bahá'ís in most other nations and lands do not face such persecution, it is important to recognize that every culture and political system exhibits some resistance to Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a world civilization characterized by justice, peace, and prosperity. For, as Shoghi Effendi explains, "The call of Bahá'u'lláh is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices.

*If long-cherished ideals and time-honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine.*¹²

Thus, whether in settings of oppression or freedom, Bahá'ís everywhere strive to adopt the same posture of constructive resilience as they work to promote unity and overcome prejudice, ignorance, conflict, and injustice. It is this coherence that makes the Bahá'í approach to non-violence unique.

4 Shoghi Effendi. *Unfolding Destiny*. London: UK Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981. pp. 128.

5 'Abu'l-Bahá. *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*. London: UK Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981. pp. 56).

6 Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991. p. 210.

7 Michael Karlberg. "Constructive Resilience: The Baha'i Response to Oppression." *Peace and Change* 35 (2), 2010. pp. 232.

8 Karlberg, "Constructive Resilience." pp. 234.

9 Karlberg, "Constructive Resilience." pp. 223.

10 Friedrich Affolter, "The Specter of Ideological Genocide: The Bahá'ís of Iran." *War Crimes, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*, 1, 2005. pp. 76– 77.

11 The Universal House of Justice, Letter to the Bahá'í students deprived of access to higher education in Iran, dated September 9, 2007.

12 Shoghi Effendi. *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991. pp. 42.

This Light that Pushes Me

Twenty years on from the genocide in Rwanda, an inspirational project is enabling African Quaker peacebuilders to relate their journey from violence, to healing, to activism.

*“Someone can’t forgive
with a broken heart.
We need first to heal our wounds
Our deep wounds
Then
Start the work of peace and reconciliation.
Sometimes
When you are still living
With your deep wounds
It is not easy to forgive
And without forgiving
It is not easy to love someone.
They need to heal
Then forgive
Then love.”*

Profound words from Cyclizes Niagara. She survived the Rwanda genocide in 1994 when approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in just 100 days. She fled with her husband to a refugee camp. Later, he was imprisoned, accused of crimes of genocide. She has used her identity as both a survivor and a prisoner’s wife to convince women from both sides to meet, and they have demonstrated remarkable acts of reconciliation. For example, genocide widows (Tutsis) helped prisoners’ wives prepare and deliver meals to their husbands (Hutus), men who had participated in the killing of their own husbands and children.

Cyclizes Niagara is one of around twenty peacebuilders who feature in *This Light that Pushes Me*, an exhibition, using photographs and personal testimonies. The exhibition was first staged in Friends House in London in April and a book accompanying the exhibition has just been published by Quakers in Britain. All the peacebuilders are involved with Quaker peacework in sub-Saharan Africa and many are Quakers themselves. All have experienced violence but what shines through is their journeys which have transformed that suffering into a force for social change. They have chosen to pursue nonviolence, forgiveness and reconciliation over revenge,

It is an inner light, a ‘knowing’ that we can all access no matter what we have done or what we believe.

bitterness and violence. They are an expression of living Quaker values in action.

The gathering of these stories was facilitated by Laura Shieler Chico, Programme Manager for Quaker Peace and Social Witness’s East Africa programme.

She speaks of the fundamental aspect of Quakerism, that the Divine is present in everyone. “It is an inner light, a ‘knowing’ that we can all access no matter what we have done or what we believe. It has led Quakers to campaign for the abolition of transatlantic slavery, to smuggle children out of Nazi Germany, to lobby for prison reform and to advocate for the universal right to conscientious objections.”

“In Africa,” she says, “it has led African Quakers to bring enemies together to sit, talk and listen, and to work across divisions to tackle root causes of violence. The peacebuilding approaches help people connect with themselves and their own inner solutions and capacity for reconciliation. They are based on the principle that if you provide opportunities for people in conflict to encounter one another as human beings, they can rediscover the good in themselves and in the ‘other’ and become whole again.”

Speaking about the inspiration for the project, Laura Shieler Chico says:

“Weaving throughout these stories is the belief that somewhere within our imperfect selves, however



Image: Cyclizes Niagara © Nigel Downes 2013

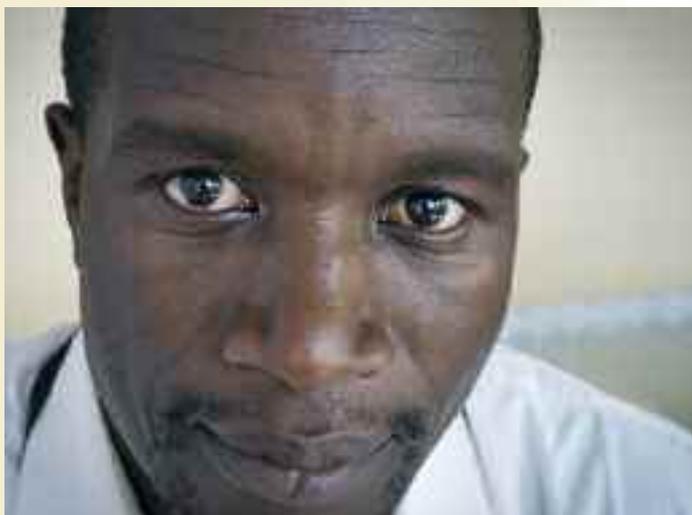
hidden under layers of grief, loss, tragedy, hurt, and disillusion, there is something good, something wise, something knowing. And it is this Divine kernel that pushes us to keep struggling to fix our broken world; to transform hurt and grief and the human lust for vengeance into something new, into a commitment to peace no matter the cost. This book invites us to do what the peacebuilders in this book have been striving to do for a long time: listen – with simplicity – for the truth. And when we hear it, let us walk side by side right into the heart of hurt, the deep and frightening darkness, and look for light.”

As well as Rwanda, the peacebuilders speak of conflict resolution in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Kenya and South Africa.

Benard Lismadi Agona is a field coordinator for a thriving and expanding active nonviolence programme in Kenya, the result of a partnership between Quaker Peace and Social Witness and Change Agents for Peace International. He says: “I’m becoming a strong believer of nonviolence because I believe it is the easiest way of attaining justice in life. All other means have failed.”

He writes:

*“I believe peace is not gotten from a silver plate
You need to work for it.
You have to do something extraordinary.
Sometimes seeking for peace demands that you
swallow your pride.
Sometimes it means that you let go your power.
The power in you,
the power to dominate
has to be let go.
The superiority complex in you has to be let go
so you remain flexible enough*



*so that you can be able to change your position.
I am a strong believer in possibilities.
Let us try nonviolence.
Let us try peace,
And see whether it will work.”*

Although it is three hundred and fifty years since Quakers in Britain declared to the King that “we are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love and unity”, peacebuilding in Africa is still in its infancy. Following the Rwanda genocide organisations such as the Norway-sponsored Change Agents for Peace Program, American Friends Service Committee and Africa Great Lakes Initiative, in collaboration with Friends World Committee for Consultation, intervened in the crisis that was slowly spreading to other African countries. International Quaker organisations have strengthened African Quakers’ capacity for peacebuilding.

The work of these peacebuilders – and of Cécile Nyiramana and Benard Lismadi Agona – is grounded in African Quakers’ faith. That is founded on the Bible that shapes their core beliefs and practices. The Old Testament teaching that humankind is created in God’s image has a profound influence on African Quakers’ view of other humans and therefore the sanctity of life. The scriptures affirm the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* – “I am because we are”. A person is not an autonomous individual but a member of their society, family, clan, neighbourhood or tribe. Quakers are therefore motivated to pursue social justice, equality, truth, peace, love, mercy and forgiveness.

As Adrien Niyongabo from Burundi writes:

*“Healing
is different
from fixing.
It is easy to
fix things
but it takes time
for healing.
Healing asks
courage,
compassion,
endurance,
and also self-giving.
It is risky also,
so you need to understand
that things will not unfold the way you are expecting.
So you need to expect the best,
just try
try.”*



Anne van Staveren, Media Relations Officer, Quakers in Britain

“This Light that Pushes Me” ISBN 9781907123665, extent 80pp, hardback, price £12.00.

Available online at www.quaker.org.uk/africa-peacebuilders and from the Quaker Centre bookshop at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London. Edited by Laura Shipler Chico and the photographer is Nigel Downes.

Image: Benard Lismadi Agona © Nigel Downes 2013, Adrien Niyongabo © Nigel Downes 2013,

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
 Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
 Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.
 No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -
 The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
 Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
 The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
 Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
 And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.

WILFRED OWEN 1893 – 1918



Beloved Muse

From a fiery red landscape streaked with flickering shadows, the king and the gazelles emerge – the intense colour suggests passion and love, but also struggle. These intriguing images at first glance are not so obvious. On the left there is an enigmatic figure resembling a warhorse: in the centre are two gazelles – one painted in crimson red and the other with a white marbled face. They seem to merge one into the other. The marbled face in the front can also be viewed as a profile of a king, his black crown shaped by the gazelle's horns. Looking more closely, one notices that the king and the gazelle (in the forefront) share the same face, and also inhabit the same body.

The limited palette of primal colours reflects the energy that went into the creation of the King and the Gazelles. It went through many stages and was obliterated and redone several times. The final result was a big surprise, even to the artist Yoram Raanan. He recalls that “the gazelles emerged as if an apparition, symbolizing a meaningful expression of my attempts to dig deep into the depths of passion. Something beyond me became manifest.”

“When I am painting, I am mindful of what is happening, I am watching. I am attentive to the flow of the paint and energy on the canvas, and yet I am not controlling it. I have to nullify myself in order to take in the whole space before me. The gazelle, which is also the face of a king, was not deliberately planned but

was arrived at by going beyond the conscious mind - a result of abandonment of self.”

This longing for an image that would capture the depth of his intense search, expressed itself in the form of gazelles. The gazelle, a creature of the wilderness, must constantly search for water, and therefore in Jewish literature, it is often seen as a symbol of longing. The gazelle's thirst for water is akin to the human yearning for divine inspiration, which is expressed by King David in his psalms: “As a gazelle yearns for streams of water, so my soul yearns for You”. (Psalm 42:1)

The king's marbled face looks forward into a landscape that shows no traces of water. This recalls events from King David's own life when fleeing from his enemies in the wilderness, he cried: “My soul thirsts for You, My body longs for You, in a dry and weary land without water (Psalm 63:1). Behind the king are images symbolizing the strife and battles of life, but also echoing the love and rapture that flourish even in struggle.

The allure of love has also been compared to the elusive gazelle, a wild swift animal that is beautiful to look at but difficult to capture and tame. For the artist, the gazelle is like the beloved muse, creative spirit that leaps beyond the rational mind. Thirsting to catch a glimpse of the flash of intuition that bounds over the thickets of the conscious mind, the artist finally captured her illusive image in the many thick layers of paint.

As a gazelle
yearns for
streams of water,
so my soul
yearns for You



Painting: The King and the Gazelles © Yoram Raanan

Soul Force

Martin Luther King and the Debates in South Africa

The 4th of April this year brings us to the 46th anniversary of the death of Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

In the 1960s, Dr King was a profoundly significant figure for many of us in South Africa. This was a desolate time for those who were concerned for justice and human rights: the apartheid regime was steadily tightening its hold on the population, strengthening the legal apparatus of segregation and oppression, and subverting the rule of law. It had imprisoned black leaders like Nelson Mandela, criminalised the African National Congress (ANC) and other Congress bodies, and deported church leaders such as my Bishop, Ambrose Reeves. It was silencing by intimidation the traditionally 'open' - i.e. non-racially identified - universities, such as the University of the Witwatersrand, where I was a chaplain. The churches, also, deeply compromised as they were in their conventional structures and behaviour, were making only a weak and ineffectual contribution in protest. In this silence, the voice of Dr King could be distantly heard - a black man's voice, speaking to the world, speaking to our situation.

Dr King had for years been a friend to many in South Africa. This was not only because of his commitment to oppose segregation and racial injustice, there was a significant link through the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, who, as a young lawyer in South Africa had developed his philosophy of non-violence. This had powerfully affected the ideals of the ANC, and of its leaders, including Chief Albert Luthuli, who had been deprived of his Presidency by the Government, and confined to his home area in Zululand. (I knew him then, as I was priest in the neighbouring district; he had been a colleague of Bishop Reeves, and after the Bishop had been deported I helped them keep in touch with each other. The Chief had been chosen by the students at Glasgow to be their Rector - greatly to their credit - so, in our correspondence about him, the Bishop and I avoided using his name, which would quickly have been noted by the Special Branch, and referred to him by the innocuous-sounding title of 'The Rector of Glasgow University'.) Dr King was similarly a committed disciple of Gandhi. But, by the mid-1960s, many were feeling that the policy of non-violence was getting us nowhere: civil disobedience and a defiance campaign had been tried, and



had resulted in more punitive legislation. Sabotage, in the sense of attacking government institutions without endangering human beings, was being tried; government responded by making sabotage a capital offence, and redefining it to include writing slogans on walls. Sadly, a senior white student went too far, exploding a bomb in Johannesburg railway station and killing two people. That put an end to amateurish violent protest. But at the same time, against the influence of its elder statesmen, the ANC enabled an armed militant organisation to develop, Umkhonto weSizwe. It was because of this that Nelson Mandela and his colleagues faced the death penalty in their trial. (At this point, let us pause for a moment to thank God for Judge Quartus de Wet, who, by imposing the lesser sentence of life imprisonment, made it eventually possible for South Africa to be profoundly blessed with its first black President.) At the same time, Dr King was facing opposition in the movement that he was leading in the USA, from people who were disillusioned with the policy of non-violence. In a lecture which he gave to an American Episcopalian organisation, in 1966, he not only called on the churches to disentangle themselves from the snares of segregation, he restated the fundamental motives and methods of non-violent struggle.

So the recording was brought to Johannesburg and from it 1000 long playing records were produced.

The Students' Representative Council of the University of the Witwatersrand publicly invited Dr King to come to Johannesburg to give our annual Academic Freedom Lecture. We all knew that he would be unable to do this; the Government had banned publication of his words and works, and identified him as a dangerous Communist; so there was no way that it was going to allow him entry. But one of his friends

in South Africa was in possession of a recording of the lecture which I have mentioned. He approached Dr King to get permission for the lecture to be disseminated in South Africa. Dr King replied that he was very happy that this would encourage the churches in their struggle against apartheid, and he willingly gave his permission for reproduction. So the recording was brought to Johannesburg and from it 1000 long playing records were produced. Over one weekend a network of us got them distributed throughout the main centres of South Africa. The recording was quickly banned, so that playing it, or possessing it, became a criminal offence. Christian leaders, such as the Roman Catholic Archbishop Denis Hurley, publicly expressed their disappointment that a unique opportunity for debate on central issues was being denied to the general public. Nevertheless, it was heard by thousands. Chief Buthelezi played it to members of the black caucus of the Anglican Church just before the holding of the elective assembly for the bishopric of Zululand and Swaziland, and some say that this is what led to the election of Bishop Alphaeus Zulu as the first African Diocesan Bishop in South Africa. Some years later, a young black student memorised the entire record and travelled the country repeating it at gatherings. Ultimately, the impact of the message went far beyond the 1000 records that had been produced.

If he had been able, what would Dr King have said to us? Judging from his lecture I think that there would have been several themes, two of which would have been primary.

For one theme, he would have wished to enter our debate about nonviolence. His message was that non-violence has real power, because it secures moral ends by means of moral means. It shows that it is possible to stand against an evil and unjust system while maintaining an attitude of goodwill towards the perpetrators of that system. 'We will match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with our soul-force. We will not obey your unjust laws, because non-cooperation with evil is as much an obligation as cooperation with good. But throw us in jail, and we will still love you. We will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we will win our freedom, but we will win you yourselves also in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.'

Secondly, a powerful theme in his lecture concerned people's anxieties about 'maladjustment'. We are right, he said, to seek to be well-adjusted, to avoid becoming neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. 'But there are some things in our nation and in our world to which I am proud to be maladjusted, and to which I call all men of goodwill to be maladjusted. I never intend to adjust myself to discrimination and segregation. I never intend to adjust myself to religious bigotry, or to economic conditions which take riches from the many to provide luxuries for the few.

I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, the self-defeating effects of physical violence - no nation can win a war, it is no longer a choice between violence and non-violence but between non-violence and non-existence. There is a need for a new organisation in this world, an International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment.'

The issue of violence and non-violence continued to be a potent subject for decision and debate in South Africa, and Dr King's contribution was highly valued, especially in the student world where I was working. For black students, there was the question of whether to support the armed guerrilla programme; they felt a loyalty both to the pacifist tradition of the ANC, but also to the imprisoned leaders, notably Nelson Mandela, who had encouraged the setting-up of Umkhonto weSizwe. This issue became a primary matter of debate in our conferences of the University Christian Movement (UCM). This was a fairly new organisation, which we had founded, with our churches'



support, as a racially-inclusive ecumenical association for students and academic teachers. But we found it increasingly difficult to get venues for UCM conferences. In 1968, we had arranged to meet in a big and highly-regarded Anglican boarding school in Natal. They were happy to have us. Then, about a month before the conference was due to start, the school told us that the police had warned them not to let us meet at the school, So, very sorry, but you will have to find somewhere else. We found another school, less prestigious, less conspicuous. They accepted us. Then, a week before we were due to meet, this school also told us that the arrangement was off - for the same reasons. We thought that there was nothing for it but to cancel. Then a farmer heard about the problem. He had a sugar-farm at the seaside in Natal. He had an empty house there, by the shore. He told us: "You can have the use of the house, it's got a good kitchen and running water and electrics. Obviously you won't be able to sleep in it, all of you; but if you get tents, and dig latrines, and generally look after yourselves, you will be most welcome." He was an Indian. He was a Muslim. And he saw the point of what the University Christian Movement was about. So we met there; and when people earnestly talk about Christian-Muslim relations, he is the Muslim that I think of.

Shirley, my wife, and our three children, came to this gathering, living in a caravan. We also brought our dog. One day, this dog went out on the beach, and came back in a terrible state. He had managed to get a huge rusty fish-hook into his tongue and gum, and was in great agony. We couldn't hold him down, even to see what had happened. There were two African medical students - Steve Biko and Lizo Mazwai - they caught hold of the dog; and the next thing we knew was that Lizo was holding the hook in his hand and the dog was hopping about as if nothing had happened. It is still, for me, the most miraculously skilful thing I

have ever seen. These were the kind of people who were trying deeply to work out their commitment to the crisis in their world. They got involved, as medical students and future doctors, in the continuing debate about violence and non-violence.

Steve argued that, in medical practice, there sometimes has to be drastic surgery to enable a patient to have a new phase of life, and that therefore, if the worst came to the worst, he would be willing to take the path of violence to rid South Africa of a violent and cruel regime. Lizo was sympathetic to this, but insisted that he would be bound by the Hippocratic Oath and would not be able to wound or kill. This was deadly serious exploration about the realities of the future of South Africa, and the rest of us (this was in a small group, not in full conference - even Steve would not talk like that in full conference of 100 people - of whom at least 5 would be there as undercover agents of the Security Police) just listened with great respect. (Steve did 3 or 4 years as a medical student, but then decided to leave college and set up basic clinics in deep rural places which had no access to the services of the formally-qualified doctors. He eventually was killed by officers of the Security Police; this was the most grievous waste of human quality; he was a person of supreme intellect, charm, and integrity. I think that it is no exaggeration to say that, if he had lived, Steve Biko would have become the natural successor for Mandela. Lizo Mazwai is now Dean and Professor of Surgery at the University of the Transkei, and President of the South African Colleges of Medicine.)

There was equally searching debate among white students. Young white males were all required to take part in a ballot for selection for conscription into the armed forces. Conscientious objection was recognised only for men who specifically belonged to recognised churches whose official beliefs included pacifism; it was no good saying that you personally were a pacifist; you had to be a definite member of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Quakers. So the question of what to do about the call-up was very live. In 1970, the World Council of Churches instituted its Programme to Combat Racism, which provided funding for bodies that were struggling against racism, including bodies such as the ANC which had armed associate organisations; such funding would be on condition that it would be used for humanitarian and educational purposes only. Unfortunately, this programme was sprung on the South African Churches without any warning or consultation, and church



leaders were sharply put on the spot to say whether they supported the WCC's action - which would be counted as treasonable support for armed insurrection - or whether they opposed it - which would have meant resigning from the WCC. (I told the Archbishop that if the Anglican Church resigned from the WCC on this ground I would resign from the Anglican Church). In the event, the Anglican Bishops did not leave the WCC, but passed a very carefully-worded statement of caution and regret. But Bishop Alphaeus Zulu, who, as a faithful member of the ANC, was a lifelong pacifist, was heard to murmur his surprise at how quickly his white colleagues became instant pacifists when there was any suggestion of guns getting into black hands.

In South Africa the big questions of the Cold War and nuclear armaments did rather pass us by, as essentially problems for the northern hemisphere; but our domestic situations required equally searching response, and Dr King's wisdom was profoundly valuable to us. Whether we are from the south or the north, there is a potent claim upon us in his call to share in an 'International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment' - which I take to be just a slightly sharpened name for the disciple-church of Jesus Christ.

After 15 years in South Africa, the status of myself and my wife as Permanent Residents was rescinded and we were classified as Prohibited Immigrants: we had to make a new life for ourselves in Britain. I brought one of the records of his lecture with me - I think there is only one other copy in Britain, owned by an old friend in Edinburgh. I have often played it and lent it to friends. Each time I hear it, I am struck by its immediacy, its relevance to our contemporary situation. It ought to be easily accessible in these days; but now we find that Dr King's words and works are protected by very rigid conditions of copyright. Recently, we were planning to transmit some of the lecture on local radio. After considerable negotiation, our radio station did get permission to broadcast an excerpt, on strict orders that this should not last longer than sixty seconds - sixty seconds to represent a 45-minute lecture on the promotion of freedom and of resistance to oppression!

Dr Martin Luther King Jr is part of world history. His message belongs to the world. Faced with the obstacles created by an oppressive and unjust regime 45 years ago, some of us, in a small way, risked our liberty to enable his voice to be heard. He himself paid an infinitely higher price. The obstacle now is not political ideology but commercial and legal structures. In restricting Dr King's voice, they are succeeding where an unjust racist ideology failed. I don't know what Dr King would make of this; but I do feel a renewed and powerful sense of indebtedness to him, for enabling us to have had a share in making his voice heard.

John Davies was an Anglican mission priest and university chaplain in South Africa 1956 - 1970, and has served in similar fields in Wales and England including being Bishop of Shrewsbury 1987-1994.

Steve Biko, Image: ©The International Defence and Aid Fund, Canon Collins House, 64 Essex Road, London N1 8LR, Martin Luther King Image, By Yoichi R. Okamoto [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

FAITH: *Breathing Deeply*

Where is the tipping balance between integration and assimilation for religious groups? Where is the point at which feeling comfortable in one's secular surroundings leads to the evaporation of one's own religious identity?

It is not a new question, yet it is also one that every generation has to face anew. Perhaps, though, it has become even more acute in Britain today, which once was a country largely of Christians rooted in a Christian culture, but now is a multi-faith society in which the other religions cannot claim to be deeply embedded in the wider surroundings, while many Christians consider themselves to be an endangered species.

One example from the past that haunts Jews is the true story of the Ten Lost Tribes. Ancient Israel consisted of twelve tribes (which stemmed from the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob, whose details are recorded in the Book of Genesis). When, centuries later, the kingdom of Israel split into two as a result of a dynastic dispute, ten tribes formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the remaining two tribes formed the Southern Kingdom.

The Northern Kingdom was eventually conquered by Assyrians in 722 BC and the ten tribes were taken into exile. They found themselves cut off from the land of Israel and intermingling with other subject populations from elsewhere in the Assyrian empire. The result was that they lost all sense of identity, assimilated away and were lost to history.

It meant that the Jewish story ever since has been ten twelfths of what it might have been otherwise. It is an astonishingly high loss. It is also one of the reasons why, although the teachings of Judaism have had significant influence and led to the development of both Christianity and Islam, its own size has always been limited. Furthermore, it begs the question of how well or badly faith can survive when it is separated from its roots – be they geographical or social.

In ancient times, one's God was associated with one's country's borders – which is why the naïve biblical prophet, Jonah, sought to escape God's orders by leaving the land of Israel by boat, only to find that - to his surprise - God did not have territorial limits.

Once the idea was accepted that God was everywhere, faith became a portable homeland which could be taken abroad. This happened for Jews later in their history, this time during the Roman exile, when they managed to maintain their identity in a non-Jewish milieu. It also allowed Christians and Muslims

to export their faith to other countries, which they did very successfully, seeing God as universal and applicable to all peoples.

However, the social situation still presents difficulties. When a faith group is a minority among the surrounding population, it is difficult not to be influenced by the dominant culture.

For instance, most Jews in Britain wear their wedding ring on the Trinitarian finger of the left hand, as is the common custom, rather than following the Jewish tradition of the index finger of the right hand. Similarly, British Sikhs send Christmas cards and British Muslims observe St Valentine's day. Each example may be relatively trivial, but they are part of a wider trend of acculturation, which over the decades can pave the way to eventual assimilation.

In some cases, it has meant a repeat scenario of the Ten Lost Tribes syndrome, albeit in modern times. This has been the fate of Chinese Jews. They can trace their lineage back to the twelfth century,

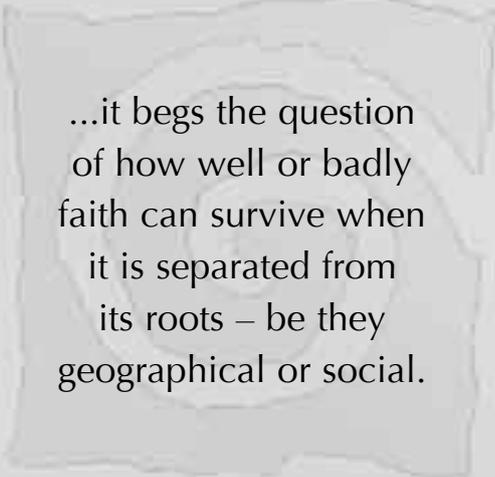
when their ancestors came from the land of Israel along the silk route via Persia and India to settle in Kaifeng. The synagogue they built in 1163 lasted until 1842, when it was destroyed by floods.

At that time, European society was riddled with Christian anti-semitism: anti-Jewish feelings based on the negative attitudes of Church teachings about the Jews in the New Testament and later writings. It resulted in them being either under constant attack or isolated in ghettos. But China had no such inherent bias and treated Jews as honoured strangers who were welcomed rather than ostracised.

The result was the same as the outcome in the apocryphal story of a competition between the sun and the wind as to who was more powerful. They decided to test it by seeing which one could make a man wearing a coat take it off.

First, the wind howled around him ferociously, but he just hung on to it all the more tightly. Then the sun came out, beamed at him, and made him feel so warm that he took it off and carried it on his arm: a simple story, but with profound religious implications. Hostility entrenches set positions, whereas friendship can melt them away.

So too in China, where Jews responded to the warm welcome and embraced Chinese society. At first, they kept up Jewish beliefs and practices. Then they blurred them into Chinese traditions, such as by honouring the biblical patriarchs through the Chinese ritual of ancestor-worship.



...it begs the question of how well or badly faith can survive when it is separated from its roots – be they geographical or social.

This religious ‘mix and match’ eventually led to the irrevocable step of letting Chinese culture reshape their Jewishness. Thus they began to define Jewish identity through the patrilineal line (the Chinese way) instead of through the matrilineal line (the Jewish way). The effect was both to cut themselves off from the rest of the Jewish world and to lose their will to remain distinctively Jewish.

But if religious extinction is one danger for minority faith adherents, hiding away from the surrounding population and surviving in a ghettoised existence is equally undesirable. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Amish Christians, fundamentalist Muslims, wee-frees and all similar isolationist groups do not serve God best by living without any contact with the rest of God’s world.

Finding a way of maintaining one’s distinctive faith but also engaging with the rest of society is not to be condemned as compromise with the ungodly, but praised for its embrace of humanity.

This is one of the great religious challenges in a world where people of different beliefs now live side by side rather than in separate lands: allowing faith room to breathe deeply, unafraid to both persevere with self-confidence, and interact positively with others.

Sometimes it does mean that certain religious traditions may slip, but this may be considered a small price for the greater goal of a world more in harmony with itself. It is also important to distinguish between core religious beliefs and incidental cultural accretions. While the latter are often given great weight, from a faith perspective they are not crucial and can be allowed to fade away as new contexts take over.

It means that a word that many religious groups fear – change – can actually be beneficial, helping to ensure the continuity of faith. Moreover, one generation’s controversial changes can then mature into another generation’s hallowed customs. It is the task of succeeding generations both to give up and innovate as did previous ones.

If the patriarch Jacob suddenly came back to earth, he would recognise very little of modern Jewish life and might feel totally lost within it, although hopefully he would be pleased that it still existed over three millennia since his death and that it regarded him as one of its founding figures.

What is key is not the survival of tradition for its own sake, but survival of the faith that tradition has helped hand down. The Ten Lost Tribes are a warning of how identity can dissipate. At the same time, the remaining two tribes – effectively, Judaism today – indicates the enduring power that faith can also possess.

What is key is not the survival of tradition for its own sake, but survival of the faith that tradition has helped hand down.



Painting: Whose God? © Moriah LeFebvre. www.moriahlefebvre.com

Living Journeys

The Holocaust can be regarded as one of the darkest hours in modern history. As the Second World War concluded, the Nazis wished to hide their atrocities and destroy evidence, and so the majority of death camps now remain as ruins. The notorious Auschwitz camps still stand to this day however, and are regularly visited by people from across the world. The liberation of Auschwitz was the 27th of January 1945, which is now celebrated each year globally as Holocaust Memorial Day. The Holocaust Educational Trust selects a theme every year to help communicate one of the many topics relevant to these appalling events. This year's chosen theme is Journeys.

In October 2013, we were given a once in a lifetime opportunity to represent our school as Ambassadors for Auschwitz. It was the Holocaust Educational Trust who provided us with this worthwhile experience. This involved attending a seminar which prepared us for our trip to the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and informed us of the history of Auschwitz and its role in today's society. This was followed by a trip to Poland in which we faced many emotional challenges, but we both feel this experience changed us for the better. Since the subject of the Holocaust is such a broad topic, there are so many ways in which we can portray the theme of journeys to others. Journeys

They could beat, starve, torture and murder their prisoners, but they never could remove faith from them, even in their final moments.

are very much associated with the tragic events of the Holocaust, and this is why we feel it is the perfect way to present our experience.

Our journey of understanding towards the Holocaust is what we believe has enlightened us over the course of our experience in Poland. What we gained at the sites of Auschwitz-Birkenau is not what we expected, and we learned so much more than just the facts and figures. Our journey began in Glasgow airport. At this point, our sleep deprived minds were completely unaware of the day ahead. We envisaged tears and

tissues aplenty, however as our day progressed we realised our reactions to this surreal place were much more complex than first thought. The journey was not exactly as straight forward as we had predicted.

As we first set eyes upon the red brick buildings of Auschwitz I, we were surprised to see the strange beauty of the area. The Germanic buildings looked more like a small village rather than a site of genocide. Our first emotional trial of the day was walking into a room filled with the hair shaved from the heads of prisoners. This was the moment

when our journey of understanding became more serious, and real. It's hard to explain the shock that we felt. When lumps came to our throats we realised that what happened there was unbelievable. Looking at the death count of the 1.1 million people who were murdered at Auschwitz, we forget that these individuals were much more than a statistic. Up to the point when they walked through the gates, each and every one of them had a personality and was unique in their own right. However seeing the hair highlighted for us that these people were stripped of what made them human, they were dehumanised. As we continued to slowly pace through the idyllic red brick buildings we no longer viewed them as charming. The more time we spent within the gates of Auschwitz, the Holocaust seemed less of a story. The Holocaust changed from facts we read in textbooks to a horrible realisation of what humanity is capable of.





In one day, we walked through two death camps, Auschwitz and Auschwitz Birkenau, saw human hair, shoes with no owners, old toys, gas chambers, prisoner living conditions and mile upon mile of barbed wire. It was a lot to cope with as we had never experienced anything similar in our life time. Despite the cruelty that occurred there, we feel privileged that we have had the opportunity to experience this landmark in history at first hand. We are both keen to share our own experiences if only to help ensure that the events of the Holocaust, and the experiences of all these individuals are never forgotten or allowed to diminish. Most importantly we wish to ensure that their journey lives on.

When people think of Nazi death camps they instantly think of the haunting gas chambers, but as we set foot into the cold concrete building our reaction to the events that had happened there surprised us. What took place here was so unbelievable and inhumane, one would think that strong emotions would be triggered. However despite our expectations we felt nothing. It is so hard to empathise with what had happened in that room, that our minds would not let us comprehend it. We did attempt to think of what it would be like to be placed into that inescapable grave, but the design of the human mind provides us with a barrier to protect ourselves from such horrors. Unless you were a victim in that chamber, there is no knowing what it was truly like. Up until their last moments, the prisoners had been stripped of everything but their faith. With hindsight, it could be said that the Nazis never succeeded in their mission to erase Judaism. They could beat, starve, torture and murder their prisoners, but they never could remove faith from them, even in their final moments. This reminded us that even when you are at your weakest no one can take away your own beliefs.

Although everyone's reaction is varied, the lessons learned at the site of Auschwitz are universal. Taking part in this project has opened our minds to a greater understanding of the world, and has given us an experience we will not forget. Even as time passes by, our journey carries on. Our thoughts on this experience continue to develop and change, and it is an experience we will always remember. Even today, humanity can look at these events and recognise that humans are capable of such brutality and discrimination. We need to take as much positivity from the Holocaust as possible and learn not to give into bigotry or intolerance.



OF

WHAT THE *Heart* SEES

I have always loved colour and putting colours together, especially greens and blues. It became a family joke that if there were something turquoise, blue or jade, they would say “give it to Lesley”. So it is with little wonder that when I came on a family holiday to Harris 15 years ago I completely fell in love with this place, so abundant in my own aqueous colour palate. I felt I had come home, and realized that this was where I had to be. My husband Alisdair (who is also an artist) and I bought a holiday home on the island and began to spend every free minute here - regardless of the season - eventually moving to Harris permanently. Having not painted for years, due to family and work commitments, I started again.

Shortly before coming to the Outer Hebrides I had travelled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and observed women there working on silk. On my return home I decided to explore silk as a medium for my work. It was a perfect match! My new found medium of silk and my coming to the Outer Hebrides just seemed to come together. I started to experiment with the silk, capturing the colours and experience of the sea that surrounded me. The silk allows colours to move around and interact with each other, creating vibrant and evocative images. This allows me to respond emotionally rather than representationally, enabling each viewer to see and feel something different, all the time evoking the spirit of the islands. No matter how many times I look out over the sea from Harris and Lewis, I always see something new that calls out to be captured in a painting.

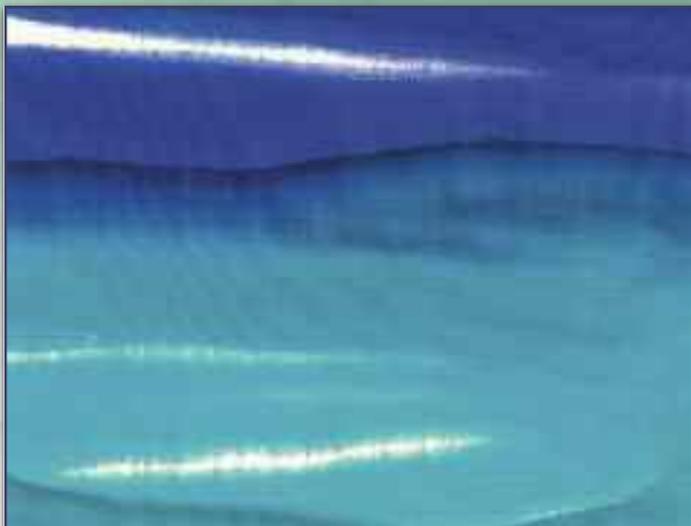
I work free hand with the silk not using any resist - like wax or gutta - that stops the spread of the dye. Although the lack of resist makes the dye more difficult to control it is this limited control



Gentle Breeze IV

Sometimes, especially during those rare days in summer when there is barely a breath of air and the surface of the sea is moving ever so gently to the swell, the day feels sort of turquoise and aquamarine. It's hard to explain but if you've looked out over the sound towards Taransay on such a day, you'll know what I mean.

LANGUAGE



Atlantic Blue I

Some would say that to see the true nature of something, you must get the picture into sharp focus, and perhaps even magnify it. There is another, contrary, perspective that suggests that it is only when we relinquish precision and detail that we come to really appreciate the beauty of our surroundings. So, find a quiet moment. Stand on any one of the many vantage points around the west coast of Harris. Take a deep breath, let your eyes go out of focus and really see.



Towards North Harris I

North Harris is far and away the most mountainous area of the island. The road to Amhuinnsuidhe castle and Huisinis takes you past the roots of these mountains. However, at sea level, it's hard to get a real feel for their sheer size, the tallest of which is the Clisham at 2,622 feet. One of the best places from which to appreciate this wild grandeur is the beach at Lusentyre. Looking past the northwestern end of Taransay, you get a true sense of the extraordinary forces that moulded this landscape.

that appeals to me and the one that I have developed over the last 15 years. I am not aware of any other artists who works this way because of the difficulty of control when the dye meets the silk. I wanted to work with the movement of the dye on the silk and not constrain it.

I have never been one for detail in my art, preferring to go for the bold statement. I love the interaction of strong colours, especially the aquamarines, turquoises and jades that characterise the Hebridean seascapes. So it is not surprising that seascapes form the basis of most of my paintings, created from a mix of memory and imagination. I am interested in bringing out abstract qualities while emphasising the use of colour and light.

When I go somewhere I sometimes take photographs but I don't copy the photographs or refer to them while I'm painting, I paint what is in my head; the impression or memory that I am left with from the experience of the place rather than the specifics or details. I will go walking along a beach or up the hills and then paint the imprint that has been left within me.

I tend to block everything out round about me when I paint, though sometimes I have music on. I then focus on the area and colour palate that I want to paint with. There is no precision, unlike other mediums, and many factors such as humidity or the amount of dye on the brush can influence the end result. When the dye touches the silk I just know where and how it's going to evolve, I can only work with this movement not against it.

I try to capture the absolute majesty of the colours and the awe inspiring feeling of the Outer Hebrides in my paintings.

Some people might not relate to that, particularly if they have never been to Harris but people who come to the island relate to my paintings. One woman who visited the gallery at the start of her holiday just didn't 'get' my paintings. She liked Alisdair's work better, as it has much more detail, but at the end of her holiday she came back to the gallery to buy one of my paintings and said "I 'get' your paintings now". She got the feeling and experience of the place. One young seven

year old girl who was visiting the gallery, and had spent a long time looking at my art work, said: "Lesley paints what's in her heart". I realised that she was absolutely right.

I try to capture the absolute majesty of the colours and the awe inspiring feeling of the Outer Hebrides

Dusk II

Look towards the setting sun at dusk on Harris and the sky is full of every red orange and yellow you might ever find on a painter's palette. Look in the opposite direction and the sky is drenched in the deeper, darker colours that presage the imminent nightfall. Find a comfortable place to sit and watch the shades and shapes in the clouds change by the second. This is a truly extraordinary experience that is never the same on any two consecutive nights.





'From little acorns tall oak trees grow'

Three Faiths Encounter – Biennial Summer School.

The Ammerdown Centre – a Retreat and Conference Centre near Bath in Somerset - organises a Three Faiths Encounter Week every two years, bringing together Christians, Muslims and Jews. The aim is to promote and facilitate dialogue through personal encounters within an organised programme of joint study and activities. We provide guests with a chance to meet people from other faiths, study with them, eat with them, worship with them, have fun together, and, in the process, establish a shared understanding whilst building relationships of mutual respect and friendship.



Here is what past participants from the three faiths have said at the end of their week at Ammerdown:

Magdalen – Christian background

I felt that the opportunity to get to know each other was perhaps the most valuable and lasting effect of the Ammerdown 'Three Faiths' experience. Over the course of the week friendships were undoubtedly formed, and such personal contact makes it impossible for people to continue to hold the many misconceptions, and narrow blanket views of other faiths, which contribute so greatly to the animosity between the religions.

The programme was ideally structured to allow these friendships to develop. The small group discussions, wherein the same group met several times, allowed discussions to develop and deepen at a natural pace. It became very apparent to me that while interfaith events which meet for a day or less are very valuable and necessary, they lack the time needed to allow people to relax – an essential

component in successful dialogue. When time is limited people are often focused on making sure that their voice is heard, and this makes it difficult for them to listen and to learn from others.

Being able to attend and participate in the prayers and services of the different faith groups present was also a hugely beneficial element of the week, and an experience which would not otherwise have been available to most of us who attended. While learning about the practices of others I noticed that many were moved by the deep faith of those of differing beliefs, and I understood why it is so often said that prayer has the power to unite. Recognising the genuine faith of 'the other' and the positive effect it has on their life, is, I believe, a key step towards achieving peaceful and loving interfaith relations.

Samuel – Jewish background

'From little acorns tall oak trees grow'. I feel that this week at Ammerdown is the little acorn in my life that shall blossom into a tree of love, tolerance and continued interfaith activity. I cannot say that we have solved all of the world's problems, however I do believe that at an individual level this past week has been a life changing experience for everyone here.

I have learnt much about other faiths while I have been here, and have made contacts and friendships with students of other religions.

I feel that I will be able to go home and communicate with and build up relationships with Muslims and Christians in my local community. Furthermore I have found the past week spiritually enriching.

Overall my stay at Ammerdown has been a lovely, rewarding experience which will continue to affect me and those around me throughout my future.

David – Christian background

I consider myself as a very ordinary person who has not had much of an education. I think I speak for the majority of ordinary people in my generation that only a decade ago (especially before 9/11) hardly knew what a Muslim was! We also know very little about Jews except from what we learned about the Holocaust. So it was a real voyage of discovery that I embarked on when I signed up for the week. To be honest, I was a bit worried about it as I was not quite sure what to expect and feared I might feel ill at ease at times. But what happened on 9/11 made me realise that if we ordinary people in the street did

not try and understand more what ordinary Muslims believe in, our whole world as we know it might descend into chaos because of fear and bigotry.

Looking back, I now know that I need not have worried. Meeting people from other faiths was wonderful – however open one thinks one is, actually meeting the people and getting to know them is a very deep and meaningful experience. Quite simply, love made itself known that week. It has made me a better person, and I hope I can carry it through where I live.

Ismail – Muslim background

The week I spent at Ammerdown has been very inspiring and interesting for me. I learned much about the other two faiths (Judaism and Christianity), about the way they pray and how they conceive the world of today. I especially liked the Jewish contribution as it showed me once more the closeness between my Islamic faith and Judaism.

I have been engaged in interfaith dialogue for seven years and it is always a great pleasure for me to meet with people of other religions or beliefs. The week gave me the opportunity to enlarge my experiences in this field and to connect with new ideas and personalities. I am very grateful for the experience.

The week made it also very clear to me that most of the conflicts which separate us today are political ones, and cannot, in any way, be justified by theological or religious reasoning.

The comments above are genuinely representative of the impact of Ammerdown's Three Faiths Encounter Weeks. It is our experience at Ammerdown that meeting people of other faiths in a meaningful way over a whole week can truly enrich one's faith and one's life and, in some cases, be life transforming. It takes courage and a spirit of openness but the rewards can be great. It also helps people to encounter people from their own faith tradition, who they may not usually have the opportunity to meet - people who hold different theological perspectives and have different faith practices from their own.

The next Ammerdown Three Faiths Encounter Week will take place from Tuesday 12th August to Monday 18th August. The theme of this year's event will be 'Who is my neighbour?', and the programme will once again be rich in shared activities and worship.

You can find more information at: www.ammerdown.org. Please note that bursaries are available for people on low income and for young people under 21.



Building a bridge across time



I was born lucky: whatever my personal setbacks, in my lifetime there has been no world war. Still, the war that started when my own grandmother was fifteen shaped my life. I myself was fifteen when I first came across the poetry of the Great War, The War to End All Wars, which turned out to be just the First of two World Wars.

The work was in an anthology that was required reading at school. The book itself was memorable because it was so new. Most of our text books had been recycled through several generations, and part of the fun of the new school year was reading the names and doodles of previous custodians.

This one had none: it was a new venture, dealing with 20th century poetry. So there was little rhyming, and quite a lot of rigour in terms of subjects tackled. There were also photographs to help us get real with the poets.

Black and white battlegrounds underscored Wilfred Owen's withering recasting of that terrible phrase *Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori*. There was clearly nothing sweet or fitting about dying in the trenches - which made the valour and steadfastness of the troops all the more heartbreaking.

Impressionable, passionate and believing that right and wrong where black and white too, I crumpled, shocked. Although I'd known before, now it came home to me that some of the soldiers were my age, legions more not much older. Kids soon to be statistics. It was the first step on the road to what is now a thirty year long journey to practice Buddhism in daily life.

By the time the anniversary of the First World War approached, I was married to Michael, who is German. Both talkative and as terrier-like, as our dog, to get to the heart of things, we spent long hours talking about our countries and their relationship.

Wandering along the Baltic shore, once again considering this question, we suddenly wondered what Europe would have been like if all the people who had been sacrificed to the First World War had lived? We know that we lost great poets and painters, Owen, Sassoon, Macke, Trakl,¹ but what about the farmers, doctors, engineers, miners, cooks and glass-blowers? All their plans, hopes and dreams were lost to us, so lost that too often, those people are chiefly remembered in names chiselled on stone, photos of boys in khaki.

1. These are just a few from the UK and German forces. For a truly magnificent overview of the losses to art and literature from all sides see Tim Cross's *The Lost Voices of World War I* University of Iowa Press 1988, still available in used copies from various internet sources.

We thought of people of a similar age today. They don't have a great war to face - at the moment! But they have a world of huge challenges too, whether we like to remember it or not. What would they say to each other, the fallen generation and the one still just struggling to stand up in this complicated world? What plans, hopes and dreams would they share. And why don't we know...and let posterity know too?

A project was born: or more than a project, a passion. To make a connection between the living, and the once alive. I phrase it that way because in doing so, there is an emphasis on the life not lived, rather than the enduring death of the soldiers, and the similar annihilation of the so many possibilities for those who survived.

The project is called, of course, *The Book of Plans Hopes and Dreams*, with the strap line *Letters from the Bridge of Time*. In a nutshell, it gives people in Germany and the UK the chance to record their own guiding passions and principles (and how to realise them). But as a memorial to schemes lost in the Great War, and as a gift to the future.

How? By writing two letters. One to 1914 - to a real person who was a victim of the war: a family member, a member of the same football club, someone on a memorial stone somewhere. The letter, so personal, and such an important method of communication in the war itself, gives the chance to show how people can connect across time and space, and just swap stories and concerns.

The second letter is to 2114 and it should outline the writer's specific plan, hope or dream. A vague wish for world peace is lovely, but we need something more concrete here. Something to show what young people want to champion now. And because we want to let all the creativity that was so cruelly arrested back then flow now, the letter can take various forms. A straight letter is fine, a poem or a story encapsulating the idea would be equally welcome.

The Book of Plans Hopes and Dreams will be the home for these letters. The long form will be published online. The shortlist will be bound into a commemorative book which we hope will serve as a testament to initiative and optimism. The writers of the best contributions will be invited to present their ideas in their 'opposite' country at Easter 2015.

Brilliantly, we have ready made connections between the two, and not just personally. The diocese of Braunschweig, Wolfenbüttel where we live in Germany, is twinned with that of Blackburn, which covers our old home town of Lancaster. Working with them, and various other connected bodies has helped us to realise our own dream. We are working now to ensure that as many people as possible can participate, in both countries. Everyone is welcome.

Because we really believe that the best way to honour the dead is to honour life in all its glory. And because every time needs plans, hopes and dreams.

a connection between the living, and the once alive.



The world media took note of the calamitous event on 24 April 2013, when Rana Plaza, a garment factory building in Bangladesh, collapsed. Despite the tireless efforts of rescue workers and volunteers, the salvage operation continued for 20 days. Over 1,125 bodies were recovered and many were unidentifiable. Of those rescued - over 2,400 - some have since succumbed to their injuries, many others are disabled for life and most are likely to have mental health problems. The building in question had violated construction regulations.

Bangladesh is the world's second-largest clothing exporter after China, with 60 percent of clothes going to Europe and 23 percent to the United States yet multiple fatalities of garment factory workers is a regular feature within the industry. Poor working conditions, structurally unsound buildings, an absence of fire exits and sprinkler systems, and insufficient monitoring of safety measures have all made their contribution. It is believed by many that the collapse of Rana Plaza was not an accident but the worst form of structural violence. Economic exploitation and social domination are among the common forms of structural violence carried out by social institutions and existing social structures in any country. The garment industry of Bangladesh is one example where workers' lives are progressively and inexorably trapped into a malevolent global market and living environment.

TRADING WITH 'TAQWA'

Against this backdrop, we need to consider faith-based trading. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country, but how much of the country is aware of, or practice, Islamic precepts of ethical commerce? Although there is a sizeable Muslim population in Bangladesh, Islamic values have not had a good breeding ground to flourish because both constitutionally, and institutionally, it is a secular country, and the political party that had a religious brand was more focussed to advance their political agenda than anything else. The secular norms have systematically eroded accurate Islamic foundations and in the absence of a secular alternative to moral and virtue education, a just society is yet to be forged. Individually, Muslims who practice religion do so within their private spheres and Islamic scholars are mostly visible on once-a-weekly TV religious discussion shows that attract only the interested few. The society in Bangladesh therefore by most standards is very different from the examples set by the Muslim merchants of olden times as described by Rice [1999]: "When Muslim merchants travelled to distant lands, the inhabitants of those lands were impressed by the traders' social and business conduct and so became curious about their beliefs. Many of these inhabitants subsequently became Muslims." Therefore, to look at the ethics of business and consumerism conducted in the country from an Islamic standpoint may not be wholly appropriate. Nevertheless, the guidelines of Islamic business principles are there for the open-minded and anyone who believes in a fair society.

Islam teaches us that Allah, the Lord of the Universe, has entrusted humanity with stewardship where our actions and even intentions matter. Our primary goal is to earn His pleasure and how we think and what we do must be fashioned to 'ihsan' - meaning 'doing what is beautiful' over and above self-interest and personal gains. This is not to say we cannot enjoy the fruits of our labour, or think of making profit, but profit alone must not be our objective. Islam does encourage trade and commerce, so much so that honest trading during pilgrimage is permissible, if necessary. The manner in which we conduct our business is crucial; we must not lose sight that someone, somewhere down the commercial chain, may be adversely affected by our actions, or those of other

involved stakeholders. The public, and common good, must be at the forefront of our business dealings. Sanctity of actions based on a spiritual or human connection with products and consumers can safeguard the common good. Such actions would include transparency, accountability, fair wages and good living conditions for employees, environment friendly, responsible and reliable modus operandi.

Islam is a religion embodying a way of life complete with manners and morals. Ethical commerce is integral to the code of behaviour that is necessary for Muslims to follow in order to be honest brokers in their personal and public lives. Measuring the corporate process by ethical and moral yardsticks comes within the scope of 'the Shariah' - Islam's own body of law that governs all aspects of a Muslim's life - individual, collective, civil and criminal.¹ Therefore, the prescribed etiquette and rules include guidelines for ethical practices in commerce and business operation just as in ordinary life. The different players involved in the business activity or operation range from producers and their suppliers, workers and consumers who are both buyers and end users; and their contractual, reciprocal and shared relationship come within the scope of the *Shariah*. Interdisciplinary in nature, Islamic finance and Islamic economics combines religion, law, sociology and area studies. The *Qur'an*, the *Hadith* and *Fiqh* or Jurisprudence are the Islamic sources from where we derive guidance and the sources of Islamic business ethics are no different. So what do the established sources say?

The *Qur'an* [verse 17: 34 & 35] states, "Honour your pledges: you will be questioned about your pledges. Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with accurate scales: that is better and fairer in the end". The verbs, nouns and adjectives forming the key concepts in the verse quoted above are about commitment and accountability and direct a profoundly honourable world order covering all aspects of social or business commerce, dealing, transaction, appraisal or adjudication that we are commanded to execute with integrity, equanimity, consideration and justice. The verse further states that such conduct will be proper and beneficial in the end, the end being either a worldly purpose or a

¹ The *Shari'ah* is primarily based on the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*. The Islamic way of life; Islamic intellectual tradition; *Aqidah* or faith; *Akhlaq* or morality & ethics; *Fiqh* or the knowledge of the legal rulings all are part of the *Shariah*.

spiritual determination. In a similar verse *The Qur'an* [26:181-3] underscores the need for fair distribution of wealth, ownership right of others and warns against what is unlawful: "Give full measure: do not sell others short. Weigh with correct scales: do not deprive people of what is theirs. Do not spread corruption on earth."

After the Qur'an, the important source of knowledge is the life (*Sunnah*) and utterances (*Hadith*) of our Noble Prophet, the most important role model for believing Muslims. An important Hadith is to make prompt payment for services rendered before the sweat of the worker dries. The instruction read literally may reflect the conditions of desert heat of Arabia where the Prophet lived, and where the same environment exists in other sultry climates. Read figuratively, the instruction of the Hadith reminds us of the obligation of an employer to safeguard the right of an employee, and warns against employer negligence. The payment however can be in the form of a regular salary or a contractual fee where both parties have agreed to the terms of payment. The *Sunnah* and *Hadith* for practical trading include standardization of weights and measures; even-handedness; contracted transaction; the seller steering clear of cheating, making false claims or pulling the wool over consumers' eyes; polite communication and considerate behaviour during decision-making and trading.

Islam's approach to corporate social responsibility is holistic and integral because we must meaningfully engage with our fellowmen and our surroundings. The purpose is to follow a unifying principle for social harmony and to strengthen the foundation of the community. Here *akhlaq* or in other words morality and ethics play a vital role. To give an example, while I have the rights to have wealth, I have to make sure that I do not infringe on the rights of society to acquire and enjoy it. Therefore, Islam prohibits a Muslim from being a 'self-centred utility-maximizing economic agent'². Islamic corporate social responsibility directs at upholding dignity of all concerned, showing solidarity with the rest of the human race and demonstrating respect for the freedom and equality of others. Therefore individual freedom must be regulated by social constraints that would act as a check and balance from arbitrary human activities. Stewardship or trusteeship means, we have to consolidate collaboration and partnership, trust, equity and social justice among all social players - values that are vital components in any commerce or transaction.

Corporate governance concerns itself with the three essential principles of transparency, accountability, and adequate disclosure required for a business to fulfil its responsibilities to shareholders and other stakeholders. While as a term 'corporate governance' is an early twentieth century concept, what it features is not alien to Islam. The characteristic of an Islamic business ethics is that every business operation and transaction must be principled and morally sound. It prohibits all forms of exploitation in business

dealings and urges the practice of fair play, honesty, accountability, transparency, adequate disclosure and impartiality between all parties whether majority or minority shareholders, very similar to the principles of secular corporate governance. *The Qur'an* urges us to be accountable and fulfil our contracts: "You who believe, fulfil your obligations." [5:1] and "You who believe, do not wrongfully consume each other's wealth but trade by mutual consent." [4:29]

Decision-making is an important principle of corporate governance. *The Qur'an* commands consultation with stakeholders prior to decision-making in order to seek consensus and to invoke God's blessing by putting our trust in Him: "... Consult with them about matters, then, when you have decided on a course of action, put your trust in God ..." [3:159] and "... conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; give to others out of what We have provided for them " [42:38]

The Qur'an commands disclosure and transparency as good practice by recording and reporting stages of the transaction: "... Have witnesses present whenever you trade with one another, and let no harm be done to either scribe or witness, for if you did cause them harm, it would be a crime on your part ..." [2:282]; "If you are on a journey, and cannot find a scribe, something should be handed over as security ... Do not conceal evidence ..." [2:283] and *Do not give short measure nor short weight. . . in fairness, give full measure and weight. Do not withhold from people things that are rightly theirs . . .*" [11:84-5]

Islamic economic principles are equally applicable all over the world. *Zakah* and the prohibition of *Riba* are dominant factors that shape the nature of Islamic corporate governance. *Zakah*, one of the five pillars of Islam is an annual compulsory payment on savings of two and a half percent owed to the less fortunate and a calculation based on our surplus cash, gold and silver. In Bangladesh regular *Zakah* contribution collectively, can go a long way towards rehabilitating victims of the garments factory disaster. *Riba* or usury is a sin because it is an unjust business gain based on exploitation. In Islam, it is the responsibility of the state not only to curb unlawful behaviour such as dishonesty, fraudulence and unfair play by ensuring the execution of contracts and protecting property rights but also to facilitate desired economic behaviour by putting in place necessary economic as well as educational, socio-political and legal reforms for proper institutions to be relevant.

The concept of *ihsan* that I have mentioned earlier originates from *taqwa* or God-consciousness, and is fundamental to protecting the social fabric by committing oneself to fulfil the entrusted roles [of stewardship] that make up our life. The totality of a Muslim's life must be subservient to the prescribed faith of Islam to meet with the standards of wholesomeness, purity, social justice and shared responsibility. We must regulate our economic behaviour by an awareness that we will return to God.

Islam's approach to corporate social responsibility is holistic and integral because we must meaningfully engage with our fellowmen and our surroundings.

2 Chapra, 1992

SOCIAL *and* ENVIRONMENTAL *Stewardship*

The guidance to Sikhs on wealth creation, use of wealth, and its distribution is implicit in the faith's teachings. More specifically, direction comes from two sources which offer the moral context as well as some practical guidance for our daily conduct:

1. the notion of '*dharamsal*' which is fundamental to the pursuit of social justice and social responsibility and;
2. the '*Rehat Maryada*', the Sikh code of discipline which guides the Sikh way of life from both the individual perspective and the responsibilities a Sikh has as a member of the Sikh community ('*saadh sangat*' or the '*Panth*').

The term *dharamsal* is composed of two words:

- '*dharam*' denotes religious, ethical and social obligations, upholding the law and duty to the community;
- '*sal*' means a place of abode.

According to Sikh beliefs, the world is a *dharamsal* established by God/Waheguru and humans are part of that system. This automatically establishes the interdependency between mankind and all life on the planet.

At the same time, the *Rehat Maryada* demands that Sikhs must earn their living through:

- hard work through honest means ('*kirat karna*'),
- share what is created with others ('*wand ke chhako*').

Kirat karna and *wand ke chhako* are two of the three main pillars of the Sikh faith and a full explanation of both will provide an insight into daily life:

Kirat Karna

- For a Sikh, doing good is an implicit and desirable outcome of wealth creation. The pursuit of excessive profits is not the aim, nor is making money for the sake of it. As such, investing in stocks and shares may not appeal to many Sikhs.
- In early Sikh history, the Gurus encouraged the creation of wealth by establishing new townships in the Punjab.

They invited traders, artisans, craftsmen and shopkeepers to these new towns, and as a result of this strategy, a number of these towns emerged as flourishing trade centres. However, although the Sikh Gurus encouraged the creation of wealth, they categorically rejected unethical or immoral means of accumulating it.

- Gambling is forbidden by the *Rehat* as it is seen to contravene the principle of *kirat karna*. Consequently, many Sikhs might interpret 'playing the stock market' for short term gains as a form of gambling. Given the principle of responsible investing, however, Sikh investors might be more open to long term/sustainable outcomes from their investments.

Wand Ke Chhako

- When it comes to sharing one's wealth, Sikhs believe in the concept of *Daswandh* tithe, or the sharing of 10% of one's income for charitable or religious purposes.
- Philanthropy and charitable donations are an integral part of the Sikh tradition. It is the way in which Sikhs ensure the upkeep of their places of worship (*gurdwara*), supporting the religious and cultural activities provided by the *gurdwaras* and ensuring a daily *langar* (the community kitchen).
- *Gurdwaras* are built by way of voluntary donations as the centres of religious and cultural activities, actively nurturing ethical values amongst young Sikh children and promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding. There are over 200 *Gurdwaras* in the UK which have been built through such voluntary donations. Charitable giving also supports educational and health care projects within and outside of Sikh communities.

a Sikh is not regarded as a passive spectator but an active participant in bringing about social reform

- Although there is emphasis on *daswandh*, Sikhs are encouraged to combine financial contribution with volunteering their time, talent and energy. This is the concept of *sewa* – unconditional, selfless service without expectations of reward or approbation to the community (*sadh sangat*). Practical expressions of this could be supporting activities in the gurdwara such as helping prepare or serve the *langar*, and volunteering time or expertise in community projects.
- The rationale for combining *sewa* and *daswandh* is simple. It reinforces the faith's emphasis on social awareness and the societal outcomes of an individual's active participation in the community. It reminds Sikhs that their faith was founded in the 16th Century during a period of grave social injustice in India due to the caste system and gender inequality, and in a time of political tyranny and religious persecution under the Mughal empire. The message is that Sikhs, led by their Gurus and at terrible cost to themselves, were fighting for social justice, equality and religious tolerance; and that legacy has to be cherished, sustained and passed on.
- The *langar*, which is open to everyone irrespective of faith, colour or creed, represents the concept of brotherhood, equality and humility, and a humanitarian, compassionate attitude to one's actions in life. *Sewa* is a way of ensuring equality and social reform and inclusive access to education, health or commerce for all members of the community.

The concept of stewardship for Sikhs is defined by the *dharamsal*, with its emphasis on both social and environmental responsibility. These in turn guide how Sikhs create, use and distribute their wealth now and for the future sustainability of society and the world.

As the world, according to Sikh teaching, is perceived as the abode of God and a sacred place in which to practice *dharam* for the welfare of humanity, a Sikh is not regarded as a passive spectator but an active participant in bringing about social reform, being ready to protect and stand up for the rights of the weak, to fight for justice, human dignity, human rights and fairness for all.

In this context, stewardship entails using one's time, talents, material possessions and wealth for societal sustainability and the transmission of Sikh values and beliefs to the next generation. The communal Sikh prayer or *Ardas* ends with the following words:

With God's blessings, may there be peace and prosperity for the whole of humanity

The *Ardas* therefore acts as a continuous reminder of social stewardship.

There is also a strong expectation of environmental stewardship in the Sikh holy scriptures, articulated especially well by Guru Nanak Dev. He is probably one of the earliest recorded environmentalists to lay the foundation for a sacred vision for the environment. For instance, the following statements of Guru Nanak are taken as a clear indication of the supremacy of Nature:

- “All Waters all winds, all the fires and underworlds. All spheres, all divisions of Earth, and all worlds, men and forms.... How great is the Lord's command over them”
- “Air is the Guru, Water the Father, and the Earth is the Great Mother”.

Sikhs are thus encouraged to have an intrinsic sensitivity to the natural world, and a belief that the fate of the planet and humanity are intertwined; destruction of one will lead to the destruction of the other.

Given the above notions of social and environmental stewardship, the Sikh faith supports the kind of financial management that would help individuals to contribute to social equality, justice and empowerment and responsible planning and management of natural resources and preservation of biodiversity for future generations.

The principle of '*dharma*' contains precepts relevant to good business, humanitarian and environmental conduct, but also the implicit requirement of mindfulness about the sources of wealth — and therefore responsible investing.

Faith-based investment would have a natural appeal for Sikhs. In reality, the demand for faith-based investment is still untapped. The idea of investment in financial markets, let alone faith-based investment, is relatively new to Sikhs around the world. When growth comes, it will be organic, pushed by individuals – investors and thought leaders alike – and from entrepreneurs offering faith-based investment services. That may take the debate on how modern Sikhs applies its values and doctrines to a wider forum.

Currently, there are no specific Sikh values-based investment institutions.

In January 2008, the Dow Jones announced that it would be launching its 'Dharma indices'. Created in partnership with a private faith-based Indian firm, the aim of the indices was to track the stocks of over 3,400 companies globally that observed the values of dharmic religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Similar Dharma indices were also created for the U.S., Britain, Japan and India.

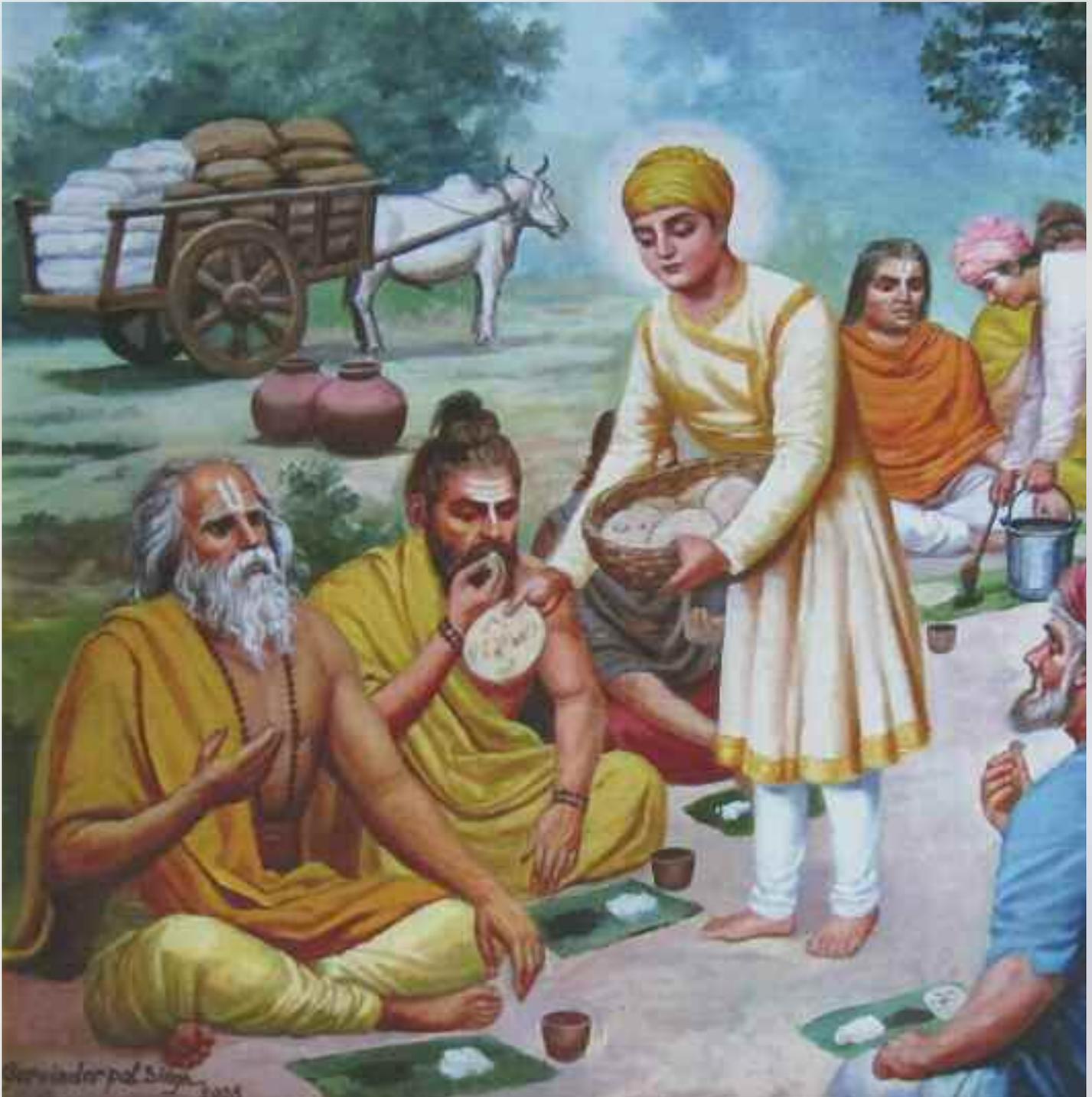
The Dharma indices rewarded companies that worked to improve the welfare of the world, whether in terms of environmental preservation, sustainability, or acting for the

good of society. The indices excluded companies that had negative impacts in any of these areas. Companies were screened for factors such as corporate governance, financial management, labour relations and human rights, resource management, environmental policies, and corporate social responsibility.

Companies from business sectors which were not deemed dharmic, such as defence, tobacco, pharmaceuticals (if they use

animal testing or promote genetic modification, for example), food production (where it involves animal slaughter or meat processing), casinos and alcohol, were excluded from the indices.

Sadly, the Dharmic indices were abandoned in late 2008 due to the economic crash, and no product was ever launched which followed those indices. However, it is hoped that similar indices will be launched in the future, thus enabling Sikhs to invest in stocks that are in sync with their religious beliefs.



Sacha Sodha (painted depiction)

The first Dikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469-1539) served Langar selflessly (in 1482) to hungry multifaith ascetics/Sadhus with utter kindness, love, compassion, benevolence and humanity.

Image courtesy of Bhai Sahib, Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ)

A Sacred duty: *Management as Vocation*

A few years ago I was asked to take part in a Church of England Symposium on work – a subject I know quite a lot about because I work at a Business School. Every year, thousands of managers come to Ashridge to learn how to do their jobs better. I've worked there for ten years, so I've had the opportunity to talk to quite a lot of them. What was interesting about the Symposium was that it revealed how

remote the churches seem to be from the reality of everyday working lives. At Ashridge I coach as well as teach, and you may be surprised to learn how frequently people cry when they talk about their work. It seems that too many people experience their work as meaningless or dehumanising, or they have difficult relationships there. This not only affects their mental health, but impacts their families and communities, and decreases the sum total of human happiness. So work ought to be a much more common topic for the church's attention than it seems to have been thus far.

Specifically, I want to talk about management. Most workers these days seem to be managers; even if they don't have direct line management responsibility, they are supervising others, or working in teams where the example they set influences others. But I think 'management' has had a long history of bad press. Indeed, the Trade Unions were set up precisely because 'the Management' could not be trusted to treat the workers well. And these days 'Management' seems to be so obsessed with metrics and keeping the stock price high that they have no time for the person toiling to deliver results for them. I want to rescue the idea of management as vocation, and to talk about how people of faith could thereby blaze a trail, improving workplaces and, through them, human flourishing.

First, some important points about the idea of 'vocation'. In the Happiness literature, the research suggests that one crucial driver of happiness is if employees experience their work as meaningful. In the modern period this has been championed by the workplace spirituality movement, who often translate 'spirituality' as 'meaning-making' in a work context. In the religions, the idea of meaningful work has traditionally been covered by the notion of vocation.

In the Christian tradition, work for a long time had an ambiguous pedigree. Adam and Eve were condemned to work for their disobedience, and the rewards of heaven offered 'rest from labour'. In ancient Greece and Rome the *civitas* were generally leisured, employing servants to work for them so they would be free to govern. This heritage was exemplified in the monastic tradition, where Christian thought inherited and



developed the Greek notion of the supremacy of the *vita contemplativa* over the *vita activa*.

Martin Luther's key contribution to workplace theology was to establish an understanding of vocation that hallowed the mundane. He said that if someone is a cobbler, they are a Christ to their neighbour if they mend their shoes well. Luther developed this into an idea of vocation that rested on humanity's status as co-creators with God. Through work humans contribute to the maintenance of society, enabling food, warmth and social order to be provided. This heritage, developed by the theologian John Calvin, is reflected in Max Weber's famous treatment of the Protestant Work Ethic, which has been freshly linked with the success of capitalism in the modern period using data from the World Values Surveys.

For an employee, a sense of vocation gives them a measure of control over their work. For those with choice, control may be directly manifest through job or role change. For the poor and those in alienating work environments, where choice feels far away, vocation helps to lend dignity to the mundane, and may help

those in uncomfortable roles to make sense of their occupation. While there may be people who do not feel able to leave a workplace on a matter of principle, or feel that the best way to change an organisation is from within, a clear understanding of the good end the work serves in their lives may help them to soldier on, by giving them a sense of what the poet David Whyte calls 'captaincy'. This means that the idea of vocation restores as

these days 'Management' seems to be so obsessed with metrics and keeping the stock price high that they have no time for the person toiling to deliver results for them.

central the idea of motivation and free will. Everyone can choose to be 'vocational' or not, in an environment where often choice feels constrained. Vocation helps us to rediscover that as humans we have a unique ability to make meaning, and perhaps as humans this gives us a unique responsibility to make meaning too.

So why does 'Management' tend to be so unpopular, and what are the pitfalls associated with it? There are good reasons for the cynicism associated with an 'us and them' view of the workplace. Some of these are bitter lessons from history, some are more modern. One of the most embedded is the idea of Agency Theory. Agency Theory, or the 'principal-agent' problem, is the idea from Economics that if a principal hires an agent they will struggle to align the agent's objectives with their own. The theory achieved prominence in the US in the 1970s, as economists struggled to advise manufacturing companies about



Luther said that if someone is a cobbler, they are a Christ to their neighbour if they mend their shoes well.

how to maintain their competitiveness in an increasingly global marketplace. Agency Theory assumes 'drag' from management, and so recommends strenuous efforts to force them to align themselves with the interests of the shareholders. While this ought to suggest that management and employees are united against the owners of the business, in practice management has been forcibly aligned with the owners of the business through performance management regimes, most commonly epitomised by executive stock options to ensure that the share price is as close to the manager's heart as it is to the organisation's shareholders. This has tended to produce chronic short-termism, a plethora of metrics and targets, and behaviour that makes it clear to the rank and file that if they do not deliver against their objectives no quarter will be given.

But this theory, enshrined in the assumptions of psychology, rests on an anthropology that is sub-religious. Indebted to Freud, it emphasises what Christians would call the doctrine of original sin to the exclusion of the doctrine of redemption, narrowing free will down to negligible levels and elevating our animal natures. While the discipline of psychology has since moved on to recognise that humans are not all pathological, vestiges of it remain preserved in aspic in this kind of thinking. And if you treat people like widgets, the temptation is always for them to live down to your low expectations.

Of course, employees have generally signed a work contract, so they are on one level agreeing to be used as instruments of management. So managers have a particular responsibility not to abuse the powerful position they have by making this natural instrumentalisation de-humanising. A famous study lends this some poignancy, being launched under the strapline 'people leave managers not companies'. In 1999, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman published their write-up of two large Gallup surveys undertaken over a 25-year period, involving over 1 million employees and 80,000 managers from a broad range of companies, industries and countries. Their study identified 12 questions that measured the strength of a workplace, which were tested on a sample of over 105,000 employees from 2,500 business units across 24 companies, to find out whether in practice a strong workplace would equate to a more profitable workplace. The 12 questions, when answered positively, correlated with higher levels of productivity, profit, retention, and customer satisfaction.

This study, and the idea of vocation, serves to remind managers of their sacred duty towards those in their care.

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8. Does the purpose of your organisation make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your colleagues committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

As you can see, most of the 12 questions boil down to whether or not a manager shows interest you, and gives you support and feedback. It also means that the single most important influence on an organisation's performance is the manager. The hard message from this research is that if your team are not performing, it is probably largely your fault.

This study, and the idea of vocation, serves to remind managers of their sacred duty towards those in their care. It recalls the opportunity their role presents for the exercise of love and nurture, towards their staff, colleagues, business partners, customers and stakeholders. Perhaps it would be better to call this 'stewardship' and not management, given the negative connotations this term has come to attract. Either way, being a manager presents a religious person with the ideal opportunity to help all of those entrusted to their care to reach their God-given potential. What vocation could be more worthy than this?

Challenging *The Economic Order*



The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) is twenty-five years old this year. It was brought into being by a group of church leaders, industrial chaplains, and Christian activists at a time when few people were asking where their own money, such as their pension pot, or the money they put in the Sunday collection, was being invested. There were some no-go areas, such as tobacco and alcohol, but few people knew what their money was doing, positively or negatively. Indeed the then Bishop of Oxford (now one of ECCR's Patrons) had to take the investing body of his own church, the Church Commissioners, to court to see how far institutional investors could or should be guided by the moral commitments of their own organisation.



Much has changed over these past 25 years, and largely for the good. Far more investors and Investment Managers, at least on the surface, take ethical criteria much more seriously in deciding where to invest and how to evaluate the activities of companies. ECCR now describes itself as a “church-based investor coalition, registered charity and membership organisation, leading and collaborating with others in advocacy and awareness-raising on issues of business, human rights and environmental stewardship”. Many other campaigning and educational bodies have emerged, within and beyond the churches. But the financial and business world has also become far more difficult to understand and influence. When financial processes like making loans and moving money were personal decisions, one could see whether the professional standards of, say, a local bank manager were being carried through the system. The coming of globalisation and new technologies has made such things far more hidden and complex.

The great danger is that people of faith will be tempted to concentrate on “easier” issues, and even withdraw into a spiritual world. But if ethics is not to be reduced to individual

behaviour and charitable activity, we need to be much clearer about how what we believe should affect the way we see, and seek to change, corporate economic activity. For our world is shaped as never before by the use, and abuse, of money.

This article addresses these issues from the particular perspective of the Christian faith. There is not space to explore so large a ground in any depth, but here are four fundamentals drawn from the Biblical narrative and illustrated by recent church reports, providing at least some signposts to begin the exploration.

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of money.

Abundance and Limitation

The first comes from Genesis, which is of course not about how humankind started but about who we really are – men and women made in the image of God, offered the great

abundance of the earth, but failing to understand what it is all for. It means that work, industry, investment, growth are to be encouraged, but only where they engage with God's purpose of human relatedness, caring for creation, and our ultimate dependence on the One who has given it to us.

We are, in Walter Brueggemann's phrase, limited by the requirement of goodness. A resource from the Anglican

Communion's Environmental Network, "*Sabbath Reflections: Capitalism and Inequity versus a Gospel Mandate*" ⁽¹⁾ spells this out.

Power and Self-Interest

Second, there are the Old Testament Prophets, their condemnation of the abuse of power (such as Nathan confronting King David) and their rejection of self-interest as the over-riding motive of human activity. Everything that Amos condemns in the "rich cows" of his time can be addressed to those who caused our current economic crisis, including irresponsible growth, encouraging debt, private greed, manipulating the law and ignoring the poor. So short-term shareholder value, and its knock-on effect on individual remuneration, took over from any larger purpose of the common good, any recognition of other stake-holders, and any concern for the environment. Now, when many assume that the only way out is to make the same mistakes again, both good theology and good economics would suggest otherwise.

Pope Benedict, in his 2009 encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* ⁽²⁾ rejects free market fundamentalism, calling for economic actors to be informed by ethics as well as the profit motive. Everyone, including business managers and investors, should base their decision partly on an awareness of how their actions will affect progress towards global solidarity.

Wealth and Poverty

Then we come to Jesus himself. He not only reinforces the Old Testament call for social justice, he radicalises it. Instead of being the victims of society, or at best the recipients of its charity, the poor must now take centre stage. A recent report from the Church of Scotland ⁽³⁾ focusses on the Gospel as good news for the poor.

But more, when Jesus tells the rich young man "go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor", he is inviting him to look at the world in a totally new way, and to become involved in it, not according to what is required by law or determined by current economic systems, but with a whole new set of priorities which comes from the love of God for each and every person, and especially for the powerless and poor. God sees us, not according to the externals of obedience and reward, success or failure, but within a love which enters, embraces, uplifts and transforms. And when we know ourselves loved in this way, everything else, including our politics and economics,

need to be redrawn in that perspective. Such transformation, rather than accommodation, needs to find expression not only in our personal ethics but in the way we see the purpose and the practices of our corporate activity.

Disaster and Hope

Finally, and particularly in the last book of the Bible, there are those apocalyptic passages which we usually try to avoid about the End of all things. But every crisis, including our current economic and environmental ones, is a time of both tragedy and potential. Scripture leaves us in no doubt that humanity is capable of destroying itself and the created order with which it has been entrusted. But we are also given the hope that all of this can be redeemed, and that Christ will be "all in all".

In the end it is God who saves. In the meantime we can choose either "business as usual" or those actions which show where the system has failed and what can be done to make it more fit for (God's) purpose. James Featherby, Chair of the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group, spelt this out in a recent lecture ⁽⁴⁾.

In practice this means challenging corporate activity which lives by shortterm benefit and speculative gain, which increases the divide between rich and poor (within and between nations), which further victimises those without power, and which puts the created order at even greater risk. More positively, it means supporting and encouraging companies and investors who appreciate long-term value, the diversity of stake-holders, the vulnerability of the planet, and an understanding of society which is relational and holistic. And the fact is that such things are not only good ethics, and good theology, but in finding sustainable financial security and growth, good economics too!

**we can choose either
"business as usual" or
those actions which show
where the system has
failed and what can be
done to make it more fit
for (God's) purpose.**

(1) <http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents.cfm>

(2) http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_benxvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

(3) http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/9765/Economics_Commission_email_and_web_version.pdf

(4) <http://www.justshare.org.uk/#/event-reports-38/4569695370>

Michael Doe was Bishop of Swindon from 1994 to 2004.

He is now Preacher to Gray's Inn and the Chair of Trustees at ECCR. More about this organisation can be found at <http://www.eccr.org.uk>

Luck.

In the head.
Is the bit.
That is made up.
It may have been.
In the heart.
Or the stomach.
The truth is I.
Do not have.
A clue.
Why.
The trees just went.
Missing.

Does it really.
Matter in the end.
Except that the missing.
Trees mean.
More.
These days.
Than Luck.
It is still now.
Even as the border.
Moves around.
Inside a broken sentence.
That marches.
Slowly towards.

Reconciliation and truth.



Detail of the Eternal Glory memorial complex in Lutsk.

This poem is dedicated to the memory of my missing grandfather Israel Olshetsky from the town of Lutsk. Only one, amongst the many millions of victims who perished during the time of the holocaust.

Luck is a city on the border of Poland and Ukraine. In Yiddish it is Lotsyk. In English it is Lutsk. In Polish it is Luck. The name may be derived from the old slavic word Luka which means an arc or a bend (of a river).

Monica Goldberg is a Sydney based surrealist poet and writer. She has been published in numerous journals and anthologies both in Australia and overseas.

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desert children

By the author of the international bestselling Desert Flower

Published by Virago Press 2011, 2005 ISBN 1-84408-252-0

by **Waris Dirie**

Chapter 1 – my third life

I wake up bathed in sweat. It is very early still, not yet six o'clock. The night was short and troubled. I kept starting up out of heavy dark dreams. I close my eyes again but keep seeing the terrible images: a cheap hotel room, cramped and with yellowing wallpaper. There's a girl lying on the bed, maybe ten years old. She can't be more than twelve. She is naked. Four women are standing round the bed holding her down. The child's legs are spread open and an old woman sits in front of her with a scalpel in her hand. The sheet is soaked in blood. The girl lets out piercing screams. She keeps screaming. Her screams go right through my heart.

It was the screaming that kept waking me. It seems to be echoing round my own room. I stumble out of bed and get a glass of water. I look out of the window. It is starting to grow light. I am in Vienna and there is nobody screaming. It was only a dream, I tell myself.

It was only last night I got back from a weekend trip to Cardiff. Before I moved to Vienna I had spent a couple of years in the Welsh capital. I had really only wanted to catch up with some friends there and relax a bit and I had been looking forward to it, but that's not how it turned out. I was flying back that evening and friends had invited me over for lunch. We all knew each other from way back and there was a lot of talk and laughter: there was so much to say. But there was one young man – his name was Mariame – who was really quiet; he never said a word the whole time. He just kept looking over towards me, watching me intently during the meal. I had no idea why. When it was time for me to leave and I had said my goodbyes he walked me to the door, so I took the opportunity to ask what the matter was.

'Waris,' he told me. 'I really admire your strength. I never used to know that circumcision involved such agony for girls. I would like to help tell people about it. Most people just have no idea at all. The procedure just gets carried out because that's the way

it's always been done. No one thinks about the consequences.'

I smiled. More and more men are coming over to the view that genital mutilation for girls is wrong. It gives me fresh hope. If only the whole thing were abolished and totally consigned to the past.



Suddenly Mariame turned very serious. 'But I wanted to tell you something else. A few days ago I heard this really awful story.' He went on to tell me about an African family in Cardiff that wanted to get their ten-year-old daughter circumcised. They took a hotel room and arranged for an old Libyan woman to be paid £200 for carrying out the cruel procedure there. But the knife slipped and the girl lost so much blood that she had to be taken to a doctor. 'And that's how I got to hear about it,' said Mariame. She nearly bled to death.

'And didn't anyone tell the police?' I asked.

'I don't know,' he said.

'What's the family called? Where do they live? Is the girl alright now?' I kept on at him with my questions, but Mariame didn't know any of the details. 'That's why I feel so bad about it,' he said. 'I know that it happened but there's nothing I can do about it.'

It wasn't the first time I had heard about a genital mutilation case in Europe. The books I had written had made me a kind of symbolic figure in the campaign to abolish the practice of female circumcision, so people kept telling me about this ghastly ritual being carried out in Arab and African families. But whenever I tried to find out enough facts to be able to take the matter to the police, people would become evasive. It is well known in all the African communities that the practice won't stop at country borders, so there must be women and girls in Europe who are affected by it. Nobody would let on any more than that. There was only the one doctor or the one hospital here in Cardiff that was involved so I would be sure to be able to find something out.

I only had a short time left before my flight and I spent it talking to as many people as I could, phoning round all the Cardiff contacts I could think of. Had anyone heard anything? Did anyone have any idea who the girl was? Nobody knew anything and, what is more, nobody was prepared even to talk about this kind of thing. I tried hospitals and the police and Social Services. Nothing. Time up. My flight back to Vienna was boarding. I left Cardiff behind, but inside I took with me the image of the girl in the hotel room. Deep inside – it invaded my dreams.

I can't get back to sleep; a waste of time trying. I find my trainers and put on my tracksuit to go for a run. Running is the best medicine for me, especially when I am really upset about something. Going for a jog will help to calm me down and it will clear my mind and let me think.

It's cold outside. Running along beside the river, I pass the first schoolchildren on their way. Gradually, my head clears. So good to be back in Austria, I think, relieved. The girls are safe here, no one will do that to them.

But how can I be so sure? What if the cases of genital mutilation that I've heard about here in Europe are not just exceptions? What if it is happening everywhere? Even here in Vienna? And I am back in my nightmare, hearing a girl screaming, somewhere in the middle of an industrial city in Europe.

I remember the interviews I gave when my books came out, the conferences I attended in my capacity as a special ambassador to the UN. It was always Africa we talked about and I always got asked about Somalia. Had I ever met an expert who knew about what was happening in Europe? No, that's not something I would have forgotten. I can't think of any research done on the subject or any statistics about genital mutilation in Europe. Are there more victims? I sit down on the nearest park-bench. Waris, I tell myself, you've got to do something. You have to get the answers . . .

At that stage I was still hoping that my fears would prove groundless. Today I know that I was right in my assumptions about it happening all over. The decision to make this commitment to the campaign was to change my life. The time of *Desert Flower* and of *Desert Dawn* was over. That was the morning my third life began.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

So says the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Resolution signed on 10 December 1948.

A week later I am sitting in a café on the Ringstrasse in Vienna. Red and white trams rattle past the window. The buildings over the road are old and quite grand. Around me people are sitting at tables reading newspapers. Some stay for hours, only ordering one cup of coffee, but nobody minds. Typical of Vienna: it is really easygoing here, and I love the atmosphere. I have been here a year now and I really like it. I am often asked, why Vienna? And I always say the same thing: Vienna is a beautiful city. I have made a lot of new friends here. Yes, and I feel I am at home, I have finally arrived.

There's been a lot of travelling in the last few years. As a UN special ambassador I was giving lectures all over the world and I was making a lot of charity function appearances, but I always felt I wasn't doing enough. I decided to take a lead: here in Vienna I started up the Waris Dirie Foundation. We have a small team collecting donations for projects in my native Somalia campaigning for an end to the practice of genital mutilation.

At the present time Somalia is a long way away for me. I am waiting for Corinna. She is a political science writer and a journalist. We have often worked together. Mostly she will do research for me, collecting data about women in Africa and the projects on the go over there highlighting the need to stop female genital mutilation. A few days ago I asked her to drop everything else and get me as much information as she possibly could about the situation for women in Europe. She arrives a bit late but I'm easy with that, having a very relaxed attitude to timekeeping and appointments myself. I'm really keen to see what she has managed to get for me.

Corinna sits down, plonking a huge green box file on the table. She's breathless: 'There's everything I've found out in there.' She orders a coffee and starts to open up the file. It has

hundreds and hundreds of pages. Taking one of the pages in her hand she leans over towards me and whispers, 'You're right. Everyone likes to think that female genital mutilation is on the wane, but that's not what's happening at all. It's being practised in more and more countries in Asia – and Europe as well – but there's hardly any information about it.'

So it's true. In Arab countries, in the Yemen, in Pakistan, I had learned of thousands of girls having their genitals removed. More and more cases were coming to light in Indonesia and Malaysia. And now in Europe as well. I had only known a fraction of what was going on there and assumed it was of marginal significance. That was what I had thought until now.

Corinna closes the file up and pushes it over to me. 'It's best if you look through my notes yourself. You'll see straightaway how big the problem already is here in Europe.'

I open the file and look at the first page, skim the text with the masses of margin notes Corinna has scribbled. Something catches my eye. There is a list of the names of women who have suffered the greatest injustice that can be inflicted on our sex: FGM, female genital mutilation, or MSF, *mutilations sexuelles feminines*, female circumcision, the Arabic word 'khafd'. *Be careful!* says Corinna's pencilled note. *Many of the victims object to the use of the term 'circumcision' because it seems to play down the extent of the damage done.*

'That's right,' I tell Corinna. 'Circumcision sounds like male circumcision but it's nothing like it at all. Although I honestly don't mind what term people use, I just want it to stop. FGM is pure violence against women, a breach of human rights. The United Nations has said so.' Corinna nods and leafs through her pile of papers, pulling out a copy of the UN Declaration of 1993. United Nations and World Health Organisation estimates put the figures for female circumcision victims at a hundred and fifty million. A hundred and fifty million women and girls! In all probability the actual numbers will be far higher. Many countries are considered blind spots where it is impossible to get any data, and nobody knows how many victims are involved in those places. A hundred and fifty million women and girls – that is more people than there are in the whole of Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark put together. Victims include week-old babies, girls at puberty and grown women of thirty.

Every time I talk about female genital mutilation I think of what happened to me. I am five years old again and I am sitting on a rock back at home in Somalia. It is early in the morning. I am afraid. I'm sitting sort of in my mother's lap – her legs are encircling me – and she puts a bit of broken-off root in my mouth to stop me biting off my tongue with the pain. 'Waris,' she says, 'you know I won't be able to hold you still. I'm on my

own here with you. So be good, my little one. Be brave, for my sake, then it'll soon be over.'

I can see again the harsh, ugly face of the old woman and the fierce looks she gives me with her dead-seeming eyes. I can see the old carpet bag, see her taking out the rusty razor blade in her long fingers, can see the dried blood on the blade. My mother blindfolds me. Then I feel my own flesh being cut, my genitals being sliced away. I have never been able to describe what this felt like. There are no words which can give the measure of the pain. I can hear the sound of the blunt blade hacking away again and again at my skin. I remember how my legs were shaking, I remember all the blood and I remember trying so hard to sit still. I hear myself calling out prayers to heaven. Finally, I fall into a faint. When I come round my first thought is that it's over now, at least. The blindfold has slipped off. I can see her clearly, the old butcher-woman, and I can see the pile of acacia thorns at her side. When she starts to push them through my flesh the pain is excruciating. She threads white cotton through the puncture holes she has made, sewing me up. My legs go dead. The pain is driving me mad. I have only one thought in my mind: I want to die.

I see my mother's face now as if it were yesterday. She is utterly convinced that she is doing the right thing for me. The only thing that is right. I don't know how many times I have told this story now. Each time it seems like it happened to somebody else, some other little girl. As if that little Waris was someone else.

'Can I get you anything else to drink?' asks the waiter; he is friendly and polite, and dressed in the usual formal black and white. I am quite startled and look at him blankly, then quickly order an orange juice. I wonder if he has any idea what vale of shadows I have just been walking through . . . Corinna is deep in her pile of papers. Or she is pretending to be. At any rate, she is sensitive enough to know not to ask me what the trouble is. A little girl at the next table looks at me and catches my eye, laughing.

I quickly take out another research paper. It is about the medical effects of circumcision. I won't have to read it, I know all about them already: pain on menstruating, the dangers of infection, the fear of anyone touching you. An old saying from Somalia comes back to me: 'Love hurts three times – when they cut you, when you are married and when you give birth.' Women who have been mutilated and infibulated are cut open a little way after the marriage ceremony and when the baby is due. 'Perhaps the worst thing for us women, though, is the one that isn't here at all,' I tell Corinna. 'It's the terrible, unwritten law that demands your silence. You must never tell anyone about the pain.'

Editorial Note: Having read the book *Desert Children* by Waris Dirie (an extract from which is featured on pages 45-47 of this magazine) I became aware that Female Genital Mutilation is quite extensive in Europe and the UK. I was interested subsequently to learn that a Fact Sheet has been produced in Scotland for teachers on the practice of FGM, to raise awareness of the subject and the legal issues and implications connected to it. We have kindly been given permission to publish this Fact Sheet in the magazine so that it can reach and inform a wider readership.

Lorna Douglas

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Fact Sheet For Teachers

Published by NHS, Greater Glasgow & Clyde

What is FGM?

- **Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a collective term for procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs.**
- **There are several types of FGM including excision of the prepuce of clitoris, partial or total excision of the clitoris and labia, and the stitching and narrowing of the vaginal orifice (infibulation), leaving only a small opening for urine and menses.**
- **It is also sometimes referred to as female circumcision or cutting.**
- **FGM has no health benefits; it causes only harm.**
- **In Scotland, under the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005 it is illegal to:**
 - **perform FGM in the UK**
 - **assist the carrying out of FGM in the UK**
 - **take a girl abroad to be subject to FGM**

Why is it carried out? Is it a religious practice?

- Female genital mutilation is a deeply rooted, traditional cultural practice.
- Reasons cited for it include: maintaining virginity, protecting family honour, chastity or fidelity, custom, tradition and social acceptance (especially as preparation for marriage), hygiene and aesthetic reasons and the myth that it enhances fertility.
- Some may believe that it is a religious obligation but no religion requires FGM.
- Some practising communities may resent what they perceive as the imposition of liberal western values on them. But the law in Scotland makes it clear that FGM is not a matter that can be left to be decided by personal preference, culture or custom. It is a harmful practice which violates the most basic human rights.

- Internationally, efforts are being made to eradicate the practice completely.
- Usually it is a girl's parents or extended family who are responsible for arranging FGM.
- Despite the severe health consequences, parents and others who arrange FGM may genuinely believe that it is in the child's best interest to conform with their prevailing custom and do not intend it as an act of abuse.

What age is it carried out?

- In half the countries where FGM is prevalent, it is done when girls are younger than 5 years old. In the rest of the countries, it is carried out between 5 – 14 years.
- It is estimated that over 20,000 girls under the age of 15 in the UK are at risk of FGM every year.

Complications

- The different forms of FGM vary, as do its wide-ranging side-effects and consequences.
- Physical effects can include: severe pain, shock, infection, tetanus, septicaemia, haemorrhage, scarring, cysts and abscesses, acute or chronic pelvic inflammation, subfertility, recurrent urinary tract infections, fistulae, childbirth obstruction.
- The range of psychological effects can include chronic depression and anxiety, as well as interference with the development and enjoyment of normal sexual relationships.

Prevalence

- FGM is much more common than most people realise, both worldwide and in the UK. The table opposite shows how prevalent FGM is in some of the countries in which it is practiced. There are also some reports of FGM in Indonesia, Oman, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.
- FGM is increasingly found in immigrant and refugee communities in developed countries. In Scotland, the most prominent community is the Somali community in Glasgow, some of whom have been actively campaigning against FGM. However FGM is not confined to this community; there will be a risk of FGM in any community from the countries in which FGM is practised.

Above 80%	51% - 80%	26% - 50%	10% - 25%	Less than 10%
Djibouti	Ethiopia	Chad	Central African Republic	Iraq
Egypt	Burkina Faso	Cote d'Ivoire	Yemen	Ghana
Guinea	Mauritania	Guinea-Bissau	Tanzania	Togo
Eritrea	Gambia	Kenya	Benin	Niger
Mali	Liberia	Nigeria		Cameroon
Sierra Leone		Senegal		Uganda
Somalia				
Sudan				

- Signs that a girl may be at risk of FGM can be difficult to pinpoint. Knowing that a family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised and is making preparations for the child to take an extended holiday to the country of origin can sometimes raise suspicions. The child may also talk about a special procedure or ceremony that is going to take place.

National Guidance

The National Guidance for Child Protection, which is used by all children's services such as education, includes a section on FGM. If there are concerns that a school pupil may have been subject to, or may be at risk from, FGM, this becomes a child protection matter and the National Guidance provides advice at Part 4, paragraph 469-474:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young People/protecting/child-protection](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young%20People/protecting/child-protection)

(This section will be updated with the next edition, which will be published later in the spring. Schools may wish to highlight the revised guidance in their next round of child protection training in August.)

The Scottish Government funds the Women's Support Project to develop resources for use in training and education, these are available at:

www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/vawtraining/content/femalegenitalmutilation/277,234

Education Scotland will work with partner agencies to develop guidance for staff, which will be available for use at the annual safeguarding update in August for all staff in all schools.

FGM helpline run by the NSPCC – 0800 028 3550 Home Office: FGMEnquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

1. Carrying out female genital mutilation has been specifically illegal since 1985. The legal definition is "to excise, infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of the labia majora, labia minora, prepuce of the clitoris, clitoris or vagina".
2. The Act permits surgical operations that are necessary for physical or mental health and operations carried out in connection with childbirth, if carried out in the UK by a registered medical practitioner or registered midwife or a person training to be one, or outside the UK by their

overseas equivalents. In determining whether an operation is necessary for mental health, the Act states that it is immaterial whether any person believes that the operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual. So an FGM operation could not legally occur on the grounds that a girl's mental health would suffer if she did not conform with the prevailing custom of her community.

3. It is also an offence to aid, abet, counsel, procure or incite female genital mutilation (including self-mutilation), even if the mutilation is carried out overseas. Previously girls may have been taken overseas for FGM to evade the UK law; this Act makes doing so an offence. Anyone involved in any way in arranging female genital mutilation runs the risk of being prosecuted.
4. It is illegal for a UK national or a permanent UK resident who is overseas to carry out or aid female genital mutilation, regardless of where it takes place. It is illegal for permanent UK residents to take their daughters to a doctor's surgery in another country for FGM.
5. The Act increases the maximum penalty for all of these offences to 14 years imprisonment. The severity of the penalty reflects the degree of harm that female genital mutilation causes and the seriousness with which it should be treated.
6. The Act allows a court, having made a conviction, to refer the victim and any child living in the same household as the victim, or person convicted of the offence, to the reporter to the children's panel. The reporter has grounds to refer such children to a children's hearing and also has grounds to refer any other children who are, or become, or are likely to become members of the same household as either the victim or the offender.

The text of the Act is available at:

www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2005/20050008.htm

FGM helpline run by the NSPCC
0800 028 3550
Home Office: FGMEnquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Beauty *with a Purpose*

I was born in Dehli, India but the nature of my father's work in the construction industry meant that we moved a lot about the country, and so I was exposed at quite an early age to diverse cultures. Interestingly, the culture, art form and style, changes every 100 miles or so in India! My mother was a social worker who worked with street children, and other people from extremely deprived backgrounds, helping them develop artistic skills so that they could earn a living and lead a better, more independent, life. When I could I accompanied her on art projects - I loved art and was curious to learn new art forms and techniques.

I saw the difference that my mother's work made to individual lives, just by helping them learn new skills and techniques allied to their own culture, enabling them to make a living and enhancing the life of the whole community. This has had a profound effect on me. To see the delight on the faces of the people, especially the children, when they had created something practical and beautiful that could be sold to better their lives, was a joy. My mother always said: "you should be working to make others smile" this was integral to her Hindu faith and she made many people smile. She said: "good deeds were the best way to reach God" and for her this was achieved through community work.

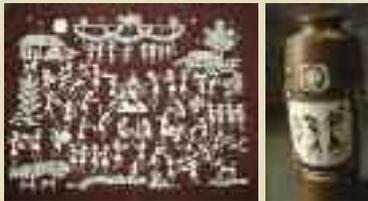
Although by profession I became a maths lecturer, my true love is working in art-based community projects. I've been involved in many projects in India, including a five-year candle making project, and various jewellery projects, all of which were working in poor communities teaching people skills and techniques by which they can make a living. In this sense for me, art is something that has to be beautiful as well as having a practical purpose.



I came to Scotland three and a half years ago and began working, on a voluntary basis, with art projects to enhance the different communities in Glasgow: these include those from different faith and cultural backgrounds, interfaith groups, and working within an educational environment to help autistic children. I try to promote Indian art and culture but although Indian art is my inspiration, I also love to explore and be inspired by other cultures and faiths.

My main focus is on Warli art and ceramic murals. Warli art is a tribal art form found in some of the remoter rural areas of the North Marashtra and the South Punjab regions of India. It was traditionally used to decorate the outside of houses, depicting scenes of celebration, harvesting and daily life. It is not colourful, there was never money for coloured pigments within these communities, but it is striking in its use of white and black, white being made from rice paste and black from charcoal. It has very precise rules and techniques that can easily be learnt.

The pictures depicted are made up of three key shapes - circles, triangles and lines - and it is very organized, relying heavily on the symmetry of the shapes. Any people depicted in the scene must all be the same size. Because of its simplicity and strict form it is accessible to anyone, children and adults alike.



I cannot tell you how wonderful it is to see people smile when they are creating something in the workshops, and projects, that I run. My mother's words: "you should be working to make others smile" are always with me and have become a fundamental part of my faith.

I cannot solve all the financial or life problems people have, but I can share the skills that I have learnt over the years to make a difference, and to make people smile.



Nikki Pardasani

website: <http://www.wix.com/nikscreativestation/workshop>



"you should be working to make others smile"





FAIR EXCHANGES

All the flat winter I saw the sea sway
in the tilt of twigs shedding snow,
counted tall masts in the white trunks
of silver birches, made sails of low clouds
and swapped dreams of lighthouses for pennies

of my husband's thoughts. I wanted cargos
of piquant ideas, flourished out like trades
from a book-plate orient, silk-bright, capsicum
tangy and each one crackling clean as life
before globalisation. In the silence the candles

guttered. I was left with bright electric light
and nostalgia for no time, where careful
customers paid good gold for fine goods,
merchants were meticulously fair and seas
were kind. *I love you*, my husband said.

Rebecca Bilkau

Photographer Michael Bilkau