



ISSUE 41

faith

INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

**“Only through love
and compassion is
the protection of
Nature possible”**

Dissent and Displacement

Faith and the Artist

Rumi

Spirituality and the Poet

Lighting Up the Darkness

Young People of Faith

I took this photograph of my children at 7am on the morning of the 27th March 2020 – four days into lockdown. It was their hour of exercise in the open air when I knew it would be quiet, and the terms of ‘isolation’ would not be broken. Looking back, it was a strange time as we headed into the unknown of the pandemic, but I felt also that it was an opportunity to explore family life through alternative activities. A slower and more peaceful way of living has created time and space for some surprisingly beautiful moments, and these I will treasure forever.

Photographer: Fiona Wells Martin



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editorial

Listening to music, sacred and otherwise, has become a significant part of my day during lockdown. I have found myself turning off news programmes – not because I don't want to know what is happening in the world outside my home, and beyond the circle of family and friends, but because I feel helpless in the face of so much tragedy. Music has sustained the balance of my thoughts, reminding me that beyond the anxiety of this pandemic is a world full of joy and sweet harmony. Emotions are however, close to the surface and a passing exchange with a fellow walker that has made us both smile is solace to my soul; acts of kindness from strangers to strangers brings tears to my eyes; and the glorious sight of spring unfolding in the hedgerows, and the awakening of the simplest of wild flowers - celandine, cowslips, daisies and bluebells - has brightened my spirits and my optimism. A huge benefit though has been preparing this magazine for publication: reading through insightful articles, poems and prose, and gathering images to accompany them on the page has been a wonderful source of inspiration. As you will see a number of contributors are creating their work during their own lockdown and this provides a special insight into their own experience; their emotions and their creativity. As our writers draw our attention to aspects of music, poetry, religious devotion, environmental concerns and life histories I have been struck by how my own heightened senses are picking up on certain words such as Anjum Javed Dara's comment on how music can 'assuage one's loneliness', and Alan Williams' interpretation of Rumi poetry to read: 'closed eyes are capable of seeing the friend when one has made a filigree of eyelids'; Martin Palmer's: 'if something is worth celebrating, it is worth protecting'; and a young voice from the Hindu community: 'the earth is crying in despair'. Perhaps it is this last statement that carries a particular resonance at this time, as it reminds us that it is not only Covid-19 that is destroying lives, but also the ways in which we so often fail to listen, not only to the cries of our beautiful planet but also to each other. Although lockdown has been painful in so many ways, especially for those who have lost loved ones, it has also served to show us that there is an alternative way of living. That a slower pace of life is less polluting for our environment: that it allows nature to thrive and birdsong to be heard: and that it can bring families and communities closer together. There will be many stories to tell when lockdown ends as we move onto a new normality. I hope and pray that we will all be inspired to truly listen to what is being said; and if and when we can help bring changes that alleviate the suffering of others, and our natural world, we will not fail to act.

Heather Wells

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www.faithinitiative.co.uk

Initiative Interfaith Trust

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Trustees: Heather Wells, Lorna Douglas
and Charanjit Ajit Singh

Object:

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

Faith Initiative: Embracing Diversity Magazine

Editorial Panel

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

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

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

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Issue 42 Themes:

1. The Role of Religion in Society

2. Narratives of our Time

Front cover: Kirka National Park, Croatia.

Photograph: Heather Wells Quote: Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi cited: 365 Meditations: collated by Marcus Braybrooke Pub.Octopus 2004 ISBN 1-84181-230-7

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

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

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

Celebrate to Motivate



words for the celebration of Christ's Last Supper, the night before he was betrayed and crucified. The oldest word is the Greek word *Eucharist*, which simply yet gloriously means Thank You or Thanksgiving.

I first ran into trouble using the word celebration when in 1985 Prince Philip, then the International president of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) asked me to bring together representatives of five major faiths (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam), with all the key conservation and environmental groups, at an event we held in Assisi – the birthplace of St. Francis, in Italy in 1986. His view was that the environmental movement was obsessed with data – as if anyone was ever converted by a pie chart! – and by trying to scare people into better behaviour towards nature. I suggested that we call this first ever meeting of such different worlds a *Celebration*, which he was delighted to agree to. Then we told WWF International.

The outrage we encountered was astonishing. Almost every major environmental and conservation movement rose in fury and denounced us. "Celebrate!!!" they roared. "What is there to celebrate when the world is going to Hell in a handcart" – I slightly paraphrase here, but I am not overstating their utter bewilderment about why anyone would want to link ecology with celebration.

Prince Philip and I stuck to our guns and *Celebration* was its formal title, and *Celebration* was what we did. People came on pilgrimage from all around the world. They created music, they danced, they sang songs, wrote poetry, and they came to celebrate the wonder of life, and to dedicate themselves to protecting it. From that first meeting in 1986 has sprung what the UN has described as the 'world's largest civil society movement to protect nature' – the religious environmental movements.

Why?

"We need to be part of nature, not apart from nature"

About five years ago, when I was Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) we helped Christian, Hindu and Muslim colleagues in East Africa produce a rather extraordinary document. We had been invited by UNESCO and the Kenyan Government's education department to create a faith-based Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Toolkit. Typical rather long-winded UN terminology but essentially ESD is an international education programme for schools on environment and sustainability.

When one of our colleagues attended the international meeting of the ESD programme she was asked, quite bluntly, what possible difference could there be between a 'normal' ESD toolkit and a faith-based one. Her response captures for me why we celebrate – indeed why it is at this time so important to celebrate.

She said, "We open our toolkit by saying Thank You, then we look at why in the light of such gratitude we need to protect our planet. The usual ESD secular toolkit starts by telling us how everything is going wrong and that we are to blame."

That's it. That is the heart of why we as people of faith celebrate. Why we say *Thank You* to the awesome magnificence and generosity of Creation, evolution, God – doesn't really matter what you call it, they are all stories of meaning. For example, in Christianity we have a number of different

*“Celebration
is a necessary
antidote to
apocalypse”*

Well the answer is relatively simple. If something is worth celebrating, it is worth protecting. If it gives joy and delight, then we want to ensure that this will always be part of our lives. If we feel moved to sing, to dance, to pilgrimage, to write poems then we have a relationship with nature which begins to take us out of one bad model, and back to a better one. The bad model is the one which has driven us into the dire state we find ourselves in, under the COVID-19 shadow. Namely that the world is here for our use; that we are the Masters of the Universe; that everything that exists has meaning only if useful to us, and that we are so clever we can make new things to replace what we have destroyed. Essentially what one can call the 'we are apart from nature' model which has been the dominant model for the last two to three hundred years.

The alternative model – one shared by every major faith – stands in opposition to this utilitarian, human-centred model. In this model, we are part of a much Greater Story – or Stories – in which we are just one small part of a much greater purpose behind life itself. In this model we need to see ourselves as servants of nature not masters; as part of the web of life, not viewers of the web of life as created just for us. In other words, we need to be part of nature, not apart from nature.

In that concept, we therefore need to acknowledge that there is something, someone, some force far, far greater than ourselves as a species, who brings life to life and gives meaning to nature and creation. In such a world picture, it is natural, and mentally vital, to start by acknowledging the sheer wonder of what we are part of – not as is often said 'what we have been given'. We need to start as we did with the ESD toolkit by saying *Thank You*.

This is why when I was asked two years ago by the new head of WWF UK, what were the faiths going to do in 2020 given that we only had ten years left before the end of the world. I shocked, and yet also delighted her by saying we would not join the handwringing, guilt tripping hordes predicting *apocalypse* unless everyone did what they said. "So, *what will the faiths do?*" she asked. I said we would hold a party!

Now, let me be frank. I wanted to jolt her and her colleagues out of a particularly troubling mindset. But I also wanted to point out that all faiths ask their followers to live as simply as possible, and to have periods of fasting or abstinence. But then we party. Think of Lent and then Easter for Christians, Ramadan and then Eid ul Fitr for Muslims; Pansa and then Wesak for Buddhists. We know you cannot ask people to give up things all the time. We also need to party. There is a wonderful Jewish saying that on the Day of Judgement, God will judge you for all the legitimate pleasure you could have enjoyed, and did not.

Hence my comment to the head of WWF UK. And it worked. She understood that if you want to move people to do things differently, you have to change the approach. Rather than instil fear and feelings of guilt as reasons to change our behaviour – the usual approach of the environmental movement – we need to celebrate how astonishing life on earth is, and to renew our responsibility for it: to protect, restore, and, perhaps most difficultly, make sacrifices ourselves in order that life for all creation can continue to flourish. And this is what gave rise to the CelebrationEarth movement, which WWF – both UK and internationally has embraced - as well as groups such as RSPB, Bhumi Movement, Eco-Sikh, Eco-Islam etc.

Let me add one other thing about the usual environmental apocalyptic language which frankly paralysis people rather than motivating them. I am a historian of religion. I know that whenever any of our faiths starts to use apocalyptic languages; when it is claimed that only by submission to its dictates can the world be saved; this inevitably leads to violence. The reason is that usually only a small minority actually join such movements whereas the founders always assume that everyone will – or to be more precise everyone SHOULD. When this vision fails, the justification to use violence is that 'we need to wake people up' and so the terrible cycle rolls out. Let me be clear. Celebration is a necessary antidote to apocalypse.

And the COVID 19 crisis has only highlighted how vital, how natural, how engaging and invigorating *Celebration* is. If we were not able to celebrate the NHS where would we be psychologically? Just be aware of your own feelings when you join in the Thursday night 8.00 p.m. singing, shouting, clapping, banging of 'drums' Celebration of the nurses and ambulance drivers, cleaners and doctors of our hospitals and care homes. Celebration makes it possible to start doing what is right, and continue to do it even when this is costly to ourselves; when we have to make sacrifices for the sake of the rest of our community.

And what will be the first thing we will all do when the lockdown is lifted? We will go to meet our families and friends and we will celebrate.

I cannot wait, and the CelebrationEarth in mid-September at St. Albans, or in the many, many local CelebrationEarth events around the country, will be our chance to not only celebrate our protection of our communities, but also of nature itself. In whatever way you can, do join us and Celebrate.

And the People Stayed Home

*And the people stayed home.
And read books, and listened,
and rested, and exercised,
and made art, and played games,
and learned new ways of being,
and were still.
And listened more deeply.
Some meditated,
some prayed,
some danced.
Some met their shadows.
And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed.
And, in the absence of people living in ignorant,
dangerous, mindless and heartless ways,
the earth began to heal.
And when the danger passed,
and the people joined together again,
they grieved their losses,
and made new choices,
and dreamed new images,
and created new ways to live
and heal the earth
fully, as they had been healed.*

Kitty O'Meara

Madison, Wisconsin 16.3.2020

LOCKDOWN
Art

In Devotion to the Lancaster Martyrs



The curlew is a familiar bird of the Lancashire wetlands and moorlands. It has a high-pitched, almost haunting, cry; very appropriate for an icon speaking of martyrdom.

The icon of the Lancaster Martyrs was created by artist and iconographer Martin Earle and commissioned by the parish of St Joseph's Church, Lancaster; it was paid for by a generous benefactor and blessed in situ by the Bishop of Lancaster, Paul Swarbrick. The icon is a unique piece of work and will serve as a setting for devotion to the martyrs, and the beginning of a new Martyrs Walk which will link the shrine with Lancaster Castle, where all these martyrs were incarcerated and condemned, and the Martyrs Memorial Stone near St Peter's Cathedral. It draws on a Medieval tradition of dyptychs and tryptych (two-part and three-part panels which would have formed the backdrop to an altar or to a shrine).

In writing the icon, Martin Earle drew much inspiration from some of the great Medieval altarpieces celebrating the communion of saints. It was customary for the saints to be set upon a floral carpet, rich patterns reflecting the glory of heaven, and in this case the pattern beneath the holy family is made up of Lancashire roses and curlews, whose bills are intertwined. The curlew is a familiar bird of the Lancashire wetlands and moorlands. It has a high-pitched, almost haunting, cry; very appropriate for an icon speaking of martyrdom. The Lancashire rose reminds us of the crown of thorns that wreathed Jesus's head in his passion. The harmony of these images reveal to us the radiance of the whole of creation, caught up and transfigured in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ; the martyrs; the whole of the cosmos; and ourselves as we look upon this icon.

Nothing is apart from Christ as indeed the very icon signifies in its tulipwood panel and oak batons, the traditionally made glue and chalk that make up the gesso base, the water, egg yolk and different pigments and minerals used in the paints, the gold leaf, and the blood and sweat and prayer involved in writing the icon itself.

Beneath the feet of the martyrs the pattern is inspired by a wallpaper design from the Pugin house in Ramsgate. The Pugin family are associated with restoring the Gothic style to British design and architecture, and given that St Joseph's church was designed by Peter Paul Pugin, it seemed entirely appropriate to include this detail too.

Looking at the martyrs, several of the priests are identified by their religious garb: **Robert Middleton**, a Jesuit; **Ambrose Barlow**, a Benedictine; and **Robert Nutter**, a Dominican. Since all the martyrs died for their adherence to the Catholic faith, and for their love of the sacraments which make present Christ's abiding presence with us, each of the priests represent a different sacrament: **James Bell** carries a scallop shell around his neck which symbolises the Christian pilgrimage through life that begins with baptism; **Thomas Thules** carries a jar of Chrism oil and his red chasuble is adorned with tongues of fire; **Thomas Whitaker** carries a chalice representing the Eucharist and reminding us of his portable tabernacle that is preserved at Cloughton-on-Brock; **Thurstan Hunt** is confessing his sins to **Robert Middleton**; **Edmund Arrowsmith**, who was



Artist Martin Earle with the icon of the Lancaster Martyrs

handed over to the authorities by a disgruntled couple whose marriage he was attempting to regularise, is holding the wedding rings of the sacrament of Matrimony on a cushion; **Edward Thwing** has his manipulated arm outstretched and resting on the shoulder of **Robert Nutter** who clings to the Word of God in a gesture symbolising the sacrament of Ordination; and, **John Woodcock** likewise lays his hand upon **Edward Bamber**, in a comforting gesture representing the Last Rites, now known as the Sacrament of the Sick. In addition to the priests, there are three laymen who enabled the mission in Lancashire to flourish. Blessed **John Finch**, the farmer **Richard Hayhurst**, carrying a lamb, an ancient symbol of sacrifice and of course intimating the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and the extraordinary weaver from Chorley, **Roger Wrenno**. He holds in his hand the rope that snapped as he was being hanged. Falling to the ground, he was offered his life should he recant his faith. But he related the heavenly things that he had just seen and had no hesitation in mounting the gallows once again. This mystical experience that he enjoyed in his last moments is depicted by his upwards gaze, orientated towards Christ in glory.

Finally, at the centre, is the Holy Family: Mary the Mother of God, and St Joseph, the patron of this church. St Joseph is often depicted in religious art as an old man, but there is nothing in the Scriptures to verify this, and in designing this icon, it was felt that a younger St Joseph, a man in his vigour and a man passionate about life, a man who was faithful to his vocation to God at the cost of all his plans, is far more inspiring. Mary bears Jesus towards us, and Joseph points to Jesus, and in particular, points to the cross which is at the crux of the icon: Jesus Christ Saviour of the World. Jesus clings to the cross which is his mission, and holds his hand in blessing, his two fingers proclaiming the two natures of Christ: his divinity and his humanity. Directly above the holy family is Christ in all his glory in the celestial realms, flanked on either side by the archangels, Saint Gabriel and Saint Raphael.

Fr Philip Conner is Parish Priest of St Joseph's Catholic Church, Lancaster. A booklet featuring the stories of the martyrs will be published shortly. Please see website for further details. www.stjosephs-lancaster.co.uk

Memories

*My response has come a few weeks late,
I've searched for words to define our memories.*

*To make times last, I'm the ink on your page.
Steadfast, we remain close in our memories.*

*We are contactless, like the new ways we pay,
unable to touch, we automatically sync memories.*

*Our daily connections through voice, text and email,
carrying us both in timeless fun, love, memories.*

*The sky and air appears fresher and the stars closer.
We are flowers in the earth, rising in memories.*

*In our garden we listen to robins, wrens, blackbirds;
our thoughts sing like our heart beating memories.*

*While I sit here and you sit weeks and months away,
our loving friendship still continues to make memories.*

Kuli Kohli

21.04.20

www.kulikohli.co.uk



When I was a young teacher of ten year olds, for a celebration of the Holy Spirit we were given a very poetic hymn to sing which led me to query whether the children could understand it: “*It doesn’t matter*”, responded the head teacher. “*Children need poetry... They need mystery.*”

LOCKDOWN ANECDOTE • Komlaish Achall

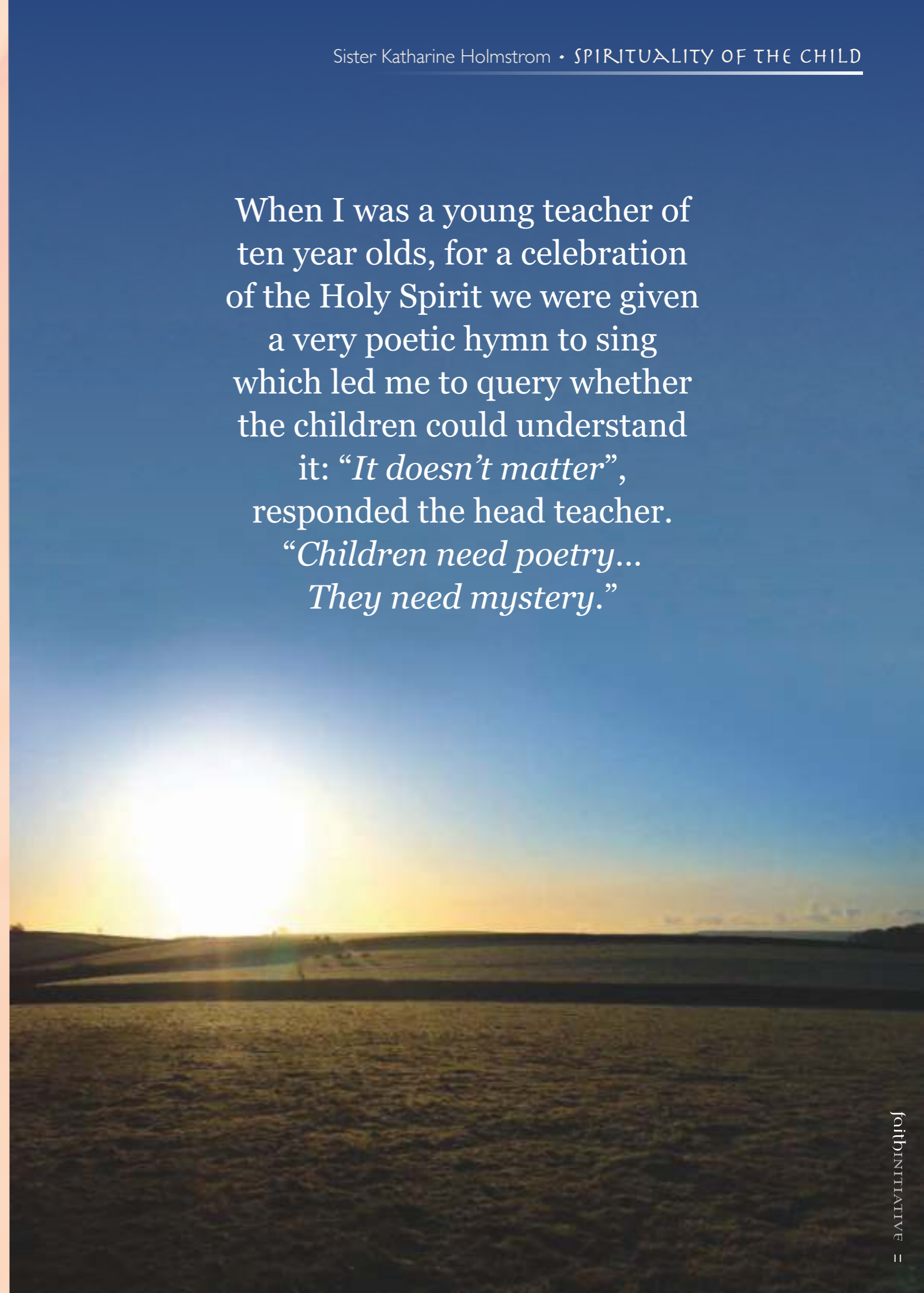


separate but together:

these daisies have become a symbol of hope. Knowing that they will return next spring, to bloom again in my garden, gives me faith in our future as a family and as a community. April 2020.

Komlaish Achall: visual artist and street photographer, and member of the Punjabi Women's Writing Group:

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Finding the Grain of Meaning



Mariotto Albertinelli's *The Visitation* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) 1503
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visitation_\(Albertinelli\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visitation_(Albertinelli))



Persian Miniature, author unknown
<http://www.eslam.de/begriffe/m/maria.htm>

“Story is the vessel of colossal imaginative energy in the *Masnavi*”

In his mystical masterpiece, the *Masnavi*, the Persian poet Rumi (1207-1273) tells hundreds of stories across six volumes of what is one of the longest and most influential poems ever to come out of the Muslim world. The *Masnavi* is a work of global literature, which soars to tremendous heights of spiritual elevation, and Rumi's ecstasies are contagious, famously inspiring generations of poets and readers with his exquisite verse couplets, even to this day. His musical sonority is equalled by only a few of the greatest Persian poets – Attār, Hāfēz and Sa'di among them – but he is unrivalled in the depth and range of his spiritual understanding. Story is the vessel of colossal imaginative energy in the *Masnavi*, launching the reader on a journey into sublime constellations, yet all in an intimate language that is largely devoid of metaphysical obscurity. The stories can be as short as one or two lines, or range over hundreds of couplets, interrupted by and intertwined with other tales in a stream of Rumi's consciousness. They are all the more remarkable for constantly taking the reader by surprise, to another place where his mystical teachings shine through from on high.

In this essay I shall share with you a remarkable little story of Mary and Elisabeth, which comes from the end of the second book of the *Masnavi*. Rumi has so far already regaled us with stories of Quranic and Biblical figures, prophets, saints, Sufis, ruthless kings and viziers, Jews, Christians and Hindus, dervishes and beggars, robbers and bullies, and also numerous non-human *dramatis personae* – parrots who break into soliloquies; a wily hare who tricks a ravenous lion preying upon his fellow creatures; a wolf, a lion and a fox; a falcon trapped in a land of sinister owls; a fly who thinks he's captain of a straw boat on a pool of piss; a crow and a stork; a blundering bear, and a mouse and a camel. And after all these, he tells the following story about Mary. She is frequently mentioned in the Quran, and is hailed as the most exalted among women by Muslims, as mother of the Messiah, and also in her own right as the perfection of purity, fertility and radiant beauty. Rumi sums up her sublime qualities in one verse:

*'The speech of Jesus was from Mary's beauty;
 the speech of Adam sprang from heavenly breath'*¹

¹ Williams, *Masnavi*, 6:4549.

² Literature on the subject is vast, but see Jaroslav Pelikan's valuable introduction *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.

³ Tr. R.A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī*, vol. VII, London: Luzac and Co., 1937, repr. 1969, 363-4, and also in commentaries on Quran, Sura 19.

⁴ Gospel of Luke 1:39–45, 56 (Authorized Version).

It is an ancient story, reflecting the verses of Luke 1:39ff. Yet the reader, still unprepared even after reading some 7,000 couplets since the start of Book I, is taken aback at how quickly the story turns into a meta-discourse, reflecting on the very nature of story, realism and interpretation.

The story itself is told in just five verses, of which four are a dialogue between the mothers of two prophets as yet unborn: John the Baptist and Jesus. The Christian commentary tradition sees the story of the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth as showing John as a prophet before his birth and as a witness already pointing to Jesus.² This is true of Islamic tradition as well. The story is mentioned by the Persian Islamic historian, Tha'labi, in his 'Stories of the Prophets' (*Qisās al-Anbiyā*) on the birth of John the Baptist from the unnamed wife of Zachariah:

*One day the wife of Zakariyyā came to Maryam (here called 'her sister') and said, 'O Maryam, the babe in thy womb is of higher degree than the babe in mine.' Maryam said, 'How dost thou know?' She replied, 'Whenever I come to thee, my babe pays homage to thine and salutes it.'*³

The correspondence between this story and the narrative of the Gospel of Luke 1:39 ff. is best understood by citation of that text:

*And Mary rose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord... And Mary abode with her about three months and returned to her own house.*⁴

In Rumi's text, the story is occasioned by his consideration of a long story that he began over 300 verses before, about a Sufi sheikh who was accused of drinking wine, and proved graphically, by vomiting up pearls, that he had not. Rumi then discourses on the human need to have visible proof, including a string of anecdotal examples that culminates in the verses:

*Or if a mother calls her suckling baby
"Come here, my baby, see, I am your mother!"
Then does the baby say, "O mother, prove it,
so I can be assured about your milk!"*⁵

The very mention of this anecdotal baby brings Rumi to the story of Mary and Elisabeth:

How John the Baptist, on whom be peace, bowed in his mother's womb to the Messiah, on whom be peace.

*The Baptist's mother secretly told Mary,
before She was delivered of Her burden,
"For certain I can see a king within you,
a lord of resolution, wise apostle,
Because whenever I encounter you
my baby bows to him, illustrious Lady!
My foetus bowed in worship to your foetus,
from bowing thus my body was in pain."
Mary replied, "I also felt within me
this baby's act of worship in my womb."*⁶

At this point, a complication is introduced: Rumi introduces a skeptical agnostic, who does not question the miracle of one foetus bowing to another but is armed with the historical objection that the two mothers did not in fact meet when they were pregnant, despite, it might be said, the evidence of the Gospel of Luke quoted above. Such a denial refutes any such miracle on the grounds that the whole story is a mere fiction, thus obviating the possibility of the miracle arising.

This is of course, indirectly, also a denial of what the story was intended to convey in Christian tradition, namely the divine sanction of the prophet John and of Jesus:

Raising a difficulty with this story

*Now fools claim that this tale should be curtailed,
and that it is a falsehood and mistaken,
That Mary, in the course of her confinement,
was far away from family and strangers,
Till she gave birth, that maid of sweet enchantment
remained outside the town and did not enter,
That in her pregnancy she met nobody,
she did not come back in from out of town,
That she gave birth, then held him to her bosom,
and took him to present him to her kin.
So where had John the Baptist's mother seen her
to render this account of what had happened?*⁷

The story of the unborn prophets bowing to one another serves to underscore their miraculous conceptions, the daughter of Zachariah/Zakariyyā (Elisabeth in the New Testament but unnamed in the Quran) being barren and Mary/Maryam remaining a virgin, according to both the Biblical and Quranic accounts. It is therefore a fine example of how a story conveys a meaning and of how it can be read as a teaching rather than as a history. In the response that follows this objection, Rumi acknowledges that the two women may have been physically distant from one another, but he chides the skeptic to grasp the meaning in any case instead of questioning the historical veracity of a physical encounter. This doubt is possibly based upon an excessively literalistic interpretation of Quran Sura 19, in which Mary 'withdrew from her people to an eastern place and she took a veil apart from them' and 'so she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a distant place'.⁸ Rumi's riposte is straightforward, chiding the simpleton who doubts the truth of the story with the following words:

“Closed eyes are capable of seeing the friend when one has made a filigree of eyelids”

“They don't know that for people of good heart what's hidden to this world is here for them.”

Answer to the difficulty

*They don't know that for people of good heart
what's hidden to this world is here for them.
The mother of the Baptist came to Mary
as present to her view, though far from sight.
Closed eyes are capable of seeing the friend
when one has made a filigree of eyelids.
Though she may not have seen her, in or outside -
just grasp the story's meaning, simpleton!
Not like the man who'd heard some mythic tales
and had got stuck in some myth understanding.*⁹

To make the point in even more vivid terms, he exposes the literalistic objection to this story as foolish by projecting it onto the more obviously fictitious stories of folk traditions that introduce animals speaking to one another (as he himself has been doing so far in the *Masnavi*) in order to show that the inventions of stories are always intended to convey meaning and not to represent historical events:

*He'd say how could that tongue-tied beast Kalila¹⁰
take in the words that came from speechless Dimna?
And if they understood each other's babbling,
how could a human understand such nonsense?
How could that 'Dimna' act as 'messenger'
of lion and ox, and charm them both with stories?
How was the noble ox the lion's 'vizier'?
How come the elephant feared the moon's reflexion?
This tale Kalila and Dimna's all invention
or why's a stork debating with a crow?*¹¹

Rumi's conclusion is neatly expressed in the analogy of the pair of scales. Like the story, it exists only as an instrument to balance the grain of meaning and is not an end in itself:

*O brother, story's like a pair of scales:
the meaning's like the grain that's in the balance.
A clever man will take the grain of meaning,
he will not see the scales, like they're not there.
Hear what the rose and nightingale are saying,
though there's no actual speech between the two.*¹²

Rumi's stories so often go in such an unexpected direction, from fable to didactic wisdom. This is a miniscule example of how Rumi is so attentive to the reader's understanding, which is something that has been lost on many readers among the general public, whether reading in Persian or translations, going back to the earliest Arabic and Turkish, and now English, where the emphasis has often been put on the entertainment value of such stories. The treatment I have given here to the story is not overly academic, as it may at first appear, but is true to the mystical-didactic nature of Rumi's text. The stories, which are so popular among Persians, and now globally among an Anglo-American readership of Rumi through the popular 'interpretations' of Coleman Barks and others, are just the tip of the iceberg. But unlike the iceberg, the substance of Rumi's meaning does not lie beneath the surface – it is there in the text, if readers can access it in unexpurgated and faithful translations.

⁹ Williams, *Masnavi*, 2:3628-32.

¹⁰ Kalila and Dimna were two legendary jackals and eponymous heroes of the work known as *Kalila wa Dimna*, the Arabic translation of the famed Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* (500-100 BCE), a compendium of animal fables.

¹¹ Williams, *Masnavi*, 2:3633-37.

¹² Williams, *Masnavi*, 2:3638-40.

Professor Alan Williams

Alan Williams is Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion, Department of Religions and Theology, University of Manchester ([https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/alan-williams\(9249cd21-9e83-4578-92a4-07f4a29bce05\)/projects.html?period=running](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/alan-williams(9249cd21-9e83-4578-92a4-07f4a29bce05)/projects.html?period=running)) Professor Alan Williams has recently published the first two volumes of Rumi's *Masnavi*, and the remaining four volumes are to follow, published by IB Tauris / Bloomsbury.

See further <http://email.bloomsburynews.com/q/11mitmamBKkNmNhNJUz89mr/wv>

and for an interview with the author see <https://besharamagazine.org/arts-literature/rumi-masnavi-divine-love-alan-williams/>

⁵ Williams, *Masnavi* 2:3611-2.

⁶ Williams, *Masnavi* 2:3617-21.

⁷ Williams, *Masnavi*, 2:3622-27.

⁸ Quran, Sura 19: 16-17, 22..

MEDITATIONS OF THE Blessed Beauty

The Bahá'í Faith was founded in 19th Century Iran by Bahá'u'lláh and for the centenary of the Prophet's passing in 1992, the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of the UK launched a limited series of deluxe editions of some of his most popular writings: all of which provide a wealth of spiritual teachings.

This special imprint, Nightingale Books, took its name from one of the titles that Bahá'u'lláh used to describe his own station: *the Nightingale of Paradise*. This series comprised five books: *The Hidden Words*, *The Seven Valleys* (both of which had long been available in a variety of editions), *The Most Holy Tablet* and *The Tablet of Carmel* (both of which had been published in compilations of Bahá'í scripture, but never as individual titles).

Meditations of the Blessed Beauty stood out from the others in that it was a brand new collection specially compiled for this historic occasion. The theme of this

particular volume is the appearance of divine revelation in the natural world, expressed by Bahá'u'lláh in poetic, metaphorical style – these English translations being true to the Arabic and Persian originals.

These special editions were welcomed by Bahá'ís all over the world as a fitting tribute to the founder of this young faith. They also made a positive impact in the marketplace for inspirational books. The five titles in the Nightingale series have never been republished, enhancing their special place in the corpus of Bahá'í literature. They still occupy a unique position on the bookshelves and in the hearts of many Bahá'ís, their family and friends, almost 30 years after their publication.

In the following scripture, Bahá'u'lláh draws on the age-old imagery of divine revelation being akin to water: refreshing, reviving and the essential ingredient for life: spiritual as well as physical.

A drop of the billowing ocean of His endless mercy hath adorned all creation with the ornament of existence, and a breath wafted from His peerless Paradise hath invested all beings with the robe of His sanctity and glory. A sprinkling from the unfathomed deep of His sovereign and all-pervasive Will hath, out of utter nothingness, called into being a creation which is infinite in its range and deathless in its duration. The wonders of His bounty can never cease, and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end.

INCLUSIVE JUDAISM

One of the best-kept religious secrets has been the revolution that has been quietly taking place within Judaism over the last two decades as it has sought to grapple with contemporary issues.

These include mixed-faith marriages, women's empowerment, gay relationships, declining numbers, increased divorce, Jewish atheists (who still feel Jewish culturally) and being transgendered. Also, the growing number of 'I-never-realised-I-was-Jewish-Jews' - those who have discovered they have a Jewish grandparent and want to reclaim their roots.

Most ground-breaking of all, it has meant re-defining who is considered to be Jewish in the 21st century, and changing the two thousand year old tradition to a more equitable one fit for the modern world.

My work as a rabbi has brought me into contact with many of the groups of people who have been marginalized. For instance, it became noticeable to me that none of the three thousand mixed-faith couples I counselled as part of the annual seminars I used to run for them, said: "Rabbi, shall we get married?" instead they said: "Rabbi, we are getting married; can you help?". I felt that to reply "no" would achieve nothing, but to reply "yes" would bring them hope and welcome them into the fold.

Rabbis are accepting that, while it may still be the ideal to marry someone with one's faith, they cannot legislate as to whom one falls in love with. The couple are also no longer shunned on their wedding day, the time when they deeply want to assert their Jewish connection, and when even more sympathetic rabbis used to refuse to have any involvement. Instead, mixed-faith blessings in synagogue can now take place and the couple are given the message that they no longer have to choose between loving each other and valuing their faith.

So too with those who are LGBTQ+. They may not be liable to criminal prosecution anymore, but they are still subject to religious condemnation in many quarters. Now, though, religious doors are being opened and they are not forced to hide their identity. They are welcomed as they are, and without any invasive caveats, such as an insistence on sexual abstinence. Also same-sex weddings can take place under the marriage canopy, the huppah, and celebrated for all to see.

Single people are no longer regarded as 'on the shelf' and the responsibility of the rabbi who must find them a match. This could be a solution if the person is looking for a marriage partner, but not if they are happy as they are. Being part of a two-some (and with children) is no longer seen as a religious necessity, with anything other indicating a religious failure.

Similarly, single parents and divorcees are counted as individuals getting on with their lives, not as problems to be judged by the community.

But the largest group crying out for change is women: while some are content to stay within the traditional role - seated at the back of the synagogue or upstairs - many find it unacceptable. They are also frustrated at lacking any say in religious life. The decision to allow female rabbis has been a transformative response. It has also been accompanied by complete equality within the service for all other women, both in terms of seating arrangements and active participation.

All these issues can apply just as much to other faiths, whose adherents also often straddle two worlds, with one foot in their religious heritage and the other foot in secular society. To what extent do the faith leaders help them live in both worlds, or do they risk losing them by insisting that they stay exclusively in the religious one?

Compromise is often seen as a dirty word in religious circles, but if it is re-labelled as 'accommodating modernity' or 'coming to terms with new realities', perhaps it is more acceptable. But whatever the wording, it means recognising the necessity of helping those people with a 'dual identity' be faithful to both.

The teachings within the Jewish prayer book now allow for the fact that not all practitioners are firm believers, with the addition of passages that talk of "our uncertainties" and also "our bewilderment". It has become a book both for those who believe and those who want to believe, but do not always find it easy. In the past, there has been no way one could express one's doubts. Now the liturgy spells out that we can flounder, and it admits that "we often do not recognise it when God speaks to us...and God must steal into us, like a thief in the night".

Meanwhile, those who wish to convert to Judaism are no longer seen as suspicious interlopers, but as appreciated additions to the community. It has been a long-standing tradition that if anyone applied to a rabbi, they would be refused three times in the hope they would eventually go away. Now it is appreciated, for example, that if a person is marrying someone Jewish, conversion will help unify the family faith and ensure it is passed onto the next generation. There has also been a greater acceptance of those applying without a Jewish partner, or even with a non-Jewish partner, who feels the faith calling to them.

As for Jewish descent, for the last two thousand years this has been defined as passing through the mother's line. There may have been practical advantages for this (one usually knows who one's mother is, not always the father, plus it was the women who was responsible for home life). However, it discriminates against those without a Jewish mother, but who have a Jewish father, Jewish education and Jewish identity. This has become especially problematic with the rise in mixed-faith marriage over the last few decades.

In Genesis, and for most of the biblical period, traditional Jewish descent went through the patrilineal line, somewhere along the way it was changed to the matrilineal line and has become sanctified in time. If the definition of Jewish status could be changed once before, it can be changed again. After much deliberation, rabbis announced that it would now be equalineal: a person is Jewish if they have one Jewish parent, irrespective of their gender.

Each of the above adaptations made ripples, noticed primarily by the individuals they affect, but taken together they add up to a religious tsunami.

Inclusive Judaism tracks this religious revolution, and the new strategy in Jewish outreach to those on the religious margins, and finds that it is beginning to stem the losses, and bring back into the centre those who had felt ostracized, and/or opted out altogether. The revolution has involved a willingness to abandon ancient biblical laws that conflict with contemporary values.

The book asks piercing questions: what changed the policy of disparagement to that of acceptance? Why do some rabbis oppose this change? Can there be any substance to the argument that being too welcoming and non-judgemental could undermine the fabric of Judaism? What were the experiences of those who have been hurt by the practice of traditional values? In what way have they been welcomed back into the community?

The title indicates the direction of travel. Given the social realities of modern life, Judaism has to adapt. What is more, the changes should be seen not as a grudging concession, but a continuation of the dynamic evolution of Judaism, which is why the Jewish lifestyle of Hasidic Jews today would be unrecognisable to that of rabbis in the 1st century, while his practices would be totally alien to those of Abraham.

Inclusive Judaism is co-authored by Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain and Rabbi David Mitchell, who have both been at the cutting edge of pressing for reforms in Jewish life to accommodate the new social realities. The book also presents a challenge to other faith groups on how best to marry tradition and modernity.

Inclusive Judaism is published by Jessica Kingsley at £12.99



It is time to take down the 'No entry' signs and replace them with signs saying 'Welcome home'

CelebrationEarth!

Joining In

CelebrationEarth! is an invitation to community groups, bigger organisations and individuals to work together, forming new networks and new partnerships to help bring about change on personal, local and national levels

Join the network, come to St Albans or maybe just declare your own Earth Celebration!

2020 looks like it will be an exceptional year of action for the environment. As we face the current environmental problems and the traumas of COVID-19, it is easy to lose sight of the wonder and joy of living on this planet. It is good to remind ourselves of environmental successes, however small or local they seem and of the beauty that surrounds us. The CelebrationEarth! project believes that we work most strongly to protect the things we love and therefore celebrate: and that if we approach environmental work with hope and joy we can work more creatively and optimistically than if we approach it with anger and despair.

CelebrationEarth! also recognises that “working for the environment” draws together groups from many walks of life, from familiar environment and conservation bodies, to artists and theatre companies, to local communities, schools and faith communities. Through this project we want to help introduce these groups to each other and build ways of working together. WWF, RSPB and many other organisations, not least from the faiths, are working to create a mass movement by assisting as many groups as possible to link up, share ideas, expertise and commitments so that together we create the sort of groundswell that will make the protection of life on Earth possible.

So join us!



Shaun Walters



Fiona Wells Martin



Heather Wells



George Douglas



David Rose



David Rose

For everyone: organisations, charities, schools, faith groups, art networks and individuals, there are various ways to become part of this year of celebrating hope.

In the months before the CelebrationEarth! weekend (18 – 20 September 2020, St Albans Cathedral), groups or individuals might:

- a) declare your own celebration: plan your own celebration of your work, your achievements, and the environmental causes that matter to you. Suggestions on how you might do this will be published on our website soon.
- b) share your successes with the wider CelebrationEarth! community – contact the team at www.celebrationearth.org
- c) Undertake if it is possible, to attend the Celebration in September and become part of the network that will grow out of the event, where each group is invited to tell us all three things:
 - i) what you are already doing that you are proud of to protect Planet Earth;
 - ii) what you will commit to do more of within one year
 - iii) what you would like to be doing in partnership with other organisations in five years' time.

These statements become the Commitments that will help shape your involvement with the network

We are also going to be the major focus of the Government's Civil Society response to the environment in preparation for the hosting in the UK of the COP 26 on climate change in mid 2021. Our aim is to help create so many new projects, commitments and partnerships that long after COP 26 is history, we will be helping celebrate the changes we have made together to protect all life on Earth.

The Morning Brightness

In the darkest of nights of this Covid-19 pandemic, I find comfort in knowing that God still presides over the universe. There is hope beyond the fleeting world and our passing life.

We continue to enjoy God's bounty bestowed for our sustenance: **"It is God who sends water down from the sky and with it revives the earth when it is dead. There truly is a sign in this for people who listen. In livestock, too, you have a lesson – We give you a drink from the contents of their bellies, between waste matter and blood, pure milk, sweet to the drinker. From the fruits of date palms and grapes you take sweet juice and wholesome provisions. There truly is a sign in this for people who use their reason. And your Lord inspired the bee, saying, 'Build yourselves houses in the mountains and trees and what people construct. Then feed on all kinds of fruit and follow the ways made easy for you by your Lord.' From their bellies comes a drink of different colours in which there is healing for people. There truly is a sign in this for those who think."** (The Qur'an, 16:65-69)

As a believing Muslim two things are of paramount importance to me: *The Qur'an*, our scripture, and the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who is a beacon for all Muslims to emulate. The beginning of the period that culminated in the dawn of Islam was the birth and childhood of our Prophet who was unaware of his prophethood until he was forty years of age. God chose for him a tragic beginning and a life of trial. His mother was widowed when she was two months pregnant with her only child. Thus, fatherless at birth, his paternal grandfather, a Meccan nobleman, became his guardian. According to the custom of Arabia at the time, an infant was handed over to the care of a wet nurse of a nomadic tribe. So, for the first four years of his life, he lived with the nurse and her family in the humble community of Bedouins in the harsh and desolate natural setting of the Arabian desert.

When he returned to his mother, their life together was short-lived. She died when he was six years old, and his grandfather died when he was around eight. One of his paternal uncles then took his charge. As an adult he again experienced tragedy. Three sons died in infancy: he outlived three of his four daughters: his beloved wife of over 25 years, Lady Khadijah, who was his confidante and counsel, and his paternal uncle, who was his staunch supporter in his prophetic mission, died in the same year. With their deaths his alienation and exclusion from his community grew stronger as his Divine mission, preaching monotheism to a society familiar with taking idols as God, met with increasing hostility.

At the hands of his enemies he and his followers suffered life-threatening persecution that compelled them to leave their place of birth and migrate to a distant land. Amidst the emotional trauma of his life and the physical hardship of migration our Prophet dedicated his life to the service of God until his departure from the world.

Throughout his lifetime he demonstrated tolerance, gave wise counsel, maintained strong ties with non-Muslims and respected the freedom of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

He communicated the Divine revelations of *The Qur'an* as he received them over a period of 23 years; oversaw the coming together of the first Muslim community in his adoptive community; and established good governance.



The Prophet's Mosque in the city of Medinah

Muslim scholars understand the challenging circumstances of Prophet's childhood and youth to have laid down the building blocks of his life-skills, and meditative contemplation of a Higher Being in his later life. That there was a Divine plan in his suffering is tellingly and movingly conveyed in Qur'anic chapter: **'The Morning Brightness': "... your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], ... your Lord is sure to give you so much that you will be well satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you? Did He not find you lost and guide you? Did He not find you in need and make you self-sufficient?"** (93:3-8) He was compensated for his misfortunes by the fulfilment of his prophetic mission.

For the perceptive, our beloved Prophet's life provides vital life-lessons: that long and weary may be the journey of life, but God's mercy will carry us forward through our ordeal. Muslims who have suffered in different ways, like millions of others throughout the globe during the pandemic, should be heartened by the wisdom of their faith.

For indeed we are reassured: **"So truly where there is hardship there is also ease; truly where there is hardship there is also ease."** (94:5-6).

WHEN COURAGE & SERENDIPITY MEET

Creating the Blessèd Round

Wishing you could have your time back at university is not uncommon. To have the chance to almost pop back in time for a while is rarer, but it feels as though that is exactly the gift I received recently.

In 2014, for the first time in 40 years, I went back to my old college. It was a special occasion, commemorating the day in 1974 that Jesus College admitted women students for the first time in its long, long history. It was one of only five colleges to go co-ed, and it was an experiment. There aren't any single sex colleges at Oxford anymore, so we can assume it worked.

At the commemoration dinner I sat next to Helen Roe, the composer, as if for the first time: in the old days I read English Language and Literature, and Helen read Music so our paths didn't cross. But that didn't seem to matter at all as we swapped memories.

Helen's studies took her beyond the college gates. "There wasn't even a Music Fellow in Jesus at the time," she recalled, "so I was farmed out to tutors elsewhere in the university and my academic life was focused on the Faculty. I'd probably have been too shy to make friends at all, if I hadn't been persuaded to join the choir: suffice to say Chapel soon provided me with my best friends."

"Professionally, my first few compositions were so well received, almost without any effort on my part, that it took a while to realise that such a state of affairs couldn't be taken for granted," Helen continued. "It is quite easy for a young composer, these days as then, to become flavour of the month, but you need to keep the ideas flowing, secure high-profile performances, network."

Helen's half-proud, half-wistful tale of early success resonated roundly with mine. In my twenties I wrote a book which captured the (not-so-pretty) zeitgeist of the early eighties. Expectations were high that I would follow it up, but to continue to write humorous non-fiction wasn't my goal, and I wasn't sure I could do it for long anyway. So, I didn't try too hard, and didn't succeed.

Initially, this bothered me. Success was bound up with fame and money, and I'm not dismissing those now. However, starting to practice Buddhism in my late twenties led me down different paths, ultimately to working in the peace movement and winning a scholarship to the Poets' House in Northern Ireland, where I dared to write again.

By the time Helen and I were talking, she had won several awards for her compositions. I was living in Germany, a couple of poetry collections of my own under my belt, and the co-founder of a small press. But we were both still facing the horrors of the blank page. These are familiar to anyone scrabbling to translate idea to comprehensible communication, and it applies across all disciplines. Irritatingly, knowing that doesn't help reduce the anxiety when, for the umpteenth time, you are convinced that you will never produce anything worthwhile again. We were also both aware that our different spiritual paths were our major sustenance in these difficult periods.

As we sat there in the college Hall, I wondered if I would ever have the courage to ask Helen if we might try a joint project: I had always longed to work with a composer. Serendipitously, Helen was wondering the same thing. It was at another reunion, four years later, when I blurted out "Let's write an opera, Helen, shall we?" She only said "Yes".

Opera's a huge undertaking though; we knew neither each other nor our work very well. Helen googled my name to find out more about me, and says now: "Though I found your poetry original and your imagery beautiful and sometimes startling, it didn't cry out to be set to music - almost the opposite." For my part, I found Helen's music stunning, breathtaking, and a long way from the comfort ground of the folk music I love. Baby steps were needed: why not try our style with a choral piece?

Helen's encouragement for me to find the subject matter for our joint venture was both generous and daunting. An earlier fascination with the centrality of buildings of worship, within even quite rudimentary settlements, came to the fore. In these places, where people have performed the same tasks, with variations, for generations, the cyclical and linear movements of human time seem clearer than elsewhere. All we needed now was a dramatic peg.



Image: Carys Davies



Image: Carys Davies

Thankfully, Helen agreed that using the Beatitudes (eight blessings recounted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew) was a plan. Over the next couple of months, different subjects presented themselves; a stone mason grappling with his fear of seeming to compete with his maker, embodied the 'poor in spirit'; the cleaners came to personify those 'who hunger... for righteousness'. Eight poems in all, with a beginning and an end, then over to Helen...

...Who had her work cut out for her. She told me: "I was dismayed... until I got to grips with the challenge properly – liberated by your willingness to offer drastic changes in the interests of the music."

On a practical level, the flexibility on both sides is perhaps what served the project best: in the final version the lines of poetry are relatively intact, the score is magnificent.

The heart of the collaboration, I felt, was belief. Not only in the project, but in each other and the role that faith plays in our daily lives. Though we follow different paths, our individual commitment to deepening our understanding of the spiritual sphere gave us a common ground where we could meet, play and create. It was crucial. The more so because we didn't meet once while we were working together!

For me, the final blessing came when, as I was preparing a booklet containing the poems, I discovered the fabulous work of another Jesus alumna, Carys Davies, the porcelain maker. Carys who, in turn, had never met either of us, agreed to illustrate the poems because she treats much with time in her work with clay, her films and her calligraphy. In no time, it seemed, she sent images of pellucid plaques etched with lines of the poetry. There was also a wonderful hand-written version of the last chorus where the ink looks as though it has fresh spring rain shot through it.

We were lucky enough to get the first performance in before the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, when we could all be together in Jesus College chapel to hear the music. Sometimes it feels as though we only got there on a wing and a prayer. But such wings, such prayers.

Our individual commitment to deepening our understanding of the spiritual sphere gave us a common ground...

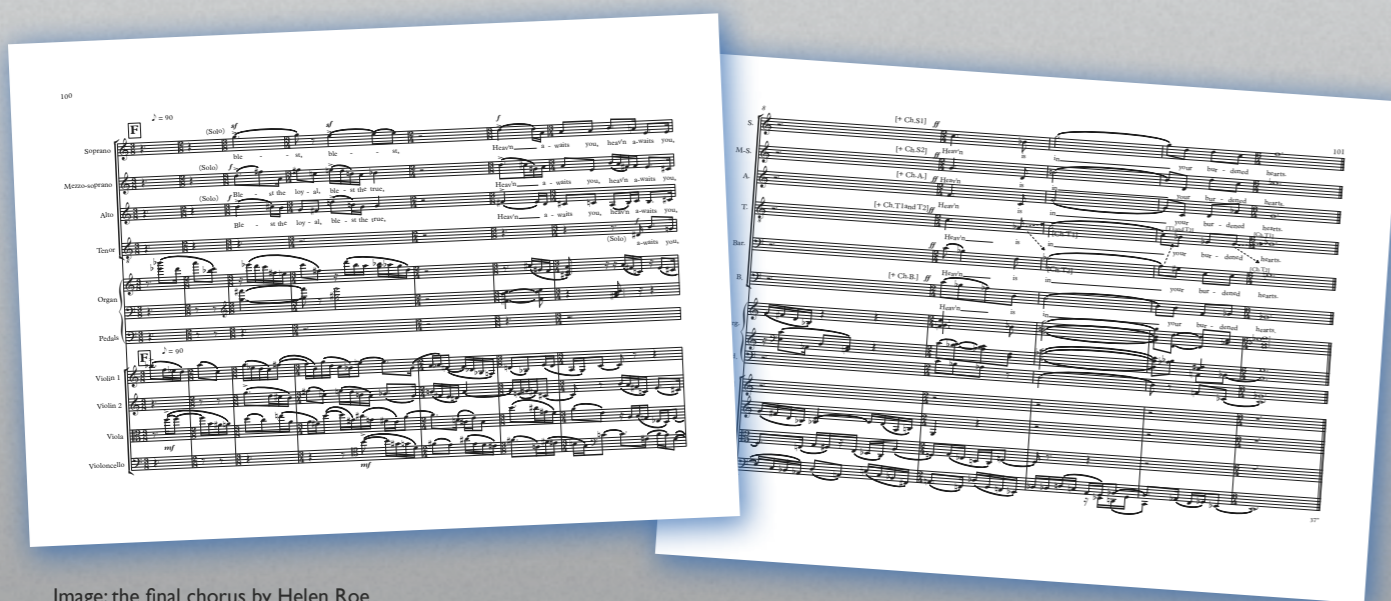


Image: the final chorus by Helen Roe

For further information please see:

www.helenroe.org.uk

www.carysdavies.wordpress.com

Rebecca is Poet in Residence with this magazine www.faithinitiative.co.uk

The poems for the Blessed Round are available in an illustrated booklet from beautifuldragons@icloud.com. Cost: donation to your charity of choice, P&P around £2.99 to UK, a little more elsewhere.

STONEMASON

I'm sent to rework God's good work for God.
My chisels chip His master strokes away,
slice limestone, cage granite, till the hills' might
is subject to my will and my small skill;

but as I hitch the hammer to my belt
and test the level of this rock made square,
my chapped hand shakes in case the good Lord sees
offence in what I do, the way I seek

to take the gifts He gave us and improve
on His perfection; my wife calls me a fool
– says the clerestory's beauty lets sinners know
the majesty of He who gave us breath;

in church they learn to praise Him properly.
I speak no Latin, stutter prayers, half-dumb
in my own tongue before my God. But near
my stones, or in the refuge of my yard

I seem to hear the voice, silent and strong
that's there and not there just the same.
*Stonecutter, show the people of your town
the subtle beauties of the earth and skies*

*which alter all the time and not at all
and let them know the sanctuary of love.*

Then shaping rocks, down on my knees, I know
though I'm no more than gravel, I am seen.

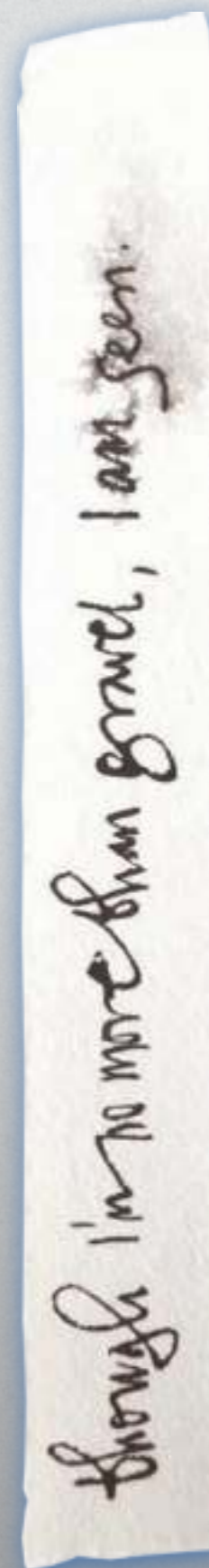


Image: Carys Davies

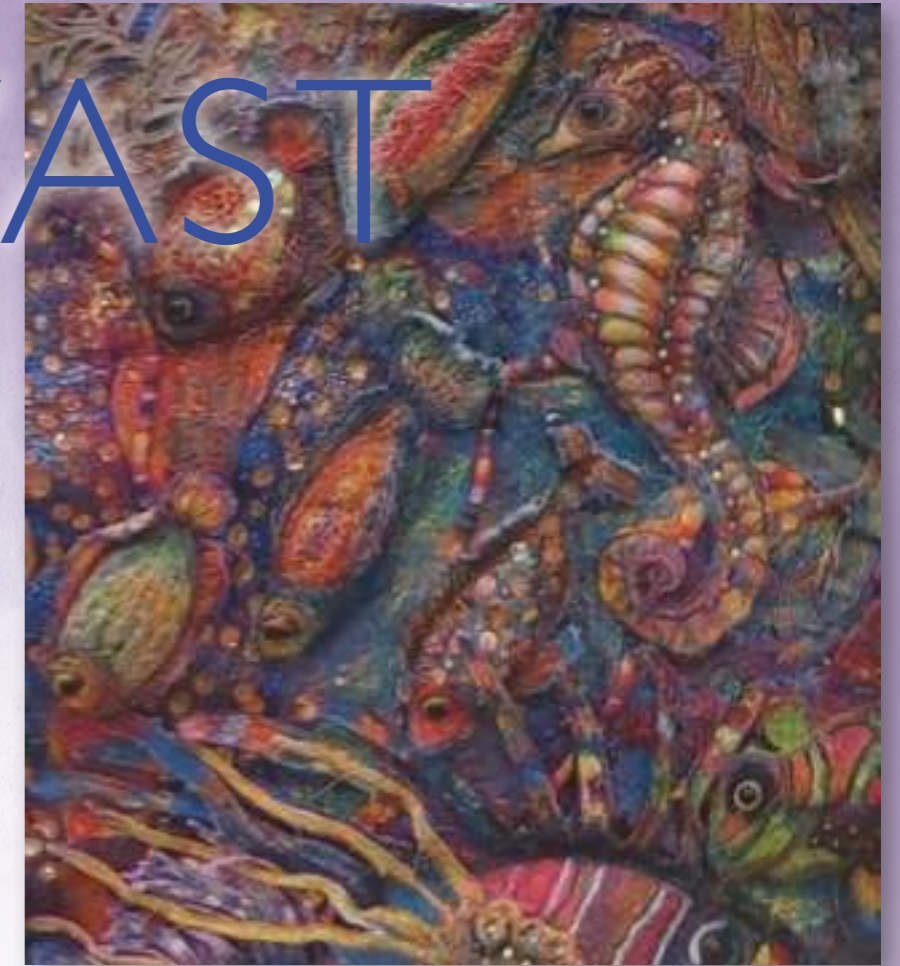
OF Oceans

SO VAST

Our seas and oceans are being suffocated by plastic pollution. Photographs of once idyllic beaches are seen choked by vast swathes of plastic which is brought in on the tide. Images of sea creatures that have ingested the plastic, or become entangled in it, are shocking examples of how humankind is destroying the fragile marine ecosystem.

As an artist I was drawn to this issue when responding to an exhibition brief titled: 'Fragility'. I had recently seen photographs which compared the glory of the Great Barrier Reef in years gone by with the devastation caused by the actions of human beings. Warmer temperatures, created by carbon pollution, lead to coral bleaching, with a 2002 survey showing

the enormity of plastic pollution became a real focus for me...



Fade Out (detail)



Fade Out



And Two Fishes

LANGUAGE



Fade Out 2

Nikki Parmenter is a textile / mixed media artist based in Poynton in Cheshire. She specialises in large scale, brightly coloured and heavily embellished wall pieces and sculptures. She taught art in secondary schools for 30 years and now provides talks, workshops and demonstrations to various groups, societies and schools. You can see more of Nikki's work on her website www.nikkiparmenterartworks.com and her Facebook page [Nikki Parmenter Artworks](https://www.facebook.com/NikkiParmenterArtworks). An exhibition titled "Floralia" at Gawthorpe Hall in Padiham near Burnley, Lancashire will be on view when the National Trust opens its properties at the end of the Covid-19 lockdown. Please check their website for further information: www.nationaltrust.org.uk

that over 50% of reefs have experienced the phenomenon. This, combined with sediment, pesticides, river catchment run off and even chemicals from sun cream are affecting the health of the Reef.

My response to this potential disaster culminated in a textile based piece, **Fade Out**: the image depicts the flora and fauna from the Reef. The lower section has fishes swimming amongst vividly coloured corals and seaweed. A Lionfish dominates the left hand section, surrounded by smaller creatures which teem across the image, swimming through bright azure waters. However, as the fishes swim up towards the surface, they become pale, ragged and faded. The sea through which they swim is insipid, and the once colourful corals and seaweed are tattered and threadbare. Hidden amongst the creatures are fragments of plastic. A jelly fish links the upper and lower sections, its colour gradually draining as it rises to the surface.

I have used a variety of media in this piece, including fabrics, plastics, hand and free machine embroidery. The sea creatures have been drawn onto calico, painted and then hand sewn. The water in the lower section is made with brightly coloured fabrics, whereas the upper area is a collage of torn calico, old lace and cellophane. Whilst making this image the enormity of plastic pollution became a real focus for me, and I decided that my next piece of work would look more specifically at this pressing issue.

And Two Fishes is made entirely of plastics. The focal point, two Koi Carp, is based on a work by Japanese painter and printmaker, Katsushika Hokusai. The Koi Carp swim together through swirling waves, surrounded by a frame with quotations

sewn into it. "And Two Fishes," a biblical quotation, refers to the distant past when the oceans were unsullied by the actions of humankind. The three remaining statements in the piece are by natural historian, David Attenborough, who reminds us of the vastness of the problem facing the planet, and our ultimate responsibility to put things right.

And Two Fishes has been constructed using two layers of crystal clear PVC, between which I have sandwiched pieces of iridescent cellophane. Having first drawn the fish onto the plastic using a permanent marker, I then free machine embroidered the detail using black and white thread. For the water I employed a similar method, but this time used blue plastics including sweet wrappers. The result is a dramatic statement with a strong, urgent message.

Fade Out 2 is an extension of the previous two images. I have again referenced the creatures from the Reef, this time realising them all using the plastic entrapment method. The faded colours at the top become gradually more intense towards the ocean bed. A muted seahorse swims through pale waters, and a lobster can be seen amongst the plastic corals and seaweed. I have used iridescent domed sequins to form bubbles in the water, and there are four circular 'flowers' which have been constructed by weaving human hair around flexi combs.

The creation of these images has sprung from a deeply held hope that they will provide inspiration for open discussions by those people who see the work, and, ultimately, positive action to tackle the ongoing catastrophic pollution of our seas and oceans.



Fade Out 2 (detail)

Holy Trinity Croft House

Turn left outdoors, as entering a Eucharist.
 Morning is consecrated; tide, silvered chalice
 as swilled by a priest's wrist, surf laced around her surplice.
 High water, elevated, skids the island

Where pain began, where many came for healing;
 a sunlit cottage, shadowed by evening panelling.
 Its chapel, with its one-armed crucifix,
 held stories, written of costs, and restoration.

Afterwards, try to recall what made it blessed:
 mist sheathing ridge, crumb-scatter of whitewashed crofts,
 a curlew celebrating through its choir of moorland;
 grey index finger profile, North, to Lewis.

All that was morning, breeze young as white hours.
 Evening brought peeled-back, raw wound end of day;
 bloodshot, scar tissue sky, a bandaged West;
 and the woman, guardian of this house of prayer,
 crossing low fields with her dogs for a conversation.

Martyn Halsall

*Croft House is on the Isle of Skye and was a Christian Retreat Centre,
 it is now in private ownership and no longer available for healing ministry.
 The poem Holy Trinity Croft House is the first in a collection
 relating to a Christian experience of cancer.*

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Editorial Note from Heather Wells

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LOCKDOWN
Art

faith INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY



I live in Queens, New York. I have to work from home because of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since I have all the time in the world now, I spend hours reading, practicing watercolour paintings and thinking about life. I discovered a video of someone harvesting honey from a beehive; the practice seemed so beautiful and pure that it comforted me and lifted my spirits. I also realised that bees are truly amazing creatures and that human activities are threatening them. So, I decided to paint a bumblebee and share it with my friends. Not only was it good painting practice for me, but also by sharing my interest in bees, I can spread awareness for the need to save them.

Elly Zhang
24.3.20



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LIGHTING UP THE DARKNESS

THE HINDU VOICES OF TOMORROW

In Hinduism, the greatest darkness feared is that of ignorance. From the extensive ancient scriptures, the Vedas, transcribed in Sanskrit, to their excerpts and renditions in the Hindu way of life today, all pray to God for the light of knowledge.

The Gayatri Mantra known to the majority of Hindu children worldwide states:

"We meditate on the glory of that Being who has produced this universe; may He enlighten our minds."
- translation by Swami Vivekananda

The other cornerstone of Hindu philosophy lies in the realisation that everything flows in and out of one, and therefore every existence tangible or intangible is an indivisible part of a whole – hence the formation of the boundaries and interconnectedness of every discipline on the basis of the concept of Yoga (or union). Yoga stretches from the physical body to the mind to the anatomy to wider biosciences to the definition of territory and space to its manifestation as atoms to their structure and their relation to the cosmos and beyond. It flows naturally that all teachings ensure the cycles of the Hindu trinity of creation, maintenance and destruction.

Echoing the distant voices of their ancient ancestors, these children utter "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "for the human community" and not the individual.

Dr.Chintamani Rath, learned in Sanskrit literature highlights a message as he writes this Vedic shloka from Sukla yajurveda (36-17).

This is key to Hindu thought on the relationship between humans, the planet and the cosmos.

Let there be balance in the space ! Let there be balance in the sky !
Let there be peace on the earth ! Let there be calmness !
Let there be ! Let there be growth in the plants !
Let there be growth in the tree ! Let there be grace in the Gods !
Let there be bliss in the Cosmos ! Let there be balance in everything !
Let there be peace and peace ! Let such peace be with every one of us !
- translation by Rajib Sarmah

Rajib Sarmah, a professor of Sanskrit, highlights the resonance of the simplest words which carry the weight of the cosmos when placed in context within the holistic writings which stress the necessity of leaving the cycle of seasons uninterrupted.

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिर्दन्तरीवरः शान्तिः इमो
शान्तिराफः शान्तिरोमदृष्टः शान्तिः
मनसत्रयः शान्तिर्विद्वे देवाः शान्तिर्वसु
शान्तिः सर्वरः शान्तिः शान्तिरेव
शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

And so the thoughts of children brought up on the cusp of a British-Hindu culture, refract these rays from their eight thousand year old Indian heritage.

While the wind blows
Here and there
The Earth is crying in despair
Let's stop now and change

Abhinav Ranjan

GLOBAL WARMING

Global warming is the process of our planet heating up. This is largely caused by deforestation, farming, burning fossil fuels and pollution. Since 1981, the rate of increase has sped up to 0.32°c per decade. Global Warming is also increasing the heat and level of the seas and oceans. The oceans are getting a lot of heat. Due to the sun melting a lot of ice, the ice turns into water and increases the level of water. Pollution also plays a big part. Every few years, people create more and more better things, that will have good and bad impacts on a lot. Cars and vehicles are being used a lot. But some people who want to change this are trying to stop this and walk around where the places are close to home. Not just them, but anyone can do this. Deforestation is also a problem. When trees are cut down, a huge amount of carbon dioxide is released. Carbon dioxide affects global warming. Nowadays, builders are cutting down trees to construct more shelters. In conclusion, humans are destroying the world slowly without even realising it. But people can stop by doing a little thing, such as walking or cycling to local places.

Shruti Naikwadi

As colossal trees begin to decrease
Carbon dioxide arsons worldwide
Deforestation for Earth's cremation
Greenhouse brasses in fancy penthouses
Leading Global to Chernobyl warming
Rise people common and leaders
Till breath do us a fresh start

Lakshya Ahluwalia



CLIMATE CHANGE

Do you know what climate change is? Do you know how it is affecting the Earth?

When we talk about climate change, we are talking about how increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide, produced by the use of fossil fuels, is slowly but quickly destroying our beloved Earth. This change became apparent from the mid-to-late 20th century. Here is the clear evidence of it: 11,000 years before the Industrial Revolution, the average temperature across the world was stable at around 14°C. But right now (20th - 21st century), the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has risen by 40%. This level of CO₂ is higher than at any time in the past 800,000 years.

So how will climate change affect us? There are many factors that will be affected: rising sea levels, droughts, and loss of agricultural land (farm land). Because of the rising temperature, the ice in the Antarctic and Greenland is melting; contributing to rising sea levels. This could lead to flooding of low-lying coastal areas (Bangladesh and Netherlands) and people can lose their homes. Plants, such as maize and sugarcane prefer cooler climates and can't grow in such high temperatures. Effect on changes in plant growth may lead to some countries not having enough food. Brazil, parts of Africa, south-east Asia, and China will be affected the most and people could die due to hunger and starvation.

We can still stop our Earth from being destroyed. Here are some things I suggest:

- Limiting the use of fossil fuels and replacing them with renewable and cleaner energy sources.
- Saying no to plastic - reduce your usage of plastic and use bags made of cloth; small changes can make big differences.
- Going car-free - go by walking or cycling. This is the most effective action an individual can take.
- Change your diet - you don't have to go completely vegetarian but can gradually become a 'flexitarian'. By doing this, you're cutting down more than 40% of your diets carbon footprint.

As you will all know, the current virus COVID-19 is affecting millions of people world-wide. But due to this, we are reducing our use of cars, since we are in a lockdown. This consequence is helping in healing the ozone layer. Scientists have noticed the big hole in the ozone layer becoming smaller. So, there is a positive side of COVID-19.

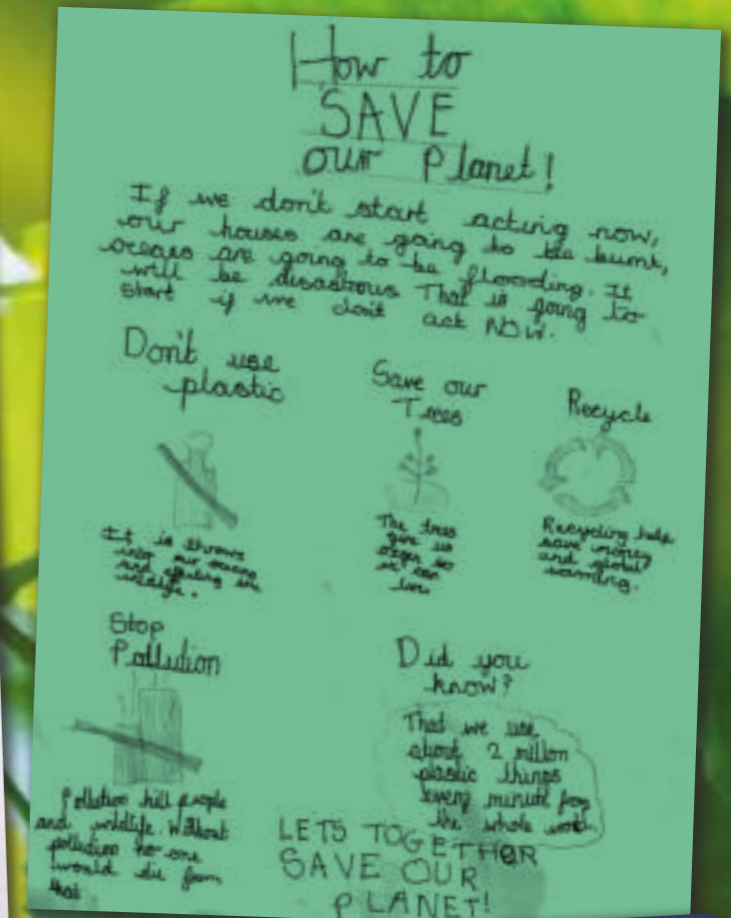
Chenab Pankhadiwala

Ancient teaching to be a son to the mother - the planet, and to punish those who hinder the natural cycle.

(compiled by the Hindu Society of Lancaster & Morecambe)



Tansi Ahluwalia



Aditi Naikwadi

As our ozone layer slowly disappears.
As more Co2 pollutes the earth
with their terrifying toxins.
As colossal trees vanish from earth.
Is this truly what we are worth?

The sands of time have rendered fear.
Blue skies on high no longer clear.
Stars were bright when they came.
Now dimmed, obscured, pollution's haze.

Broken bottles and charred pieces of glass,
Wadded up newspapers tossed on the grass,
Pouring of concrete and the destruction of trees.
This is the environment that surrounds me.

Crystal clear our waters gleamed.
Fish abundant, rivers streamed.
Ocean floors sandy white
Now littered, brown, pollutions plight.

One can't blame pollution alone.
As they say, you reap what you've sown.
So let us plant a better seed.
Tear out old roots cultivate, weeds.

Aayushi Ranjan

Reconfiguring, Contributing, Sustaining

How the Bahá'í Teachings Transform My Outlook on the Environment

Climate change has come to be regarded as one of the most urgent challenges that humanity faces. With extreme weather events leaving populations displaced, disturbances in habitats that are affecting indigenous wildlife, challenges in food production and water supplies, it is easy to understand the sense of fear that surrounds the issue of the environment. In light of this, humanity is having to ask itself how, as individuals and members of wider society, we can work together to build a pattern of behaviour conducive to a sustainable and harmonious relationship with the planet.

One thing is clear: people care. The affirmative action being taken by people from all backgrounds, ages, nationalities and belief systems, is evidence of the fact that climate change is an issue being taken seriously. Young people in particular seem to have a specific focus on finding ways to live in harmony with the natural world, reconfiguring structures and behaviours in order to realign our relationship with the environment. Of course, this kind of reconfiguration requires not just exciting events, but a long term commitment to a process of deep

reflection – a process that is universally accessible, creating a space where a common vision unfolds.

Religion can play a vital role in setting such a process in motion. Some of the values and qualities that will be at the heart of such a profound reflection, such as working for the welfare of others, sacrifice, trust and generosity, have long been elicited by religion. As a member of the Bahá'í Faith, I believe that the principles enshrined in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, which develop the spiritual and intellectual capacities of individuals and communities, can have profound implications on climate change. Principles include the oneness of humanity, the centrality of justice to all human endeavours, the harmony between science and religion, and the integration of worship and service. Not only does faith provide us with a set of teachings that inspire our actions, but provides the motivation and self-discipline needed to translate them into social reality. If these principles are taken into account when framing the question of climate change, they could provide insight into new formulations of individual and collective life.



Young people in particular seem to have a specific focus on finding ways to live in harmony with the natural world



We must start to re-examine our approach to material possessions and profit, we must re-examine our patterns of life

One of the contributions of religion to the climate question may be in helping to redefine the modes of speech that frame the discourse. Often, the conversations surrounding climate change can be charged, politically and emotionally, in ways that might curtail the ability to overcome this worldwide challenge. Moving away from the adversarial frameworks of debate and deliberation, and towards a more consultative and collaborative approach, may support an alternative process of exploration and decision making that focuses on points of agreement and fosters systematic action. The Bahá'í principle of consultation may offer some insight here: consultation allows for a diversity of perspectives, whilst promoting unity and trust. Abdu'l-Bahá,

the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith describes the prerequisite qualities one must possess in a process of consultation; "They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views". With these values first and foremost, the process of collective exploration could be both more inclusive and more conducive towards finding a constructive, collective vocabulary for talking about climate change.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges to transforming our relationship with the natural world is the insatiable appetite for luxury comforts that permeates the culture of so many areas in the world. From a young age, we are taught that the source of happiness lies in the acquisition of material goods, that the secret to success lies in competition and that greed is a rational feeling that should be harnessed for economic gain. It is clear that with any endeavour, when one group of people prioritise their own interests above that of the collective, lasting social progress is inhibited. These assumptions have consequences for our planet and for our approach to alleviating the deepening environmental crisis. In order to begin to address the issue, we must start to re-examine our approach to material possessions and profit, we must re-examine our patterns of life.

An essential element of this re-examination is also a reconsideration of how we view our identity as human beings and our place in the world. If we conceive of our identity as fundamentally spiritual in nature, and are conscious that we are born noble, and have the ability to express the names and attributes of God, our relationship with the environment will naturally change. We no longer think of ourselves as individual economic units, but our lives become an arena to express such qualities as honesty, generosity and selflessness. We no longer define progress as the acquisition of material things, but as contributing meaningfully to community life through service to others. If we are to work for the welfare of humanity, it becomes incoherent to focus primarily on extracting a profit from the Earth's resources. If we want to be compassionate, it becomes

incoherent to dismiss the way that our behaviours will affect people across the world. If we are to focus on justice, it becomes incoherent to focus on material acquisition to the detriment of others. If we are conscious of the interdependence of all things, it becomes incoherent to treat the earth disrespectfully. Our actions as individuals have consequences for the planet, so transforming our habits is key to ensuring a harmonious relationship with nature. Again, religion can be a catalyst for bringing about such a change in the life of an individual.

For meaningful change to occur, however, it is not just individuals that have to rethink personal choices, but communities and institutions that create policies. The principle of the oneness of humanity, the fundamental teaching of the Bahá'í Faith, implies a total reconceptualisation of the relationships between individuals and societal institutions. According to the environmental non-profit Carbon Disclosure Project, just 100 companies are responsible for 71% of global emissions. Lasting progress, therefore, is reliant on the efforts of the whole structure of society, including governments and businesses. With each layer of society, the individual, community and the institutions working to support sustainable modes of living, conscious that the betterment of the climate will mean a greater quality of life for everyone, we can begin to face the environmental challenge.

If we are conscious of the interdependence of all things, it becomes incoherent to treat the Earth disrespectfully



The perils of climate change ominously looms over this generation of youth like storm clouds



Bahá'ís and their friends, in neighbourhoods all around the world, are striving to build vibrant communities based on the unifying teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Through a process of study, action and reflection on the world's sacred scriptures, people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds, are engaging in their own spiritual growth and building the capacity to serve others. In this way, personal and social transformation, which deeply affect each other, go hand in hand. Efforts to contribute to environmental protection are often grassroots initiatives that seek to promote the social and material well-being of all people. The junior youth spiritual empowerment programme is another such activity that encourages thoughtful discernment for young people in a world where the pull of materialism grows more insistent. The groups empower them to think critically about injustices in

the world and contribute to the betterment of their community through acts of service, such as beautifying public spaces or encouraging residents to recycle.

Currently, the perils of climate change ominously looms over this generation of youth like storm clouds. Desiring to live harmoniously with nature, far from representing emotionally and vaguely placed hope, is imperative. But religion has the power to transform individual and collective attitudes towards the planet and the relationships that sustain society. The fact that scores upon scores of people are embracing spiritual principles and finding creative ways to give expression to them, instils great hope and assurance. We should take heart in the efforts of individuals, communities and institutions around the world to chart a sustainable path towards prosperity.

Changing Rhythms



Some years ago, I watched a television programme about a group of men who temporarily went to live in Worth Abby, a Benedictine monastery. They were not necessarily religious people but for various reasons had decided they wanted the experience of a monastic lifestyle, and a retreat from their own lives. They were removed completely from their normality and were not allowed connection with the outside world during their stay. Many of the men struggled initially as they tried to readjust to a new way of life, particularly slowing down and living a more peaceful and quieter life. The Abbot shared with one of the men how he too had struggled to readjust when he first came to the monastery. He explained that over time he had come to find his own rhythm, leaving behind the relentless rhythm of day to day living forced on us all in the outside world, surrounded by noise. He said that getting to recognise his own natural rhythm was a truly amazing experience, and expressed a kind of sadness that so many people today would never get the chance to know their own rhythm, because they are so caught up in a fast-paced busy-ness. I have never forgotten this conversation and it has often come to mind during lockdown, perhaps because in some ways, lockdown has been retreat-like, albeit out of necessity rather than choice.

During this rather strange time, I have tried to be aware, if not truly know, my own rhythm. Whilst still having to meet work demands, and expectations of life outside my home, I have tried hard to slow down the busy-ness of my life, and shut out intrusive sounds. Gradually, internally, I have begun to recognise a changing rhythm in myself, one that I have truly not acknowledged before, and nature has played a large part in that.

This more natural rhythm has found me taking unplanned walks around our neighbourhood in the late afternoon, accompanied by my dog. As we walk down the avenue towards the shore, I am conscious of, and inspired by, chalk drawings and painted messages created by local children. I sense a closeness of the community. I can't say I truly know my own rhythm yet, I'm still discovering it, but what I do know is that I do not want to revert back to any other rhythm that drowns out my own. And that is perhaps for me, a silver lining that I can be grateful for.

Lorna Douglas

During lockdown I miss all the fun activities I used to do and all the fun places I used to go such as swimming, picnics and camping. The things I have liked is having dinner together every night and not having to get up early for school. I have enjoyed watching everyone walking passed our house and waving.

Claudia age 7

During lockdown I've mostly been having fun playing in our garden with my sister, and going for walks or cycles once a day, it's also been good not having to get up so early for school! I've missed seeing my friends during lockdown, and going to activities during the week. We have a jar in the house that we have been filling with notes of ideas of things we would like to do once lockdown ends - I can't wait to do some of these fun things!

Elijah age 10

During this crisis, I think the hardest part for us has been lockdown. Not being able to see friends has made us feel sad and lonely and everyday just feels the same, as we're not able to go to school or clubs. However it helps understand how children from generations before us may have felt at the time of World War I and II. A positive to come from this situation is that it makes you realise how grateful we are for our essential workers and how we should continue to support them once the current crisis is over.

Suilven age 12 & Ada age 10



Music

A BRIDGE TO THE DIVINE

As a research student of Hinduism, I have a special interest in musicology and have spoken with the gharanas (families) of musicians, antique collectors of music and musical instruments, and many manufacturers of these instruments in an endeavor to study the obscure history of musicology/ethno-musicology and its connection to the cultural heritage of Pakistan. My detailed study of Indian religion has illustrated to me that music or *sangeet* is not only a complimentary part of Indian religion but is sacred in itself, and its performance - vocal, instrumental or dance - is an act of devotion, not only to the divine but also to the art of music.

Music has the ability to affect our emotions, our intellect and our psychology: it can assuage our loneliness or incite our passions. The Greek philosopher Plato suggested in his famous book *The Republic*, that music has a direct effect on the soul, and therefore, in an ideal state, music should be closely regulated. Hence music was compulsory at all levels of education in ancient Greek and Roman culture: and in India, music has been part of academia down the ages. In our local musical traditions, the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Upanishads* and other religious texts have provided knowledge of music and musical instruments throughout history.

The collection of musical instruments and its display in the Lahore Fort Museum is the result of an extensive undertaking to revive traditional musical instruments, and the art forms of music. This unique collection of musical instruments has taken 10 years of dedication, enthusiasm and of course, funding from various sources, to be turned from a dream into a reality. Its monetary value can only be estimated, as many of the objects are priceless, but given the antiquarian nature of the objects the true value must lie in its display at the Museum, and its availability for study.

Music is a mystery; trace its origin and we arrive at God: indeed, music creates a bridge between humanity and the divine. Music and faith have always been known to share a deep relationship with each other, our traditions boast a vast repertoire that comprises of songs which are meant to praise, invoke, please and plead to the supreme divine being, whether named as God, Allah, Rama, Rahim.

The discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization (3500-1500 BC), with its twin capital cities, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa in Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan respectively, is considered a benchmark in civilization, and a turning point in the ancient history of mankind. The civilization has itself been scrutinized and studied, but the musical context of this culture has not been fully explored. Musical instruments such as arched or bow shaped harp and several varieties of drums, some castanets and

cymbals (metal plates used for rhythm instruments), blowing whistles and terracotta balls (Borindos) have been identified from small figurines of terracotta. Pictographs and hieroglyphs also show Dhol (longdrums) and harps on the seals that were probably used by the traders and merchants of this civilization.



Cymbals

The famous bronze statuette of a dancing girl (original in Delhi Museum) represents a class of temple dancer carrying a musical instrument. The 'Khanjari' (small percussion single hand drum) clearly indicates the presence of music in Indus Valley Civilization. Evidence of *Rudra* (name of god) worship during this period has also been found, *Rudra* was later to become known as *Shiva*, who was the supreme deity of dance, drama and music.



Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro

With its historical and deep-rooted religious tradition, Indian mythology specifically has held music to be of divine origin since the Vedic Age 1500BC – 500AD. *Narade* the sage singer, *Saraswati* the goddess of music, art and learning, Bharata the author of *Natya Shastra*, who drew up rules for

theatrical music and dance. Its chapters on music contain descriptions of various classes of musical instruments. *Shiva*, *Saraswati*, *Krishna*, *Ganesh*, are the gods associated with music, some ragas and musical instruments are also named after these deities.



Shri Krishna Playing Flute



Saraswati, Goddess of Music, Art and Learning

Music is a mystery; trace its origin and we arrive at God

Valuable insights into the evolution of music can also be gained from Buddhist literature and sculptural art in Indo-Pak region. The language used in religious texts like *Theragatha* and *Therigatha*, is conducive to music making. The *Jatakas* tale (life story of Lord Buddha), written in Pali around 300 Bc about the previous births of Buddha, describes Buddhist monks singing and dancing to the accompaniment of musical instruments: they contain a wealth of material of musicological interest.

Hindustani art music began to evolve in the Medieval period, the socio-religious and cultural patterns of this region transformed a new identity with the fusion of Arabic and Persian school of thoughts. Islam established its roots while offering it as a faith and consolidated its super structure as a state religion.

The Sufi Muslim saints and sages secured a firm foothold in the Indian Subcontinent, with their great love for music and acceptance of many indigenous customs. Hazrat Ameer Khusro (1255-1325 AD) was the legendary poet, composer and musician of that period, and spent times in the court for as many as ten different Muslim rulers of India.

During the Mughal period (1526-1858 AD) and particularly under Akbar's reign (1556-1605 AD), the temple music took a back seat and *durbur sangeet* (court music) came into being and music was composed to the pattern of eulogies. Information about music in Akbar's court came from the historically written volume *Ain-e-Akbari* of Abul Fazal (1551-1602 AD): a courtier and close companion of Akbar the great. There were numerous musicians in the court. i.e. Hindus, Persians, Kashmiries, Central Asian and Bangalis both men and women. All these vocalists and instrumentalists were headed by the legendary Mian Tansen (1538-1610 AD).

The singers mostly chanted different *ragas* and *alapas* (genre of music). The main musical instruments, as also depicted in various miniature paintings of that era, were *sawar mandal*, *bin*, *karna* and *tanpura*. Akbar's court witnessed to a complete fusion of the Persian and Indian musical traditions. Mughal emperors Jahangir ruled (1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (ruled 1627-1658 AD) were genuinely interested and inspired by the court music and both generously patronized this art form.

Music in Indo-Pak especially has been through a metamorphosis in the last four centuries. This modern period mentions an increasing number of musicological works in Persian, Urdu, Hindi and other regional languages, instead of Sanskrit. From the beginning of 19th century, many Indian scholars, musicologists and art historians, began to publish material on Indo-Pak music in English as well in local vernaculars. That was a welcoming addition to the works of the early British Indologists. The book *Music and Musical Thought in Early India*, by Lewis Rowell, and another historical document, the *Rise of Ethnomusicology*, are valuable resources on Indian music for the musicologist Joep Bor. These books offer a broad perspective of the philosophy, theory and aesthetics of early Indian musical ideology, and make a unique contribution to our knowledge of the ancient foundation of India musical culture. Lewis Rowell constructs the tuning, scales, modes, rhythm, gestures, formal patterns, and genres of Indian music from Vedic times to the 13th century,

presenting not so much a history as a thematic analysis and interpretation of India's magnificent musical heritage.

In early 20th century, two persons revolutionized the Indian music i.e. Pandit V.D.Paluskar (1872-1931) and Pandit V.N. Bhatthande (1860-1937) Paluskar introduced the first music college, he gave a new perspective to the education and propagation of music. Since medieval time music in India has changed so considerably that no correlation or correspondence was possible between Sanskrit musicological texts and the music practiced in modern times. It was Bhat Khande who bridged this enormous gulf. He defined grammatical structures, historical evolution, performance norms and aesthetic criteria relevant to Hindustani music. All India Radio established in 1924 and radio Pakistan founded in 1964 also contributed a lot for the preservation as well as the promotion of the real spirit of musical tradition of Indo-Pakistan.



Percussion Instruments

Percussion or membranophones are instruments in which the sound is made by the vibration of stretched membrane or skin. Evidences of using musical drums at least 5000 years ago in Indus Valley Mohenjo-daro have been discovered. Many people consider drums to have magical and ritual significance. Drums are also important signaling and battle instruments, as well as being popular for accompanying singing and dancing. They are of varied shape and sizes i.e cylindrical, conical drums, barrel and waisted drums, goblet and footed drums, long drums, frame drums, friction drums, kettledrums, orchestral and band drums.



Blowing Instruments/Aerophones or Sushira Vadya

Blowing or wind instruments, *Sushira vadya* in Sanskrit, are those in which the sound is produced by the vibration of a column of air blown into an open cylindrical tube. Instruments are classified according to how the vibration is generated, this includes flute, reeds, cup mouthpiece instruments. Since the Stone Age flutes have been endowed with magical significance. Reed instruments originated in the east.

Among the four kinds of instruments the first and most natural is the simple common act of whistling, which is very primitive. The first roaring or shouting by humans into megaphones cut from a hollow branch of wood, tree trunk or a large cone was not an attempt to attain a musical sound, but to distort the natural voice, and to produce a harsh sound in order to frighten evil spirits.

The whistling, mouth megaphones, Conch shell *Sankh* domestic blow tubes, could have been early wind instruments. This may lead us to the conclusion that non-musical applications are often the parents of musical instruments. Pre-historic instruments found so far are whistles, bone trumpets and bone flutes.

Paleolithic wind instruments were bone flute without finger holes, later on we come across flutes with holes as well as conch shells and much younger are the metallic aero phones. Indus Civilization and its latest excavations have thrown ample light on clay whistle wind instruments. The most ancient of the blowing instruments of Pakistan which is also in vogue in Sindh province is "Borendo" excavated from Mohenjo-daro in 1920 by the archeologist John Marshall.



Stringed Instruments/Chordophones or *Tata Vadya*

String instruments/chordophones or *tata vadya* are most popular of all Classical and Folk instruments. The basic principles of the string instrument is that a length of gut, wire, silk or horse hair, held in tension between two points is made to vibrate when plucked either with fingers, or by means of a plectrum or *mizrab*, emitting sound. This sound is hardly audible, so a sound box is provided within the instrument to amplify it. The fundamental characteristic of instruments in this lute family is the roundish, pear shaped body and the long neck giving it a romantic appearance. The important differences include the relative length of body and neck, the shape the number of strings and frets. These instruments are beautifully decorated with engravings and inlay work. Most of the Indo-Pak strings instruments are played in accompaniment to vocal Folk music, *timbal* music, and classical mystic music.

There are various theories about the origin and evolution of stringed instruments. Some have traced the source to the hunting bow, some to ground harps and some to bamboo zithers. The hunting bow is an ancient

and familiar tool, and many harps are believed to have evolved out of this.

There are three major classes of stringed instruments, one group of these is not used for creating a melody or a raga but is employed as drones and rhythmic adjuncts. Another family which we may term polychords, comprise of instruments such as the *Sarangi*, *Sitar* and *Rubab*, on which melody can be played: and then there are the monochord instruments, such as the *Ektara*, where one string is sufficient for playing a whole melody.



Rhythm Instruments, *Ghana Vadya*, Solid Chimed or Idiophone

The primitive rhythm instrument *Ghana Vadya* was, naturally, the human body itself, through clapping hands, the slapping of thighs and hips and the stamping of feet feelings of pain or pleasure were released. Instruments such as clappers, castanets, *danda* (rode) bells, (gongs) and cymbals were developed later.

They are usually considered as not capable of producing definite pitches that are required for creating a melody and that is why you will not find many of them in classical music. The sounds produced by *Ghana Vadya* instruments are short-lived and hence

better suited for *Tala* (measured beating), as in tribal music. Rhythm instruments are used as accompaniment to other musical instruments, as well as for dancing and singing, embroidering a basic rhythm, thus making a significant contribution to music making. The role of these instruments in Indo-Pak folk music is particularly significant.



Anjum Javed Dara, was born in Badhomalhi, District Narowal in 1968, and moved with his family to Lahore in 1980. He mastered in History/Archaeology from Punjab University. He was appointed Assistant Curator in Department of Archaeology and Museum, Government of Pakistan and has served in various capacities at Historical/Archaeology Sites and Monuments in Pakistan.

EVAPORATION

Mist! Twirling, swirling, creeping, winding,
 Omnipresent, enveloping all things in shadow?...
 Not everything. Ourselves, rising, we contemplate
 The world of cloud beneath us.
 Sunlit scenes emerge, triumphant.
 Below, the valley steams like a great cauldron.
 Sun glimmers through a fog of tranquillity.
 A shivering chill caresses our faces, shoulders.
 Contours are softened, lose their bold aggressiveness.
 The world becomes gentler, leaving room for mystery, for dreams.
 Why hurry so! Slow down, ponder, be still,
 Accept uncertainty. A time for brightness,
 And a time for all to become dim, less clear.
 Perhaps it is good, that way. Welcome, mist!

Sister Katharine Holmstrom

Photograph taken in the highlands of the Philippines by David Rose



IB



IC

Panel IB (top): My mother's family in East Prussia 1914 - c1924
Panel IC (below): My mother's family in Dresden 1924- 1936

DISSENT AND DISPLACEMENT

Dissent and Displacement is about narrative and testament, identity and memory. It is about how we construct and interpret history and create meaning. As an artist I am committed to the retelling of our stories in an accessible and innovative form. I believe this helps us understand who we are and offers a space in which to consider how to move forward.

The youngest of three, I was born, shortly after the Queen's Coronation, to German-Jewish refugee parents, growing up in London close to Hampstead Heath. There was a bookshelf in the house holding the *Nurnberg Trials* transcripts and Winston Churchill's *History of the Second World War*. We did not need these books 'to know'; the shadow of my parents' displacement, the Holocaust and loss of my father's family: World War II fell over much of our daily life. We were enveloped in memory and ritual. Our Lutyens house had been modernised in the style of the 'Bauhaus'. We ate apple strudel off Rosenthal china with silver cutlery. My brothers and I played the Blüthner grand piano and heard Schubert lieder on the gramophone. My mother translated and taught German, a language she loved and used with her husband and all their social circle. Being Jewish was never a religious practice, we did not belong to a synagogue or observe the holidays, it was a cultural identity. My parents were enduringly grateful for the refuge that Britain had offered them, considered themselves highly assimilated, and yet fondly referred to 'the English' as people who were entirely different from them.

This upbringing was, of course, on a collision course with growing up in London in the 1950s and 1960s. I did my utmost to detach myself from it, becoming a rebellious teenager and a politicised student. My lengthy education included an MA in Art History at Sussex University under Norbert Lynton, and another in painting at the Royal College of Art, under the formidable Peter de Francia: both these influential mentors were refugees. I emerged from my studies at the age of 28 and had a diverse career as an artist, writer and curator; as a mature student I studied printmaking. In 2006 I opened a gallery both actual and virtual www.printroom.studio which continues.

My interest in family stories, particularly those of Jews and refugees, is long standing and for many years I conducted oral histories for the British Library's National Life Stories, focussing on significant figures in the art world; most of them refugees and all of them Jews. Eventually I directed my gaze to my own family and their complicated and often untold stories. Although I was too late to record them in person orally, I did possess an extensive and remarkable archive. In 2013 I went to work in the city print studio in Dresden, my mother's hometown. These prints became *'Indelible Marks: the Dresden Project'*, shown in 2014 at the Kreuzkirche Gallery in Dresden, Germany for the 70th commemoration of the bombing of that city, and at the Herbert Museum, Coventry, UK in 2015 -2016 for the 75th commemoration of that bombing. I also made a large print installation *'75/70 The Coventry Dresden Towers'* for Coventry Cathedral. All of these can be seen on www.monicapetzal.com



My grandmother Sofie with my mother Lore c 1918



My father Harry Petzal (left) with his brother Werner

It has taken many years of life experience for me to seriously re-evaluate the significance of my history and capture the stories that I have woven into Dissent and Displacement. That they encompass both my personal stories and the city of Leicester are no coincidence. I first came to Leicester in 1994 for an exhibition of the work of Conrad Felixmüller, to which I had lent the work owned by my grandparents. Leicester had also managed to borrow a privately owned Felixmüller painting of my grandmother, Sofie, which I had never seen: my grandfather had sold it in the 1960s. It was very odd to gaze at a painting of a woman I never knew, but whom I so closely resembled, down to the squint. I returned regularly to see the developing and formidable German Expressionist collection and the more I learned of the history of those who contributed towards it, the more the stories grew in my imagination.

Making prints is about the interaction of ideas and process. My way of working, which is slow and complex, involving a variety of processes, allows thoughts to change and develop.



My research has involved deciphering boxes of letters, documents and photos that I inherited, visits to libraries and record offices, and many a chance conversation. It has included journeys to Germany, Holland and Belgium, to many places where I was pleased to be, but to others where I could not bear to linger.

Although I was married to a Jew and have three Jewish children, I was never a traditional practicing Jew. However, I am an intensely identified and committed cultural Jew and work with various Jewish and refugee causes. In 2013 I was approached by the Dresden Trust www.dresdentrust.org a charity that works on reconciliation between

Britain and Saxony, and am now the Vice Chair. The same year after the referendum on membership of the EU was announced, I applied for, and was granted German citizenship, as a 'natural right', which extends to my children and grandchildren.

Dissent and Displacement has been three years' work, but the ideas have been in gestation all my life. It has been the most absorbing of projects, it has changed me, and there is more work to be done.



It has taken many years of life experience for me to seriously re-evaluate the significance of my history and capture the stories that I have woven into *Dissent and Displacement*

Panel 3E: Westerbork Internment Camp, Holland 1942-1944

3A



3C



Top: My father Harry Petzal in the British Army Pioneer Corp c 1941
 Panel 3A (left): My father's family Berlin 1908 onwards
 Panel 3C (right): My father's life as a young man in Germany 1921-1939

Dissent and Displacement is a book, a website www.dissentdisplacement.com and an exhibition, commissioned by Leicester New Walk Museum. At the core of the exhibition are 34 large lithographs and 2 digital prints made in 2019 and 2020, which are augmented by associated works of art and objects, including 20 works by the German Expressionist artist Conrad Felixmüller.

Faith and the Artist

Image with thanks to Anjum Javed Dara. Please see p 43 - 46



Saraswati, Goddess of Music, Art and Learning

Music expresses that which
cannot be said and on which it is
impossible to be silent.

Victor Hugo (1802-1885)