

ISSUE 22

faith

INITIATIVE

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Beauty is the gift of God

Aristotle

WITH EYES DRAWN HEAVENWARD

Prince's School of Traditional Art

REVEALING THE DIVINE

Women of Faith

WHY ANIMAL SUFFERING MATTERS

Andrew Linzey

Last Post

*In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

If poetry could tell it backwards, true, begin
that moment shrapnel scythed you to the stinking mud...
but you get up, amazed, watch bled bad blood
run upwards from the slime into its wounds;
see lines and lines of British boys rewind
back to their trenches, kiss the photographs from home-
mothers, sweethearts, sisters, younger brothers
not entering the story now
to die and die and die.
Dulce- No- Decorum- No- Pro patria mori.
You walk away.

You walk away; drop your gun (fixed bayonet)
like all your mates do too-
Harry, Tommy, Wilfred, Edward, Bert-
and light a cigarette.
There's coffee in the square,
warm French bread
and all those thousands dead
are shaking dried mud from their hair
and queuing up for home. Freshly alive,
a lad plays Tipperary to the crowd, released
from History; the glistening, healthy horses fit for heroes, kings.

You lean against a wall,
your several million lives still possible
and crammed with love, work, children, talent, English beer, good food.
You see the poet tuck away his pocket-book and smile.
If poetry could truly write it backwards,
then it would.

Carol Ann Duffy

Poem written for the BBC Radio 4 Today programme 30th
July 2009 on the death of the last of the British survivors
of World War I, Henry Allingham & Harry Patch.

Background painting by Michael Lewin

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editorial

Walking on the salt marshes of Morecambe Bay the other morning I was struck by the stillness that surrounded me. The tide was out and a mist hung silently above the shallow waters, the only sound was of the wading birds calling to each other across the sandbanks. As I looked out over the bay to the Lakeland hills a soothing peace descended on my anxious heart and instinctively I found myself marvelling at the beauty of life. My spirit soared like a bird and I found myself at a new level of consciousness, of being absolutely in the moment and seeing the world for what it truly is – exquisitely beautiful. The natural world can sometimes find you off guard like that, not quite prepared for breath-taking moments in which there is a sense of being spiritually healed by the sheer beauty of it all. Today my thoughts turn to people living in conflict-torn lands, such as Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa and, of course, the Middle East where violence has wreaked havoc on community life and displacement becomes the norm. Such moments of tranquillity will be nothing but a memory for these people as they endeavour to survive the hardships thrust upon them. Our keynote writer, Bharti Taylor, gives focus to Sri Lanka and the suffering of Tamils used as pawns in a game of power and control. Many are imprisoned in internment camps far from home and family, with little likelihood of returning to their towns and villages. So many areas of the world are torn apart in struggles for power, and it is always especially painful to learn of brutality inflicted on innocent people. It seems that there can never be global union in any one aspect of life, and yet recently we almost touched it with our fingertips! At the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen it seemed, for a short space of time, that World Leaders were speaking with one voice recognising the urgency of the need to address global warming by reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. In the closing minutes of the Summit however, it seems some delegates closed their ears to talk of the fragile equilibrium of the planet, concerning themselves more with maintaining political power in their own countries and not being seen to concede to Western persuasion. As people of faith we must pray that realisation of the urgency of addressing climate change will dawn on the leaders of these countries before it is too late. Interestingly, it is mostly young people who protest and demonstrate against the damage being inflicted on the world. But then it is the young, of all nations, who have the most to lose, for it is they who will inherit our amazing and beautiful planet in whatever state we leave it.

Heather Wells

God passes through the thicket of the World, and wherever his glance falls he turns all things into beauty.

St. John of the Cross

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www.faithinitiative.co.uk

Initiative Interfaith Trust
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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.

Faith Initiative Magazine Editorial team –

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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**
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Issue 23 Themes:

- Faith and Leadership
- Colours of the Divine

Front cover: Image: 'Flag' (detail) © Nikki Parmenter (mixed media) Created for an Exhibition in Hungary, in three colour bands representing the Hungarian flag and imagery symbolising Hungarian folklore.
www.nikkiparmenter.co.uk **Text:** Quoted in Diogenes Laërtius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers

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





Displaced lives

The Tamils in Sri Lanka

Growing up in India I knew of Sri Lanka as this exotic place that I heard about only through the Ramayana Stories. I never really gave its people any thought; what they might look like or be like. It was a far off distant place which I did not realise I was so physically close to compared to today when I live in the UK. After I came to live in the UK with my parents it featured even less in my life, or in my experiences, as I was busy getting to know my new home and its exotic culture and people.

In my early 20's I worked in an organisation where there were four south Asians, two Gujaratis, me being one of them and two Sri Lankan ladies. This was my first encounter with people from Sri Lanka, and, like my white colleagues, once I realised they were both Sri Lankan I assumed that they must both share the same language and culture etc. After all they both wore saris!

It was during a conversation with one of them that I discovered that she was Tamil and a Hindu, and her country woman was Sinhalese and a Buddhist. They spoke different languages, had different religions and different customs, and were united in this country by the same fact that united me to them. We were brown people in a country full of white people and, being a minority, we stuck together for safety, security and companionship.

I became a little more aware of the conflict in Sri Lanka when a distant family member was killed – execution style, a gun to the head at his business premises in Colombo. His crime was that he was a wealthy business man. The news sent shivers through my community, and for a while there was a lot of discussion of the conflicts and its consequences. But I had by then a young family to care for and again it slipped out of my consciousness and I moved on with my life. Until some 20 years later as I moved on

in my spiritual journey and started serving as Hindu Chaplain to an Immigration Detention Centre.

I met many Tamils there, mainly women from Sri Lanka fleeing the troubles and the stress that the conflict created in their personal and family lives. I began to realise that their behaviour toward me was hostile, which I found surprising as I was there in a spiritual role trying to help ease their pain through prayer. It took some time to get to the reason for their attitude and behaviour towards me, which was that I was an Indian, and the Indian government was backing the Sri Lankan government in the conflict. These women saw me as a personification of the Indian Government and treated me with the contempt they felt towards the foreign policy of the country of my ethnic origin!

Trying to get the women to look past the conflict, to look more at the spiritual, to look at what we shared, and pray together was a challenge, which was won with some and lost

with others, who simply could not get past my 'Indian-ness'. It made me wonder what terrible things we do to one another in the name of religion, faith, and country, that people cannot bear to sit in a room together to share prayers. Much healing is needed to move on.

The British Hindu community, many of whom were pushed out of East Africa can identify with aspects of the lives of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Those who were housed in temporary camps when they were expelled from Uganda can identify with the plight of those who are in the camps now. Those old enough to have been around when India was partitioned remember the agonies of separation and loss. The British Hindus of Kashmiri origin understand what being 'Internally Displaced' people is all about.

...Much healing is needed to move on

Seeing and hearing about such things happening to others often triggers off memories of their own suffering. So, when we are given an opportunity to do something that may help another group which is going through similar experiences, we as human beings, and as people of faith, feel compelled to do so.

How did the Tamils end up as internally displaced people? They too originate in India from the state of Tamil Nadu. Tamil communities can be found in many part of South Asia and travelling into the orient. Malaysia, for example has a significant Tamil population. Sri Lanka was a place the Tamils settled in centuries ago and now call home. They settled in the Northern tip of the island and put down roots, the area was almost exclusively Tamil and predominantly Hindu. They had their own infrastructure and provided services such as libraries and schools. They started demanding autonomy and independence. The conflict has been a bloody one as many of the women in the IDC would testify. The Tamil Tigers were very much known for their skills in spreading misinformation, which of course meant that internationally they have a very poor reputation. The government of Sri Lanka claims that the Tamils destroyed the whole infrastructure and that there is nothing for the Tamil population to go back to hence they are keeping them in camps. The Tamils claim that the government is keeping them in camps and repopulating the Jaffna peninsula, the once Tamil area, with Sinhalese, so that the Tamils will never be able to call it their own again.

Who is right? I don't know I haven't been there. However on a humanitarian level one can sympathise with the ordinary people who are just pawns in this game of power and control. Displaced, estranged from family and unable to come and go as they please means they are prisoners. The Hindus may not have been able to celebrate Diwali in the manner they are accustomed, the Muslims would have faced the same at Eid and now as Christmas approaches it is the Christian Tamils who will miss the familiarity of home more.

Hindus believe in the power of prayer and the good vibration of mantras chanted in the correct manner, and so the British Hindus held group prayers just after the festival of Diwali. Alongside sending our money, our good wishes and our prayers, we can also demonstrate and keep their plight alive in the minds of others. We now have a growing Tamil population in the UK, most of them are of Hindu faith, we as Hindu Forum of Britain have a duty of care towards them. *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*, the world is one family, therefore we also have a duty towards everyone, prestigious or poor.

Bharti Taylor is Secretary General Hindu Forum of Britain
www.hfb.org.uk

*“He is a perfect yogi who,
by comparison to his own self,
sees the true equality of all beings,
in both their happiness and their distress, O Arjuna!”*

Sri Krishna: The Bhagavad Gita verse 6:32
cited: Bhaktivedanta VedaBase © The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc.

MINDFUL TOGETHERNESS

A retreat at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre guided by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh

Be aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experiences of your daily life. Spiritual learning continues throughout life, and often in unexpected ways. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendship, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?

(Advices and Queries, in Quaker Faith & Practice)

This retreat was co-tutored by Timothy Peat Ashworth, Woodbrooke's tutor in Biblical Studies, and two Buddhist nuns, Sisters Annabel and Bi Nghien, belonging to the Community of Interbeing. The Community was founded by Thich Nhat Hanh, an 'engaged' Zen Buddhist monk, whose international mission for peace was developed during the war in his native Vietnam.

Openness to each other's traditions and practices inspired and pervaded this occasion. Most participants were Quakers, some were Buddhists and some were neither. The Woodbrooke environment, as usual, embodied and promoted the mindfulness we were seeking to develop together. The partnership between Quakers and the Community of Interbeing is growing through a variety of contacts, from events such as this to the frequent use of Quaker premises for occasions inspired by Engaged Buddhism, including Thich Nhat Hanh's appearance last August at Friends House.

Increasingly, and strongly, I am finding the Quaker and Buddhist traditions mutually enriching. I am not of a mind to 'become a Buddhist' in order to draw on the wisdom of this tradition: indeed neither the Dalai Lama nor Thich Nhat Hanh advocates rushing to 'change horses' theologically speaking. At the same time members of the Community of Interbeing are finding wisdom and even practical skills, about business for example, in our Quaker tradition.

My most valued discovery is that meditation in the Buddhist tradition helps me to walk the Quaker path - which I can often see, but not always find a sure footing. This practice leads me by the hand, perhaps not surprisingly, since the pedagogical wisdom of Buddhism has been so long in growing.

The practices we experienced during the retreat were simple and profound: sitting meditation, walking meditation, working meditation, eating meditation. Nothing exotic — just lessons in living more fully in the present moment, revering the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of life, mostly by attending more to the flow of our breath as it connected our individual experience to broader, more universal aspects of being.

One important consideration that I learned, was to become more aware of the distinction between needing and wanting to

On the altar of my hermitage in France are images of Buddha and Jesus, and every time I light incense, I touch both of them as my spiritual ancestors. I can do this because of contact with real Christians. When you touch someone who authentically represents a tradition, you not only touch his or her tradition, you also touch your own.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, from *Living Buddha, Living Christ*)

eat: initially, I overfilled my plate. This has helped me eat and drink more slowly, more judiciously and with more savour.

Every vegetable, every drop of water, every piece of bread contains in it the life of our whole planet and the sun. With each bit of food we can taste the meaning and value of our life. Thich Nhat Hanh (2007) *Chanting from the heart* Berkley, Parallax p. 34

I also learned to see unattractive routine tasks less as chores to be rushed through resentfully, and more as opportunities in which to live mindfully in the moment, even when part of that moment is my impatience.

As well as meditation opportunities we had Dharma talks from our two Buddhist sisters: teachings and reflections on aspects of Buddhist thought. One, which especially 'spoke to my condition', was on life and death, embracing the whole domain of beginnings and endings. Holding a newly fallen autumn leaf in her hand, Sister Annabel introduced her talk by reading Advices and Queries No. 30, which begins: "Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death we are freed to live more fully." She invited us to consider when the leaf had begun, and when it would end. Buddhists are more relaxed about the facts of life and death than most of us. They see all living beings, including humans, as dynamically interconnected, as they keep changing their forms within a continuously creative universe.

We may be mindfully accepting of this, or upset ourselves by trying to resist it. This view affirms the unity of creation that we, as Quakers, are increasingly enjoined to honour and uphold.

We also experienced a Buddhist Tea Ceremony. The Sisters, with gentle humour, persuaded Tim to be the Tea Master, quite a complicated role, which he accepted, also with gentle humour, and consented to be instructed in. The result was a triumph of respectful cooperation. The Ceremony flowed sweetly, so that we felt calm, reverent and light-hearted.

A precious part of each day was Meeting for Worship where our Buddhist sisters and brothers seemed very much at home. We heard many warm expressions of appreciation of being welcomed to this centre of the Quaker tradition.

Long may our loving openness to each other continue and flourish.

My most valued discovery is that meditation in the Buddhist tradition helps me to walk the Quaker path

Expanding

It was my privilege to be Chairman of Faith in Lancaster, a Lancaster and District inter-faith group during its first year of existence, 2008-2009. A new Chair, Vijayanti Chauhan, has now been unanimously voted in to serve for the coming year and I feel that it is opportune for me to thank those who gave me their support, and take stock of my own role of helping to bring different faith traditions together.

At first sight it would seem strange that I have a commitment to interfaith work. As a doctrinally and liturgically rather conservative Roman Catholic, who has views on truth which many today would find old-fashioned it may appear that I'm suffering from misconceptions about who I really am, and what I really stand for.

However, my circumstances from a very early age compelled me to be sensitive to the problems of co-existent belief systems. My mother, a country girl from a village in Westmeath, was an Irish Catholic: my father an Anglican, with views on the liberal side of the theological spectrum. Religious allegiance and differing interpretations of Christianity, were a touchy subject at home, and I learned to shut up about them. The deal between my parents followed a straightforward division: I was to be brought up as a Roman Catholic and educated by the Church of England.

The Anglican churchmanship of these establishments varied, but the overall point of balance tended to be high church, though there was a surprising hint of Evangelical enthusiasm in my prep school. I was not extracted from 'Divinity lessons' in any of these schools, and that says a lot for my mother's pragmatism and moderation in an age when the insistence of the Catholic bishops would have been to enforce my separation. I remember my Anglican teachers with great respect. Their commitment to Christianity was lived out rather than talked about, and their essential fairness and decency, their sensitivity and their mercy in many pastoral situations where the response might justifiably have been very different, are remembered by me with a kind of retrospective awe. When religious matters were explicitly mentioned there was always a forum of free interchange of ideas and beliefs. As a pupil at Cheltenham, Divinity lessons were invariably unimpeded discussions, and when I was fourteen Robert Turnbull, the young Anglican chaplain got us to read, in

class, John Robinson's *Honest to God*, a publication which was something of a *cause celebre* with 1960s theological progressives. It was an invigorating process, the opening of doors and windows, the bracing fresh air of being allowed to think for myself. Nor did I ever hear any hostility to my Catholicism, to which I have been consistently loyal.

This, of course, is the paradox. On doctrine I remain essentially orthodox in the Christian context, yet there has been a transposition of this mindset to a broader interfaith one. This I owe to the kindness of a much older Jewish friend when I was a young man in my late teens. She came from the pre-1914 Viennese upper middle classes, and was shaped, in social and cultural terms, by the world that had produced Sigmund Freud. She was, in fact, a convert to Catholicism, but she retained an absolute loyalty to her Jewish heritage.

What I learned from her in the 1960s, while I was an undergraduate and staying frequently at her home, was an appreciation of the Jewish cultural context of Jesus, and of the ancestral and historic precedents which made him and his people. Of course now this is taken for granted, but over forty decades ago it had a newness, and enjoyed, for an ever widening readership, the vivid aspect of a rediscovery. Those working for Jewish-Christian rapprochement such as the Sisters of Zion were pioneers.

Pastoral challenges which faced the churches after the Second World War proved to be a turning point in their thinking. The shock of the discovery of the death camps in Eastern Europe meant that Christianity, to be true to itself, had in the future to reach beyond itself. It would be inept to say that a mentality of religious exclusivism resulted in genocide, but it had, of course, unwittingly assisted the cultural segregation that was exploited by the Nazis – and other extreme nationalists – who had rejected what Rosenberg had termed 'the pity ethics of the Jew-Christ'. The brief of those in the Christian traditions, whether of Latin Catholicism, or of northern Protestantism, or of Graeco-Slavonic Orthodoxy, was to move towards thoughtful and respectful empathy with communities whose religious loyalties were outside the confines of Christendom. And the starting point was self evident - to trace the pathway from the Incarnation to the faith of the Patriarch Abraham .

...the
bracing fresh
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myself.

Parameters

That meant that Christian people had to acquaint themselves with the rabbinical teachings of Hillel and Maimonides, and with the places of gathering for Jewish worshippers. I was in Leeds in the summer of 1981, about to start an MA course at the university. Since the Azkhenazic immigration from the Pale of Poland in the 1880s, Leeds has been an important centre for the British Jewish community. Through contact with the Council of Christians and Jews in London I was able to locate a local synagogue and attend a service. This was markedly Orthodox in terms of the form of worship, in the intonation of the Scriptures and the Torah in Hebrew, and in the final prayers: these included an affirmation of loyalty to the British Crown, and a prayer of petition for the State of Israel. As I emerged from the Leeds synagogue that morning I realised that in my personal spiritual life journey, I had just crossed an important bridge. This had been a direct encounter with 'God's chosen people'. I use this phrase without any concession, and regard 19th century Christian attempts to relate the words to the Church as preposterous. To quote Thomas Becket a propos of something else: *non vindicabit Dominus bis in id ipsum*; 'the Lord will not judge twice in the same matter'. In other words, this 'chosen-ness', vested in the posterity of Abraham – and I make no distinction between the Azkenazic and Sephardic branches of Judaism – remains, and can never be rescinded. Nor can it, at the deepest level, ever be shared by anybody else.

Truth has to be awkward to be authentic, and, in the last resort, a contradiction. As someone who has been a practising Catholic all his life, I have always known that. To say that I have found 'faith' easy would be quite untrue. So frequently do I fall short of its standard. So often I find its demands on me, and expectations of me, in terms of the affirmation of my intellect, quite unattainable. It is fleeting, and comes and goes. What there is of it is often utterly obscured when it is most necessary. In a sense it is a gift, but, equally, it is a choice, in which I act 'as if' – to use the celebrated phrase of Berkeley – it were true. Faith is not the same thing as the 'certainty' offered by mathematical

logic. How, of its nature, can it be? Nor does it lead to a system which slots neatly into the cosmos as perceived by modern astrophysicists, and we are chasing a will-o'-the-wisp if we think it should. There is no precise fit: rather a very obvious 'mis-fit'. Whether I examine the Fall or the Second Coming, I am baffled. But I go on accepting them as axiomatic, and do not jettison them. Part of going on is some attempt at systematic religious practice, a dutiful following of a pattern of worship, prayers, and private devotion; an attempt to bring moral consciousness within the constraints of religiously legitimated absolutes – not easy in a lot of situations, and many people, for perfectly comprehensible reasons, would be deeply uncomfortable with it. In my old-fashioned way, I adhere to a clear-cut pattern of doctrine – because, if you are a mechanic, you have to understand how the car engine works, or you can't mend it when it breaks down.

The irony – or should I say surprise – is that I keep managing to do all this because other men and women, with exactly the same circle to square, do it in relation to their own group identities and faith histories. In that specific generic sense we are all in the same boat, and we reach up – and out – to touch meaning with our fingertips.

Human Remembrance

High above the altar in Marylebone church, angels swirl. Some have trumpets, all are a gathering of insubstantial energy – whoever painted them had a vivid vision of his or her heaven.

Sitting in a pew half way back, those celestial visions comforted me, Buddhist of twenty-five years practise though I am. Because my mother had her own kind of faith, and I was here at a memorial service for her and all the other patients whom even the great and good ministrations of the London Oncology Clinic and the London Clinic could not, ultimately, save from cancer.

The event was organised by the hospitals, and I went ... well, why did I go? To be there, is the only answer I can give. To say thanks. Something like that, because it was an instinct more than a decision that pulled me 200 miles to visit again the liminal lands between life and death in the company of those who know them well.

A gentleman I took to be Jewish read from the Song Of Solomon, assuring us that the dead are at peace, balm for those of us who had witnessed our loved ones in their final, valiant struggles for dignity.

Later, the Chaplain pointed out that this was All Souls' Night, adding that soon it would be Remembrance Day. November is, he said, the month of recollection. That, certainly, was common ground for those all faiths and maybe none that were in the congregation.

Somewhere in his words I travelled the journey from the rag-bag of grief I carry round with me, back to photographs of mud-grave battle grounds that formed my political and religious views, out to the wars we human beings are still using to scorch the whole race, and back again to my darling ma.

As if to emphasise the commonality of loss, as I relaxed into these meditations, people bearing tapers started to walk down the aisles of the church. The light-carrier who touched the candle I held for my mother was the young lady who dispenses the refreshments in one of the clinics.

Her smile, so familiar and welcome all those hours I sat by while mum's chemo went in, folded me over. I had, of course, already noticed this doctor and that nurse, and felt obscurely glad to see them. It was the tea-lady, though, and later the

receptionists and the admin staff who helped me get it, get what we were all on about here.

We were a team. The human team. Every single one of us here walked into those vast border territories with people we loved or cared for. And we had to come back without them. Professionals, or novices at the loss game, we came back to our ordinary lives, and to our newly unordinary selves, without them.

The chance to revisit our loved and cherished ones together was a visionary creation. It brought me close to my mother again in a way that the rush and flurry of her funeral could not. It brought me to a new appreciation of the demands on all levels

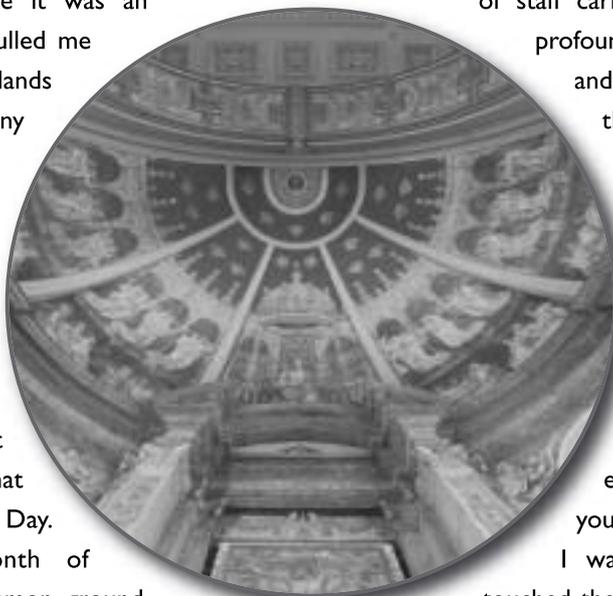
of staff caring for the terribly ill. It made me profoundly thankful that they are as friable and fragile as the rest of us. Which is why they had the compassionate imagination to bring us all there.

As we left the church for refreshments in the crypt, a young mum was standing with a baby on her hip: she'd taken the little one out of the service, maybe, in a quiet bit. Instinctively, I touched the child's bobbing foot. "The other end!" I exclaimed. "Oh, everyone is saying that, you know. And I nearly didn't bring her."

I watched as more and more people touched the baby, their faces softening out of the trench lines of loss. We did not know the little girl, she was not of our kin. But she was the vector, suddenly, of our aspirations, freshly come from that other liminal land, the one before birth. New life, new human life. One of us. And though she wasn't an angel and didn't have a trumpet, she had a lovely smile.

Sitting on the train on the way home, I'm thinking about her smile, about the subtle striations of the smiles of last night, from wistful to joyful in memory. My mother always pretended that our dogs could grin. I don't think any animal can smile, just us human beings. We're the only ones who can make weapons of mass destruction as well. I wish we could all learn to concentrate on the earlier achievement.

Thinking back on the enduringly moving ceremony last night, it's those smiles that stop me crying now. We need more moments like these.



“My devotion to truth has led me into the field of politics: and I can say, without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, do not know what religion means”.

Mohandas K.Gandhi





The Middle way

A debate is currently going on within some areas of the British Jewish world concerning how far into the political world should a Rabbi delve. The Rabbi of Britain's oldest surviving synagogue, the ages old Bevis Marks congregation in London's East End, recently pronounced on some issues which his lay leadership deemed were outside of his field of operation.

Without going into the specifics of the case, it throws into sharp focus something that, whilst appearing to be a new phenomenon, is actually as old as society itself. And for me it shows up very clearly in the issues that we can read about especially in the biblical books of Samuel, Kings and the various prophets. The creation of a monarchy in ancient Israel created in itself a situation of massive change in the society as lived then. The king and his court became essentially the political arm of the community. Sworn into office "under God", their role was not just to govern, but to execute the rules of the society as then established. The society was a theocracy, or a society of the people 'under God', so to speak. And here came the first issue: for, the people tasked with carrying out 'God's rule' had been and then currently remained, the priests.

The priests were essentially a caste of civil servants, or

tasked to put into practice the laws and requirements but within the framework of what was deemed to be God's command. As the monarchy grew so their understanding of the role became blurred: to whom were they answerable? Was it to the Almighty... or was there at least a smidgeon of need to follow the king?

Into this came the prophets, or consciences of the people. They themselves were not 'salaried', as it were, but there nonetheless, sounding off against excesses BOTH from within the court and from within the hierarchy of the priesthood. The prophets were hardly going to win popularity contests, but what we have of their writings tell us much of their role.

So a Nathan sounds off to David for having put Urriah the Hittite in the front line of fighting where he is surely going to be killed, thereby freeing Urriah's wife, or rather widow to marry David. Or Jeremiah challenges the priests ("the temple, the temple" – chapter 7) for thinking that the ritual is the thing in carrying out their duties instead of understanding that in truth their duty included, in large measure, consideration of the people and whether, in hard times they were even able to bring all the sacrifices that they had been slated to bring.

sometimes we appear to build boundaries or barriers as if to isolate our actions or inactions

And it is this moral imperative that still sits uneasily in the debate of today. It not only operates in the spheres of international or national politics, but even is part of the day to day existence of our communities, places of worship or wherever: We think we are all governed by the thrust of what is generally thought to be 'the right way to live', but sometimes we appear to build boundaries or barriers as if to isolate our actions or inactions. This is not really the "Jewish way", even though in a phrase from the New Testament which is often quoted – "render to God what is God's, render to Caesar what is Caesar's" – a firm intent is there to separate them.

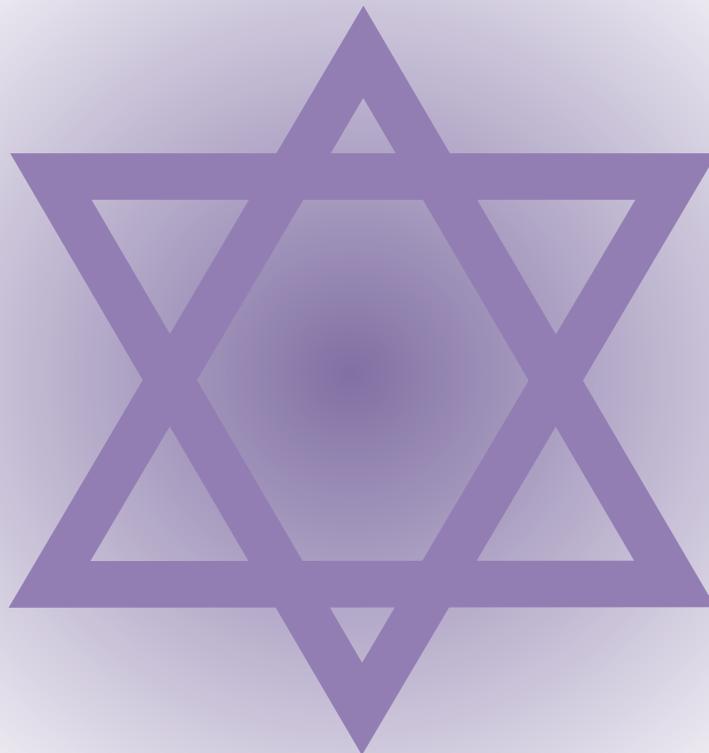
I happened to grow up in apartheid South Africa, and the imperative to speak out against the injustices that were present was strong. Against that there were those who, whilst accepting that the inequalities in the system were wrong were themselves fearful of the whole society as they knew it falling apart, or worse. Striking a balance, finding a *modus vivendi* was difficult, to say the least.

This also became an issue in the 1990s in the State of Israel as Premier Yitzchak Rabin attempted to find a way in which Israel and the Palestinians could co-exist. Whilst he and his followers took a line which effectively would mean major compromise in terms of land, several orthodox Rabbis opposed him vocally and vehemently as they saw he was not only possibly opening an area whereby attacks on

the population of Israel might have occurred but access to what they saw as 'holy sites' could be endangered. Basing their thinking on the biblical statement that deemed the land to be God's they stated a secular politician had no right to negotiate away such land. It was noticeable that, when their views effectively were the trigger for the slaying of Rabin, they pulled back somewhat from the brink. However, every so often, whether it is over settlements or disputes over Sabbath observance, this difference in perspective comes firmly into focus there.

My own position is very much influenced by the stance taken by the prophets of old. As I say, for many they were the "conscience" of their society. Often not popular, but somehow trying to get the populace to find what could and was deemed to be a 'middle way'. As such they tried to let the politicians do 'their thing', but by speaking out, voicing their concerns, they tried to avoid the excesses, the overblowing of their self importance by the politicians.

Does it, can it work in our time? Well, let me end with a tale: a man went to Nineveh, a city known for sins on an unimaginable scale. As he walked round the city he shouted: "Change your ways, change your ways!" Someone came up to him. "Sorry, do you not know where you are? What is the point of you speaking?" "I say what I say", said the man, "Not to forget who I am!"



'Holy Agendas'

} True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness ☹☹

- Albert Einstein

} If you have two religions in your land, the two will cut each other's throats; but if you have thirty religions, they dwell in peace ☹☹

- Voltaire

These words of wisdom, spoken by masters of the past, carry a special resonance in today's world when religion and politics are so often intricately linked, leading to violence in the extreme, and even war.

In our generation Tony Blair arrived on the political scene with a declaration that he carried a Qu'ran with him on his travels and read it regularly to gain an insight into the teachings of Islam. He may well have done this but as we now know, he was actually more focused on his own personal spiritual pilgrimage - from the Church of England to the Roman Catholic Church - than understanding other world faiths. With one side of his family leaning heavily towards non-conformist Presbyterianism, it seems he had a somewhat chequered Christian journey that presumably has been both formative and inspirational in his political development.

Herein lies the paradox. How is it that this man, claiming to come from a rich spiritual background that proclaims peace, has led us - you and me - into a horrendous war in the Middle East? A war founded on misrepresentations that has had dire consequences for World peace. Many people would say that if you are a person who is motivated out of a grounded spiritual background, then your actions would promote peace not war. I know that I am not alone in believing that Prime Minister Tony Blair's actions had far

more to do with his political ambitions than any sense of his spirituality, Christian or otherwise.

As a Christian he could have drawn on the actions of his spiritual mentor, Jesus of Nazareth, who brought his faith to bear on the political and religious issues of his time through non-violent means. Jesus used the power of speech not of weaponry. His outspokenness on political issues related to injustice and inequality of the common people, and his words of healing and peace for that same community, were construed as a threat to the security of the existing political and religious establishment in Palestine. Hence their desire to silence him, and their use of the most violent of means - crucifixion.

*Religion in
Ireland was part
of the political
problem, not part
of the solution*

More recently spiritual leaders such as Mohatma Gandhi have showed us how to apply religion / spirituality to the political reality in which we find ourselves. Personally I could eulogise forever about this world leader whose humility and determination continue to motivate people of all faiths, and none, in every corner of the Earth. Sufficient perhaps in this context to illustrate his political and religious integrity by highlighting his words: "My politics is my religion and my religion is my politics" - a quality that he never failed to apply to his reality to bring about, what he hoped would be, a greater good for the people of India.

Turning to the United States of America we find Martin Luther King Jr. as another fine example of someone who was motivated by his faith. He began his religious work as a Christian pastor in a community where the issues of black segregation were high on the agenda. His faith could not allow him to ignore these matters, nor could he tell his people to 'be obedient to the civic authorities' - as outlined in the teachings of the Apostle St. Paul. Luther King's story has been an inspiration to two generations of black and white people around the globe. Ironically both Gandhi and Luther King also suffered violent deaths by the hands of those who feared their spiritual power.

I was born and grew up in a country where politics and religion were, and sadly still are to a great degree, inextricably linked – Ireland. The situation in Ireland was exceptional, in that the antagonists against peaceful solutions to so-called political disputes were 'sponsored' by faith communities. The Republicans – seeking home rule - were largely supported by a Catholic religious ideology, and the Loyalists – supporting British rule - by a Protestant, supremacist philosophy.

It was very difficult for independent faith people to intervene in this process without being deemed 'disloyal' to their respective faith communities. Following on from some of the political/religious outrages committed over 30 years, prayer sessions would be arranged jointly by lay leaders of both religious communities, but the hierarchies within the respective churches and the political parties maintained their control of the 'holy' agenda.

I remember in Derry in 1969, before the outbreak of violence on the 12th of August, Paddy Doherty, a Catholic layman urged both Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops at a public meeting to "get out on the streets yourselves, and walk together among the people". The Bishops did that the following Saturday, but suffered such criticism from many quarters that they withdrew almost immediately afterwards from the front line.

Religion in Ireland was part of the political problem, not part of the solution.

Church leaders often held the moral high ground where they remained distant from the people they publicly condemned.

When I was working as a university chaplain in Limerick, I found myself doing pastoral work with prisoners, mental hospital patients, and travelling people. My faith led me to stand at the local County Council elections as a community candidate seeking justice for the people I served. This outraged my Bishop who informed me angrily that "Protestants in Limerick have learned not to put our heads above the parapet" – and that in doing so I had broken ranks. Not all the travellers, patients and prisoners were Anglican, therefore, to his way of thinking, there was no need to engage with the wider community. No, I didn't get elected, but we did get commitments from the County Council to improve the care of people in these groups over the following years.

If I am honest, my ego has always been a driver in my political commitments over the years. I can understand why it is that politicians are seduced by power. But just because the world might discover we have feet of clay does not mean that we should not engage with the political process: humility is not exclusively a religious quality – it is there for all humanity. Maybe we could develop training programmes for aspiring politicians to learn how to recognise arrogance as it surfaces within them, and how to access some deeper compassion when they are under pressure. Or do we stand idly by and allow the world of spin and deceit to go its own separate way, and pretend that we are not really a part of it?

I tentatively suggest that we might not perish if we have a vision! (Bible: Proverbs 29.18)



A Parallel

As Zimbabwe begins slowly to emerge towards a new dawn, Chris Chivers discovers the Christian rock upon which its recovery is founded

"Sorry, I'll just turn on the inverter." My host, Hugh, lights a candle and scrabbles around the floor connecting up a myriad of cables and adaptors as another power-cut hits Avondale, Harare where I'm staying. His wife Muriel calls from the kitchen: "Transferring the cooking to the two gas rings... shan't be much delayed".

It's clearly a well-rehearsed routine, and a good introduction to the realities of daily life in contemporary Harare. Over the coming days we experience power-cuts of varying lengths - four, seven and even ten hours. Once, half-way through the night, we are all awoken as the lights we've clearly forgotten to turn off blaze forth.

"Not enough people pay their bills... that's partly why the cuts occur" Muriel explains. "The country just can't generate enough electricity or buy it in... in South Africa they haven't got enough for themselves, let alone to sell to us" adds Hugh.

We're joined one afternoon by Lenny, stalwart of local church life. She explains the ins and outs of the situation in the Anglican Diocese which is seeing the deposed - and now excommunicated - former bishop, Mugaube-supported and self-styled Archbishop of Harare, Nolbert Kunonga, still trying to scupper the consecration and installation of his newly-elected successor, the friend I've come out to support, Chad Gandiya. The following Saturday the diocesan chancellor, Bob Stumbles, finds himself fighting off several injunctions in the High Court before Sunday's consecration proceeds in the Harare Sports Stadium in front of a 10,000 strong congregation, ecstatically welcoming their 'undoubted bishop' with Shona choruses and songs. Bob is texted half-way through the service and informed that the cathedral doors have been padlocked and chained - presumably by Kunonga supporters. So a locksmith is called in order for Chad's installation to proceed later on.

I'm of course barely scratching the surface of the parallel universe which is church and state in contemporary Zimbabwe. Other vignettes would include my dilemma whether to buy the only bottle of a particular brand of

shampoo in the chemist I visit - when to do so would deprive someone else of it. My shock at the number of seemingly under-nourished people struggling to carry water from Lake Chivero to their homes miles away. My disbelief when a bookseller asks me for sixty dollars for a second-hand book. And the shift in my thinking when he explains: "People will pay this, sir. No-one keeps money here. They're

used to spending everything they have, as money's always been worth less tomorrow than it was today". Not to mention my thoroughly Western frustration at the lack of the high-tech living I'm used to - broadband speeds are painfully slow in Zim, and though the mobile phone on my Blackberry is working, little else functions.

What transcends all this, however, is the extraordinary resilience of the Christian witness I encounter. Nontu, the young catholic woman I meet on the plane out of Harare, flying for the

first time as she heads to the States on a scholarship to study at Harvard, having taught art for absolutely nothing in a Harare school the past two years.

Mark, the young Baptist teacher who gives me a lift into the city one evening and who, by contrast, has been paid the princely sum of four and half dollars a month in the last year (his first in teaching) but who is "so grateful for the food parcels and fuel coupons that have kept me going" and above all for "the awesome opportunity to teach".

Anne, the mother of teenaged children who gives me a lift one day, and whose exhausted face lights up at the mention of a mutual acquaintance, Margaret Tredgold, the celebrated catholic illustrator of children's books and painter of Zimbabwe's flowers, who lived at Marandera, towards which we're driving, until her mid nineties, and who celebrates her ninety-ninth birthday this month in Ilminster so far from the landscape and people she loves.

The same Anne, who explains that whilst she had most of her farm taken in the land grabs of the last few years - and the community school that she and her husband had built up completely destroyed - she's now trying to work with some of the very people who took the farm to help them get the school started again.

The potency of
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The potency of the sacrificial and the transforming is palpable as I travel in and around Harare. Even when I get my camera out at the wrong time to take external views of the city's Anglican Cathedral - and soon discover that this is prohibited next to parliament - I see love restored to the initially menacing faces of the soldiers who descend on me, all I guess in their late teens. They're clearly programmed to frighten but as they make me show them the digital photos I've taken, thankfully we come across a playful image of my two-year-old son. Humanity and humour immediately transcend their learnt jumpiness. "Isn't he cute" several soldiers say before feigning further curtness.

But it's the resilience that I encounter when I visit Peterhouse, one of Zimbabwe's greatest schools that really impresses me.

Whatever may be said about President Robert Mugabe, it can't be denied that in the first fifteen or so years of his regime he presided over one of the best educational systems in Africa. A teacher himself – he emerged as a leader when he taught fellow political detainees during his imprisonment at the behest of Ian Smith's UDI regime - he used rightly to trumpet the highest literacy rates in Africa. All the more tragic then that for most of 2008 the vast majority of Zimbabwe's children were not in school. Most teachers simply could not afford to be paid nothing or little at all. So the schools were shut. But at Peterhouse, at least - through a daily battle for food, fuel and even water waged by its courageous Rector, Jon Calderwood - a thoroughly multi-racial staff and pupil body were galvanised into a beacon of real hope.

I've wanted to visit the school for some time not least because when I was Precentor at the Anglican cathedral in Cape Town I'd been responsible in 2001 for the project to install 'Liberation panels' in the cathedral's Great West Window commemorating the anti-apartheid struggle, and welcomed the Peterhouse choir to sing in the cathedral shortly after. The Dale de verre panels by the Chartres artist Jacques Loire clearly caught the eye of some Petrians, who decided to commission a window by the same artist for the school's chapel to commemorate their first fifty years of Christian witness.

In a context where you lack fuel, food and water this seems at first like wreckless extravagance. But visit Peterhouse, and you soon realise the truth of that encounter between Christ and the woman pouring expensive ointment on his feet. For in this school aesthetics and ethics meet in a window that symbolises a community energised by a Christianity so strong you can almost put out a hand and touch it. "Morning Sir... Morning Ma'm", the greeting from each pupil for adults, may seem a throw-back

to a by-gone age. But as it's directed to me hundreds of times during my stay I realise that it's in fact a powerful outworking of the African theology of ubuntu: a person is a person only in the presence of other people. In other words, their presence has respectfully to be acknowledged.

Pip, final-year pupil, musician to the Christian Union and a keen hockey player, confirms this for me as he speaks eloquently yet unselfconsciously of the mutual respect that Peterhouse seeks to foster in its pupils. "Conditur in petra is the school's motto" he explains. "It's on the rock of decent relationships that the school stands or falls", adds Simon, who's taught in Zimbabwe for over a decade.

I see this clearly when a drop-goal in the dying seconds of the game (just like Jonny Wilkinson's 2003 World Cup-winning kick) robs the First XV Rugby team of victory against their closest rivals, Falcon, and they are full of good-spirited words for their opponents.

I see it too as pupils crowding round a log fire to stave off the bitter winds of an African winter's day make special room for the men laying the logs to enjoy the heat.

It's a living spirit that's captured timelessly in Jacques Loire's Peterhouse window. Dalle de verre is chipped glass set in epoxy resin square blocks (like concrete). The colour radiates from within the glass as much as from light refracted through it. It's a parable, if you like, for that strength of Christian witness that comes from within. As I stand gazing at a window which depicts the figure of Peter standing at the prow of a boat, set against the calm waters of Lake Kariba on the one hand and the turbulence of the Victoria Falls on the other, I realise how strong and transforming is the Gospel of respect I'm being shown in glass and in community.

It shames my ridiculous irritation and impatience at a half-functioning Blackberry and the loss of all else that I rely on so heavily day by day. For a moment in its light I glimpse again not only the journey that countless ordinary Zimbabweans are walking with such grace and determination, but also the person I'm actually meant to be.

WOMEN'S INTERFAITH WORKSHOPS

Organised by Initiative Interfaith Trust and funded by the 'Faiths in Action' Grant

WORKSHOP 1 11/10/09 WORKSHOP 2 16/11/09 WORKSHOP 3 SPRING 2010

The aim of the workshops is to empower women in the community of Hounslow; to support them in achieving change; to provide a safe and nurturing environment for interfaith dialogue; and to enable the creation of interfaith friendships.

Women's voices:

Recently a number of interfaith workshops have been delivered by Heather Wells and Emma Winthrop from Initiative Interfaith Trust/Faith Initiative: Embracing Diversity on Hounslow Borough. Hounslow as many will know is a very multi-cultural borough and it was very pleasing from my point of view as Metropolitan Police Faith Officer for Hounslow Borough to see women of all different faiths sitting side by side sharing many common values. These workshops have given a platform to women of different faiths to speak freely about their views on various topics.

It was enlightening to see the second workshop begin with women of the Sikh faith singing a Sikh Hymn. They were then requested to sing this again and on the second occasion all the other women joined in. This clearly displayed a feeling of oneness amongst the women.

What would be a great achievement leading on from these Interfaith Workshops is to create a project that these women can deliver in Hounslow and this would raise the Interfaith Profile amongst the women on the borough.

Karmi Rekhi

Faith Officer: Metropolitan Police Force

"I think it's essential that interfaith workshops such as yours are held on a regular basis. I feel it has given women a platform to voice issues that affect them and society as a whole. It's a great opportunity to network and therefore get involved in the community. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and am looking forward to the next one. I would strongly recommend these workshops to other people."

Maira Hamid

Before attending the interfaith workshop I wasn't even familiar with the term 'interfaith'. Attending the workshop helped to clear my perceptions regarding the different religions.

Increased interaction between people from different faiths might lead to a better understanding of others. A level of trust might build up that will allow people of all backgrounds to work together in partnership for a better society for all. As the Quran says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair of) male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other)."

The interfaith engagements between people of all ages is

important, as this interaction provides the opportunity to build friendships across faith boundaries and give valuable insights into the complexities of modern identities.

Good interfaith relations in UK, as in other parts of the world are of crucial importance. Such workshops, seminars or gatherings can play a vital part in bringing a more harmonious and cohesive society.

I appreciate the good work being done by all the team members.

Maria Junaid

The Interfaith Workshop enabled women from different faiths and backgrounds to come together and talk. It was an opportunity for people to discuss a range of issues related to the diverse community in which we live. The workshop increased understanding between women from different faiths and helped them develop confidence and skills in sharing their own beliefs.

As Britain is now a more diverse society - ethnically, racially and culturally - than ever before, the contributions of people who have come to live here have enriched the country and resulted in a richer cultural life. Through Interfaith dialogue, we can build thriving places where a fear of difference is replaced by a shared set of values and a sense of belonging.

Divya Din, Diversity Team, British Airways Plc

About thirty women from five different faiths met together for our first workshop. We spoke in turn about our own backgrounds and why we believe that Interfaith work is important - agreeing that it is important to break down barriers due to human attitudes, to challenge and overcome prejudices and gain inspiration for collective progress.

A series of excellent speakers spoke about their various religions. When introducing their religions, they reinforced much that I knew already but I also learned much that was new, particularly about the immediate, practical issues in the local community and how these affect women.

In the afternoon we worked in small groups to consider the practicalities of interfaith work and some very good discussion ensued. All in all it was a very inspiring and informative day.

Durga-Mata Chaudhuri

WOMEN'S INTERFAITH WORKSHOPS

Organised by Initiative Interfaith Trust and funded by the 'Faiths in Action' Grant

Women's voices continued:

My name is Amrita and I come from Kolkata in India. I am 22 years old. I am visiting Hounslow and this is my first Inter Faith meeting. As part of the Workshops activity we were asked to choose one item from the table and say why we chose it and what it means to us.

I have chosen a little picture of Ganesha, because I do belong to a Hindu background. I have special love for Ganesha. We worship Ganesha at the beginning of each day. Ganesha comes first - such as when we start any puja (which is the worship of the deities) or a wedding or blessing the new house or starting a new book of accounts in business or anything like that.

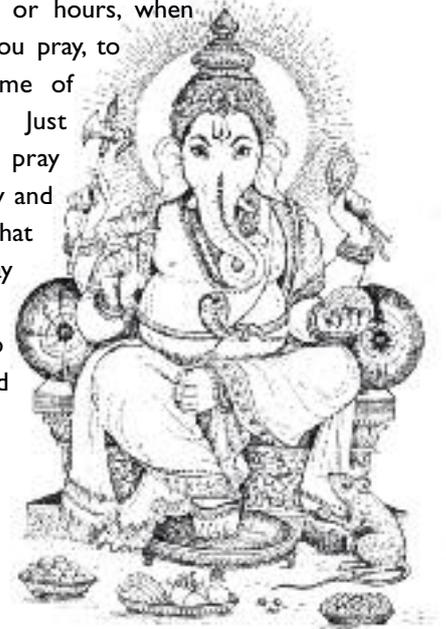
In this picture I can see it is full of flowers and light – which is to show that all positive and beautiful things start with God and it is from God where we get light and all positive aspects of life.

At my home in India we have a picture of Ganesha like this one near the door. Most Hindu families will have a picture or image of Ganesha in front of the door so we see it when we go out and come in. Ganesha reminds us to pray. In the morning we thank the gods for blessing us with the new day. We pray for protection and guidance in the day. There are so many things to pray about:

“To pray is to change. To pray is to be open to change.”

Yes it is very necessary that we pray every day but some times it is difficult because the events of the day are so demanding. We have so many ordinary things to think about which demand our attention. The thing is not how much you pray, how many minutes or hours, when you pray or how you pray, to which God or name of God you pray. Just remember to pray sometime in the day and offer gratitude for what you have. Try to stay positive even in the hard times. Give to God your smile and your positive things.

Amrita Seal



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Editor

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CHARTING *Emotional Terrain*

Yesterday was fierce and troubling - my emotions stripped back exposing me to an intensity of feelings that disturbed me all day. Involuntary feelings descending and sweeping across a vulnerable landscape creating a storm cloud disturbance that affected me deeply - but not today! Sitting here, looking out on the garden bathed in the afternoon's sun, I'm engulfed by a presence of silence and peace. A stillness has settled in my life, a peaceful calm and I feel extraordinarily at ease, relaxed in a space of security and refuge – a shelter from the maelstroms of life.

Why are we taken through these different terrains of emotions and feelings? Where do they come from? Where do they go? Do we have any real control over their presence? If we are so solid and powerful why do we allow them to affect us in such fundamental ways?

Thoughts on oscillation and the possibility of eventual transformation dwells in my mind today....

An entry in Thomas Merton's journal mentions a novice monk at Gethsemani Monastery who increasingly laughed until he reached a point where he could not stop. "I am told that once, before one of the singing classes, he laughed so much he rolled on the floor." This may seem an extreme case to many, but I can tell you I spent many months, on and off, weeping. It just welled up inside me and spilt all over the place. The accumulation of so much emotional charge - built up over an exceptionally traumatic year - that had to find release. There were tears of grief and loss, tears of joy and celebration, and tears of gratitude and deep appreciation for all that I had been given. A defining period in my life that helped to shape me for a better future. A supreme reconciliation of shifting and contrasting life forces that led to a profound healing of all that had gone before.

It's good to feel these emotions and feelings, to let them course through our bodies to find eventual release, because if they are blocked in any way, denied access, then we will

undoubtedly suffer. I've often thought about the laughing novice; what had happened to him, where is he now, Is he OK? Why did he laugh so much? I can't help but think he knew something special, that he had gained some insight that he couldn't express to others; that his laughing was close to enlightenment – I like to think so anyway.

Jung once stated that our emotional problems: " ...can never be solved, but only outgrown " and I think these are wise, thoughtful words. They counteract the more mechanistic views of some schools of psychology which see the inner energy of emotions and feelings as a 'problem' that needs to be 'fixed'. Good psychotherapeutic practice recognizes the energy force within us and seeks, through a process of inquiry (engagement and listening) to work with it. Thus, gradually we can start to move

forward, to outgrow our current difficulties.

But not too quickly, it takes time to heal. We can't be too hasty in our need to bring a reconciliation to our plight. Modern life-coaching language about closure and finality are too simplistic – "Get over it " we are told, " Move on", but what is the point in trying to be too dismissive, too soon, when our deep seated feelings tell us of something quite different – a full narrative that needs our undivided attention before we can acquiesce into a mutual, curative holding. My period of weeping did come to an end, but it took time. Time to be quiet, time to listen, time to accept, time to reconcile.

We just simply do not have control over the external forces / circumstances that can dramatically shape our lives.



A profound learning came to me soon after this healing when I suddenly realized that I wasn't in charge! Not in charge of my life, not in charge of the universe. Up to this time I think I secretly harboured the notion that what I did was of vital importance, that the universe should somehow order itself around my desires and aspirations (however noble they may have been). Plans, objectives, aims and goals were laid out in regimental fashion awaiting final inspection, implementation and completion. Feeling that nothing would stand in their way I assumed all would be done – how deluded I was! Life just isn't like that. All the best-laid plans can go wrong. We just simply do not have control over the external forces / circumstances that can dramatically shape our lives. Terrible things happen in our world, tragic, heart breaking events that can affect so many lives in so many undeserving ways and all we can do is tend to the wounded – ourselves and others.

Another lesson that crept into my life, quietly and un-noticed but still needing my attention, was that of service. I suddenly and quite dramatically realized that something outside of myself had to be served and that something was other people, which reinforced the biblical imperative that states: “ Let him who is greatest among you be your servant”. We are not here to serve ourselves exclusively, although many may believe this so. A full, inspiring, noble life always reflects the ability and willingness to help others, especially those less fortunate than ourselves. This is at the core of the teachings of all World religions. We are all an integral part of an interconnected human family and we must never allow that to fade from our individual and collective memories

Many years ago I met a psychiatric nurse who told me that in his professional work he had encountered many difficult and disturbed patients: individuals who, at times, displayed severe, traumatized behaviour. He was philosophical about his work and didn't bring any apparent judgement to bear on it. He was just a professional carer, in a difficult job, trying to look after peoples' pain. After he spoke for twenty minutes or so he paused in silence. Then, turning around to face me fully, so that I would not miss a word, he told me that the psychiatrist who had been in post at the regional psychiatric hospital was himself admitted as a patient. We ALL suffer. No one is exempt from the pain that accompanies life. It is like an encircling shadow that descends to spread its darkness upon us. And all we can do at these challenging times is seek refuge in the healing light of a spiritual practice that will ground us in understanding and compassion.

Despite all the chaos, fragmentation, erosion and disintegration that pain can bring there still remains, surprisingly enough, a holding that we can seek out. A very gentle and tentative gathering up of our hurt. There is a reason why pain has come to visit us and we need to understand this. We just cannot go

chasing off, attempting to avoid what it is trying to say, because it will come after us, hunt us down with its full presence and voice. The pain is requiring our attention and so we have to listen deeply, like we have never done before, in a space of acknowledgement and acceptance. Then, at this point of stillness we can start to be transformed; we can open up to healing.

We should remember that healing can only come to a mind that is able to release its built up anxieties and fears, resentments and illusions in order to clear a space of receptivity. We must also remember the important point that healing isn't something outside of us, a 'treatment' externally given to alleviate our suffering. On the contrary, it's very much an internal process, an inner practice of listening, evaluating and reconciling. At its very heart, healing is simply changing ourselves; our perception and attitudes in a continuous, process of attentive living.

} Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for the heart to conquer it. ☺☺

Rabindranath Tagore

If life went exactly as we wanted, pain free, there would be little scope for learning. For the reality is, we can grow through our pain if we make a commitment to open up and allow its presence to speak to us. It can liberate us, take us away from a life spent half asleep and make us stronger, more alive, more aware and appreciative of what is happening in our collective world. To experience life fully is to experience pain.

Everything, absolutely everything that arrives in our lives is here for a reason and our journey of adventure is to discover what that reason is. Paying attention, witnessing and reporting on the vicissitudes of life is our mission. Not shying away, ignoring or denying them. They are our spiritual masters here so that we can experience the full, far reaching dynamics of what is to be human and so we must commit to engaging with them in the full and vital knowledge that we will be allowed to grow - to develop the deepest powers within us.

The *Inner Ascent*

The joy of pilgrimage

Life is a pilgrimage. We are launched into it and, through the help of friends, family and society, we somehow find our feet and learn to enjoy the journey. For Jains, one of the most sacred places for pilgrimage is Palitana – an entire city of temples on top of Mount Shatrunjaya in Gujarat. The journey is arduous – not just getting there, but also the steep climb in the hot sun – 3,500 steps in all. Whilst climbing it I was reminded of my past, my successes, trials and tribulations, and reaching the summit was for me pure joy and a sense of huge achievement.



Kasturben Shah from Nairobi, the lady whose financial support made it all happen



Like the external journey, there is an inner pilgrimage. Who am I? What am I on this planet for? What should I be doing with my life? Where lies lasting peace and happiness? Having been born a Jain, I feel so fortunate to have inherited this beautiful culture and philosophy of wisdom, and Palitana for me is a truly sublime expression of all that is beautiful and precious in life.

My journey started in London and, after flights, transfers and road travel, I arrived at the Taleti (the valley of Mount Shatrunjaya). I decided to stay at the beautiful new dharamshala (abode of spirit), Kasturdham, built and sponsored by many Jains from the UK and Kenya, whom I know personally. From the moment I arrived, I felt at home and at peace. My visit coincided with the start of the festival of Chaumasa – the four month rainy season, when monks and nuns are required to stay in one place and not move from village to village. This festival is also a time when ordinary people like myself can come and spend time with the saints, benefit from their wisdom, and deepen our personal quest for enlightenment and liberation. India is the world capital of spiritual festivals, and to experience one personally is the rarest of joys.

To climb the spirit, we need to respect the body. Every day, the body needs food, shelter and clothing. Only when these basic needs are met, do we have the time and possibility of focusing on the divine. At Kasturdham every effort is made to facilitate this ascent. The accommodation is amazingly clean and spotless, the rooms are spacious and comfortable, and the food is fresh, delicious and nourishing. There is no excuse for stress – it goes away the moment you arrive.

There were over one hundred monks and nuns staying in the complex when I arrived – a sea of white, an ocean of peace. Kasturdham was inspired by Acharya Vajransanjayji and Guru Hemprabhuji, spiritual leaders of the Halari Visa Oshwal community. They had left their worldly life many years ago to focus on spiritual upliftment, and to raise society to new heights of ahimsa and respect for all life. Their very presence electrified the atmosphere, enabling all of us to introspect. The charity of Jains is such that anyone wishing to stay in the complex for the entire



The Interior of Kasturdham Complex

festival, could do so for free, so that no money is required for those committed to their deep inner journey.

For women, coming to Kasturdham is a unique opportunity. In Indian culture, the worldly duties and responsibilities of motherhood are very tough, and especially so due to their role in feeding the family. I had always seen that at religious events, the number of women attending outnumbered men by at least five times, and it was clear that they were the ones with the greatest

love for spiritual wisdom and the hunger for its realisation. At Kasturdham, they could forget the burden of cooking and cleaning, and rest, recharge and ascend the vast spiritual journey that lies ahead. They have the opportunity to make this their last life on the Universe, and help them attain the state of Moksha or everlasting freedom and immortality.

As a writer, broadcaster and educator of timeless wisdom, I see in Kasturdham a huge

launchpad for peace and prosperity. Here, values like charity, community, seva (selfless service), simplicity, beauty, respect for all life, were not just theoretical ideals – I saw them being lived and practiced in front of my very eyes.

Come from all corners of the world to rest here. Leave your burdens and worries away to just stop and reflect. Start the inner journey with friends and family – have group discussions, meetings, group meditations and prayers. Use Kasturdham to focus on that which is real and everlasting in life, and to declutter your life from all that is false and misleading: and believe me, your moksha will start right here in this life.

Let us embark on this epic and meaningful journey, and attain liberation in this life.

Website: www.kasturdham.org

Atul Keshavji Shah is founder of Diverse Ethics Ltd.

www.diverseethics.com



A Sadhvi (nun) reading and reflecting during Chaumasa

Askifou Museum Piece

Fleeing from heat, from light that makes them yearn
for shadows to distinguish them from ghosts
they spin beyond the warping loops of bouzouki

music, beyond the familiar scorch
of mid day marble pavements. While they fly
their steady state of love, their fine

disdain for war but not the warrior,
pares back to fights for drips of bottled water.
They do not expect the gun harvester.

He has no particular expectation of them.
His Cretan dress worn from habit not for tips,
he reaps munitions and bits of khaki

from the hills, a scavenging mutineer.
The guns pinioned to his walls still the refugees.
They count four tin hats, with sky framing backs,

poled, like scarecrows protecting the crops.
In '40 the brains of a Fritz oozed here,
a Tommy's there; below, an Anzac's blood

rusts the metal and up above, a Greek
curl's ghost blows on a vanilla bright strap.
The harvester taps Raki from his vat

two fingers up for peace and bloody hope.
'No more young men boom boom,' he says
in all the languages he hardly knows.

Fresh in their shadows, the fugitives glint
tears. They take the guest book, German man,
English wife, and like a pledge, they sign a kiss.

Rebecca Irvine Bilkau

With e Heaven



THE PRINCE'S SCHOOL OF TRADITIONAL ARTS

"Through my school for the traditional arts, I have tried to do what I can to continue the living traditions of the world's sacred and traditional art forms. It is all too easily forgotten how crucial traditions are in handing on the immense richness of human knowledge, wisdom and skill, and giving them new life and new application. I hope that The School's practical teaching and outreach programmes will enable the next generation to bring their inheritance to life."

© HRH The Prince of Wales

The School holds that the practice of the traditional arts is a contemplative process based upon universal spiritual truths. Art is seen as an integral part of everyday life and not a luxury; neither is it a subjective psychological experiment, nor a whimsical exercise in nostalgia. The Postgraduate Educational Programme aims to encourage an awareness amongst students that form, pattern and colour, as manifested in the various branches of the traditional arts, are not simply pleasing to the senses, or demonstrations of good design, but are created to embody beauty — the beauty of the permanent that shines through in the world of the transient. The distinction made today between 'Fine Art' and 'Craft' is entirely modern. In a traditional society painting, pottery, carpentry, agriculture and music were all expressions of art or making, and the artist's practical activity was integrated, not only into the wider community, but also into a more profound order. Extract from © PSTA Programme



Jamie Clark *



Helen White *

Tasleema Alam – a Graduate of PSTA writes:

In 2006 I took three years out to do a postgraduate degree in sacred art that was to prove a momentous change for me. This seemed like madness and pure indulgence at one level – to take 'time out' of my professional career and become financially dependent. Sometimes one instinctively ventures into the unknown – either to hit a dead end or to find a whole new way of being.

During the course one became aware of a belief that the creative soul exists to pay homage to the Creator, through a deep understanding of Creation; this inspired me to search for that within myself. I confess often the guilt of presumption plagued me throughout my studies; after all, never having been to art school, how could I presume to be a skilled artist! The answer to that question lies in the great education I received from the teachers who taught at the PSTA. Their generous guidance transposed a self belief into an understanding that creating art was the most natural thing; it was as natural as sacred worship.

Islam being the faith I was born into, my readings of the Quran encouraged me to embrace Faith as a universal instinct of humankind. All paths directing to a Universal Truth – the Eternally True; the Sacred and the Enlightened - that is what I wished to express in my art.

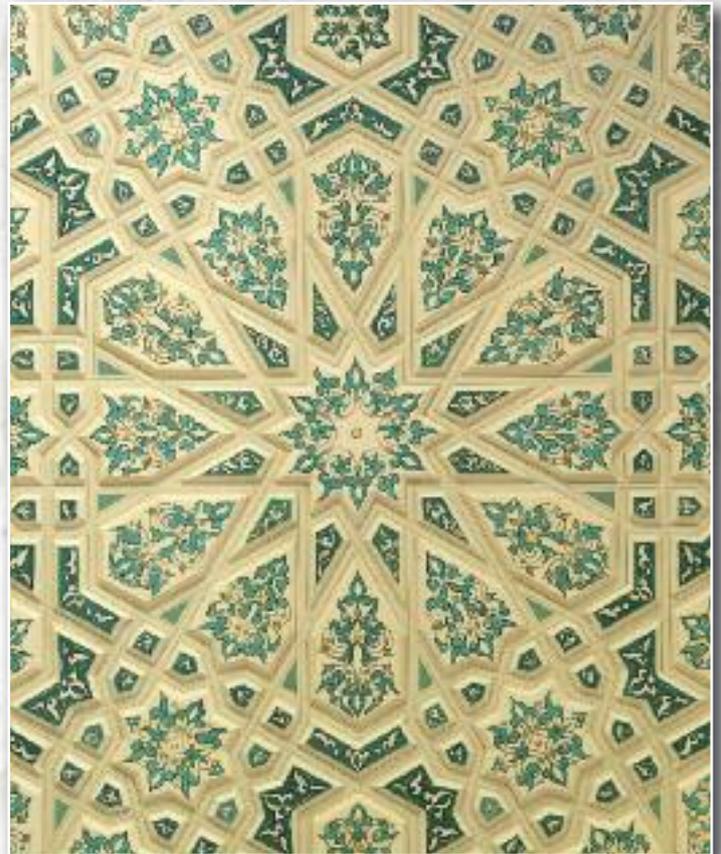
LANGUAGE

eyes drawn forward

My final year project involved the interior design elements of a mosque; of which the main exhibit was a section of a painted ceiling. Sitting in a café in Granada, Spain, and inspired by the design of the magnificent Alhambra Palace, I was mulling over the idea of a painted ceiling; but it was just an idea. Perchance, around the same time I was fortunate to be invited to submit a design scheme for a mosque in Sheffield. One area the client felt needed attention was the entrance hall, which unfortunately suffered from an unsuccessful installation of a water fountain. The challenge was to design something that would be as striking as a water fountain. It was a perfect opportunity to design the ceiling of my dreams. Months and weeks dragged on before a visual representation was ready, much to the exasperation of those around me. I had a visual impression in my mind that I could not easily express to others. I knew one thing for sure. I wished for people to look up and see an inspiring piece of Islamic illumination above them – like an antique book cover or even a carpet. On a personal note, I felt it was important that I remained conscious of the Higher spiritual context for which all this art was being created.

The ceiling is made from wood, primed with gesso and painted with egg tempera and gold leaf. I am fond of Moroccan art so it seemed natural that this would provide the influence for my designs. I wanted to remain faithful to the skills I had learnt at PSTA while also remembering the directives of a real live project – eg the sacred setting; lighting and measurements. Geometry had to form the basis of all my art. The ceiling was no exception. I selected a 12 and 8 fold configuration, as these are symbolic cosmic numbers that seemed appropriate for viewing something above. The colours were determined by the mosque dome, which is deep turquoise. A teacher once told me that turquoise is the colour of

Sometimes one instinctively ventures into the unknown – either to hit a dead end or to find a whole new way of being.



Mosque Ceiling

the universe; it symbolises water and enlightenment. Gold, a symbol of divine inspiration in sacred art was also used. But both turquoise and gold being extremely strong colours, I worked on a palate hoping to 'earth' the colours, yet provide the subtlety and illustrious quality of water. The motifs were inspired by the walls of the Alhambra. Islamic motifs can be extremely rich as in Ottoman/Persian art; however it is the simplicity of the North African/Moorish patterns that inspire me more as they speak a simple language. They give the appearance of being less contrived yet are highly conforming to geometric movement.

Through the ceiling I wanted the client to see a glimpse of the universe – the structure; the endless movement; the colours and the light. I wrote in my journal that the painted ceiling is an invitation to "look up" as human nature has a natural propensity to search the Heavens to get closer to God.



Hand Carving Plaster *

* Photographs taken by George Bodnar



Tasleema at work

'THE PRACTICE OF THE



} Come, come whoever you are,
An unbeliever, a fire-worshipper, come.
Our convent is not of desperation.
Even if you have broken your vows a hundred times,
Come, come again. ”

Mevlana Jalalu'ddin Rumi

My first encounter with a Sufi took place in London in 1977 when I met a Sheikh from Rhodesia. Shortly afterwards I became his pupil and the following year I met his Master, who was later to become my Sheikh. This was such a meeting of destiny that Sufism has become part of my life since then. Although this is the story of a conversion, hopefully of a transformation, it is less about turning from one religion to another than about a change of heart. A gradual change occurred through seeing life from a different angle or indeed, through a different window. It is said that the presence of a Sufi can transform one's being. It is certainly true that the Sufis can change hearts: I have experienced this many times in the presence of my Sheikh. Between Sufi sheikhs and their pupils there is an eternal, soul-to-soul relationship, without the trappings of the personality interfering.

What is Sufism? It is difficult to pinpoint what it is in general terms. Nevertheless, it could be described as the mystical or esoteric dimension of Islam, and to take an even wider viewpoint, the core or essence of all religions. In common with all mystics, the Sufi's aim is to achieve perfection by freeing himself from the 'self' or ego.

At the age of twenty-eight I decided that I had no desire to spend the rest of my life as heedlessly as I had in the last twenty odd years. People from the Middle East say that our lives are 'maktub' or 'written'. It is an expression which believers frequently affirm in resignation to God's will and His providence. Nevertheless, they say we still have the freedom to choose between good and evil and are responsible for our lives. Do we make our own choice when selecting a spiritual path or is it already made for us? The Naqshbandiya (members of a Sufi Order named after Shah Baha'ad-Din Naqshband), say they choose those who are to follow a Sufi path. This is the only way I can explain my orientation towards anything as exotic as Sufism.

How did this come about? I was born in Australia in 1939. My childhood and early formative years were happy and uncomplicated. As well as educating me in conventional good manners, my mother, who was Irish and a bit fey, taught me that

there is a meaningful pattern to life, like a coloured thread running through it. It seems strange that coming from a middle class Anglo-Irish Australian background, with no aspirations to anything unusual, I chose to embrace a spiritual path little known to many people in the West. My parents and grandparents had no great leanings toward spirituality, except perhaps my maternal grandmother who was very reflective and interested in comparative religions. The rest of the family were all 'high day and holiday' churchgoers, who didn't seem to think very deeply about religion. One grandfather was extremely irreligious, while my father preferred to worship God outside in the garden, in his gardening clothes. To say that I had always experienced mystical states would be an exaggeration. However, I had somehow known from early childhood of another reality far beyond the circumstances of everyday life. I knew there was a numinous quality which is always part of life, if only we can tap into it. It was this spark of the divine within everything which I longed for. I certainly made no intellectual decision to choose Sufism as my way to God. It would be true to say that it chose me.

After finishing university I left Australia in 1961 to visit Palestinian friends in Beirut, with a view to travelling on to Italy to continue my studies at the University of Perugia. However, charmed by colourful and many-faceted Lebanon, I decided to spend some time there and soon found employment as a teacher. I met my husband there, a young German businessman living in Kuwait at the time. We married in Beirut in 1962 and left for Kuwait, where we spent the next nine years from 1962 until 1971. Life in Kuwait was considered a hardship post then. Setting up and running language schools throughout the Arabian Gulf and later in Iran and Lebanon, with no large company or organisation behind us, was a great psychological and physical challenge. As well as teaching for six or seven hours a day, I also had three children, two of whom were born in Kuwait, the third in England. Extremely lonely in my life as an expatriate I became very introspective and reflective. Nevertheless, this exacting time brought about the beginning of a change in orientation. Through my soul-searching about the meaning of life I began to have very intensive and vivid dreams, which eventually led me to the conclusion that God exists and that He is near us at all times, everywhere.

Presence of God'

Arab and Islamic culture taught me much about patience and about looking at life from a different angle from the way we in the West regard it. I learned that a most important component of the Middle Eastern way of life is time: people have time for one another and plenty of it. They relate to each other on a very intimate, hearty basis and are not afraid of close contact. I learned not to fuss and fume about unimportant things and not to be constantly in a hurry. I also learned from the timelessness of the desert: how the days and seasons slowly unfold and I thus developed a more inner orientation. Life in the Gulf, with the sound of the muezzin's call reverberating around the city at prayer time, the monotony of the desert, the exacting conditions of extreme heat and dust storms for most of the year, far from western diversions, forced me very much to turn inward. In my search for 'enlightenment' I devoured books about parapsychology and the esoteric. During this very active and reflective time I became even more convinced of the existence of God. In 1971 we moved back to Lebanon where we enjoyed an idyllic life-style in a small village in the mountains. Despite these happier outer circumstances, I still felt dissatisfied with life lived mostly on a worldly level and longed for that 'union with the Beloved' which the Sufis talk about.

Owing to the Civil War we were forced to move to England in 1975, where we set up our school in London, teaching Arabic to foreigners. During the 70's in London we met Sheikh Abdullah Sirr Dan al Jamal. He used to give weekly lectures about Sufism and Naqshbandi Dhikr on a regular basis in a church hall. My husband had been searching for Sufis throughout our time in Islamic countries, especially in Iran and here at last was our chance to learn more about them. At Sheikh Abdullah's Dhikr during the month of Ramadhan a few months later, we met Sheikh Nazim al Haqqani al Qubrusi. I will never forget the atmosphere in the room when the Sheikh first arrived at the church premises. We were about to begin our Dhikr when he appeared with an entourage of pupils of various nationalities. As he walked into the hall, the whole room seemed to take on another dimension. He wore his Turkish Islamic dress – baggy Turkish trousers (shalwah), a jacket with a high collar, a jubah or long Arab cloak and the typical Naqshbandi white muslin turban around a green velvet pointed centre. It looked like a scene from 'A Thousand and One Nights'. Sheikh Abdullah and all of us mureeds stood up out of respect for his presence when he entered the room. After Sheikh Nazim was seated we all sat

down and the Dhikr began. This was the first time I really understood the meaning of 'the peace of Islam'. There was an all-pervading peace in that room as well as a strong vibrancy and feeling of at-oneness among all the pupils, which can only be described as love.

I knew there was a numinous quality that is always part of life

During the spring and early summer Sheikh Nazim came to our Dhikr several times. Each time he came the atmosphere of the room was transformed. The vibrant energy and heightened consciousness was tangible and could actually be seen as little sparkling points in the air. The whole room glittered as though it was Christmas and the overall light there seemed much brighter.

There was a sense of timelessness as though we were not in that hall at all but rather suspended in time and space. There seemed to be a blending in with the other mureeds, making us feel as one unit – like a hive of bees buzzing or a flock of birds flying. We felt the complete loss of experiencing the self-conscious self, or ego, and only a feeling of love for the whole of Creation remained. A great change took place within me during this intensive period when I learned about Islam through the association with both Sheikhs, leading to my formal conversion to Islam in 1979.

Since then I have spent almost thirty years following the spiritual path of Sufism within the Naqshbandi tradition. The Sufi Path, the inner, mystical reality of Islam and essence of all religions, is one of great inner beauty which has brought more intensity and 'God-consciousness' into every facet of my daily life. It can be called 'the practice of the presence of God.' Having accepted Islam and its more esoteric inner component of Sufism, I can appreciate the Muslim way of life, as well as that of Christianity. In fact, Islam has helped me to understand the real meaning of Jesus' message. Although I recognise the unity of all religions and feel at home in different forms of worship, I am intrinsically a Muslim with a strong belief in the Unity of God. However, just as the Sufis have always looked beyond orthodoxy, I do not feel at home in outward practices only. The Persian mystic Jalal'uddin Rumi said that God is to be found in our hearts and not in church, temple or mosque.

"...But I am contained in the heart of my faithful servant.

How wonderful! If you seek Me, seek Me there."

Mathnawi I, 2653-5ⁱⁱ

Abiding Heritage

Manchester's Jewish Community



School Visit



Immigrants Trades case



A meeting place

Shortly after the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne (1837), a large number of penniless East European Jews, mainly from Russia and Poland, came to Manchester to escape poverty and persecution in their own countries. Their arrival in Manchester was made possible by the development of cheap rail and sea travel between Western Russia and Liverpool, and the help offered by Jewish charities on the way. These immigrants had only minimal skills and became workers in small garment and cabinet-making workshops which some set up in their own homes. They were forced by their poverty to live in a district called Red Bank, then a slum area just to the north of the city centre.

Up to the 1870s the richer members of the Jewish community set up their own synagogues, schools and charities. The Manchester Jews School was established in 1840 to provide children of the Jewish poor with a basic elementary education. Two major synagogues were established in 1858; the Great Synagogue for Orthodox Jews and the Reform Synagogue for those who had opted for a modernisation of the orthodox ritual.

As the number of East European arrivals expanded between the 1840s and 1880s, Red Bank became badly overcrowded and the immigrants spilled over into neighbouring districts like Strangeways and Lower Broughton. Here they sought to keep their East European religious standards, language and culture alive in tiny societies in which Yiddish was the language of communication. The earlier established and integrated Jewish settlers feared the effects that these new arrivals would have on their hard-won status and respectability in the Manchester community. With this in mind, they established the Jewish Board of Guardians. One of the Board's aims was to persuade the immigrants to give up their foreign ways. Encouraging immigrant parents to send their children to the Jews School was one way of doing this. Here, the children were introduced to English culture, language and ideas of discipline and respectability. Yiddish was banned and children with first names that sounded too foreign were made to exchange them for English ones.



Manchester Jewish Museum

The large influx of East European immigrants encouraged many more prosperous and integrated families to move out of the area to the All Saints district of South Manchester. There, in 1872, they established the first South Manchester synagogue in Sydney Street.

From the 1850s Sephardi merchants from the Mediterranean coastlands began to arrive in Manchester to acquire Manchester textiles for sale to their home countries. These Sephardim had their roots in Spain and Portugal but, after their expulsion from these countries in 1492, had settled around the Mediterranean. Differing in culture, and in some of their religious customs from the Ashkenazi Jews (i.e. Yiddish speaking Jews from western, central and eastern Europe), they set up their own place of worship, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Cheetham Hill in 1874.

From 1875 to 1914 around 120,000 more Jewish people came to Britain. During this time Manchester had become the centre of the world's cotton trade, the centre of the engineering and chemical industries, and renowned for its flourishing retail trades. This reputation attracted richer Jews from Western Europe and the Mediterranean. They were merchants and businessmen wishing to set up their own businesses. However, the majority were poor Jews escaping persecution in Russia, Austria and Rumania. Life in these countries had continued to be very difficult for Jewish people, particularly in Russia. Pogroms and enforced military service in the 1880s finally forced many Jews to flee their native countries and set up a new life elsewhere. Manchester seemed ideal for many, as there was already an established Jewish community where many Jews could join their families and friends. They had heard that they could practise their own religion, and that the rapid growth in the textile trade meant that their work skills could be used.

By 1914 Manchester's Jews were a long way down the road to acculturation, if not assimilation. The generation that had grown up in Manchester soon learned English and rapidly forgot Yiddish. The children attended English schools and quickly came to identify with the working class street culture that they encountered there. At the same time they adopted the upwardly mobile attitudes of the English middle class and sought a route out of poverty via the professions.

The Manchester Jewish Museum documents the history of Manchester Jewry and is housed in the converted Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in Cheetham Hill, - once the heart of the old Jewish quarter of Manchester. This wonderful building was designed by an Anglo-Jewish architect, Edward Salomon and as previously mentioned opened as a synagogue in 1874. It was the first Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in provincial England and is now the oldest surviving synagogue in Manchester. Salomon

designed the building in the Saracenic style, using Moorish features that reflect the congregation's origins in Muslim Spain. These include beautiful stained glass windows. When the congregation moved out in 1982 and the building was turned into a Museum all the original colours and features were kept. The ground floor of the main building is still laid out as a synagogue and as such, is a valuable educational resource in its own right. The upstairs gallery houses a permanent display on the history of Manchester Jewry, complete with room settings and extracts from taped interviews, whilst another downstairs room is used for temporary exhibitions on any number of relevant themes. Manchester Jewish Museum is the only Jewish Museum outside London and is unique in being housed in a former synagogue.

Run under a Deed of Trust, the museum collects documents and interprets material illustrating the history of Manchester Jewry from the late 18th century to the present day. The collection includes household objects, religious artefacts, textiles,

silverware, paintings, personal documents and important and unique collections of photographs and oral history recordings. The Museum also organises events and activities e.g. regular guided walks around the old Jewish quarter of Cheetham Hill and demonstrations such as the Art of the Scribe and Jewish music, amongst others. It has a full annual exhibition programme and promotes child friendly activities. In 1986 the Museum was 'Highly Commended' in the Museum of the Year Awards and in 1988 it was

'Commended' in the Carnegie Interpret Britain Awards. In 1998, 2005 and 2009 it was awarded the prestigious Sanford Award for Heritage Education. Finally in 2009 the Museum received a 'Marque of Excellence' from North West Faith Tourism for its multi-faith and faith trails work.

Over 80% of the Museum's visitors are primary, secondary and special schools children who come to gain a first hand experience of Judaism. The rest are further and higher education groups, adult special interest groups and individual visitors. Our visitors come from all over the UK, from Europe and as far away as New Zealand. 98% of our visitors are not Jewish!

The museum continues to work with ethnic minority communities, refugees and asylum seekers, people with mental health problems, learning difficulties, teenagers not in full time employment and young offenders. We hope that our programme of regular sustainable activities throughout the year, including festivals and events, helps to support the City's regeneration as a vibrant cultural capital.

By 1914
Manchester's Jews
were a long way
down the road to
acculturation, if
not assimilation.

The *Significance* of *Faith*

Respecting religious belief at university



Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) is a large institution with over 30,000 students and almost 4,500 staff spread across two sites. It is a diverse campus community in all sorts of ways including culture, ethnicity, social background, and religion.

There has been a Multifaith Chaplaincy at Sheffield Hallam for around 15 years, reflecting a deliberate decision by the university to move away from the more traditional Christian chaplaincy model that has been the norm within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). I am an Anglican minister, managing a team of volunteer Faith Advisors representing 13 religious traditions. Some of the team work at SHU; the remainder are leaders from religious communities in and around the city.

Our work falls, broadly speaking, into three strands: providing pastoral support to students and staff from any or no religious background; resourcing the university in relation to matters of religion and belief; and supporting students in the practice of their religion within the environment of the university.

The second and third of those strands are of particular significance when set against a society that it is increasingly pluralistic in terms of religion and belief, and in which legislation has existed since 2003 to ensure that people do not suffer discrimination within institutional contexts because of their beliefs.

It is important for religious students to feel that universities are places where they will be respected as people of faith and which are open to exploring ways of maintaining their religious identity within the predominantly secular world of higher education. There are a number of reasons why the freedom to be identifiable as members of a religion is important to students on campus, among them the following:

- **Religion is an integral part of identity.** In the post-Enlightenment west, religion has become compartmentalised and privatised. This goes some way towards explaining the attitudes of some voices within HEIs that have in the past promoted universities as secular places almost in the sense that religious belief must be left at the door. However, religious segregation is incomprehensible to many religious believers - and especially to those from religious backgrounds apart from western Christianity. Religion, culture, tradition, family, and so on, are bound in a tight matrix. Religious identity matters to believers. Religious dress, for example, is sometimes adopted as a reaction against perceived attacks against a religion by attitudes and

behaviours of the majority group.

- **The need to belong** is true for all of us and is something that is accentuated during times of transition. This is one reason why, for example, students at university, will often gravitate towards peers from the same country, region, or social background. The same need is also true in relation to religious belief, though religious affiliations will sometimes transcend national boundaries and be the common denominator between students from very different places. Group identification can be particularly important for some minority religious groups in coping with the stresses and pressures of university life.

...the need to belong with others who share that faith should not be underestimated

- **Shared values and beliefs** of particular religions are often counter-cultural. For example, attitudes towards alcohol, dress codes, or socialising between males and females may conflict with the attitudes of many students at our universities. University results in some degree of culture shock for some students and this may be more profound for students whose worldview has

been shaped by a religious tradition. The opportunity to be part of an identifiable religious group on campus can therefore become an important source of support to a student in managing a social and educational context that is very different to his/her experience prior to university. Such groups may be formal student religious societies or consist of more informal networks congregating in the social space of the university.

The significance of faith, and the need to belong with others who share that faith should not be underestimated in relation to a religious student's university experience.

Even within the pressured environment of the university, where demands on both physical and timetable space create their own unique challenges and stresses, there are some straightforward steps that can be taken which go a long way towards helping religious students feel respected and valued within the institution:

- **Providing space for prayer and worship** This need will vary from university to university, depending on factors such as geographical location and the religious demographic of the student population. Different religions have different needs. In the SHU context, Muslims constitute a growing group within our student community. With no mosque in reasonable distance this faced Sheffield Hallam with a challenge due to the Muslim obligation to pray five times a day and, wherever possible, to pray congregational prayers around the middle of the day on Fridays. The solution has been to provide permanent male and female Muslim prayer rooms that are sufficient to meet the daily prayer

needs, and to make the Sports Hall available to accommodate the large Muslim congregation that meets on Fridays.

• **Meeting religious observance needs** Respecting the identity of religious students involves much more than the provision of prayer rooms. There are, however, a number of straightforward practical initiatives which, if implemented, go a long way to creating a climate in which religious students feel respected and valued and which can also help avoid unnecessary tensions. Some of the potential difficulties can be avoided through the following approaches:

• **Timetabling consideration.** By avoiding major religious festival dates when, for example, setting examination dates, a significant source of stress is removed both for students of the religion in question and for staff who might otherwise be deluged by requests for absence.

• **Faith calendars.** Linked to timetabling, these can be invaluable to university staff, helping to enable that such things as course assessments and group presentations can be planned so as not to clash with key religious dates.

• **Communication of religious policies and procedures.** Students and staff need to know the university's position on religion and belief. Students need to be encouraged to make their religious needs known to the university as early as possible. Student religious societies can be good channels to some.

• **Availability of religious observance advice and information.** Needs will vary from religion to religion, and there will also be differences within a particular religion. This makes it important to ensure that religious observance requests are taken seriously on a case by case basis. For instance, religious and cultural sensitivity is needed when responding to requests for absence following bereavement. I believe chaplaincies have a key role in this regard.

It's hardly rocket science, but such simple steps can go a long way to helping religious students feel that they have a place within the university."

Undoubtedly the main reason why the religious identity of students should be respected within universities is the contribution that they make to our institutions. So as well as it being the right thing to do in terms of equality and diversity, universities themselves gain when adopting a positive approach to engaging with religious agendas. The benefits also ripple out into wider society. Here are a few examples of the contribution of religious students within the HE arena:

• **Different ethical and moral perspectives.** The worldviews of students from different religious groups will sometimes bring a fresh dimension to academic exploration and debate. In the religiously diverse global village that we now inhabit, critical engagement between secular and religious voices is vital and the university is a key forum where that interaction can take place.

• **Breaking down barriers.** University will, for some, be the first real opportunity to encounter, spend time with, and discover more about people from diverse religious traditions. This can be between religious and non-religious students, and also between students of different religions. In the climate of debate and discussion afforded by university, there is a great opportunity for students to question and challenge each other about what they believe and why, thereby breaking down pre-existing barriers of suspicion and mistrust.

• **Dismantling stereotypes.** In a similar way to the previous point, meeting people from different religious backgrounds enlarges a person's understanding of the group to which 'the other' belongs. Stereotypes, particularly those promoted through the media, are revealed for what they are. Student religious societies will also be keen to take active steps in promoting the reality as opposed to the stereotypes of their religion.

• **Enriching the university and beyond.** Through the things mentioned, and in many other ways, religious students bring much to the university. They contribute to making it a place where different ways of seeing the world can be debated, discussed and challenged with academic rigour but in a climate of respect and tolerance. Such an experience of university stands students in good stead to take that approach with them beyond graduation and to be agents of change in a world where intolerance and religious fundamentalism so often hold sway.

There is a strong case for universities to take positive steps in recognising and respecting the religious identity of students. The challenge for each university is to consider, in the light of its specific situation, the practical steps needed to make that a reality, to the mutual benefit of all.

...critical engagement between secular and religious voices is vital and the university is a key forum where that interaction can take place.



A PLACE FOR GROWTH

Having come to university as a practising Pentecostal Christian, I've discovered life on campus - where everybody seems to be doing what he or she wants - can be quite challenging. Thankfully by connecting with a group of like-minded people I've managed to overcome that problem. But I have noticed that many students leave home for the first time and get to university as Christians with a strong faith, but sooner or later that faith begins to diminish, and they no longer pray the way they used to pray at home, or even read their Bible.

Having the opportunity to use the Multifaith Centre at Sheffield Hallam University has enabled us, as a group of Christians, to support each other as believers who want to continue, and even grow in our faith, while at university. We meet on a weekly basis and encourage one another in our walk of faith. Also, by example, we want to encourage others to believe in God, who I believe is able to take away the stress that university life can bring. We have a place where people with a common goal and vision, can meet, make friends, relax and learn

from one another. Though we came to university on our own, we don't have to always be alone when there are others to share our faith.

Being a student that believes in God and prays a lot and loudly, I am very appreciative for the space provided within the Centre, because every time I go there I pray the way I want to, I sing out loud and nobody asks me to keep it low. And being a leader of a prayer group which meets there weekly, I feel the multifaith centre is a great gathering place for students who want to keep their faith growing, and their prayer life increasing, especially when they can't do it on their own and just need another believer to pray with. Also, it is not just a place for people who have certain beliefs, it is a calm space for students who like to have peace to just think and gather their thoughts after a long day of lectures.



Nomsa Dewa - LLB (Hons)

We...
encourage
one another in
our walk of
faith

THE *Sweetness* OF RELIGION

In the name of the beneficent the most merciful



I would like to state that all my efforts at university were solely to gain the love and mercy of God the All mighty.

Looking back, as a post-graduate, I believe that university was by far the best time of my life as a young man. It provided a platform that gave me new experiences in all aspects of life. I had the privilege of meeting many people of different nationalities, faiths and ideologies. As a Muslim student I saw it as an opportunity to be an ambassador of my religion Islam, which means to surrender to the will of the All mighty God, and to spread his message in a practical sense. Islam is a way of life and every act that is performed can be an act of worship if it is directed at pleasing God.

In my final year at Sheffield Hallam University I successfully campaigned to be President of the Islamic Society. Through this

role I managed, with all the powers given to me, to help clarify the misconceptions that exist about Islam; to organise events and activities which helped students to better understand Islam, its teachings and core principles: such as its teachings about love, etiquette, politeness and sense of morality. These Islamic principles can be seen in all aspects of a Muslim's life, be it socially, politically, economically, as well as in the juristic system, which many fellow students did not know. I believe the nature of these events and activities brought a greater element of tolerance and respect towards the Muslims, who are going through an unpleasant time.

My experience of other religious students was very positive, because I felt that we all had a common goal, which was to show the students at Hallam University the sweetness of religion (faith in God) and the way it made us mindful, considerate, loving, and caring towards our friends, colleagues and lecturers in all aspects of university life.

I as a Muslim former student truly believe, that religious students have the power to change people's hearts through the teachings of their religions, which mainly advocate that we live in a healthy and positive way. This ultimately makes us happy, which then influences the environment in which we live, making it a healthy and loving society.

As a Muslim student I saw it as an opportunity to be an ambassador of my religion Islam

A Mother's Faith



Women of Faith

I believe that women have a deep faith and a true relationship with their religion. For me, my faith and religion is actually a specific way of life that I adhere to and live accordingly. It has a great impact socially, culturally and on the way I live my life in the wider society as well.

As a woman I am very proud to belong to the Sikh faith. My mother was a devotee of the Sikh religion. Since my childhood I had seen her observing and practising the main rituals of our faith. I can still remember that she wouldn't eat anything in the morning until she had taken an early bath and read a passage at random from Guru Granth Sahib. This she did not because she was forced to do it but because she wished to start her day with blessings from God, and a prayer which she felt guided her through the day. As I and my brothers and my sisters grew older, we found ourselves adopting the same routine without being pushed into this ritual.



My mother used to play the harmonium and was good at singing hymns so she played a lead role in the local gurdwara. Sometimes I accompanied her by playing on the dholak and this way I also learnt a lot of hymns. In my school and college our day always started with a singing prayer which has also influenced my faith. I still use this skill of singing hymns, as well as folk songs, with the beat of the dholak on many cultural occasions.

When I came to London I never thought I would still be able to observe my rituals and keep up with my faith. Surprisingly, there was a big gurdwara in Southall and

every Sunday and on special occasions my husband and I went to attend the service.

My parents visited me after a few years and brought me Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh religious text) as a gift to look after so that I also had the living Guru in my house. We got a special prayer room built in our attic and placed our religious book in there. Everyday I start my day by opening it, reading a passage at random, saying prayers to get blessings from God to lead a good day. In the evening I close it followed by prayer and finish my day again with His blessings.

Although Guru Granth Sahib is a holy book of the Sikhs, I consider it as my Guru, my Teacher. In other words I have humanised it. I talk to it. As a mother, and now living on my own, there have been so many issues from time to time and sometimes it is not possible to talk to anybody to get advice. But my faith in Guru Granth Sahib has certainly helped me a lot. I often sit in the prayer room and humbly ask God to show me the right path. On happy occasions as well I do thank Him for His kindness and blessings. Every year I start reading Guru Granth Sahib on Christmas Day and complete the reading on the same day the following year. The more I read it the more meaningful it becomes for me.

Sikhism is a very simple Faith to practice. One can say one's prayers, recite chapters from Guru Granth Sahib (available in the form of small books) at any time of the day, anywhere, sitting, standing, travelling, driving, even lying down.

The very first words of Guru Granth Sahib are 'Ek Onkar' God is one. This has given me an acceptance of other religions as well, as I believe that although people worship Him with different names, there is but one God, who has created this world. He dwells in all human beings so if we love Him, we should also love all the human beings.

Sikhism also believes in equality. Male, female, people of different races and social backgrounds are all equal. The Golden Temple, the centre of Sikh worship, has doors pointing North, South, East and West and keeps its four doors open for everybody coming from any direction.

Guru Nanak frankly gave so much respect to women. According to Him a woman should rather have the highest place in society as it is only women who have given birth to kings. Living some 540 years ago, how well advanced he was in his thoughts about equality - giving women an equality which is still not available in so many places.

According to Sikh tradition, women have an equal role with men, to sacrifice their own, and their children's lives, to defend their Sikh religion. In Sikh history some brave women actually went to the battlefield to fight against the enemies of the Sikh religion.

In the history of Sikhism, there are also female role models. They are women who have played a specific role in a faith-filled life that can be adapted by those seeking to lead a good life. Although they lived their lives as good daughters, wives, mothers, daughters-in-law, they also proved to be strong, independent women equal to any man. It is a well-known saying that, behind every man's success there is always the inspiration of a woman. It was because of a promise made to his mother before he left for England that my husband kept to his faith and especially wore his turban throughout his life.

I saw this equality in my parents and was lucky enough to experience it throughout my married life. I am quite proud that it has filtered through to my daughters' lives as well. They have humility within their marriage but also have the independence to be confident enough to contribute equally

in their day to day life. I have never forced them into any strict rituals that they must observe every day, but I am proud to say that they have made a religious corner in their homes to say their daily prayers before starting their day.

Being a working mother, I never had enough time to sit down and properly teach my daughters some chapters from Guru Granth Sahib. However I took every opportunity I had to help them learn at least the first chapter of Guru Granth Sahib, and taught them to recite it daily. They do this to this

day. I was glad to hear my granddaughter the other day reciting the first passage from Guru Granth Sahib. On special occasions e.g. Diwali, Basakhi, Gurburabs (birthdays of different gurus) I have explained to them about their importance, why we celebrate them and how they are related to our daily lives.

Sharing and doing some voluntary work is very important in our Sikh religion. You can make a contribution with money, with your hands or with your mind/ brain. This helps to build

good relationships at home, at work and in the wider society.

Now that I have got some time on hand I have joined a local radio to present a programme so that people who can't go to gurudwaras for any reason can enjoy worship at home and start their day with Gurbani. It is listened to by thousands of people in the UK and Europe. Talking to the listeners has further deepened my belief in the Sikh religion.

As a woman I can say that my faith has given me a lot of strength to carry on, even in time of crisis as my faith shows me that this life is very important. I try to do my best to give happiness in any way to my friends to my neighbours, to my children. I try not to hurt anybody knowingly if I can, and to do something good for society. My faith has given me tolerance, broad mindedness towards other religions and different cultures.

I must confess that I am not a strictly orthodox Sikh and I practise a liberal form of the religion. I always have found an interest in reading stories from other religions and have adapted some of the philosophies in my daily life. However I strongly believe that my daily life is interwoven with religion; it will be hollow without my Faith.



...behind every man's success there is always the inspiration of a woman



The Anchorhold

Women of Faith

“a way of living with Godly silence
in midst of the world”

From very early on in my Christian pilgrimage I have been drawn to a contemplative spirituality and prayer. For a number of years, however, I was part of the Lydia Fellowship, an international network of women called to intercessory prayer. This is charismatic in focus and spirituality but it taught me not only the value of prayer but also much about the power of prayer and God’s gracious activity in the world. As a Tertiary Sister I learned the discipline of the Daily Office and the value of a Rule of Life based upon the Benedictine balance of ‘ora et labora’ (prayer and labour). Although I did for a time seriously consider a call to the Religious life lived in community it became very clear to me that this was not my vocation, and I made a vow of celibacy just before my ordination as Deacon. The call to the Solitary consecrated single life was a gradual development growing out of a deepening sense of prayer and contemplative living, and the growing desire to dedicate myself to God in a way of life that would enable me to focus on God in perhaps a more single minded way than I had in the past.

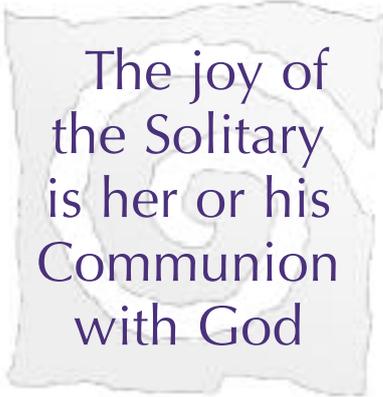
I hope that the way of life I live can stand as an exemplar of how to live the spiritual life in the ordinary and the everyday

The monastic life has been a part of the Christian experience from very early centuries, with women in particular choosing to live together in single sex houses in urban areas; nevertheless, there increasingly developed the impulse among men and women from the time of Charlemagne’s reforms (8th/9th Century), which saw the official acceptance of Christianity throughout his Empire, to seek the ‘white martyrdom’ of the desert mothers’ and fathers’ experience. Both men and women sought the solitude and danger of the ‘desert’ in order to devote their lives to prayer, fasting and penance both for themselves and on behalf of their world, and indeed the word monasticism itself derives from the Greek root *monos* meaning ‘alone’. By the Middle Ages there were many women and men called to the life of the Anchorite and Anchoress, a form of religious life that straddled the community of the monastery and the solitude of the hermit, with the most famous, perhaps, being Mother Julian of Norwich.

I hope that the way of life I live can stand as an exemplar of how to live the spiritual life in the ordinary and the everyday. In many ways my lifestyle is just the same as anyone else who lives alone; a living must be earned, the food shopping needs to be done, the cat needs to be fed...etc. Of course, the contemplative life is perhaps a more intense way of living the Christian life, but it is essentially a life lived with and for God, which is the common calling of all the baptised. Living under a vow of simplicity of living (poverty) requires a continual conversation about 'need' and 'want', and about how to live a life which seeks to live simply within the created order. The vow of chastity (celibacy) takes seriously God's gift of sexuality and the integrity of the 'other'. While the vow of obedience calls me to recognise that I cannot live a life purely unto myself, to paraphrase John Donne, no man or woman, is an island. And of course, the 'anchorhold' can be a praying place where the needs of the parish are held before God.

To live the life of the Solitary is to make a conscious decision for 'aloneness' with God and my additional vow of solitude seeks to make concrete my desire for God, which becomes the foundation of my active ministry as the contemplative and the active influence and feed each other. So, what makes my way of living different to any other consecrated single person? It is, I suggest, the active choice of the vow of solitude. It is perfectly possible to live faithfully as a consecrated single person while remaining within the community of a family or with friends, in making the additional vow of solitude I rule out this possibility and make an active commitment to a life lived alone.

To make a vow of solitude brings with it joy and sorrow, fullness and emptiness. For living the solitary life means living in full emotional dependence on God – and God is not always a vocal partner and as mystics through the ages have known and taught, God is as known by God's absence as much as by God's presence. The Solitary cannot rely upon the physical presence of a partner at the end of a busy day; the Solitary, like the hermit moves from silent contemplation to silent meals prepared by her or himself. The joy of the Solitary is her or his Communion with God, her or his awareness of the loving presence of God and the fact that



The joy of
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this communion can be entered into completely and can be responded to with all one's heart and head, without the (legitimate) demands for time and attention that spouses and families have a right to expect. Being a Solitary and not a hermit means of course that I am also called, in a qualitatively different way than that of the hermit, into an exchange and interface with others around me, but the vow of solitude gives me the permission

and freedom to withdraw, to enter into the contemplative communion with God without which I could not continue my ministry. To quote Sister Lauren, an American diocesan hermit, writing in her blog: *Notes from Stillsong Hermitage*, the Solitary lives within the "silence of solitude" which is deeper and more profound than simply the absence of noise, it is into the silence of solitude that the Solitary is called to live, and from which to move into the activity of the apostolic life. Living under the vow of solitude enables the Solitary to be immersed in the silence in order to find the presence of God.

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*Do not feed your spirit on anything apart from God
Cast away all cares and let peace and reconciliation
fill your heart.*

St. John of the Cross (1549-1591) Poet and Mystic

(cited: 365 Meditations for a peaceful heart and a peaceful world © Marcus Braybrooke 2004 Pub. Octopus Publishing Group)

Within my Hindu faith, a woman is a form of divine cosmic energy (shaktiswarupini). She is Mata, the Mother Goddess, or Devi, the auspicious one, who appears in many different forms representing supreme power. Without this power the male gods are deemed to be powerless. The scriptures always say that in order of preference worship your mother first.

Looking back into history, the status of women in early Hindu society in India was most definitely an enviable one. They could avail of the highest learning and there were many seers and philosophers among them. The Women used to teach and, traditionally, queens such as Queen Kaikeyi helped their husbands in the battlefield.

As far as the history of ordinary women goes, their position on the whole was free. Girls were normally not married until they were in their late teens and sometimes even later. They had a choice in the selection of a life partner, which is evidenced by the prevalence of the 'swayamvara-system' in which suitors vie for the woman's hand in marriage. The stories of Sita and Draupadi illustrate this choice, with would-be suitors travelling great distances to prove themselves worthy partners. From birth till death a Hindu had (and even today has) to perform hundreds of ceremonies, and not even one of them could be performed without the presence of the wife (Rig-Veda 5.102).

However, subsequent invasions in India brought about cultural changes that affected the position of women in society. Each community built a fortress of social norms to protect their women from the invaders who placed no value on their life, property or chastity. This in turn resulted in some rigid social systems, for example: child marriages (before a girl could be of an age attractive enough to be abducted), the shaving of heads of widows (to make them look unattractive). These then became the norm during this unsettled period of Indian history and Hindu women could not enjoy the liberty and equality to which they had been accustomed.

In time the position of women in Hindu society declined, particularly in the economic context. With the advent of India's Independence however, attempts were made to secure the economic independence of women and to give them back their rightful place in society. The Constitution of India guarantees equality of status to Indian women with

that of men. The Hindu woman has subsequently improved her social status considerably during the post Independence period. Her legal disabilities with regard to marriage, inheritance, guardianship and adoption have been removed. She inherits, by right, the property of her father on the basis of equality with her brothers. Her economic rights entitle her to hold and acquire property, enter public services and take up any profession.

Today as a Hindu Woman I feel a sense of freedom and the ideals of my faith help shape my life and give me the greatest confidence in my decision-making. I play an active role within worship and at festivals by singing, dancing and leading ceremonies. Being a part of the largest pluralistic religion in the world I embrace all paths and respect all human beings. For me, God is not necessarily a fatherly figure: God is Mother and Father combined. In the Temple, we worship Lord Rama with his wife Devi Sita: Lord Krishna is worshipped with Radha or with Devi Rukmini. All Goddesses are worshipped as Shakti (female power). Knowing that the female is respected as 'Shakti' energizes me and assures me that, as a woman, I am in no

way perceived in comparison to a male. Neither has it been imbibed within me or implied through the scriptures that I am inferior to a male. The diversity within my faith allows me to follow the path that is right for me. Both this freedom and diversity allows for my creative growth and inquiry. My faith never demands any undue restraint upon the freedom of my reason, my thought, my feeling and my will.

On a practical level, as a Hindu living in Britain, rigid social systems do exist, but these are more related to traditional and cultural norms rather than religious. This is possibly because we are a minority community in this country, and in many ways the Hindu Community seeks to hold onto traditions practiced in India in times gone by.

Probing into the richness of the Hindu Faith it is evident that we understand and act the "gender" of an individual in different ways. Hinduism goes deeper by moving the focus onto the soul, which is eternal. The gender of the human being, the soul, and the deity are commented upon, debated, and contested. However it can be said that Hinduism is an exploration of reality itself, and seeks to recognise a relationship between the nature of Divinity and the nature of the soul to which material designations such as gender do not apply.

the status of women in early Hindu society in India was most definitely an enviable one

A Daughter of God



I do find that being a young catholic in today's society is getting increasingly more difficult, especially as I get older and have other commitments. However, I am part of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and this is a great way for me to put my faith into action. The YCW is a Catholic organisation for young people and is run by young people. The YCW calls young people together, out of their isolation, into groups so that together they can come to recognise their own true worth and dignity. The YCW recognises that young people are the experts of their own reality and are often the best placed people to be the means of transformation in their own lives. Through a process of enquiry, reflection and action we grow as leaders - serving, educating and representing other young people. Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, the founder of YCW, said: "Each young person is worth more than all the gold in the world because they are sons and daughters of God". The belief he showed in young Christians gives me the encouragement to keep living my faith even when things seem hard.

I was recently lucky enough to travel with my college to Lourdes in the South of France as part of the Welsh National Youth Pilgrimage. While I was there I spent an amazing week getting to know like-minded people. We went

out to help the elderly and disabled members of our group have a week to remember - assisting them with whatever they needed to prepare for the day, taking them to Mass and out on daytrips.

Something that really stood out for me and strengthened my faith was the incredible bond we made with the other Welsh group out there, from the Menivia Diocese, in the city of Swansea. On the last night of our time in Lourdes both groups went down to the meadow on the far side of the river, opposite the Grotto. There we prayed together to thank God for the week we had shared, and the friendships we had made and would take home with us. This was one of the most emotional parts of my week and it reminded me that I am not alone in my faith. Just being in Lourdes, helping the elderly and disabled, reminded us all to value the gifts from God that we take for granted.

I am not as limited by being a young woman in my faith as those of an older generation might have been. I am an Altar Server in my parish of St. Philip Evans in Llanedern Cardiff, and this is a role that only boys or men were allowed to do not so long ago. When I am not serving on the altar I actively take part in the Liturgy, either by interpreting for the deaf members of our parish with sign language, or reading from the scriptures. Mary, mother of Jesus, is an incredible figure in my faith.

She trusted God saying: "*Your Will, not mine, be done*" when called upon to bear Jesus into the World. She is the example, I believe, all women should follow. She showed the amazing things God can do for us if we place our trust in Him.



Rebecca is 17 and lives in Cardiff, where she studies at St. David's Catholic College. Here she describes her visit to the Catholic Holy site of Lourdes in the South of France, where miracles have been attributed to an appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to a peasant girl in 1858. (Matthew Youde)

Acknowledging the unseen



BISMILLAH HIRAHMAN NIRAHEEM

(IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST KIND THE MOST MERCIFUL)

"Fly without wings to Heaven and above with Spirituality"

This is the challenge for all Mankind. How is it possible to do this in this modern world, full of technology and science? In order to believe this we must first believe in the Soul: that we have both a physical and a spiritual body. Just as a car moves through crowded streets with a driver, in the same way our physical bodies need a soul to operate them and steer them on the right route. Our bodies may travel all over the World, but when the driver (the soul) leaves our physical body we, like cars, come to a standstill.

We are living in a time when people have virtually ceased being interested in anything spiritual, only their material existence and enjoyments. This dense covering of materialism smothers all other interests. That is the illness of our times and certainly, I believe, the main reason behind the World's troubles. People who are interested solely in the materials of life cannot be kept within any limits. The more they get the more they crave. So who or what is the culprit, who is the most dangerous enemy of mankind? It is the ego the part of a person that represents the animal instincts and base desires. It makes people pursue things that they can never reach: there is no rest or satisfaction. Envy, enmity, pride, anger and greed are all bad characteristics of a heart corrupted by the ego. The ego drives people to disbelieve in themselves and in the existence of their souls.

To overcome the problems of mankind, people must begin to believe in themselves. They must, like true followers of all world religions, resist the onslaught of materialism and believe that they are eternal spiritual souls, temporarily

clothed in material bodies. Our physical body is a vast unknown, undiscovered area so imagine how deep our spiritual self must be. If we are ignorant of ourselves how can we hope to understand the Universe and the Creator that regulates it. For this reason the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has instructed us on the way of knowledge by recognising that the key to the Lord's knowledge is to be found in Self knowledge.

Scientists can neither confirm nor deny the Soul's existence. However, people who are in contact with the spiritual world can speak on these subjects and it is indeed their duty to do so. All Prophets (peace be upon them) spoke about the soul as they had authoritative knowledge of these matters. Only the ignorant claim that science is the only knowledge, denying everything that falls outside of this realm. Science deals exclusively with observation and experimentation, but what of the thousands and millions of unseen events that cannot be experimented upon.

Physicians and paediatricians are always listening to the sounds in pregnant women and if they don't hear anything they say, no life signs yet, then 120 days after conception the heart pump begins to beat. What makes the heart of a baby take its first beat in the womb? Who squeezes that heart to make it start? Is it possible for a pump to work without an operator? Why not say that it is his Creator, God who makes that baby's heart make its first beat because He has sent the 'driver' (i.e. the Soul) to begin controlling the car (i.e. the Body).

Having established a belief in the existence of the Soul, a human must then ask what its purpose is as a minute speck in this vast Universe. In understanding firstly why humans have two parts, one that has life, and the other inanimate, a person begins to appreciate the Universe in a similar way. If the Universe is made of atoms then there must be an animator of their particles to give them movement and function. Further to that there must be an origin to these atoms or they would not physically exist. We can explain this as the work of an Unseen Creator. As the Creator of the Universe and the Heavens, God is unseen, as an Almighty Spirit who is only visible in His creation. The key to God's knowledge is through self-knowledge (i.e. knowledge of one's soul). Faith is born by acknowledging the Unseen both within us and in the Universe.

A person may ask what the purpose of this spiritual knowledge is and a believer will answer that both science and spirituality are striving for the same destination. Science wants to know the origin of the Universe and understand its nature and uncover the secrets of creation. Spirituality already acknowledges the existence of a Creator and understands what He is like and how He is related to Mankind and the Universe.

From a Muslim perspective spiritual knowledge is the key to salvation. A person must follow the rules of Islam brought from God by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the examples of previous Holy Prophets such as Moses (peace be upon him) and Jesus (peace be upon him). These rules and rigorous training suppress and control the bad characteristics of the ego and give a person unlimited spiritual power. With this power a person can throw off physical constraints and soar like a rocket through time and space.

The key to this power is to accept God's Will by saying 'As He Pleases' in all circumstances and believing that all good and bad come from Him. To do this one must obey the commands of the Prophets (peace be upon them all) sent by God and by worshipping Him. The main aspect of this training is to purify one's heart. To achieve this we must accept a spiritual guide who is an expert in treating the ailments of the heart. This is done by balancing the external practices of Islam, the Shariah and the inner practice called Tariqa (the Path or the Way). Both practices are interdependent. Shariah teaches the basic duties of Islam such as the Unity of One God, to pray five times a day (Salat), to fast during the month of Ramadan (Sawm), to pay

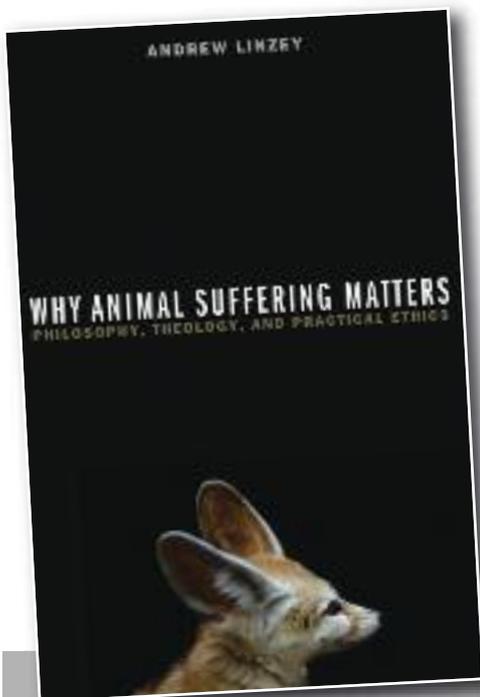
alms to the poor (Zakat) and to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). In the inner practice of Tariqa the Heart is considered the centre of the spiritual body (the Soul). It is the centre of the conscience and the aim is to achieve a well-balanced and pure Heart in order to preserve the light of Faith. The heart must be free of bad characteristics like anger, pride, arrogance, enmity, hatred and envy. The remembrance of Allah (Zikr and Meditation) will replace these with humility, compassion, justice, sincerity and love.

Most people think that Islam is about outer practices only but it is the development of the inner spiritual life that is more important than the outward appearance. Outer practice without inner discipline is hypocrisy, and the inner without the outer structure is imagination. Therefore, one has to be sincere in one's practices and intentions to achieve the Pure Heart (Qalbn Saleem in the Holy Quran) that is filled with the Love of Almighty Allah and nothing else.

The hearts of most people are filled with the love of this material life (Dunya, this mortal World). When speaking of a 'pure heart' in the Divine Presence we are not just talking of the afterlife but in this life too. We are always in the Divine Presence even though we may not conceive of it. Actions, which appear to be good, are no use as it is the sincerity of the heart that counts. Real justice, compassion and Divine love can only appear in a pure heart.

May Allah forgive us for our shortcomings and bless us all.
Amin

*The key
to God's
knowledge is
through self-
knowledge*



WHY ANIMAL SUFFERING MATTERS MORALLY

From: *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology and Practical Ethics* by Andrew Linzey 2009 OUP, Oxford. This article will focus on the Theological justifications for moral solicitude presented by Revd. Professor Andrew Linzey.

Traditional ethics in almost all its forms privileges human suffering over all other kinds of suffering. It seems self-evident to many people that human suffering is virtually in a class of its own, and that animal suffering, while sometimes objectionable, isn't really as important or as morally significant. There are, it is supposed, two kinds of suffering: human and animal. Human suffering always matters because it somehow represents the worst kind of suffering in the world, whereas the suffering of animals is judged to be "second class," significant (perhaps) but wholly secondary in moral importance.

Controversially, I am no longer convinced that this position is wholly rational, nor that it can be supported by the most rational considerations available. This chapter documents my wrestling. Whether readers agree with me or not, I hope they will at least accept that the case for extending moral solicitude to animals is much greater than they might have previously supposed.

A couple of basic definitions—of "suffering" and "animal"—are required. Although often used interchangeably, "pain" and "suffering" should be distinguished. Pain usually refers to the reaction following an adverse physical stimuli, what is typically taken, at least by philosophers, to be an unpleasant sensation or the result of what scientists call "noxious stimuli". Suffering is sometimes taken to be pain of a certain sort—for example, sufficiently unwarranted, prolonged, and outside the control of the subject. However, while pain usually accompanies suffering, it is not always identical with it. Suffering thus refers to more than physical pain, including what has been termed the mental experience of pain, including such sensations as shock, fear, foreboding, anxiety, trauma, anticipation, stress, distress, and terror.¹ In general, suffering may be defined as harm that an animal experiences characterised as a deficiency in (or negative aspect of) that animal's well-being. What is important is the recognition (informed by scientific evidence) that mammals, at least, experience both pain and suffering. "Animal" refers to

mammals and birds where such suffering may be reasonably supposed. Whether suffering extends wider than the class of beings here envisaged is an important question, but its resolution in no way affects my argument.

1.1. DIFFERENCES AND MORALLY RELEVANT DIFFERENCES

Those who wish to justify or minimise animal suffering rarely argue that animals do not suffer. Rather, they argue that animal suffering matters less, if at all, because animals are different from human beings. There are obviously differences, sometimes important ones, both within species and between them. The ethical issue is not about difference per se, but whether any of the proposed differences are morally relevant, that is, whether any should reasonably form the basis for differential treatment of one species over another. Some differences, I conclude, do have moral relevance but in an entirely contrary way to that supposed by their proponents.

The issue of relevant differences was well aired by the Anglican divine Humphry Primatt, who wrote in 1776:

It has pleased God the Father of all men, to cover some men with white skins, and others with black skins; but as there is neither merit or demerit in complexion, the white man, notwithstanding the barbarity of custom and prejudice, can have no right, by virtue of his colour, to enslave and tyrannize over a black man; nor has a fair man any right to despise, abuse, and insult a brown man. Nor do I believe that a tall man, by virtue of his stature, has any legal right to trample a dwarf under his foot. For, whether a man is wise or foolish, white or black, fair or brown, tall or short, and I might add, rich nor poor, for it is no more a man's choice to be poor, than he is to be a fool, or a dwarf, or black or tawny—such he is by God's appointment; and, abstractedly considered, is neither a subject for pride, nor an object of contempt.²

What is important is the recognition (informed by scientific evidence) that mammals at least, experience both pain and suffering.

In other words, these differences should have nothing to do with differences in moral treatment because God has originated them, or, in non-religious terms, we have not chosen them. Primatt goes on to make a similar case in relation to animals:

Now, if amongst men, the differences of their powers of the mind, and of their complexion, stature, and accidents of fortune, do not give any one man a right to abuse or insult any other man on account of these differences; for the same reason, a man can have no natural right to abuse or torment a beast, namely because a beast has not the mental powers of a man. For, such as the man is, he is as but God made him; and the very same is true of the beast. Neither of them can lay claim to any intrinsic merit . . . at their creation, their shapes, perfections, or defects were invariably fixed, and their bounds set which they cannot pass. And being such, neither more or less than God made them, there is no more demerit in a beast being a beast, than there is merit in [a] man being a man; that is, there is neither merit nor demerit in either of them.³

The argument is that “shapes, perfections, or defects” cannot be counted morally for or against any being. They are simply the accidents of birth or, as Primatt suggests, what is given by their Creator. None, strictly speaking, are matters of moral merit or demerit. That is just the way humans are, and animals also.

That said, Primatt does make one exception, namely, sentience. The capacity to feel pain and suffering is morally relevant. He writes of how “the differences amongst men in the above particulars are no bars to their feelings, so neither does the difference of shape of a brute from that of a man exempt the brute from feeling; at least, we have no ground to suppose it.”⁴ That, then, is the central question: are there any grounds—other than the existence of sentience—for supposing that what Primatt calls “the particulars” provide any ground that human suffering has a greater moral claim upon us?

1.2. EXAMINING THE DIFFERENCES

Six of the most often cited “particulars,” or differences, will be considered. It has been claimed that animals are

- (i) naturally slaves;
- (ii) non-rational beings;
- (iii) linguistically deficient;
- (iv) not moral agents;
- (v) soulless; and
- (vi) devoid of the divine image.

The first four differences are mainly philosophical, and the remaining two, theological. It is important that my methodology is clear: my concern is not to dispute the accuracy of the differences, but rather to show that the moral conclusions drawn from these differences are almost entirely mistaken and that another, completely opposed, conclusion follows. Since humans have excelled themselves at what may be called the “uniqueness-

spotting tendency,”⁵ my list can only comprise some fairly typical arguments. Clearly, those who maintain that animals do not suffer will find my arguments irrelevant, as I find theirs unconvincing, but it is worth remembering that, pace Descartes (probably), almost all mainstream philosophers and theologians have not doubted that animals are sentient, even if they have accorded various meanings to the term...

this extract will focus on (v) and (vi)

(v) Soulless beings

The notion that animals are devoid of immortal souls has, historically, played a major part in Christian attitudes. It is worth noting that, following Aquinas,⁴⁵ Catholic tradition has never denied that animals have souls as such. As E. L. Mascall explains, Thomist theology (that is, theology derived from St. Thomas Aquinas), in turn influenced by Aristotle has distinguished between three kinds of soul: “vegetative” for vegetables, “sensitive” (meaning “animate”) souls for animals, and “incorporeal”—that is, rational—souls for humans:

Turnips and wart-hogs, as well as men, possess souls, for they, too, in their humble and different ways, are alive; when more precision is needed, the soul of the turnip is described as “vegetative,” that of the wart-hog as “sensitive” and that of a man as “rational”; there is no implication that a soul necessarily survives the death of the body or that it is, in the modern sense of the word “religious.”⁴⁶

The apparent lack of rationality in animals, then, disqualifies them for immortal soul possession. Only rational beings have worth in themselves, according to St. Thomas, because they are valued by God for their own sakes. But there are other theologians, such as Paul Badham, who accept that animals are “thinking” beings, but also deny that they have immortal souls:

One might well agree that animals are not machines but are feeling, thinking agents with purpose, wills, and rights which should be respected, without wanting to commit oneself to the view that they possess an eternal destiny beyond bodily death. . . . Much of the desire to claim souls for animals or fetuses ignores the question of whether it is actually intelligible to suppose that they could live apart from their bodies.⁴⁷

Then he goes on to reinstate rationality (with an emphasis upon language) as a criterion:

As far as we can judge, animals appear to live very much in the present and their thoughts and purposes concern their immediate needs. Indeed, without a complex language it is hard to see how it would be possible to have a developed, reflective individual life and a fully developed power of reasoning such that one could identify one’s selfhood with that capacity. Yet unless the subject’s selfhood can validly be identified with its capacity for reflective reasoning it would not be possible to say that that “self” could exist in a disembodied state. . . .

Though one cannot any longer accept the clear-cut distinctions of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, there does seem to be a point in its judgment that a soul which was only sentient would be mortal whereas a rational intellectual soul could enjoy immortality.⁴⁸

Badham reinforces his view with reference to the “religious dimension.” He writes that, “as far as we can see (with the possible exception of dolphins!), animals do not worship” and hence, “a mode of existence which was given intelligibility by the thought that in it God would become the most real feature of our experiencing would not be a mode of existence which would ensure continuity of identity for animals.”⁴⁹

Leaving aside for a moment Badham’s connection between worshipping God and a continuing identity capable of surviving death, the issue of identity is worth some attention. One increasingly common rejection of the moral claims of animals is based on the idea that they are not persons. To be a person requires not only being a subject of mental states, but also persisting through time (i.e., a person is a persisting subject of mental states). Many might argue that this is precisely what animals are not; they may be subjects of mental states, but they do not persist through time. Therefore, they are not persons. Evaluating a claim of this kind is far from straightforward. Despite the considerable emphasis laid upon “persons,” especially by Trinitarian theologians (derived from the classical definition of God as three persons in one substance), it is remarkably difficult to find a coherent account of the notion, particularly of how it might specifically privilege human persons and their moral claims against those of animals.⁵⁰

But let us suppose that the claim is true and that—in the current philosophical jargon—an animal’s body “contains” not a person, but a succession of “person stages.” In such an animal, suffering can in no way be mitigated by considerations of narrative significance (as when, for example, I come to understand that my life is a story where the rough follows the smooth, that things will soon get better, and so on). One might also think of the trauma of teething, when young infants experience excruciating pain from the emergence of their first milk teeth. No parent (and I speak here as a father of four children) can be anything other than disturbed at the onset of this pain, which occurs when infants are wholly incapable of comprehending what is happening to them. Infants may be potential persons, but they are surely not capable of a “self-narrative” at this early stage of their life. So the question is: is their suffering or the similar sufferings of animals (who are likewise unblest by a personal narrative) thereby less morally significant?

On the contrary, if true, it seems that we have a stronger, not a weaker, obligation to minimize the suffering of both.⁵¹ What a poor parent it would be who withheld an analgesic to a teething

child crying in pain because it is not yet a full person with a philosophically defensible self-narrative.

Again, because animals cannot worship God and do not, apparently, experience the divine, they cannot, according to Badham, have a “continuing identity” capable of surviving physical death. But if true, does it follow that they deserve—for that reason alone—less moral solicitude? Surely, the reverse is the case. If animals are not going to be recompensed in some future life for the suffering that they have had to undergo in the present, it follows that their current suffering acquires even greater significance. Lewis addressed this issue in the context of vivisection, and his logic cannot be faulted:

The Christian defender [of vivisection], especially in Latin countries, is very apt to say that we are entitled to do anything we please to animals because they “have no souls.” But what does this mean? If it means that animals have no consciousness,

then how is this known? They certainly behave as if they had, or at least the higher animals do. I myself am inclined to think that far fewer animals than is supposed have what we should recognize as consciousness. But that is only an opinion. Unless we know on other grounds that vivisection is right we must not take the moral risk of tormenting them on a mere opinion. On the other hand, the statement that they “have no souls” may mean that they have no moral responsibilities and are not immortal. But the absence of “soul” in that sense makes the infliction of pain upon them not easier but harder to justify. For it means that animals cannot deserve pain, nor profit morally by the discipline of pain, nor be recompensed by happiness in another life for suffering in this. Thus all the factors that render pain more tolerable or make it less than totally evil in the case of human beings will be lacking in the beasts. “Soullessness” in so far as it is relevant to the question at all, is an argument against vivisection.⁵²

As a matter of justice, then, the present condition of animals subject to suffering without any understanding of why it happens, any personal narrative that would explain their suffering, any communication with the divine, and any hope of heavenly recompense (if that is really the case) is surely the most pitiable of all, and calls out for more, not less, moral solicitude.

(vi) Devoid of the divine image

This putative difference has its principal basis in the biblical declaration in Genesis 1:26–28, in which God makes human beings in the divine image. The difficulty, of course, is understanding what the *imago Dei* really means. Perhaps the most important work on the meaning of the image is Guunlaugur A. Jónsson’s little-known but masterful survey titled *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26–28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*, in which he painstakingly reconstructs the range of interpretations offered by scholars and theologians during the period 1882–1982.⁵³ The century begins with work by August

What a poor parent it would be who withheld an analgesic to a teething child crying in pain because it is not yet a full person with a philosophically defensible self-narrative

Dillmann (1823–1894) and Samuel Rolles Driver (1846–1914), who argue (following many of the scholastics) that the *imago* refers primarily to the “mental endowment” of human beings over and against animals, what Driver calls the “possession by man of self-conscious reason.”⁵⁴ Humans have the ability “to know in a sense in which animals do not know, and involving the capacity of apprehending moral and religious truth.”⁵⁵

From that altogether traditional definition, the image is variously defined as consisting in “man’s external appearance” (Theodor Nöldeke and Hermann Gunkel), as deputising for God (Gerhard von Rad), as proof of the “higher category” of humankind (Emil Brunner), as expressive of divine trinity reflected in sexual differentiation (Karl Barth), as indicated by the upright posture of humans (Ludwig Köhler), and as the “holistic” view of Theodorus C. Vriezen that the image refers to the “totality of the human being embracing not only its corporeal but also its spiritual capacities.”⁵⁶ The twists and turns of exegesis are too numerous to follow here in detail, but I would like to bring the survey up to date with the latest view which now commands wide agreement among Old Testament scholars.

This interpretation (variously advanced by scholars including Robert Davidson, Heinrich Gross, Helmer Ringgren, and Waldemar Janzen) locates the meaning of the image in the context of the priestly narrative in the first creation saga in Genesis (1:1–2:3) and sees it as inextricably related to the granting of dominion over animals in Genesis 1:28. Without necessarily limiting the concept to the notion of dominion (as some scholars have done), David A. Clines summarises the view that sees, at the very least, an inextricable relation between the two:

That man is God’s image means that he is the visible representative of the invisible, bodiless God; he is the representative rather than the representation. The image is to be understood not so much ontologically as existentially: it comes to expression not in the nature of man so much as in his activity and function. This function is to represent God’s lordship to the lower orders of creation. The dominion of man over creation can hardly be excluded from the content of the image itself.⁵⁷

The importance of this “functionalist” interpretation is that it provides the grounding for an ecological and animal-friendly interpretation of the human presence in creation. Far from being a simple reinforcement of human supremacy, this view requires us to view human specialness as consisting (at least in part) in exercising God-like power over animals—a power that also requires God-like responsibility. “Dominion” in this context is far from the despotism it suggests to human ears; rather, it is a limited and accountable authority: limited because humans are to represent God’s own benevolent care for other creatures, and accountable because humans are uniquely responsible to God for how they exercise that authority. The picture that emerges is of a God who creates humans with God-given capacities to care for creation as God’s own representative on earth. In short,

humans have to be that kind of unique creature (in terms of possessing a spiritual and moral sense that animals do not possess) in order to care for creation as God intended. In case this is thought to be just one opinion among others that will change (as invariably all ideas do over time), it is worth noting how established the consensus among scholars has become. As Jónsson indicates, this creation-friendly interpretation has gained “an ever increasing acceptance” among scholars. “There is no doubt,” he writes, “that during the period 1962–1982 an obvious general shift in scholarly opinion has taken place,” so that “the functionalist interpretation . . . is now the predominant view.” Indeed, Jónsson goes so far as to say that were it not for one or two dissenting voices, there would be a “complete consensus among OT scholars” on this issue.⁵⁸ Understood theologically (with the help of modern scholarship), we can report that the divine image only warrants a more careful, diffident, and conscientious stewardship of creation, and animals in particular. The moral relevance of this difference works entirely in favour of animals, rather than against them. This must, logically, be true if the image in whose God we are made is a holy, loving, and just God who cares for all creation.

This brings us back to our opening discussion about the nature of human power over animals (see section 1.2.i). The issue is sharpened still more if the further step is made to understand this God-given power over animals from a Christological perspective. In that sense, St. Thomas was not entirely wrong in seeing a kind of implicit moral hierarchy in the world—except that he misunderstood it at its most important and relevant point, namely, that the “higher” should serve the “lower,” rather than the reverse. The notion of human “mastery” is replaced by the notion of “service,” and humans become not the “master” species but the “servant” species.⁵⁹

One answer is given in a little-known sermon by John Henry Newman preached when he was the vicar of St. Mary’s University Church, Oxford, on Good Friday in 1842. Like most of Newman’s sermons, this one merits careful attention. Newman began in a devotional way by saying that we cannot love Christ unless we feel heartfelt gratitude, and we cannot feel that gratitude “unless we feel keenly what he suffered for us.”⁶⁴ While feeling is not enough, it is an essential component of our response to Christ. He then posed the question: “how are we to feel pain and anguish at the thought of Christ’s suffering?”⁶⁵

He offered three ways in which this can be done. The first is by reference to the suffering of animals. His text was from Isaiah 53:7, which compares the coming Messiah to “a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” Newman noted that Christ was “as defenceless and innocent, as a lamb is,” and stated that since scripture compares Christ to this “inoffensive and unprotected animal,” so “we may without presumption or irreverence take the image as a means of conveying to minds those feelings which our Lord’s sufferings should excite within us.”⁶⁶

But Newman did not stop there. He specifically addressed the issue of cruelty and, in the process, made a remarkable claim:

I mean, consider how very horrible it is to read the accounts which sometimes meet us of cruelties exercised on brute animals. Does it not sometimes make us shudder to hear tell of them, or to read them in some chance publication which we take up? At one time it is the wanton deed of barbarous owners who ill-treat their cattle, or beasts of burden; and at another, it is the cold-blooded and calculating act of men of science, who make experiments on brute animals, perhaps merely from a sort of curiosity. I do not like to go into particulars, for many reasons; but one of those instances which we read of as happening in this day, and which seems more shocking than the rest, is, when the poor dumb victim is fastened against a wall, pierced, gashed, and so left to linger out its life. Now do you not see that I have a reason for saying this, and am not using these distressing words for nothing? For what was this but the very cruelty inflicted upon our Lord? He was gashed with the scourge, pierced through hands and feet, and so fastened to the Cross, and there left, and that as a spectacle.⁶⁷

What is significant about this passage is not the particular sympathy shown to animals as such, but the placing of such within a Christological context

What is significant about this passage is not the particular sympathy shown to animals as such, but the placing of such suffering within a Christological context. With the question: "For what was this but the very cruelty inflicted upon our Lord?" he posited nothing less than a moral equivalence between the suffering of animals and the suffering of Christ himself. He underlined this by illustrating how the suffering of a hapless animal in a particular experiment mirrored the physical suffering of Christ on the cross. But the issue is not just about the physical similarity of the torture inflicted; Newman went on to explain the rationale for our abhorrence of cruelty in both cases:

Now what is it that moves our very hearts, and sickens us so much at cruelty shown to poor brutes? I suppose this first, that they have done no harm; next, that they have no power whatever of resistance; it is the cowardice and tyranny of which they are the victims which makes their sufferings so especially touching. For instance, if they were dangerous animals, take the case of wild beasts at large, able not only to defend themselves, but even to attack us; much as we might dislike to hear of their wounds and agony, yet our feelings would be of a different kind; but there is something so very dreadful, so satanic in tormenting those who have never harmed us, and who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power, who have weapons neither of offence nor defence, that none but very hardened persons can endure the thought of it.

And to make the parallel exact, he continued:

Now this was just our Saviour's case: He had laid aside his glory, he had (as it were) disbanded his legions of angels, he came on earth without arms, except the arms of truth, meekness and righteousness, and committed himself to the world in perfect innocence and sinlessness, and in utter helplessness, as the Lamb of God.⁶⁸

And Newman concluded: "Think then, my brethren, of your feelings at cruelty practiced upon brute animals, and you will gain one sort of feeling which the history of Christ's Cross and Passion ought to excite within you."⁶⁹

Newman was doing much more here than using our feelings about cruelty as an aid to religious reflection. He was explicitly recognising a moral equivalence between two kinds of suffering. Moreover, and this is the crucial point, in so doing, Newman uncovered the all-important rational ground for positing that such cruelty is nothing less than (in his word) "satanic".

1.7. CHRIST-LIKE SUFFERING

So, if we ask again our question with which we began—namely, why should the sufferings of vulnerable, innocent, unprotected, defenceless beings be judged to be theologically significant—the answer must be that there is something Christ-like about such suffering. It ought to compel a moral response, as ought the sufferings of Christ himself. We are right to be, in Newman's words, "moved" and "sickened" because that kind of suffering—whether of humans or of animals—of the innocent, unprotected, and vulnerable is morally unconscionable.

One further connection should be made, and it goes to the heart of the issue about Christian believing and suffering generally. Given the close correspondence between these two kinds of suffering, and their identical moral underpinning, it should follow that those who are properly sensitised to the sufferings of the crucified ought—for the same reasons—to be sensitive to the suffering of all vulnerable and innocent beings. That is further illustrated by Newman's second example, concerning the suffering of children. Newman asked: "How overpowered should we be, nay not at the sight only, but at the very hearing of cruelties shown to a little child, and why so?" He replied: "for the same two reasons, because it was so innocent, and because it was unable to defend itself."⁷⁰ The same pattern of argument repeats itself: there should be a common revulsion at the infliction of suffering on all innocent and vulnerable beings. Newman was sagacious, even prophetic, in grasping the underlying philosophical justification for opposition to both animal and child cruelty.

Editor's note: Due to lack of space we are unable to provide a list of referenced materials. These are of course, featured in the book itself. **HW**

OUR STORIES OUR LIVES:

Inspiring Muslim Women's Voices



Pioneers always create a space for others to follow and shape other paths and in some ways my mother opened up a path for me and in some ways I'm opening the path up for my daughters.

(Fatima Ayub age 37 Bradford)

Muslims are the second largest faith-based community in the UK; making up 3 percent of the population and Bradford is home to one of the largest Muslim communities in the UK.

The book *Our Stories Our Lives: Inspiring Muslim Women's Voices* began as a vision designed to explore the insights and experiences of Muslim women in Bradford. Funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, it focused on over a hundred women, from the ages of 14 to 80 of all walks of life – and harnessed media technologies to capture their insights. The aim was to empower women to present themselves in their own words through participatory video, documentary film, audio, oral history/narratives, seminars and the internet. The result is a number of engaging cameos that identify their hopes, aspirations and concerns through their day-to-day activities. Throughout the process of producing the videos and other media material, their voices remained pivotal, un-obscured by over analysis and interpretation.

Over the past few decades the UK has seen major demographic, social and cultural changes and Muslims have emerged at the heart of countless critical debates and analysis with particular reference to mainland and global security; cohesion, participation and integration, marriage, immigration and also educational and economic disadvantage. Many of these debates have continued to homogenize Muslim men and women, and failed to represent the rich diversity of opinion within Islam and between people. It is necessary in a society where over the years particular voices have been silenced, that we hear authentic experiences that talk to us with genuine openness and critical reflection.

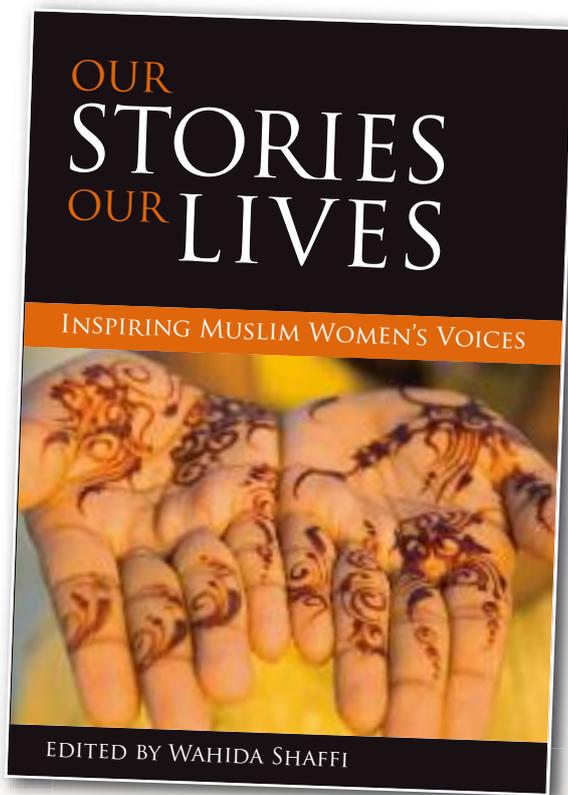
As a Muslim woman myself, and editor of the book, I have always believed in the power of stories in reaching out to peoples hearts and minds and the importance of capturing history as it unfolds. Across the UK I have witnessed a number of changes. I see a number of Muslim women who have achieved

positions of influence – in local government, business, further and higher education, charities and other organizations. Women who care about the society in which they live and bring up their children; women who increasingly find a voice together to promote values and who work together to make things happen. There's a considerable way to go in harnessing the potential that lies at the heart of this change and there is a need to acknowledge that there also continues to be

a disproportionate lack of reflection on women's achievements and experiences. But there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Muslim women are paving the way forward in new dynamic, challenging and creative ways.

The stories told here bring out into the open some of the issues that women raise. Here, there is a universal appeal in their frank and open commentary on love, marriage, motherhood; mortality, migration, racism; violence and terror as well as faith and freedom. At times humorous and always refreshing, the contributors speak passionately about concepts of global peace and justice, citizenship and belonging, education, business, entertainment and creativity; the headscarf, the importance of nurturing a culture of critical openness and self discovery and more importantly the crucial role of women as architects of change. The extracts here depict just some of the areas the women focus on:

there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Muslim women are paving the way forward in new dynamic, challenging and creative ways.



Arshad Begum Ajeeb – The Mayoress age 56 (first Asian Lady Mayoress in The country)

“I’d told my husband I wouldn’t be Lady Mayoress if he got elected. For a start my English wasn’t great. I’d been to school in Mirpur and I can read and write Urdu, but it’s not like I received a broad education or anything”

Fatima Ayub – The Pioneer – speaking about not being heard by government (age 37)

You still have lots of people who still feel unheard and under represented! In fact Iraq was the only time that we saw millions of people of all backgrounds march on the streets of London but no one listened and we ended up going to war for no reason, no evidence at all and they admit it now!...

Rejwana Malik – I have a Dream (age 19)

When people come across Me a Muslim - I don’t want them to associate me with 7/7 or 9/11, Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein but pictures of the blue mosque; the fragrances of morocco, date palms in Egypt or the Taj Mahal. Then we will have succeeded!!

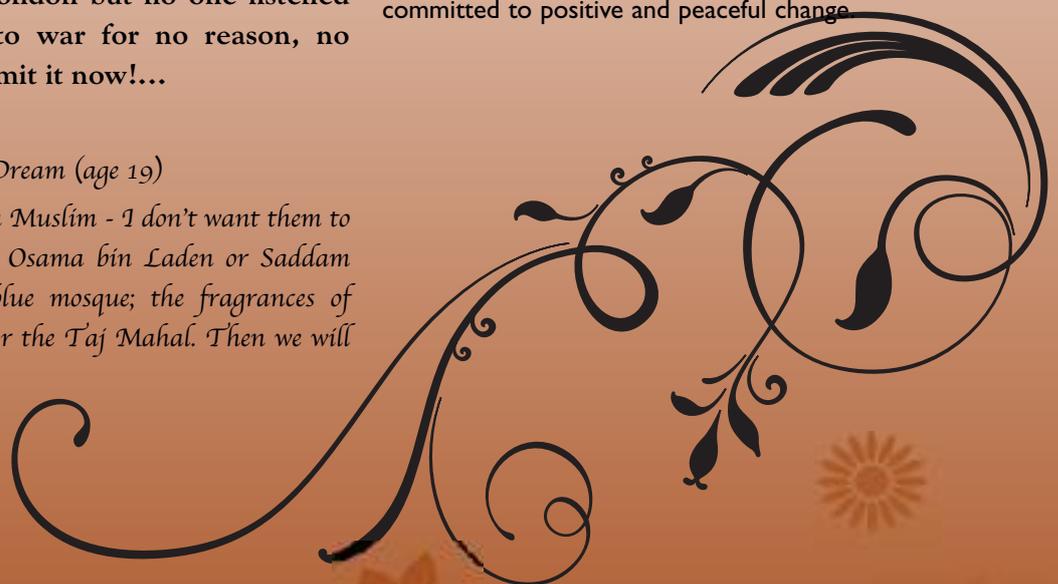
Syima Meracli – Jihad – speaking to work colleague about wearing the hejab

I just said, “Neil, how would you feel if I covered my hair?” And he said, “What do you mean? With gel?” And I said, “No, with a scarf!” He did get the concept. He knew what I was talking about so we had a chat and I said, “Look I’d like to do this. Would it be a problem for you guys because obviously when you employed me, I wasn’t wearing it. This is my decision and I don’t want to force it upon you guys if it’s an issue for you. I’m not going to take you to an employment tribunal or anything like that.”

Barkat Bi – Dadi ma the Motivator – speaking about coming to the UK for the first time (in her 80’s)

Oh, we were in the tiniest aeroplane and my children were very small. And they were so scared that they threw up all the way to London. **And that’s when I first saw Goray (white) people at Heathrow Airport. I couldn’t believe my eyes that these people had such fair skin! Back then I thought they were such beautiful people, so young and white skinned. I remember thinking that God’s creation was amazing!**

The women of multiple generations do not see themselves as victims. They illustrate the hopefulness and dynamism of the young and the patience, vision and experience of the old. They depict the courage, dignity and strength of women who have embraced life in all its endless variety. Pioneers, who have recognized their potential in the public and private realms of society; who have struggled, made sacrifices and both intellectually and critically challenged both themselves; conventional norms and strategic governmental policies. They have taken pride in their multiple and changing identities and are committed to positive and peaceful change.



Life's Continuum

Emma Winthrop

I became involved in art when I went to university. This was a time of transition, and some deeper part of my being found the need to express itself through abstract art, doodles and creative play. It wasn't until a few years ago during another period of transition that I found myself armed with paint, paper and a yearning to express things that I was not consciously aware of; I once again found myself engaging with art.

Art for me is about an inward journey, an exploration and expression of the self in abstract form without formulated language. It is a visual representation of where I am at in my journey; a symbolic expression of the conscious and unconscious. My Faith has taken a similar journey: at times tangible and clear, but more often than not, intangible and incomprehensible - something that is best expressed through movement and form, colours and texture.

Inspiration for one particular piece came when I had recently returned from a trip to India: I well remember the great sense of excitement, anticipation and a deep sense of freeness. I found myself picking up a thin paint brush, canvas laid out before me and just applying paint to canvas in a series of curves, twists and turns; not knowing where the shape was leading to or where it would travel. Then I would stop, change colour and continue the process, each time feeling a sense of peace and openness at what was to come, both in my life and on the canvas. The final piece was a series of colourful shapes formed from free movement and, although it is not one of my best pieces technically, it was part of an important process that expressed my inner journey.

This organic process of painting reflects also
the evolving process of my faith.



For Becky

faith and the artist



Portrait of a flower

This organic process of painting reflects also the evolving process of my faith. Having always been interested in Eastern religions I decided in 2008 to go to India to attend a 10-day Vipassana silent meditation course. Although the meditation course does not prescribe a religious path, it was here that I became more connected to Buddhism and found a richness of truth that has guided my spiritual journey.

It was the teachings of Buddhism that led to an inner sense and desire to express the continuum of life, from the arising of matter to its passing away, and this gave life to my painting: 'Becoming...Ceasing...Becoming...Ceasing...'. Buddhism teaches that all things are in a constant state of change, and the key principle of Anicca (impermanence) has informed much of my work. 'Chasing butterflies' is an expression of the ephemeral nature of all compounded things, yet of how we choose to pursue them as if they are permanent. It is as if we are chasing butterflies, ever elusive, dancing around us, but unable to be grasped. The creation of these earlier pieces was a rich and organic experience. I did not use brushes to paint, but enjoyed the feel of the paint between my fingers, kneading it into the canvas, or thinly applying it with my nail tip. I love textures; when producing another piece of work I used human hair, tea leaves and sand. At times the movement onto canvas would be vigorous, with little thought or direction, as I danced to music in the studio, at other times I would apply the paint reflectively and delicately.

The creative act of painting takes me into a deeper state of connection with the teachings of my faith. Unifying each piece of work is one thing: *Change*. Change in myself as I practice Buddhism, change in my inner world, and change in how it is reflected on canvas. And, just as Buddhism is reminding me of this change, producing art, that is connected with this truth, is supporting me in embracing constant uncertainty.



Becoming...Ceasing...Becoming...Ceasing...

Singing Bowl

The large metal bowl sits heavily in my hand.

I strike the rim gently with a felt-tipped beater.

A humming, singing sound envelops me.

The deep, throbbing undertones gradually change into undulating overtones. I strike the bowl again,

and then again and again. The more I strike,

the more the room in which I am sitting is filled

with sound. The sound calms me. I gradually lose

an awareness of time and place. I am living in the

sound and the sound is living in me...

Singing Bowls: A Practical Handbook of
Instruction and Use by Eva Rudy Jansen
Binkey Kok Publications, Havelte, Holland 2001

