

UNITED RELIGIONS

ISSUE 14

# Initiative

BUILDING GLOBAL INTERFAITH CO-OPERATION



Lord, teach us to forgive:  
to look deep into the hearts  
of those who wound us,  
so that we may glimpse,  
in that dark, still water,  
not just the reflection  
of our own face  
but yours as well.

*Sheila Cassidy*

**Blessing or Choice**

FORGIVENESS

**Your people shall be my people**

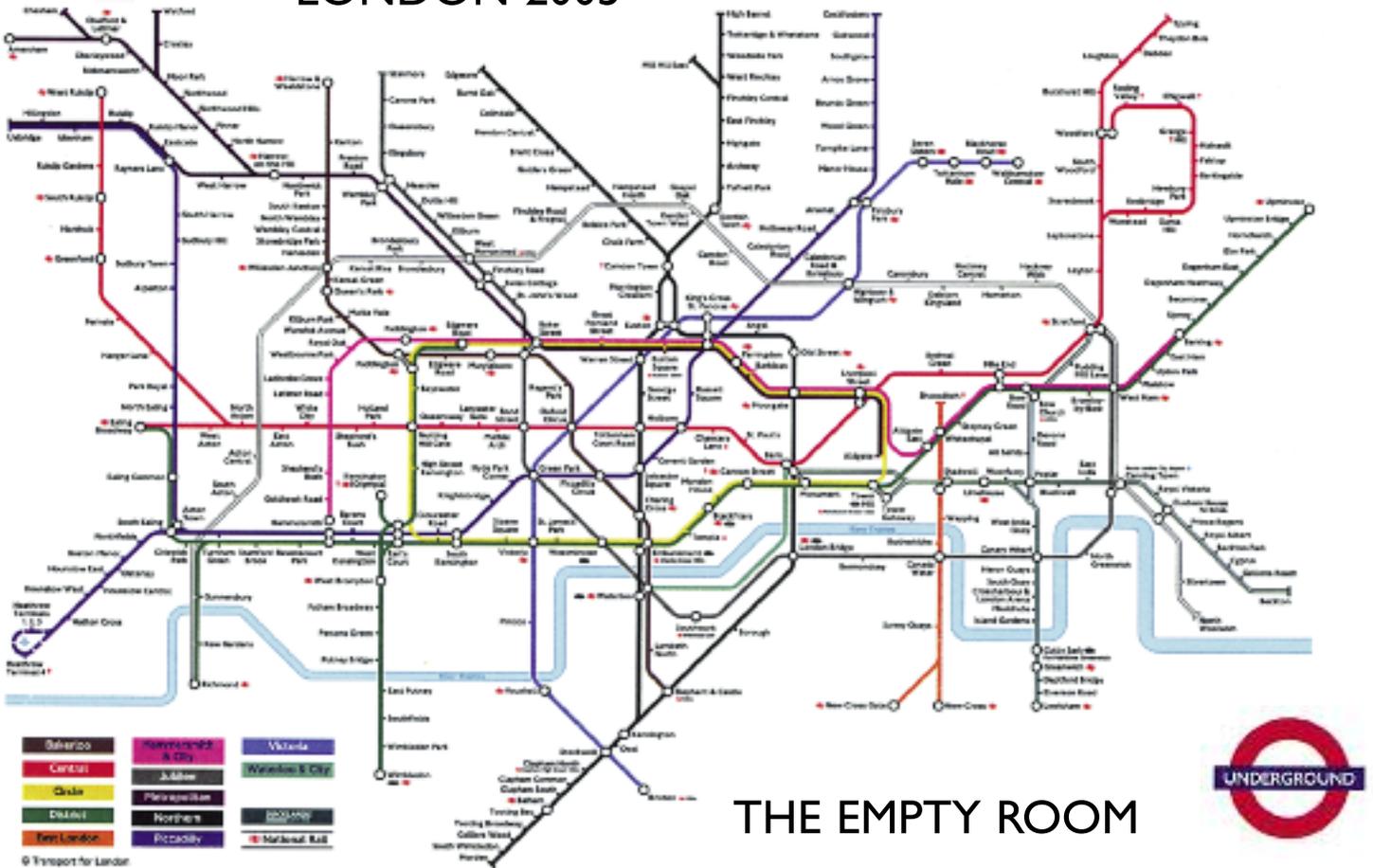
INTERFAITH MARRIAGE

**A Necessary Truth**

THE PASSION OF JEROO ROY

A FORUM OF MANY FAITHS EACH RETAINING THEIR OWN UNIQUE IDENTITY

# LONDON 2005



## THE EMPTY ROOM

I have not walked this unknown street before,  
 where buckled lamp-posts sway, unlit all night;  
 and now, towards dawn, as I conduct my search,  
 the cracked stones of the tilting pavement shift.

The eerie houses hover either side;  
 detaching drain-pipes look like aiming guns,  
 the falling tiles are missiles meant for me,  
 and pointing shards of cruel glass accuse.

Unhinging doors seem set to keep me out  
 as I squeeze through to reach abandoned rooms:  
 where once you came and might still come again,  
 if I, in grief's despair, keep up the search.

I know you died here far too many times,  
 and yet, before each dawn, I seem compelled  
 to walk another unknown street, to search  
 its dereliction and not find you there.

I look through windows where you cannot be,  
 yet hoping every time to see your face,  
 believing you will suddenly stride out,  
 with love enough, from one last empty room.

Alan Gaunt

21/09/2001

Second prize in the Manchester Cathedral Interfaith  
 Poetry competition 2004

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### Aim:

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

### Statement:

Whilst the contents of this magazine will be in accordance with the Purpose and Principles of URI there will be freedom of expression.

We invite you to contribute articles, poems, letters, illustrations and responses so that *Initiative* reflects the religious communities it serves. Editorial guidance can be obtained from Heather Wells, PO Box 110, Lancaster, LA2 6GN Email: hf\_wells@yahoo.co.uk

**Issue 15** Themes: 'Faith & Leadership' and 'Music of Faith'

### Front Cover:

**Photo:** Carrownisky Bay, Western Ireland

By Mark Reid, author of *'The Inn Way'* guidebooks.

www.innway.co.uk

**Poem:** *The Heart of Those Who Wound Us* by Sheila Cassidy

Cited: 1000 World Prayers Compiled by Marcus Braybrooke  
 2003 O Books

THE EDITORIAL TEAM OF *INITIATIVE* IS SINCERELY GRATEFUL TO THE PRIVATE DONORS WHO HAVE MADE PUBLICATION OF THE MAGAZINE POSSIBLE. WE WELCOME AND APPRECIATE ALL DONATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS.

# Editorial

As this issue of Initiative goes for publication I am conscious of the tender points of suffering we touch through the long reach of our contributors. There is the hungry cry of the deprived African child; the meditation that reflects on the awful power of the Tsunami; a poem that conveys the empty desolation of grief, specifically following terrorist attacks around the globe; stories and articles that highlight the fragility of life for the girl-child in India and the vulnerability of migrants in Europe. Our theme of forgiveness also reveals wounds of conflicts around the world, especially Rwanda, Northern Ireland and Iran. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those in pain as we seek through our various themes to provide rays of hope and light in a time of darkness. The images of devastation recently conveyed through our media have, I believe, given us all a sense of the urgency now thrust upon us to find ways of working together to eradicate the horrors of the modern world. Most especially we have to establish the cause of the hatred that fuels terrorism. We must learn to trust each other, listen to each other - particularly the young of all races - care for each other as human beings, yet accept and value our differences. It is only then, with a combined, enlightened strength and compassion, that we will be able to extinguish the malevolent and hostile forces that could ultimately harm us all. We must make the world a safer and more just place.

Heather Wells

Death rent my soul  
Fashioning space  
For Spirit's utterance.  
I sit beside myself  
And awed, observe  
Within my barren darkness  
A flower, whose petals burn  
With prayer, no longer mine.  
I scale its heights  
Perceive my place of rest  
Ensnared in loving pain  
I know myself caressed.

Sister Dolores Dodgson

Hermit  
Saint Ignatius  
Caldey Island  
Published by Caldey Abbey.

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marina cantacuzino

# the 'f' word

Forgiveness is an inspiring, complex, exasperating subject, which provokes strong feelings in just about everyone. I know this because for much of the past three years I have been embedded in the subject.

It started as a project which I undertook with the photographer, Brian Moody. We set about, in our spare time, collecting stories of reconciliation and forgiveness which finally, thanks to funding from Anita Roddick, launched as The f Word exhibition at London's Oxo Gallery in January 2004. The fact we now have seven versions of the exhibition round the world, one of which is constantly on hire in the UK, is a measure of the success of this exhibition, but also proof that people find the word forgiveness very compelling indeed.

In researching and creating The f Word, I began to see that for many of the people I met forgiveness was in fact no soft option but the ultimate revenge – a liberating route out of victimhood, a choice, a process, the final victory over those who have done you harm. As Mariane Pearl, the wife of murdered journalist Daniel Pearl, said “the only way to oppose them is by demonstrating the strength that they think they have taken from you”. The exhibition tells some extraordinary stories – stories of victims who have become friends with perpetrators, murderers who have turned their mind to peace-building.

As I talked to friends, colleagues and strangers about this exhibition I began to notice two very different reactions. There are those who see forgiveness as an immensely noble and humbling response to atrocity – and those who simply laugh it out of court. For the first group, forgiveness is a value strong enough to put an end to the tit-for-tat settling of scores which has wreaked havoc over generations. But for the second group, forgiveness is just a cop out, a weak gesture, which lets the violator off the hook and encourages only further violence. This is why I called the exhibition “the f word”. For some people forgiveness was a very dirty word indeed.

I chose the subject because as a journalist I find I'm far more moved by stories of forgiveness than revenge. In fact revenge scares me a little. I don't understand the thinking which advocates the settling of scores because it just creates an interminable cycle of attrition. On the other hand, the further I have ventured down the forgiveness route, the more I've realised that forgiveness is not the other side of the coin to revenge: it may include forgiveness but not exclusively, and not inevitably. At one time I thought the title of the exhibition should simple be REVENGE upside down - the seven letters turned on their head.

I chose the subject of forgiveness because gentle people attract me more than resolute ones, vulnerability more than strength, and I believe there are very few truly malevolent people in the world. As Father Michael Lapsley says “All people are capable of being perpetrators or victims - and sometimes both”. Lapsley runs the Institute for Healing Memories in Cape Town, despite – or probably because - he had both hands blown off in 1990 when he received a letter bomb sent by FW de Klerk's death squads in the post.

Jon James who was held hostage in 1997 by Chechnyan rebels with his girlfriend Camilla Carr said he survived only because he'd learnt from practising martial arts “that to overcome your opponent you should meet hardness with softness”. Their ordeal lasted 14 months, during which Camilla was repeatedly raped by one of her captors, but they have come through it remarkably intact. For them – like for many others – forgiveness was about seeking to understand the enemy. As Terry Waite wrote to me in his support for the exhibition:

“If one can understand why people behave as they do then often the road to forgiveness is opened. Not only is forgiveness essential for the health of Society, it is also vital for our personal well-being. Bitterness is like a cancer that enters the soul. It does more harm to those that hold it than to those whom it is held against.”

When I met Mor Dioum, the human rights lawyer who represents Berthe and Francis Climbié here in England, he asked me with genuine puzzlement, “Why forgiveness, why here in England?” He was referring to the British media's thirst for retribution. Forgiveness is not a part of our culture, yet research conducted by OMD Snapshots found that one in five thought forgiveness should form part of the judicial process here in the UK and 59 per cent believed forgiveness was an essential part of healing.

In parts of Africa (Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Africa) where perpetrators of bloody conflicts are being reintegrated into their communities, forgiveness is a much more accepted response to violence, viewed by some as the only way to bring about lasting peace. A Masai woman raped by a member of the British Army was quoted recently in The Guardian, saying “I have not reached forgiveness yet” - as if this was a state of mind she should aspire to.

Emma Thompson wrote to me in her statement of support for ‘the f word’:

“I have spent time with people in Chile and in Argentina whose families were murdered and tortured during the troubled histories of these countries. I have never heard a

single one desire revenge. There is no more important undertaking than forgiveness... It is the most powerful weapon we have against terrorism and atrocity."

I still find myself defending the notion of forgiveness though I am not advocating it as the best way forward. Who has the right to ask anyone to forgive. It is an intensely personal choice. As Alistair Little, the former Protestant paramilitary, told me. "Often in a conflict situation there's a huge pressure on people to forgive. If they don't, it's seen as a selfish act, and that I think is reprehensible. To expect them to forgive only victimises them all over again."

## drawing out the sting

And yet for some rare people forgiveness is the most constructive way forward, one which has immense rewards for victim and perpetrator, as well as society. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said last August after I'd finally got to meet him at his modest office on the edge of an industrial estate in Cape Town,

"Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what has happened seriously and not minimising it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. In the telling of stories like these there is real healing."

He told me I should go to Israel and see a pioneering organisation called the Parents Circle – a group of bereaved families supporting reconciliation and peace. The Parents Circle was founded by Yitzhak Frankenthal after his son was kidnapped and murdered by Hamas terrorists in 1994. While others around him were bellowing for revenge, this very courageous man decided to go in the other direction. Six weeks ago we were in Tel Aviv to meet Rami Elhanan and Ghazi Briegheit, an Israel and a Palestinian who have both lost close family members.

Rami, whose daughter was killed in 1997 in a suicide bombing in Jerusalem, told me that his work with the Parents Circle has become his sacred mission. "If we - Ghazi and I - can talk and stand together after paying the highest price possible then anyone can". Rami believes the suicide bomber to be as much a victim of the occupation as his daughter. Ghazi also sees the soldier who shot his unarmed brother as a victim like his brother – brutalized by a regime which puts guns into the hands of boys. They both believe passionately that somewhere a line must be drawn under the dogma of vengeance. Robi Damelin – another member of the Parents Circle, told me that when the army turned up at her door to tell her that her son had been shot dead while serving in the reserves, the first and totally instinctive words to come out of her mouth were, "do not take revenge in the name of my son".

I am in awe of Rami, Robi and Ghazi, just as I am in awe of Linda Biehl, and in a different way of Easy and Ntobeko - two of the men convicted of her daughter's murder - who now work for the Amy Biehl Foundation in Cape Town despite the fact that by doing so they live daily under the shadow of their crime. They were both given amnesty under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) though Easy told me, "I thought the TRC was a sell-out, until I read in the press that

Linda and Peter had said 'it's not up to us to forgive, it's up to the people in South Africa to learn to forgive each other. It was then I decided I'd go to tell our story and show remorse. Amnesty wasn't my motivation. I wanted to say in front of Linda and Peter, face to face, 'I am sorry, can you forgive me". Forgiveness is not a single magnanimous gesture in response to an isolated offence; it is part of a continuum of human engagements in healing broken relationships.

Tim Newell, former governor of Grendon Underwood prison and author of 'Forgiving Justice' says: "The main dynamic that stops victims, offenders and their communities of care moving on after the trauma of a crime is the inability to forgive the person responsible for the crime. This identifies forever the person with the deed and can freeze relationships and life stories forever."

With a reputation for supporting difficult causes, Anita Roddick is the main sponsor of the 'the f word: images of forgiveness'.

"For me forgiveness is as mysterious as love" she says. "I've never understood how people who experience pain through violence can see any light, or any freedom from the obsession of why or how? I've never really believed that I would forgive, but then nor have I ever really understood the cage which anger locks you into".

And that just about sums me up too. I'm not preaching or telling people what to think or how to respond. How can I know how I would behave, especially when I have often suspected that the smaller cruelties of loved ones might be harder to forgive than the greater cruelties of strangers. And yet there seems to be hope in forgiveness, a way out of the darkness. As the late Peter Biehl said when addressing the TRC and speaking in favour of granting his daughter's killers amnesty: "The most important vehicle of reconciliation is open and honest dialogue... We are here to reconcile a human life which was taken without an opportunity for dialogue".

Marina Cantacuzino

## For an Ex Far East Prisoner of War

*I am that man with helmet made of thorn  
Who wandered naked in the desert place,  
Wept, with the sweating sky, that I was born  
And wore disaster in my winter face.*

*I am that man who asked no hate, nor pity –  
I am that man, five-wounded, on the tree.  
I am that man, walking his native city,  
Hears his dead comrade cry, Remember me!*

*I am that man whose brow with blood was wet,  
Returned, as Lazarus, from the dead to live.  
I am that man, long-counselled to forget,  
Facing a fearful victory, to forgive:*

*And seizing these two words, with the sharp sun  
Beat them, like sword and ploughshare, into one.*

Charles Causley



# HURTS!

## Suggested Background Reading:

Cam, Philip, (1995), *Thinking Together – Philosophical Enquiry for the Classroom*,

Primary English Teaching Association/Hale & Iremonger

Fisher, Robert, (1990), *Teaching Children to Think*, Basil Blackwell

## 1. The children's voices are heard

In a P4C community of enquiry, the aim is give control of both the content and the process increasingly to the children. Anyone who works with children knows that they do come up with the most startling and deep questions, often at moments when it is difficult to give them the attention they deserve. Other examples of questions which members of this group raised on other occasions are:

- Is everyone in disguise?
- Why do people always want more than they have already got?
- Is money happiness?
- What is the meaning of war?

## 2. Each person's views are valued and respected

A caring, respectful consideration of others' views is encouraged, as are good listening skills and appropriate turn-taking. Children are taught explicitly to say, "I agree/disagree with ... because"- and to justify their reasoning. They are encouraged to own their opinions, and to recognise that disagreement is OK as long as it is expressed respectfully. The facilitator asks them, if they can, to support each other's views and help each other out. Here is a group of boys supporting each other in summarising a film to the rest of the group. Note George's respectful question as he takes over the bulk of the explanation, and the way he later checks with John that he's getting it right.

*John: The bit that it reminds me about is the humans and they had a computer. The life that we see now is like a computer programme set up for the humans. It's not reality.*

*Facilitator: So this is a film about what's reality and what's not. How did what George say connect to that for you?*

*John: About the fingers lying and ....*

*George: Do you want me to carry on?*

*Facilitator: Can you add something helpful to that, George?*

*George: What I think he's trying to say is, in the thing, the main*

*character gets out of the world and there's other people already there and they go back into the world to try to get things right and everything (that right?), and while they're in there, they need to keep hold all the time walking about, because they could get lost in the Matrix.*

*John: ... which is the computer.*

*George: .... that's taken over the world.*

The facilitator encourages the more retiring members to contribute using various techniques, for example:

- by pausing to turn to a partner and talk in a pair for a few moments about the issue under discussion;
- by inviting a show of hands to indicate agreement/disagreement with a particular point of view;
- by finishing an enquiry with an opportunity for everyone to contribute a "last thought" in turn, if they wish;
- but most importantly, by valuing and respecting any contribution they do make. This attitude of respect is talked about explicitly with the group when the ground rules are established, but an essential part of the facilitator's role is modelling this behaviour.

The playground culture, and even that of the contemporary classroom - where getting through the content of the curriculum and getting the answers right can be the teacher's and the children's main concerns - does not always allow the time, the space and the respect for such questions to be aired and pondered upon.

As to the process, it is the children who raise the questions, they who vote on the one they wish to focus on, and the facilitator, while s/he may guide the discussion, tries not to impose his or her own views. In more experienced groups, children sometimes choose the stimulus (which does not have to be a picture book – video clips, artefacts, pieces of music and games have all been used successfully to provoke thought and questions), and conduct the enquiry themselves.

## 3. Reflection is encouraged

Part of the facilitator's role is to help the group to reflect carefully on what they have said, to revisit an assertion or an exchange, and to consider alternative points of view. Sometimes it is appropriate to call for a pause in the enquiry, and suggest a minute's quiet personal reflection before moving on.

## But perhaps most importantly:

## 4. Children have the opportunity to engage in a collective search for meaning.

Very typically, part of an enquiry will be taken up with the group trying to define the terms of the question. What is the meaning of 'alien'? (or 'evil', 'friendship', or 'equal' – to name but a few concepts which this particular group has grappled with).

Often moral issues arise, as do the eternal questions concerning life and death and the nature and value of human existence. The children learn to try out and refine their thoughts, learning from each other, expressing themselves more precisely, and possibly (but by no means always!) arriving at some mutually satisfying conclusions. For the aim is to cultivate a community which honours sincerely held convictions, carefully expressed, but also has room for genuine uncertainty. And sometimes, someone changes their mind: maybe not a sign of weakness, but a sign that s/he has carefully considered the thoughts of others, and had his or her own thinking enlarged. This is certainly my own experience of doing philosophy both with children and adults. My brain hurts, but my mind is opened to new possibilities. And the chance to enquire into big questions with others (irrespective of their age) is life enhancing.

*an on-going  
search for  
truth*

This article argues that Religious Education (RE) should be *God-focused* rather than *religions-focused* as it mostly is at present. This may seem an odd statement. Commonly it is assumed that RE must teach about religions on the basis, either of the truth of one religion – say, Christianity in a Christian country or Islam in a Muslim country – or of promoting a pluralist agenda which celebrates diversity. The latter is mostly accepted in Britain today.

If the former is chosen the importance of the *truth-question* is taken for granted. With the latter however, it is easy for it to become sidelined. The explosion of globalisation and the urgent need to find ways of tolerating widely disparate traditions and religions seem to preclude any serious attention to the truth or otherwise of what is believed. To raise such questions in the classroom could easily jeopardise the teaching of toleration because they are so controversial, and because they can arouse such strength of feeling.

- Not to focus on the *truth-questions* concerning God is effectively to add the voice of RE to the general relativism and secularism which are such marked features of Western civilisation today. This is because constant talk about diversity and tolerance risks giving the impression to pupils that believing in God is just a matter of subjective, personal opinion. RE should help to expose the level of secularist indoctrination which is happening instead of helping to reinforce it – however unintentionally.

There is a huge task to be performed here. Secularist indoctrination has been going on in higher education for the last two centuries, and has now filtered down to every level of society as leaders in the professions business, media and politics – have been through the same system which routinely pursues all subjects without reference at all to God. RE, so long suspected itself of indoctrinating, should be a major anti-indoctrinatory force – a slot in the timetable when pupils actually have the chance to perceive and question underlying thought-patterns, force-fed into them by the whole cultural apparatus of which they are a part.

RE needs to make clear for pupils that belief in God is a live option against the belief that God does not exist. It will

## R.E. *Secular or Spiritual Reality*

I think this sidelining is mistaken for at least the following reasons:

- There can be no understanding of religion without refinement and awareness of the concept of Spiritual Reality (with a capital S and R) which in most religions is given the name of God. That is the real defining attribute of *religion*, and justification for using the term across so wide a spectrum. Saints and scholars in all the major religions insist on this, as does the content of the religious language and ritual to which all religions give priority. They constantly reiterate the centrality of the Divine, and the need for humans to dispose themselves appropriately towards the presence of the Divine; for example the very word Islam means submission to Allah. Some forms of Buddhism and Hinduism may be non-theistic but they are not a-theistic in the Western sense of the word. They do acknowledge the primacy of spiritual reality, which transcends, even as it is immanent in, this world of time and space.
- An important consequence of focusing on what is at the heart of religion is that the notion of rivalry between religions, and of fear of proselytising, can actually be bypassed. Focus on *God* rather than on human behaviour and traditions can enable members of different religions to see the importance of what they hold in common, as well as enabling them to learn from differences they encounter in an on-going search for truth<sup>1</sup>.

not do to convey the impression by default that *only* belief in God is an option. Belief in a purely scientific explanation of the whole of life is equally an option, so why should the whole curriculum be weighted in its favour? No-one can prove the non-existence of God any more than they can prove the existence of God, so the presumed rational by-passing of God is irrational. If God is, then people are likely to go far astray in their making sense of the world and in their search for meaning, if they do not take this into account.

Focus on *God* has huge relevance for pupils. Many today feel uncomfortable with religious institutions and outward forms of worship but nevertheless do have belief in some kind of Spiritual Reality. RE should cater for everyone. The question of God is, in fact, of perennial interest even to young children. In my own teaching I always found that when the question of God was raised RE came alive for pupils and they would contribute to some fascinating discussion. There is also an acute need to tackle gross stereotypes and promote clear thinking. J.B.Philips' book *Your God Is Too Small* makes compelling reading still today. So many people, both within and outside religion, operate with infantile notions of the God which they accept or reject.

It goes without saying that RE which is thus *God-focused* and not *religion-focused* must not make assumptions about pupils' belief or non-belief in God. It must rather enable them to have sufficient understanding of the leading concept of religion to think authentically for themselves.

Dr. Brenda Watson

# Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice

Blessing or Choice

On Sunday 8th November 1987 as people gathered around the Enniskillen cenotaph, an IRA bomb exploded. Eleven people died; there was extensive damage. Gordon Wilson and his daughter Marie were buried in the rubble. As they held hands, Marie, a nurse, died. That same evening Gordon Wilson gave a spontaneous and memorable interview to a BBC reporter. Some criticised him for what he said; others were amazed at the spirit of reconciliation he expressed. Later he wrote:

*I like to think that it was the real Gordon Wilson who spoke to the BBC's reporter, Mike Gaston, on the evening of the bomb when I said, "I have lost my daughter and we shall miss her. But I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge. Dirty sort of talk is not going to bring her back...She was a pet. She's dead. She's in heaven and we'll meet again. Don't ask me please for a purpose. I don't have a purpose. I don't have an answer. But I know there has to be a plan. If I didn't think that, I would commit suicide. It's part of a greater plan, and God is good. And we shall meet again.*

## *Don't ask me please for a purpose.*

*I did not use the word 'forgive' in that broadcast, nor in any later one, but people understand that my words were about forgiveness. Our Lord taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us'. We ask God to forgive us, but we are subject always to his condition that we must forgive others. God's forgiveness is ultimate, ours is the forgiveness of man to man. To me, the two become one. It's as simple as that. My words were not intended as a statement of theology or of righteousness, rather they were from the heart, and they expressed how I felt at the time, and as I still do.*

*Gordon Wilson (1927-1995) with Alf McCreary*

# choice + process = forgiveness



Lesley Bilinda

Lesley Bilinda's husband was murdered in the 1994 Rwanda genocide, during which almost a million Rwandans were slaughtered by their own people. Ten years on, Lesley returned to Rwanda to find out who was responsible for his death and offer them forgiveness. She told **Sylvie White** from Tearfund of her wrestle with forgiveness and the challenge it is for the Rwandan people who 10 years on are still struggling to rebuild their nation.

When Lesley Bilinda decided to return to Rwanda ten years after her husband Charles was murdered in the Rwandan genocide, she wondered if it was a decision she would regret for the rest of her life. Charles had fled to the town of Butare in the south of the country when the genocide broke out and on the 21st April 1994 he was taken from the Butare Diocese compound where he was hiding and he was never seen again. Speaking to Edward Stourton on Radio 4's Today programme just days before she left, she admitted it would be the hardest thing she had ever done. But that as a Christian she felt compelled to meet her husband's killers face to face and offer them forgiveness in person.

"I've been really struggling over the last ten years as I come to terms with the fact that Charles was murdered," she told Edward Stourton. "I've gone through a whole range of emotions, everything from hurt and pain to bitterness and resentment, and I've tried as far as I'm able to at this stage to forgive whoever killed Charles."

"But it's a hard thing to do from a distance, when I don't know whom I'm forgiving or what I'm forgiving them for. And it's one thing for me to sit here and talk about forgiveness when I'm thousands of miles away and I haven't met the person, but it's quite another when I meet them face-to-face. However I know this is something I must do, even though I recognise how much of a challenge it will be."

Despite her reservations and fears, Lesley was keen to return to the country that was so close to her heart and see the friends and family that were so special to her. She spent five years in Rwanda from 1989 to 1994, working with Christian relief and development agency Tearfund, running a community health project in the town of Gahini in West

Rwanda. It was while she was there that she met and married Charles Bilinda, an English teacher at the local secondary school.

She made many good friends during her time there, in particular John and Jemima who adopted her as their daughter – so much so that they actually hosted her wedding and received the gift of a cow in exchange for her!

Her early days in Rwanda were happy, peaceful times, but the wedding celebrations in December 1992 could not obscure a growing sense of menace, as the number of sporadic attacks started to increase across the country.

When the genocide broke out in 1994, Lesley was out of the country visiting Kenya with her sister Sue. It was just a few days into their holiday when the Rwandan President's plane was shot down, unleashing a three-month frenzy of killing, rape and pillaging. In just 100 days, 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were brutally murdered. Charles was one of them.

Lesley also lost other friends and members of her adopted Rwandan family, but compared to most people in Rwanda, she felt she got off very lightly. "**Some people I've met are the only surviving member of an extended family of 40, 50 or even 100 people.**" she says, "And not only are they having to pick up the pieces of such terrible loss, but also they are having to cope with the sense of betrayal by those close to them – people with whom they had worked and socialised, and even worshipped at church. "Moreover they are having to cope with the fact that this tangled web of lies and deceit is so difficult to penetrate that it's virtually impossible to get to the truth of what happened. Many, many people – myself included – don't know exactly what happened to their loved

ones or where they are buried. And with so many in prison denying any crimes, and even denying that genocide ever happened, it makes for a very, very difficult situation.

So how can anyone even begin to contemplate forgiveness in a context like this?

Lesley believes that it's precisely in a situation like this where forgiveness has profound meaning. Forgiveness is not something you do when you're feeling nice. She believes that to forgive when you've been very badly wronged, is one of the hardest things you'll ever have to do. And that is why forgiveness is a choice – you can't be told to do it, it must come from deep within. "If you wait until you *feel* like forgiving, you never will," says Lesley, "When someone has done or said something against you, you don't feel good about it. It hurts. It makes you angry and upset. Our natural reaction is revenge and bitterness. To choose *not* to go down that path is the hardest option."

"Forgiveness is a choice, but it's also a process" continues Lesley, "Sometimes memories are triggered, feelings of pain and anger come back. But it doesn't mean we didn't forgive the first time. It just means the forgiveness needs to continue – perhaps on a different level or dealing with a different aspect."

"People often ask 'are forgiveness and reconciliation the same thing?' As I see it, if I have been wronged, I have it in my grasp to offer forgiveness, but I have no influence over the response of the one who has wronged me. They may choose to accept my offer, apologise or repent for the wrongs they have committed, and we could be reconciled. Or they may choose to reject my offer and reconciliation is then not possible."

When she returned to the small landlocked country to join in the 10-year anniversary commemoration ceremonies this April, Lesley came face to face with how challenging forgiveness and reconciliation is. Although outwardly there has been significant change in Rwanda, underneath the surface, there is still hatred, bitterness, fear and mistrust of others.

Travelling with a television crew who were filming her story, Lesley visited prisons and interviewed murderers – some were remorseful but others were in complete denial that the murders had ever taken place. As she felt the agonising

frustration of someone withholding the truth from her, it made her appreciate all the more how incredibly painful it is for those for whom this is a daily reality. "Many people don't feel justice has been done which makes it incredibly painful for those who are forced to live side by side people they suspect have murdered their friends and family," says Lesley.

But Lesley met one person, Nicholas Hitimana whose example stands out as a symbol of hope for the future of the nation. Nicholas, a young Hutu man, spent several years in Edinburgh with his Tutsi wife Elsie, while studying for his Phd. He was supported through the *Charles Bilinda Memorial Trust*, a charity Lesley set up in Charles' memory to help Rwandans come to terms with their experience and provide education opportunities to those in need. Nicholas and Elsie are now back in Rwanda, where they are particularly involved in setting up small co-operatives for widows and orphans. They grow geranium and eucalyptus for distilling into essential oils.

On a visit to the project, Lesley spoke to genocide widows who previously were so despairing and discouraged that they could neither work nor sleep. Now through the project they have become Christians and found the support, friendship and courage they need to carry on. "One widow called Agnes told me how she used to be very angry woman," says Lesley, "She used to be a primary school teacher, but her husband and children were killed in the genocide and afterwards she couldn't face teaching the Hutu children so she just gave up. She couldn't sleep, her anger was so intense." But after being put in contact with Nicholas' organisation and experiencing God's forgiveness in her own life, Agnes is now a completely different woman. She works with other widows to encourage forgiveness and reconciliation and offer practical support. She even describes Nicholas as 'being like Jesus, because he left the glories of Scotland to come back and live amongst us, giving us hope to live again.'

These women knew what it was to live with grief, bitterness and anger destroying their lives, but they made the choice to forgive and now their lives speak of peace. To Lesley this is the *power* of forgiveness – the power to transform and change people's lives forever. Lesley also sees this as the *challenge* of forgiveness – that we have a choice to hold on to our anger, or to stretch out a hand in an offer of forgiveness, though it may be the hardest thing we have ever done. It can at times be a long, slow process – which can barely be

the challenge of forgiveness

contemplated unless we have first known in our own lives what

it means to *be* forgiven – by God, through his Son, Jesus. But it's in the offering of forgiveness – whether it is well received or not – that releases us from our bitterness and brings peace.

Tragically, Rwanda has become known throughout the world as a place of horrific atrocities and murder. Given what has happened there, it is all the more incredible that there are those who stand against the cycle of violence and betrayal, in their courage to forgive and work for peace.

**"The least we can do is to stand with them to encourage and support them, and seek to learn from their example in our own lives,"** concludes Lesley.



# The Sacred Mandala of Forgiveness

If we are wounded and hurt through the actions of others, real or perceived we may start to build up forms of hardened resentment and hatred in our lives. Clinging to these negative elements like prized possessions, we find it difficult to move forward, to enter into a healing space that forgiveness offers. And yet the Buddha unequivocally tells us that in order to seek out this higher spiritual level of eternal law, where healing resides, we must do exactly that - give up our negative feelings of hatred and cultivate love instead. Entering this sacred mandala however is not easy....

**Forgiveness starts with spiritual awareness - in the mind, heart and body.** It is the calling that tells us that we must let go of our storehouse of pain, that our resentment has built up, in order to return to peace. But no one else can make this move for us; it is our journey alone. The spiritual path of forgiveness that we tread, may be enormously difficult and we may have to accept that it is a unilateral move on our behalf. Our 'enemy' may very well be unrepentant and yet we must still seek out and embrace forgiveness because it is a gift WE offer up - for GIVE ness - irrespective of any reciprocal return.

If we keep on playing out the role of 'victim' and spin stories about our hurt and pain, then our discomfort will continue and we will have missed an opportunity for self-succour. Trying to forgive can be a very difficult undertaking at times; we perhaps gain some ground, only to be knocked back again with corrosive, undermining feelings. But we just have to walk on that extra mile (where may others fall away) because that's the very time we can meet with unexpected results - our release from the tyranny of self-imposed bitterness.

**Forgiveness involves us in a regular, therapeutic practice of looking and listening to what is troubling us, so that we may understand it more.** But we must never rush this process, bring it to premature closure, because it may come back to trouble us at a later date. Incubation time is of the essence here so that we can make a shift in perspective, a fresh consideration about possible rigid, entrenched views. It can lead us to ask the following probing and challenging questions: Are we in possession of all the 'facts', or just our interpretations of the 'facts'? Are we judging too soon? Do we have access to the fuller picture? Could we be wrongly accusing people, or assigning blame disproportionately? Have we made a true and fair assessment, or have we allowed our minds to cloud over with prejudice?

Through engagement with this questioning process we may arrive at different conclusions and thereby reach a future position of reparation that encircles everyone.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me" In those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.....In those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease. For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time, hatred ceases by love - this is an eternal law....

The Buddha The Dhammapada  
(The Way of Truth)

**Forgiveness can take time to ripen but when it is ready to give, we must give fully.** We cannot hold back - either we give it fully or not at all. There is no partial agreement, some negotiated deal that conceals as much as it reveals. Forgiveness is a full spiritual gift (probably the most challenging one we could offer) that ultimately benefits both the 'victim' and the 'perpetrator'. It is a deeply enriching process of metastasis - transformation. Even if we accept the notion of partial forgiveness, and pull away from giving fully, then we could only expect to be given back a corresponding partial healing. And that may not be enough for us.

**Forgiveness should never cancel out the past but heal it, and move us forward to a more empowering future.** The creative opportunity here is to recognize our past as a learning tool from which we can draw up a 'survival map' for a better, more spiritually informed tomorrow. We must never try to 'erase' our past hurts because this may damage us further. In reality it's a form of repression that only 'hides' them, creating an opportunity for festering and eventual re-surfacing again, in the future. We simply cannot 'forget' what has happened to us, that's unrealistic. All life's events (both positive and negative) are consigned to our memory bank and constitute, to some extent, who we are. By remembering what has happened to us, we are able to learn and go forward in a positive fashion. But clinging is something else, that's a form of ownership that just keeps us locked in a cycle of distress and anguish, with no prospect of relief. Remembering is not the same as clinging.

**Ultimately forgiveness is a spiritual matter, not an intellectual one.** Certainly we must bring wisdom and insight to bear on our thought processes when evaluating our emotions and feelings, our pain and anguish, but in the final analysis the decision to forgive comes from the heart, not the intellectual mind. It is a journey into a sacred mandala where we are given the chance to leave behind all the corrosive, damaging thoughts that we have been clutching, in order to be cleansed and released.

**True forgiveness is probably the highest spiritual accomplishment we can participate in - which liberates both the 'victim' and the 'perpetrator', bringing them into equal standing for potential, purification and reconciliation.**

It is the drawing of a sacred circle, a sanctified mandala that will encompass and embrace everyone:

*"Whoever approaches Me walking, I will come to him running; and he who meets Me with sins equivalent to the whole world, I will greet him with forgiveness equal to it."*

Mishkat Al - Massabaih

"Undertaking that makes no demands on us are probably not worth the effort"

(Tibetan Saying)

Mick Lewin

# Forgive

# & Be Healed

The world is searching for those who are bringing peace to the world by living their lives in a peaceful and loving way. This is the kind of person the world needs.

Who could this be? Those who develop forgiveness, mercy and love. Mercy comes first, because where there are merciful feelings, there is love. A loving heart is able to forgive very quickly. Then comes forgiveness, as we start to relate to others with understanding.

The world needs those who are developing love and compassion in their hearts. I know to what extent I am doing this by my ability to forgive. Until I've learnt to forgive the person with whom there is conflict, there'll always be problems in my relationships with others. A block in one relationship also affects the whole flow of energy with everyone else. If I don't forgive, then there is bitterness, pain, many hang-ups. There is sorrow for myself, never mind the person I'm not willing to forgive. When you have flu, you can't eat anything because nothing tastes good, nothing tastes right. It is not the food that's bad, but there's a bitter taste in your mouth. It's the same when I don't forgive, that feeling of bitterness in my mind influences everything else that I do. So, the process of forgiveness is part of my own healing.

Forgiving the self involves the process of realising and then letting go of the ego. It's our ego that doesn't allow us to acknowledge our mistakes. When I let go of the ego with honesty and humility, I'm able to have the recognition of my mistake. There's determination that I don't want to repeat that mistake again. Experiencing God's grace and forgiveness, I'm able to let go of my own guilt, and my own pain. Through that, I take a step forward to walk through the new door of opportunity.

When I realise my own mistake, others are also ready to forgive me. Forgiveness from other people comes from their own generosity of spirit, and also their faith in the goodness of every human being. That's why they're able to say, "We understand, we know that mistakes happen. It's ok. We've been through the same." When I remember the situations where I have received forgiveness, there's a feeling of gratitude and humility. Appreciative of that forgiveness, I know that I have a responsibility to do the same for others.

*We need the art of forgiveness in our world.  
Our future depends on it.*

When a mistake has been made, sometimes an apology isn't enough. Feelings are so deep and have been hurt so badly, that I have to prove that there's been some change and I'm not going to cause you any more pain. When there has been some transformation in the self, then the other person will also be ready to forgive.

When the other person is not ready to forgive you, the only possibility at that moment is to let go and step away. From their side there's rejection because their mind and heart are just not open. Let there be peace in your heart and positivity in your mind, and maybe with time, hearts will heal and the minds will be open.

When it comes to forgiving others - do I have the authority and the right to forgive? The world is actually based on law. Everything moves in a pattern, which is absolutely right. We might see disharmony and disorder, however this is not part of the whole scene. Things settle and resolve and get back to a state of order, harmony and justice. So, my forgiving you is really for my own healing and the healing of the relationship, but I don't really have the authority or the power to forgive you. The law of cause and effect is absolute, so whether somebody forgives or not, the outcome will be sorted out in the right way.

There's an expression that, 'God is able to forget my past but am I able to forget my past?' God, the compassionate Parent gives unconditional love, forgiving and forgetting the past. With the recognition of being a child of God, I'm fully open to God's healing power.

To forget is to let the past belong to the past instead of bringing it back into the present. By learning to put a full stop in my own mind to the past, there is the possibility of creating a better future. To let go, forgive and forget, I need power. I can gain inner power by connecting with the Divine. By focusing and drawing on that strength, I'm able to lead my mind in the right direction and create a peaceful state within.

We need the art of forgiveness in our world. Our future depends on it.

Sister Jayanti

# Actions speak LOUDER than words

How is it possible that a group of people and their communities, singled out solely because of their belief system, sustained violence and discrimination in all areas of their lives, sacrificed their freedom, allowed their dear ones to be annihilated, yet remain firm in their beliefs without the desire to retaliate?

This is exactly what happened to me, my family and my fellow Bahá'ís in Iran. The persecution and execution of the Bahá'ís has been going on since the inception of the Faith in the Nineteenth Century.

In order to have an insight into this possibility, I suggest one must consider the gems present in the holy teachings of all the religions of the world whose foundation is based on spirituality and a strong belief in a loving Creator – God!

Among the many virtues and attributes pertaining unto God mentioned in the heavenly books are: Trustworthiness, Forbearance, Patience and Forgiveness.

According to the various Holy Scriptures, God has created humans in His image and likeness. That is to say, the perfections of God and the divine virtues are reflected or revealed in the human reality.

Abdu'l-Baha, the son of the prophet founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Baha'u'llah (The Glory of God), tells us: *“Just as the light and effulgence of the sun when cast upon a polished mirror are reflected fully, gloriously, so, likewise, the qualities and attributes of Divinity are radiated from the depths of a pure human heart. This is an evidence that man is the most noble of God’s creatures.”* [1]

As a third generation Bahá'í, I know that any positive changes to the world of humanity starts from the individual and if I wish to influence the transition from darkness to light, first I need to change myself so that I may be able to reflect the attributes of God latent in my heart.

I believe that: *“People have grown weary and impatient of rhetoric and discourse, of preaching and sermonizing. In this day, the one thing that can deliver the world from its travail and attract the hearts of its peoples is deeds, not words; example, not precept; saintly virtues, not statements and charters issued by governments and nations on socio-political affairs. In all matters, great or small, word must be the complement of deed, and deed the companion of word: each must supplement, support and reinforce the other.”* [2]

So when we are asked: *“Recognize your enemies as friends, and consider those who wish you evil as the wishers of good.”* [3], believing that actions speak louder than words and wishing to make this world a better place for this and future generations, I strain every nerve to translate them into reality.

Vision of a glorious future coupled with complete reliance on the bounties of the All Mighty, has been the guiding light on this journey of translation: *“...if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not troubled thereby. Rely upon God and the Lord of thy fathers...”* [4]

True forgiveness involves looking at humanity through the eyes of its creator: *“You must not see evil and then compromise with your own opinion. For to treat in a smooth, kindly way whom you consider evil or an enemy is hypocrisy, this is not worthy or allowable...”* [3]

Granted, it's a tall order! However, the act of forgiveness not only brings much joy to one's soul, it also has a great deal of influence on the health of the body. When one forgives the wrongdoings of others one's sense of peace permeates all one's daily associations and activities.

As forgiveness has in reality to do with the conduct of two individuals towards each other, it brings people together in unity and harmony and can provide the foundation of a just society.

However, *“the constitution of the communities depends upon justice, not upon forgiveness... If one person assaults another, the injured one should forgive him. But the communities must protect the rights of man.”* [5]

The drive to create just societies has been among the fundamental forces in history and in any system of governance, and a strong judicial function is necessary to protect the individual and deliver justice.

As we live in an ever-increasing interdependent world, the interests of the individuals and society are inextricably intertwined not only at the community but also at the global level. Therefore, there is an increasing desire by the world governments to establish a foundation for a strengthened World Court.

Suffice to say that during the periods of oppression that has been part of my life, the Bahá'ís of the world awakened the international community to the plight of the individual sufferers in Iran, and as a direct result of the interventions of the United Nations Commission of Human Rights and resolutions passed by many of the powerful nations, lives have been saved and many positive changes realised.

On a personal level, what I've managed to achieve by forgiveness has been to raise a family without the scorn of hatred, who love humanity and work tirelessly to make this world a better place for all of us!

Mahzad Mazloomian

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 69

[2] Shoghi Effendi, A Chaste and Holy Life, p. 17

[3] Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p453

[4] Baha'u'llah, The Tablet of Ahmad

[5] Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, p. 270

# God's Forgiveness

*Said Rabbi Akiva: Happy are you, Israel. Before whom are you made clean and who makes you clean? Your father in heaven...*

(Mishnah Yoma 8:9)

Rabbi Akiva lived in the second century of the Christian era and was no doubt aware that the view he expressed was very different from that of the Christian scriptures, where we read: *'the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins'*

(Matthew 9:6).

For the Jew, that sense of being forgiven, of letting go of the past, is part of the relationship with God. Forgiveness comes from God and is a result of a process of contrition and recompense on the part of the sinner. The process begins with repentance, in Hebrew *teshuvah*. Martin Buber called repentance in Judaism "the decisive turning point in a man's life". That God looks for and accepts the truly penitent is an idea frequently found in the Hebrew prophets: for example, Malachi 3: 7:

*Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the Lord of Hosts*

In rabbinic tradition, in order to repent, the penitent should first seek to make amends for what he has done wrong: a thief must give back what he has stolen: if somebody has caused injury, he must pay for the medical treatment. The idea of making amends is a basic prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins committed against other people. But it is not always so easy to make amends;

*Whoever causes the multitude to be righteous, through him no sin shall be brought about; but he who causes the multitude to sin shall not have the means to repent.*

(Mishnah Avot 5:21)

This quotation is about community leaders. If one of them does wrong, there is no simple way to put it right. It would be unjust if he were able to repent while those he has led astray are still held responsible for the wrong he has taught them.

When a person has made amends to the one he or she has wronged, the next stage is to repent and confess sins before God. This process is particularly associated with *Yom Kippur*, the Jewish fast day and Day for Atonement which takes place in the autumn. In the Jewish calendar, this day comes as the culmination of a period of searching and repentance: the days immediately leading up to and including *Yom Kippur* are known as the "Ten Days of Penitence", and these ten days begin with *Rosh HaShanah*, the Jewish New Year. The idea is that prior repentance and the public confession on *Yom Kippur* itself absolves from sins against God: when the sin is against other people, restitution is also a necessary prerequisite. Through this process comes that sense of reconciliation and contrition which we call "forgiveness".

If people are to be so easily forgiven, will they not be tempted to act rashly? The rabbis thought of this difficulty, and answered as follows:

*If somebody said "I will sin and repent, and sin again and repent," he will be given no opportunity to repent. [If he said,] "I will sin and Yom Kippur will effect atonement," then Yom Kippur effects no atonement.*

*For transgressions that are between man and God Yom Kippur effects atonement, but for transgressions that are between man and man Yom Kippur effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow...*

(Mishnah Yoma 8: 9)

This is part of the last paragraph in *Yoma*, the section of the Mishnah about *Yom Kippur*, the Day for Atonement. The first statement here shows the concern of the rabbis that the day should not be regarded as an automatic path to absolution: the public confessions uttered on that day are to be regarded as important, but not sufficient in themselves: otherwise, somebody might think about this in advance and do something wrong, on the assumption that he could make up for it afterwards.

Forgiveness, in the sense of letting go of anger and resentment, is to be seen as part of this systematic process of repentance: forgiveness comes from God, as the Book of Leviticus states in connection with *Yom Kippur*:

*For on that day.... from all your sins before the Lord you shall be clean.*

(Leviticus 16: 30)

In recent years many arguments have taken place about the question of forgiveness for the Holocaust. Some Christian groups have come to Jews and asked for forgiveness, and Jews have replied, in accordance with our tradition, that they can forgive things done to them personally, but they have no power to forgive on behalf of people who have died.

Rabbi Albert Friedlander has written of his experiences at a conference in Nuremberg where he had spoken about Auschwitz:

*A young girl rushed up to me after the lecture. "Rabbi," she said, "I wasn't there, but can you forgive me?" and we embraced and cried together. Then an older man approached me. "Rabbi," he said, "I was a guard at a concentration camp. Can you forgive me?" I looked at him. "No", I said, "I cannot forgive. It is not the function of rabbis to give absolution.....In Judaism, there is a 10-day period of Penitence, between the New Year and the Day of Atonement, when we try to go to any person whom we have wronged, and ask for forgiveness. But you cannot go to the six million. They are dead, and I cannot speak for them...."*

The rabbinic analysis of the kind of attitudes which block the path back to God is profound. Judaism, in its emphasis that forgiveness comes from God, does not permit us to forgive on behalf of somebody else who has been wronged: Christianity explicitly and clearly has given priests that function. These are different perspectives which we must understand, because they cannot be harmonised.

Rabbi Dr. Michael Hilton

# The hand of Forgiveness

In 1995 Azim Khamisa's only son, Tariq a 20-year-old student was shot and killed while delivering pizzas in San Diego. His killer, Tony Hicks, became the first 14-year-old to stand trial as an adult in the state of California. He received a 25-year prison sentence. Azim, alongside Tony's grandfather and guardian, Ples Felix, now devotes much of his time to promoting the vision of the Tariq Khamisa Foundation an organization committed to stopping children from killing children.

## AZIM KHAMISA

When I got the phone call saying that Tariq was dead I kind of left my body, because the pain was too much to bear. It was like a nuclear bomb going off inside my heart. There was no solace to be found in my mind and so, as a Sufi Muslim, I turned to my faith. For the next few weeks I survived through prayer and was quickly given the blessing of forgiveness, reaching the conclusion there were victims at both ends of the gun.

Tariq's killer had the face of a child. He was 14 years old and belonged to a street gang called the Black Mob. His gang name was Bone.

In my faith, on the fortieth day after a death you are encouraged to channel your grief into good compassionate deeds: deeds which provide high octane fuel for the soul's forward journey. Forty days is not a long time to grieve for a child, but one of my motivations for starting the Tariq Khamisa Foundation was to create spiritual currency for my son, as well as to give myself a sense of purpose.

Simultaneously, I reached out to Ples Felix, the grandfather and guardian of Tony Hicks. The first time I met Ples I told him that I felt no animosity towards his grandson. Ples was quick to take the offered hand of forgiveness.

We are very different: I wear a pin-striped suit, and he has hair down to his waist. But from the moment we met we have been like brothers. We share a common purpose. We believe that in every crime there is an opportunity to improve society by learning how to prevent that crime from happening again. Tariq was a victim of Tony, but Tony was a victim of American society and society is a mirror image of each and every one of us. What gives me hope is the fact that when Ples and I give talks in school, you can see the metamorphosis as the kids are moved by our story.

Five years after the tragedy I met Tony. It was a very healing time. I found him very likeable, well mannered and remorseful. I told him that when he got out of prison there would be a job waiting for him at the Tariq Khamisa Foundation.

You do forgiveness for yourself, because it moves you on. The fact that it can also heal the perpetrator is the icing on the cake. Tony is studying in prison now, and I know we will save him. In return, Tony will go on to save thousands of other children. I have recently written a letter to our Governor to commute Tony's sentence.



## PLES FELIX

Tony is my daughter's only child. He grew up on the violent streets of south LA, and at eight years old witnessed the murder of his cousin. Seeing that he was becoming increasingly exposed to gang life, my daughter proposed that he come and live with me. I welcomed the opportunity to bring up Tony in San Diego as my own son. He had been living with me for five years before the tragedy occurred.

Things had started off okay, but by seventh grade Tony was hanging out with much older kids who were leading him astray. The night before the shooting I told him he wouldn't be able to go out that weekend if he didn't do his homework. The next day I found a note saying, "I've run away, love Tony." My shotgun was also missing. Having reported Tony a runaway, I sat and watched a news report about a pizza delivery man who'd been shot and killed in North Park.

Two days later I traced Tony and alerted the Police. That afternoon I got a call from a homicide detective saying, "Mr. Felix, your grandson is no longer considered a runaway. He is now the prime suspect in a murder inquiry." All the emotions hit me. I felt anger, shame and tremendous loss. I also felt guilt because I was Tony's guardian and responsible for his behavior.

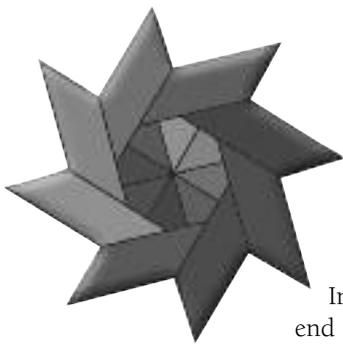
Tony was angry: angry about abuse and abandonment, about living with a strict grandfather. He had tried to medicate this anger with drugs and drink. Later he told me that on that fateful night he'd been hanging around with older gang members. When a pizza delivery man turned up and refused to hand over a pizza without payment, one of the older kids shouted, "Bust him, Bone" and Tony pulled the trigger.

From the moment he was taken into custody to the day before he appeared for sentencing, Tony maintained a false bravado. But when he met with his attorney he was warned that, in light of the evidence, there'd be serious consequences if he pleaded "not guilty".

It was then that I urged Tony to take responsibility for his actions, to minimize the pain and harm he'd done to the Khamisa family. He broke down and cried. "I'm so sorry, Daddy" he sobbed. I held him and tried to console him.

The next day everyone was expecting a plea of "not guilty", but Tony gave a very remorseful and emotional speech in which he pleaded guilty and asked for Mr. Khamisa's forgiveness.

When the three of us met in prison it was probably hardest for Azim. At the end, after Azim had left, Tony said, "That is a very special man. I shot and killed his one and only son and yet he can sit with me, encourage me, and then offer me a job".



# Reflections on 3 year trusteeship of URI Global

URI

The Second Global Trustees' Council of the United Religions Initiative convened in Seoul at the end of June to celebrate the five year anniversary of the signing of the Charter in Pittsburgh USA and plan its future. It soon "got down to business". It proved not to be "business as usual". That became startlingly clear from the moment that the immediate past Trustees withdrew from the inner circle of decision-making chairs – to be replaced by new (2005-2008) Trustees elected by the Co-operation Circles of each region. The election of the new Trustee Council's Office Bearers saw a major shift of the centre of gravity for the URI. Decision-making power moved from the San Francisco personnel towards the whole international body of Trustees. Take the new chairperson for example. Yoland Trevino was nominated by European Trustees and by the indigenous Trustee from Latin America, She has indigenous roots as well as strong connections with Spanish-speaking South Americans and with the Indian sub-Continent.

Such election results were definitely not expected. Our first three years of life as Trustees has been a fast-track experience of personal, communal and institutional growth: a bumpy roller-coaster ride not always pleasurable. Now we were experiencing even more: a substantial and swift INTERNATIONALIZATION of the Network.

For their part the San Francisco Trustees and salaried staff have borne the burden and heat of the establishment of the earliest phase of the network. It was amongst them that the vision of a United Religions had first arisen. It was from their spirit that the large hospitality of those earlier days arose. Thus initial URI international participants and planners were able to stream in to events at Stanford and Pittsburgh. Over time there has been a steady growth in the development of Co-operation Circles around the world. There has been a corresponding growing energy and decisiveness amongst the Global Trustees as they

experienced regional work amongst themselves. This progress has been accompanied by an emerging desire for a better balance of powers between the Trustees as an international whole and the San Francisco 'hub'. By saying 'NO' to the continuation of the status quo, the new international trustee Council immediately manifested its determination to govern and to be the drivers of its second three years.

This is not a split between URI of the third and developing world, and the URI of the first world but a natural progression as those on the ground become the 'working party' rather than merely 'advisors' to an administrative base.

Perhaps this discussion of the insider activities of the URI, newest Inter Faith Network on the Block, may seem irrelevant in the context of the huge and vengeful violations tearing wider society apart. As I began this article, banner headlines in the New Zealand media were reporting the bombings in London. Immediately six Auckland mosques suffered damage and graffiti. On Sunday July 10 the anniversary of another bombing - by French Government agents - was commemorated. The Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior*, blown up at its Auckland Harbour berth twenty years ago had been subsequently towed to the exquisite Matakauri Bay and sunk there. Today a statue was unveiled on shore by the daughter of a crew member who was killed by the explosion.

As these convulsions reveal their intimate and complex interconnectedness, there is a growing conviction amongst civic leaders and the general population: interfaith co-operation could make a vital contribution to probing and healing the deep and self-inflicted wounds of global and local society. At the heart of such inter-Faith networking for co-operation must lie integrity through every part of its manifold organisational cultures. We as URI must ourselves practise the peace love and justice that we preach. We must BE the change that we wish to see in the world.

George Armstrong

Maori is one of the two official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand

*Ko tau rourou,  
ko taku rorou,  
ka makona tatou  
Maori whakatauki  
(proverb)*

*"With my basket, and with your  
basket, we can feed  
the multitude"*

## The Cry of a deprived African child

Poem

What I need is  
the roof of a father's house to nurture and shelter my dreams;  
the gentle pat of a mother's hand to take my mind away from my aches;  
the friendly shaking of hands to demonstrate that we are all brothers and sisters.

What I need is  
a beaker of water to quench my thirst;  
a slice of yam to calm my hunger;  
a yard of cotton cloth to cover my nakedness.

What I need is  
a nivaquin tablet to ward off malaria;  
a paraffin lamp for my home chores to be done in the light;  
a smile on every face to make this world a happier place.

What I need is  
a classroom where I shall learn arithmetic;  
a blackboard for my teacher to use;  
a piece of chalk to illustrate my thoughts.

I do not need  
your long palavers – which, by the way, are beyond my understanding, and which postpone unity until tomorrow,  
decent housing until tomorrow,  
schooling for all until tomorrow,  
health care until tomorrow,  
a decent transport network until tomorrow,  
justice...  
peace...  
social reform...  
happiness until tomorrow.

What I need is  
all that...  
today!

**Cri Etriangle'**

This poem is dedicated by the Gabonese author, Louis Marie Armel Ikapi Pombo to the children of the Third World.

Cited: Father Sky, Mother Earth: A faith traditions liturgical reader Edited & published by Daniel Faivre SG 2004  
Tel. 020 8843 0690 [brotherdaniel@faivre.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:brotherdaniel@faivre.freereserve.co.uk)

“love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness”

- Freud

Spirituality is seldom discussed in the work place. At best, it is relegated to Diversity Workshops, under the heading ‘respect for differences’. In the West of Scotland, spirituality is immediately connected with religion. Asking someone about their spiritual practice, would be considered a loaded question. Which is a great pity, because spirituality needn’t be about religion at all. One dictionary defines spiritual as ‘having a mind or emotions of a high and delicately refined quality’. Many organisations would like to hire employees with highly refined minds and as we shall see, highly refined emotions are prized these days too.

Good staff are hard to find these days. Employees are a major investment and getting the right people in the workplace is essential. Organisations are becoming increasingly sophisticated in defining the qualities and abilities of the ideal employee. First class honours degrees and excellent technical skills, will no longer ensure that you’re hired and being hired is only the start. Employers are looking for something more and they’re turning to various psychological theories and models to give them answers.

One model widely used in the business is ‘Psychological Types’, based on Carl Jung’s personality preferences. He identified that people have different preferences in how they think, how they make decisions, how they take in information and how they are energised. His work was further developed by two psychologists - Myers & Briggs. They developed a personality-profiling questionnaire (Myers Briggs Type Inventory – MBTI). This questionnaire identifies 16 different personality types. The MBTI is widely used in organisations around the world today, particularly with management teams. As a tool for explaining the different ways which people think, feel and communicate, it is invaluable in helping to raise awareness of how people act at work, and to increase understanding of why they act that way

A different personality model, the Enneagram, identifies 9 types. It proposes that people have one of 3 distinct approaches to life – head, heart or gut. One of these aspects of our personality will be dominant and we will approach the world from this stance. Head types will rely on their thinking skills. Heart types, their feelings and emotions. Gut types will rely on instinct. To some extent, peoples’ preferences may influence their career choices. Having a feeling preference

# Wisdom

may draw someone to the caring professions, whilst a thinking preference, may draw someone to analytical work. Many people find themselves in careers which don’t fit with their preferences and can struggle to find meaning and job satisfaction.

Daniel Goleman’s ‘Emotional Intelligence’, has become an accepted concept in organisations in the last 10 years. Goleman’s book, *Emotional Intelligence – Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, sold 5 million copies in 30 languages. His findings indicated that IQ (Intelligence Quotient), contributes to 20 percent of the factors that determine life success. EQ (Emotional Intelligence), he claimed, was more important. According to Goleman, EQ includes “other characteristics” such as being able to motivate one self, being able to persist in the face of frustration, to control impulse and delay gratification, to regulate one’s moods, to empathise and to hope. Businesses around the world have adopted his concept. The language of compassion, empathy and wisdom became acceptable in the workplace. Organisations should hire for EQ, Goleman said. IQ is no longer enough. IQ is about thinking, EQ is about feeling. He argued that businesses needed both.

Focusing on behaviours and emotions, still doesn’t take spiritual beliefs and practices into account. Spiritual wisdom goes beyond hearts and minds: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;*” (Luke 27-28).

The Kabbalah Tree of Life, is far more encompassing with its 10 aspects of the being human, including:

<b>Yesod:</b>	subconscious feelings,
<b>Hod:</b>	intellect, reason, logic
<b>Netzach:</b>	feeling, emotion
<b>Tiphereth:</b>	appreciation of a power greater than man and open-mindedness.

The Tree of Life could be used as the basis for a leadership development programme. Models of spiritual development could be an addition to an MBA programme. Strength and soul are beginning to gain more prominence. The positive psychology movement, with its focus on ‘happiness’ has identified values, virtues, strengths and character, as fundamental aspects of personality. Spirit too, is becoming more mainstream. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ), had been defined by Danah Zohar as:

*“the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context, the*

# at Work

*intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life-path is more meaningful than another."*

Zohar's definition could easily be read in the context of a job advertisement for a strategic leadership position:

*"the right candidate will have the intelligence to solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence to place the actions of the company into a wider, richer, meaning-giving context, the intelligence to assess that one course of action or one path for the organisation, is more meaningful than another".*

Spiritual intelligence (SI) can be developed through learning, experiencing and persevering with a spiritual practice – whatever that may be. As with the development of any intelligence, there is a progression from novice to expert, with many stages in between. The pinnacle of Spiritual intelligence is wisdom. In many businesses there is a lot of focus on knowledge, less so on wisdom. Perhaps businesses need more wisdom and less knowledge.

The explosion of technology in the last decade had brought with it the concept of "Knowledge Management". This has meant capturing the information in peoples' heads, documenting it, logging it on computers so that it can be followed by any one of thousands of employees. In addition to capturing and copying existing knowledge, businesses need people who can draw on their inner wisdom and create new knowledge. You can't manage wisdom, nor computerise it.

## ***Wisdom is a scarce and precious commodity***

There is a danger that businesses are developing followers rather than leaders. The quest to computerise knowledge has enabled a generation of workers to follow an algorithm. The consequence of this is that there is a decline in the number of workers who are able to solve problems for themselves when the system fails.

Wisdom is a scarce and precious commodity. The wise leader has a rich inner resource on which to draw. Spiritual practices teach compassion and encourage serving others. Spiritual intelligence leads to increased intuitive ability. Listening to inner wisdom, is a feature of discernment, which is a key quality of enhanced decision making. Wisdom is needed at work.

A knowledgeable leader may have all the answers. The wise leader is likely to have more questions than answers. Spiritual Intelligence develops the ability to cope with change and uncertainty. Even traditional and highly structured religious practices, celebrate an element of mystery. Living with uncertainty and ambiguity are necessary competencies in today's turbulent working environment. Leaders who can

inspire others to thrive in this environment are essential in the world of work today. Any form of spiritual practice is an excellent preparation for developing this attribute. Being able to accept that we cannot know everything and to let go of the need for certainty leads to more creative workplaces.

Embracing spiritual development has much to offer the world of work. Psychologists are now beginning to encourage this. Martin Seligman, prominent figure in the Positive Psychology movement, has identified that people have signature strengths. These strengths are more than personality traits, they are strengths and virtues, which are timeless and applicable to any culture.

Seligman points out that psychology may have neglected virtues, but religion and philosophy have not. There is convergence and agreement across cultures and thousands of years about what constitutes virtues and strengths. Seligman studied Confucius, Aristotle, Aquinas, the Bushido, Samurai code, The Bhagavad-Gita and many more. They may disagree on the details, but all of the main spiritual practices include the following core virtues.

- Wisdom and knowledge
- Courage
- Love and Humanity
- Justice
- Temperance
- Spirituality and Transcendence

Freud's famous quote that "love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness," has been echoed by Seligman. He suggests that in order to achieve happiness, people should find love and work, which uses their signature strengths everyday. A happier and contented workforce is a more productive workforce than a disgruntled workforce. A happier population is good for individuals, organisations and society.

Organisations will always seek an alchemist's formula for enhancing their management practices. We may witness a move to business wisdom, rather than business management. Spiritual teachings and practices have much to offer corporate life, and business ethics are higher on the corporate agenda post Enron. Perhaps if more leaders develop their strengths, virtues and character, we may see increased honesty, more hope and raised levels of happiness in the world of work.

Monica Smith

From my bathroom window, I can see the point upon the hill behind our home, where the spring arises that supplies our household with water. From the hill, the spring water flows to a catch box, then to a holding tank, and on to our taps. When it has washed our skin, our dishes and our clothes, mopped up our spills and rehydrated our bodies, what remains flows down the drains, is purified in the septic tank, and trickles out into the burn that runs beside the house. The burn flows into the river, the river into the firth, the firth into the sea and the sea into the ocean. Under the heat of the sun and the caress of the winds, some of the ocean's waters evaporate into the air and are blown along in the Gulf Stream, condensing as they go into droplets, mist, clouds; the clouds shed themselves over the land, and some of the water falls onto the hill behind our home, sinks deep into the earth, and arises in the spring which supplies our household with water.

In Pagan traditions, the symbolic attributes of the elements – earth, air, fire and water, woven together into life by the fifth element, aether (or spirit) – are directly related to their physical attributes or actions; symbols, yet not separate in any way from that which they symbolise. The somewhat poetic description above of the journey that our household's water takes in its never-ending cycle demonstrates two of the principal aspects of water in many Pagan traditions – flowing and connection. Our household is intimately connected with all of the life – mineral, vegetable and animal – along the flow of this water, not only in a symbolic way, but in the direct impacts that the water, and everything added to or taken from that water by any of the life along its path, has on all of the life along its path.

So, water both demonstrates and symbolises flowing and connection. This leads directly to its association with emotions, which ebb and flow like the tide, and arise through our connection with others – our relationships. Water is associated most particularly with love. On the cosmic level, love flows between, connects and joins all beings in ecstatic union with the source of all life and the ground of being – in the traditions of Wicca and Witchcraft, the Goddess. On the personal level, love brings that union and ecstasy into our human experience through our intimate relationships. The Goddess proclaims: “All acts of love and pleasure are my rituals”<sup>i</sup>.

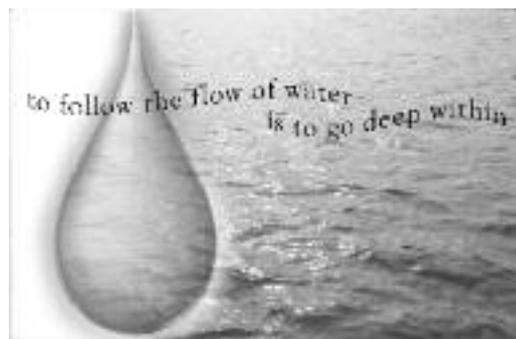
Our bodies are made up mostly of water – between 60 and 80%. We must regularly take water in, and use it to clean our bodies, to maintain our health, so it should come as no surprise to find that water, in many Pagan traditions, is associated with healing. This association comes both through healing wells and springs, and through the visualisation of water in cleansing the subtle energy body, which is as important in most Pagan traditions as the physical body.

Another attribute, both physical and symbolic, of water, is its receptivity. Throw a stone into water and it is swallowed up; pour a liquid into water, and the two will almost always mix. Water receives and accommodates. The cup, the physical tool associated with water in both Wiccan and Druid traditions, is also

# Flowing and Connecting

receptive, and adds the aspect of sharing – when water and its qualities are contained, they can be carried to where they are needed, and shared.

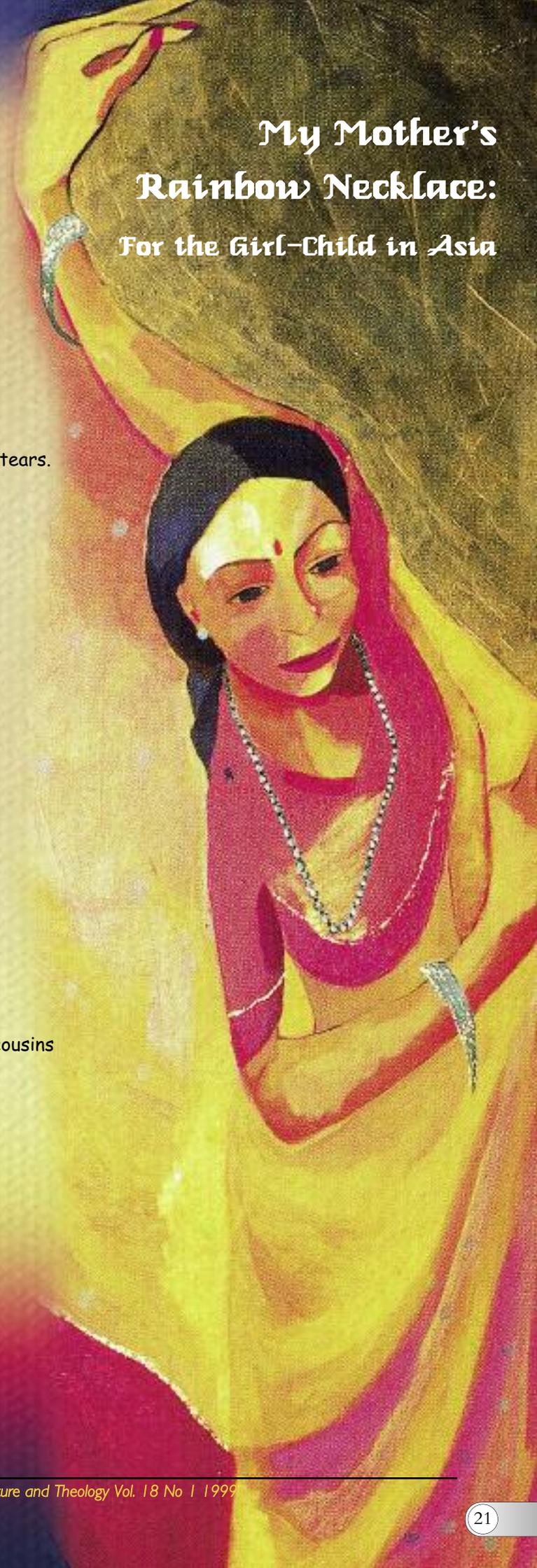
This cup is often linked to the Grail, an ancient European symbol of Divine grace and love, later given a Christian context and a literary mystique by the Medieval Arthurian romances. The first question which must be asked on sighting the Grail is, “Whom does the Grail serve?”; but the second, which, just as it is never stated explicitly in the Grail stories may never consciously occur to us, is, “How can I serve the Grail?”<sup>ii</sup>. Those who are willing consciously to receive Divine grace and love, joy and the ecstasy of union, must also be willing consciously to share what they receive, and to put their skills and powers into the service of the Divine – which in Pagan traditions, in which the Divine is immanent in all life, means service of humans and animals of all kinds, of plant life and of the whole sacred earth.



One of the qualities developed in working with the element of water in inner spiritual practice is the ability “to dare”. It can take great daring to serve the immanent Divine in a time and a place in which the deep and intimate connection between all beings is, explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously, denied. Another important quality required to begin the path of service, and one which is also symbolically supplied by the element of water, is wisdom – the wisdom to know when one can serve better by words and when by silence, when by action and when by stillness, when by giving and when by receiving. This wisdom is not the knowledge sought and worked for by the mind, but the intuition and inner knowing received in the heart and gut, made possible by the interconnection and flow between all things.

Flowing, connection, love, union, healing, receptivity, wisdom; all of these attributes are part of the symbolic and the physical element of water in Pagan traditions, available to all who seek them when they are willing to undertake the inner work required for their attainment. For water is also the vastness of the ocean, symbol in so many Western spiritual traditions both of the unconscious and of utter union with Divine love. Most of all, completely to follow the flow of water is to go deep within, and open fully to the Source.

*Swift Bright Flame*



## My Mother's Rainbow Necklace: For the Girl-Child in Asia

Why did my mother cry  
When I was born?

I felt her tears baptise me,  
Her arms gave me loving comfort,  
Her eyes cradled her pain and  
The pain of my Grandmother.  
I remember my mother's tears

When I was five I heard my brothers say:  
"She's only a girl!"  
"She's just a nobody!"  
I heard my mother cry again.

But I also remember the rainbow in my mother's tears.  
It glistened with the colours of love,  
It promised me the strength to strive,  
It gave me the gift of Life,  
It moved me into healing space.

Do you see the rainbow hues  
That nestle among the tear-drops?  
Will you celebrate my mother's necklace of tears  
With love?  
Do you see the threads of healing love  
That bind the tear-drops together?  
Will your girl-child tears also baptise the world  
Into rainbow hues?

I am only a girl.  
But I am a **SOMEBODY** today!  
I have an identity that is uniquely mine.

I celebrate my mother's tears  
As a necklace of nurturing love.  
I celebrate her gift to me:  
The precious gift of life.  
I celebrate all girl-children  
Whose mothers, grandmothers, sisters and girl-cousins  
Hold up half the sky!  
I celebrate **GOD** -  
The **GOD** of the girl-child,  
In whose Image I am made!

I wear my mother's rainbow necklace  
With pride.  
Glistening in the colours of Love,  
Shimmering in the dance of Life.

I am.  
God is!

*Ranjini Wickramaratne-Rebera*

pope benedict xvi

## GAMEKEEPER turned PASTOR

As the Church's keeper of doctrinal correctness for more than a quarter of a century, he was the enforcer to John Paul II's communicator. Now he is Pope how will Benedict XVI face up to his fragmented flock?

WAS IT white or was it black? It looked grey and wispy at first and indistinct against the leaden sky but it was getting whiter and stronger with every second. The promised bells were not sounding but the smoke was enough to send people rushing towards St Peter's Square. Tourists, Roman families, nuns and priests dashed down the Via della Conciliazione to the piazza to join the many thousands already in the square. The smoke was still pouring out of the narrow chimney perched on the tiled roof of the Sistine Chapel and now it was unmistakably white.

"Habemus Papam", one young Brazilian priest shouted, and some 15 minutes later he was proved right when the great bells of St Peter's began to sound. On the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, the senior cardinal deacon - Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez stepped forward to confirm "Habemus Papam". The first discernible name he spoke was "Joseph". It was then that the crowd - and the world - knew. Joseph Ratzinger, prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), the man who had worked beside John Paul II for more than 20 years, now stepped on to the balcony to give his first blessing - *Urbi et Orbi* - to the city and the world.

While many in the crowds in St Peter's Square roared and cheered their approval, their views were not universally shared. Joseph Ratzinger has a reputation as a fierce and divisive figure - someone who as prefect of the CDF did not hesitate to censure or excommunicate individuals deemed to have strayed from the straight and narrow doctrinal path. To many, his soubriquets - the Iron or Panzer Cardinal, God's rottweiler, were apt.

But by choosing him, the cardinal-electors signalled they were unfazed by this reputation and elevated a man widely recognised as one of the finest theologians of his generation and one of Pope John Paul's most senior and trusted advisers, while at the Pope's funeral he also revealed a pastoral side.

As Dean of the College of Cardinals, he had presided at John Paul II's requiem, then the daily general congregations of cardinals and finally the Conclave itself, which led to the swift decision of his peers that he was the man who should be pope. According to one report, he had intervened as many as five times during the congregations to suggest, to warn, to recommend, to repeat, to insist that the Cardinals do not speak to the media, even before the conclave with its strict vow of secrecy had begun. In the run-up to the conclave, secret meetings of cardinals were taking place to discuss personalities and strategies, although some of those from far-flung countries felt left out when they did not know who was meeting when and where and with whom. That isolation in turn raised



anxieties about whether some of the Africans or Asians might be left vulnerable to the curial lobbying for Ratzinger. The campaigning of those wanting a more progressive papal candidate was uncoordinated, and the Latin Americans, once rumoured to hold the future pope among their number, were hampered by not having the economic resources to come with secretaries or back-up teams. They had no organisation, no plan and no candidate. According to the Italian press, Cardinal Martini (Italy), who had returned to Rome from a retreat he was giving in the desert, found himself unwillingly drawn into the fray, as a stalking horse or *candidato di bandiera* to test out how much support there was for the agenda of the *riformisti* as opposed to the *integrismi* - terms which approximately correspond to progressives and conservatives. It seemed a good plan at the time and may have failed on the grounds that while they are both 78, Martini has Parkinson's and is now walking with a stick.

By Tuesday evening, groups such as We Are Church and individuals who have been admonished by Cardinal Ratzinger were voicing their shock and dismay at the election. His friends, however, believe that the new Pope has been much maligned. He is, they say, a genial and kindly professor. His biographer, the journalist John Allen, says he is "the most humble, gracious and un-careerist man you will ever meet". Certainly Cardinal Ratzinger has until now lived quietly and modestly. It was his habit to walk from his flat near St Anne's Gate outside the Vatican to his office across St Peter's Square. He does not drive or use a computer. He likes to set aside 15 minutes each afternoon to play the piano - Mozart and Beethoven are particular favourites.

Pope Benedict XVI was born on 16 April 1927 at Marktl am Inn in Germany. His father was a policeman and his family from traditional farming stock in Lower Bavaria. His was an early vocation but his studies for the priesthood were interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. As a teenage seminarian, his school enrolled him in the Hitler Youth Programme, though he records in his memoirs that he did not enjoy the meetings and stopped attending after a short time. In 1943 he was called up and served for a year in the auxiliary anti-aircraft service which tracked Allied bombardments. He spent some time in an American prisoner-of-war camp at the end of the war.

From 1946 he was able to resume his studies and was

ordained in 1951. He received a doctorate and a licentiate in theology from the University of Munich with a thesis entitled: 'The People and the House of God in St Augustine's doctrine of the Church'. He qualified as a university teacher in 1957, and went on to hold teaching posts at a number of universities including Tübingen from 1966-69 where he was also dean. Cardinal Ratzinger had a reputation as a progressive at Tübingen where he worked alongside the Swiss theologian, Hans Küng. Both were chosen by the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne, Joseph Frings, to be consulters at the Second Vatican Council. A turning point in Ratzinger's thinking seems to have occurred during the student revolt at Tübingen in 1968, the violence of which horrified him. He moved to the University of Regensburg where he remained until 1977.

By then Cardinal Ratzinger was a highly regarded theologian who had published several major books, the best-known being *Introduction to Christianity* - a collection of university lessons on the profession of apostolic faith. He had been a member of the International Theological Commission since 1969. Eight years later, Pope Paul VI appointed him Archbishop of Munich and Freising and a year later he was made a cardinal.

It was around this time that Ratzinger denounced Hans Küng for questioning papal infallibility. Küng lost his licencship to teach at a Catholic university and his professorship at Tübingen. "The Christian believer is a simple person: bishops should protect the faith of these little people against the power of intellectuals," said Ratzinger in a sermon on 31 December 1979.

But it was under the next pontificate that he attained a position of real influence in the Church. Cardinal Ratzinger had got to know the future pope - when both were members of the world-wide Synod of Bishops that advises the Pope. John Paul II made him Prefect of the CDF in 1981 and the next 23 years cemented Ratzinger's reputation as a stern upholder of doctrinal correctness. A succession of theologians found themselves silenced or excommunicated. The latest was

earlier this year, a Jesuit, Roger Haight, was banned from teaching Catholic theology after writing a book which appeared to question the divinity of Jesus.

The future pope's concerns about what he considers the wayward trends in modern culture were well illustrated in his homily at the Mass '*Pro Eligendo Romano Pontefice*', or the Mass for the election of the next pope at St Peter's Basilica, when he delivered a litany of 'isms' to be resisted including Marxism, liberalism, radical individualism, atheism and a 'vague religious mysticism'.

At the Mass Cardinal Ratzinger appeared to be suffering from a cold, coughing occasionally and sounding hoarse. There was one report earlier in the year that he suffers from blackouts but, at a time when wild rumours about the health of cardinals have been circulating, it is impossible to determine whether it should be taken seriously. What is well attested is that in September 1991, he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage that affected his left field of vision. The following August he fell against a radiator, was knocked unconscious and lost a lot of blood. Perhaps after the long and eventful tenure of John Paul II, Benedict XVI will be a pope of transition.

## How will the enforcer get on without the great communicator?

Of his predecessor's greatness, Pope Benedict is not in doubt. The two were close and met weekly to discuss the state of the Church. A Vatican official said once they were two pieces of a puzzle. So now we are left with the one piece. How will the enforcer get on without the great communicator? Will we have an Iron Pope? The former Cardinal Ratzinger disliked his image. "I'm not the Grand Inquisitor," he once said. Now his actions more than his words will determine how he is judged as pope.

*Elena Curti and Margaret Hebblethwaite*

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Representatives of the world's main faith communities have proposed reshaping the approach to global interreligious dialogue to face threats posed by the current world situation. "Recasting interreligious dialogue as a practice of humility and hope offers a way of building greater trust" concluded participants in an international conference on a "critical moment in interreligious dialogue" convened by the Geneva-based **World Council of Churches** 7-9 June 2005.

"Together may we seize this critical moment and help transform its perils into a pilgrimage of faith that will guide us to a more just, compassionate and peaceful future" agreed the over-130 representatives from ten of the world's religious traditions involved in the event.

The conference outlined specific strategies which aim to shift the emphasis of interreligious relations from dialogue to common action, including new education and training programmes and exchanges. It enabled open discussion of divisive issues, notably those of religious violence and conversion, and called for repentance and humility that "opens a way to move from a dialogue of strangers to a dialogue of neighbours".

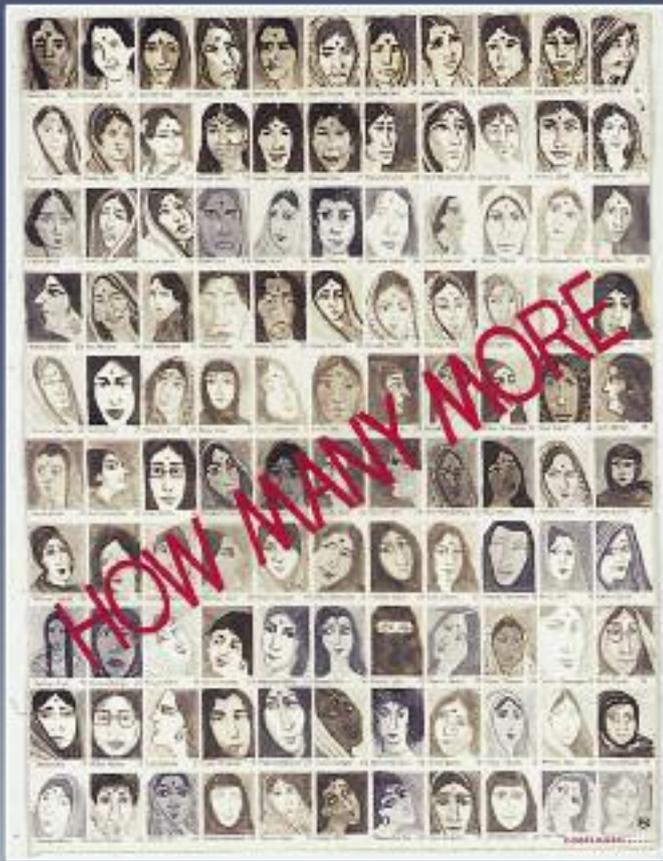
Referring to the conference as a "landmark event", the WCC leadership reiterated the strengthened commitment of the world wide fellowship of Christian churches to interfaith dialogue and understanding. "Dialogue with other faiths has become a core issue for the WCC" confirmed general secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia. "We can only be effective and successful in our search for hope if we work together...towards a better world in which all people may experience abundant life in dignity."

Please see [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)

## Humility and Hope

– ingredients for a relationship of trust.

Comments from Jeroo's Visitor's Book at exhibitions:



"Inspiring work. The images will encourage me to keep on with my HRV work. I am an experienced detective used to seeing death. The 'Production Line' reduced me to tears comparing the waste of female human life to the beauty and joy that my daughter brings to me."  
 Ian Pegington New Scotland Yard

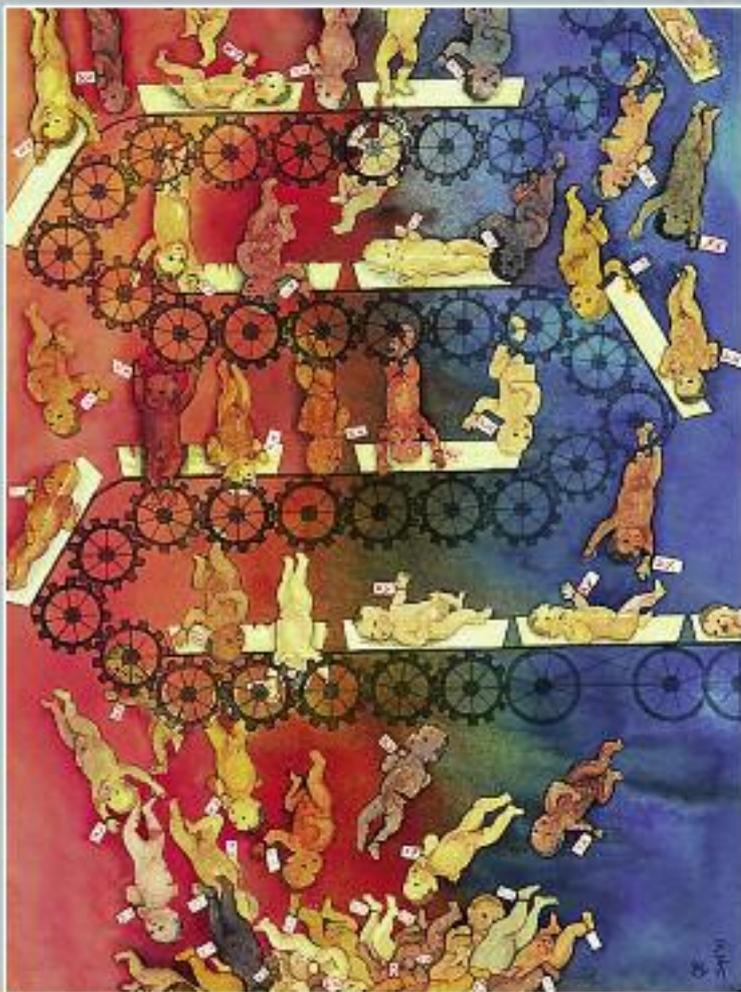
"Even brutal images, if they reveal a necessary truth, are inspirational!"  
 Mala Sen, author

"Very disturbing, as it should be. Art with a purpose."  
 Kamlesh Sharma, High Commissioner of India

"Your paintings touch my stomach, my heart and my brain, and gave me a remaining picture and feeling that will guide me in my future efforts. Thanks!"

Bam Bjorling of Kvinnoforum, Stockholm.

'How Many More' - Black and white ink and watercolour on handmade paper

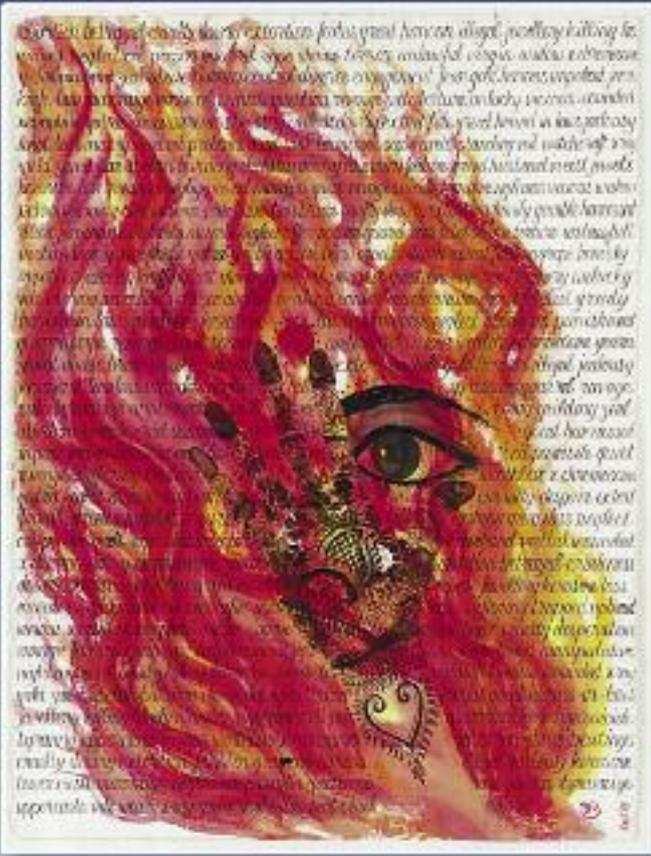


'The Production Line' - Acrylic on handmade paper

# a nec

I was not prepared for the profound emotion that I would feel on first viewing the paintings of Jeroo Roy. The subjects of her on-going exhibition "What Honour, Whose Honour?" are sensitive, challenging and heartrending, invoking feelings of sorrow, pity and anger. They portray an abuse against females at all stages of life, and convey the pain, suffering and powerlessness of women in a society where traditionally men have created rules and laws which subjugate women and perpetuate inequalities and social injustices.

A Parsee from Mumbai, India, now living in London, Jeroo found much of her inspiration for this series of paintings from a visit in 2003 to Kolkata, India. She visited members of women's organisations and heard extensively about the violence perpetrated against women at all levels of society, cast and creed. Violence such as dowry related deaths and female infanticide - where the birth of a girl child is often lamented or her life cut short. Though banned, the practice of ultrasound scanning is still commonplace to establish the gender of the unborn child, and so enable the abortion of the foetus if female. In cases where young brides are burned badly, or sometimes die, as the result of cooking/paraffin accidents, the crime is rarely investigated officially although



'When More is Less' - Acrylic on handmade paper



'Breaking Through' - Acrylic on canvas

# ecessary truth

it is widely accepted that the practice of dowry payments lies at the root – if the bride dies in the flames then another can be taken and a new dowry received. Dowry payment to the husband by the bride's family itself reflects the perceived inferiority of women.

These problems stem from the age-old established patriarchal society, bound by customs, religion, superstition and honour. This has a carried forward effect among the families of Asian women in this country, and various parts of the world where they have settled. Violence knows no boundaries.

The passion with which Jeroo Roy approaches her work is immediately apparent in the boldness and graphic detail of her

paintings. She shows great courage in tackling the taboo subjects and seeks only to raise awareness in those who may be ignorant of such brutality, and also to encourage victims of violence to speak out. Jeroo says "I have no desire to moralise or point a finger at anyone. My only aim is to create awareness in every individual who views the paintings. In the near future she or he may be instrumental in averting violence and another atrocity. It may be just a drop in the ocean, but neither can we sit still and do nothing."

Joy Hodder

## Suggested reading:

Mala Sen Pub. Death by Fire Phoenix 2002 isbn:0 75381 335 1  
Jan Goodwin Price of Honour Pub. Warner Books 1995 isbn: 0 7515 1286 9  
Ed. Monica Das Her Story So Far: tales of the girl child in India Pub. Penguin Books India 2003

Jeroo's paintings have been displayed at conferences addressing issues such as 'Forced Marriages' and 'Honour Related Violence' organised by New Scotland Yard and the Home Office and she has also been invited to participate in similar conferences in Sweden. She is presently involved in the 'Changing Lives' initiative, working as an Arts Awareness co-ordinator with Dr. Salman Asif for a special course at Tower Hamlets College. The course deals with issues of violence against women – and provides a creative forum for students and sufferers of violence to express their feelings through art. Jeroo would welcome enquiries relating to her work, especially in the context of schools and colleges and can be contacted: [jeroo.roy@btinternet.com](mailto:jeroo.roy@btinternet.com) Tel. 020 7607 0095

# SIGNS

As the world emerges from the ravages of the cold war and as the UN restructures itself to meet the challenges of a multilateral world, the large migration of peoples is finally being acknowledged as one of the major global dilemmas facing the international community.

In the process, unfortunately, 'foreigner-bashing' has become a popular political pastime in many parts of the world. Christians cannot accept this; the Christian gospel rejects all forms of racism, nationalistic and ethnic chauvinism. Christians believe that those who indulge in it are acting in a sinful manner.

In Europe, policies deterring asylum seekers and migrants are now common in many individual European states, as well as European states acting collectively through the European Union (EU).

However, there are *signs of hope*: The EU now acknowledges that "knee-jerk" policies of deterrence, restrictions and exclusion, have forced desperate people into 'illegal situations' or into the arms of smugglers and traffickers, in their attempts to reach safety in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the EU also recognises now that 'migration is a global reality of globalisation' and that policies are needed to 'manage' the process to the benefit of the EU as well 'countries of origin.' This new attitude towards managed migration is also evolving in other developed countries in the North.

Racism and xenophobia already exist in Europe and in some places it is very strong. By xenophobia, I mean the fear or dislike of foreigners and strangers or of the unknown. It typically implies a belief, accurate or not, that someone looking different is in some way alien and should be avoided, isolated or excluded.

Racism on the other hand, means the treating of one group of people less favourably than another because of their colour, religious belief or ethnic origin. It was widely held that human beings belonged to different 'races' of people, which were defined according to physical characteristics. Racism is rooted in the belief that some 'races' are superior to others. Feelings of racial superiority led Europeans to justify their colonisation of countries in Asia, Africa, and the Americas and exploit their economies.<sup>2</sup>

Violence against foreigners and mass expulsions is not new in Europe. The painful thing is that the present violence against anyone looking foreign by racist and other extremist political groupings in Britain and elsewhere in Europe is all too terrifyingly reminiscent of past decades.

Today it is widely recognised that migration has a global character, simultaneously touching all regions and crossing all regional boundaries. Also emerging is a recognition that the motivations for migration run along a continuum spanning political and economic factors. The spectrum runs from immediate threats to life, safety and freedom due to war or persecution, to situations where the economic conditions or environmental degradation make the prospects for life, even mere survival, marginal or non-existent.

With economic and environmental conditions worsening in many countries, the likelihood is even more migration, as people naturally and legitimately seek some place to survive, when they cannot do so any longer in their homeland.

Human history has been very much a history of migrations. The Bible tells us, time and time again, of large scale population invasions of lands occupied by other ethnic groups and mass movements of people who today would be called refugees or asylum seekers. (*2 Kings 24:10 ff*)

It is crucial at this point to clarify what we mean by the terms migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Reference to international laws and norms would be a useful guide.

Generally immigration is the generic term used to describe people moving or settling in another country temporarily or permanently. An immigrant is someone who intends to reside permanently, and not a casual visitor, tourist or traveller. At different times throughout history, people from many parts of the world have come to Britain and settled here and so have British people migrated overseas. The first Jews arrived more than 1,000 years ago and Irish people came fleeing famine in the 1840's and right throughout the 20th century looking for work. Between the 15th and the 19th century, thousands of Africans were brought to Britain as slaves, seamen or servants of the wealthy.<sup>3</sup> People from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean were invited after the devastation of WW II, to do the work for which there were too few British workers. Britain for most of its history has been a multicultural society, with a host of people from minority ethnic communities making important contributions to every area of national life. It is important to remember that today primary immigration to this country has all but ceased.<sup>4</sup> We admit people whose parents were born here to settle and we allow those already granted rights of settlement to bring in their families.

When you add all these together with those granted asylum as refugees, you get a total of circa 100,000 people. Hardly a human wave, yet, this does not stop some sections of the media and politicians referring to the new arrivals as an "immigration problem"! But if you look at the other end of the argument, Europeans too have moved to other parts of the world, for reasons not different from today's migrants and refugees. For e.g. between 1800 and 1950, Europeans accounted for 80% of international migration or the fact that the period spanning the two WW's 70m European fled the continent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A study by Prof. Michael Pugh, University of Plymouth, for example, suggests that in the last decade alone more than 2,000 people have died in the Mediterranean Sea trying to smuggle into Europe. The numbers maybe more if all the European coastline is included. <sup>2</sup> The role of racism in justifying the morally indefensible was clearly illustrated in apartheid South Africa. See also the racism definition provided in the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> More than 100m Africans were removed to the Americas during the Slave Trade period. <sup>4</sup> The 1971 Immigration Act abolished primary immigration, introduced the work voucher system and the 'paternal' rule i.e. entry only for those whose parents or grandparents were of British origins. <sup>5</sup> Source: European Trade Union Institute, 1992.

# of hope

A migrant is someone who has moved from his or her country of habitual residence to another country to work.<sup>6</sup> According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) there are 125m migrant workers worldwide. The numbers include Europeans working in the Middle-East, Australasia, Africa and the Americas, Asians in the Middle-East, Europe and South-East Asia, Latin-Americans in the USA, US citizens in Europe and in many other parts of the world – a worldwide circulation of people indeed.

There are four main ways that migrants enter Britain. They can come as work permit holders, students, seasonal agricultural workers and working holiday makers, reflecting both ends of the labour market from highly skilled (doctors, teachers and IT specialists) to low-skilled like those in agriculture.<sup>7</sup> Britain has about 100,000 people on work permits. Recently the government announced new plans to reform the system to allow migrant workers to come to Britain.<sup>8</sup>

An asylum seeker is someone who is fleeing persecution, war and genocide in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised their legal right to apply for asylum.<sup>9</sup> By definition therefore, as arbitrated by the Press Complaints Authority, there is no such thing as an ‘illegal’ or ‘bogus’ asylum seeker.

A refugee is someone whose application for asylum has been successful and who is allowed to stay in the country, with a view to settlement. The 1951 UN Refugee Convention requires that those given refugee status are entitled to the same rights as nationals regarding economic, social and cultural rights.

The British asylum and immigration system is strictly controlled and is complex. It is very difficult to get asylum in Britain. In 2003 (latest figures from the Home Office) we had 49,370 asylum applications and the number is falling, mainly because deterrence measure are used to prevent asylum seekers from getting to Britain in the first place. Measures such as fines of airlines for carrying poorly documented people, visa regimes and the posting of immigration officers overseas to prevent poorly documented people from boarding planes for Britain.<sup>10</sup> Asylum seekers are not allowed to work and receive income support 30% below the normal rate, neither are they allowed council housing; they are dispersed around the country for temporary accommodation, many are desperately poor.

To recap, I emphasise again, that when we talk about immigration, we need to differentiate between immigrants who come to settle, migrants who come to work because our economy needs them and asylum seekers who arrive for sanctuary as victims of persecution, torture, human rights violation or victims of wars and generalised violence.

Important questions face Christians as they consider the situation of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in our midst, and in the world. Who is a refugee in need of

protection? Who is a migrant with different needs? Who has the right to asylum? Who should be sent home? These have been questions of burning immediacy. As we begin the new millennium, the movement of people poses one of the greatest challenges of the recent times, as enormous pressures bear on the time-honoured institutions of asylum.

For us Christians, perhaps, the question is simpler. Who is my neighbour? What can we draw out of the Bible and Christian tradition on it, which may throw some light on the situation migrants and refugees? What clues can we draw from the relationship revealed between God and refugees in the history of Israel as told in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the word of the prophets? How does the life and teachings of Jesus throw new light to guide us in our reflection?

In the New Testament stories of Jesus’ life we hear that he was familiar with the problems we associate with migrants and refugees. The Gospel of Luke tells us that he was born in humble circumstances and away from home, while Matthew tells us that his parents took the baby Jesus into exile in Egypt to flee the hand of Herod. Later in his life, the Gospels tell us, he was a migrant, moving from place to place, often threatened by the political powers of the day and rejected by his own townspeople.

As his life was a witness, the words of Jesus as related to the Gospels, speak powerfully to us even today. For in administering to the stranger, the poor, the dispossessed in our midst, we are also administering to Christ:

“For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger, you took me into your home; when naked, you clothed me; when I was ill you came to my help; when in prison, you visited me.” (*Matt. 25: 35, 36*)

And our concern for the dispossessed, the stranger, will grow through our knowledge of the love of God which, as the Sermon on the Mount tells us, we may experience as a desire to show mercy and seek justice:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail; they shall be satisfied. Blessed are those who show mercy; mercy shall be shown to them.” (*Matt 6:6, 7*)

But finally, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus which brings reconciliation of our differences, reminds us that we are all one in God and brings about the possibility of a new social order based upon love of God and love of our neighbour as ourselves

From these principles of action shown in the Bible of love, mercy, justice and reconciliation, Christians over the years have developed an understanding of the right way to treat the dispossessed. On the one level living their vocation as viable and inclusive communities, accompanying dispossessed people, sharing in their hope and suffering and providing space for them. On another level, critiquing policies that exclude the dispossessed, promoting justice, peace and reconciliation of all God’s creation. (*Ephesians 2: 19*)

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.*

*Matt 5:9*

*Rt Rev Patrick O’Donoghue  
Bishop of Lancaster*

<sup>6</sup> UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of Migrants and their Families, 1991, exist to protect migrants, but the British government is not a signatory to the Convention.

<sup>7</sup> For e.g. there are 80,000 Filipinos workers (nurses and domestics) in Britain. The vast majority circa 65% are women. <sup>8</sup> 5 year strategy for asylum and immigration, Home Office, February 2005. <sup>9</sup> 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol exist to protect asylum seekers and refugees.

<sup>10</sup> Compare this with the 90million people who visited Britain in 2003 or the 300,000 foreign students studying here or the 100,000 work permit holders.

# A Spiritual Throne

*In times of happiness, be thankful  
In times of sorrow, be prayerful  
At all times, reflect on God.*



*Charanjit with Banjaras family - Photograph: Ajit Singh*

As we got into a taxi at the Nanded Railway Station, to take us to the Sikh Gurdwara, Sri Hazur Sahib, the above three line poem written in Hindi and in Punjabi, greeted us and set for us the vision of the whole pilgrimage. It was in every three wheeler, bus, taxi, private cars, on banners and in shops and on notice boards, reminding us about the purpose of this sacred place, the blessed town of Nanded. The Gurdwara is also known as Abchal Nagar Sahib, the Eternal Town. It is situated in Southern India on the banks of the River Godavari and is one of the five spiritual thrones for the Sikhs and the last place of residence of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. It has developed as a special place of pilgrimage. It has been my very strong desire for quite sometime to be able to visit it and to tread in the most revered footsteps of the Guru who continues to inspire the Sikhs and others through his writings and his exemplary life.

This wish was fulfilled when the whole programme came together in such a way that we could be there in the second week of April during the festival of Vaisakhi, to celebrate the birthday of the Khalsa Sikhs, which falls in mid-April. Guru Gobind Singh came to Nanded providing support to the Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah in 1708. He stayed there after the Mughal ruler moved on further to the South East.

There are more than a dozen gurdwaras associated with the Guru's life and legendary parables. Hazur Sahib is the place where the Guru was seriously stabbed by two Pathans, who were sent by

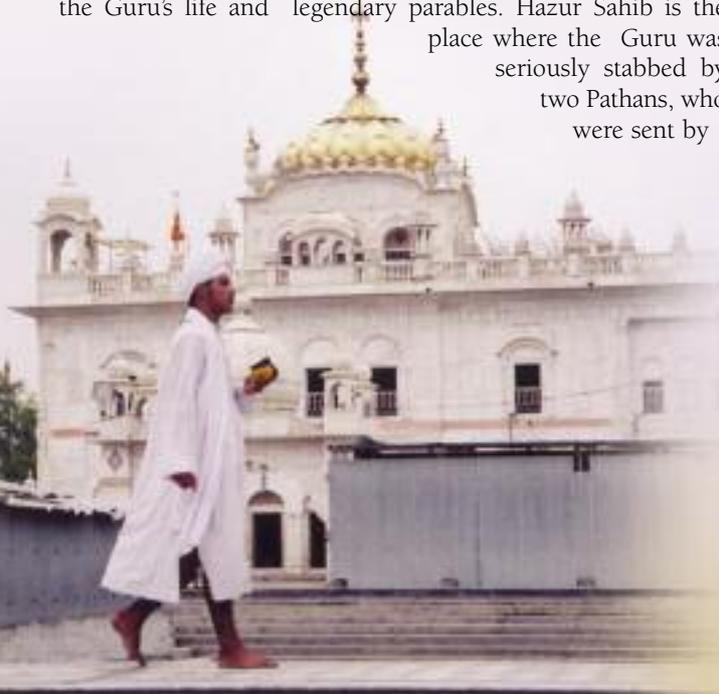
Nawab of Sirhind from Punjab in Northern India for this motive and it is where he gave his last blessing to the Sikhs before disappearing from there.

The two storey building with its Golden Dome was built in 1832, with the donations and artisans sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the first Sikh Ruler, in the memory of Guru Gobind Singh. Here, in the inner sanctum within the gurdwara, the Guru's weapons are held, to which only the Head Keeper and Guardian has access. Those are shown to the assembled congregation with great reverence on Vaisakhi day by the head guardian - beautifully gilded swords, shields, quoits, arrows and bows. A special weapon is Asht-bhuja shastar, literally the eight armed/sided armour which is said to have been bestowed by Goddess Durga also known as the Hindu goddess Shakti (Power). Guru Granth Sahib and the tenth Guru's Scripture are both recited in a hauntingly melodious voice to enable the congregation to listen to the Guru's message of the day as revealed in the scriptures and to reflect on it.

For Vaisakhi, people gather in their thousands during the day; they come in trains, buses, cars and in trucks loads from different parts of India and particularly from villages in the Punjab undertaking hazardous journeys to be there for the occasion. Some come very early, before dawn, others at other times or evenings. They pay their respects, bringing offerings of cash and donations in kind, seeking blessing and healing and they are not all Sikhs.

We were waiting to behold the holy arms of the Guru, when I saw a young South Indian looking couple, circumambulating the shrine with their elders and it was the young lady who was showing how they should do it and what special features to note. I was highly intrigued as they did not look like Sikhs to me. I asked the young lady about the group and what were they doing. She cheerfully told us, "I have got engaged today and I have brought my husband to be and his relatives to the Gurdwara to seek blessings for the relationship." When asked, whether they were Sikhs, she said that all of them belonged to the Hindu tradition. As she was born and bred in Nanded, the Gurdwara has been a place of her spiritual devotion and faith and her fiancée's family lives over 200 miles away from Nanded. She wanted them to be part of where she felt spirituality uplifted. I was really moved particularly as the couple were both highly educated professional people and the young man had come from Melbourne, Australia for the occasion.

Another group we met were from the travellers community called Banjaras. They come in family groupings every Vaisakhi,



*Young man walking and praying at Sri Hazur Sahib Gurdwara  
- Photograph: Ajit Singh*

when they take time off from working in the fields in villages hundreds of miles away. The women wear very colourful clothes and spectacular jewellery and they are at the Gurdwara in all their finery. They do not speak or read any of the languages locally used or in which the holy books are written but their devotion is immense and they feel welcome. One of them said to me in limited Hindi, "We love coming here every year." How inspired they must be that they save from their meagre earnings to meet the travel and other costs to participate in Vaisakhi celebrations there.

The commemoration of the first Vaisakhi Day in 1699, is celebrated as a big initiation day, through the taking of the amrit, the sacred nectar and the wearing of the five articles of faith, the ultimate state for a Sikh to achieve, the identity of an Amritdhari Sikh. Five hundred men and women took the Amrit on the morning of Vaisakhi Day. Three out of those were a middle aged couple, who had come over a thousand miles from Punjab (the husband even further from Dubai, where he worked) with a widowed female relative. The couple had prepared themselves for the ceremony and their relative also became so enthused that she also offered to be a recipient of the amrit, within the precincts of the gurdwara.

There are many engraved marble panels with precious stones in the shapes of flowers, birds and animals on the walls and some marble tiles on floor reminding us of the contributions made by the Sikhs for building, mosaics and gilding work. It was interesting to note that during the period of the British Rule, Sikh Regiments regularly made donations and the union jack itself is carved on the panels there. Similarly, contributions are listed by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in Hindi, Urdu, Gurmukhi, Marathi and other South Indian scripts. The Sikh community in the area speak local languages and culturally are very much at home with local customs and traditions having been there for many generations, though religiously they are taught the Sikh way of life and to read the scriptures in Punjabi/Gurmukhi script, which they do very well. They firmly believe that the rituals and traditions they observe are the ones which are genuine and which Guru Gobind Singh established. They also believe that Guru did not leave his physical body there but performed a vanishing act to show to the world that he is gone. They are of the opinion that the Guru would be visible when the Khalsa, the amritdhari Sikhs are increased manifold. Furthermore, those Sikhs would be trustworthy and living embodiments of what Sikhism is about in words and deeds, real spiritual beings. The head guardian lives in the precincts and leads a life of total dedication to the service of the main shrine and overseeing other local ones.

We also witnessed the spectacle of a procession which takes place the day after Vaisakhi in which the whole town, Sikhs, Hindus, Jains, Muslims of a variety of backgrounds, languages and cultures participate. The procession is led by the Guru's special horse, which is beautifully decorated with fine materials, ornaments and garlands of flowers and is fully saddled but not ridden by any person, because there is a deep shared faith that though he is unseen by the human eye, Guru Gobind Singh rides the horse and the horse responds to the rider's command and moves ahead of the people in the procession. Then the Head Guardian, the Panj Piyare, the five leading Sikhs and others walk behind the Guru's other horses, followed by hundreds of thousands of men, women and children either on foot or in a variety of vehicles singing hymns as well as different bands playing. They are served

many kinds of non-alcoholic drinks, ice-cold water, fruit juices and sodas and food of different kinds as well as fanning with hand-held fans as the procession advances by people waiting on either side of the road, as their way of serving the community on this very hot day. Others observe it from many vantage points.

Another feature of this procession is the participation of young men in significant numbers. They all carry drawn swords and are highly disciplined. There is also an enactment of 'Halla' an attack, running with their swords for about a mile. The stewards and local police ensure that there are no impediments in the path of the advancing runners and the whole thing ends peacefully. Most people find it a great event to be part of or to behold it. The procession ends after about six hours. The Panj Piyare return to Sri Hazur Sahib and the head guardian receives them with respect and humbly washes their tired feet after their bare footed long pilgrimage having visited all local gurdwaras.

The local young people and their families are highly involved in the local community. Their work, social, economic and cultural life are supported and sustained very well. Over the last five years, the gurdwara has taken the initiative to reduce the pressure on families for costly weddings. Twice a year mass wedding ceremonies are held; parents bring the bride and groom, and their respective relatives attend. Special food is served in the langar and the day is a great spiritual and social event for all attending, without the hassles associated with major family events. The families who had chosen to be part of the ceremonies, felt deeply blessed and honoured. They talked about their experiences with great joy to us.

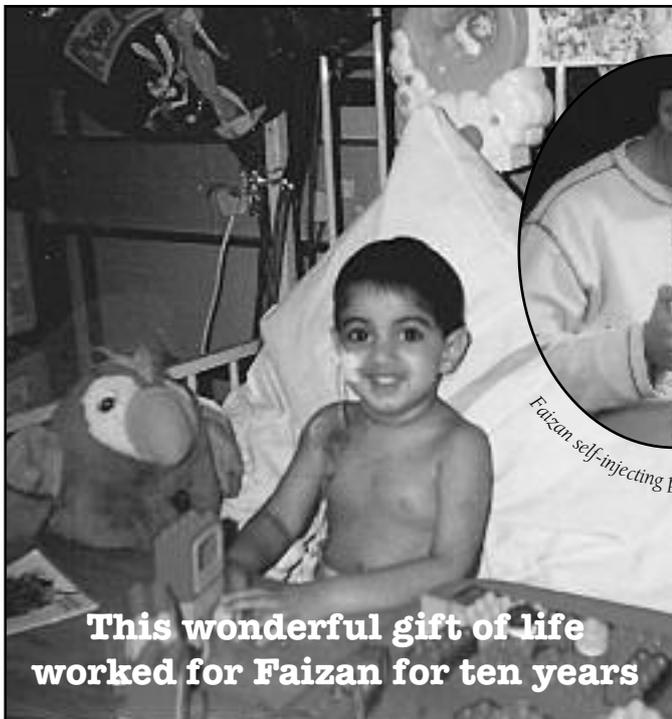
My account of my pilgrimage could not be complete if I do not mention the more recent developments. Gurdwara Langar Sahib is particularly revered because of the site's association with the feeding of people in the times of Guru Gobind Singh and its rediscovery by Baba Nidhan Singh early in the twentieth century. He was born in the Punjab in 1882 and in the 1920's opened a round the clock serving of food to the pilgrims. The story is told that there were some jealous people who frustrated his efforts so much so that he decided to give up and leave. As he was waiting at the railway station for his train back to Punjab and was praying, he heard the tapping of horse's hooves. As he looked up, he saw Guru Gobind Singh in front of him. The Guru told him not to lose heart but to go back and continue serving food. He assured him with the words, "My pocket, your hand," which means that he has access to all resources the Guru provides and as such there cannot be any shortage or any other difficulty. Thousands of people are served food day and night there and the buildings also have accommodation for stay for thousands of visitors.

On our visit there one evening, we went to the langar hall but I could not sit on the floor, because of my knee problems. A young man saw my predicament and offered the rolled up carpet as a seat for me to sit on and brought me food on a tray. He said to me, 'I am usually here after six in the evening. Please come then, so that I could serve you everyday.' I was really touched by his humility, his pleasant words and actions. When I asked him his name, he replied, 'Heera Singh.' The word Heera means a diamond. A true diamond indeed!

There could not be a better conclusion to our visit to Sri Hazur Sahib.

# The Gift of Life

Currently in UK there are more than five thousand people waiting for **organ transplantation**. These patients may wait for years and unfortunately some may never get the match necessary because there are fewer people willing to donate their organs after their death. The wait for Black Minority Ethnic (BME) patients is longer as donation is less scarce than for white people and yet it is expected that in the next ten years the number of people with kidney illness will double and half of patients on dialysis will be from the BME community.



*Faizan aged 3 following first transplant*

I would like to explain why this issue is important to me. I am a housewife who is more suited to domestic duties than be worried about lack of organ donation or actively work to raise awareness. Like most people I probably would never have thought about organ donation let alone trying to raise the issue to the wider community, if it hadn't been for my son Faizan! Faizan was born with a condition which caused his kidneys to fail when he was 6 weeks old.

It was extremely difficult to look after a baby with Chronic Renal Failure. Faizan spent more time in hospital than at home. He picked up any infection going. He did not eat anything for the first 3 years of his life. I had to pass a nasogastric tube every day to feed him.

We were very pleased when a kidney became available and he got his first transplant. Things improved. He started to grow, became lively and healthy and most importantly, for the first time in his life, he ate. And all these improvements were because someone somewhere decided to donate their organ.

This wonderful gift of life worked for Faizan for ten years and during this time he was able to do everything that any other child of his age could do.

Then gradually the transplanted kidney failed. This time around his Doctors encouraged us to think about live donation. Which meant giving one of our kidneys to him. Khalid, my husband, and I didn't need to think twice about it because we would have done anything to improve our son's health and life.

But we were not prepared for the shock when Faizan refused the transplant. He did not want to put us through the operation as he had had twenty eight himself and knew what it was like. I tried to talk him out of it. But he did not change his mind. Donor and recipient have to consent to the transplant otherwise it cannot take place so we had to give in.

Faizan went on Dialysis. He was on the dialysis machine for twelve hours a day. Six days a week. He was giving himself ten injections a week. He did not have much appetite but when he did the dietary restrictions made it almost impossible for him to eat anything.

He was allowed only one piece of fruit a day, if he had an apple he could not have an orange and so on. His vegetable intake was restricted in the same way. He was allowed one packet of crisps in a week. No chocolates at all. Even milk was restricted, he had allowance of one glass of milk per day. After doing his best to follow all the dietary restrictions and taking medications, injections, dialysing, he still felt unwell and tired at all times.

He waited for a kidney every day. Days turned to weeks and weeks to months and months to years. Still there was no kidney. ...He had had enough and reluctantly he gave in and decided to accept the offer of a kidney from his father.

My husband, Khalid was given a full health check. He was admitted into the hospital and had many tests, x-rays etc. In fact whatever was necessary to make sure that he did not have any adverse effects after donating his kidney.

Day of the Transplant was set: 4th May 2001. My son and my husband were admitted to two different hospitals. Khalid

was at Manchester Royal Infirmary, which is in the centre of Manchester, and Faizan at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital at Pendlebury, which is about 6-7 miles out of Manchester.

On the morning of the operation. I saw Khalid off to theatre and then went to Pendlebury and did the same with Faizan. When Faizan had gone in I rushed back to MRI so that I could be there when Khalid came out. When he came to the ward I was able to spend only a little time with him because I had to get back to Pendlebury.

When your loved one has major surgery all you want is to be with them but I didn't have that luxury. I had to choose who I would be with at a given time and it was an impossible decision for me to make, so Khalid and Faizan had decided, before the operation, that I should spend most of my time with Faizan and visit Khalid as frequently as was possible, and keep them informed of each other's progress.

Following this plan I rushed back to Pendlebury as Faizan was expected back any time. I waited and the expected time of his arrival came and went but I was not overly worried because through experience I had learnt that times are only approximate. But I did begin to worry when almost two hours had passed. Then I saw the surgeon Mr.Riad coming towards me accompanied with Faizan's consultant, Dr. Bradburry. I did not think anything of it. I assumed they must have met up in the corridor and decided to walk together. I think it was when Mr Riad asked me to sit down before telling me about the transplant that I suspected something was not quite right.

Mr. Riad told me that there were some complications during surgery and the kidney was transplanted but was "sleeping". He hoped that it would "wakeup" and I should not worry. (As if that was possible!) Then he went on to say that one of Faizan's lungs had collapsed and therefore they had to clamp the blood going to the kidney so that he would not suffer, hence the "sleeping kidney". I asked if I could see my son and was told that he wouldn't be coming to the cubicle that was prepared for his arrival but would be taken to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). In the last fifteen years Faizan had been through so much, if I write about all that it would end in a book, and until that day he has never seen an ICU unit. I was not sure what was happening. Non of this happened at the last transplant. At that time I just wanted to see Faizan so trying to be very brave I asked if I would be allowed to see him. Mr Riad said I could go and see him but be prepared that he wouldn't know I was there. To which I answered that he has had many operations before and I know he would be dopey, and wouldn't be able to talk but would know I was with him. At that point Mr. Riad told me that Faizan was on a ventilator. I am not sure what he said after that or if he did say anything at all. My mind went completely blank. My surroundings seemed unfamiliar and I could hear sounds but was not able to understand anything. I took a deep breath and cursed myself for letting my emotions overtake me. I told myself that I needed to be strong for my son and my husband and had to put my feelings and emotions on hold to be dealt with later at a more appropriate time.

I made my way to the ICU unit. At the reception, I met the anaesthician who looked after Faizan and asked him what

had gone wrong? He sat me down and showed me x-ray's of Faizan's collapsed lung. I plucked up my courage and asked him the question that I did not even want to voice or phrase. I asked, would he survive, would my precious son live?

## *1300 kidneys going to waste every day in the UK*

His reply was that Faizan is strong and young and they were confident that he would make it through. When I asked him if there was a risk that he could be brain damaged because of lack of blood during surgery, the answer was not very positive. He looked at me very sympathetically and admitted that it could not be ruled out. I think it was at that time that my eyes filled and tears just poured out without my consent. And it was at that time that I desperately wanted my husband there to hold me and tell me that everything would be all right. And it was at that time that I thought there are 1300 kidneys going to waste every day in the UK, if only people out there knew of my dilemma and the dilemma faced by many thousands of people like me.

That night I sat on a little stool next to Faizan's bed and prayed like I have never prayed before. I asked God to grant me my son's life and for him to be normal although I knew I was not worthy, but He is compassionate and understanding. He even granted me what I dare not ask because I did not want to appear too selfish. When Faizan woke up he was as normal and perfect as before but also his kidney was functioning as best as a transplanted kidney could possibly do. That night I made a promise to my God that I will try to help those who are less fortunate and in need of support.

So as a result here I am trying to raise awareness about organ donation in the only way I know, by sharing with you my personal and very private life.

I run a Kidney Support Group for patients and carers for Blackburn & District areas. You can get more information about the Group from [www.blackburnkidneygroup.org.uk](http://www.blackburnkidneygroup.org.uk)

*Parveen Awan*



*Faizan receiving Citizen Award with Parveen and Mayor and Mayorsess of Blackburn with Darwen*

Parveen was a speaker at the Multi Faith Organ Donation Conference held 22nd June 2005 at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston. For further information contact: John Prysor-Jones, Head of Pastoral Care Services, Royal Preston Hospital. 01772 522350/522435

How does one describe in words what is truly indescribable - beyond description!



## Beyond words

This is the task I face in writing about my recent experience on Bahá'í pilgrimage. Like many other world religions, the Bahá'í Faith offers its 5 million members worldwide the immeasurable privilege of visiting holy sites that compose the spiritual core of the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. It is on the slopes of Mount Carmel in Haifa, the sacred remains of the Báb - a messenger of God from 19th century Persia who proclaimed the coming of the Bahá'í Faith's prophet-founder, Bahá'u'lláh - are laid to rest. Bahá'u'lláh's remains are interred in a Shrine just north of Haifa, near the ancient prison city of Acre along the Mediterranean Sea where he and his family suffered intense hardships for many of the last 24 years of his life, having been banished there in August 1868 as prisoners of the Ottoman Empire.

Despite officially remaining a prisoner until his death, Bahá'u'lláh was allowed some freedom of movement after winning the admiration of his captors with his kindness and outstanding character. In 1891, Bahá'u'lláh instructed 'Abdu'l-Bahá - his eldest son and the one chosen by him to lead the Bahá'í Faith upon his death - to construct on a particular spot of Mount Carmel a suitable mausoleum for the Báb, whose body was mutilated by a firing squad in 1850 and carefully hidden from Bahá'u'lláh's enemies for 60 years. Despite great difficulty in meeting this challenge, 'Abdu'l-Bahá fulfilled his father's instructions and completed the base of the mausoleum in 1909. An ornate domed superstructure was constructed by Shoghi Effendi - the eldest grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and head of the Bahá'í Faith after his grandfather's passing - in 1953. More recently, a series of terraces above and below the Shrine of the Báb was completed in 2001, to create a befitting backdrop for the mausoleum.

I was fortunate to have visited the Bahá'í Holy Land twice within the last five years prior to this visit, when I was permitted by the Bahá'í World Centre to stay up to three days each time to say prayers at the Holy Shrines. However, Bahá'í pilgrimage, which runs for nine consecutive days, is completely different altogether. While a three-day visit is

permissible any time with only a few months' advance notice, application for pilgrimage requires a waiting period of five or six years before permission is granted. Moreover, after completing the pilgrimage, Bahá'is must wait five years before re-applying. Many friends of mine told me how pilgrimage was a unique experience in their lives, and I had no doubt from their accounts that it would be life changing for me. Despite knowing this and given my previous visits, there is a huge difference between merely stating what is abstractly true about pilgrimage and sharing a firsthand account.

It is truly beyond words to fully capture the full spirit of pilgrimage at the Bahá'í World Centre, so this article cannot begin to do it justice. What I can say is that until going on pilgrimage, I had never experienced a time when, on a given day, I was moved to tears, felt completely awestruck by what I saw, and yet laughed so hard my sides hurt, all within the span of an hour for several times each day! People from all over the Earth who I had never met are now close friends, and those friends who I knew beforehand are now even closer friends because of pilgrimage. The guide who accompanied my pilgrimage group over the nine days gave me the unforgettable gift of making the events of Bahá'í history - merely words on a page until now - truly come alive through both down-to-earth and reverential descriptions of important events in Bahá'u'lláh's final years.

The most emotional memories of my pilgrimage were of our first visit to Acre and seeing the port where in 1868 Bahá'u'lláh and his followers - who first arrived in humiliation as prisoners - were jeered at by the local people who mocked him as "The god of the Persians" in the same way Jesus was mocked before his crucifixion. When we entered the prison barracks where Bahá'u'lláh's family was incarcerated, we saw the very spot where his 22-year-old son known as the Purest Branch died after falling through an open skylight. Instead of letting Bahá'u'lláh save his life, he asked that it be a sacrifice to God so that pilgrims restricted by authorities from visiting Baha'u'llah could attain his presence. We went in the prison cell where Bahá'u'lláh was kept in solitary confinement for two years without any contact from outsiders. On a later day, when we visited his summer home just beside his Shrine, we entered Bahá'u'lláh's bedroom to see where Edward Granville Browne - an orientalist from Cambridge University who later gave the world the famous pen-portrait of Bahá'u'lláh's persona as his first westerner visitor - would meet him. Browne wrote:

*The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow... No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!<sup>1</sup>*

This is also the place where Bahá'u'lláh died in his sleep on May 8, 1892, and for me it became especially difficult to remain inside his room for very long.

This account is, at best, an inadequate expression of my deepest appreciation for attending Bahá'í pilgrimage. This experience has already changed my life and I am certain it will continue to have a profound effect on me for many years to come.

Dinesh Singh



“Do not urge me to leave you,”  
“For wherever you go, I will go;  
wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.  
Where you die, I will die,  
and there I will be buried.”

Book of Ruth 1:16



*your people shall be my people*  
*your people shall be my people*  
*your people shall be my people*  
**your people shall be my people**  
*your people shall be my people*



# an ancient tale



Artist: Evelyn de Morgan 1855-1919

The biblical Book of Ruth is a tale about a mixed marriage. Ruth is from another culture, a foreigner, an outsider, a Moabite - not an Israelite like her husband. There had been a famine in Bethlehem and so his family travelled eastward to Moab, where there was food and water. When his father dies, he and his brother

marry Orpah and Ruth, Moabite women, even though Deuteronomy specifically forbids any Moabite to “enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever.” (Chapter 23) Ten years later, however, the brothers also die and their poor mother, Naomi, tells her daughters-in-law to return to their families. “Do not urge me to leave you,” replies Ruth, touchingly. “For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.”

While Orpah leaves, as most young women in her position would probably chose to do, Ruth the Moabite adopts the nationality and the faith of her mother-in-law. Ruth and Naomi travel together back to Bethlehem. Ruth meets her late husband’s relative Boaz and wonders why he is kind to her, seeing as she is a stranger. Soon she marries this man and conceives. Naomi takes the baby and becomes its nurse. The neighbours declare: “There is a son born to Naomi.” This boy grows up to continue the patriarchal lineage that began with Abraham and goes on, through Ruth, to King David and beyond. Jews read this story every year and find in Ruth the Moabite, the outsider, a paragon of womanly virtue and goodwill.

What do we conclude from this classic story about a mixed marriage? Judaism tolerates mixed marriages where the non-Jew converts and the offspring are raised as Jews.

We notice however that the young men only married the foreign girls after their father had died. Apparently they chose not to anger or offend their father by marrying “out” while he was still alive. We notice also that Ruth and her husband lived together as man and wife for ten years before she made her touching declaration to her mother-in-law. She didn’t convert for her husband’s sake. We notice too, that the young woman is referred throughout the tale as “the Moabite” and she identifies herself to her late husband’s relative as “a stranger.” She remains the foreigner, the outsider. And finally, she disappears from the tale as soon as she has delivered the heir, who is Naomi’s baby: Naomi (and not the foreign mother)

raises the child as a Jew. We sense the complexities of a mixed marriage.

The story of Ruth makes us think about the problems that arise with mixed marriages when there are parents or parents-in-law who have difficulty in accepting the marriage and when a baby is born of the union. As soon as a marriage brings a couple under the roof of the extended family, it is no longer a private personal matter. Parents, siblings, grandparents and neighbours notice the outsider, subtly or ominously. The young couple have conflicting loyalties - to their own parents and to each other – which they have to resolve, with patience, understanding and compromise. And when a baby is born, grandparents (like Naomi) may expect to pass on their own faith, tradition and identity, which may not be what the young couple choose. Will the child receive one religion, or two faiths; one heritage, or two cultures; or a new brand of mixed identity?

There were a lot of mixed marriages in biblical times, but Ezra (chapter 9) and Nehemiah (chapter 13) tried to stop this. Out-marriages continued, inevitably, and so the rabbis introduced regulations and stringencies to try to stop them. But it is human nature to fall in love and sometimes the loved one is from a different people and has a different faith. Nowadays there are more interfaith marriages than ever before. At one end of the rabbinic spectrum, the Orthodox rabbis insist on a thorough and proper conversion of the non-Jewish partner, according to Jewish law, in order to include that person and the couple’s children in the Jewish community. At the other end, Reformed rabbis tend to be more welcoming, try to count people in, solve problems, open doors and understand doubt.

## *Faith is only one of many other aspects of our individuality and identity.*

Mixed marriages have the advantage of giving advanced warning of what every couple must eventually face – that two people, however much they are in love, are different from each other. Even when a couple of the same faith marry, each partner soon learns about the other person’s childhood, family history, personal rituals, favourite foods, beliefs, customs, expectations and hopes. Faith is only one of many other aspects of our individuality and identity. One partner can “convert” to the faith of the other, but can never obliterate all the other differences. Ruth was still a Moabite, even after she declared her faith in the Jewish God. We are all different, but some of us are more different than others. We all have to understand, tolerate, and accept our partner’s differences in order to live together and raise our children in harmony. With the positive knowledge of where they have come from, our children will develop their own faith and unique identity, and find their way as good citizens.

Michele Klein

**As any parent knows, children are fascinated by stories.** And the most favourite of all stories are the ones about “when mummy was a little girl,” or, even better, “when grandpa was growing up” or “when granny was young”. They take us back to a time when the milkman’s float was pulled by a horse, there were coal fires in school classrooms and children spent nights sleeping in air-raid shelters. If grandparents are from a different culture or even a foreign country, the stories become even more exotic and captivating.

### *“when granny was young”*

In our own interfaith family, we have stories about grandma and her twin who grew up in a traditional North London Jewish community, joining the Wrens as soon as they were old enough, and getting a little dog called Skipper; their other grandmother’s childhood in Wales, and her narrow escape from a German bomb; grandpa’s adventures in a Lancashire village, especially the incident when he stood on a hornets’ nest; and their other grandpas’ life with his dad, the son of an immigrant tailor. They lived in a boarding house after his mother’s untimely death, and there was never quite enough food for a growing teenage lad.

# a marriage of stories

These stories open up a different world, and by hearing them the children learn not only about the events and circumstances that shaped their individual grandparents, but they grow to respect very different ways of thinking, living and believing.

Stories are also central to religious faith, and we feel our children should know the beliefs and traditions of both their families. For Jews, the family is the place where faith and values are learnt, so we join in celebrations with Jewish cousins and friends. At the Passover Seder service, when the youngest child asks, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” the story is told of how God, ‘with an outstretched arm’, rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. The Seder normally takes place at home, and everyone gathers round the table to eat and drink, sing, tell stories and jokes, and to praise God for His faithfulness and generosity. Lionel Blue has described the Seder service as a sermon you can eat. The symbolic foods include eggs promising new life, salt water, recalling the tears of the Hebrew slaves, matzot (unleavened bread), because the escaping slaves couldn’t wait for their dough to rise, and charoseth, a paste made of apples and nuts and a little sweet wine, which looks like the builder’s mortar used in the buildings which the slaves worked on, and sweet and bitter herbs, for life is a mixture of happiness and sorrow. Slices of raw horseradish which, according to grandpa, should

bring tears to your eyes, are a further reminder of the bitterness of slavery.

Christianity is full of stories too, like the baby in the manger, the wonderful parables and the resurrection stories. Our children, who accompanied me to church since they were tiny (less so since they hit adolescence) know the Christian story too, as well as Christian interpretations of the Jewish narrative. How do half Jewish children like ours relate to both faiths? I believe that their understanding of Christianity is deepened by their intimate knowledge of Judaism. (It doesn’t work like that the other way round; because Judaism does not depend on Christianity.) They are also aware of the Jewishness of Jesus; one daughter, when aged about seven, argued in the playground with several children from a local church because she had stated that Jesus was Jewish. No, they protested, Jesus was a Christian, but my daughter eventually convinced them. Thirdly, I hope because our children do not simply learn about Judaism and Christianity, as one might learn about a remote event, such as the building of Hadrian’s Wall, but instead experience them as part of life, seeing both the differences and the connections, and integrating both traditions in their own lives.

Sometimes people worry that children like ours will be ‘confused’ by opposing values and competing claims to truth. I can honestly say that I don’t know any who are confused in this way. Rather like bilingual children, they are at home in two contexts and are able to link the two, and even “interpret” for those around them. I know several highly creative adults who are from religiously and culturally mixed backgrounds, and I don’t think their creativity happened by chance. Further, although families like ours may sometimes be marginalised by religious groups, we are also in a position to build bridges between communities. Our children have an acutely developed sense of fairness, and will not tolerate racism or other social injustice.

In the end, our children will choose their own faith, and we must accept their decisions. If they decide to be Jews, they must undergo instruction and formal conversion, and if they want to be Christians, baptism and confirmation will be required. We have sometimes had to make difficult decisions, and with hindsight some of our decisions may have been the wrong ones. As a family we have not always felt supported by those around us, and I have personally sometimes felt misunderstood by people in churches. Yet I hope that we have helped the children relate to both Jewish and Christian narratives, and that they make these stories their own.

Rosalind Birtwistle

# when rivers meet

## Her view...

Like the majority of people we met at work, a spark, a friendship developed into a blossoming relationship full of wild and high times involving international travel, meeting new people, exploring all aspects of culture globally and generally having a great time. I come from a liberal Sikh background and my husband from a lapsed Christian background.

As time progressed we began to move towards the question of marriage, but what kind of marriage ceremony would we embrace given our diverse backgrounds? We decided on a civil marriage which was performed at Burgh House, Hampstead, a beautiful historical old house. We added to the ceremony live music and poetry and exchanged our 'wedding bangles' to bring in an element of Sikhism for my part. What struck us most was the multicultural nature of our friends and family who all joined in the occasion with love and positive feelings lifting the day to new heights which will stay with us always.

As the years went by we faced challenges in our marriage as most couples do. But by not belonging to a fixed religious group and with family a long way away, I wondered how we may begin to develop a sense of family and community to which we could belong? Time and time again I was brought back to the idea of the 'Oneness of God' and to look at the family in a wider context where friendships of all different backgrounds begin to take the place of family. As I began to come to terms with this idea I began to feel more rooted within myself.

For the last few years I have been drawn to Yoga, meditation and Vedanta philosophy. These teach us that in the words of Swami Vivekananda: *'The very essence of the Hindu philosophy is that man is a spirit, and has a body, and not that man is a body and may have a spirit also.'*

As my practise deepens I find myself experiencing incidences of synchronicity or meaningful encounters or events as defined by Karl Jung and later Deepak Chopra where he states: *'Meaningful coincidences are well worth our attention. According to Vedic tradition there are two characteristics that define a person is on the path towards enlightenment. First, a sense that worries are disappearing. Things may go wrong, but they don't bother you anymore. Second, in every area of your life, you become aware of a growing number of synchronicities'*.

At times I have tried to pull my partner towards my direction or towards my spiritual path, but have found that compulsion doesn't work and we have to find our own path. When we spend time in the company of someone else however, some elements are bound to rub off on each other. We can be like two rivers meandering along the same path, merging here and there, diverting here and there and then coming together now and then. Giving each other space and freedom to be who we are meant to be in this life.

I now find myself revisiting the faith of my fathers which is Sikhism and realise there is much to learn. Guru Nanak's message of the Oneness of God is inspiring, and indeed I can see how the Sikh teachings draw their inspiration from the

ancient philosophy of India as written in the Vedic texts. The challenge for me is to learn how to interpret Sikhism in the here and now and to make it meaningful to a second-generation migrant like myself.

When all else fails I have often found that having faith is the only thing that works. I believe it is possible to live a meaningful life in a loving relationship with a partner whilst sharing elements of our common humanity - respecting our differences as well as giving space to one another to develop in our unique way. In my marriage I am moving from a position of 'divergence' to a position of 'convergence', slowly opening up to recognition that we are spiritual beings who are part of the universal life force, and our purpose is to grow spiritually, to give, to love and to create with a view to uplifting ourselves and those around us.



## His view...

I was brought up as a Christian, attending church once or twice on a Sunday, I was a member of the choir and also in the Boys Brigade. However by the time I had reached twelve, I had begun to question some of the teachings of Christianity. For example, the message that only Christians could enter 'heaven', seemed to me discriminatory and prejudiced. The moral code also appeared sometimes contradictory and confused for instance, whilst few would disagree with the commandment 'Thou shall not kill', the church throughout history has supported crusades and war in the name of 'just causes'.

Although I would not dispute the broad moral code of Christianity as means towards a fairer and more equitable world, my experience of church unfortunately left me more with feelings of fear and disassociation rather than spirituality. Subsequently, perhaps subconsciously, I turned my attention to a search for something alternative and more meaningful. A significant part of this search has involved interaction with nature. I have for a long time had a passion for mountainous areas, and the sense of spirituality I have experienced in many of them in different parts of the world, has left me with a feeling of connection to a greater whole, and a sense of peace. In the spirit of Rousseau, Wordsworth and other Romantics, shamianists, animists and pagans, there is a sense of awe and wonderment to behold in nature that we are unfortunately now far removed from in our normal lives.

### *The search for a sense of 'other'*

The search for a sense of 'other', moving beyond the boundaries of my upbringing, also influenced my personal relations in the sense of being curious about how people in other cultures lived. Hence, when I saw my beautiful to-be wife, there was an immediate attraction that passed beyond the physical into the cultural and spiritual. Perhaps more than for any other group the cultural and spiritual spheres seem to be interwoven in the Sikh identity. Entering relatively late into this religion, I have found it both welcoming and generous. However, similar to my earlier experiences of Christianity, it does not offer me a sense of spirituality. I feel that in my case, this feeling and insight will be held in special places, where one feels in touch with nature or in the presence of other spiritual phenomena such as Anne Frank's home in Amsterdam.

So, what of my path from divergence to convergence? My divergence has been away from Christianity and from other forms of organised religion. My convergence is towards a greater spirituality that transcends religious boundaries and labels, a path that I am experiencing with my partner in life, and undoubtedly one down which I have far to go.

*Kiran Kalsi & Andrew Holden*

## On Marriage

You speak of those years which stretch  
between childhood and youth  
like a golden age that laughs  
at the torments of life  
and the turning points of destiny.

An age that surmounts without concern  
labours and misfortunes,  
as the bee crosses the stagnant marshes  
in order to fly away towards the gardens  
full of flowers.

My youth was full of mysterious and silent  
sorrows which lodged in my heart,  
they rebelled stormily in my veins  
and magnified throughout my adolescence.

And my sorrows found no solution  
in the World of understanding  
until the day when love opened  
the lock gates of my heart  
and illuminated its dreams.

Love freed my tongue, and I spoke.

It opened my eyes and I wept.

It loosened my throat and I sighed.

With marriage, aspiration to love  
throws back its veil

and lights up the depths of the heart;  
it creates a happiness that no other  
happiness could possibly surpass.

*Kahlil Gibran*

# Living life forwards ... understanding it backwards

When I'm asked about my interfaith marriage, my own identity or that of my children it can be very tempting to start 'spinning' and to paint an entirely positive picture of our lives. For the best of reasons I want to let people know that it's possible to have a long and happy marriage, to raise children who are well-balanced and spiritually aware and for each of us to continue to belong to our faith communities (in our case Christianity and Islam) while still respecting the other. Sometimes I'm tempted even further, particularly when I come across attitudes of disapproval concerning marriages like ours - to make the claim that there is something about interfaith marriage which is intrinsically 'good for' religion, or rather for religions, that it can be a location for spiritual learning and exchange, for a healthy challenge to the unconsidered prejudices and unexamined dogmas that all human societies lug around with them; a kind of test-bed for ways our religions can get along: as if what happens at our kitchen-sink today, could happen in the world tomorrow.

But as I make these claims I find I have an uneasy feeling. It's not that it's not true: my partner, my marriage, my children really are as wonderful as I say, and I would never wish to put the genie - of all I've learned and come to understand back in the bottle. It's just that the positive spin can make our lives sound coherent and pre-planned, as if we sat down on the eve of our wedding or before and agreed the ground rules for our public relations exercise in interfaith living. In reality our marriage, and I suspect most other interfaith marriages, has been much more of a muddle, an improvisation, than I've been admitting. We live life forwards and understand it backwards. In practice, where there have been clashes between religious rules and interfaith reality we've tended towards 'common sense' solutions, to what seems likely to best satisfy everyone here and now. For us that has tended to mean religious observance becoming less formal, less identifying or exclusive. I'm drawn to 'interior' kinds of worship, private prayer, but also the fasting and feasting in which all can share. Rites that define communal belonging also define not-belonging and tend therefore to be contentious or difficult in interfaith families.

*the world of faith has  
changed around us.*

As we look to religion to support rather than undermine our marriage and our family it's natural that we should avoid contexts that leave some of us in the cold, but it means ultimately a different relationship with faith and community than we started with. We didn't sit down and plan it that way,

but when the people we are closest to straddle two (and more) faith communities, it feels not quite honest, not quite complete to pray only with, and only for one of those communities. We have had to become unorthodox.

Then I look around and find it's not just us. While we have been occupied with our private interfaith encounter, the world of faith has changed around us. We're no longer pioneers or mavericks on the edge of the two societies we come from, instead we're part of a great number of people who have become intensely aware of other faiths beside their own, some in interfaith marriages but many not. Many children now, not just our's, do not experience faith as a monopoly of allegiance. Our children find themselves regarded by their peers as being amongst 'the faithful', not because they put themselves into one group but because there has been a lot of religion of one kind and another in their lives and this fact in itself differentiates them from those 'without' religion of any kind.

Rites that define communal  
belonging also define  
not-belonging

Without intending it, we have been part of a revolution in faith in Britain. But like all social change it isn't really possible for those in the throes of it to see where it will lead. We watch society struggle with the implications of accommodating the consciences and sensibilities of different faiths and cultures and we recognise themes from our own lives. We see how for some the encounter has been a disorientating and fearful thing, a reason to retreat into strict and sometimes intolerant or oppressive faith or group identity; for others the fact that contradictions exist is taken as a reason to abandon matters of the spirit and religious culture altogether. Amongst people in interfaith marriages too these responses are as typical as our 'liberal' celebratory version. If marriages like ours do offer a model of religion in an interfaith world then it is a less certain, clear-cut or predictable model than we have been letting on. In a society whose religious life is like such marriages there would be change: syncretisms and syntheses, new religious forms, revivals and schisms. There would be some struggle for dominance, things lost but also God willing, new insights, and understanding.

Heather Al-Yousuf



# a binding of generations

I am a Christian priest serving the Church of England and am married to a Hindu woman. We have been married for eleven years. I did not expect to marry someone of a different religion or culture to my own, but this is what happened. I met my wife when we were students. In one of the summer holidays I went to work for the Iona community, which is an ecumenical Christian community based on the island of Iona off western Scotland. My wife was also working there. As you can guess, young people meet and fall in love...

She was born in northern England into a family who had come to Britain in the early 1960s from rural Gujarat. It was expected that her parents would arrange her marriage to someone suitable from within her community. No one before had openly married someone from outside the community. So, when she felt ready, my wife told her parents about us and I went to stay for a weekend to meet them. I must say that I have always felt extremely welcomed by them and part of their family. It must have been a huge adjustment for them that their only child was going to marry someone outside the community, caste and religion. They have accepted this with enormous grace and have always placed me at the centre of things, even when I know that this has led to some uncomfortable times.

We thought hard about the marriage ceremony, and came to the conclusion that we wanted to reflect and honour both our religious traditions fully, so we were married twice. First in my family's church, and then three weeks later in the Hindu temple. At the Christian wedding about ninety people filled the small medieval church in which the ceremony took place. This included a coach full of my wife's family who came to share in the occasion of a traditional Anglican marriage ceremony with the couple making vows to each other before God and the community, with bible readings and a sermon, prayers, and legal formalities, followed by a celebratory reception.

Three weeks later we were married again in a Hindu ceremony. This was a much bigger affair with three hundred and fifty guests. As you can imagine, there was a great deal of interest in this wedding. For me, the main difference between the ceremonies went beyond ritual, custom or language, for it was the binding together of two families for several generations. In Christian understanding, it is the joining of two individuals 'till death do us part'. Reflecting on this, I am not sure what the difference means, but I do know that there is a profound joining between us. So the weddings were

positive experiences, although I know that my wife felt under a lot of pressure at the Hindu ceremony and that people had come to see this person marrying out of community. I was impressed by my wife's father. It would have been easy for him to have made sure that the ceremony was hidden and private, and I think there may have been some pressure for him to do this. He declared that he had nothing to be ashamed about.

History and common sense shows us that it is inevitable that individuals from different communities will meet, love and marry. This is a challenge as well as a blessing to the different communities, and it is something that we have to continue working on together. I would say that marriages such as mine have a great deal to offer society. Perhaps they offer a kind of icon of the future for rainbow cities and communities such as those from which we all come. If we cannot live together, work together, love together, then what is the future

## a kind of icon of the future

for us? Marriages like ours clearly offer a challenge to those religious people and forces who would like to make everyone in the world the same as they are. I know Christian people who are concerned and scandalised because of my marriage.

This is magnified and given focus because I am a priest and have a public and leadership role within the Church. I should say that at no time during the lengthy procedure of selection and formation for me to become an Anglican priest, did it become apparent that it was a problem or a stumbling block for me to be married to someone of another faith (although people did speak to me truthfully about the pain that this might involve). I do question as to what God might be up to in relationships such as mine (and for Christians bearing in mind that God is love, and that those who live in love, live in God).

We have one child and are doing our best to bring her up in the integrity of both traditions. We felt that the Hindu and Indian parts of her would be most vulnerable to being lost, so she has a traditional and ancient Hindu name. We are planning her first trip to India, which will of course include time spent with her great-grandmother in the village. I suppose it is inevitable that she goes to church more than temple, but at a Hindu wedding she went to recently she was asked if she was Christian or Hindu, and she answered that she was both. This makes me very proud. If she wants to choose in the future, she can, but we are trying to give her a proper grounding in both. She offers a future, a challenge and a blessing to this country and its faith communities.

*The writer wishes to maintain anonymity*

# doubly blessed

My husband I met through inter-faith activities and so knew right from the beginning what each other's religious commitments were. My husband was a practising Catholic with a brother. I was Jewish with a mother who was extremely suspicious of anything that appeared Christian by character. Although not attending shul her Jewish identity was very much a part of her - annual trips to Israel, a caravan called Shalom and a dog called Golda Mayer were all tell-tale signs of what she valued.

From the time that we started to plan the wedding we realised our relationship was going to be one of continued learning and dialogue built upon a never-ending predicament of how do we marry the two traditions together without either of us losing our identity? We both felt strongly that we wanted an inter-faith marriage - that should be easy in this day and age we thought! Wrong!! We quickly discovered that it was easy to have a non-faith wedding or a wedding where passages from all faith traditions could be read. Arranging a service which gave equal status to and protected the integrity of two religions was a quite different matter.

Prepared orders of service which were satisfactory to both of us were extremely difficult, or rather impossible to find. We quickly realised that we would have to create our own. The first step we had to take was to decide on the content of the service. We knew that until that was written we would not be able to talk to ministers to see if they would conduct it. This called for long theological discussions often accompanied by a deep anxiety at the confusion and offence symbols from one faith could convey to members of the other. Our starting point was to look at what were the essential elements of the marriage ceremony from each tradition. We then began to construct a service. The excitement and relief we experienced when we realised there were some common elements - even some common symbols e.g. wine used in both traditions. Such spontaneous bouts of exhilaration would be swiftly followed by strong feelings of despondency when we realised for instance, that although each tradition may have a shared practice or artefact it often represented radically different concepts for each tradition.

When, after much deliberation we had agreed a reasonably satisfactory draft of the service we began to consider who might conduct it for us. We were truly blessed to be able to locate a priest and a rabbi - acquaintances of each of us - who, at some risk to themselves, agreed to conduct the service jointly. Reassuringly they were as keen as we were to ensure that our concerns about respecting the integrity of each tradition were achieved. They were keen to create for us the deeply spiritual experience that we wanted the marriage service to be.

The years since our marriage have been filled with dialogue, debate and the odd theological argument. Week-

ends usually include considerable time spent with my husband reading *The Tablet* and I the *Jewish Chronicle* followed by discussions of their invariably interesting and sometimes contentious content.

One of the issues we often discuss is that neither of us can really 'know' what it is really like for the other when they are observing a major festival or event from their own tradition. I may know in practice, from my experience as a lecturer in Religious Studies, that Good Friday is highly important to my husband but I can never know fully what it is like for him i.e. the feeling, the emotion or spiritual significance that he experiences by observing it. Similarly it is hard for him to

keep up with the concepts behind so many of the festivals and which are major or minor from my Jewish tradition. Being a member of a minority religion is difficult in itself and it is very easy to be unaware that a major festival is looming. Therefore, conscious decisions have to be made by each of us to ensure that we don't unwittingly show disrespect or insensitivity to each other at these times.

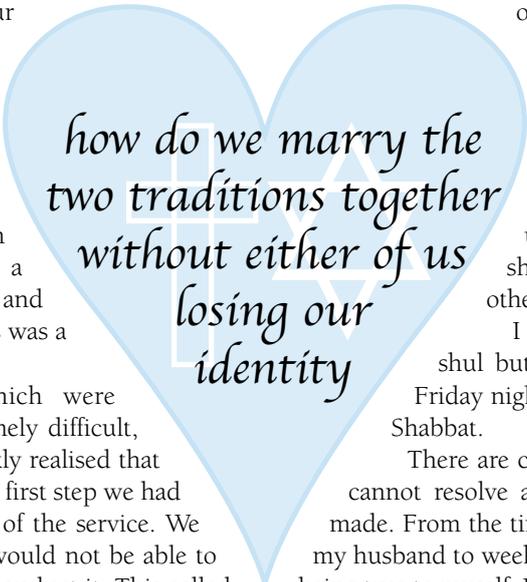
I have never been a regular attender at shul but my husband and I both try to make Friday night special. Whenever possible I bring in Shabbat.

There are certain aspects of our lives that dialogue cannot resolve and about which decisions have to be made. From the time of our marriage I have accompanied my husband to weekly Mass. However I never feel that I am being true to myself. Hence I find myself omitting words from hymns which contradicted my own beliefs, unable to kneel in prayers and feel a range of emotions when people were going up for communion. My husband does not want me to feel uncomfortable about being the lone occupant of the pews at this time and so he tries to stay in the pew as long as he can. And then there are the times when it is downright embarrassing. Recently I accompanied my husband to Mass after a considerable time gap. As luck would have it, the opening line for the main scripture reading that Sunday was "The disciples had barred the doors for fear of the Jews". We both looked horrified at each other and he bent towards me and slowly but surely whispered "I'm now feeling how they felt!"

One of the times when we really feel the enrichment that our inter-faith marriage has brought each of us is after we have attended the regular inter-faith dialogue meetings held in our area. The discussions we have on the way home as we make sense of the Muslim Ummah or the Hindu Atman, from each of our own faith perspectives is always stimulating and a moment of growth.

Our marriage is a continual dialogue about our beliefs and traditions. We are thus constantly learning from and being enriched by each other - it's a marriage that is doubly blessed!

Joy White



how do we marry the  
two traditions together  
without either of us  
losing our  
identity



# Making a difference:

## An appeal for New Life (Nava Jeevan)

who live on the streets of Kolkata (Calcutta).

Why do the street girl-children need help? The number of girls on the street of Kolkata is increasing. They go through the trauma of fear and insecurity; socially handicapped very often they are forced into delinquency, prostitution or begging. They are deprived of their basic human needs and live in unhygienic filthy conditions, robbed of their childhood.

Last year the Sisters rented a two-roomed terrace apartment and took in eight girls from the streets. The Sisters had known them for many years as the bridge they lived under was close to the church. The girls had been living on the streets with their mothers, begging, and were all involved in drugs of various kinds. The mothers agreed to let the girls live with the Sisters. At the beginning it was very difficult for everyone as the girls had to be weaned off their drugs and were often violent. They had never been to school, and so initially the Sisters tutored them in the apartment. The intention always is not to disconnect the girls from their families only to improve their prospects and to this end the children would all go 'home' on Sundays to visit their families on the streets.

Sadly two of the girls could not be saved from their addiction to drugs, and they returned to live on the streets. Two other girls did so well that they now attend an English medium school in Pandua, three others are still living in the apartment and go to a local school. The eighth child has found school difficult, plus her behaviour was presenting problems for the teachers. She was therefore withdrawn and she now goes to afternoon classes with the sisters. She is doing

Nava Jeevan is a home run by the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod (Kolkata Province) to help the vulnerable street girl-children and battered women

well and is growing in confidence. Unfortunately visits 'home' for all of the girls have been reduced to once a month as some parents forced the girls to beg on their return to the streets.

The Sisters now also run classes for approximately thirty street girls in a small room. The girls are taught basic maths and English.

The women on the streets of Kolkata may be widows forced out of their houses: some may be persecuted by their in-laws or husbands; some may be sold or tricked by people promising jobs. The women end up on the street as rag pickers; many of them have to turn to prostitution and use their children to beg or pickpocket for their sustenance. Hence, they may not be willing to send their children to be educated, as their absence will decrease their meagre income.

In the year the work has progressed remarkably and there is great hope and vision for the future.

The Sisters have taken in four more, younger girls and they too are going to local school. However, the apartment is too small to take any more girls and initiate a women's project. The Sisters are looking to raise funds to buy a house that will accommodate both projects.

*"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop"*  
Mother Theresa

Stephanie Cadman

If you would like to help or learn more about Nava Jeevan please contact Stephanie on [stephinindia03@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stephinindia03@yahoo.co.uk) or the Sisters: [scccal@cal2.vsnl.net.in](mailto:scccal@cal2.vsnl.net.in) Postal address: Nava Jeevan, c/o Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod, 23 Lower Range, Circus Avenue, PO 700017 West Bengal, Kolkata, India. +91-33-22 479650

## Meditation

**Tsunami: 26.12.2004** That we do not forget what it is like to be a living, but also dying, shoreline place where the Ocean and the sand, death and Be-coming meet.

It is sunrise in Goa. I am walking along the water's edge in the gentle breeze blowing from the Arabian Sea. Wave by wave, the microcosm at my feet keeps changing, small stones, shells, bits of rubbish and little shells and crabs living in the sand are in continuous movement, as if performing a dance directed by some mysterious choreography.

As my bare feet continue their progress along the wetness of the soft fine sand, I meditate how easy it is to forget Reality. To forget what it is like to BE a living shoreline, continuously moulded and transformed by the movement of the sea and sand. To forget what it is like to be the place where sea and sand, two separate material forces, meet and exchange energies, whisper and caress each other, sometimes also roar and fight for each other's space.

The Ocean's edge is a perfect metaphor for breathing: the sea and the shore breathe together. One breathes in the other's

outbreath, is born from the other's death, and in that instant the direct changes. Each breath is unique. So, too am I, a human being, reborn every time air flows into my lungs, where it is transformed according to my internal state at that moment. At each outbreath, I let go of my self, mingle with the world, disappear. Only to be-come again at the next in-breath. In meditation the rhythm of the in-breath and the out-breath is a mantra: HAM-SA-HAM-SA. Every human being repeats this mantra at every in and out-breath without even being conscious of it. Becoming aware of ham-sa-ham-sa at every breath expands the consciousness, elevating it to a higher level. Ordinarily in-and-outbreath are experienced as continuous, but when one becomes conscious of and internalises ham-sa-ham-sa mantra, he or she realises that at every change of direction of breath, there is a gap, a gap which deepening meditation can become more aware of. Learning to concentrate on the gap between in-and-outbreath opens the third eye and gives a glimpse of the Universal Self.

*Meditations by the Sea: composed by Dr. Kirsti Evans, Finland*

# FAITH & WORKS & KARMAYOGA

By engaging in interfaith dialogue we acquire knowledge of what others believe and practice: knowledge that is beneficial in all kinds of social and academic ways (not least because it brushes away those misleading stereotypes that so often lead to fear, prejudice, and injustice). But knowledge *by itself* can be a sterile, unedifying, commodity: it is only when we allow that knowledge to challenge our own practices and beliefs, that this knowledge will be beneficial for our own spiritual development. A recent discussion with a Hindu at a United Religions Initiative event in Newcastle got me thinking about one way in which this could be achieved: Hindu thinking points towards one possible solution to what I consider to be a sticky problem in the New Testament.

The New Testament, for Christians (a category into which I place myself), is a collection of narratives and letters that form the most important part of our Scriptures, the Bible. Amongst other important writings the New Testament contains a number of letters, many written by the Apostle Paul. These letters are a source of guidance for Christians on theological, ecclesiastical, and social matters. But because these letters were written in different contexts and times, to specific people, in response to particular problems, they do not represent a systematic or comprehensive guide, and often throw up confusions and tensions.

One such tension concerns the Christian concept of justification. Paul tells the Christians of Galatia, “*a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ*” (Galatians 2:16). For the Protestant reformers – and subsequently most protestant Christians – Paul was making a sharp distinction between faith (belief in Jesus Christ) and works, which did not bring salvation. This seems clear enough, but Paul said to the Roman Christian, “*For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified*” (Romans 2:13). Is Paul contradicting himself? If we believe ourselves to be justified by faith alone then what can we make of the statement in ‘The Epistle of James’, “*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone*” (James 2:17)? For a Protestant Christian there is an undeniable tension here. Hindu thought showed me a fresh way of approaching this problem.

Hindu tradition has always insisted on the voice of personal experience (combined with the voices of tradition and scripture) as a crucial component of one’s religious response to life<sup>1</sup>. Personal experience is important because Hindus, as I understand it, believe that *Brahman* – what Christians might call Holy Power, Eternal, God – lies within each individual in the form of *Atman* – what Christians might call Spirit, or Soul (although English words can never do justice to the terms). This concept finds its classical expression in the Upanishads in the phrase, *tat tvam asi*, “That thou art” (Chandogya Upanishad). To explain this concept the Chandogya Upanishad tells the story of father, Brahmin Uddalaka and his son, Svetaketu: Uddalaka explains to his son:

“O son, put this salt in the water,”  
and Svetaketu does as directed. The next day, father asks him to bring the pot, and asks the son to feel or look for the salt. The son says he cannot see or feel the salt. Then father says:  
“O son, taste the water from above.”  
“Yes sir, it is salty,” says the son.  
“Drink from the middle.”  
“It is salty,” says the son.  
“Drink from the bottom.”  
“It is salty,” says the son.  
“Here you could not see or feel the salt, but you could taste it all the same”

Chandogya Upanishad 6:13<sup>2</sup>

For Hindus, the pursuit of truth, of understanding of the *Brahman*, is regarded as an existential matter, in which the whole person is involved. It is said of Hinduism that it does not matter what you believe it is *how* you believe that is important. This is acted out through Yoga. The word ‘yoga’ will conjure up, for many Westerners, visions of people in leotards contorting themselves into uncomfortable looking positions, but in Hinduism Yoga means much, much more. Yogas are methods of contemplation that involve seeking the Eternal within, they are pathways to union with the Divine, the Sanskrit root *yuj* means literally, *to join*. The human mind cannot embrace the infinite but it can dwell on the finite and the concrete: this is Yoga’s role.

*Karmayoga* is one important form of Yoga. Sri Aurobindo, the great Hindu thinker, stressed the importance of *karmayoga*, “the spiritual life finds its most potent expression in the man who lives the ordinary life of men in the strength of the Yoga”<sup>3</sup>. The theory behind *karmayoga* is this: the compulsions of life make man work; man cannot escape from work; so work is performed as a spiritual discipline. This is expressed profoundly in the Bhagavad Gita, often called ‘the scripture of Yoga’ (*yoga-sastra*), in which Krishna tells Arjuna:

“Not from refraining from action does man attain freedom from action. Not by mere renunciation does he attain supreme perfection.

For not even for a moment can man be without action. Helplessly are all driven to action by forces born of Nature.

He who withdraws himself from actions, but ponders on their pleasures in his heart, he is under a delusion and is a false follower of the Path.

But great is the man who, free from attachments, and with a mind ruling its powers in harmony, works on the path of Karma Yoga, the path of consecrated action.”

Bhagavad Gita 3:3-7<sup>4</sup>

1 J.Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Routledge, 1994) p165  
3 Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayoga* (<http://intyoga.freesevers.com/k-krmayo.htm>)

2 Translated by R.C.Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures* (Everyman’s Library, 1966)  
4 Translated by J.Mascano, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Penguin Books, 1975)

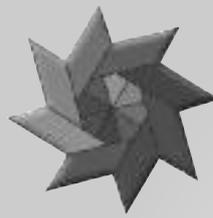
One has to sacrifice all actions to *Brahman*. All actions must be carried out as a sacrifice. A traditional tale is told of King Sikhidwaja who renounces all his possessions, his kingdom, his wife and children, but when the Queen, Chudala, asks him "what will remain when you are cremated?", he replies, "my ashes". The moral of the tale is this: for the King the *me* and *mine* remained despite having outwardly abandoned all. For the practice of *karmayoga* it is not the conduct that counts but the consciousness with which conduct proceeds

What then of the New Testament and the apparent tension between justification by faith alone or by works? In *karmayoga*, it is not the conduct that counts but the consciousness with which conduct proceeds. It seems to me that for the Apostle Paul and James a similar concept is in operation: it is not the works that count but the faith with which the works are carried out. Having stated that "a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Romans 3:28); Paul precedes to qualify that by saying "Do we overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary we uphold the law!" (Romans 3:31). This is contradictory only on the surface for what Paul is suggesting is that mechanically following a set of rules by itself is pointless if it is not accompanied by the right attitude, that of service to God. Thus Paul exhorts us, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk (i.e. act) by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

In *karmayoga* it is not the conduct that counts but the consciousness with which conduct proceeds, for Paul and James, the consciousness is key, and for both authors right consciousness will by necessity manifest itself in deeds: Describing the Patriarch, Abraham, James states, "faith was completed by works" (James 2:22) – this is what he means when he says, "Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:18). For Paul action runs the risk of being hollow if it is without faith, for James faith is hollow if it is without works. Actions for Paul and James, as it is in *karmayoga*, is to be performed as a sacrifice to God, this is why Paul can say to the Christians at Colossae "whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31 cf. Colossians 3:17).

Hinduism and Christian are distinct in so many ways, and I do not wish to fudge that. Let us celebrate our differences boldly, relish them, and most importantly be courageous in learning from them: If two human beings look upon an object from different angles they will see different things, if they share what they see with each other they will both understand better what they are looking at. The experience of *karmayoga* in Hinduism is that other human being, looking from a different vantage point. For Christians, living a life in the newness of Christ means drawing closer to God through faith, our reflections on *karmayoga* suggest that for Paul and James and for us too, we should seek to draw nearer also in our action, but not through mechanical action but through sacrificial action. The religious visionary and Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, in his poem 'Dust-temple' sums up beautifully, "Be one with Him in the way of work, let sweat pour to the ground".

Hector Patmore  
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# URI Principles

- 1 We are a bridge-building organisation, not a religion
- 2 We respect the sacred wisdom, spiritual expression and indigenous tradition of each religion.
- 3 We respect the differences among religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions.
- 4 We encourage our members to deepen their roots in their own tradition.
- 5 We listen and speak with respect to deepen mutual understanding and trust.
- 6 We give and receive hospitality.
- 7 We seek and welcome the gift of diversity and model practices that do not discriminate.
- 8 We practice equal participation of women and men in all aspects of the URI.
- 9 We practice healing and reconciliation to resolve conflict without resorting to violence.
- 10 We act from sound ecological practices to protect and preserve the Earth for both present and future generations.
- 11 We seek and offer cooperation with other interfaith efforts.
- 12 We welcome as members all individuals, organisations and associations who subscribe to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
- 13 We have the authority to make decisions at the most local level that includes all the relevant and affected parties.
- 14 We have the right to organise in any manner, on any scale, in any area, and around any issue or activity which is relevant to and consistent with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
- 15 Our deliberations and decisions shall be made at every level by bodies and methods that represent fairly the diversity of affected interests and are not dominated by any.
- 16 We (each part of the URI) shall relinquish only such autonomy and resources as are essential to the pursuit of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.
- 17 We have the responsibility to develop financial and other resources to meet the needs of our part, and to share financial and other resources to help meet the needs of other parts.
- 18 We maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, prudent use of resources, and fair and accurate disclosure of information.
- 19 We are committed to organisation, learning and adaptation.
- 20 We honour the richness and diversity of all languages and the right and responsibility of participants to translate and interpret the Charter, Bylaws and related documents in accordance with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles and the spirit of the United Religions Initiative.
- 21 Members of the URI shall not be coerced to participate in any ritual or be proselytised



## Statement on the London Bombings of July 2005

### From the Interim Regional Council of the United Religions Initiative in Southeast Asia

We of the United Religions Initiative in the South East Asia-Pacific Region have learned with horror of the bombings in London over the last few days.

We extend our deepest condolences to the families of the bereaved. We pray for the quick and full recovery of those injured. We rejoice at the bravery, skill, and compassion of all those who are assisting those deeply implicated in this tragedy.

We pray that the perpetrators of these acts may be brought to justice, and be converted at heart to the ways of love, peace, and good will for all living beings.

We urge people of good sense and good will to join us in a partnership of Religions. In particular we wish to prevent backlash of any kind against Muslim communities world wide following the London Event. Auckland New Zealand writers Anjum Rahman and Tariq Ashraf have joined a host of Muslim voices world wide in expressing compassion, outrage and a complete rejection of the attacks as in any way justifiable under the banner of Islam.

In our times and throughout history, humanity has been both victim and perpetrator of gross violence, war and terror. Time and again violence has begotten violence. And in these matters our religions have not themselves been innocent.

We of the "United Religions Initiative" (URI) have resolved, through daily interfaith co-operation, "to use our combined resources only for non-violent, compassionate action, to awaken to our deepest truths, and to manifest love and justice among all life in our Earth community". These are words of the solemn Charter signed by us all in Pittsburgh USA, and in URI communities around the world, at the dawn of this new Millennium. We believe that this spirit of active co-operation will and must urgently grow between all religions - between all spiritual and indigenous traditions.

We pray for fortitude in this most trying of times. May our nations and religions be granted an outpouring of compassion, love and justice. This alone can bring to birth and sturdy maturity the elusive and fragile peace that children, women, and men have yearned for from the beginning of our epic human journey.

Signed (for the Council)

DR. AMIR FARID ISAHAK (Muslim, Malaysia)

Council Members:

DR. AMIR FARID ISAHAK (Muslim, Malaysia)

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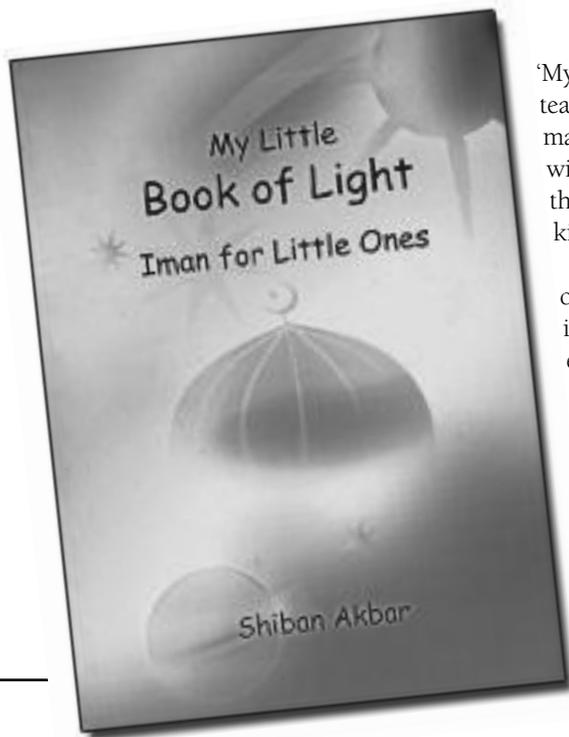
MR. SAM AN ROS (Buddhist, Cambodia)

MR. BONIFACIO QUIROG (Anthroposophy, Philippines)

MR. LEE COLLANO (Christian, Philippines)

# My Little Book of Light: Iman for Little Ones

By Shibban Akbar - Published by Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd.



'My Little Book of Light: Iman for Little Ones' is a great and fun book that teaches children the basic beliefs of Islam in a charming and colourful manner. It takes the reader through each of the Islamic beliefs starting with Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the last day, faith and the hereafter, as well that it teaches them the importance of generosity, kindness, good behaviour and much more.

Every section of the book is well connected to each other and neatly organised. The religious sources are amazingly maintained and the text is full of information. The book is laid out in a way that is fun and educational.

The illustrations in the book are wonderful, fun and appropriate to the text. The important words in the book such as 'Allah' and the Arabic words are highlighted and printed in a different font and colour to make them stand out.

I personally think that this is a delightful book for children who are seeking the way of Islam.

Mona Tarmal  
aged 13

## *Practising The Sacred Art of Listening*

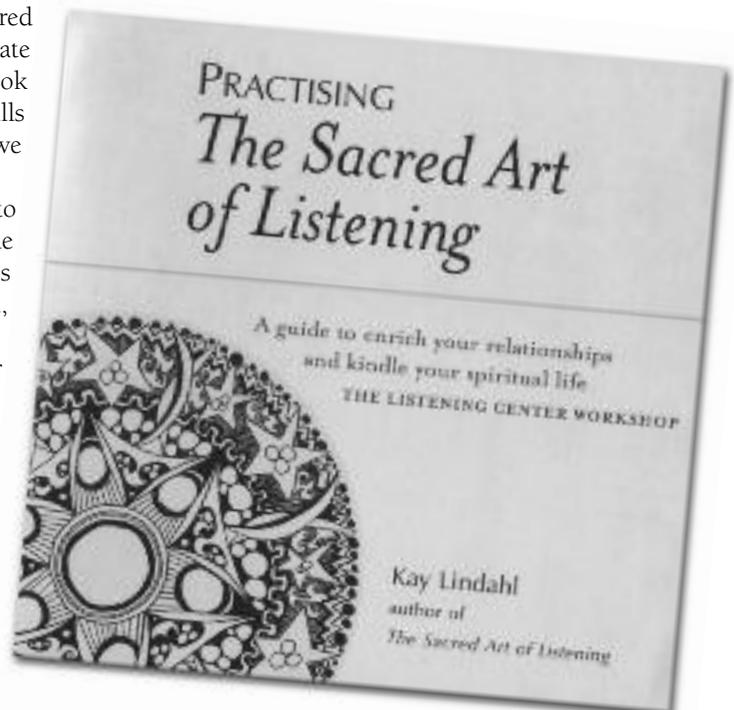
By Kay Lindahl

This is Kay Lindahl's second book. It follows on from 'The Sacred Art of Listening' which provided 40 reflections to help cultivate and enhance listening skills. As the title of this new book suggests, it offers a more practical approach to developing skills of listening in everyday situations, and in conversations that we may find ourselves involved in.

All too often we hear what people say, rather than listen to what is being said. Lindahl's book helps the reader to make the distinction between hearing and listening. She provides exercises to help focus the listener on the present moment, and on the words being communicated.

This book will make you question how effective a listener you are, and provide simple exercises and reflections to improve your listening capability. Each chapter focuses on the different communication and listening contexts that we encounter on a day to day basis, such as contemplative listening, heart listening and listening in groups. Examples of listening contexts are given and guidance is provided to illustrate good listening and effective communication. It will, I feel, help enhance any reader's listening and communication skills within a personal or professional context.

Lorna Douglas



# Intensive light

a gift from God – not to  
possess, but to pass on



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Years ago, as a clergy wife with three children under five and, at the time, rather starved of artistic work, I was asked to make a number of drawings of birds for the RSPB, to be printed on their products. This commission seemed heaven-sent, and my husband Anthony and I decided I should take time off from parish duties for a while and agree to do it. Later that day, walking down the hill to the supermarket, I was almost entirely preoccupied by how I would proceed – Keyhaven marshes, near my mother-in-law's house, had an abundance of migrant waders...

At the time it was winter, but not freezing – why, then, was there this sheet of ice across the pavement, with water running freely over the top of it? I followed it up the garden path to where it appeared under the front door, rang the bell, went round the back of the house, stood on a dustbin and peered in through the window. Below me, in the sink, both taps were overflowing onto the floor. Beyond was a winged armchair and, slipped to one side, a figure – a woman. Two hours later I heard from the hospital that she had survived both the stroke which had incapacitated her, and the concomitant hypothermia.

I felt a real conflict: I asked myself: how can I take time off to do my art-work if it means that one day I might not see a sheet of ice across the pavement? I knew I couldn't and I was angry with God for weeks! Then someone said to me, "Aren't you clever with your art-work. It's such a gift!"

I woke up, then, to the fact that my art was, and is, a gift – and a gift from God – not to possess, but to pass on. It was a revelation, and I promised God that if ever I had time to paint again, both the Christian themes and the proceeds would always seek to help those in need. A few years later, that time came. I was able to exhibit thirty drawings and paintings in aid of victims of war and, later still, *The Hidden Passion* also raised funds for refugees. There has been no shortage of work, and frequently faith groups have asked to reproduce images, as in this publication.

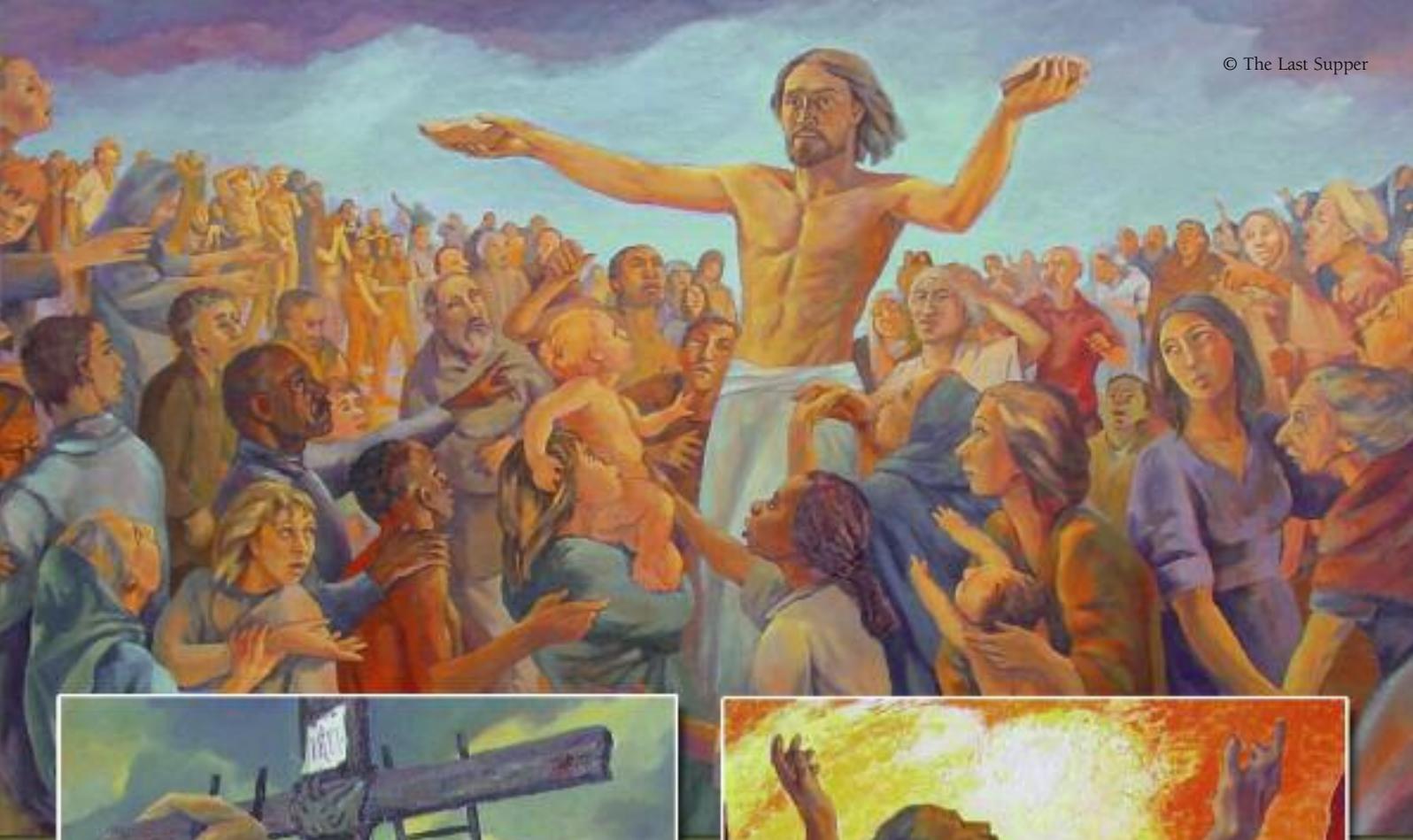
Currently I am working on a commission of *The Transfiguration*, and as usual I draw first. It is a compositional mine-field because the eye wants to dart between two asymmetrical groups of people, Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the one hand, and Peter, James and John on the other. The challenge for me is how to work within this asymmetry, itself inherent with the symmetry of God.

Part of my answer is to focus on the intensity of light in Jesus, part to try to convey the voice of God. For the disciples, the meaning of that whole event was hearing his voice proclaim: "This is my Beloved Son...". And Moses and Elijah express another manifestation of the voice of God – in both the "I AM" of the Burning Bush and in the person of Elijah, forerunner of the Messiah. The fact that these prophets appear to the disciples, albeit in a vision, articulates and authenticates Jesus as Christ.

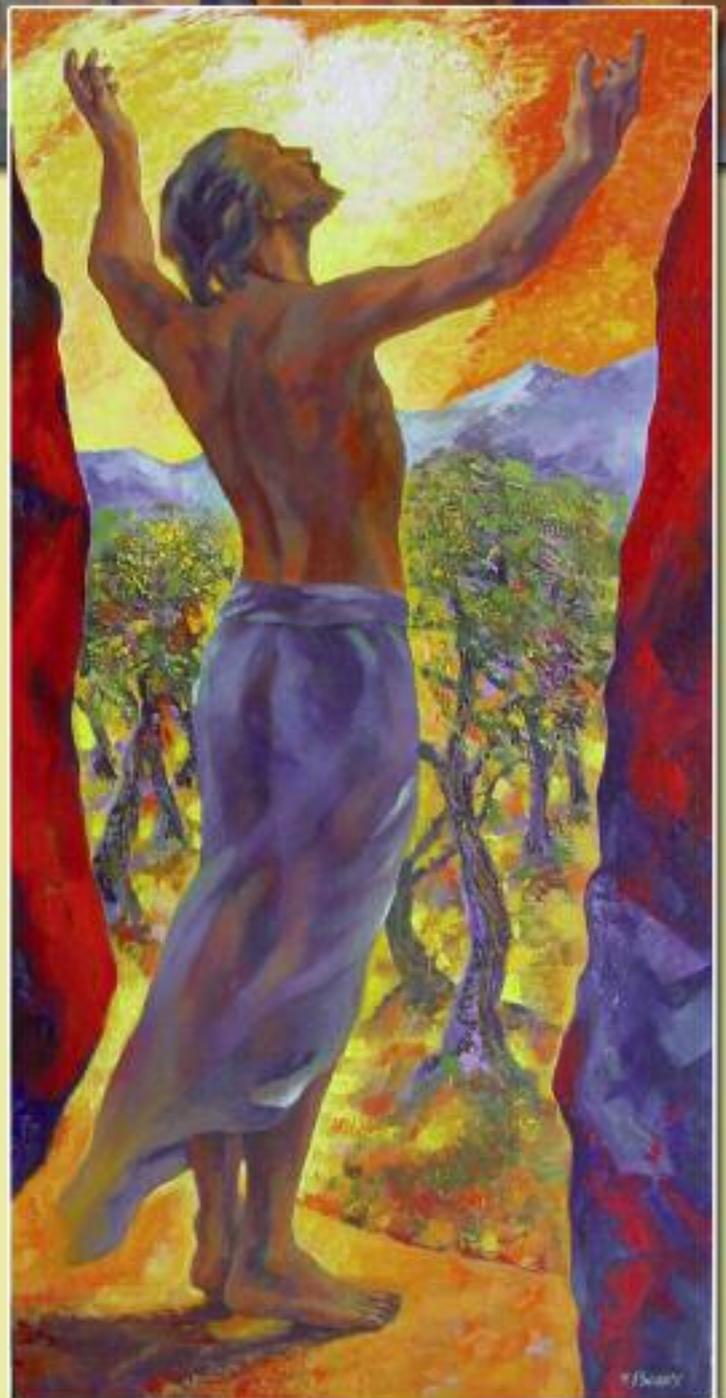
Suddenly the painting becomes less about symmetry and more about communication. That's good, because it must appeal to the heart – as the voice does. But Christ is the focus, the vividly-lit central figure, whilst Moses and Elijah are more abstract, part of the continuity of revelation. The context is local, a vast triangular hill bordering Offa's Dyke the foreground is angular, rocky and hazardous, and from the left the sun catches the top of a thorn bush, setting it on fire.

For what actually happened on that mountain? Well, the Greek translation has 'lightening' – a sudden flash revealing intense brightness on Christ's robes – and the three figures in the foreground scramble to their feet – stunned, taken aback, *woken*. The action, therefore, is with the disciples, but the message is also for us, the on-lookers. It is our experience, too, and it is to us that God still speaks, giving meaning and purpose to our work.

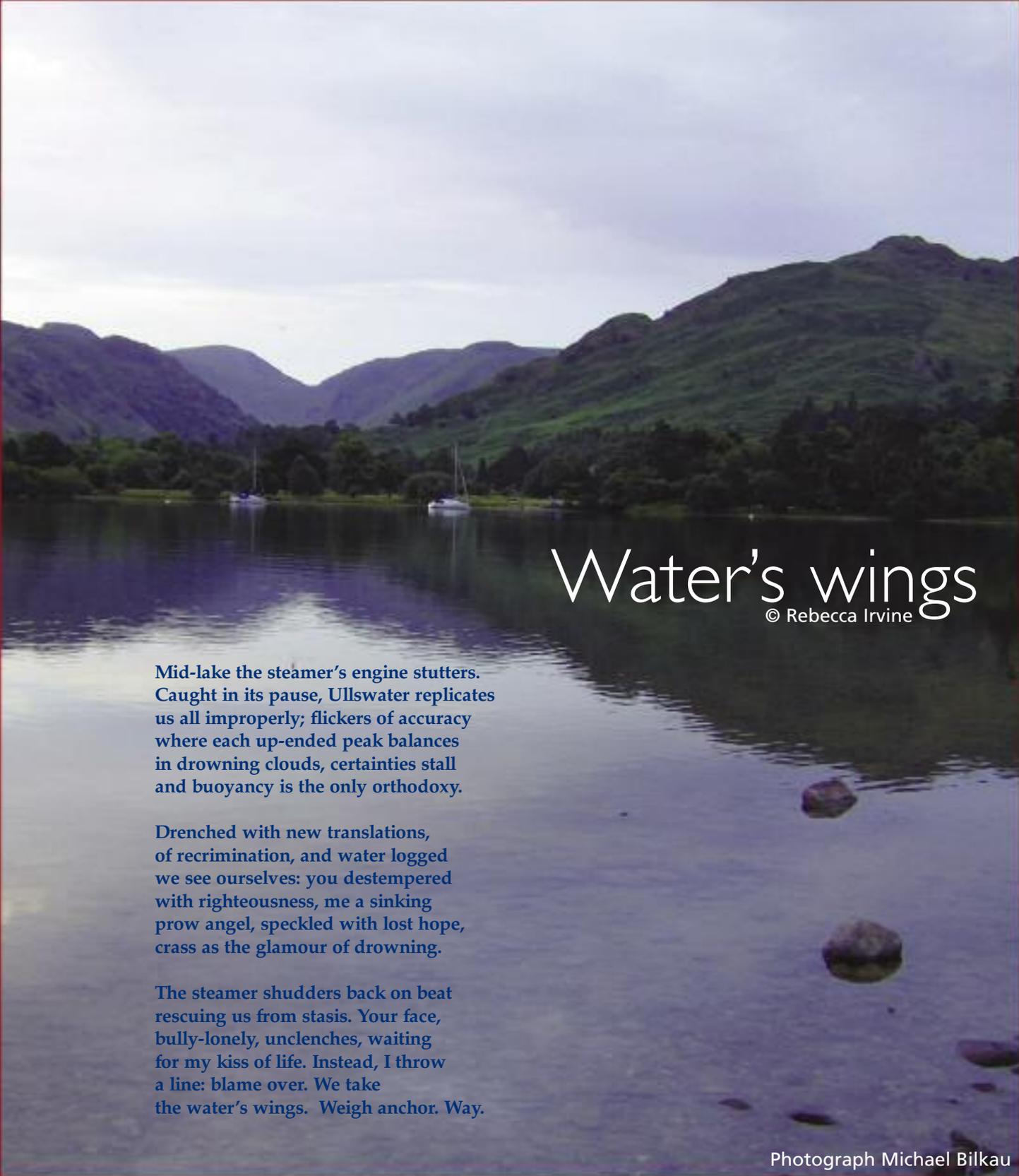
Kathy Priddis



© Deposition



© Resurrection



# Water's wings

© Rebecca Irvine

Mid-lake the steamer's engine stutters.  
Caught in its pause, Ullswater replicates  
us all improperly; flickers of accuracy  
where each up-ended peak balances  
in drowning clouds, certainties stall  
and buoyancy is the only orthodoxy.

Drenched with new translations,  
of recrimination, and water logged  
we see ourselves: you destempered  
with righteousness, me a sinking  
prow angel, speckled with lost hope,  
crass as the glamour of drowning.

The steamer shudders back on beat  
rescuing us from stasis. Your face,  
bully-lonely, unclenches, waiting  
for my kiss of life. Instead, I throw  
a line: blame over. We take  
the water's wings. Weigh anchor. Way.

Photograph Michael Bilkau