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# Live encounters

Free online magazine from village earth

February 2016

THE THREE FORMS OF LOVE  
PAULO COELHO

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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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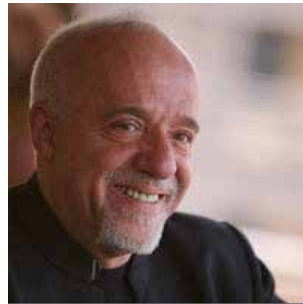
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Cover photograph of fish by Mark Ulyseas.





## The three forms of love: Eros, Philos, Agape

**Paulo Coelho**

Paulo Coelho (Portuguese: [ˈpawlu kuˈɛlu]), born August 24, 1947) is considered one of the most influential authors of our times. He is most widely read and his books have sold more than 195 million copies worldwide, have been released in 170 countries and been translated into 80 languages. He has received numerous prestigious international awards amongst them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. He has been a member of the Academy of Letters of Brazil since 2002, and in 2007 he was proclaimed Messenger of Peace by the United Nations. Paulo is the writer with the highest number of social media followers and is the all-time best-selling Portuguese language author. <https://www.facebook.com/paulocoelho/>



## Where Journeys Meet

**Randhir Khare**

Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal, a Director of The Rewachand Bhojwani Academy and Visiting Professor to the Dept Of English, Pune University. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures. [www.randhirkhare.in](http://www.randhirkhare.in)



## On the Train to Dublin July 1st 2014

**Terry McDonagh**

Irish poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was Drama Director at the Int. School Hamburg for 15 years. He now works freelance; has been writer in residence in Europe, Asia, Australia; published 7 poetry collections, book of letters, prose and poetry for young people translated into Indonesian and German, distributed internationally by Syracuse Uni. Press; latest poetry collection Ripple Effect/Arlen House; children's story, Michel the Merman, illustrated by Marc Barnes (NZ). He lives in Hamburg and Ireland. [www.terry-mcdonagh.com](http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com)



## Tried and Sentenced

**Philip Casey**

Philip Casey's novels are *The Fabulists*, *The Water Star* and *The Fisher Child*, previously published by Lilliput and Picador and now reissued in new editions by Casey's independent label eMaker Editions. Previously translated into German, *The Fabulists* was translated into Japanese by Noriko Ito and is published by eMaker Editions. He has also published *Tried and Sentenced*, his Selected poems, and a novel for children 9+, *The Coupla*. He is the founder and editor of [Irish Writers Online](http://www.irishwritersonline.com) and [Irish Culture](http://www.irishculture.com). A member of [Aosdána](http://www.aosdana.com), he lives in Dublin. <http://www.emakereditions.com>



## Renew This Town's Life - As in Days of Old

**Natalie Wood**

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K, Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month prior to outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She remained in regional Jewish journalism for over 20 years, leaving full-time writing to help run a family business and then completed a range of general office work. Wood and her husband, Brian Fink emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and live in Karmiel, Galilee. She features in *Smith Magazine's new Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life* and contributes to *Technorati*, *Blogcritics* and *Live Encounters* magazine. Her stories - [Website](http://www.nataliewood.com) and journalism - [Website](http://www.nataliewood.com)



## Prophet of Love

**Farrukh Dhondy in an exclusive interview**

Dhondy is a screenwriter, playwright and bestselling novelist. Born in Pune, India in 1944 he went to school and college in Pune and then to Pembroke College, Cambridge. He graduated in '67 having read Natural Sciences and English. He went on to do a thesis on Rudyard Kipling at Leicester University and then taught in various London schools. He has written several books including *The Bikini Murders* which was on top of the Indian bestseller lists for three weeks, *Bombay Duck*, *Poona Company* and the screenplay of *Split Wide Open* among others.



## Child Marriage in Amhara, Ethiopia: Faces of Change Part 2 Elizabeth Willmott-Harrop

Elizabeth is a freelance writer, poet and artist specialising in human rights advocacy, with a particular interest in the rights of women and children who has worked for many international organisations including Amnesty International and UNICEF, and has worked in a number of countries, where she has spoken with the victims of human trafficking. The subjects Elizabeth has worked and written on include inter-country adoption; legal reform; maternal and infant health; the sexualisation of children; and war propaganda. [www.libertyandhumanity.com](http://www.libertyandhumanity.com)



## Normative Esperanto?

**Siobhán Airey**

Siobhán is currently completing her doctorate in law at the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa. Her current research analyses how Official Development Assistance (ODA) or international development aid governs in a global context, focusing on the juridical nature of its various governance instruments. She has formerly worked in international development in South-East Asia. <http://cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/en/people/airey-siobhan>



## Making Rhinos Count in a World of Indifference

**Tisha Wardlow**

Tisha Wardlow is the founder and President of Fight for Rhinos, a U.S based 501c non-profit, established in 2012. Tisha's college background is in journalism and biology. She has gained her knowledge and passion through experience as a veterinary technician, educator at John Ball Zoo, assisting Focus on Ferals (a TNR group) and the Kent County Humane Society. Tisha is involved in local and state government as an advocate for an ivory ban, circus ban and for wildlife preservation, as well as animal rights. <http://fightforrhinos.com>



## Tajen - The Clandestine Cockfight - Bali's other sport

**Jill Gocher**

Bali based international photographer has spent her life exploring and enjoying Asian cultures. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, International Herald Tribune, Asia Spa, Discovery, Silver Kris and many more. Her books - *Asia's legendary Hotels*, *Periplus*, *Bali- Island of Light* -Marshall Cavendish, *Indonesia - Islands of the Imagination*. *Periplus*, *Australia - the land down under* - Times Editions, *Singapore, Indonesia - the last paradise* - Times Editions. She has held exhibitions in Singapore, Kathmandu, and Bali. [www.amazon.com/author/jillgocher](http://www.amazon.com/author/jillgocher)



## Absinthe Minded - Black Maria

**Mark Ulyseas**

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Paulo Coelho (Portuguese: [ˈpawlu ku'eɫu]), born August 24, 1947) is considered one of the most influential authors of our times. He is most widely read and his books have sold more than 195 million copies worldwide, have been released in 170 countries and been translated into 80 languages.

He was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947 and discovered early his vocation for writing. He worked as a director, theater actor, composer and journalist. His collaboration with Brazilian composer and singer Raul Seixas gave some of the greatest classic rock songs in Brazil.

He has received numerous prestigious international awards amongst them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. He has been a member of the Academy of Letters of Brazil since 2002, and in 2007 he was proclaimed Messenger of Peace by the United Nations. Paulo is the writer with the highest number of social media followers and is the all-time bestselling Portuguese language author. <https://www.facebook.com/paulocoelho/>

## PAULO COELHO

### THE THREE FORMS OF LOVE: EROS, PHILOS, AGAPE

In 1986, when I was on the road to Santiago with my guide Petrus, we passed through the city of Logroño while a wedding was taking place. We ordered two glasses of wine, I prepared something to nibble on, and Petrus discovered a table where we could sit down together with the other guests. The wedding couple cut an immense cake.

“They must love one another,” I thought aloud.

“Of course they love one another,” said a man in a dark suit sitting at our table. Have you ever seen anyone get married for any another reason?”

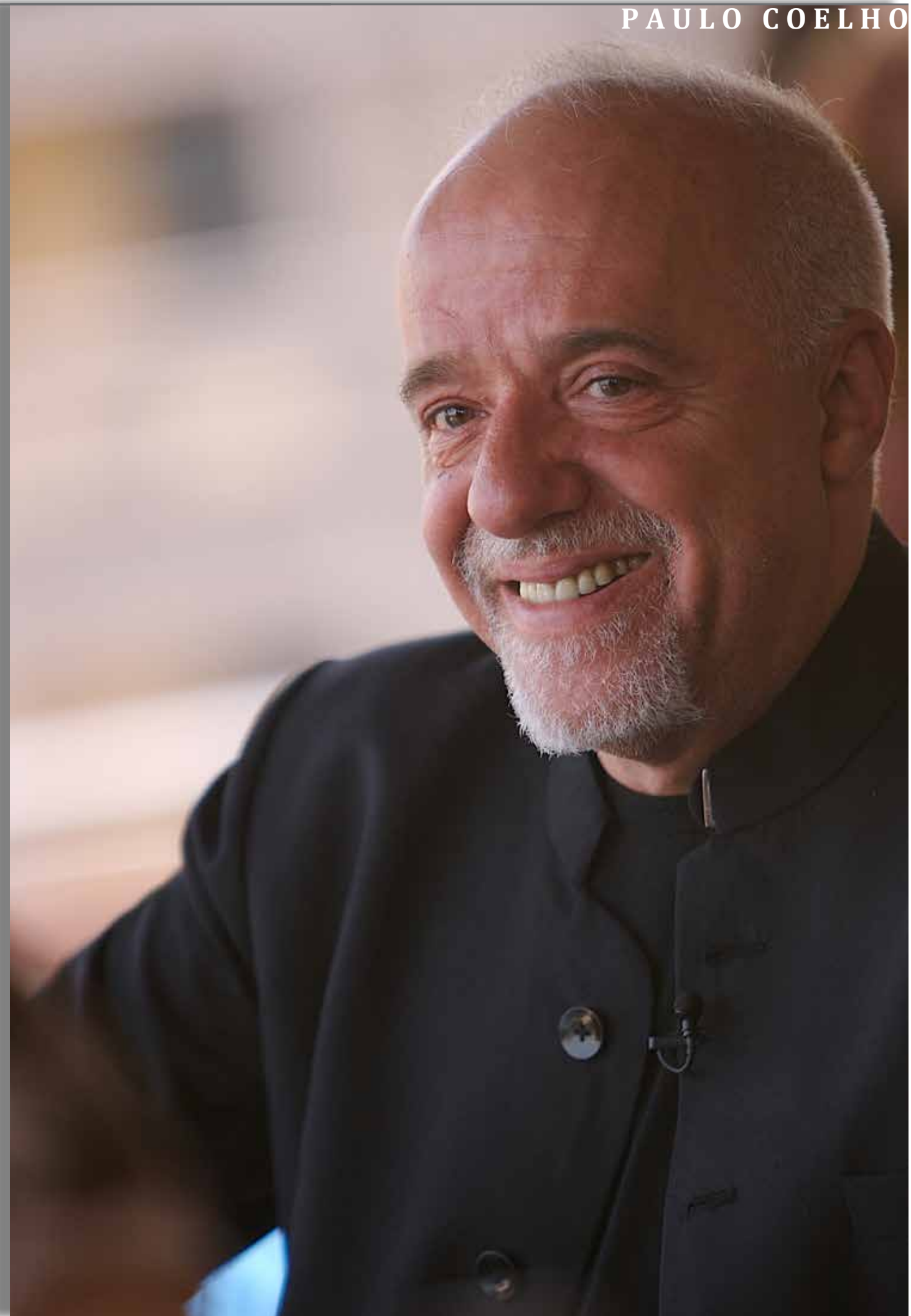
But Petrus did not let the question go unanswered:  
“What type of love do you mean: Eros, Philos or Agape?”

The man looked at him without understanding a word.

“There are three words in Greek to designate love,” Petrus said. “Today you are seeing the manifestation of Eros, that sentiment between two persons.”

The bride and groom smiled for the cameras and received compliments from the guests.

“The two seem to love one another. In a short time they will be fighting alone for life, establishing themselves in a house and taking part in the same adventure: that’s what makes love grand and dignified. He will pursue his career, she probably knows how to cook and will make an excellent housewife because since she was a little girl she was brought up to do that. She will accompany him, they will have children and they will manage to build something together, they will be happy for ever.”



“There are three words in Greek to designate love,” Petrus said. “Today you are seeing the manifestation of Eros, that sentiment between two persons.”

“All of a sudden, however, this story could happen the other way around. He is going to feel that he is not free enough to show all the Eros, all the love that he has for other women. She may begin to feel that she has sacrificed a career and a brilliant life to accompany her husband. So, instead of creating together, each of them will feel robbed in their way of loving. Eros, the spirit that joins them, will start to display only his bad side. And what God had meant to be man’s most noble sentiment will begin to be a source of hatred and destruction.”

I looked around me. Eros was present in many couples. But I could sense the presence of Eros the Good and Eros the Evil, just like Petrus had described.

“Notice how odd it is,” continued my guide. “Despite being good or bad, the face of Eros is never the same in all persons.”

The band struck up a waltz. People moved to a small paved area in front of the band-stand to dance. The alcohol began to show its effect and they all became merrier and drenched in sweat. I noticed a girl dressed in blue who must have been waiting for this wedding just for the moment of the waltz to arrive because she wanted to dance with someone she had dreamed of embracing ever since she entered adolescence. Her eyes followed the movements of a young man, well dressed in a light-colored suit, who was sitting with a bunch of friends. They were talking away merrily, they had not noticed that the waltz had started, nor had they noticed that a few yards away a girl in blue was staring at one of them.

I thought of small towns, of marriages with the chosen boy, dreamed of ever since childhood.

The girl in blue noticed me looking at her and moved away. And as if the whole movement had been rehearsed, now it was the boy’s turn to seek her out with his eyes. Discovering that she was close to other girls, he went back to his lively conversation with his friends.

I drew Petrus’s attention to the two of them. He watched them exchanging glances for a while and then returned to his glass of wine.

“They act as if it were something shameful to demonstrate that they love one another,” was his only remark.

“Philos is love in the form of friendship. It’s what I feel for you and others. When the flame of Eros is no longer able to shine, it’s Philos who keeps couples together.”

Another girl was staring at us, she must have been half our age. Petrus raised his glass, made a toast, the girl laughed in embarrassment and made a gesture pointing towards her parents almost in apology at not coming closer.

“That’s the beautiful side of love,” he said. “Love that challenges, love for two older strangers who have come from afar and tomorrow will already have parted down a road that she too would like to travel. The love that prefers adventure.”

Then he continued, pointing to an elderly couple:

“Look at those two: they haven’t let themselves be affected by hypocrisy, like so many others. They look like they are a couple of farm workers: hunger and need have obliged them to overcome many a difficulty together. They have discovered love through work, which is where Eros shows his most beautiful face, also known as Philos.”

“What’s Philos?”

“Philos is love in the form of friendship. It’s what I feel for you and others. When the flame of Eros is no longer able to shine, it’s Philos who keeps couples together.”

“And what about Agape?”

“Agape is total love, the love that devours those that experience it. Whoever knows and experiences Agape sees that nothing else in this world is of any importance, only loving. This was the love that Jesus felt for humanity, and it was so great that it shook the stars and changed the course of man’s history.”

“During the millennia of the history of civilization, many people have been smitten by this Love that Devours. They had so much to give – and the world demanded so little – that they were obliged to seek out the deserts and isolated places because love was so great that it transfigured them. They became the hermit saints that we know today.”

“For me and you who have experienced another form of Agape, this life here may seem hard and terrible. Yet the Love that Devours makes everything lose its importance: these men live only to be consumed by their love.”

“But Agape is a lot more than liking. It is a sentiment that invades everything, fills all the cracks and makes any attempt at aggression turn to dust.”

He took a pause.

“Agape is the Love that Devours,” he repeated once more, as if this was the phrase that best defined that strange type of love. “Luther King once said that when Christ spoke of loving our enemies he was referring to Agape. Because according to him, it was impossible to like our enemies, those who do us harm and try to make our daily suffering all the worse.”

“But Agape is a lot more than liking. It is a sentiment that invades everything, fills all the cracks and makes any attempt at aggression turn to dust.”

“There are two forms of Agape. One is isolation, life dedicated only to contemplation. The other is precisely the opposite: contact with other human beings, and enthusiasm, the sacred sense of work. Enthusiasm means trance, ecstasy, connecting with God. Enthusiasm is Agape directed at some idea, something.”

“When we love and believe in something from the bottom of our soul, we feel stronger than the world and we are imbued with a serenity that comes from the certainty that nothing can conquer our faith. This strange force makes us always make the right decisions at the right time, and we are surprised at our own capacity when we fulfill our objective.”

“Enthusiasm usually manifests itself in all its power in the early years of our life. We still have a strong tie with the divinity and we give ourselves with such zeal to our toys that dolls take on a life of their own and little tin soldiers manage to march. When Jesus said that the kingdom of Heaven belonged to the children, he was referring to Agape in the form of Enthusiasm. The children reached him without paying any attention to his miracles, his wisdom, the Pharisees and the apostles. They came happily, driven by Enthusiasm.”

“May you never lose your enthusiasm at any moment for the rest of your life: it’s your greatest strength, intent on the final victory. You cannot let it slip through your fingers just because as time passes we have to face some small and necessary defeats.”





With input from **Ushnav Shroff**, Associate, Creatives Gyaan Adab, Pune's premier cultural centre  
[www.gyaanadab.org/](http://www.gyaanadab.org/)



WE TRAVEL, SOME OF US FOREVER, TO SEEK OTHER STATES, OTHER LIVES, OTHER SOULS.

ANAÏS NIN, THE DIARY OF ANAÏS NIN



Sanjna Kapoor was the chief guest for the inauguration of the festival. Photograph © Gyaan Adab  
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## WHERE JOURNEYS MEET

What does a reformed addict have in common with a cyclist, a musician, a poet, a writer, an actor, a trekker, dancer and an environmentalist? The journey. The state of becoming. The process being more important than the product. The moving more than the arriving. We never really arrive. But on the way our paths cross and suddenly, like the alignment of planets, a magical moment happens.

When 2015 was in its last tumultuous month, Pune experienced the magical moment when journeys met and paths crossed. It happened at *Gyaan Adab*, Pune's Premier Cultural Centre where a three day national festival of the arts unfolded, celebrating the journeys that visual artists, performing artists, writers and unusually gifted people have made. It featured literary readings by writers such as *Stephen Alter*, *Diya Sethi*, *Githa Hariharan*, *Pankaj Sekhsaria*, *Pervin Saket*; presentations by eminent international cartoonist *Suraj Sriram*; a seminal talk by *Sanjna Kapoor*, music performances by sufi and fusion bands; theatre and dance performances by the *Mime'ers* and *SPACE*; exhibitions by the Irish artist *Sam Bullough*, *Bijay Biswal*, *Atul Gendle* and *Apurva Bahadur* – and four seasoned travellers : trekker and guitarist *Majid Aziz*, international endurance cyclist *Divya Tate*, long distant cyclist *Salis Quraishi* and mobiker *Baljeet Singh Kochar*. And many more colourful characters with their own stories to tell...their own performances.

The articulate *Githa Hariharan*, winner of the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book in 1993, talking about her book *Almost Home: Cities and Other Places*, reflected – “A deceptively simple question was my starting point. What makes a place home? I mean home in the largest sense of the word – implying a sense of belonging, a sense of having stakes in the place and its collective life. I wanted to take on this question through the real stories of individuals, cities and countries – as they struggle with colonization, or the business of making a new nation, or poverty, or simply the day-to-day businesses of life: making money and love and culture, or being in the crossfire of power struggles.

I live in a place where there are multiple stories on any given subject, including home. So I had to figure out how to bring all these together – the stories of searching for a home or juggling multiple homes, the pain and dreams of the homeless or those who have had their homes taken from them. I was very clear about my approach to this diversity of voices, places and stories.

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*Githa Hariharan in discussion with Randhir Khare. Photograph © Gyaan Adab*

I was determined that the vantage point of my book would be the “view from here”. Whether my book traveled through Bombay or Mumbai, Bengaluru or Ooty, Algeria or Spain, Palestine or Kashmir, I wanted my complex, multi-voiced “Indian” view to prevail. This Indian view has postcolonial baggage that may enrich sometimes, cripple at other times. It is layered, complex, rooted in heterogeneity; it is a natural site for argument and debate.

I also saw that like the novel form, the essay can hold all kinds of things: poetry, politics, anecdote, imagined vignettes. I knew that when I wrote nonfiction, it would have to be a fiction-writer’s gift to the reader. I saw that I could bring to nonfiction an unashamed kind of speculation. I began with the enjoyable imaginative bits, sometimes playful, sometimes dead serious, that make historical or literary figures, or ordinary citizens in Delhi or Washington come alive.

Then I wanted to connect these lives through the ideas of justice so many cities are supposedly built on, or the dreams of freedom, or the hope for a life with more choices. It was astonishing, the links I found as I did this. Writing about Algiers celebrating its fiftieth year of freedom from France for example, I couldn’t help seeing the contrast between the kind of nation Algeria chose to be and the kind of nation India chose to be. So I ended up getting a sharp view of our Indian national experiment as I described the post-independence dilemmas of the Algerian nation.

At a more individual level, what fascinated me was the way in which great liberal thinkers or leaders of democracies applied their ideas of equality and what we today call human rights only to people in their own country, or their own colour or their own religion or language or whatever. It’s not enough to try and understand the post-colonial or neo-colonial mind; the picture is incomplete without trying to fathom the colonising or imperial mind.”

The celebrated Stephen Alter expressed more internal reflections. “The physical process of writing has always fascinated me, particularly in books that I would describe as “travel memoirs,” which includes most of my non-fiction. The first draft of these books is completed over the course of the journey itself, as I walk along trails in the mountains, making choices on whether to turn left or right, to go uphill or down, and where to stop for the night. In this way, the narrative grows out of the journey, a selective sequence of encounters and events, routes and detours that begin to take shape even before I commit words to the page.”

Alter’s presence at the festival was an inspiring one. His quiet and almost meditative demeanour never at any stage overwhelmed others around him. Author of sixteen books of fiction and non-fiction.

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*Stephen Alter’s charm and calm demeanour won over everyone in the audience. Photograph © Gyaan Adab*

2016 february © www.liveencounters.net



Member of the environmental action group, *Kalpavriksh*, Pankaj works on issues of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and also edits the bi-monthly newsletter, the Protected Area Update. He is a freelance journalist, photographer and author, most recently, of *The Last Wave – an Island Novel*, a story based in the Andaman Islands. He has authored/edited three other, non-fiction books, two of which are based in the A&N Islands.



Pankaj Sekhsaria enthralled everyone with his talk on the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Photograph © Gyaan Adab  
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Mime'ers in performance!. Photograph © Gyaan Adab

He was born in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, and much of his writing focuses on the Himalayan region, where he continues to live and work. *Becoming a Mountain: Himalayan Journeys in Search of the Sacred and the Sublime* (Aleph, 2014) is his most recent work of non-fiction. *The Secret Sanctuary* (Puffin, 2015) is his most recent book for younger readers. He has written extensively on natural history, folklore and mountain culture, particularly in his travel memoir *Sacred Waters: A Pilgrimage to the Many Sources of the Ganga*, which describes a journey on foot along the pilgrim trails of the Uttarakhand Char Dham Yatra. Among the honors he has received are fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Fulbright Program, the East West Centre in Hawaii, and the Banff Centre for Mountain Culture. Stephen Alter is founding director the *Mussoorie Writers' Mountain Festival*, which has brought more than 150 authors, mountaineers, artists and musicians to Mussoorie since 2006.

Writer and environmental activist Pankaj Sekhsaria has been of another sort. "It is a little more than two decades now since I first visited the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. I had flunked the last semester of my Engineering bachelors that I was doing in Pune and had nothing to do, therefore. A friend in the Indian Navy who had a Port Blair posting invited me over and that was an opportunity I just did not want to miss. I spent two fascinating months in the islands then, travelling quite wildly and widely along their length- from the north in Diglipur to the extreme south to Indira Point on Great Nicobar Island. There is an incredible amount that the islands allowed me to experience and to do in the years that have followed - many exhilarating and humbling hours watching Green sea, leatherback and Olive Ridley turtles nest on remote uninhabited islands; photographing the endemic Nicobari megapode build up its nesting mound; descending into deep dark caves to see nesting Edible nest swiftlets; swimming and snorkelling in sparkling ocean waters - researching and writing on this spectacular diversity and beauty and the threats and challenges it faces; seeing the devastation caused in the earthquake and tsunami of 2004 to getting involved in advocacy and litigation in the interests of the fragile ecology and the indigenous peoples of the islands- each journey and has been rewarding and challenging in its own unique way. Two decades is only a blip in the scheme of nature's designs, but a considerable span in the short life we humans are allowed on the planet. I'm grateful I've had this opportunity and *The Last Wave – the Island Novel* that it is, is only the latest in this island journey."

Member of the environmental action group, *Kalpavriksh*, Pankaj works on issues of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and also edits the bi-monthly newsletter, the Protected Area Update. He is a freelance journalist, photographer and author, most recently, of *The Last Wave – an Island Novel*, a story based in the Andaman Islands. He has authored/edited three other, non-fiction books, two of which are based in the A&N Islands.





Milind Date's performance was the final act of Journeys that encapsulated it all. Photograph © Gyaan Adab

Intersecting his journey is Divya Tate's. Feminist, traveller, trek biker, backpacker, wind-surfer, swimmer, architect, travel writer, mosaic artist and owner of an art gallery, Divya has been cycling for two decades, solo and otherwise, across India and abroad. More recently (since 2010) she has been cycling long distance endurance or ultra-cycling events, in India and representing India abroad. She advocates endurance sports to people of all ages, simply for what it does for one's confidence and sense of self-worth. "I ride hard, try and inspire others to push their limits, especially women. I want to see more women out on the streets, strong and free."

Another path crosser was Baljeet Singh Kocchar, motorcyclist and bike enthusiast, nominated for *Wanderer of the Year 2013* and member of the *Roadshakers Royal Enfield Biker Club*, covering 180,000 km on his Royal Enfield Classic 800 over the last 30 years. Thrilled by the sheer magic of movement, Baljeet exuded the joy of the road and gratitude for "having been able to see his country in thrilling style". Musician and mountain trekker Majid Aziz added contemplatively to Baljeet's exuberance, plucking out hauntingly beautiful notes that only a lyrical traveller could exude. Salis Qureishi picked out a few notes on his flute and took the journey in another direction. His sharing was intimate and moving, reminiscent of some long forgotten wandering philosopher.

Woven into the very fabric of this meeting of journeys was the soul-stirring sounds of the Sufis performed by The Looking Glass, drawing listeners into magical percussion and vocal rhythms that traced the historical evidences of the epic movement of Sufism and spoke intimately of the lives of the performers through music and poetry. An 800-year-old philosophy was churned awake and breathed NOW.

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes," Marcel Proust once said. And it proved so true.....when the brilliant flautist – maestro Milind Date (one of Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia's senior most disciples) – seamlessly brought together and fused the borders of numerous journeys into a whole with his divine music....and candles were lit and the last stanza of Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* was read:

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

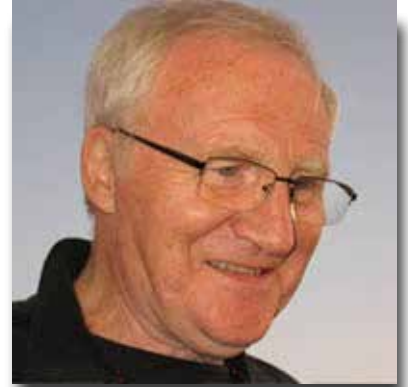
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Baljeet Singh Kocchar on his motorcycle, one of his first loves in life. Photograph © Gyaan Adab



This poem, first published in the London literary journal, Agenda, was influenced by my time spent as a teacher when I very much disliked 'colourng in' books for children. I couldn't help feeling their creativity was being manipulated and limited by so-called education systems, publishers and 'educators' that refuse to allow children to grow, think for themselves and find their own shapes and voices.



## On the Train to Dublin July 1st 2014

*to my late mother on her birthday and to Dermot Healy who died last Friday*

The sun has microfilmed – there's no need for tears.  
My mother and Dermot Healy are dead. They never

met and died seven years apart but dead is dead as this  
perfect day rises in me. I'm not in a tall building, but,

at least, I'm travelling first class by default. A mother  
teaches her little son to be best in his class. I feel like

shouting: *stop colouring in that ugly horse – there are  
three beauties out there in the meadow.* Should I report

this woman for stifling vim and vigour – for  
damage to a boy's head – for anti-social behaviour.

They are a unit contracted to each other. They boy  
knows how to spell house and roof and suburbia.

He's learning to keep the lid on things – to cover up.  
A completed construction might read: the roof is there

to keep you safe – under lock and key – out of  
danger – out of harm's way – I'm your mother.

I'll pack you nicely and transfer love  
into fear of big butterflies.

*Stop looking out of the window, my son. Colour in the page that  
says daddy's rich – that says money helps you not to look up.*

*Forget the stars. There are no storms on a page and  
it's almost always summer. Keep a roof over your head.*

Your mother means well.  
She is indebted to you.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph meant well  
in paradise.

Allah meant well  
in paradise.

Dermot Healy meant well – Dermot Healy did good.  
He watched birds migrating.

My mother meant well – my mother did good.  
She watched me migrating.

Look out of the window, boy. Stop colouring in  
for a moment. Look at those horses taking wing.

Imagine the moon ducking among the stars. Imagine  
the dead catching up on games they'd forgotten

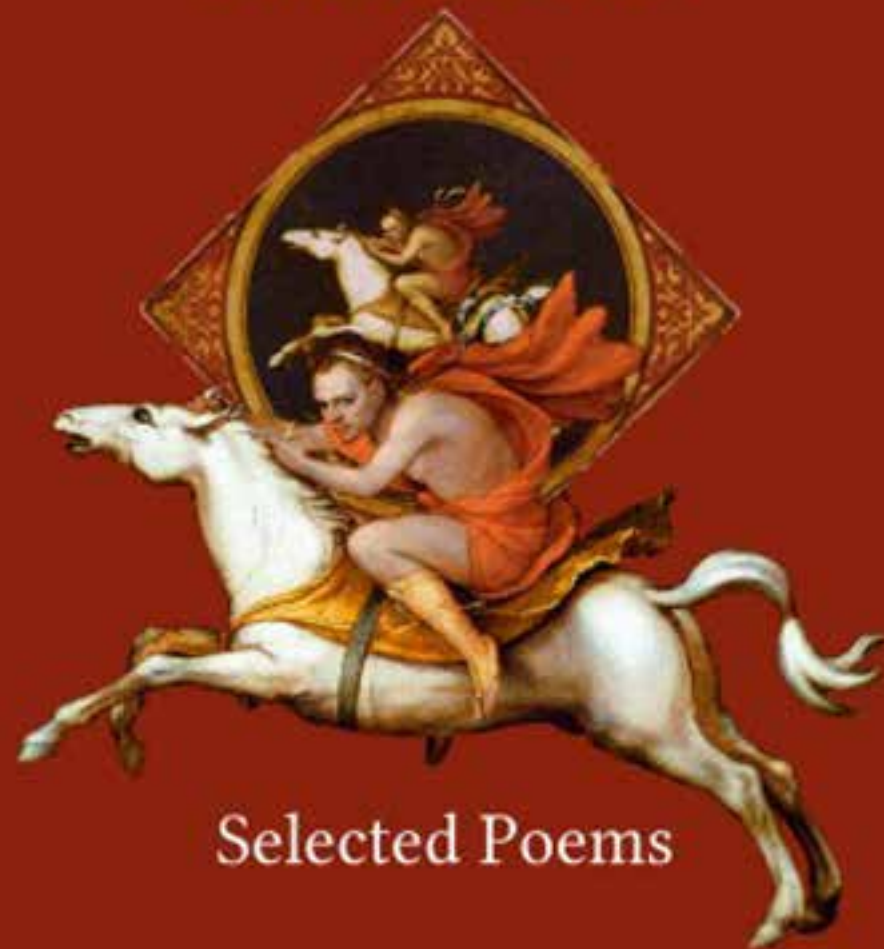
and, above all, don't forget  
to build a skylight into your roof.





PHILIP CASEY

TRIED AND  
SENTENCED



Selected Poems

## Hamburg Woman's Song

Time has gone slowly by the hour,  
by the year it has gone like a day  
and you and I are of a sudden old.  
But behind my bright eyes, papa,

I will always be a girl of ten,  
and you, a grown man of twenty  
when you cheated the dreaded police  
who wanted to take me away.

I was born in a time and place  
to a woman I look like now,  
but fear grew like mould on bread  
in my mother's love for her slow girl.

I remember the sirens and cobbles,  
then waking at dawn by a stream  
where you left me with a countrywoman  
and time went slowly by the hour.

She who was my mother  
died in the Hamburg fire,  
and he who was my father  
never came back from the east.

My hands hardened and my bones grew long.  
I trusted what I could not understand  
until one morning you came up the road  
and happiness changed my face.

I am a woman of Hamburg  
who walked to the hungry city  
side by side with my new father.  
I have lived here to this day.



## Sunlight of Love

*-for Christine*

The fan  
slowly turns on its axis  
to Mahler's Loneliness  
in Autumn,  
undulating,  
keeping time  
with the music's  
planetary rhythm.

The graceful blades  
cool a man  
who lies comatose  
and alone,  
a degree  
from his mortal end.

A hawk alights  
on the windowsill,  
a portent  
from myth,  
the shape-shifting  
raven  
waiting for the hero  
who has fought too well,  
his wounds  
outnumbering  
his nightmares.

Ancestral  
wraiths  
pass through him  
in procession.  
In their thousands,  
to the shifting sands  
of violins,  
as the contralto  
soars,

they come from  
as far  
as his third eye sees,  
along  
a spiral path,  
full of light  
and joy.

The hawk  
flies away.

The sick man wakes.  
The fan bows to him  
like a sainted nun.

Sunlight fills the room  
with love.  
The contralto  
tears  
my heart into  
quivering strips  
of understanding.

Hope is born  
of hope that had died,  
purified  
of childhood fears,  
holding new breath  
in a blasted landscape.

Wild mountain flowers  
drip  
their  
dew  
onto  
the  
sterile  
floor,  
the teeming  
drop  
beginning  
a stream  
that will form  
the first river  
in all creation  
flowing into  
the first ocean.  
Rough tea leaves  
from a painted tin  
make the first drink  
that is not poison.

Bread made  
with full grain  
by a woman's hands  
quells hunger  
at last,  
and forever more.

The hawk  
is back,  
black  
in the setting sun.  
The fan  
is gone.  
The man it cooled  
is gone.

## You Within Me

*-for Ulrike*

I read page after page and see nothing  
but your face, word after nulled word.  
I have the absurd urge to vacate my skin  
and pour your molten essence into its mould,  
so that never again would I know estrangement.  
I love the lawless present, give space  
its due and needless, restore self to myself.  
But in these intense days, on obsolete maps,  
I search crude alleys and mountain paths,  
knowing I will only find you within me.  
So many scattered parts of us are as one,  
as five thousand days or one make a life,  
and you race free with a tiger's grace,  
unafraid of the weight of continents.  
Your hands are adept at shaping clay,  
and they shape the cast of my story:  
it is a woman crouched at the root of a tree  
it is the beseeching ghost of a childhood pain  
it is rain hurtling earthward, regardless of need.

## Making Space

*-for Heather*

Sometimes, when looking at the stars  
on a clear night in summer,  
I wonder about light  
and the energy that keeps me upright.  
What does the Principle  
of the Conservation of Energy  
say, and does it apply to me,  
and when I die  
will I be transformed into a thought  
travelling at the speed of light?

Perhaps, you will turn me on at the flick  
of a switch, to bathe your smile  
while you nod off over a book.  
My light and how lovely you look  
will describe a time and place  
as you reach out, making space  
in your calm sleep  
for your lost black sheep  
whose molecules keep your bedroom lit.  
I will burn for you all night.



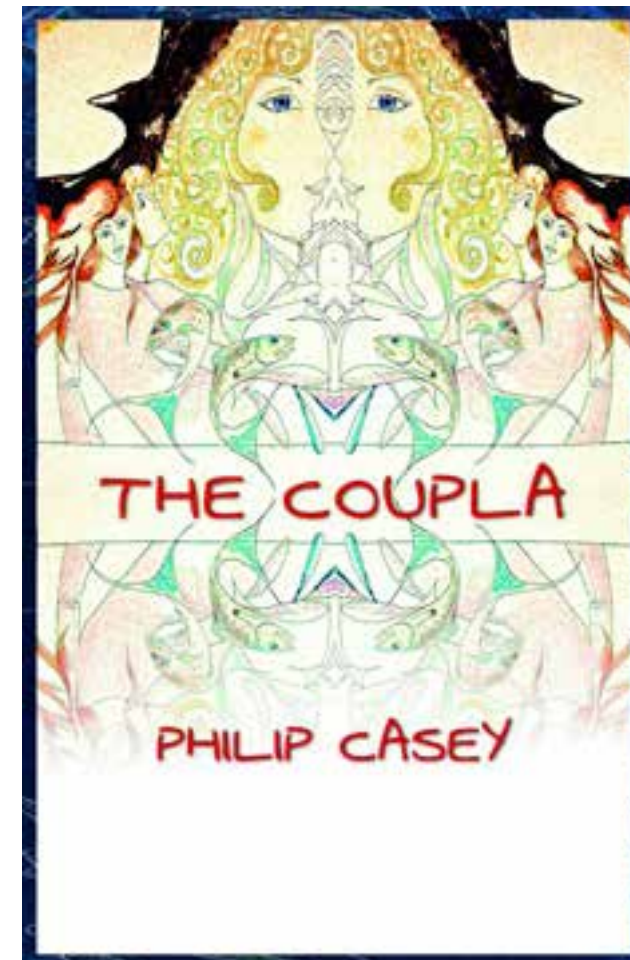
## Toledo, Encore

O Toledo, I am parched  
beneath your Moorish arches.  
My love bit my lip in anger  
and stormed off to see her lover  
when I looked after  
everyone but her.  
I could not free  
myself to be with her.

O Toledo, I am parched.  
My sense of sensual self  
ebbs to a vacant point.  
There was a time I could feel  
in gracefully spoken sentences.  
Toledo, you have done for me,  
it's too cold a morning  
to wake abruptly from a dream.

I should not ask of another  
what she cannot give,  
when all I have to give  
is my fullness of her.  
No wonder if she turns away  
in anger when I wake,  
cold all over.

O Toledo, I am cold  
in your Moorish station,  
waiting for the outward train  
that will never come.  
All I want is happiness  
for my beloved. I'm too old,  
and can give her nothing.  
My love for her has emptied  
all I knew and owned.



Philip Casey's novels are *The Fabulists*, *The Water Star* and *The Fisher Child*, previously published by Lilliput and Picador and now reissued in new editions by Casey's independent label eMaker Editions. Previously translated into German, *The Fabulists* was translated into Japanese by Noriko Ito and is published by eMaker Editions. He has also published *Tried and Sentenced*, his Selected poems, and a novel for children 9+, *The Coupla*. He is the founder and editor of [Irish Writers Online](http://www.irishwritersonline.com) and [Irish Culture](http://www.irishculture.net). A member of [Aosdána](http://www.aosdana.com), he lives in Dublin. <http://www.emakereditions.com>  
For a more extended bio see <http://www.emakereditions.com/bio/>



## Natalie Wood

### Renew This Town's Life - As in Days of Old

No mountains, but soft, green-topped undulating hills. No grapes, but ancient trees still producing the finest 'Roman' olive oil.

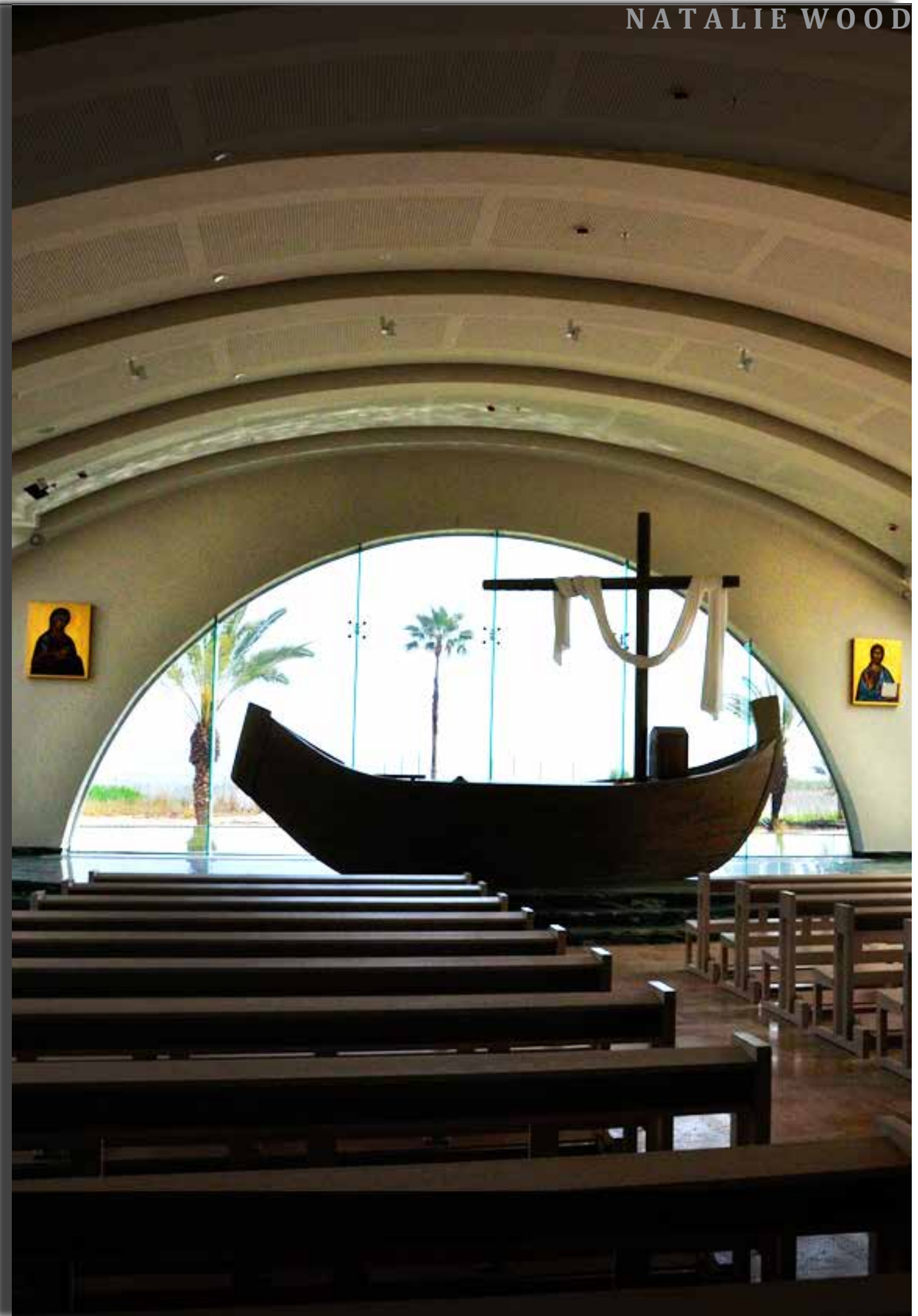
And as our coach rolled past gentle fields of tropical fruits, citrus orchards and the pretty streams of the Beit Hakerem Valley in Lower Galilee, so began a remarkable trip back in time to the early years of the first century CE and the ancient ruin of Migdal – the town associated with the Christian saint, Mary Magdalene.

The modern chapters of the story related by our guide, **Nurit Greenberg** opened in 2004 when Father Juan Solana of the Mexico-based Order of Legionaries of Christ answered a spiritual call to build a pilgrim centre with a church and hotel where the faithful may enrich their lives.

Twelve months later he had bought 30 dunams (about 7.5 acres) of land on the site of ancient Migdal and by 2009, he had presented his plans to the Israel Antiquities Authority, whose archaeologists, Dina Avshalom-Gorni and Arfan Najar were sent to investigate the site before building permission could be granted.

Then most exceptionally, the pair's intended three-month exploratory dig started to stretch as they found, first a narrow channel directing the run-off water from the nearby Mount Arbel stream into the Kinneret and then watched, amazed, as the remains of the first century city of Magdala gradually emerged, complete with evidence of fine housing, a priests' quarter and a working synagogue that must have functioned fully at the same time as the Second Temple stood in Jerusalem.

As we wondered round the grounds, Ms Greenberg elaborated on some of the secrets that the on-going archaeological excavations continue to reveal. The chief discoveries, she said, have included a coin dated at 29 CE – now considered to be the most likely year of Jesus's crucifixion – firm evidence that this was the period when Jesus preached and chose his disciples from among the local fishermen. This is also where he may have first met **Mary Magdalene ('Miriam from Magdala')** who lived in the town and was said to be the 'apostle to the apostles'.







The Magdala Stone was unearthed in 2009 near the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel, where a resort and center for Christian pilgrims was going to be built.

The implications of this revealed history are enormous for Jewish-Christian relations as it proves Jesus and his disciples were Galilean Jews who practised Judaism and Ms Greenberg several times urged us visitors to act as 'ambassadors' for the Jewish origins of the site.

Recent excavations have so far exposed only one layer of the town although it is believed to have been established during the Hellenistic period (circa third or fourth centuries BCE).

This initial layer has also unearthed a wealthy suburb of spacious residences founded during the first century BCE away from the smell of the landed fish by which the town earned its living. The fish were salted to preserve them and then sold on elsewhere in the area. That the local inhabitants were wealthy is demonstrated amply by the costly mosaic floors and plasterwork on the walls that survive.

This elegant quarter, destroyed in September 67 CE by the Roman Army following the Jewish Revolt against their Roman occupiers, was never resettled, but instead became covered slowly and inexorably by 1,942 years of neglect until the events of 2009 kick-started its long road to restoration.

The synagogue remains are situated near the market and close to the Arbel stream which provided the water for the pools in which the landed fish were kept before salting. Market days were traditionally Monday and Thursday and they became the days, along with the Sabbath, when the *Torah* was read in public.

Until the synagogue at Magdala - one of two 'found' synagogues in Galilee - was unearthed, archaeologists knew only of six others dating from the time when the Second Temple stood. It is likely that they were originally community centres rather than prayer houses as even the meaning of the Modern Hebrew term '*Beit Knesset*' is similar and translates as 'House of Assembly'.

Because of this, no special emphasis was placed on situating the Ark in the Jerusalem-facing wall of synagogues while the Temple stood. To the common people of Migdal, the synagogue would have appeared sumptuous with its plastered walls, imitation marble frescoes and costly mosaic flooring. We can therefore but imagine their horror when during the Jewish Revolt against the Romans, the ornate building was dismantled stone by stone and the pieces used to block the entrances to the city. Pious Jews believed that God would grant them victory against the pagan Romans after which the synagogue would be rebuilt. But this was not to be.



<https://www.ibookisrael.com/guide/nurit-greenberg>

But of particular fascination to historians, theologians and the devout laity alike is that the recovered artefacts include a **slab of white limestone** which was decorated with Jewish symbols including a depiction of the menorah (seven branched candelabrum) which stood in the Temple. It is believed that this was the lectern used in the reading of the *Torah*. A replica has been placed on-site while the original has been removed to the security of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Also uncovered were two *mikva'ot* (ritual immersion pools), which also surprised scholars as previously it was believed that the Kinneret had been used for Jewish ritual immersion.

Today, only a few yards from the archaeological site stands the magnificent modern church of Duc in Altum ('Launch into the Deep') which is named after a passage in the Gospel of St Luke telling the story of Jesus standing on the lake shore and preaching to a large crowd. The story relates how he asked Simon (later St Peter) to launch his boat and throw his nets into the water although he had just returned empty-handed from an over-night fishing trip. The nets came up so full of fish that they nearly sank the boat!

The alignment of the present church is precisely that of the town's quayside in ancient times, since when the lake has shrunk markedly. The original main road of the town has been preserved and one enters the church along it. The ancient roadway remains inside and stone seats are arranged in a circle.

But it is the scene on the upper floor that provides a breathtaking, heart-stopping moment for all. Reaching it, one sees a massive plate glass window overlooking the Kinneret. In the centre stands an altar placed in a replica boat hewn from Cedar of Lebanon. This was modelled on the ancient vessel found at nearby Kibbutz Ginosar.

The whole stands on an Italian marble base with green-coloured 'streams' representing the boat's wake while the mast symbolises the cross and its sails serve as the shroud in which Jesus's body was wrapped. Beyond the plate glass window is a pool filled with water from the Sea of Galilee and as a low winter sun streams through the glass, the effect is almost overpowering.

As the Christian community has renewed its connection to the area with this superlative place of worship, I like to think that in the years ahead, appropriate facilities will be made available on the fully excavated site for Jewish visitors to reflect on its huge significance for them.

## Farrukh Dhondy



Author - Prophet of Love  
in an interview with Mark Ulyseas



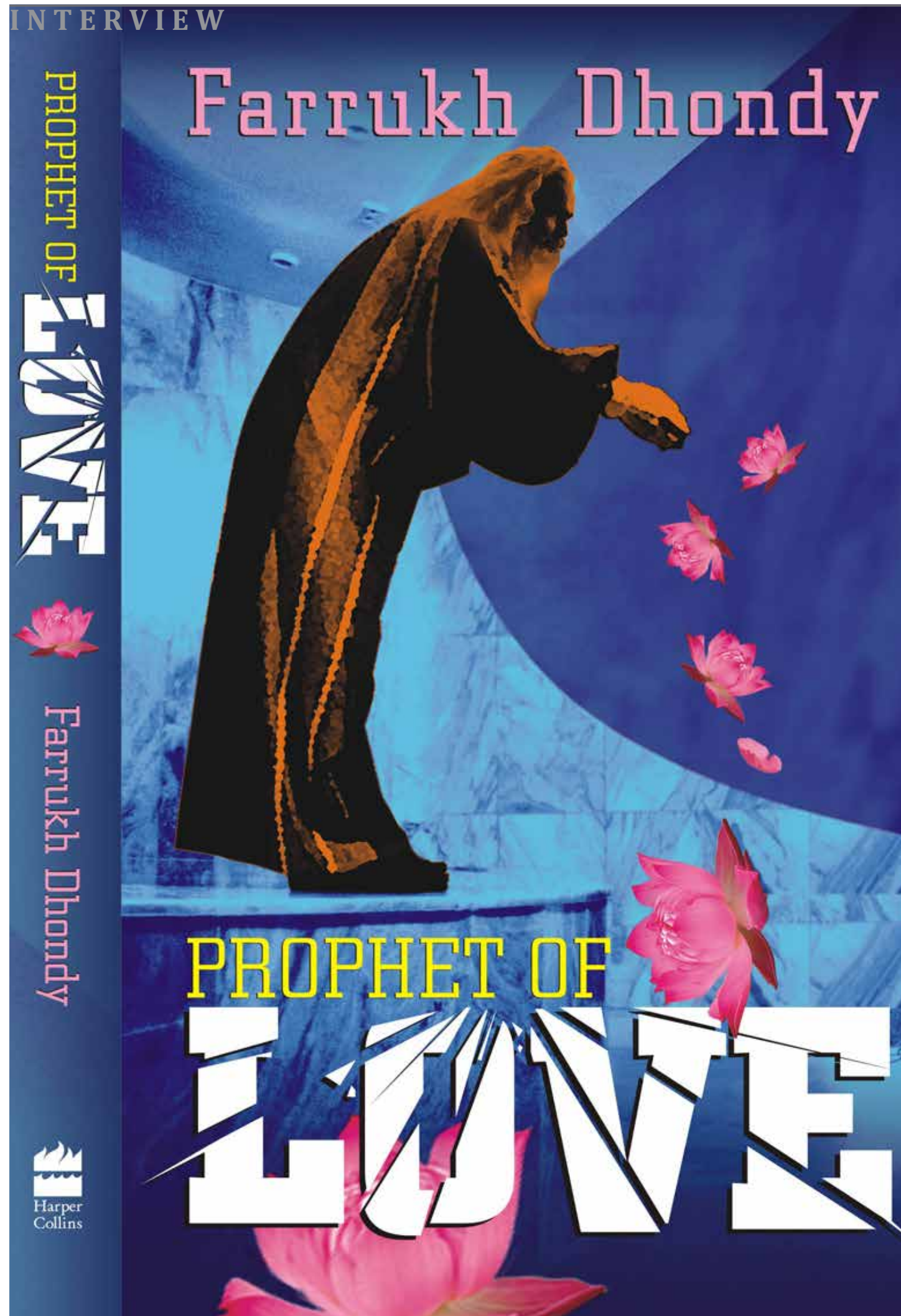
The title and setting in an ashram is reminiscent of the 'heyday' of the 70s when Westerners flocked to the Ashram of Bhagwan Rajneesh, a self styled Godman, in Pune (then Poona) in search of the guru who spoke of Love...uninhibited spontaneous universal love. It is believed that many such 'followers' often referred to him as the Guru of Love...the media called him the Sex Guru. Did you derive your inspiration from this and thus the title reads as "Prophet of Love"? But why Prophet and not Guru?

I have never read any work of Rajneesh apart from stray quotations in newspapers etc. Yes, the story is about a Godman who plagiarises from and simplifies the work of several traditions so those who don't want to do any serious study can relate stray ideas to the mundane circumstance of their lives. A guru imparts wisdom that has been gained and tested. A false guru talks nonsense. A prophet prophecies and since love and the future are uncertain it was the most appropriate title. It could have been called the Prophet of Sex but my publishers thought it would put off potential readers who think they are in the love rather than sex camp.



Published by Harper Perennial





Is this novel an honest mix of fact and fiction? I ask this question because it is said that your novel *The Bikini Murders* was loosely based on the 'murderous activities' of Charles Sobhraj?

As with most fiction, *Prophet of Love* has its origin in my experience. I did go on a journalistic mission to research the activities and proclivities of an ashram and I did have aunts and friends in Pune. I did meet several characters there and have now; years later twisted them imaginatively into fiction. None of the characters are actual portraits and none of the action is a factually accurate account of real events.

It is also believed that many followers fell afoul of Bhagwan Rajneesh aka Osho and his coterie and thus paid the price by being banned from the ashram...in a sense being derobed (the followers wore the uniform of the ashram— maroon colour robes similar to Buddhist monks). Is the story of Diamond aka Ma Vidhyadhari representative of this reality?

I have met people who dissented from one cult or the other and were expelled and even punished for it and yes, Diamond is such an one

Why did it have to be a young journalist that Diamond approached to help rescue her daughter from the ashram and not her embassy or another Westerner?

The novel doesn't give the reader any certainty about Diamond's nationality. Does she have American or Israeli citizenship? Would she appeal to an embassy rather than a journalist boyfriend who had befriended her? Is her story true? Does she have a child held by the ashram. The prophet says she doesn't and in the end she doesn't mention the child.

Did you write this novel because you wanted to expose the seedy underbelly of the goings-on in some ashrams that everybody knows about but refuses to acknowledge because it has to do with a portent concoction of faith, spirituality and sex?

Yes. I wanted to tackle a universally known reality about contemporary India. And yes, I remain unconvinced by the spiritual quest and by god-men, but that needn't apply to the reader. I didn't write it to convert anyone spiritually, only to convert my publishers into greater generosity with advances and percentages.



The role of the guru in your novel appears similar to the role of a guru in reality...an unquestionable power that he exerts even on politicians and business folk, in general. Was this intentional? And what do you hope to achieve with this depiction? To set the record straight?

I haven't directly incorporated politicians and business folk in the story. I do strongly believe that those who are elected in a democracy ought to follow discernible laws and accountable disciplines and not the ramblings of irrational cultists. I don't know if fiction can ever 'achieve' anything apart from imparting the possibilities of life and thought to the reader and entertaining him or her through the force of narrative or drama or even accuracy of ear such as Kipling has or twists of invention such as Salman exhibits.

Why in your opinion do Westerners still flock to gurus in India? Have their cultures failed them or are they attempting to escape from their own inadequacies to seek shelter in ashrams, far from the madding crowd?

I have met Western Buddhists who ignore the fact that Buddhism is atheistic and non-material and believe that chanting will bring them worldly goods (lots!) and prosperity and power. Very many victims of cults want to be controlled by a 'philosophy' and assume the disciplines of a religion or a cult which gets them away from the indiscipline or even chaos of their own lives. Think of Malcolm X who was a self-confessed thief and pimp before he found the discipline of Islam which made him abandon his criminal existence and pray five times a day – of course he grew out of it and came as close to Marxism as a very practical American leader can.

Would you agree that gurus of the Hindu persuasion always appear to be in the majority and one never seems to hear about gurus from other faiths? Why is this? Has this got to do with the perceived 'exotic' spirituality that does not have a formal organisational structure and relies solely on a guru to dispense spirituality in a subjective manner that is palatable to those seeking emancipation from a material world – one on one with a godman?

In Britain the 'godmen' one hears about are Islamic preachers who get a following of would-be jihadis. The Hindu cults exist but they are quieter and go about their business without bombing people or slaughtering soldiers on the streets of London. There are of course gurus of the internet age who are amateur philosophers and sometimes open frauds who charge you money to tell you to stay silent for ten minutes a day and breathe deeply or concoct more complicated formulae to convince you that you are being redeemed. Hindu ideas and stray terms such as Yoga assist them in convincing people that their prescriptions have tradition and ancient wisdom behind them.

Why do you write?

Four answers:

To earn a living

To find out what I think

To win the respect of people I respect

Why do bees make honey?

What are you working on now?

Two screenplays, a stage play and I have two prose manuscripts drafted and waiting to be published.

What is your message to aspiring writers?

Don't imitate any modern writing and don't write 'for yourself'- that, like blogging, is for amateurs.





*The Faces of Change* series profiles advocates in the community who are changing the face of child marriage in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia, by saying *no* to this harmful traditional practice.

In this issue we tell the stories of two girls aged 10 and 13 who had their marriages stopped, as well as a Government Official. In the March issue, we feature the last characters in this series: a Mother, two Priests, and a School Teacher. Read the [January 2016 issue](#) for an introduction to the Community and profiles of a Health Worker and village Elder.

Elizabeth is a freelance project manager, communications consultant and writer, specialising in International Human Rights Advocacy – particularly the rights of women and children. She has extensive knowledge of international human rights law, and a Master's Degree in Human Rights and Social Change. Elizabeth has worked for inter-governmental, international development and advocacy organisations, such as the *Africa Child Policy Forum*, the *African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)*, *Amnesty International*, the *European Union*, the *Global Movement for Children*, *Oxfam*, *Plan International*, *Transparency International* and *UNICEF*.

[www.libertyandhumanity.com/elizabeth/](http://www.libertyandhumanity.com/elizabeth/)



## Elizabeth Willmott-Harrop

### Child Marriage in Amhara, Ethiopia: Faces of Change - Part 2



#### The Poor Girl

**"I could help my family be free from poverty if I was educated. Not if I am married."**

Lakesh\*, aged 13, is from a poor family in the Bandani Kebele (neighbourhood) of the Dangla Woreda (district) in Amhara, Ethiopia. Her father, 55, is frail from ill health and her mother, 45, supports the family on her own.

Although Lakesh's older sisters have been educated, times are now hard. Lakesh's mother had arranged for her to be married, to both benefit from a dowry and to avoid the additional costs of Lakesh's presence in the household.

"We sometimes do not have enough to eat. We do not even have clothing", explains Lakesh's mother, "I was given this dress by Hebeste the Health Extension Worker. My girls are always asking me: *Why do we not have clothing? Why do we not have soap? Life is hard.*"

Lakesh found out about the planned marriage from school friends. She explains the impact when she found out: "I was determined not to be married. I wanted to run away, to an urban area where I would look after myself. I planned to work as a housemaid and continue my schooling. I could help my family be free from poverty if I was educated. Not if I am married."

Lakesh reported the planned marriage to Girma Demlash, the facilitator of the Community Conversation Group which campaigns against child marriage.

"I felt distrust for my parents during that time. At first my parents were angry when I reported them, as they said they had no capacity to send me to school. But we have been offered help because I reported it. So I am no longer in fear of a planned marriage," explains Lakesh.

Lakesh's mother was relieved when the marriage was cancelled. "The Community Conversation Group told me about the legal consequences. I have been supported by the community since. My friends are very happy that Lakesh will not be married," she says.

The family has been able to access a UNICEF supported Revolving Fund to prevent child marriage. So-called because when funding is paid back by beneficiaries it is reinvested into the next family who needs it, so it circulates within the community. Families can start a business, make money and send their girls to school. Plus the fund gives support for education materials including uniform and clothing.

Meseret Debalkie, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Ethiopia, says of the fund: "For the wealthy family you just have to change attitudes. That is relatively easy. But for the poorer families, if you do not offer any other life options, what will they do? You have to give them alternatives."

Atalele Abera, 35, is a member of the Women's Development Group and of the Community Conversation Group. Atalele says of Lakesh's cancelled marriage:

"The girl's family received 1,000 ETB (\$47) as a gift from the headband's family, but we made sure they gave it back. I am following up with Lakesh.

I didn't trust the parents to stick to their decision to cancel. So I visited them four times in the aftermath and continue to collect information from the neighbourhood on whether the marriage plans have really stopped."



Meseret Debalkie, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Ethiopia, says of the fund: “For the wealthy family you just have to change attitudes. That is relatively easy. But for the poorer families, if you do not offer any other life options, what will they do? You have to give them alternatives.”

Lakesh’s mother explains that she had ambiguous feelings over educating Lakesh: “I was worried that I will lose my daughters if I educate them as there are no schools nearby. My eldest daughter went to school some miles away and we have lost contact with her. So I was worried that when we face a challenge due to poverty that my other girls will do the same thing – they will leave and find a life elsewhere.

“But now we have the fund to help us. We will get 5,300 ETB (\$250), I will buy sheep. It will cost me around 900 ETB (\$43) to buy one sheep if she is pregnant, so then I will have two. I will prepare local whisky and the leftovers from that will feed the sheep.”

*Photo page 1: Lakesh, 13, had her marriage cancelled as a result of reporting her parents to the Community Conversation Group in Bandani Kebele (neighbourhood), Amhara, Ethiopia. Photo on the right: The Mother of Lakesh, 13, agreed to cancel her daughter’s planned marriage as a result of an intervention by the Community Conversation Group in Bandani Kebele (neighbourhood), Amhara, Ethiopia. Photos: © UNICEF/ESARO 2015/Elizabeth Willmott-Harrop*



“I heard I was getting married from a school friend. I cried when she told me”, Azeng again starts to cry as she recounts finding out she would be forced to leave her family, education and childhood to become a wife at the age of 10.

### The Wealthier Girl

“I had heard of plans by one man to invite Azeng to tea behind my back. She could have been defiled. I arranged the marriage to prevent that from happening. We were living in fear of it.”  
Father of Azeng, aged 10

Azeng\*, aged 10, is one of seven children belonging to a family with high community status due to their land assets, in the Bandani Kebele.

Azeng found out she was due to be married when she was at school.

“I heard I was getting married from a school friend. I cried when she told me”, Azeng again starts to cry as she recounts finding out she would be forced to leave her family, education and childhood to become a wife at the age of 10.

“I do not want to get married. I want to learn. I want to be a teacher one day,” Azeng bows her head, the tears continue to fall as she speaks. “I do not know who my planned husband is, or how old he is,” she continues.

The man concerned is in fact 25 years old. And was one of nine suitors who had asked Azeng’s father for her hand in marriage.





“I educated my eldest daughter – she is now 24 – but in those days there was not the fear of abductions. Now youths just take a girl to the fields and rape her. I regret marrying my 15 year old daughter. She would be educated now, supporting the country with her skills and knowledge, but instead she is managing a household.”

“My husband was 12. Both families had assets. Neither I nor my husband knew we were marrying. I kept being given jewellery by his family, but had no idea why or what was going on. I found out I was getting married during the ceremony, but I did not know who my husband was, as both he and his brother were getting married that day!”

Azeng’s father explains that because Azeng is a desirable wife due to his family’s status, he feared she would be abducted to seal a union without his consent. “I had heard of plans by one man to invite Azeng to tea behind my back. She could have been defiled. I arranged the marriage to prevent that from happening. We were living in fear of it,” he says.

Zelalem Belay, a community Elder explains: “There is shame upon the family if a union is not formal and a girl lives with a boy. So there is a fear of abduction. For example if a girl goes to the market and is raped. There is a fear that a girl will have a sexual affiliation with a man. That fear leads to families wanting to marry their girls young.”

Azeng’s father continues: “I protected my older daughter in the same way when she was 15. The man I chose for Azeng is from a good family and the marriage would have bonded our two families.

“I educated my eldest daughter – she is now 24 – but in those days there was not the fear of abductions. Now youths just take a girl to the fields and rape her. I regret marrying my 15 year old daughter. She would be educated now, supporting the country with her skills and knowledge, but instead she is managing a household.”

After Azeng found out about the planned union,



she reported her parents to the “Ears” and “Eyes” of the Community Conversation Group, of the Community Conversation Group, an initiative supported by UNICEF which advocates for adult marriages and prevents child marriages in the Kabele. The Ears and Eyes then told Community Conversation Facilitator Girma Demlash, 30, and he immediately went to Azeng’s house to speak to her parents and dissuaded them from continuing with the marriage.

Azeng’s father explains how he overcame his fear of abduction: “We are taking due care to protect Azeng, and I know that Girma and others are conducting education amongst youths, to prevent abductions. So I feel assured I have done the right thing.”

*Photo page 4: Azeng, 10, had her marriage cancelled as a result of reporting her parents to the Community Conversation Group in Bandani Kebele (neighbourhood), Amhara, Ethiopia. Photo on the left: The Father of Azeng, 10, agreed to cancel his daughter’s planned marriage as a result of an intervention by the Community Conversation Group in Bandani Kebele (neighbourhood), Amhara, Ethiopia. Photos: © UNICEF/ESARO 2015/Elizabeth Willmott-Harrop*

### The Government Official

“I got married at 6 years old. We established our own home when my husband was 14 and I was 8. So at first I was a victim, but then I became an advocate.”

“I got married at 6 years old” says Yitayesh Akalu, Expert at the Women, Children and Youth Affairs Office (WCYAO) in Dangla Woreda (District), Amhara, Ethiopia. The WCYAO is supported by UNICEF to run a comprehensive programme against child marriage involving multiple stakeholders at the community level.

Yitayesh continues, “So at first I was a victim, but then I became an advocate. That is what motivated me to do this work.

“My husband was 12. Both families had assets. Neither I nor my husband knew we were marrying. I kept being given jewellery by his family, but had no idea why or what was going on. I found out I was getting married during the ceremony, but I did not know who my husband was, as both he and his brother were getting married that day!”



Yitayesh explains the negative impacts of child marriage in her Woreda: “It is usual for girls as young as seven to be married – it even happens to infants as a promissory marriage. Young girls unsurprisingly do not know how to manage a home. They quarrel with their husband and in-laws and suffer psychological distress. They are separated from their school mates and friends and become extremely isolated. This has a hugely negative effect on the life of the girl.

“Where a marriage takes place to establish ties between two families with social standing, it may be too risky to wait, in case the girl marries someone else. And so the girl will be “reserved” at age 6 or 7, when the boy is say 14 and they will be married soon after.”



Above: Yitayesh Akalu, Expert at the Women, Children and Youth Affairs Office (WCYAO) in Dangla Woreda (District), Amhara, Ethiopia with Meseret Debalkie, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Ethiopia.  
Photo: © UNICEF/ESARO 2015/Elizabeth Willmott-Harrop

### The Government Official *contd...*

Yitayesh explains that although both married as children, she and her husband continued with their educations: “We established our own home when he was 14 and I was 8 years old. He insisted he continue with his education and my father in law agreed to school him, and my own father made sure I was educated until the age of 16. It is usual for both boys and girls who marry to leave education early so we were lucky.”

Yitayesh explains the negative impacts of child marriage in her Woreda: “It is usual for girls as young as seven to be married – it even happens to infants as a promissory marriage. Young girls unsurprisingly do not know how to manage a home. They quarrel with their husband and in-laws and suffer psychological distress. They are separated from their school mates and friends and become extremely isolated. This has a hugely negative effect on the life of the girl.

“The youngest girls aged say 5-7 may be protected from having sex with their husbands by the respective families. The girls often run back to their families but she will be sent back to her husband each time. At age 10-12, sometimes younger, the girls are considered old enough for sexual intercourse with the husband. At 13 they are giving birth.”

Yitayesh explains that both wealthy and poor families are effected by child marriage: “Poverty is a real factor in driving child marriage. Many families can not cover the cost of education. However poverty is not the only reason. In the case of wealthier families, they wish to forge an alliance with a prestigious family through marriage. When families have equal status they will contribute equally. So for example, the girl’s family and husband’s family will both provide start-up capital to the new couple such as two cows each. And the husband will give clothing to his new wife. However if the girl is poor, her family may be given an Ox by the husband’s family which will ensure their survival.”

It is in fact the wealth of a family which can drive the age of marriage lower and lower. Yitayesh comments: “Where a marriage takes place to establish ties between two families with social standing, it may be too risky to wait, in case the girl marries someone else. And so the girl will be “reserved” at age 6 or 7, when the boy is say 14 and they will be married soon after.”

*\*Name changed to protect identity*



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**Siobhán Airey**, Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa

## **Normative Esperanto? A Closer Look at the Proposed Indicatorisation of the Right to Development in the UN**



There is now a very solid body of literature, both scholarly and practice-focused, on the relationship between indicators and human rights. It addresses pragmatic considerations (how indicators can develop precision on the normative content of human rights, especially for socio-economic human rights, and aid the monitoring of states' duties to fulfill their international human rights obligations); political considerations (how the use of indicators can result in shifts in relationships between different policy spheres and their institutional mechanisms and human rights, and between human rights actors such as rights-holders and duty-bearers and those with responsibility for monitoring those institutions and actors); epistemological questions with normative effects (how indicators can foreground certain kinds of knowledge and ways of seeing the world and, through their use in a human rights context, can shape what we think a human right might be). This work can also illuminate the role of indicators, especially in a human rights context, in helping to solidify the "legality" of human rights norms (helping them become more "law-like").

In my research on indicators and the human right to development, one aspect of this work that I've found fascinating is how indicators enable communications and facilitate relationships between: different organisations (such as international organisations focused on human rights, and international organisations focused on other agendas but whose work addresses human rights); actors (such as marginalised communities and people negatively affected by rights infringements and violations, "experts", practitioners, researchers etc.); different normative frameworks (such as those on trade, on climate change, on human rights) and instruments (from formal standards to "softer" instruments such as monitoring frameworks and policy guidelines); and between the local, regional and the international.

I use the term "Esperanto" to capture this communicative and relationship-building aspect of indicators' work in a human rights context, as it resonates with the benign impulse underpinning the turn to indicators. Esperanto is a constructed language that was created in the late 1880s by LL Zamenhoff. He was a Polish-Jewish ophthalmologist who lived at the time in Bialystok, what is now one of the largest cities in Poland near the Belarus border, but was part of the Russian Empire at the time.

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One human right that has begun to be indicatorised recently is the Right to Development (RTD). The RTD has been among the more controversial rights in contemporary international human rights discourse. It was proclaimed in a **Declaration within the UN in 1986**, and if we take that Declaration as representing a moment of consensus on the content of the right, we can see the prominence of particular ideas about development and about equality as a key part of the right.

It was home to Germans, Russians, Poles, Jews and Christians, between whom relations were strained. In response to this, Zamenhoff created Esperanto to foster harmony between peoples. This impulse behind Esperanto – the idea of a shared language, fostering harmony and reducing conflict and tension through continued and ever more widespread practice over time – to me captures one of the roles that is either explicitly or implicitly ascribed to indicators in the human rights project.

However, this Esperanto role for indicators has implications for human rights discourse across all the areas I've identified above – pragmatic, political, epistemological-normative and so on. Depending on how indicators are devised and used, concepts developed with particular meanings in a non-human rights context can enter into a dedicated human rights domain and bring the normative meaning of that alternative context with it, with particular consequences for the human right being “indicatorised”.

One human right that has begun to be indicatorised recently is the Right to Development (RTD). The RTD has been among the more controversial rights in contemporary international human rights discourse. It was proclaimed in a **Declaration within the UN in 1986**, and if we take that Declaration as representing a moment of consensus on the content of the right, we can see the prominence of particular ideas about development and about equality as a key part of the right. It is thus a really interesting example of how concepts (such as development and equality in this case) that are central to the meaning of a human right become clarified and made more precise through indicatorisation.

### The Declaration on the RTD and its approach to equality as a key aspect of the RTD

The Declaration contains the following ideas about development and equality. First, development is about the human person being the main participant and beneficiary of the RTD (Preamble and Article 2.1). This is in contrast to a predominant focus within current development policy discourse that identifies the promotion of economic growth as the prime goal and objective of development. Secondly, the Declaration places a strong focus on the centrality of equality which, in relation to people, includes the following three aspects: (i) Equality of **Access** – to “basic resources” in education, health services, housing, employment and other areas (Article 8.1—the Declaration does not qualify this with references to extenuating circumstances such as the existence of crises or other factors); (ii) Equality of **Participation** – the right of (and responsibility of) persons and peoples to participate in development processes (Articles 1.1, 2.1, 8.2 and Preamble). The Declaration also specifically recognised women's participation in development processes (Article 8:1); (iii) Equality of **Outcome** – in relation to the “fair distribution of the benefits” of development (Article 2.3 and Preamble) and of income (Article 8.1), which, taken together (as the Declaration recognises in

The right to development is the right of peoples and individuals to the constant improvement of their well-being and to a national and global enabling environment conducive to just, *equitable*, participatory and human-centred development respectful of all human rights.

Article 1.1), lead to (iv) Equality of **Condition** – the enjoyment of “every human person and all peoples” of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. That the indivisibility of these four aspects of equality (along with other aspects of the Right) is central to the content of the RTD is recognised in Article 9.1 of the Declaration, which states that “[a]ll the aspects of the right to development set forth in the present Declaration are indivisible and interdependent and each of them should be considered in the context of the whole”.

Without a doubt, this was a normative milestone in two respects. The Declaration was one of the first international human rights instruments to recognise all the four elements of equality as part of a human right. Now, a human right constituted not only a right of access or a right of participation, but also a right to distributional fairness. Moreover, this approach to substantive equality, as opposed to formal equality, marked a distinct shift in the relationship between the normative content of a human right and that of equality.

### After the pronouncement of the Declaration...

In the 1980s and '90s within the UN, various institutional mechanisms were used to clarify the nature of the right and figure out how to implement it. There was an Open-Ended Working Group and an Independent Expert. Later again, in 2004, a **Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development** began dedicated work focused on the implementation of the RTD. In order to further this, it decided to focus on developing “practical tools” such as guidelines and objective indicators in order to “translate... the human rights norms and principles into parameters accessible to policymakers and development practitioners.”[1]

### The indicatorisation of the RTD

Over several years, the Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development worked to elaborate the content of the norm, and from 2009 focused its attention on producing RTD criteria. The Task Force stated that there was a “core norm” that summarised the Right to Development, which it stated as follows:

The right to development is the right of peoples and individuals to the constant improvement of their well-being and to a national and global enabling environment conducive to just, *equitable*, participatory and human-centred development respectful of all human rights.[2]

It then expanded this norm into three attributes, eighteen criteria, and sixty-eight sub-criteria. Each of the sub-criteria is linked to varying numbers of indicators.[3]



Thus, we can see from this initial examination that the Task Force's approach to equality strongly reflects a classically liberal one, reflecting equality of access and opportunity, but not addressing elements of equality of participation, outcome and condition, as identified within the Declaration.

### The approach to equality in the indicatorised RTD

The Task Force's table of attributes, criteria, sub-criteria and indicators includes two concepts – equity and equality. Equity is not defined by the Task Force. Instead, its sole reference in the table is as follows: “[e]quity, non-discrimination and right to development objectives in IMF, World Bank and WTO programmes and policies”.[4] Equality receives five references in the table – three as sub-criteria and indicators, and two within the endnotes.[5]

The former three include two “attributes” of the RTD as follows:

- 3 (a) (i) Equality of opportunity in education, health, housing, employment and incomes.
- 3 (a) (ii) Equality of access to resources and public goods.

“Income inequality”[6] is further identified as an indicator of a RTD criterion of “fair access to and sharing of the benefits of development”[7].

Thus, we can see from this initial examination that the Task Force's approach to equality strongly reflects a classically liberal one, reflecting equality of access and opportunity, but not addressing elements of equality of participation, outcome and condition, as identified within the Declaration.

How might this significant omission have resulted from the careful and painstaking work undertaken by the Task Force? One answer, perhaps, lies in the process the Task Force used to determine appropriate criteria and indicators. In order to ensure the “quality” of the criteria and indicators selected, the Task Force said it “integrate(ed) analytical work done by expert groups at the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development” and in other arenas.[8] Thus, it went beyond organisations and institutions with a primary focus on and expertise in human rights for knowledge to develop the RTD indicators. One of those sources of knowledge appears to have been the World Bank's 2006 World Development Report (WDR), entitled *Equity and Development*, which the Task Force welcomed upon its release. The Task Force stated that the Bank's report encapsulated the theme that development “had to be grounded in sound economic policies that fostered *growth with equity*” and that “recognition of the need to *build complementarity into growth-oriented strategies and human rights* was a response to the growing call by people for *more empowerment, more ownership and more sustainability* in development efforts”.[9] The World Bank's approach to equity and development, however, is distinctly different than that enunciated in the Declaration on the RTD. For the Bank, “equity” is defined as an expectation that “individuals should have equal opportunities to pursue a life of their choosing and be spared from extreme deprivation in outcomes” (2).

Equity does not have its own intrinsic value; instead it is instrumental to growth-oriented development. There are obvious tensions between this view of the normative content and role of “equity” in development, and international jurisprudence on the “minimum levels,” “core obligations,” and “progressive realisation” of socio-economic human rights. How are the latter elements to be reconciled with the “avoidance of extreme deprivation”? The Bank's report is silent on this important question.

Equity is viewed as complementary to “long-term prosperity” (18), with the relationship between both described as a “virtuous circle” (122). “Equity” is not a goal with an intrinsic value – rather the Bank's argument is that “greater equity can in the longer term underpin faster growth” (17). In this view, we see a liberal, as opposed to substantive, approach to equality where equity is linked to formal equality of opportunity, but not equality of access, participation or outcome. Equity does not have its own intrinsic value; instead it is instrumental to growth-oriented development. There are obvious tensions between this view of the normative content and role of “equity” in development, and international jurisprudence on the “minimum levels,” “core obligations,” and “progressive realisation” of socio-economic human rights. How are the latter elements to be reconciled with the “avoidance of extreme deprivation”? The Bank's report is silent on this important question.

### Some reflections

What changes to the meaning of the RTD are brought about by the Task Force's inclusion of the term “equity” in the table of indicators for the RTD? What are the implications of its choice of a more minimal approach to equality than was present in the 1986 Declaration on the RTD for the current and future normative development and implementation of the RTD? As the Working Group on the RTD **are continuing their own work on refining the indicators**, it is as yet too early to say. However, I believe that the developments just outlined offer cause for concern from human rights activists and researchers engaged in understanding and implementing approaches to development informed by human rights discourse. The Working Group are in a period of reflection on the indicators developed by the Task Force. It will be interesting to see if those deliberations result in a “reverse transfer” of the normative ideas on equality from the 1986 Declaration to the RTD indicators, over those from the World Bank's *Equity and Development* Report that appear, at this time, to be more prominent.

[1] UN HRC Working Group on the Right to Development high level task force on the implementation on the right to development, ‘Right to Development Report of the high level task force on the right to development on its sixth session Addendum Right to Development Criteria and Operational Sub-criteria’ A/HRC/15/WG.2/TF/2/Add.2, para 4.

[2] Ibid. 8, emphasis mine.

[3] The current version of the indicators lists 149, each having its own note, identifying the source of data for that indicator.

[4] UN HRC Working Group above n.1, 9.

[5] The endnotes clarify further sources of information for the indicators, or the focus of information sought for the indicators. The two references to equality in the endnotes refer first to information on inequalities between “identity groups,” such as groups with different ethnic identities (endnote 80), and, secondly, to policies on equality and non-discrimination by the WB, the WTO and IMF (endnote 35).

[6] Measured by the “Ratio of income of bottom quintile to bottom quintile population (by country)” (Endnote 127). UN HRC Working Group, above n 1, 21.

[7] See criteria 3 (a), UN HRC Working Group, above n 1, 4.

[8] UN HRC Working Group, above n 1, 3.

[9] Commission on Human Rights, “Review of Progress in the Promotion and Implementation of the Right to Development: Consideration of the Report of the High-Level Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development.” Report of the high-level task force on the implementation of the right to development, E/CN.4/2005/WG.18/2, 24 January 2005, para 31. Emphasis mine.

Tisha Wardlow is the founder and President of Fight for Rhinos, a U.S based 501c non-profit, established in 2012. Her college background is in journalism and biology. Tisha has gained her knowledge and passion through experience as a veterinary technician, educator at John Ball Zoo, assisting Focus on Ferals (a TNR group) and the Kent County Humane Society. She is involved in local and state government as an advocate for an ivory ban, circus ban and for wildlife preservation, as well as animal rights. Tisha has spent time at Ol Pejeta Conservancy, the Masai Mara, and Amboseli regions of Kenya; as well as Hoedspruit Endangered Species Center, Kruger National Park and Kariega Reserve in South Africa. To find out how to help: <http://fightforrhinos.com>



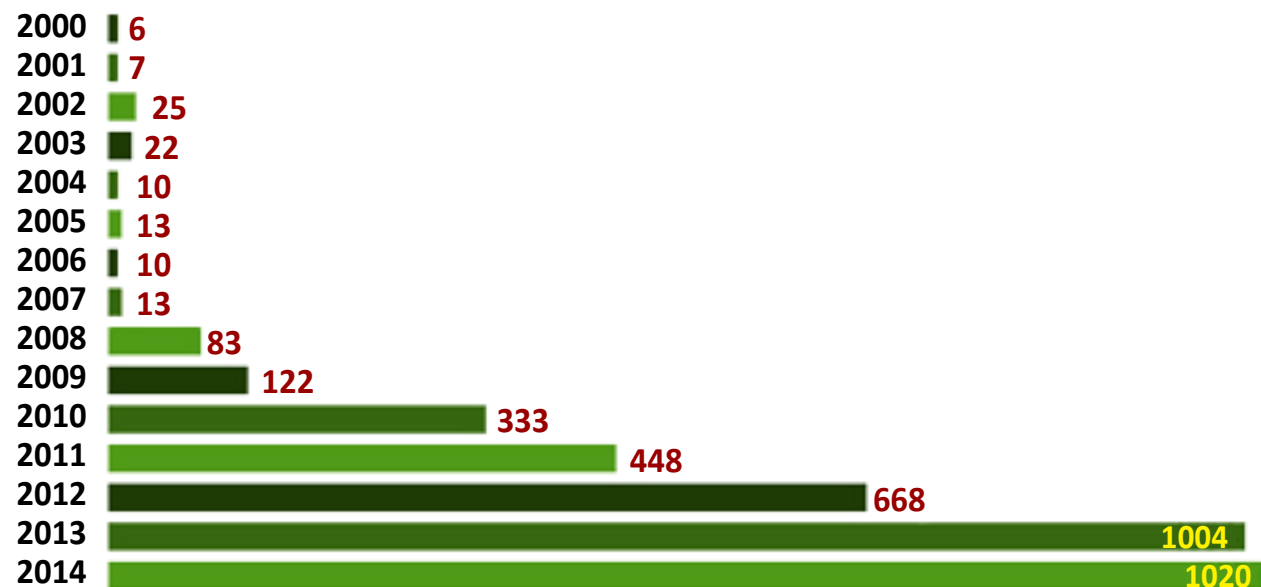
**Tisha Wardlow**, Founder and President of **Fight for Rhinos**.

## MAKING RHINOS COUNT IN A WORLD OF INDIFFERENCE

Rampant corruption, low employment and high poverty are the unfortunate circumstances surrounding South Africa, the primary home of Earth's last rhinos. Add to that a high Asian demand for their horns, and it equates to the perfect storm for their demise.

South Africa has lost approximately 1600 black and white rhinos in 2015 (unconfirmed by the government at this point). With poaching spreading like a plague, the death toll has risen dramatically each year, with this year topping all previous ones.

### NUMBER OF SOUTH AFRICAN RHINO POACHED



SOURCE: South African Department of Environmental Affairs



Two of the remaining three Northern White Rhinos at Ol Pejeta Conservancy Photo: Tony Karumba. Photo courtesy Tisha Wardlow.



We exist in a time when evidence points toward the “sixth mass extinction” on Earth. With 50% of all our wildlife wiped out in the last forty years, and currently 150-200 species of plants and animals going extinct EVERY day, we are facing the largest decimation of species since the dinosaurs were wiped out 65 million years ago. So it seems impossible to ever feel like we’re doing enough, let alone too much.

Through our blog we told the story of the “Last Male Standing”, focusing on the desperate and solemn life of Sudan, one of the three very last Northern White Rhinos on the Earth. It was circulated by the Dodo, then CNN and the Washington Post; resulting in much needed donations to Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya; the home of the Northern Whites, as well as the largest black rhino sanctuary in east Africa.



Mom and baby white rhinos browsing in Kruger National Park photo: **Fight for Rhinos**.  
Photo courtesy Tisha Wardlow.

In a world where an animal’s horn is worth more than cocaine or gold, the solution to their survival is not an easy one. The answer is a multi-faceted effort of anti-poaching strategies to combat the “here and now”, legal change to make the consequence more dire than the greed, and education and awareness to secure the future.

For our group here in the United States, we support those “on the ground” making a difference in these areas. As an entity, it takes raising not just dollars, but consciousness to do that. We are the facilitators of change, quietly meandering through social media making the desperate plea for the plight of the rhino, and the effects on the communities surrounding them. Trying to educate a population of people lost in reality television and “selfies” is a daunting obstacle all unto itself. Yet, once we do break through - low and behold- people DO care!

But how much will awareness help?

Through our blog we told the story of the “Last Male Standing”, focusing on the desperate and solemn life of Sudan, one of the three very last Northern White Rhinos on the Earth. It was circulated by the Dodo, then CNN and the Washington Post; resulting in much needed donations to Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya; the home of the Northern Whites, as well as the largest black rhino sanctuary in east Africa.

As a result, we were also able to successfully raise funding for them for a rhino audit of ALL rhinos on the conservancy, as well as providing half a dozen GPS devices.

Since then, there have been funds raised to pour into research to perpetuate the last of their genes. Looking ahead, some Southern White Rhinos were sent from South Africa to California where scientists hope to successfully implant Northern White Rhinos embryos into their Southern counterparts.

Another case where “awareness” played an integral role is that of Cecil the lion. The wave of concern and outrage over the lion’s shady demise prompted the world to take notice, in fact it was the top most searched topic on the internet in all of 2015.

In the midst of a corrupt government, racial and social tensions, and with an unemployment rate at a staggering 26%; the country seems to be tapped out of sympathy for its dwindling pachyderms. So being a conservationist, trying to save a species from the brink of extinction in 2016, suddenly one is faced with more than just biology and ecology as the stumbling blocks. Politics, poverty, economics and apathy are daunting obstacles in this race against time.



*Above: our most recent journey through South Africa.*

The public outcry created pressure on politicians and corporations that was impossible to ignore.

The results?

- France has banned lion trophy imports and Britain will do so in 2017
- 40 airlines have taken a stand to stop the transport of animal trophies.
- In November, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Global Anti-Poaching Act to enhance and support protection to combat wildlife trafficking.
- Five months after his death, the US has finally listed lions on the Endangered Species Act, protecting them and making it more difficult to bring lion trophies back to the country.

The ripple effect is still being felt. There have been petitions to shipping giants FedEx and UPS to stop the transport of wildlife trophies. The hometown of the hunter who killed Cecil, even run ads on the sides of their buses in memory of the lion.

Conservation groups saw a welcomed increase in donations to their projects for endangered big cats. Even groups like ours saw a surge of interest and activity, which reflects not just concern in the trophy hunting controversy or big cats, but in wildlife preservation in general. How far will it go, how long will Cecil's memory last? Are people still following the story and life of Sudan? And when is reality too much "doom and gloom" for the world to handle?

We exist in a time when evidence points toward the "sixth mass extinction" on Earth. With 50% of all our wildlife wiped out in the last forty years, and currently 150-200 species of plants and animals going extinct EVERY day, we are facing the largest decimation of species since the dinosaurs were wiped out 65 million years ago. So it seems impossible to ever feel like we're doing enough, let alone too much.

In September of 2015, our organization, *Fight for Rhinos*, made the rounds from Hoedspruit in the north-eastern part of South Africa to Kruger National Park in the east, and down to the south on the Eastern Cape. Throughout our time spent with field guides, trackers, veterinary staff, reserve managers, anti-poaching units, and ecologists we left no stone unturned in our quest for answers from those with firsthand experience of the poaching crisis; always searching for that "holy grail" solution.

We interviewed and spoke casually with taxi drivers, airport employees, and housekeeping staff to gain better understanding on the feelings and attitude of poaching within their country.

The conclusion? They're burnt out. With a giant ad in the Johannesburg airport, anti-poaching signs on fences, and almost daily mentions of poaching incidents in the news; people are becoming desensitized to it all.

In the midst of a corrupt government, racial and social tensions, and with an unemployment rate at a staggering 26%; the country seems to be tapped out of sympathy for its dwindling pachyderms.

So being a conservationist, trying to save a species from the brink of extinction in 2016, suddenly one is faced with more than just biology and ecology as the stumbling blocks. Politics, poverty, economics and apathy are daunting obstacles in this race against time.

Can we save South Africa from their "conservation fatigue"? Does what the rest of us do in our own corners of the world have effect on them? Applying public pressure can and does effect change. It strengthens laws and perhaps most importantly, changes attitudes. Only time will tell if it's all fast enough to have the necessary impact on our planet's wildlife.

Either way, we're left with no choice but to try. After all, who among us is willing to live with that regret if we don't?





## TAJEN THE CLANDESTINE COCKFIGHT BALI'S OTHER SPORT

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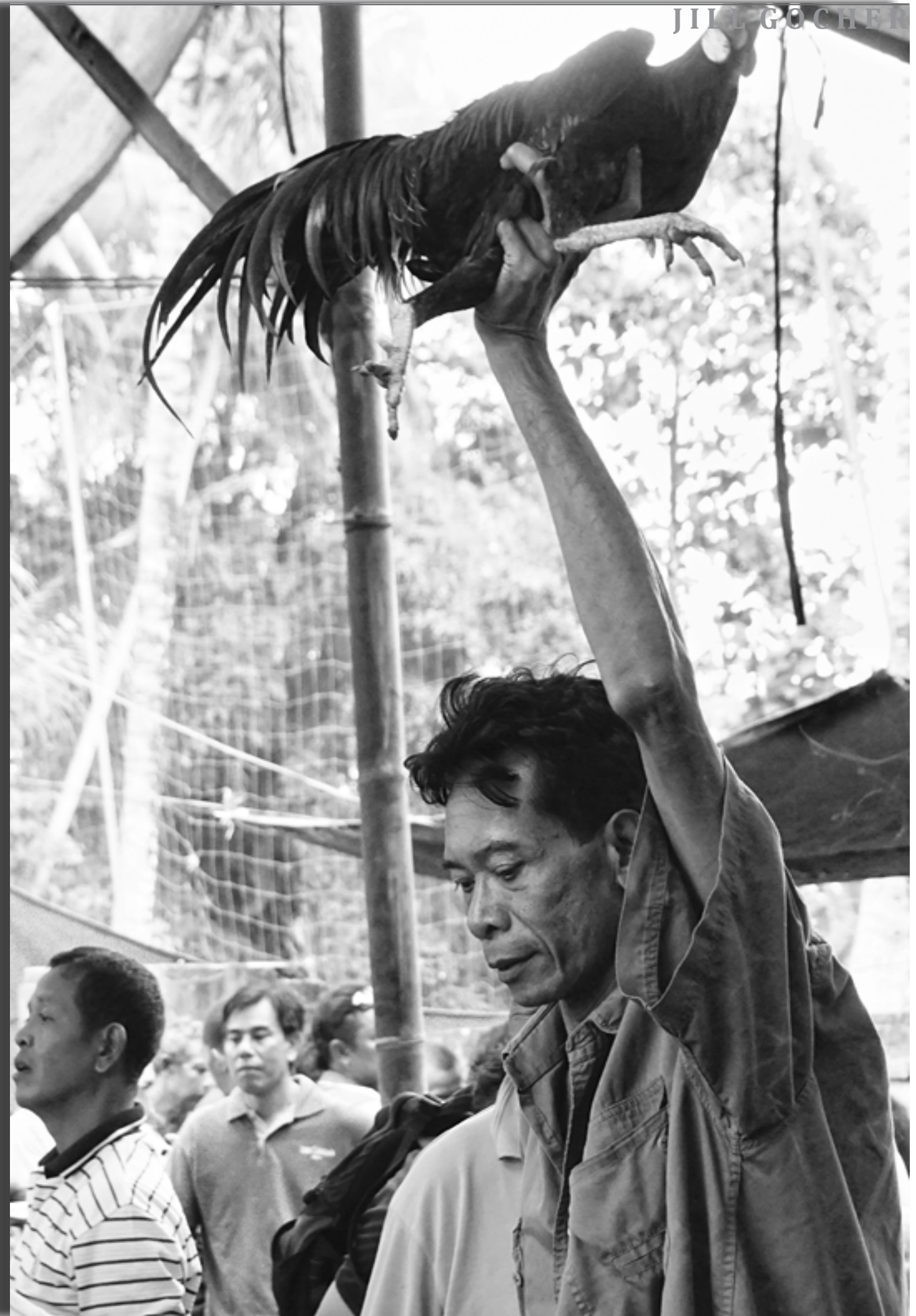
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JILL GOCHER

You can always tell when a cockfight is going to happen in Bali. The first sign is the beautiful woven bamboo or rattan baskets held tightly on the back of a speeding motorbike as the proud owner makes his way to today's specially selected spot. The next sign is a huge number of motor bikes crowded into a small space by a clearing or tented canopy. It doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out what's going on.

Cockfighting is an ancient sport or ritual that dates back around 6,000 years. Aggressive birds that have a propensity to fight are bred to increase their aggressiveness, strength and stamina. The sport is widespread from Europe to Mexico and across Asia, especially in India and the Philippines and Thailand, where apparently, they have specialist veterinarians at hand to stitch up favoured birds. In Bali, once you're cut, you die and into the soup pot!

Apart from anything else, in an increasingly industrialised environment, Tajen gives Balinese men a chance to enjoy their Balineseness, freed for a while, of all the other detritus they need to handle in their lives.

Opposite - a victor holds high his winning bird.







Tying on the taji - the sharp knives that enhance the birds natural claw.



A very enthusiastic bird takes to his opponent.





The crowd watches intently.



There is a poetic beauty in a cockfight.

Absinthe is a travelling companion in the metaphysical world where one frolics in the font, where images become reality and where one can delete forever those that haunt the soul.



## BLACK MARIA

It is crowded at Joe's bar. In the far corner sits Maria with Shirley waiting for the man to arrive. One is sipping tequila and the other, absinthe.

It is a warm night and the air is filled with smoke and verbosity.

Maria is holding a book in her hand...grubby and dog-eared...it is her blackboard on which she writes about her unknown life.

He walks in, looks around and then, noticing them, moves to their table.

"Hi"

"Hi" says Shirley and kisses him, "This is Marie, she wants to show you her writing. Maybe you can guide her. I don't know. I am too tired. After this drink, I'm off".

"Hi Marie"

"Hello" she replies shyly and gives him her book as if in offering.

"Keep it with you. First I need a drink, then you can read me a passage".

His absinthe arrives and after a few sips he reaches out for Shirley's hand.

"You have to go?"

"Yes, I have my monthly instalments...came here to introduce Maria to you. Be gentle with her."

He smiles and turns to Maria who is wearing an ill-fitting black dress that makes her look like a matron, but she is only in her early twenties with her unkempt hair and apparent nervousness.

Shirley gets up, kisses him on the shoulder, and leaves without looking back.



“Shall I read a passage?” asks Maria, hesitantly.

“Yes, please do”.

And in a voice that sounds like a mother comforting her baby, she begins...

“A warm day visiting a tiger petting tourist attraction...a snake farm and a crocodile zoo. All animals in cages, a wretched existence being mauled by the paws of tourists eager to touch the exotic.

A day in purgatory...sharing it with a man who has Crohn’s disease. He talks of his death...and I think of mine in a manner that rejoices it...

Continuity of thought and action is essential to surviving life. But the lucky number at the Buddhist temple says something else...it announces a life of shifting between time zones, of discontinuity of work and circumstance and a warning that all is not well.

How does it all end? How will one know the substance and meaning to one’s life when all round the cacophony of ‘I want, I need, I must have’ rises to a crescendo.

Today shall remain a temporary existence till another one rises to the whine of jet engines that takes me to yet another place in the firmament.

I suppose one will have to bid adieu to the here and now.

On the morrow I shall visit a butterfly park... wild butterflies are caught and entombed in a large netted area where people go to see them...numbskulls who are too lazy to walk the un-traveled pathways in the forest to discover for themselves the beauty and sanctity of Nature. Some call me mad...others the joker. I don’t care for I know who I am...I am the music maker... perhaps someday someone will hear my music and be enchanted by the essence of a life lived in celebration of the sacredness of living beings that offer us everything and yet lose their lives in doing so.

I leave you now to dream your dreams...wonderful and blessed. And I shall dream tonight of companionship, of love that I lost or left behind or didn’t recognise until I had lost it...a solitary existence that sometimes craves for a settled life...yet resisting the temptations of belonging to someone else without the fanfare of marriage or children.

Life, I suppose, is just a dream and death, a reality.”

She puts the book on the table and with a nervous twitch picks up the glass of tequila, her eyes looking straight at him like an animal in oestrus.

“You are living in a world I wish I could visit. Could you read me another extract?”

“The place is too noisy. Can we go somewhere else, please?” she asks.

“Ok”

They leave for his home...a hole in the wall spiced by characters of his world, a world that exists only in the lexicon.

Maria searches for his hand and holds on to it as they walk down the street. She is happy, for tonight she will carry him away into her world...the pills in her pocket will help them journey into the light, never to return.

**Live Encounters celebrates 6 years 2010-2015**

# Live encounters

**Free online magazine from village earth**  
**February 2016**

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas