

faith

INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

If the strings on the instrument are set too tight,
then the instrument will not play harmoniously.

If the strings are set too loose,
the instrument will not produce music.

Only the middle way, not too tight and not
too loose, will produce harmonious music. *The Buddha*

DIVINE HARMONIES
Music of Faith

ENGAGING TOGETHERNESS
Interfaith in the Classroom

HAUNTING CONNECTIONS
The Art of Ahmed ElHassan

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
'Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!'

GATE OF THE YEAR



GATE OF THE YEAR

And he replied:
'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night
And he led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

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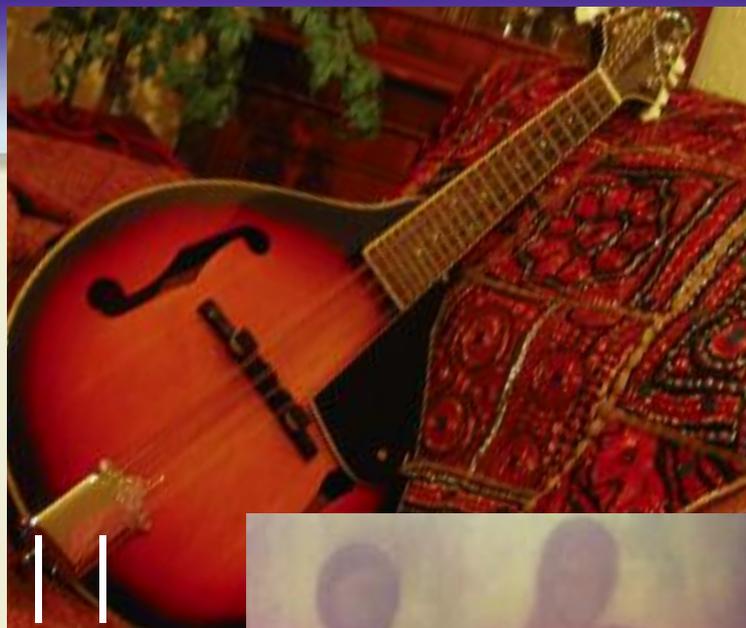
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editorial

These are exciting times for all involved in the magazine! In November 2005 Lorna Douglas, Jonathan Lockhart and myself took the decision to form Initiative Interfaith Trust through which this magazine will be nurtured and developed. In December we applied for funding to the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, a fund supported by the Cohesion and Faith Unit of the Home Office, and to the Charity Commission for charitable status. I'm delighted to tell you that we were advised by the Community Development Foundation in February that we have been awarded a grant to publish three issues of the magazine and develop our website; and in March we were advised that we have been granted charitable status. We feel that this is a tribute to the editorial group, to all writers, artists and poets for their contributions, and also to those private donors whose support means so much to us and without whom we would not survive. The magazine has now been renamed 'Faith Initiative' - which defines and celebrates our new identity - and it is with great pleasure that we offer you this celebratory issue.

It is wholly appropriate that we have chosen as our main theme Music of Faith for there can be no more joyous way to celebrate faith than through its music. Music is, of course, for playing, singing and for hearing, and yet our contributors convey clearly through the written word the sense of rapture experienced at the sacred sound; illustrating its capacity to evoke the spirit within us all. In his BBC Reith Lecture on Friday 7th April, the conductor David Barenboim spoke of the ephemeral nature of music, of how the first note rises out of silence, filling our space, and then, on its final note evaporates into silence. We are left only with the memory. Yet it seems that within that moment we are able to locate something mystical within ourselves, and truly sense what it is to be human. This reflection brings to mind a visit I made to Sri Meenakshi Temple in the pilgrimage city of Madurai, Tamil Nadu where I observed young couples visiting a stall selling brightly coloured bangles. Seemingly it is a tradition in South India that when a woman becomes pregnant her husband takes her to choose a wrist-full of bangles that will, as she goes about her daily life, create 'music' to soothe the baby in the womb. Powerful affirmation, I feel, of the Hindu conviction that ensoulment begins at the moment of conception, and that music has the capacity to pierce and nurture that soul.

It is with the nurture of our children in mind that we have given focus to education, and its magnificent potential to create a more harmonious society. Children are not born with prejudices, these are absorbed through external influences. If their learning environment is one in which prejudice does not feature, then acceptance of difference becomes the norm, and the horrors of daily racial and religious violence may become a thing of the past. From my own experience childhood friendships set a pattern for life.

The celebration of our new beginning expands to include a kaleidoscope of colour in the work of artists and photographers, also of poets and writers from many different traditions. Within the pages of the magazine we are taken on a shared journey that will hopefully culminate in joy and understanding.

Heather Wells

We gratefully acknowledge the grant received from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and the support from private donors, who wish to remain anonymous. Such funding makes publication and distribution of this magazine possible. We welcome and appreciate all donations and subscriptions.



www.faithinitiativemagazine.com

Initiative Interfaith Trust
registered charity No. 1113345

Trustees: Heather Wells, Lorna Douglas, Jonathan Lockhart

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.

Editorial team – Faith Initiative Magazine

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Aim: The aim of Faith Initiative Magazine is to open windows on the beliefs and practices of world religions, in the hope that this will foster understanding and reduce religiously motivated violence.

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

Invitation: We invite you to contribute articles, poems, letters, illustrations and responses so that the magazine reflects the religious communities it seeks to serve. Editorial guidance can be obtained from Heather Wells, PO Box 110, Lancaster LA2 6GN Email: hf_wells@yahoo.co.uk

Issue 16 Themes: Fasting & Prayer Beads

Front cover: Harp Image: Ailís Ní Ríain

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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



Educational consequences

If you ever go to Los Angeles, be sure to go to the Simon Weisenthal Museum of Tolerance, which covers not only the Holocaust but also black-white racism as well as conflicts in Asia. One of the best bits is at the very beginning, when you enter the foyer, buy your ticket and are then presented with two doors into the museum itself, one marked “For those who are tolerant” and the other marked “For those who are intolerant”. I like to think of myself as reasonably open-minded and so I chose the one marked “Tolerant” - and as I pushed the door handle, a lock clicked and a red light flashed up saying “Try the other door”.

It was a neat trick and made its point very well. However liberal we are in certain areas, there are others in which we are definitely not. To my shame, I found that out when my 14 year old brought home a friend from school. He had asked me the day before if Leon could come over and I said “sure” but what took me by surprise was that Leon was black and Muslim. I was momentarily shocked, because when I was at school I never had a black friend or a Muslim one, but I was delighted that my son had seen no need to tell me that Leon was black or Muslim, because he saw him as an ‘ordinary’ person.

This is the nub of my objection to the current rush to establish a greater number of faith schools, and with the government giving its backing to such demands by all the major religions.

The problem with faith schools is not their purpose but their consequences. They may be designed to inculcate religious values, but they result in creating religious ghettos, which can destabilise the social health of the country at large. Even those faith schools who genuinely try to reach out to the wider community and teach good citizenship still segregate Jewish, Muslim, Catholic children from each other and bring them up in what amounts to an educational apartheid system.

Lack of contact leads to ignorance of each other, which can breed suspicion and produce fear and hostility. The best way to know about members of other religions is not from books, but by mixing with them in person.

I want my children to sit next to a Sikh in class, play football in the break with a Methodist, do homework with a Hindu and walk to the bus-stop with a Muslim, and then enter their homes. That way they will see how much they have in common, realise where they differ, and find each other’s culture interesting rather than

threatening. It is equally important for Catholic and Muslim youngsters to understand why my children are Jewish and what that means.

Moreover, it is not just the children who are being cut off from each other in faith schools, but parents too, who will not meet and form friendships with mothers and fathers from other traditions at the school gate or sports days or PTA meetings. We need to work hard the opposite way, the more multi-faith Britain becomes, the more we have to ensure the different groups do not grow apart.

We have already had the warning notes. Following the riots in Bradford and Burnley, the Ouseley Report blamed part of the problem on the segregation in schools between different local communities. It was not the sole reason, but was a contributing factor.

We also saw the terrible scenes of Catholic children trying to battle their way through screaming ranks of Protestants to the Holy

Cross School in Belfast. Had thirty years ago those

*schools
should build
bridges
not erect
barriers*



Protestant parents, when they were children, mixed with Catholic children, they might have grown up knowing that Catholics are not demons but ordinary kids who share their crisps with you at lunch and enjoy skateboarding... and thirty years on those Protestants might not have been so fearful of Catholics and so hate-filled as to man the barricades against them.

In England itself, thankfully, we have not got such dire problems - but it seems madness to consciously lay the foundations that might lead to them.

By creating a range of separate faith schools, we will prevent integration and encourage separation. We have spent over a century ridding ourselves of class divisions, why now rush in and replace them with religious divisions?

Think of what is happening in Israel educationally, where each year thousands of schoolchildren are taken on an outing to Neve Shalom (Oasis of Peace) - the unique village where Jews and Arabs live together, work together, go to school together - precisely to break down social divisions. The schoolchildren are shown that it is no dream, but can work given the effort. Closer to home is Corymeela, a joint Catholic-Protestant centre in Ireland, where members of both communities have chosen to live side by side as an example to the rest of the country.

My preferred solution would be to encourage schools that are cross-religious, that are neither allied to one particular faith, nor do they regard religion as a waste of time. Instead, they treat faith seriously (including atheism) and acknowledge the richness of each tradition. At the same time, they should seek to replicate the undoubted achievements of some faith schools - be it academic success, parental involvement or moral climate - and harness them to a more inclusive environment.

Meanwhile the children should receive their own particular religious direction from the source which counts the most and has the greatest impact - the home. This can be supplemented by after-schools classes or weekend Religion School if parents so wish.

Of course the more tolerant and harmonious society is as a whole, the safer and more valued are its component parts, especially minority ones. All sectors will be better off if we keep up our own traditions, but study and play alongside each other, respecting differences but sharing common values.

This was highlighted in a haunting television programme made by the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn on returning to his pre-Holocaust

home in Eastern Europe. He pointed out that in his village, Jews and non-Jews were entirely separate communities, virtually never carrying on any activities together, and added that he felt this was partially why the non-Jews made no attempt to save the Jews

from deportation to Auschwitz : the Jews were just strangers within their midst. Hugo Gryn posed the question, "Might we have been saved, or at least had some co-operation from them, if the communities had been closer?"

Schools should build bridges not erect barriers. However good some faith schools are individually, collectively they are a recipe for social disaster. Leaders of all faiths should put aside religious self-interest and make national cohesion a higher priority.

At the same time, MPs who can see political advantage in supporting

local sectarian demands, should have the courage to ignore calls for religious preferences and work towards the greater good of communal integration.

Had I sent my son to a Jewish day school, Leon would never have become a regular visitor, nor a Muslim family have a rabbi's son playing in their garden.

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain is minister of Maidenhead Synagogue and author of 'Reform Judaism and Modernity' (SCM Press)

We have spent over a century ridding ourselves of class divisions, why now rush in and replace them with religious divisions ?

School has taught me not only how to learn in the classroom, but outside the classroom as well.

Where do you think I learned how to climb, swing and skip?

Where do you think I learned how to meet my best friend?

Jessie Braun (18)
from Chicken Soup for the teenage Soul.

Engaging Togetherness

I want to argue for all children, in whatever school, being entitled to a broad and inclusive Religious Education. Meaning that they must learn, from primary school onwards, about all the major world religions in new and ground-breaking ways; ways which are relevant to our society as it is today.

It is also my hope that no school will be exclusively *single faith*; that all faith schools will operate an admissions policy with a percentage of places (and not just a token one or two) open for local children of other religions and none.

The current status of the teaching of RE is that there is no statutory national syllabus as there is for other school subjects. Every Local Authority has a SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for RE) (England) which is made up of teachers, members of the local council and representatives of the faith groups in the area. Each SACRE is responsible for its own Local Agreed Syllabus, which must be reviewed and revised at least every five years. Community (state) schools are obliged to follow their Local Agreed Syllabuses which, in varying degrees, include teaching about all the main religions. This system has the advantage of being tailor-made and relevant for your own locality and the disadvantage in that the support for the work of the SACREs varies nationwide.

As far as 'church' schools and those of other faiths are concerned, they may follow their own RE syllabus which does not require them to teach about religions other than their own (many do, but not all).*

In 2004 a non-statutory national framework for RE was published by the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), in which 'inter faith dialogue' was given a high profile.

In the educational context, for me 'inter faith dialogue' means, beyond 'comparative religion' (which can imply academic and value judgments); beyond 'learning *about* religion' - from an

objective distance; beyond learning about each religion individually: Christianity this term, Sikhism next term; it is even beyond multi-faith topics such as 'festivals' or 'weddings'. It is all of these things, but there is a real urgency for it to be more than that. Better than talking *about* each other, is to talk *with* each other - talking *together* at every opportunity, and beyond even dialogue, it's about *engaging* together, whenever we can.

If we live in a multi faith part of Britain and we have Muslim neighbours, let's not sit behind our net curtains condemning them for what we hear on the national news, let's go and talk with them, find out how they see the issues, listen to each other's concerns. If I am a Hindu let me invite my neighbours to the temple to celebrate Divali, be they of another religion or none. Let's ask our Roman Catholic cook and our Pentecostal Christian deputy head to come and talk to us in the classroom; let's invite our 'different faith' parents to join in class discussion; ask older pupils to come and tell us about the occasion of their

Confirmation or show us how to tie a turban; let's visit the nearest synagogue; invite the rabbi in; ask our Hindu parent to explain puja to us ...

If we live in a more mono cultural part of Britain let's be imaginative, adventurous - let's explore possibilities of inviting visitors from elsewhere, twinning, exchange visits, handling religious artefacts, internet research and email contact, even old fashioned letter writing!

If pupils are encouraged to discuss the religious aspects of matters which are relevant to them, to share their experiences, to 'stand in another's shoes' and to trust one another, this should counter the problems of ridicule, prejudice and stereotyping and lead to an enrichment of each pupil's spiritual journey, whether they are 'religious' or not. ■



So much for the opportunities of multi faith Britain! Here are some immediate practical challenges, as I see it, for those of us involved with RE:

- We need to have an excellent basic RE curriculum to be adopted nationwide, which includes options, and allows flexibility for adaptation to the local situation and to breaking news.
- We need new, relevant, ground-breaking resources to support a more inter faith approach to teaching.
- We need to recruit more specialist RE teachers and to equip and empower existing teachers and student teachers, with skills and confidence to teach this challenging approach to RE.

On the subject of inter faith engagement, what about single faith schools? Whatever we may think about this controversial matter, I believe we must be flexible and imaginative and find creative ways to co-operate and interact; to work with what exists and turn controversy and difficulty into opportunity.

I'd like to tell you about two primary schools in south London. Holy Trinity Church of England School, where I teach and Gatton Muslim School, a thirty minute bus ride away. Gatton has recently become the fourth Muslim school in the country to be state-funded. Gatton pupils have just moved into stunning new premises – the first Muslim school in the country to have designed their own brand new building. Before that, they have survived (and produced very high standards of education) in a partially converted old cinema. For the last three years, our two schools have been making exchange visits most terms. Our year five pupils (9 and 10 year olds) spend a morning in each others' schools. In small groups they go off to different classes throughout the school to join in with whatever is going on; it may be PE with reception, art in year 3, Arabic literature in year 6, maths in year 4 and they finish with an extended social time together as year 5s. Last year Holy Trinity had a 'Learning about Islam' week with an interactive exhibition up in the Hall – staff and pupils from Gatton came in to contribute to assemblies, visited classrooms, helped our pupils complete an exhibition trail. Later in the year, when Gatton year 5s were learning about Christianity, we arranged a joint visit to Southwark Cathedral to do a trail on

Let's encourage our children not just to tolerate each other, but to discover our similarities and to respect and learn from and even enjoy our differences.

'Christian symbols' and share a packed lunch and a walk along the river. We are about to have our first 'friendly' football match and a joint staff in-service training day is being planned. We are also hoping to collaborate in a teacher training scheme, where trainee teachers will do a term's placement in our school and a term at Gatton School.

This is just one example of inter faith engagement and collaboration.

I commend these two websites to you for further encouragement and examples: www.diversityanddialogue.org.uk and www.teachernet.gov.uk

One other thing to mention – Gatton School governors are currently debating their admissions policy. The Trust believes it is

important to encourage parents who are not Muslims to send their children to the school, both to enrich the spiritual ethos and the educational learning and to maintain diversity rather than segregation. This is not an easy decision for them, as there is a long waiting list of Muslims for the school. Their standard of education and behaviour is very high and I can well imagine that non-Muslims would be pleased to send their children to the school.

Our 'global world' gives us opportunities that previous generations didn't have! Let's

encourage our children not just to tolerate each other, but to discover our similarities and to respect and learn from and even enjoy our differences. It's not easy, there are deep and difficult differences. We shall make mistakes and we shall disagree. But our chances for a peaceful future will, I believe, be better if we take risks and talk and engage together.



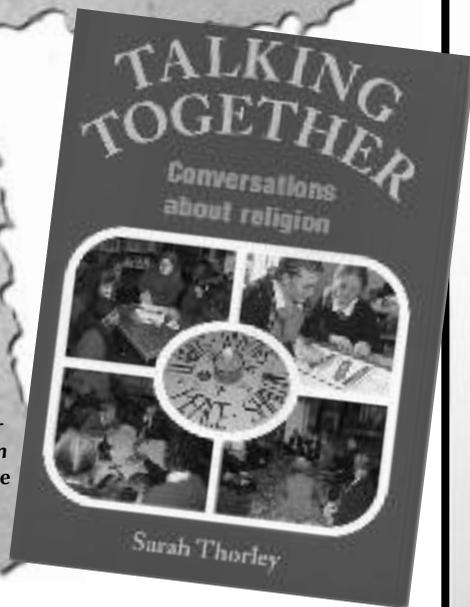
STOP PRESS! As I write, news is breaking that faith leaders have just issued a directive that pupils in all faith schools be taught about all the main religions! The statement has been made jointly with the DES (Department for Education and Skills) and commits faith schools to using the non-statutory framework for RE.



I'm compiling a list of 'good practice' between faith schools, so if anyone reading this knows of any examples, please contact me via the Editor of this magazine. Thank you.

"I and the pupils in my class found the Talking Together materials fascinating and enjoyable. The conversations provoked excellent discussion of different religious viewpoints."
Maggie Marshall Primary School Deputy Head

"A timely insight into ideas, manners and customs made especially interesting by being presented in their religious and cultural contexts..." **Ganesh Lall – recently President of Caribbean Hindu Society and Temple**



BOOK REVIEW

TALKING TOGETHER by Sarah Thorley

"This is very good and innovative way of teaching the basics of our main faiths...very well done, very well thought out." **Gurbaksh Singh Garcha – Sikh Member of Lewisham Council**

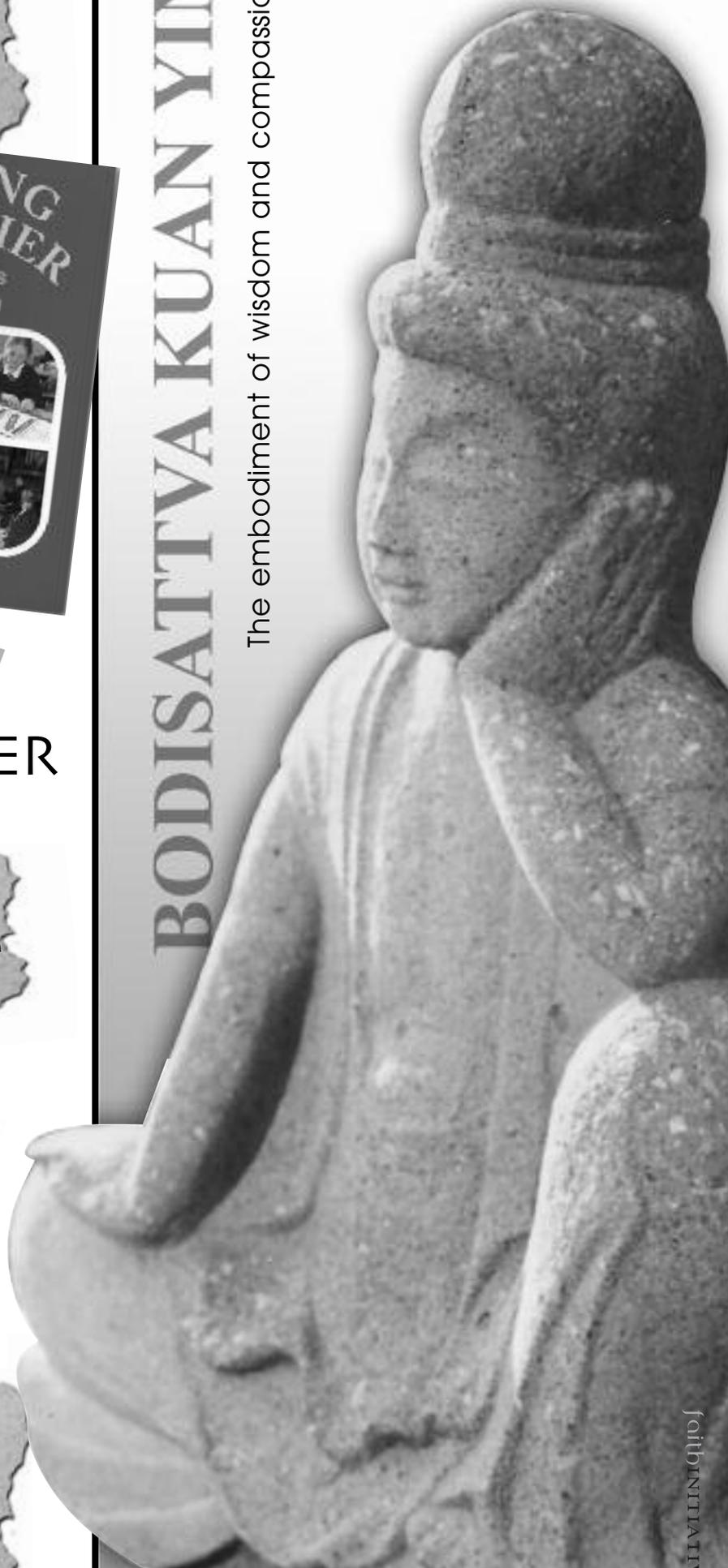
"The material comes out of young people's experience rather than expecting them to relate to material that comes out of religion. The conversations draw together themes about which all religious and non-religious young people have something to say.

Sarah Smalley (Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants)

"This book will make a valuable contribution towards the understanding of different faiths. By focusing on common elements rather than divisive, the author will encourage schools using the book to foster mutual respect and tolerance." **Rabbi Philip Ginsbury**

BODISATTVVA KUAN YIN

The embodiment of wisdom and compassion

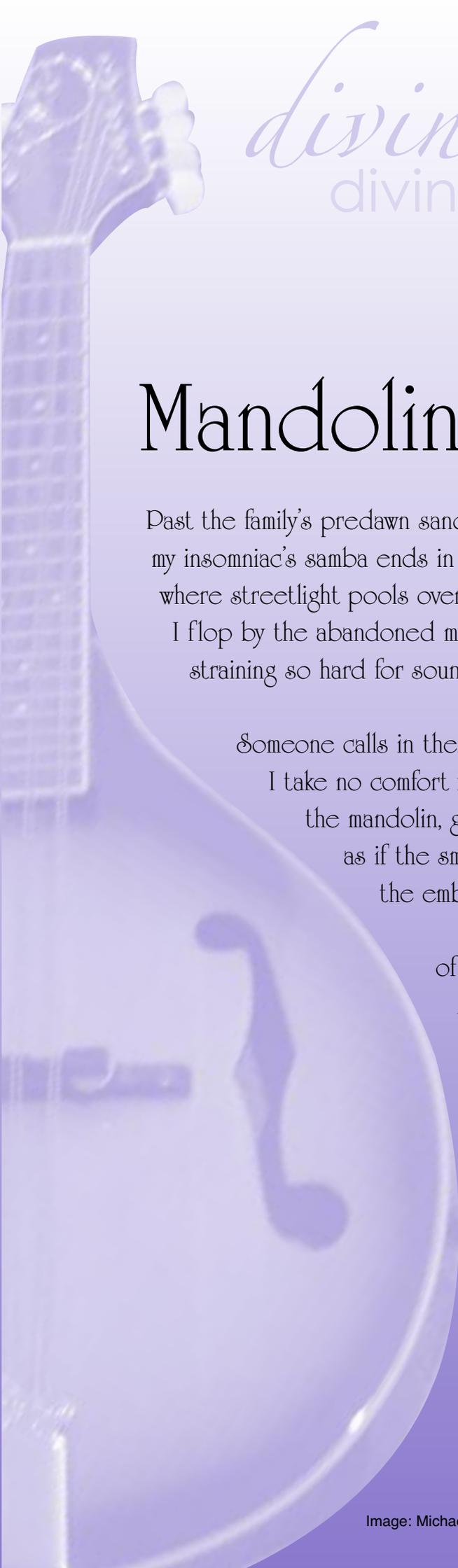


Teaching *Spirituality*

As a teacher of biology, and a member of the Bahá'í community, I am concerned that there is an emphasis within the Science syllabus on the teaching of the concept of "spirituality" as 'a sense of awe and wonder at the natural world' - in other words the spiritual experience is grounded in the material world. To me, 'spiritual' means that which transcends the merely physical to the metaphysical realm. This 'sense of awe and wonder...' may be an element of the 'spiritual' experience, but there is a real danger that "spirituality" comes to mean a contemplation of or reaction to the physical world. I feel that to reduce it to this is to miss an important educational opportunity that can open up the student mind to reflect on matters beyond the material world.

I feel that it is important for us to consider that the majority of the peoples of the world believe that reality is fundamentally spiritual. For most of the world's peoples, their sense of themselves and of their purpose in life stems from this belief. It should also be remembered that the notion that reality is purely material is, in a wider historical context, a very recent phenomenon and one largely confined to Europe and North America. In the past the spiritual nature of reality was not only accepted but acted as a source of inspiration for breathtaking achievements in music, architecture and literature, the artists endlessly replicating the soul's experience for millions of their fellow believers. In fact no other force has been able to elicit from people comparable qualities of heroism, self-sacrifice and self-discipline. At the social level, the resulting moral principles given by the major world religions have repeatedly translated themselves into universal codes of law, regulating and elevating human relationships. Viewed in perspective, religion emerges as the primary driving force of the civilizing process.

In a society where some branches of the popular media caricature those of faith and seek to highlight difference, our school communities have the opportunity to offer an alternative attitude to religious conviction. Prejudice stems from ignorance. I feel that by encouraging students to talk about their religious faith – or lack of it - and discuss the thinking behind religious practices, such as fasting and Holy Day celebrations, we would be giving our students the opportunity to gain valuable insights into the spiritual nature of human kind.



divine harmonies
divine harmonies
divine harmonies

music of faith

Mandolin Music

Past the family's predawn sanctuary of sleep
my insomniac's samba ends in last night's room
where streetlight pools over the messy sofa.
I flop by the abandoned mandolin
straining so hard for sounds I fear I'm deaf.

Someone calls in their sleep, but tetchy with loneliness
I take no comfort from the sound and grab
the mandolin, greedy for company
as if the smudge of my touch could ignite
the embers of music, the lost glory

of improvised song. As if I could play.
As if I should. Shushing the mandolin
when my button catches a string, to keep
the peace for the sleepers upstairs,
I am the woman at every predawn gate,

cave mouth, creating angels out of flakes
of light, summoning them with gut-strung bone
flicking heart and as the mandolin plays me
every prayer is a song in the dark, and I
close my eyes, humming a tune I might know.

© Rebecca Irvine

The new string

Like many world faiths Christianity inspires its adherents to make music of all kinds, and also finds in music itself an image and expression of some of Faith's deepest mysteries. In this brief article I would like to explore what music has meant to some Christian writers and poets over the centuries, and I would like to begin with a verse by the priest-poet John Donne, written at a time he believed he was on his death-bed:

*Since I am comming to that Holy roome,
Where, with thy Quire of Saints for evermore,
I shall be made thy musique;
As I come I tune the Instrument here at the dore,
And what I must doe then, thinke here before.*

(Hymns to God, my God in my sickness)

Donne imagines his life as preparation or 'tuning up' for a concert which has yet to be played, a music-making that is yet to happen. He takes a traditional image of Heaven; the choir of saints making music before God in praise and worship, and gives it a new depth. For he does not say "I am coming to that holy room, where ... evermore... I shall play thy music", but, "I shall be made thy music".

He imagines the soul as both the instrument and the music. We have an instrument to tune but we are ourselves a note or perhaps a motif to be sounded within the wider harmonies of a larger music. How did Donne arrive at this notion? What lies behind it, and is it taken up and developed by other Christian writers?

Donne had certainly meditated richly on music and found in it a helpful analogy for the mystery of God's power as both creator and redeemer. Like his fellow priest-poet George Herbert he possessed and played stringed instruments and found a parallel between the collaborative and sympathetic resonance of all the parts of a well made instrument and the order and beauty of the world around us:

God made this whole world in such an uniformity, such a correspondancy, such a concinnity of parts, as that it was an

Instrument, perfectly in tune: we may say the trebles, the highest strings, were disordered first; the best understandings, Angels and Men, put this instrument out of tune. God rectified all again, by putting in a new string...the Messias, and onely by sounding that string in your eares, become we musicum carmen, true musick, true harmony, true peace to you. (Sermons ed. Potter and Simpson University of California 1955 vol. II, p.170.)

Here it is not simply the individual soul, but the whole cosmos with all its living creatures which is the musical instrument "perfectly in tune". Within this single simple image Donne conveys three essential Christian ideas; firstly the original goodness of all creation, every part of which is intended to support the other and sound the praise of God, secondly the idea of fall or evil, as being not a separate force in itself, but a dis-ordering of what is essentially good. Evil is therefore something which needs to be re-ordered and redeemed, not annihilated. And finally that in Christ the Christian hears the key-note, tuned by God himself. By

carefully listening to this note we can gradually re-establish both inner spiritual, and outer cosmic harmony. The presence in the cosmos of the "new string" the Messiah, does not intrude on or threaten what is already there but is a means of establishing harmony. He is both a measure of the order in creation and a means and promise of redemption. Donne, like Shakespeare, was deeply aware of the interconnections between inner and outer nature between the microcosm

of our humanity and the macrocosm of the universe, when he speaks of the characteristic Christian experience of self-examination, leading to repentance and renewal he uses just this musical metaphor to describe what happens:

So when a naturall man comes to be displeased with his owne actions...though his naturall faculties be the Instruments in these actions, yet the Holy Ghost sets this Instrument in tune and makes all that is musique and harmony in the faculties of this naturall man. (Sermons vol.VII, p.222.)

The presence in the cosmos of the "new string" the messiah, does not intrude on or threaten what is already there but is a means of establishing harmony

So looking back to the poem with which we opened we can see how much was meant by that little phrase, "I tune my instrument here at the door." But what of the rich phrase "I shall be made thy music," with its note of hope looking forward to a transformation for us and for our world? Has that intuition been followed or developed by other more recent poets in the Christian tradition? It certainly has. **Time and again when writers and poets need to express that human hope which does not capitulate in the face of death and that longing for a better ordering of our relations with ourselves, each other and the world, it is music which helps them find that expression and flesh out those hopes.** *What happens next, says Seamus Heaney in his beautiful poem Rainstick, is a music you never would have known to listen for.* Another contemporary Irish poet, Michael O'Siadhail has developed Donne's death-bed metaphor in the light of his love of jazz and blues, introducing into Donne's images of tuning and harmony the further idea of *improvisation*, freedom within form, a music made both by listening and by creating. Writing from within the Irish situation and with a keen sense of some of the darkest conflicts of the 20th century O'Siadhail finds in music, especially in polyphonic music, an image which may help Christians and people of all faiths who seek to live together and hear one another in a multicultural society. So he writes, of the experience of jazz improvisation:

...To play is everything...broken tempos of anguish seem to feed our joys; unexpected cadences, a tale of twelve bar blues...

.....The stamp of one voice;
Then pure concert as an ensemble improvises,
Hearing in each other harmonies of cross-purpose
As though being ourselves we're more capacious.

(*That in the End Our Double Time* Bloodaxe 1998 p. 96)

In *Motet*, a meditation on the terrible role in world history played by the colonial powers of "white-burdened Europe" he rejects the monocultural "one voice" of colonialism and substitutes for it the notion that "All things share one breath" the conclusion of his poem seems to echo Donne's notion of the "new string" the listened-for note that helps make sense of all the others, what he calls *the cantus firmus*. For the Christian believer, this note resounding through all music, is the voice of God touching the strings of humanity in the flesh of Jesus Christ. But O'Siadhail does not need to name the *cantus firmus*, like many Christians he believes that our faith is capable of harmonising with other faiths, neither losing its distinct motifs nor overwhelming or dominating others,

...We listen

clash and resolve, webs and layers of voices.
And which voice dominates or is it chaos?
My doubting earthling, tiny among the planets
Does a lover of one voice hear more or less?
...Among the inner parts something open,
something wild, a long rumour of wisdom
keeps winding into each tune: *cantus firmus*,
fierce vigil of contingency, loves congruence.

(*Motet Hail Madam Jazz* Bloodaxe 1992 p.123)

It maybe that in sharing our love of music and improvising in this world together we may all begin to make a new "music of compassion" and find together "Love's congruence".

Mozart at Greenbelt, 27.08.01

for Niki and Sarah

*We lie upon the grass on God's good earth
and listen to the Requiem's intense,
long, love-laden keening, calling forth
echoes of Eden, blessing every sense
with brimming blisses, every death with
birth,
until all passion passes into praise.*

*I bless the winding paths that brought us
here,
I bless this day, distinct amidst our days,
I bless the light, the music-laden air,
I bless the interweaving of our ways,
the lifting of the burdens that we bear,
I bless the broken body that we share*

Sanctus the heart, Sanctus the spirit cries,
© Malcolm Guite

music of faith

Melody of Faith

Once upon a time there was a Jewish herdsman who had an only son, Isaac, who couldn't read. The father sent him to school, but Isaac absorbed nothing. The father tried to teach him the alphabet, but the boy would not learn. So he sent him into the fields to watch the cows. Isaac had a little flute and happily piped the days away in the long grass. When he turned thirteen, his father decided he should initiate him into the ways of the Jews. He took him into town, bought him some decent clothes and sat next to him in the synagogue for the High Holy Days.

The Day of Atonement was long. The Jews did not eat or drink all day. They prayed and prayed, swaying as they read from their prayer books and beating their breasts as they repented for their sins. Isaac couldn't read but he listened to the melodies of the prayers. As the morning wore on, he wanted to join in and sing too, the only way he could - with his flute. He pulled it out of his pocket, but his father noticed and angrily stopped him from playing. "Do you want to make the Rabbi angry? Be still!" whispered the father urgently.

Isaac sat quietly next to his father. Later, when the congregation stood again to sing their benedictions, in the afternoon, he told his father that he wanted to pray too, with his flute. But his father snatched the flute to make sure he wouldn't use it. Isaac was miserable.

The hours passed and evening approached. The candles flickered and the congregation rose for the closing prayers, raising their voices to repent, plead and praise the Lord. Isaac snatched his flute from his father and his own powerful notes pierced the voice of the congregation as he, too, called out to the Merciful One with all his heart and soul.

There was a stunned hush in the synagogue, but the Rabbi finished his prayer quickly and then announced: "The pure voice of the boy's flute has united and lifted up all our prayers to the Lord." The Rabbi understood that Isaac was able to reach up to God through his music, with true concentration and devotion. His little tune was able to carry with it the prayers of the whole congregation.

The rabbi in this well-known tale is the early 18th century founder of Eastern European Hasidism, the Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). **Music is an angel, he taught, that bears us above the spheres to the**

lap of God; it is the diamond bridge that leads upwards out of the valley of immorality into the heart of God. Music is the most important element of spiritual life, according to a later Hasid. But one doesn't need to be a Hasid to feel the power of music or song.

Music is the means of communication between souls, said author Marcel Proust. However, this is perhaps only true if the souls share the same culture and respond to the same kind of music. The father didn't understand Isaac's music. It's sometimes quite a challenge to find meaning in another person's tune. Music may be pleasing or annoying, but it can also be the key that opens up a new world, another world, if we listen carefully.

Actually Jews have been aware of the spiritual power of music, ever since antiquity.

The Bible tells that Elisha was able to reach "the hand of the Lord" when a musician played; the music enabled the prophet to gain divine revelations (2 Kings 3:9-27). Music can open the gates of heaven – but not every tune unlocks those doors and not every person manages to get a peek. David played his lyre for King Saul to remove the evil spirit that had upset the king (1 Samuel 16:23). He knew that a melody can free and raise spirits, calm us down or cheer us up. The piercing notes blown on a *shofar* (ram's horn) (Exodus 19:16, 20:18), the singing of benedictions and psalms, the chanting of prayers and biblical verses, or even merely listening to a musical work of art may elevate our souls and rouse our own spiritual feelings.

Music can represent, organize, and arouse our feelings; it can carry us away, down memory lane, into another culture, or up to the heavens. Music can lead us to an appreciation of beauty, to the divine world, to the realization that life is worth living – to the intangible melody of faith. We just have to let it open up our hearts!

"The pure voice of the boy's flute has united and lifted up all our prayers to the Lord"





Sacred Sound

music of faith

Throughout history, adherents of all religions have practised a variety of methods to enhance their communion with God, including prayer and meditation, asceticism and temple worship. According to the ancient Vedic (Hindu) scriptures, each method of worship is prescribed for a particular period in history. Yet for the modern age, known as the 'Kali-Yuga' or the 'Age of Quarrel', it could be said there is only one prescribed method of realizing God.

It is simple, sublime everyone can take part, and can be summed up in one word: **MUSIC!**

Religious music has always occupied a central role within Hinduism. In this role there is a clear relationship between music and the Supreme. Sacred music, while being firmly rooted in the Vedic theological principles, is associated with spiritual power and ecstasy. The sages of India have always been great musicians and chanters of the Vedic texts. Traditional religious and devotional music has been played in the temples to glorify the Supreme Lord Krishna, and His devotees, for thousands of years.

The Supreme Lord Krishna, described in the Vedas as being exemplified by the sound (*shabda*) "AUM", is therefore also known as Shabda-Brahman (later came to be known as Nada-Brahman), which becomes manifest through the power of chanting. This notion of sacred sound manifests as chant, and music provides a genuine link between the devotee and the Lord as manifested in the music of the Bhakti traditions.

In Hinduism sacred music and chants are considered to have divine origin and have always been closely identified with the Hindu gods and goddesses. The Goddess Sarasvati, who carries the 'vina' instrument, is the divine patron of music and receives the veneration of all students and performers of Indian music. Lord Brahma, who with his consort Sarasvati fashioned Hindu music out of the ingredients of the Sama-Veda, creates the universe and also plays the hand cymbals. Lord Shiva plays the 'damaru' drum during the dance of cosmic dissolution. The Supreme Lord Krishna Himself sounds the conchshell and plays His transcendental flute.

On an individual level sacred music, in form of personal 'bhajan', helps the devotee connect to the Supreme. This may include chanting on beads (*japa*), performing 'puja' by

singing devotional hymns or chanting sacred 'mantras'. On a collective level chanting the names of Lord Krishna, accompanied by music, not just helps the individual(s) but also bestows great spiritual benefit to anyone who hears the sacred sound vibrations. This congregational chanting of the Lord has been personified by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, an incarnation of Lord Krishna, who appeared in India 520 years ago.

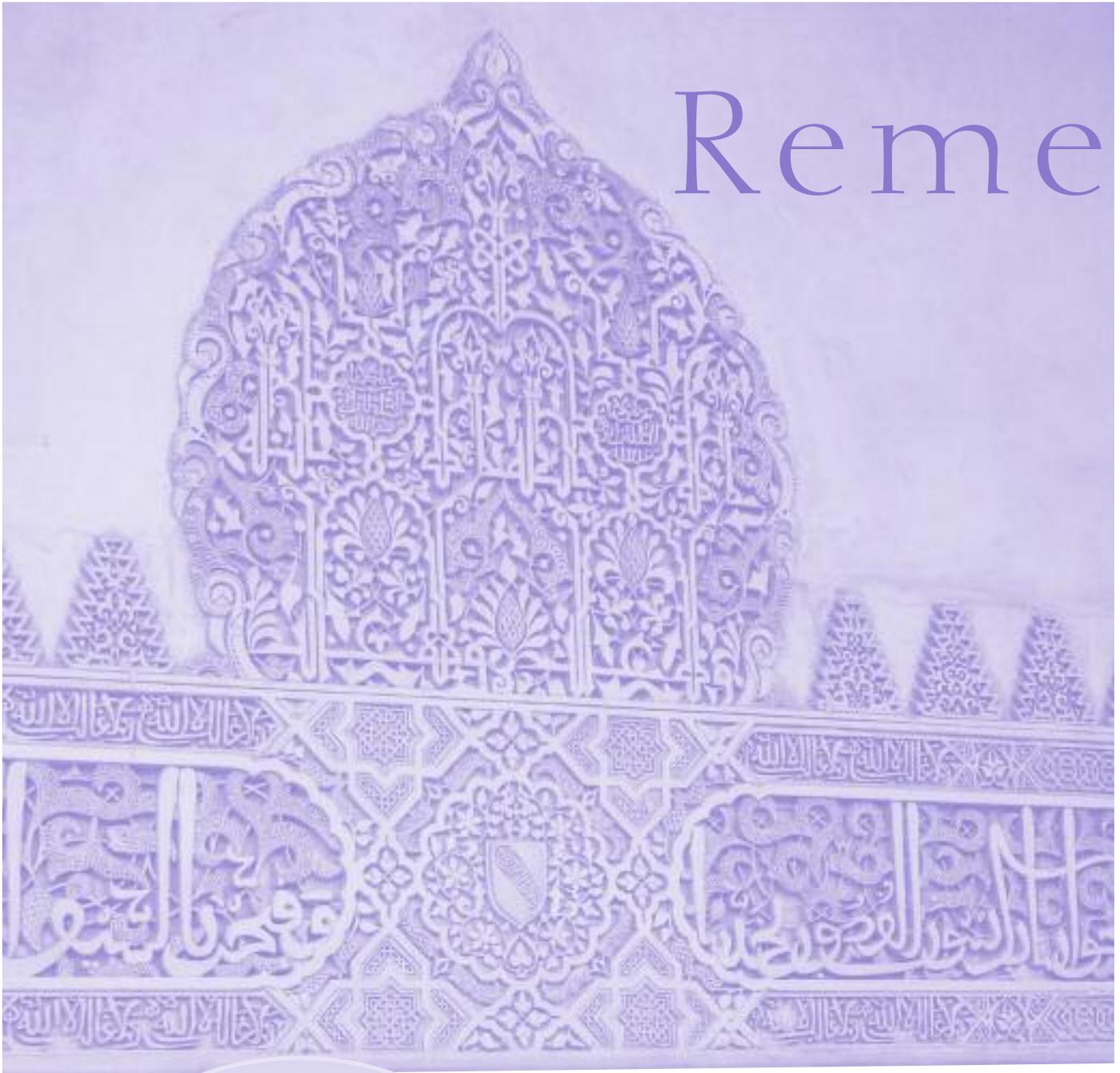
His mission was to take religion out of the temples and on to the streets. He did this by assembling congregations of people to sing and dance in public, glorifying the Lord's Holy Names to the sound of drums and cymbals, in a joyous celebration of worship. Specifically, He taught a mantra or the Mahamantra, (great mantra for deliverance) composed of the names of God, which is a petition to Radha (Hara), the energy of Krishna, to be engaged in the service of Krishna who is also full of pleasure (Rama).

**Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare**

Shri Chaitanya predicted that one day the chanting of Krishna's names would be heard in every town and village in the world. This prediction started to be fulfilled when His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami ShрилаPrabhupada, the Founder of the Hare Krishna movement, brought the Hare Krishna mantra to the cities of the West and other countries. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada emphasised the devotional path of glorifying God through music, which he stressed is not a sectarian process.

Krishna specifically states that this process of Krishna consciousness is 'susukham' (enjoyable), very pleasant and easy to practice. Indeed, the devotional process is very pleasant; we melodiously sing with instruments, and someone will listen and also join. In the higher states of spiritual advancement, glorifying God through Music leads to a blissful communion with the Lord Himself as stated in the Yajnavalkya Smriti III, 115:

"He who knows the inner meaning of the sound of the lute, who is expert in intervals and in modal scales and knows the rhythms, travels without effort upon the way of liberation".



Remember

“Tis said, the pipe and lute that charm our ears
 Derive their melody from rolling spheres;
 But Faith, o’erpassing speculation’s bound,
 Can see what sweetens every jangled sound.

We, who are parts of Adam, heard with him
 The song of angels and of seraphim.
 Our memory, though dull and sad, retains
 Some echo still of those unearthly strains.”

Rumi, Mathnawi IV¹

When travelling in Iran in the 1960’s, I first heard the haunting melodies of the Sufis, with their lamenting, curiously echoing quality. While on the way from Teheran to Isfahan or to the Caspian coast by bus, we would be uplifted to another dimension upon hearing the ‘Mathnawi’ by the thirteenth century Persian mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi, played on the radio, with accompanying *ney* (reed flute). The *ney* plays a major role in Sufi music and is characteristic of the accompaniment to the Mevlevi Sufi ritual of *sama*. Indeed, one of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi’s best known mystical poems from the ‘Mathnawi’ is called ‘The Song of the Reed’, telling of the soul’s search to be merged with its Creator.

Remembered Song

music of faith

While living in Bahrain we were often invited to a garden with a reflecting pool where musicians played *illahis* in honour of the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings be upon him). These songs, mostly played on the *'oud* (a kind of lute), the *tabla* (a drum beaten with the hands) and the *ney* had that mystical and evocative quality which connects directly with the soul, transporting it to another realm.

Music, other than the chanting of the *adhan* and Qur'an, is not accepted for ritual worship by the orthodox, but it holds a most important place in the evocations of the Sufis. Abu Hamid al Ghazzali, the greatest theologian of medieval Islam, said: "...music and dancing do not put into the heart what is not there already and only fan into a flame dormant emotions." The aim of Sufi music is to bring about nearness to God and certain states which, in their turn, have a healing quality. In their *sama*, which literally means 'audition' many Sufi groups listen to music, or use it to accompany their *Dhikr*, or Remembrance of God, to promote ecstasy. In Jalaluddin Rumi's poems, he refers to music and dancing as inner states of the soul. We hear stories of him turning in ecstasy to the rhythm of the goldsmiths' hammers in the market place in Konya. Later, whirling or turning was established by the Mevlevi Sufis as part of their ritual religious services. For Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi the ecstasy was what *caused* him to turn, while for his followers, they turn because they wish to attain this ecstasy. When the dervishes turn, they recite the Name of Allah, which inspires the heart, bringing inner peace.

Depending on the *Tariqat* or way, some Sufi orders play musical instruments during their *Dhikr* ceremony. Many of the North African Sufis, like the Shadiliyya or the Qadiriyya use the *tabla* to establish the rhythm of their chanted evocations. The men form a circle and perform a *hadrah* or sacred dance, swaying energetically from side to side or from front to back, intoning the Most Beautiful Names of Allah. Sometimes, in their ecstatic states, some Sufis start to whirl and leap high in the air, while others walk away quietly

and fall into a trance. The Chishtiyya of India are great lovers of music and dance, and during their ceremonies the accordion and tambourine are used to a great extent. *Qawwali* music, found in Pakistan, Afghanistan and also in Iran, resembles Turkish *illahis* and mystical singing in Arabic. It is particularly fervent in its effusive and flowery style. The Sufis sing praises to the Prophet Muhammad, but *qawwals* also consist of love poems for Allah and His beloved Prophet.

When I first joined the Naqshbandiyya more than twenty-five years ago, our Sheikh played *Qawwali* music at the beginning of the *Dhikr*. When our group travelled to Konya for the first time, I again heard Mevlevi music as I had first experienced it in Iran, and it was as though I had come home. It is performed with various traditional Turkish instruments. Rhythm and voice are important components as well. The rhythm is determined by the drums (*kudum*). The *ney* and various stringed instruments, like the *qanun* (rather like a zither) are also used in Mevlevi ceremonies. The traditional *rebab*, an ancient violin with strings made of horse hair, like a viola, gives the music its mystical quality. The human voice, with its tremendous longing, also plays an important part. Mevlevi music is full of subtle nuances. However, to the unattuned Western ear it may appear monotonous and even boring. It is played in order to put the listener into a reflective and concentrated state. Its haunting quality expresses the Sufi's desire to be annihilated in God. Al Ghazzali goes on to say that the Sufis "stir up in themselves greater love towards God, and, by means of music, often obtain spiritual visions and ecstasies, their heart becoming in this condition as clean as silver in the flame of a furnace, and attaining a degree of purity which could never be attained by any amount of mere outward austerities."²

"Hence Sama is the food of the lovers, for within it they find the Image of the meeting with the Beloved."
Mathnawi IV.³

¹ 'Rumi Poet and Mystic', R.A. Nicholson, P. 32 • ² Al Ghazzali, 'The Alchemy of Happiness' P.67-9. • ³ 'The Sufi Path of Love' William C. Chittick P. 326.

*“We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high”
Bahá’u’lláh*

Intoning

Spiritual food for the

In year 1853, Bahá’u’lláh, the prophet and founder of the Bahá’í Faith, was incarcerated in a dark, underground prison in the Persian capital of Tehran known locally as the *Siyáh-Chál*, or black pit. Fastened together with unbearably heavy chains, and confined in the most galling conditions without food, warmth or sunlight, the early Bahá’ís were detained for four months under the constant threat of execution. Nabil-i-A’zam, one of the early followers of Bahá’u’lláh, known to Bahá’ís across the world today for his history of the early days of the Faith, records how amidst these harrowing conditions Bahá’u’lláh had taught his companions to sing.

We were placed in two rows each facing the other. We had taught them to repeat certain verses, which every night they chanted with extreme fervour. “*God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-sufficing!*” one row would intone, while the other would reply: “*In Him let the trusting trust.*” The chorus of these gladsome voices would continue to peal out until the early hours of the morning.

It is reported that the king of Persia, who had ordered the arrests, heard the chanting and, perplexed, asked one of his ministers to explain the meaning of the sound. Upon learning that it was the prisoners intoning prayers in their prison, the king fell silent.

The Bahá’í Faith was born in the nineteenth century in Persia, amidst a culture of Shi’i Islam in which music was often viewed with suspicion and hostility. In this context we can understand Bahá’u’lláh’s own writings on the subject in which, while cautioning His followers against transgressing the bounds of dignity, He states that: “*We have made it lawful to you to listen to music and singing.*” The same notion is explained by Bahá’u’lláh’s son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the head of the Faith between 1892-1921:

“Among some of the nations of the Orient, music and harmony was not approved of, but the Manifested Light, Bahá’u’lláh, in this glorious period has revealed in the Holy Tablets that singing and music are the spiritual food of the

hearts and souls. In this dispensation, music is one of the arts that is highly approved and is considered to be the cause of the exaltation of sad and desponding hearts”.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks and writings develop this concept. Writing on the subject music, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá draws on the idea which permeates many of his discourses, that our material existence is linked to, and thus exerts an immense influence upon, our spiritual reality as human beings:

‘Music is one of the important arts. It has a great affect upon the human spirit. Musical melodies are a certain something which prove to be accidental upon etheric vibrations, for voice is nothing but the expression of vibrations, which, reaching the tympanum, affect the nerves of hearing. Musical melodies are, therefore, those peculiar effects produced by, or from, vibration. However, they have the keenest effect upon the spirit. In sooth, although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual, and its greatest attachment is to the realm of the spirit’.



Image: Rebecca Irvine

Prayers

heart and soul

As such, music, in the Bahá'í Faith, is regarded as an expression of prayer, as one of the means by which we can strive to reconnect with the divine and life giving Spirit of God. This link between music and prayer is present in Bahá'u'lláh's own writings when He councils His followers to Intone, **“O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men”**.

Nabíl has recorded numerous descriptions of the early Bahá'ís enraptured with spiritual joy and ecstasy as Bahá'u'lláh's tablets were chanted long into the night.

This tradition remains an inspiration to today's Bahá'ís, particularly among Persian and Arabic communities, where the chanting of Bahá'u'lláh's mellifluous prayers and poetry infuses spiritual gatherings.

Though in recent times, as the Bahá'í Faith has spread across the planet, and as the words of Bahá'u'lláh have been translated into the diverse languages of the world, many new styles of spiritual music have naturally evolved within the Bahá'í community. The first American Bahá'ís composed hymns, setting the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to music similar to that used in the Christian Churches.

Today Bahá'í devotion expresses itself in an eclectic range of musical genres, from classical, folk and gospel, to electronic dance and rap. It is significant here that Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith between 1921 and 1956, discouraged the early western Bahá'ís from attempting to fix a definitive style of “Bahá'í Music”. As a truly universal religion, which evolves organically as its followers express their love for God in their own unique ways, the Bahá'í Faith avoids entrapment in set forms or rituals. Instead, through embracing a diversity of musical and other artistic and cultural practices, today's Bahá'ís celebrate and share the Word of God in an attempt to manifest spirituality and unity in the world.

Revealed Music

“Mardana, please start playing on the rebeck, the rhythm of the divine music is revealing.”

These famous words of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith to his Muslim companion Mardana, tell us about how the word of God was revealed to him and to the later Gurus. They also establish for the Sikhs, the close connection of music to prayer and worship, and to our spiritual unity with God. The renowned couplet about the revealed word is:

**‘The WORD came from God
it took away all our worries.’**

Indeed in the congregation, when the word is sung, the day to day concerns and problems evaporate. At an individual level, while meditating on the Name, the word, our inner rhythm gets turned into the unheard comic music of the divine, such is the power of Nam Simran, of meditation.

Guru Nanak and the later Guru's compositions are enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs, which also contains writings of some Hindu and Muslim saints. The 1430 page scripture is in verse with over 7000 hymns and uses rhymes and rhythms in 31 different classical measures, which are usually referred to as Ragas. The final section of the holy scripture is devoted to the description of the families of ragas used under the title, Rigmala, the rosary of ragas.

Kirtan, the singing of the verses of the scripture, is highly uplifting and forms a significant part of the Sikh service in the Gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship. Classical Ragis, people who are adept at maintaining this tradition of singing, are held in high esteem and have become global visitors singing in Sikh places of worship in different parts of the world. No Sikh ceremony is complete without the recitation of the holy scripture and the singing of hymns; naming, initiation, marriage and death. Harmonium and tabla drums are the usual accompanying instruments and increasingly the stringed instruments such as sarod, dilruba, santoor and the sitar are becoming popular as a way of going back to the early roots of Sikh music.

music of faith

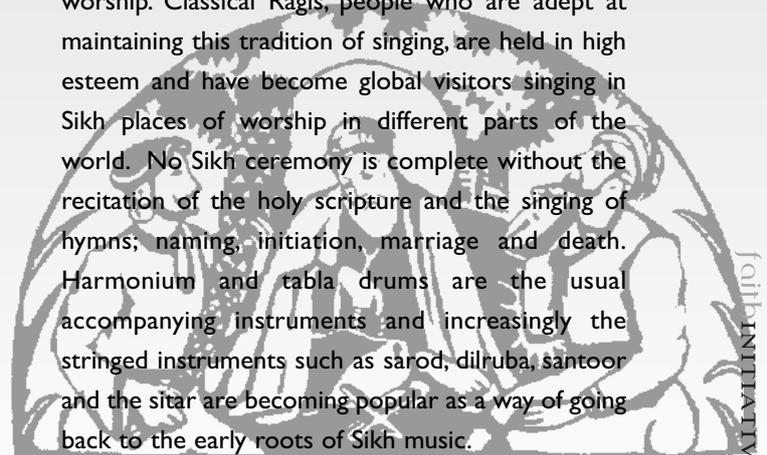


Image: Guru Nanak with disciples, Bala, a Hindu (carrying the fan) and Mardana, a Muslim (who plays the rebeck)

The exiled Dalai Lama played host to 150 meditators from five continents who gathered at Bodhgaya in north-east India, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The fruitful dialogue that followed is described by the Benedictine monk who is director of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

Under the Bodhi Tree

A single leaf fell. Early December mornings in Bodhgaya are, by Indian standards, rather fresh. By English standards, however, the sun was already quite strong as we sat down on well-arranged cushions under the Bodhi tree with the Dalai Lama. Here was the most sacred of Buddhist places of pilgrimage, where, two and a half millennia ago the Buddha came to enlightenment. Under the ancestor of this lofty tree with its generous branches offering shade, he had sat, determined not to rise until he had discovered in meditation the truth that he had failed to find in more extreme practices. In one night, the story goes, he passed through universes of soul and emerged with a penetrating insight into the nature of reality, gained in the power of an overwhelming and cosmic compassion.

The story is as familiar to Buddhists as that of the Nativity to Christians, and as inexhaustibly attractive. The Dalai Lama enjoyed telling us why the place that we had come to was so sacred, and he was genuinely delighted and moved that 150 Christian meditators from five continents should have arrived not as tourists or diplomats, but as pilgrims and friends.

The first step of the pilgrimage began some years ago, when the Dalai Lama visited John Main's monastery in Canada, meditated, stayed for lunch and spent time in conversation with this Christian monk whose contemplative vision he clearly admired and shared. When we invited the Dalai Lama to lead the 1994 John Main Seminar in London, 'The Good Heart', he accepted and further agreed to take a risk. We asked him to use the time to comment on the gospels, not of course as a New Testament scholar, but, as he put it, as a simple Buddhist monk. The success of this historic dialogue and of the associated book *The Good Heart*, now published in many languages, made us feel that something had been started which was meant to continue.

At a later meeting with the Dalai Lama, we agreed to pursue

this model of inter-religious dialogue with a three-year programme that we called 'The Way of Peace'. The essential elements are pilgrimage to each other's sacred places, spending time in retreat together, and joining forces as agents of peace and reconciliation in the world. The Christians offered to visit a Buddhist site, as the Dalai Lama had so often visited our holy places, and when he suggested Bodhgaya we accepted.

So it was that a laughing, tireless Dalai Lama, freshly arrived the night before from France, greeted us at the entrance to the stupa, or temple shrine, and led us to the first of our meditations under the Bodhi tree.

As we exchanged words before the meditation began, a leaf fell from the tree into his lap and, seizing the moment and the leaf, he presented it to me with a laugh. It set the tone of informality which characterised the dialogue sessions that, apart from our times of silence together, were the substance of the next three days. The word dialogue can have a cold sound, however, and it can be made to sound even chillier by those who are scared of it. If there is fear in the mind of someone you are in dialogue with, the exchange of views becomes stiff and formal. Humanly, and even intellectually, such a meeting will be unproductive compared with the free and thrilling flow of new understanding released by the informality of spiritual friendship.



In his encyclical on Faith and Reason, Pope John Paul II urged Christians to draw from the rich heritage of the East, especially India, those elements compatible with and enriching to Christian thought. For Christians who are uncertain how to do this, the example of the Dalai Lama's deep interest in Christian thought and openness to it should be an inducement.

At the beginning of our first session, he gave us a powerful and moving sign. When we were seated and about to begin, a large rolled Tibetan *thangka* was brought to him, which he presented to our meditation community as a gift. Thankas, painted on cloth, are, rather like Christian icons, portable devotional objects, often of great beauty. As it was being unrolled, the Dalai Lama asked me to guess what the subject was. I thought it would be some Buddhist theme traditional to the genre, a wheel of

life or Bodhisattva. Instead there appeared an exquisite Nativity scene, in bright Tibetan colours and gentle style – not at all what I expected.

Modelled on a fifteenth-century Dutch altarpiece, it was rendered in typical Tibetan style, so that the ox looked rather like a yak and the lute-playing angel like a descending Bodhisattva, and it drew a gasp and spontaneous applause from everyone.

One has to take risks to make progress. There are apparently some Buddhists who do not feel easy with the familiarity the Dalai Lama shows to Christians. And there are even some Christians who feel that Buddhism presents a threat to Western Christianity. But it is a groundless fear.

The Dalai Lama, as he frequently repeats, does not advise people to change their religion although, of course, he recognises their right to do so.

Some do indeed change. But the Western Buddhists I have met generally seem to me people for whom Buddhism is a first genuine religious experience.

Why this should be so in a Christian culture is a question for the Churches to answer. The large numbers of young people who frequent Buddhist meditation centres are attracted to Buddhist thought, or even to the Dalai Lama's personal goodness. They are not apostates – they are seekers. When they find, through *The Good Heart*, for example, a Christianity open to dialogue which offers them a spirituality of depth and a revelation of joy, they often embrace it with relief. The Dalai Lama told me that of the many letters he still receives because of *The Good Heart*, the ones that please him most are those from Christians telling him how

it has helped them to embrace their traditional faith afresh.

This may be difficult to understand as long as religion is thought of as a commodity, and dialogue as a marketplace of competition. Such openness is difficult to believe, because it is so recently that Christians have officially entertained the idea of tolerance. The Second Vatican Council urges Christians to enter into dialogue with respect for what is true and holy in other faiths, and respects the path to salvation they represent.

This approach lies behind Pope John Paul II's courage and insight when he said that today we face a situation similar to that of the early Church, whose leaders entered into fruitful dialogue with ancient philosophy and thus found new ways of proclaiming and understanding the God of Jesus Christ.

Such openness to dialogue derives from a profound personal love of Jesus and a clear perception of the universality of Christ.

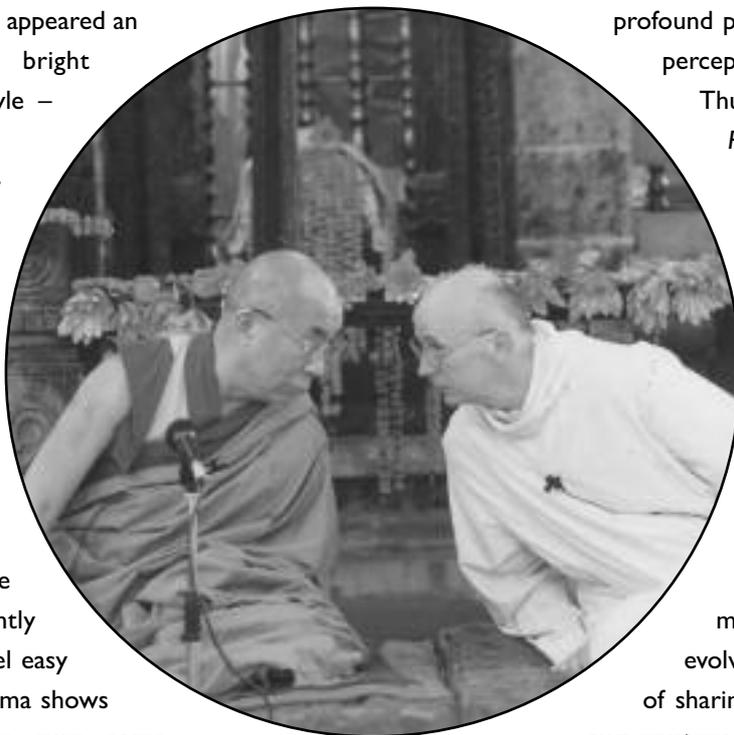
Thus the Pope writes in *Faith and Reason* that Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery. The words 'new' and 'risk' are key terms in this encyclical, at least as I read it (together with all the necessary qualifications and balances).

They are words we need to be more at ease with as Christianity evolves and discovers these new ways of sharing itself and of understanding its own mystery.

One thing is certain. Without exploring new ways and taking the risk of sharing ourselves with others, particularly with Buddhists in the West, Christianity will miss its cue. Either we become a global cult, or we go on to become a truly global religion. Yet we do not face the troubling future with quite the same anxieties or methods as the Euro-politicians or the global capitalists. As they are nervously realising, the world is too complex for a single solution. But those who live in the spirit know that the solution is simplicity.

Unfortunately, it is much tougher than complexity. The recovery of the contemplative dimension of our religion and spirituality, theologically but especially prayerfully, is the most inspiring and hopeful movement in the Church. The way we pray is the way we live and believe. *Lex orandi est lex credendi*.

The troubles of the present look very different and cause less violence to the soul when they are seen in simplicity from the contemplative dimension of prayer. ➡



Only if we open up the rich depths of our own contemplative tradition and release them for all the people of God can the pressing challenge of inter-religious dialogue be embraced. Dialogue can be fruitful only if it comes from this depth of communal spiritual experience. Those who fear that this will mean fewer people going to church on Sunday or fewer children attending church schools have missed the point. The point is that our liturgy, our theology, seminaries, our pastoral care and catechetics are all in desperate need of this contemplative spirit. As we sat under the Bodhi tree one morning before meditation, I read the Beatitudes aloud. Later as we prepared for the dialogue session, I read the Crucifixion narrative. The Dalai Lama listened intently, as we did to his searching questions about Jesus and how Christians see God in Jesus, about hell and purgatory, grace and faith. What does it mean, he asked, that Jesus is the only son of God?

These sessions were far from academic; rather, we pilgrims to Bodhgaya felt as one does after a good workout – tired but energised, clearer and stronger. The point of dialogue with those

you love and respect is not to convince but to listen. The greatest changes are wrought by listening.

This is what Mary teaches us as we see her gazing on the humility of God in the beautiful Nativity thanka that on Christmas Eve, a week after Bodhgaya, adorned the wall of

perhaps what we should do is give time to watching the leaf of enlightenment fall and see its hidden meaning. See how simply and naturally it falls and with what divine punctuality and precision.

the church at my Cockfosters' monastery during midnight Mass.

Perhaps, though, we were being rather selfish pilgrims. We were thinking, not about how many Buddhists we had convinced, but of how much deeper and more precious our understanding of Jesus had become. And yet, is this not the secret of Christianity, to see how Christ who dwells with the Father and in the human heart dances in a thousand places? Seeing that, we learn the secret of abandoning divisions and fears and embracing the universal friendship which the Dalai Lama shares so amazingly with the world. Can it be done? Is there enough time to do it? If these are the questions Jesus declined to answer to his disciples, perhaps what we should do is give time to watching the leaf of enlightenment fall and see its hidden meaning. See how simply and naturally it falls and with what divine punctuality and precision.



The Moon! The Moon!

The moon! The moon! Whose cooling rays
Are seminal, dripping down
Like luminous milk—a silken haze
Gathers round you, like a diaphanous gown.
We look up at you, by the Ganga stream,
Light and cool in the night's dream,
Talking, talking beneath the moon.
We, smelling the jasmine petals, swoon.

© Ninian Smart
October 30 1989

Cited: *Smart Verse: the owl flies amid the wood wind hooting. (For Libushka)*.
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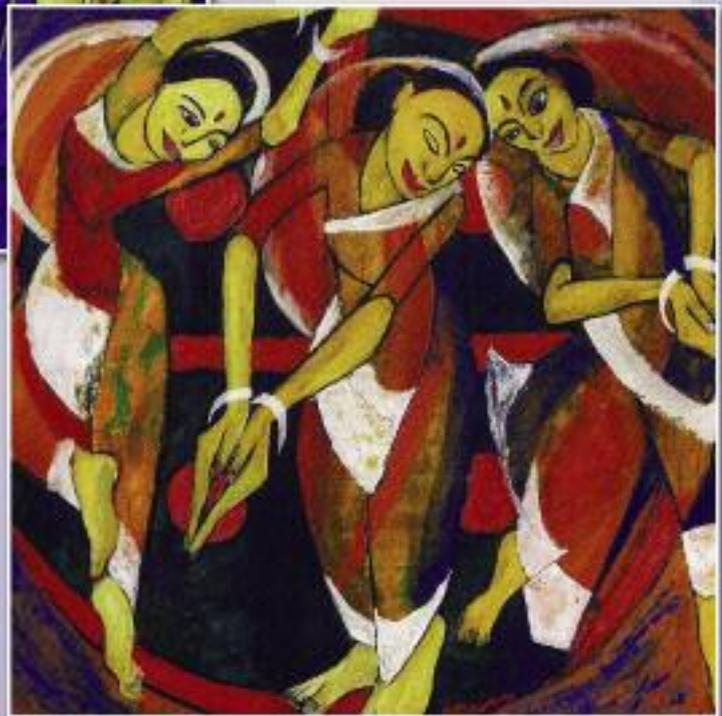


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ਸ਼ਕਿਤਿਕ ਟਸਕਟਾਰ ਖਿੱਚਿ ਨਿਵਸਿਤ ਖਾਥਿਨਾ
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Nathan Gardels

Can a ‘right’

Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, is a philosopher and leading spokesman for Muslims in Europe. His most recent book is ‘Western Muslims and the Future of Islam’. He spoke from Switzerland with Nathan Gardels.

Nathan Gardels...

What is your response to the challenge to European Muslims presented by a number of European papers republishing defamatory cartoons from a Danish daily (Jyllands-Posten) of the Prophet Mohammed?

Tariq Ramadan...

There are three things we have to bear in mind. First, it is against Islamic principles to represent in imagery not only Mohammed, but all the prophets of Islam. This is a clear prohibition.

Second, in the Muslim world, we are not used to laughing at religion, our own or anybody else’s. This is far from our understanding. For that reason, these cartoons are seen, by average Muslims and not just radicals, as a transgression against something sacred, a provocation against Islam.

Third, Muslims must understand that laughing at religion is a part of the broader culture in which they live in Europe, going back to Voltaire. Cynicism, irony and indeed blasphemy are part of the culture.

When you live in such an environment as a Muslim, it is really important to be able to take a critical distance and not react so emotionally. You need to hold to your Islamic principles, but be wise enough not to overreact to provocation.

For Muslim majority countries to react emotionally to these cartoons (with boycotts) is to nurture the extremists on the other side, making it a test of wills. On one side, the extremists

argue that, “See, we told you, the West is against Islam,” and on the other side they say, “See, Muslims can’t be integrated into Europe, and they are destroying our values by not accepting what we stand for.” This way of opening a debate on emotional grounds is, in fact, a way of closing the door on rational discourse.

What we need now on both sides is an understanding that this is not a legal issue, or an issue of rights. Free speech is a right in Europe and legally protected. No one should

contest this. At the same time, there should be an understanding that the complexion of European society has changed with immigrants from diverse cultures. Because of that, there should be sensitivity to Muslims and others living in Europe.

“Cartoon controversy is not a matter of free speech but civic responsibility”

be wrong?



Tariq Ramadan

Nathan Gardels...

Did publishing these cartoons go beyond the limits of free speech?

Tariq Ramadan...

There are no legal limits to free speech, but there are civic limits. In any society, there is a civic understanding that free speech should be used wisely so not as to provoke sensitivities, particularly in hybrid, multicultural societies we see in the world today. It is a matter of civic responsibility and wisdom, not a question of legality or rights. In that context, I think it was unwise to publish these cartoons, because it is the wrong way to start a debate about integration because it inflames emotions, not courts reason. It is a useless provocation.

How does one imagine that the average Muslim in Europe who opposes terrorism will react seeing the Prophet Mohammed depicted with a bomb in his turban? Publishing these cartoons is a very stupid way to address the issue of freedom of speech.

Nathan Gardels...

Why do you think so many European papers feel obliged to republish these cartoons?

Tariq Ramadan...

Now it is a power struggle. Who will have the final word? Who is right? Who will have the upper hand?

If it was stupid in the first place to publish these cartoons in Denmark, it is even more emotionally stupid to do it now. What do we want, to polarize our world or build bridges?

Look, let's have a true debate about the future of our society. Muslims have to understand there is free speech in Europe, and that is that. On the other side, there needs to be an understanding that sensitive issues must be addressed with wisdom and prudence, not provocation. Just because you have the legal right to do something doesn't mean you have to do it. You have to understand the people around you. Do I go around insulting people just because I'm free to do it? No. It's called civic responsibility.

Nathan Gardels...

In defending its publication of the cartoons, an editorial in the German daily Die Welt said, "The protests from Muslims would be taken more seriously if they were less hypocritical. When Syrian television showed drama documentaries in prime time depicting rabbis as cannibals, the imams were quiet." What do you say to that?

Tariq Ramadan...

Die Welt is not wrong to say this. We Muslims must be self-critical. At the same time, hypocrisy in the Arab world doesn't justify insulting Muslims in return. Your teacher should not be the wrongdoings of others, but your own principles.

"What do we want, to polarize our world or build bridges?"

(c) 2006, Global Viewpoint

http://www.digitalnpq.org/articles/global/56/02-02-2006/tariq_ramadan

'Western Muslims and the Future of Islam' Pub. OUP 2003

HAUNTING CONNECTIONS

I have lived in England for more than 20 years, was born in Sudan near Merowe in the north but spent most of my time in Port Sudan, on the Red Sea. Our family would return to our village for three or four months every summer. This was on the Nile and looking toward the horizon from the village you would see the vast desert. Turning around you would see the mud houses, and the Nile itself with a wealth of vegetation growing on its banks. This area was the land of the ancient Sudanese kingdoms, the Nubian Civilisation. Islam came after a period of Christianity, and the culture, traditions and religion are a result of all these influences. Growing up, religion was a natural part of my upbringing. It seemed that everything that could be celebrated within life was accommodated within the popular Islam that I experienced.

Yet one of the debates going on within the Art College whilst I was studying there was around the definition of 'moral' or 'immoral' art, and this was reflected in some of the practices. Life drawing, for example, would take place with a male model wearing a pair of shorts; any artist who wanted to work from the whole body would have to do so privately. At that time, academic art was still evolving, and finding its way with the major influences of Western and European teaching of Art, tradition and religion.



LANGUAGE OF ART



It is within this tension that I came to realise the complex relationship between spirituality and art, politics and religion. As an artist you do not think of things as haram and halal, as sin and not sin, art is goodness, just as spirituality is goodness. They are twins, each with their own identity, yet inextricably linked and fundamental to our humanity. Art is connected to the search for expression, the struggle for originality. Not just looking for the new, but connecting with our origins, connecting with creativity. Art seeks out a higher level, and for me that level is freedom and a commitment to justice.

When I paint, my focus is the action of painting itself. The subject matter is not the prime motive but the act of painting. My paintings vary from abstract to semi-realistic. The human being and nature are the inspiration and centre of my work but I rarely

approach a painting with a planned idea, composition or subject, and do not often sketch in preparation for a painting. I enjoy the challenge of facing a blank canvas and letting the flow and process develop from there. So if a figure or building appears that is not my only aim, I enjoy the process itself. I love to experiment with colours and different surfaces. Painting to me is “not a matter of mastery only, but a matter of feeling” – to quote Jimi Hendrix!

My hope is that, when a viewer sees my paintings, he or she may be haunted, stopped in their tracks, made to linger and make a connection – not just a casual glance. A painting is successful to me as long as it uses the language of painting. I don't use titles because they limit the visual communication between the viewer and the picture.

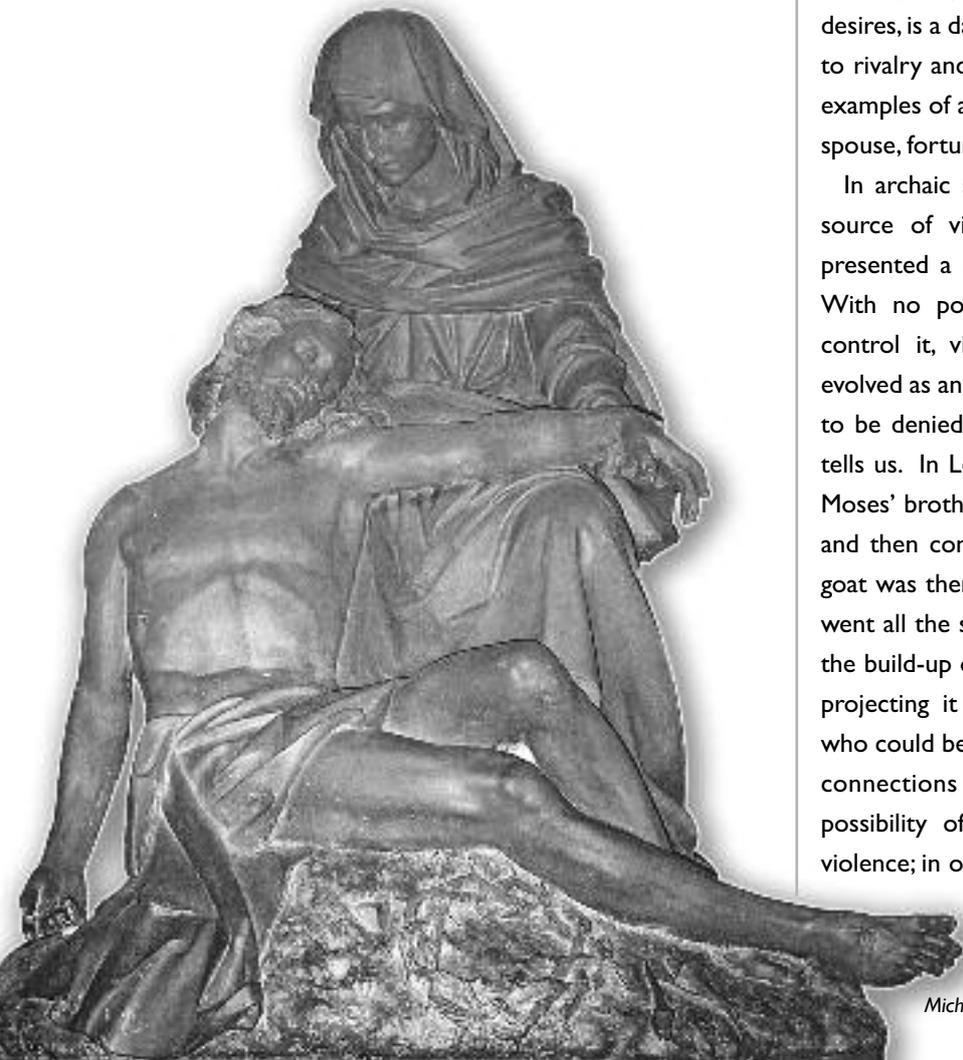
Ahmed has exhibited widely throughout the UK and abroad, latterly at a solo exhibition in the Arison Gallery, Manchester. This May '06 he is having an Open House exhibition as part of the local Chorlton Arts festival in Manchester. He can be contacted via email: ahmed100@onetel.com

does religion evoke violence?

Since the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, the term 'religious fanaticism' and the concept of 'killing in God's name' have become common currency in the media and popular discourse worldwide. In the West, they are regrettably almost exclusively associated with fanatics of the Islamic tradition, and, while extremists who resort to violence are indeed a very active aspect of a fringe of Islam, they are equally present in other faith traditions. Clearly, in the thoughts of President Bush, when speaking to his troops at what he perceived to be the cessation of hostilities in the ongoing war in Iraq, 'wherever you go, you carry a message of hope – a message that is ancient and new.... in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "to the captives, come out and to those in darkness, be free", the Christian God was clearly 'on our side' as Baghdad was bombed and so many innocents killed. But how can we equate this violence 'in God's name' with the message of peace and compassion at the heart of the world's great religious traditions?

The groundbreaking work of the French thinker René Girard tells us that the key to understanding the source of human violence comes from appreciating the way in which we learn, as man is a social animal whose first steps and early sense of identity come from observing and copying others. A baby learns language and its social behaviour in this manner and will carry this capacity to mime and imitate into adolescence and adulthood; contemporary fashion and the advertising industry being testimony to the efficacy and potency of this imitating. Girard describes this process as mimetic desire, or the desire to mime or imitate. But while the child is learning language and the ability to relate to others, it will also learn to want what his or her sibling or playmate wants. Two children in a playpen with many different toys will, within no time at all, both want the same teddy bear. The more the child in possession of the bear resists giving it up, the more the other child wants it, with the wanting growing in crescendo as each child fuels the other's desire. This wanting, acquisitive mimesis, or the desire for what the other desires, is a dangerous development in that it must inevitably lead to rivalry and conflict. Great literature and history abound with examples of acquisitive mimesis where one individual desires the spouse, fortune, land, fame, reputation, social position of another.

In archaic societies, acquisitive mimesis was an ever present source of violence, and as violence is highly contagious, it presented a constant threat to the survival of the community. With no police force, judicial system or social contract to control it, violence was dispelled by a sacrificial rite which evolved as an outlet of diffusion and containment. 'Violence is not to be denied, but it can be diverted to another object', Girard tells us. In Leviticus 16:20-22, the biblical narrator tells us how Moses' brother Aaron laid both his hands on the head of a goat, and then confessed all the guilt and sins of the Israelites. The goat was then dispatched to a desolate place to die, and with it went all the sins of the tribes. Similarly, in archaic communities, the build-up of violence in a community would be contained by projecting it onto someone or something, usually vulnerable, who could be a prisoner-of-war, tribal outcast or person without connections within the community, thus eliminating the possibility of retaliation that would prolong or reignite the violence; in other words, a scapegoat.



Michelangelo's Pieta (1499) St Peter's Basilica, Rome

The scapegoat would then be sacrificed or banished from the community, at which point the violence would abate, albeit only temporarily. Carefully controlled sacred violence acted to contain the wider violence in society, without which a community would become the victim of the cycle of endless violence and retaliation and would not survive.

The sacred texts of the Judeo-Christian tradition abound with acts of violence. But the God of the Old Testament was a God very different from the gods of the ancient world, in that he was a God on the side of the victim, a God who put a mark on Cain the murderer of his brother to protect him from retaliation. And the Prophets, as God's voice, were constantly calling for mercy and compassion: 'Shall I come before him with burnt offerings.....He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'. (Micah 6:6-8) God's message of non-violence and compassion in the Hebrew scriptures reaches its culmination with Christ's message of love and forgiveness, the only true antidote to sacrificial violence and scapegoating.

But when we speak of violence today, we so often refer only to the world's trouble spots, to Palestine, Afghanistan and Chechnya, to the horror of the suicide bomber, the problems of our deprived inner cities or occasionally to domestic situations. So is violence only physical? Or can it not also be psychological, emotional, sexual, indifference or neglect. Is violence not also the withdrawal of love and empathy towards the other? How often do we scapegoat by projecting our anger, envy, frustration or feelings of powerlessness onto another who frequently is not the cause of our pain. We do this in our personal relations and in our communities when we discriminate against the Muslim, the homosexual, the person who differs and does not belong to our elite group of believers. We do this between nations when we in the West talk of the 'Axis of Evil' and 'Satanic Islam', and when Islam talks of the 'Great Satan of the West'.

Most of the great wisdom traditions teach of a divine presence within man, but a presence that is both mysterious and unknowable; 'for my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways' (Is.55:8 NJB) the Hebrew prophet tells us and 'no one knows the Father except the son'. (MT. 11:27 NJB), we learn in the Christian message. God is not a projection of man's hopes and fears, something so well expressed by Meister Eckhart: 'I pray God to rid me of God', and 'All the images we have for God comes from our understanding of ourselves'. As it is impossible to know this mysterious God, all our images of him are mimetic projections, albeit the good, loving God or the violent, punishing God. Consequently, those who propagate a

creed that kills, hates or discriminates have not dealt with their own violence, their punishing, vengeful God is a reflection of their understanding of themselves.

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creed that kills, hates or
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It is commonplace to hear that all the violence of the world today can be placed at the door of religious belief. But true religion that teaches us to imitate the good is the only response to the violence of the religious fanatic. For those of us of the Christian tradition it is Jesus' message of love and forgiveness that we must imitate, the spirit of the Beatitudes, the acceptance of the outcast by a God 'who so loved the world'. False religion that preaches acts of violence in the name of an angry God, is a reflection only of the fear and pain of the

perpetrator, a fact that our various faith traditions and governments must urgently address. 'What is frightening is the conjunction of massive technical power and the spiritual surrender to nihilism. A panic-stricken refusal to glance, even furtively, in the only direction where meaning could be found dominates our intellectual life'. (René Girard)

VIOLENCE AND RELIGION

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Sheelah has a research degree in peace studies and is a member of the World Community for Christian Meditation. She has been active in Albania (Kosovo) and Northern Ireland, in Palestine and Israel and, most recently, is doing work in Bradford.

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has launched AIFES, a new inter-faith exhibition service. Its director is Professor James Allan, a renowned scholar of Islamic art and formerly Keeper of the Museum's Department of Eastern Art. In response to the increased expression of extremism in many religious communities and the widening gap between the different faiths and ethnic traditions, he emphasises the need for new initiatives to help dismantle the walls of hostility, and to bring us together on the basis of our common humanity. He hopes that AIFES can make a contribution, by offering a series of art exhibitions on topics that are shared by different religions.

Words, whether spoken or written, too often divide us. Art, on the other hand, attracts by its visual quality and can offer a non-threatening way of identifying our similarities and differences. It leads us to appreciate the achievements of people of other faiths and cultural backgrounds. Thus, for example, we will not be able to understand the words written in a medieval manuscript of the Koran without learning Arabic. Nevertheless, we can still appreciate the beauty and elegance of the calligraphy, and through that accept that there exists an artistic tradition outside the historic culture of the UK, but of equal quality to anything produced in this country's Christian past.



1



2

words,
whether
spoken or
written,
too often
divide us

visual attraction



3

Oxford University's museums and libraries hold a wealth of objects representing the historic cultures of the UK's ethnic minorities. The University provides a neutral ground and can offer its scholarly expertise in this endeavour. The exhibitions developed by AIFES will provide a wonderful opportunity to share these treasures with the people whose cultures produced them. The first venue will be Oxford itself, but it is hoped that the displays will also travel to other parts of Britain. The first exhibition 'Pilgrimage - The Sacred Journey' - held at the Ashmolean Museum - enquired into the role of pilgrimage as part of religious experience, with objects shown from Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and the religions of India. Most religions recognise pilgrimage, and some even require it as confirmation of religious allegiance. Its aims are to gain spiritual enlightenment and to attain a state of temporary purity and salvation, but it is also undertaken to make a vow and request delivery from physical or mental difficulties, through miraculous intervention. Pilgrimage always brings man into intimate contact with the Divine.

The exhibition's focus is on aspects common to all pilgrimages, but the differences between the religions are also explored, especially in the publication that accompanies the display. The arrangement is thematic, rather than divided by religion. It looks at 'Departure', 'The Journey', 'Sacred Space', 'The Central Shrine', and finally 'The Return', as the different stages that are part of pilgrimage.

For further information please see: www.ashmol.ox.ac

1. Qur'an, mid 16th century, Iran or India. Bodleian Library.
2. Map of the Holy Land, parchment illumination. * English, c. 1350-1400. Bodleian Library.
3. Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, English manuscript, c. 1450-60. Illuminated page with the beginning of the Tale of Melibeus. Bodleian Library.

Minaret Of Sacredness

Mosques are recognisable buildings in contemporary urban landscapes and minarets provide one of their most distinguishing features. In Birmingham, the minaret of the Central Mosque in Highgate has been a striking landmark for many years, but many people may not be fully aware of the origins and meaning of the minaret within Islamic culture. A simple definition is straightforward: a minaret is a slender tower attached to a mosque, surrounded by one or more balconies, which provides a means of calling Muslims to prayer. This article analyses the historical and religious background of the minaret as a symbolic icon in Islamic architecture.

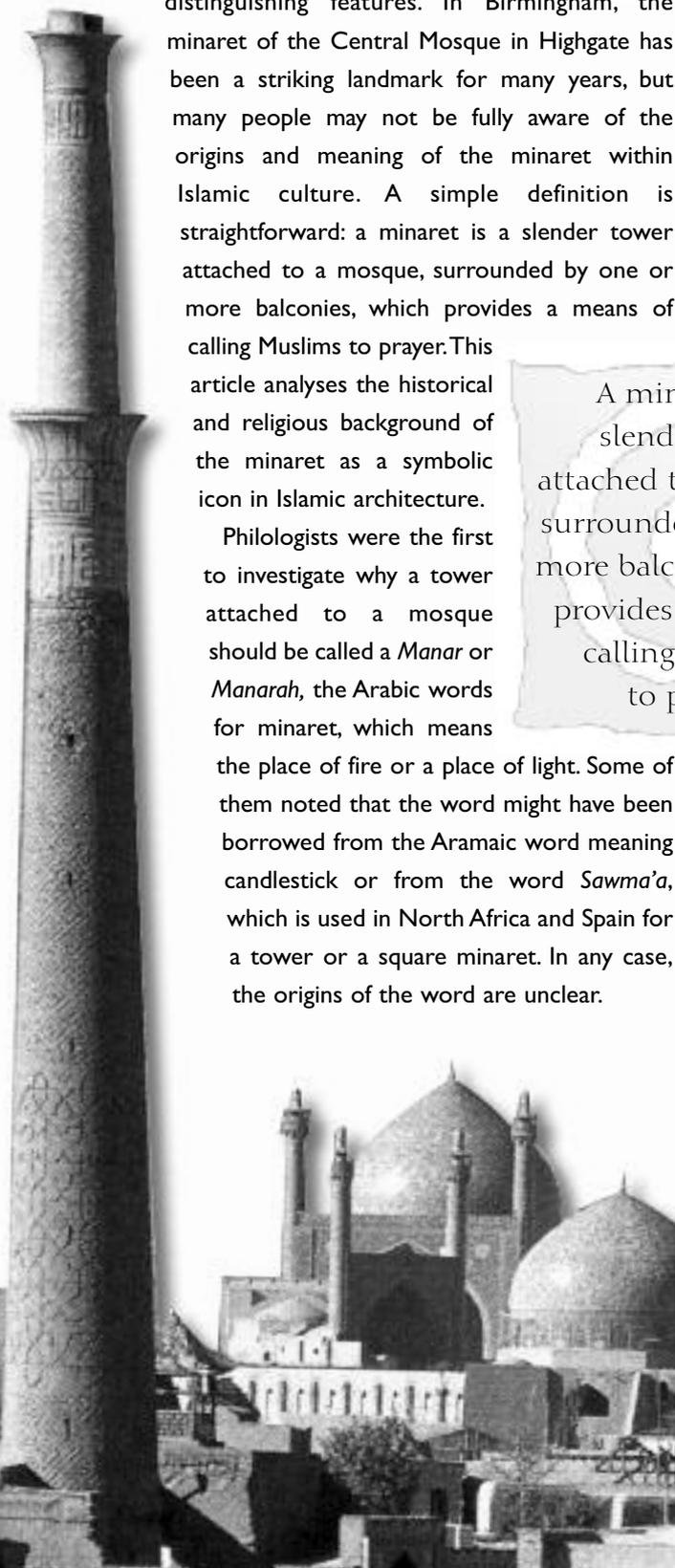
Philologists were the first to investigate why a tower attached to a mosque should be called a *Manar* or *Manarah*, the Arabic words for minaret, which means the place of fire or a place of light. Some of them noted that the word might have been borrowed from the Aramaic word meaning candlestick or from the word *Sawma'a*, which is used in North Africa and Spain for a tower or a square minaret. In any case, the origins of the word are unclear.

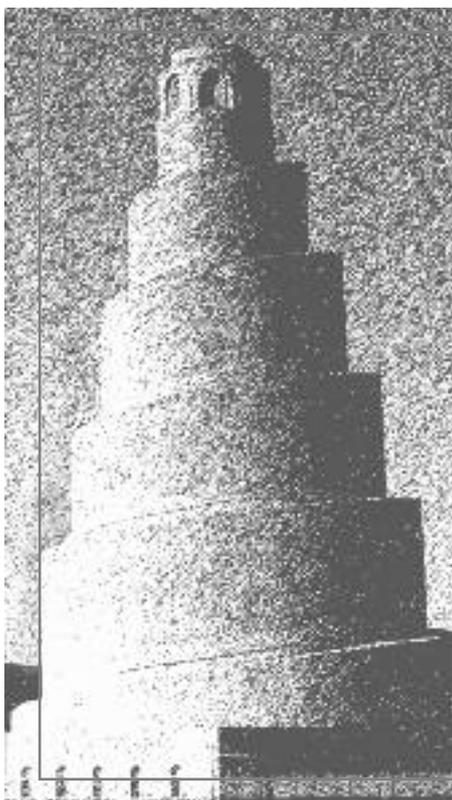
A minaret is a slender tower attached to a mosque, surrounded by one or more balconies, which provides a means of calling Muslims to prayer.

Archaeologists and historians hold different opinions about the first appearances of minaret as well. The Oxford University's publications about Islamic architecture have traced the origins and varieties of the minaret to pre-Islamic towers in the Christian Syrian, late-antique Mediterranean world, ancient Mesopotamia, Sassanian (224 – 651 A.D) Iran and India. The earliest minarets that have been discovered in Syria were square and consisted of several storeys. This became the normal type in North Africa and Spain. In Iraq a spiral form was popular, but this form of minaret is seen occasionally outside the country of its origin, as in the mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo, built between 876 and 879 AD. The Persians used lots of columns and other

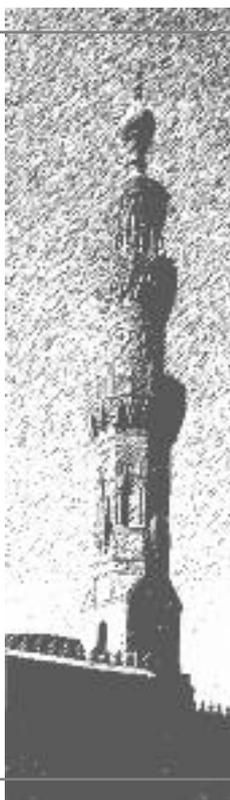
cylindrical forms in their pre-Islamic architecture. In the Islamic period, the Iranians favoured a cylindrical form - a tall column with an enormous capital - which is, in fact, the balcony for the muezzin to call for prayer. Needle-like or pencil shapes with one or more balconies present graceful profiles in Turkey. Minarets became decorative as well as functional elements within Islamic architecture.

Early Muslims felt the need for a unique way of summoning the faithful to prayer. The Jews used horns and the Christians a wooden clapper to bring people to worship. One explanation for the emergence of the minaret for this purpose is as follows. In the second year of *hijrat* (623-24 AD), *Abdullah Ibn Zaid*, one of the Prophet Mohammed's friends, had a dream that he heard a voice calling Muslims to prayer. Mohammed ordered his followers to mount the highest roof in the neighbourhood and call the faithful to prayer. Africans still use the roof of a mosque as a high platform for the call-to-prayer. Nevertheless, many historic mosques have no minaret. Scholars have argued that the minaret as a tower attached to a mosque appeared centuries after the beginning of Islam. Jonathan Bloom pointed out: 'Attaching a tower to a mosque and providing a distinctive place for the call to prayer were initially unrelated ideas that came together only centuries after the first mosque tower had been built. It was in the Abbasid 750- 1258 period, not in the Umayyad 661-750 time as had already been thought.' (Bloom, 1989, p. 175).





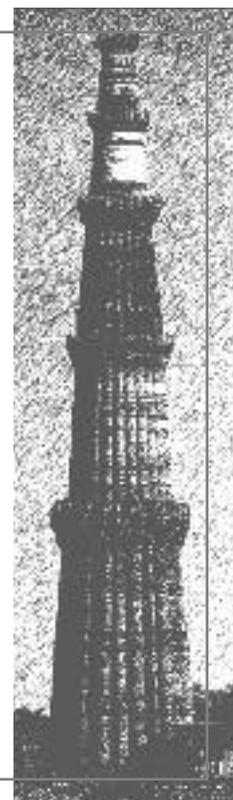
The great mosque of Al-Mutawwakil in Samarra, Iraq



Mausoleum of Sultna Qaitaby in Cairo



The great mosque of Kairouan



Minaret in the Quwwat al-Islam mosque, Delhi, India

Later, when the Arabs defeated the Romans and conquered Damascus, they used part of St. John's Church as a mosque. They built four square towers – minarets - as high platforms at the corners of the church to summon the faithful to prayers. Minarets became features of mosques from which the muezzin could give the call-to-pray.

The number of minarets attached to individual mosques can mean different things. Repeating vertical forms as minarets, twice or more times, may signal the political or religious importance of a building. Different divisions of Islam have their own beliefs about the number and shape of minarets.

For example, Shi'ite Muslims usually have two minarets in their mosques, whereas Sunni Muslims have one, five or four minarets, but there have always been exceptions. The single tower was accepted as a sign of the oneness of God in Islam. Then double minarets paired around a portal became a common architectural for composition proposes in architecture. The twin-tower arrangement remained standard for long time in Iranian architecture in Timurid (1363/70 – 1502) and Safavid (1502 – 1736) architecture. One tradition derives from pre-Islamic times. According to Jonathan Bloom: the "four towers standing guard at the corners of a roof had a long history in the architecture of the Near East. Four-towered temples were associated with the worship of a supreme sky god." (Bloom, 1989, p. 43)

The minaret represents the sacredness of the place of worship in the Islamic tradition. Throughout history, the minaret has always been a respected form in Islamic architecture that identifies a building as a mosque. As a result, it has become a symbol of Islam.

www.mohsenkeiany.com



Drawing of a mud mosque in the rural area of Baluchistan in Pakistan

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Perhaps, at the end,
All we shall have
Is the sum of our loving,
All we shall be
Is as much of ourselves
As we've found.

Perhaps it is all
Unbelievably simple
Not, as Theology has it,
Profound.

© Maureen Coatman

Cited: Love's Danger

Maureen died in 2005 she was Anglo-Irish and a member of the Society of Portrait Sculptors. She exhibited at the Royal Academy and lived on a mountain in West Wales. For further information please contact Jennifer Carrick 01239 613777

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LOVING LORD OF JUSTICE

Loving Lord

Thank you for being with us
moment by moment.

Our hearts and minds know
that we are fortunate.
We have food, clothes,
a good education.

Loving Lord

Thank you for continuing to be with us
moment by moment

Our hearts and minds know
We have partners and colleagues
Who are far less fortunate.
Some of our friends live
below the poverty line
and yet ..

and yet ...
their generosity far exceeds our understanding.

Loving Lord of Justice

in your being with us
moment by moment,
Instil in our hearts and minds
the will ...
that determined will ...
to make sacrifices
so that our friends may,
without any strings attached
or any patronising self-promotion,
be enabled to live ...
to live their lives in freedom and
to know peace

Amen

'OUR JOB NOW IS COMPASSION'

professional and personal priorities in the wake of the London bombs

At 11.12am on Thursday 7 July 2005 a teacher wrote as follows to a discussion forum at the *Times Educational Supplement*:

This is shocking! I've just heard this news from a kid (I'm currently in ICT) and it turns out the teaching assistant's husband is working in London. She has tried to call but the network is jammed. She is worried sick!

Many people reading this no doubt recall well the sick worries they too had that day. In the next day or two there were hundreds of further messages on the TES website. Most of them were slightly less worried, but all – of course – were deeply concerned.¹ A small selection of the messages is printed below. Between them, they show teachers reacting to the news of the bombings both as private individuals and as professional educators. Further, they raise general issues about teachers' professional responsibilities at times of crisis and tragedy and in contexts of deep controversy. And they evoke the kinds of question about British society and its education system that teachers, together with millions of their fellow-citizens, have been talking and thinking about these last few months:

The screenshot shows a window titled 'Forum' with a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Go, Window, Help) and a taskbar at the bottom. The window contains several text posts from a discussion forum. A mouse cursor is visible at the bottom left of the window.

I was on a course at the Institute of Education and had to be evacuated from my tube train at King's Cross, but I saw all the injured and later heard the bus bomb, which was close to the IOE.

We were watching the news at lunchtime and people clapped Ken Livingstone's speech...

I ran an assembly today for Year 9 pupils on good and evil and they got it quite clearly. There is no debate in their mind or mine.

Londoners are a stoic lot and will carry on almost as normal. But school was very strange today (we're in west London). Kids quite scared, but weirdly mature about it.

... Mind you my tears were also to do with relief: number two daughter and boyfriend live in London, and boyfriend was on the underground when the first bomb went off. It was a very long morning until they replied to my texts.

We reap what we sow. Live with it, and keep it in proportion. This is not a risk-free environment and never will be.

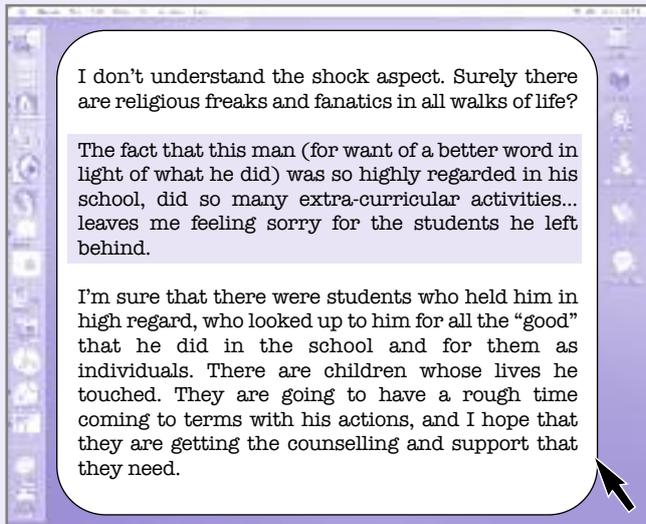
My daughter was supposed to go on a school trip today - her school's well south of London and they were going to northern France by coach for the day. The trip was cancelled. And there was me thinking we're not supposed to bow down to terrorism.

Nobody is destroying my way of life because I will not let them. I refuse to be cowed by terrorists, as do the rest of my colleagues who came into work this morning, as do the people on the bus who all spoke to the driver this morning and as do my fellow commuters on the train into town.

... I am also proud of the schools I chair in Tower Hamlets where staff made an extra effort to get into work, even though we advised parents that we might have to suspend some classes. The real heroes are those who get on with it, do their jobs and do not let others derail their futures.

Our job now is compassion, for the families and victims of the bombs and for the children taught that suicide is glorious. Compassion is all that will bring hope from this: anger's done enough already. All we can do is keep open the possibility of reconciliation in our torn world. I feel really, really sad. My thoughts and prayers are with everyone who lost someone yesterday.

A new thread of messages started after one of the bombers was identified as a former learning mentor in a Leeds primary school:



'Good and evil'... 'no debate in their mind or mine' ... 'carry on almost as normal'... 'Kids quite scared, but weirdly mature about it' ... 'We reap what we sow. Live with it, and keep it in proportion. This is not a risk-free environment and never will be' ... 'proud of the schools I chair in Tower Hamlets' ... 'The real heroes are those who get on with it, do their jobs and do not let others derail their futures'... 'Our job now is compassion, for the families and victims of the bombs and for the children taught that suicide is glorious' ... 'Anger's done enough already' ... 'religious freaks and fanatics in all walks of life' ... 'sorry for the students he left behind' ... 'a rough time coming to terms with his actions, and I hope that they are getting the counselling and support that they need.' The phrases pose searching questions about teachers' professional responsibilities:

how as teachers do we keep our nerve and our heads and our sense of proportion in the increasing absence of 'a risk-free environment'?

how do we support and counsel and help kids to be 'weirdly mature'?

what's going on inside the hearts and minds of 'religious freaks and fanatics'?

how helpful is it, if at all, to talk in this or any context about 'evil'?

in what sense and in what ways is compassion a professional duty ('our job now is compassion')?

This article is a kind of stepping-back and taking-stock, in order to help with the discussion of these questions. It recalls various key themes in recent conversations and reflections, and suggests agenda items for the months and years ahead, both in the education system and in society more widely. The stocktaking begins with a review of the attacks on multiculturalism, and on multicultural education, that were one of last summer's many ugly features.

ATTACKS ON MULTICULTURALISM

The quotations from teachers with which this article began show that they were able to keep their heads at a time of great crisis. Quite a lot of commentators in the media, however, including some on the liberal-left, lashed out with unfocused anger against something they called multiculturalism, and they said or implied that teachers committed to multicultural education were to blame for not preventing the attacks in London. For example, William Pfaff, in an otherwise useful discussion of the ways in which Al Qaeda has been constructed in part by the West's paranoid imagination, claimed in *The Observer* that the young bombers in London had been created by 'a half-century of a well-intentioned but catastrophically mistaken policy of multiculturalism, indifferent or even hostile to social and cultural integration'. The policy, he said, had 'produced in Britain and much of Europe a technologically educated but culturally and morally unassimilated immigrant demi-intelligentsia.'²

In the web-based journal *Open Democracy* Gilles Kepel announced with a breath-taking mixture of confidence and ignorance that 'in Britain, multiculturalism was the product of an implicit social consensus between leftwing working-class movements and the public-school-educated political elite. Their alliance allowed one side to monitor immigrant workers (Pakistan in particular) and the other to secure their votes, through their religious leaders, at election time.' He then added:

*The July bombings have smashed this consensus to smithereens. In one sense at least, and in spite of the massive difference in the number of deaths, British society was more deeply traumatised by the two London attacks bombings than Americans were in the aftermath of 9/11. The United States assailants were foreigners; the eight people involved in London were the children of Britain's own multicultural society.'*³

Similar attacks on multiculturalism were made from the political left by Jonathan Freedland and Henry Porter. From the political right attacks on the same target were made by, amongst others, Michael Howard, David Davies, Michael Portillo, Matthew Parris and Boris Johnson.⁴ Some of these contained extraordinary caricatures of the outlooks and policies they were criticising. At much the same time the British National Party issued thousands of anti-Muslim leaflets with a graphic illustration of the devastated No 30 bus and claiming that multiculturalism was to blame. The journalists and politicians mentioned above would maintain that they are poles away from the BNP. There was nevertheless an eerie similarity between BNP propaganda and the musings of certain mainstream commentators.

The commentators, for their part, derived succour and support from selectively quoting Trevor Phillips, chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, in order to claim that he agreed with them, having seen the error of his ways. It is true that Phillips subsequently criticised what he called 'anything-goes multiculturalism' and speculated that 'in recent years we've focused far too much on the "multi" and not enough on the common culture.' But also he paid handsome tribute to people working in the field of race relations.

People talk a lot about the race relations industry, usually disparagingly. I am proud to say that this summer, our industry did its part in holding communities together at a time of great stress. We experienced no major conflicts, and despite the fact that there definitely was an upsurge in anti-Asian activity post 7/7, we understand that this has now subsided; the GLA tells us that in London for example, the level of such activity is lower now than it was before 7/7. This is in no small part due to the work of the people often casually abused as race relations busybodies, working on the ground, calming, cajoling and conciliating. Many are paid, but tens of thousands are unpaid, and do it because they want our country to be a better place.⁵

There was a great gulf between the actual text of Phillips's speech about 7/7 and the way the speech was first trailed and then reported throughout the media. Whether the gulf was down to off-the-record briefings, or to a misleading press release, or to journalistic carelessness, bias or ignorance, or to sheer malice and disinformation, is not publicly known. The fact remains that the interesting and valuable things Phillips had to say were drowned by the headlines he generated and there was widespread disappointment and dismay, even indeed anger, amongst the very people whose support he most needed – for example, the people saluted in the passage quoted above. The dismay was powerfully articulated by Lee Jasper:

Effective antiracism starts from the view that we refuse to ... go along with distortions and generalisations about Islam. In these circumstances, the provocative, headline-grabbing speeches by Trevor Phillips, the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, are counterproductive and generate many of the most unapologetic headlines in the rightwing press, giving succour to those who want to push back antiracism. Asked [by Tom Baldwin for The Times, 3 April 2004] whether the word multiculturalism should be killed off, he replied: 'Yes, let's do that. Multiculturalism suggests separateness.' ... But the truth is that vile anti-Muslim prejudice, using the religion of a community to attempt to sideline and blame it for many of society's ills, is the cutting edge of racism in British society. Those who consider themselves antiracists need to wake up to this fact.⁶

ISLAMOPHOBIA

In summer 2005 the vile anti-Muslim prejudice of which Jasper spoke took on a more subtle form, in some quarters, than hitherto. Previously, there had been explicit hostility to all of Islam. Samuel Huntington, for example, had infamously said: 'The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.' A commissioned article in the *Sunday Telegraph* declared that 'all Muslims, like all dogs, share certain characteristics. A dog is not the same animal as a cat just because both species are comprised of different breeds.'⁷ The new development in 2005 involved distinguishing between 'good Muslims' and 'bad Muslims', on a direct analogy with the good nigger/bad nigger distinction that was once an explicit hallmark of racism in the United States.

The hallmark of good Muslims, in this demonology, is not so much that they are 'decent' or 'law-abiding' or 'peace-loving' or 'mainstream' or 'gentle' (all favourite words amongst non-Muslim commentators), but that they do not seek to apply their faith to social and political affairs, do not criticise British foreign policy on Iraq and Israel/Palestine, do not wear Islamic dress in public spaces, are not inclined to 'self-segregate' or seek 'separateness', are not critical of Western secularism, and do not read or offer for sale the works of, amongst others, Mawlana Mawdudi.⁸ The convenient consequence of the demonology is that good Muslims are remarkably hard to find. In particular, the argument runs, they cannot be found in the leadership of major organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the Muslim Association of Britain or the Islamic Foundation. A particularly outrageous and simplistic expression of the good Muslim/bad Muslim paradigm was presented in a *Panorama* TV programme, 'A Question of Leadership', on 21 August 2005, with substantial supporting and supportive coverage in the *Independent on Sunday* and *The Observer*.⁹

The MCB has an impressive record of encouraging its members to engage fully with mainstream British society and to develop strong British Muslim identities. So have many other organisations, and so has the Swiss scholar Tariq Ramadan. Ramadan's writings and lectures are extremely relevant for educators in Britain, for they inspiringly explore how Muslims can live with integrity in non-Muslim societies and can contribute to their societies' development and creativity. Yet there were extraordinary attacks in the

tabloid press on Ramadan. In the course of these he was constructed along with others as 'a cleric of hate' who should be prevented from even entering Britain, let alone lecturing here.¹⁰

REBUTTALS

To their credit, the BBC, *Guardian* and *Independent* gave Ramadan a platform on which to explain his thinking. So earlier had *Open Democracy*, through a lengthy interview with Rosemary Bechler. With regard to the attacks on multiculturalism more generally, magisterial rebuttals were provided by the political philosophers Bhikhu Parekh and Tariq Modood. There is not space here to give a faithful account of their patient clarification of the concepts of assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and national identity. But brief quotations give a flavour of their conclusions. The first quotation below is from Parekh, the second from Modood:

*Multicultural societies are not easy to manage, and there is no saying what external and internal factors might destabilise them. They are, however, here to stay and form part of our historical predicament. Given good will on all sides, they can also become sources of great richness and vitality. If we mismanage or try to mould them according to some naïve and nostalgic vision of a culturally homogeneous and tension-free society, they can easily become a nightmare. But we can make a reasonable success of them if we accept cultural diversity as an ineliminable and valuable part of human life and devise imaginative ways of forging social unity out of it.*¹¹

British involvement with the United States's geopolitical projects – including the creation of Saudi-backed jihadism in Afghanistan in the 1980s as well as those following 9/11 – is certainly part of the current crisis and is putting great strain on multiculturalism. Yet in the same period New Labour has been part of an evolving multiculturalism, not least in understanding that religious equality is a necessary part of multicultural equality. These developments of recent years should not be called into question in the name of integration, anti-terrorism or secularism. What is urgently needed is not a panicky retreat from multiculturalism, but to extend its application by recognising Muslims as a legitimate social partner and include them in the institutional compromises of church and state, religion and politics, that characterise the evolving, moderate secularism of mainstream western Europe, and resist the calls for a more radical, French-style secularism... The lesson from the current, post-7 July crisis of how to respond to the appeals and threats from Salafi jihadism is that we need to go further with multiculturalism: but it has to be a multiculturalism that is allied to, indeed is the other side of the coin of, a renewed and reinvigorated Britishness.¹²

There is an urgent need in the education system to make the writings of scholars such as Parekh, Modood and Ramadan available to teachers, student teachers, education officers, Ofsted inspectors and school governors in forms they can readily use in their own thinking and day-to-day work. Equally, their treatment of the issues should be made known, through appropriate curriculum materials, to young people and children. The debates and discussions will not be easy. Most of the voices with which this article began show, however, that teachers are readily up to it.

THE NEED FOR DEBATE

One of the teachers quoted earlier mentioned that they had talked to their students about good and evil and that 'there is no debate in their mind or mine'. We can empathise with the teacher and can also, given the circumstances, sympathise. But it's seldom if ever appropriate for someone involved in education to condone or welcome the absence of debate, or to take refuge in discourse of evil. A core task of education, after all, is to foster debate – to enquire, weigh evidence, withhold judgement, listen, empathise. It may suit politicians to speak of evil ideologies and empires, but it is seldom if ever appropriate for educators to characterise something as evil, and therefore to deny any responsibility for trying to understand it, or any collusion in its existence.

William Pfaff, in the article already quoted, said it was pointless trying to understand al-Qaeda and the London bombers:

Like the anarchists of the 19th and early 20th centuries, these people have no realisable goals and make no meaningful political demands, only Utopian ones. Thus, like the anarchists, they must be called nihilists. For that reason, they present a profound problem to governments accustomed to dealing with rationally manageable threats, enemies and demands. Reason has no answer to nihilism.

This was deeply anti-educational. To label something as nihilistic, in the sense of being impossible to engage with, is itself nihilistic. It is a counsel of despair. On this point as on so many others in summer 2005 Gary Younge was a beacon of calm and unwavering determination:

For political and emotional reasons it has been necessary for some to dehumanise the bombers – to eviscerate them of all discernible purpose. Stripped to their immoral minimum, they are simply 'evil monsters'. .. [But] those looking for tails and tridents on the CCTV footage of the bombers will be disappointed. They look like everybody else. If the security services are going to have any chance of infiltrating the bombers, they must first humanise those involved. They need to find out what would motivate young men who apparently have so much to live for to die – and kill. Only then can they discover how to spot the determined and stop them, and how to catch those vulnerable to their message before they fall into the clutches of the terrorists. The only extra power the police need in this effort is the power of persuasion – the ability to gain the confidence of the Muslim community by convincing them that the aim is to catch terrorists, not to criminalise their community.¹³

Younge's article was based in the first instance on the killing of a young Brazilian by the Metropolitan Police. He recalled also that earlier in the year, after a young British Muslim from Gloucester admitted planning to blow up a flight between Amsterdam and the US, the head of the Met's anti-terrorist branch said: 'We must ask how a young British man was transformed from an intelligent, articulate person who was well respected into a person who has pleaded guilty to one of the most serious crimes that you can think of.' Younge wryly commented: 'A policy that lets the police shoot first and ask that question later will have a drastic effect on the kind of answer they are likely to get.'

BRITISH MUSLIM IDENTITIES

The kind of questioning Younge was advocating requires substantial attention to concepts of fundamentalism and to the strand of thought described above by Tariq Modood as Salafi jihadism.¹⁴ Even more importantly, however, it involves much joint reflection on the meanings of key terms such as integration and shared belonging. The debate on these topics got off to a bad start when the community cohesion reports were published in 2001, with their outrageous claim that the principal problem is the so-called self-segregation of Muslim communities, as distinct from the marginalisation of Muslim communities, fed by racism and Islamophobia.¹⁵

A good example of appropriate joint reflection was provided by a symposium in late July 2005 organised by *Open Democracy* and the Muslim magazine *Q News*. 'What happened?' 'What changed?' 'What now?' These were the key questions. The agenda was divided into two parts: 'Is Islam in Britain failing its young generation?' and 'Is British society failing its Muslim community?'

'The first generation of Muslims that came to this country,' said Humera Khan, one of the panellists, 'did not come with dysfunctional families and politicised views. I can remember, being someone who is from a migrant family in the early 60s, a passive community, keeping themselves to themselves. The question to ask is how this peaceful community can have children who are full of anger, hatred and susceptible to radical ideas.' Other contributions to the debate included:

If British society views the kids that are involved in this project [terrorism] as separate to the rest of society, a lot of problems that they are trying to solve and the young people that they are trying to address will effectively be excluded from the rest of society.

I think the broad causes are known and they are a series of factors that have produced humiliation... Violence legitimised by religion wipes away the stain of humiliation.

I found my British identity by finding my faith.

The symposium ended with Fuad Nahdi, the founder and managing editor of *Q News*, recalling a story about Mullah Nasruddin. Once Nasruddin wanted to learn how to play the guitar so he went to a teacher who told him it's very easy, but you have to pay £10 for the first lesson and then £5 for each of the other lessons. Nasruddin thought about this and then said OK, can I start with the second lesson.

All too much of the debate about 7/7, Nahdi emphasised, particularly the debate initiated by the government and developed by journalists, has been about the second and subsequent lessons, not the first.

What, though, is the content of the first lesson? Introducing the symposium, Isabel Hilton, *Open Democracy's* editor, enumerated some of the points the lesson plan needs to contain. She mentioned the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire; the war on terror; the jihad in Afghanistan; the Zia regime in Pakistan; Kashmir; oil; patterns of migration and ensuing social alienation; theological and doctrinal debates within Islam, both in Britain and globally; inter-generational strains in migrant communities; and integration and multiculturalism. Her underlying point was that there are 'overlapping and competing narratives' and that 'each of us tends to attach ourselves to the story that we most recognize as the prime explanation.' She continued:

If we confine ourselves to the narrative that we are most comfortable with, and we are not open to new facts, then we will be tethered to explanations that don't necessarily work.

TAKING STRENGTH

As teachers sort out how they are going to live and work with overlapping and competing narratives, and how they are going to help their pupils to live with them, and as they plan not only the first lesson but also the whole series of lessons ahead, they could do worse than recall the first reactions of some of their colleagues on or just after 7 July:

Kids quite scared, but weirdly mature about it.

We reap what we sow. Live with it, and keep it in proportion. This is not a risk-free environment and never will be.

... proud of the schools where staff made an extra effort to get into work, even though we advised parents that we might have to suspend some classes. The real heroes are those who get on with it, do their jobs and do not let others derail their futures.

Our job now is compassion, for the families and victims of the bombs and for the children taught that suicide is glorious. Compassion is all that will bring hope from this: anger's done enough already.

REFERENCE

- 1 Talkback, *Times Educational Supplement*, 22 July 2005
- 2 William Pfaff, A Monster of our Own Making, *The Observer*, 21 August 2005. The monster in question was al-Qaeda, incidentally, not the 'home-grown' bombers or multiculturalism. However, busy readers of the headline could be forgiven for misunderstanding it.
- 3 Gilles Kepel, Europe's Answer to Londonistan, *Open Democracy*, 24 August 2005.
- 4 For precise bibliographical references and internet links go to www.insted.co.uk and then click on Multiculturalism.
- 5 Trevor Phillips, After 7/7: Sleeping-walking to segregation, *Commission for Racial Equality*, 22 September 2005.
- 6 Lee Jasper, Trevor Phillips is in Danger of Giving Succour to Racists, *Guardian*, 12 October 2005
- 7 Will Cummins, *Sunday Telegraph*, 25 July 2004
- 8 Mawlana Mawdudi (1903–1979) was an extremely influential Muslim writer. The BBC *Panorama* programme on 21 August 2005 devoted much space to deploring his influence and the fact that his writings are promoted by, for example, the Islamic Foundation in Britain.
- 9 *Panorama's* conclusion was: 'It's a battle of ideas - between those for whom Islam is personal - and those who also wish to pursue Islam as a political ideology, fuelled by the rages and injustices of much of the Islamic world.'
- 10 According to the front page of the *Sun* on 11 July Ramadan is even more dangerous than tabloid bogey figures such as Abu Hamza and Omar Bakri, for he presents 'an acceptable face of terror to impressionable young Muslims'. Other papers ran with the same story.
- 11 Bhikhu Parekh, British Commitments, *Prospect Magazine*, September 2005. The article was based on a lecture that Lord Parekh had given earlier in the year for the International Labour Organisation, Geneva. The full text of the lecture is at Prospect's website.
- 12 Tariq Modood, Remaking Multiculturalism after 7/7, *Open Democracy*, 29 September 2005
- 13 Gary Younge, No Forked Tails Please, *The Guardian*, 29 July 2005
- 14 For discussions of these topics, follow the links at www.insted.co.uk/multi.html.
- 15 There is fuller discussion of the 2001 reports, and of the ways they were presented by the then Home Secretary and by the media, in the chapter entitled Street and Neighbourhood (chapter 9) in *Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action*. Trentham Books 2004



Regard man as a mine
rich in gems of
inestimable value.
Education can, alone,
cause it to reveal
its treasures, and
enable mankind to
benefit therefrom.

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A Soothing Song

Lucky enough to be travelling in Morocco recently, a friend drove me to his home village high up in the Atlas Mountains. I've visited his family many times before and I was warmly welcomed. While the mother busied herself with making tea and other traditional culinary treats, the baby girl was plonked in my lap. I made friends with little Fatiha and she was happy enough for the first few minutes. But when she began to need her mother, I began to sing, and she began to laugh. What magical song did I sing? Her favourite? No, she'd never heard it before. My favourite? No, I'd never heard it before either! I just sang, many times, the two notes of a cuckoo's call and those inspired words "Where's your mama?" And that was enough! I was able, in the international language of music, to soothe Fatiha and to bring laughter to the whole family, young and old.

I have worked with children aged 3-11 for thirty years and in that time I've seen music perform miracles for many children. Music has the capacity to entice, to inspire, to gladden, to sadden, to excite, to soothe, and to disturb. Viola Brody (a developmental play therapist in the USA) says: "If every child were held, rocked and sung to for a while every day until they were six it would revolutionise the world." I agree with her.

Working in inner London, I met Jack, a sad eight year-old with many difficulties and little pleasure in life. He was extremely musical, but his gift was not picked up until I met him. What a transformation! Within three months, he changed from being constantly in trouble to being the star of the school, not only able to perform musically in front of the local community, but also able to hold his head up high, having found something he was really good at, a different boy for having tasted success. Sathyan, a four year-old attending a language unit where I worked, would never talk in class, but he joined in and sang all the songs in our music session.

But even children who do not have a particular gift for music benefit from having it in their lives. A recent study in Switzerland backs up what we have long suspected: music is good for the mind. During a three-year experiment more than 50 primary school classes were given five music lessons each week instead of the usual two. The extra classes replaced one of Maths, one of Language and one other lesson. The results showed that music has benefits for children beyond the purely musical ones. The classes that had more music were found to be slightly better

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at Language and Maths than the other classes, even though these other classes had more Language and Maths lessons. There were also striking gains in the children's motivation and in the social climate of the classes.¹

I believe that we come to love music through routes which are familiar and which feel safe, and for small children, this is through reference to colours, numbers, feelings, surroundings and bodies. You don't have to look far for a selection of good resources, for songs with simple repetitive words that aid

language development, all wrapped up in the charming packaging of a good tune. Children themselves have given me the ideas for many of the songs I've written, frequently based on subjects close to their hearts. One song incorporates parts of the body:

**"Miloud's leg moves up and down,
From side to side and round and round,
He can touch it with his fingers, everyone knows,
But show us, Miloud, can you touch it with your nose?"**
(from *Ready Steady Sing*, book and cassette).

Listening to music is one of the requirements of the National Curriculum Guidelines, and it can be great fun too! Helen MacGregor, an experienced teacher and musician, has gathered together a selection of music, all very suitable for young children to listen to, encompassing a wide variety of styles (West African drumming, music for computer, 19th century French orchestral music, North American big band music etc). In *Listening to Music 5+*, Helen describes a wealth of activities for children to do, many of which can be used with four-year olds.

Music is universally joyful and a powerful tool for communication, especially for the young. With one child or with many, the principle is the same: **make music!** And with modern technology the possibility is at your fingertips. I do hope that you and your child will make music, and that you both enjoy it.

¹ Ernst W Weber 'Music makes the School', available from the author at Haldenau 20, 3074 Muri, Switzerland. Fax no 00 41 31 951 1641

Ready Steady Sing

25 tuneful songs tailored to National Curriculum requirements for 3-7 year olds. Available from Jane at jane.sebba@zen.co.uk or phone +44 (0)20 7272 6064.

Listening to Music 5+

Recordings of music from different times and places with activities for listening, performing and composing. Published by A&C Black: www.acblack.com

TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP

Though justice and respect for our neighbours are important values in the three monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam, they have traditionally been dominated by male leaders, whose religious views reflect androcentric perceptions of reality. The views and the spirituality in these religions are based on the experiences, problems, questions, feelings, insights, and interest of men, and on men's desires, fears, dreams, and fantasies. In this age-old practice of male domination, men with androcentric views continue to consider themselves as superior to women. They claim exclusive authority to determine how God must be viewed; what is human, male, and female, and to identify God's allocation of roles and responsibilities among men and women. Accordingly, women's experiences and views on religion and spirituality are marginalised, ignored, and excluded from the discourse in androcentric religious traditions.

In 1980, I wrote a paper about Thecla. Her story is described in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a remarkable text, written circa 180 AD. The text describes the problems a woman at that period met when deciding to make her own choices for her life. First, she was put in prison and condemned to be burnt, after refusing to marry the man to whom she was promised. She survived by a heavy shower of rain putting out the fire after it had started burning. Thecla was again brought to the court of justice after having defended herself against sexual assault by a wealthy man. She was condemned to fight with wild animals. Her offender was allowed to lead the game with the wild animals. The women in the court were upset and protested loudly screaming "A bad judgement, a godless court of justice". The queen Tryphania supported Thecla. By screaming and fainting, she made the violations against Thecla stop. After her release, Thecla started preaching the Gospel. Paul assigned her as an apostle and spoke to her: "Go and teach the word of God".

Around 204, the church father Tertullian declared the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* apocryphal - in other words, of questionable authenticity. He played a major role in the selection of texts that would be included in the Bible and ultimately the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* were placed outside the Canon. His view on women was epitomised in statements such as: "And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway; *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree; *you* are the first deserter of the divine law; *you* are she who

persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert - that is, death - even the Son of God had to die." (See: Serenity Young, Ed. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*. (New York, Crossroad, 1993, p. 46)

In circles which considered the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* as authoritative, women were accepted in leading roles and as co-workers in the early Christian community. The way the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* was handled is an example of the patriarchal selection and canonisation process of early Christian documents, a process which has functioned to bar women from ecclesial leadership. (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her*, pp. 54-55). Through the ages, Thecla continued to be honoured in the Roman Catholic Church. However, her image and her story were changed to make Thecla accommodate with the male church leaders' ideal image for women. Thecla became honoured by the church fathers as a virgin, as a martyr for her faith in Christ, as the first daughter of Paul, and as his faithful pupil and companion. Paul's instruction to Thecla to be an apostle and her dedication to teach the Gospel was then virtually written out of history. After these distortions of her story, Thecla became the patroness of the church fathers. Before the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* was declared apocryphal, the devotion to Thecla was as strong as the devotion to Mary. At that time, a woman who was called "a Thecla" was seen as a strong, respectful and dedicated woman.

Now "a Thecla" is perceived to be an obstinate and strange woman.



Thecla's story increased my awareness of how men of power, who feel superior to women, try to distort the truth about the lives and struggles of women in history. I was surprised to discover that it is possible to uncover the truth about women's lives, even if the truth has been hidden for centuries within male-centred history. A revelation that brings to light powerful, active, influential and resilient women – our foremothers and sisters in every culture and tradition.

When participating in China in an exchange programme with Chinese religious organisations and departments of history, philosophy and religious studies, information about Chinese women's research, history, and living conditions was difficult to obtain. Questions on these issues always got the same response. "Women are not oppressed in China. Next question, please." Sometimes translators even did not want to translate these questions. They were sure that there was no research available on these *women's issues*. Information came from Chinese women and men outside the meetings. Months later, I received a letter from a student with a hand-written text in Chinese characters. After translation, it proved to be a lecture written in 1904 by Qiu Jin (1875 – 1907), a Chinese women's human rights activist.

The text is an "Appeal to two million Chinese women" and starts with "Unfortunately! The greatest injustice in the world concerns two million Chinese women." The first part gives a detailed description of the subjugation of girls and women throughout different periods of their lives. "When a girl is born a father says – if he is a nice man – nothing. If he is a bad tempered or heartless man, he will continuously whine 'What a misfortune! Again a worthless creature.' Earlier or later, the girl will belong to another family. On the day of her marriage, the girl will be carried to the house of her boy in a colourful sedan chair. If the boy is a good husband, the girl will lead a happy life. If the boy is a bad person, the woman will ask herself, 'Have I done something wrong in my former life?' or complain 'I don't have any luck.' When she complains and the husband cannot longer stand that, she will be beaten up and cursed. Other people will also say, 'This woman is good for nothing. She does not know her place.' But I say, 'Where is a place for women to complain?'"

In the second part, Qiu Jin wonders where this injustice against women is coming from and why women are treated in such an inferior way. She accuses the men in power for the different kinds of oppression and violence against women. "These awful scholarly recluses said: The man is respectable and the woman inferior, her ignorance is her greatest virtue, the woman has to obey the commands of her husband." She appeals to women to change their situation and to stand up against this nonsense.

In the third part, Qiu Jin addresses women's portion in their oppression. She expresses that women are often submissive and tend to give up their responsibility. "When a man says that I am

worthless, I feel worthless. But I am incapable when I am only worried about temporary convenience and keep quiet like a slave."

The fourth part starts with the words: "I hope that we women from now on do our best to change this situation." The text ends with the words: "Everybody knows that China will fall down, and that the men will do nothing for their country. How can we have faith in them? If we women do not stand up, China will fall down."



秋瑾

Qiu Jin

It is time to listen to the voices of women and men who call for change

Which religions, world religions, grant social justice and equality to women – half the population of the world, relegated to second-class citizenship? Swami Agnivesh

The age-old practices of male-dominated religions and traditions continue to influence the culture and structure of the interreligious dialogue and its agenda. When women participate in interreligious organisations we are often confronted with the rules, ideas, norms, values and structures that have been designed by men according to their experiences, insights and interests. Women are expected to accommodate with this male-oriented tradition. That makes it still controversial in the interreligious dialogue to communicate women's experiences and views on religion and spirituality, and very difficult to address the worldwide mental, physical and sexual violence against women and children.

Honour Killing:

Questions posed by Lorna Douglas

Q. In so called ‘honour killing’ whose honour is being protected, and why?

A. The honour of the family/tribe/clan of the young people guilty of sexual misconduct is being protected. The mistaken belief is that through the sacrifice of the life of the said individual the honour of all concerned will be redeemed and the family or tribe will have received absolution from the shame.

In reality at the root of honour killings is a problem of domination, subjugation and hatred of women who, in these instances, are viewed as lesser human beings. It is not a problem of female morality or of safeguarding women’s chastity and personal virtue.

Q. How has the concept of ‘honour killing’ developed?

A. In order to explain this I feel that I should first clarify the place that ‘sexual relations’ holds in Islam.

While Islam considers sexual union within marriage as pure, unpolluted and healthy and a gift of Allah (God) for humanity, it considers such activity outside marriage as an abuse of this gift, and therefore a grave sin. Any sexual misconduct of this kind is not permissible by Islam. Islam also lays down rule for marital partners to sexually engage with each other with love and affection, kindness and consideration. Hence the rules of modesty and etiquette apply. As Islam is a way of life for Muslims, the religious precepts and everyday Muslim lifestyle almost go hand in hand. And this has influenced a lot the way we think. The exception to this rule (of religious traditions and individual practices sitting comfortably with each other) and a strong one at that, is the cultural baggage and/or prejudices of a particular region or ethnicity (since Islam is a universal religion and not of any culture, ethnicity or region-specific) which interfere with it, and even dominate in certain cases. Not every culturally Muslim person is a practising Muslim who adheres to the precepts in the way one is meant to. This is when the conflict between cultural malpractices and individual transgressions are misunderstood to have the sanction of Islam. Whatever may be the circumstance or action, sinful or criminal, Islam does not allow us to play the judge, jury and executioner. The law is there with its proper safeguards; but on the other hand law-breakers are there too. Those who commit ‘honour killing’ are guilty of first degree murder.

Muslim parents feel responsible for the actions of their children under their care but not all have good parenting skills. Again those with good parenting skills can be confronted with

real challenges which may lead to situations where certain families may fail to demonstrate the prescribed lifestyle in Islam. Free mixing between the sexes with no holds barred is not acceptable in our culture. As for example, physical intimacy, even if it is kissing and holding hands; clubbing, late night partying is unacceptable and falls within the realms of promiscuous behaviour. Behaviour of this nature causes much concern and deep hurt, and in many cases trauma as well, to the majority of Muslim parents. Many parents see themselves as having failed in their duty to their Eternal Lord for not protecting the honour of their children. Children are ‘amanah’ or that which is entrusted to parents who are trustees. While some parents experience a heart-breaking situation for the moral lapses (of a sexual nature) of their teenage boys and girls, others are provoked to take the matter further and resort to violence and honour killing, thinking that punishment in this life is less in degree than the punishment of hell-fire in the after-life.

Q. How has the practice been influenced by cultural norms?

A. Honour killing is a century old custom prevalent in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iran, in Hindu and Sikh communities of India and in rural Sindh and adjoining parts of Beluchistan in Pakistan practiced upon those who have committed adultery. In Sindhi ‘Karo-kari’ is the term used to define those guilty of sexual misconduct. ‘Karo’ means black and in this context means an adulterer and ‘kari’ is an adulteress. If a man and woman unrelated to each other by close blood ties are seen to as much as talk to each other in a street corner or have exchanged flirtatious glances, can be accused of Karo-kari. No funeral or proper burial will take place for the ‘Karo-kari’ victims. A hole is dug in the ground and the body or bodies are thrown into it, no one is allowed by the tribe to go to the burial site and pray for the departed souls. These unfortunate victims are forever disowned and no mercy is shown to their souls as it were. Close relatives or friends of the victims who may privately mourn the killing cannot be seen to publicly do so as it would make them an accomplice in the crime. They might as well hang their head in shame for the rest of their lives for the actions of the member/s of their family or tribe.

Like many unlawful and horrendous practices the custom of honour killing is also perpetrated for monetary gain, this brings further misery to defenceless people and those completely innocent of Karo-kari. This custom has also been used to get rid of a wife. In such instances the wife will first be killed and then the husband will bring an allegation of having witnessed her in a sexually compromising situation with someone.

sacrificing a life

This unfortunate person then will be forced to pay the supposed aggrieved husband a large sum of money to save his life and reputation. The ruthless social system of honour killing is manipulated for purposes of a lucrative trade specifically in rural Sindh.

The head of the tribe in this area is like a self-proclaimed deity and his word is final. In most cases he colludes with the perpetrators of this crime for personal gains, and for mutual protection from the law enforcing officials. A Landlord or head of the tribe can elect to spare the life of an alleged 'adulteress' but nevertheless pronounce her an outcast. He may offer to give her shelter, in a show of compassion, on the condition that she will earn her keep by doing household chores. The woman will be grateful to have been spared her life and to have found a suitable refuge but what awaits her is the probability of being raped by the landlord, and by his associates, as and when it suits them.

There have been cases where the 'honour killer' has been indicted for manslaughter or third degree murder; but the Government of Pakistan has recently introduced stricter measures in the Law by which such a person will be charged (and found guilty) of 1st degree murder.

Q. How has it been allowed to perpetrate in this country?

A. Male condemnation in UK is there in certain circles, but in the form of statements only. The condemnation is not loud enough to be heard widely, so does not work as a deterrent or prevention. Muslim leaders are yet to take an unequivocal stand against this custom which is a direct violation of Islam. Even if they have, it has not reached my ears or of those around me.

Q. Why do the media always seem to report it as a Muslim practice?

A. Well, it could be a combination of things, such as lazy or irresponsible journalism; ignorance of what is actually prohibited in Islam; prejudice towards Muslims; as well as reporting based on perception. When so-called Muslims commit the heinous crime in the belief that they are doing a service to Islam, it is sadly the religion on trial and not so much the individual. Muslims should unite to condemn this act in the strongest possible terms and seek out ways to prevent it. Only then 'honour killings' will not be seen or reported as a Muslim practice.

Shiban has spoken out against 'honour killing' in the bilingual magazine *Shomoy*; and on Radio Ramadan Glasgow and European Radio.

WALKING TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT



one thousand day
mountain walk in
Japanese Buddhism

It is after midnight at Mudôji, a Buddhist monastery built on one of the isolated ridges in the sacred forest of Mt Hiei. A monk starts his nightly circuit of walking meditation in the dark. He is dressed in a white shroud to symbolise his state hovering between life and death and wears the traditional *waraji* (straw sandals) that are by no means the most comfortable footwear for a long walk. He carries a lamp, a long staff, and wears a unique headgear made from wood strips rolled up on both sides that looks like a long tube. This headgear is treated with utmost respect as it is considered to be Fudô Myô-ô, the fiery looking Buddhist deity who is his guardian saint.

The nightly walk is almost thirty miles, but it only takes about six hours for Fujinami who has been doing it for the last six years. His pace is fast and it is almost marathon-like to a bystander. He says the walk itself is not difficult, but it is more difficult to carry on. He has been exhausted and ill, and at times, it has taken him to the brink of death. But anyone who embarks on the journey is not allowed to quit for any reason. He carries a dagger and rope just in case weakness comes over him.

Mt Hiei is the headquarter of Tendai sect, one of the oldest Buddhist sects in Japan that originated in China. The mountain is situated at the outskirts of Kyoto, not far from the ancient imperial capital of Japan popular with tourists who come in flocks to visit temples and shrines. Few of them are aware that a lone monk walks every night to meditate and pray in the mountain range that overlooks the city.

In the last 500 years, there have been less than 50 monks who have completed the *kaihô-gyô* or 'mountain walking practice'.



The practice is a unique form of Buddhist asceticism, which is said to have evolved from pilgrimages to sacred mountain sites, but it took a long time to develop into the structured form that is carried out today. There are two types of *kaihô-gyô* depending on the length of time and distance; one hundred day and the thousand day practice. Most Tendai priests and monks take part in the former as part of their monastic training, but the latter that takes seven arduous years to complete is reserved for the most determined few. It is part of twelve years imposed seclusion in the mountain. The practitioner has to live on a vegetarian diet and engage in many other kinds of austerities.

During the first three years, he walks one hundred days each walking around the wilderness of Mt Hiei offering short chants at a few hundred sites along the route. He worships a variety of objects; Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, guardian spirits, Shinto deities, trees, rocks, and even the sun during his walk. The number of walking days is increased to two hundred days each during the next two years.

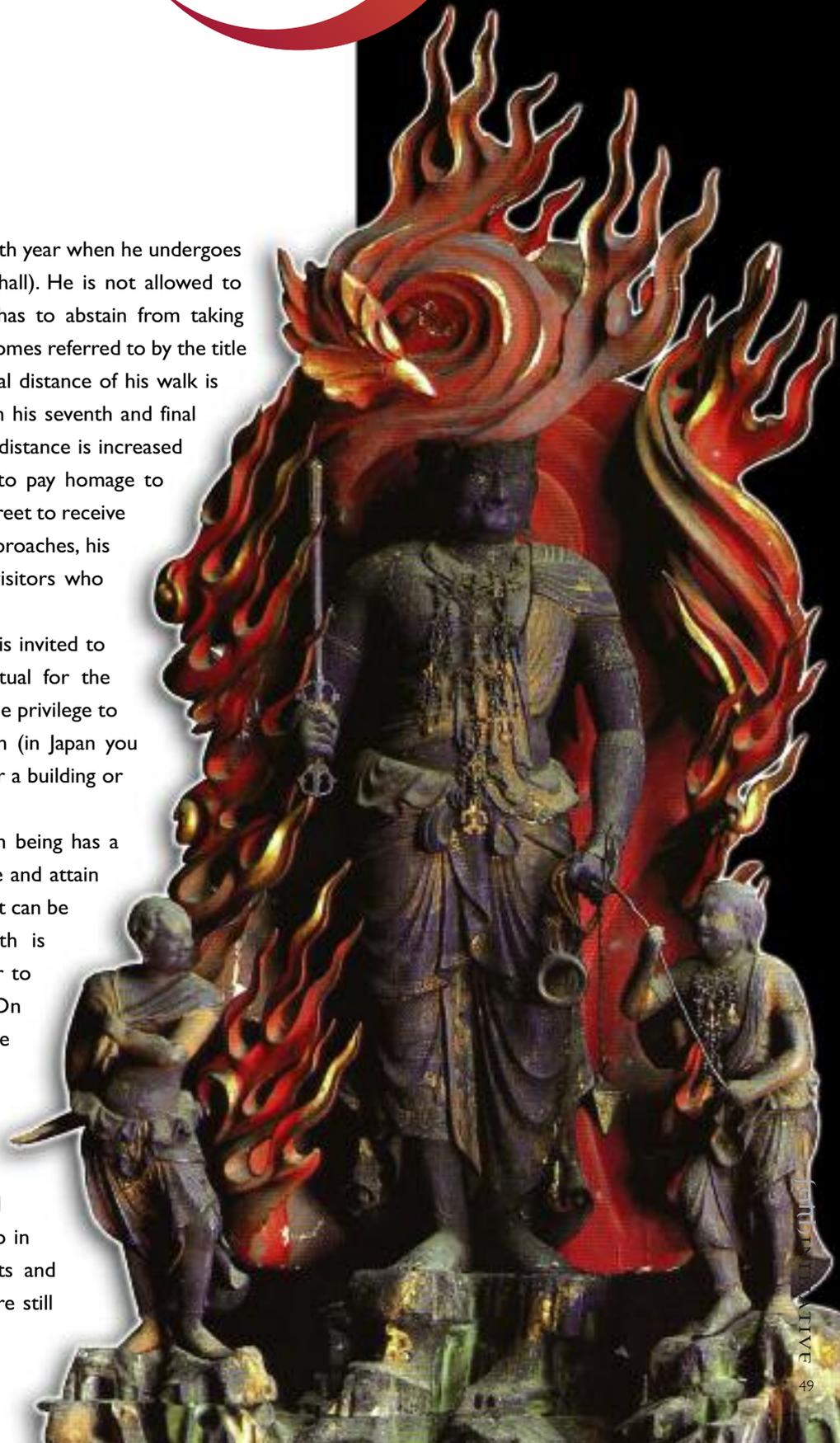
anyone who
embarks on the
journey is not
allowed to quit

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE!

The most arduous task arrives during the fifth year when he undergoes an extreme fast called *dô-iri* (entry into the hall). He is not allowed to sleep or even lie down, and for nine days, has to abstain from taking neither food nor drink. If he survives it, he becomes referred to by the title of *ajari*, meaning 'master' or 'teacher'. The total distance of his walk is extended to 36 miles during the sixth year. In his seventh and final year, he walks for two hundred days, and the distance is increased to 48 miles that takes him down to Kyoto to pay homage to sacred sites in the city. Lay devotees line the street to receive his blessings, and as the end of his ordeal approaches, his temple becomes crowded with anticipating visitors who come to witness the final days of his walk.

Upon completion of the thousand days, he is invited to the Imperial Palace to conduct a special ritual for the Emperor and the nation. He is even allowed the privilege to enter the palace grounds with his sandals on (in Japan you always have to take off your footwear to enter a building or house).

Tendai Buddhism teaches that every human being has a potential quality to develop one's inner nature and attain enlightenment. It is believed that enlightenment can be achieved in this life, and although this path is extremely strenuous, ascetic monks volunteer to undertake the ultimate challenge. On completion, his devotees perceive him to have become a 'living Buddha'. At his worship hall, he conducts daily fire ritual under the gaze of Fudô Myô-ô, where he burns hundreds of wooden sticks with wishes written on them by his followers to dispel misfortune and invite his protection. He has forsaken his ego in the most individualistic of all ascetic pursuits and acquired mystical status to help those who are still suffering in the world of *samsâra*.



God of light

Throughout the ages people have been able to identify with the emotions described in the words of the Psalms, for these poems express human life in its range of joys, sorrows, and confusing doubts, all within a framework that relates to God. In my personal life too, the Psalms have played a special role; they have challenged me, comforted me and strengthened my faith. For me, painting is a Spirit-led search, struggling with the mediums, changing, adding, erasing, for that image to emerge which captures the deep emotions I experience in response to particular Bible texts. Dark versus light – with light often referring to God – is one characteristic feature of my paintings.

Psalm 150

Hallelujah!

Praise God in his holy house of worship,
praise him under the open skies;

Praise him for his acts of power,
praise him with blast on the trumpet,
praise him by strumming soft strings;

Praise him with castanets and dance,
praise him with banjo and flute;

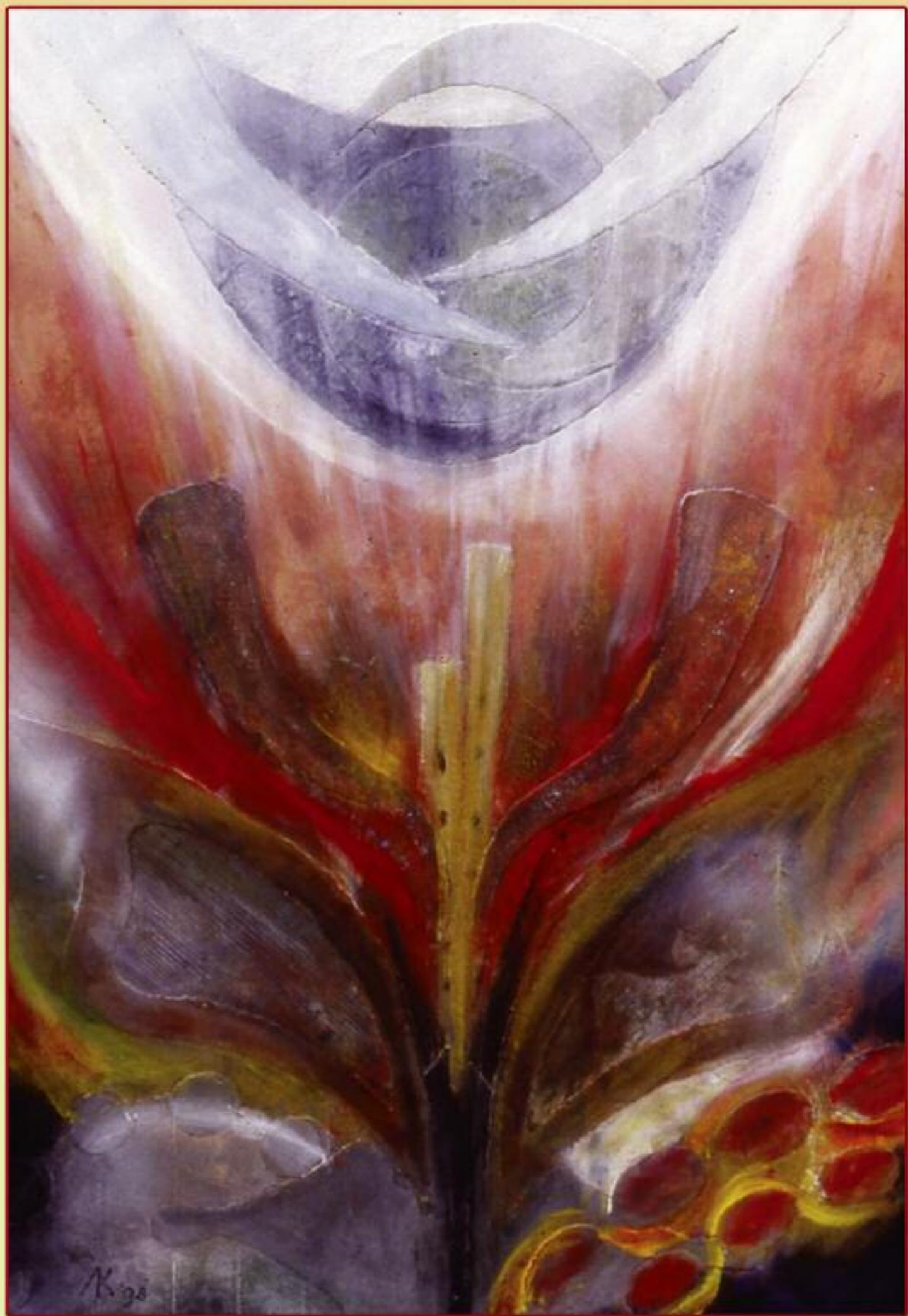
Praise him with cymbals and a big bass drum,
praise him with fiddles and mandolin.

Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!
Hallelujah!

Psalm 150 radiates a joyful occasion of celebration as all creatures join to express their overwhelming praise for their Creator. Up above in the heavens, God is represented in an abstract manner by arms that lovingly surround the earth. Down below, all the musical instruments listed in this song of praise are gathered together into a colourful, dynamic composition; and breath from the worshipping crowd of human and animal creatures rises up to praise God, Hallelujah!

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Then she bound her laughter on the top of the wood,
And stretched out her hands to smother it,
But her hands were stayed...
Her laughter rose and proclaimed
"Because you did not refuse your laughter
Your deepest, dearest laughter
Your joy will shine out like the stars
Cascade, like the sands of the sea..."
And now all I know is
That my 'oughts' have flown,
My life like a flame, reaching to where it will,
Low, sad and smouldering,
Rippling, crackling with joy.
In each, You are there
And God provides with peace, the power to walk
This solitary road in freedom's joy.
My tears have hewn my path.
I know that I am woman,
One who has found her place,
And oned, with you in God,
We seek and find His face.

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Hermit
Saint Ignatius
Caldey Island

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