

Live encounters

July 2011

Free international online journal by citizens of planet earth



Our sincere thanks to the following people
who have contributed in more ways than one to bring out
this issue of Liveencounters.

Sarita & Kamal Kaul

Indonesia

Randhir Khare

India

Riz Khan of Al Jazeera

Middle East

Ela & Hari Gori

U.S.A

Bobby Chinn

Vietnam

Terry McDonagh

Ireland

Carmen Roberts of Fast Track BBC

U.K

Vasumi Vjikaa

Indonesia

John Chester Lewis

Indonesia

Natalie Wood

Israel



July 2011

Shukreya Contributors and Readers,

It is with your support that this free online magazine, Live Encounters, has been resurrected. The unusual one year gap since the last edition was due to my abrupt departure from Indonesia... the result of comments made by me in a documentary on Bali's beach life.

The magazine's website is now being redesigned and this will take two weeks to complete. In the meantime, this issue is being uploaded on issuu.com, where the previous three issues are parked. The embed code is available for all the issues. All that you have to do is copy the embed code and paste it into the text area of your website/blog.

The stars of this issue are well known journalists, writers, a celebrity chef and upcoming scribes.

Riz Khan has been gracious by contributing an article.

The vivacious globetrotting Carmen Roberts continues to travel to the end of the world, this time to dance with criminals in a maximum security prison in The Philippines.

Randhir Khare 'donates' a Special report on The Dangs, a beautiful and ancient Tribal area in Western India.

Bobby Chinn churns out a 'comforting' tale of detox in Thailand...

Terry McDonagh does a double act with two poems...

Natalie Wood writes an 'in your face' piece on same sex marriages in Israel.

Live Encounters profiles the life and work of Marcus Robbin, a young German Director and Producer of the popular film Last Hippie Standing. He is a young man on a mission to create a new world.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

Mark Ulyseas

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Special Report

The Dangs, Sacred Green by Randhir Khare

Randhir Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. He is the Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal and Visiting Professor of Literature at Poona College. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and has been given the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures. www.khare-bullough.com/randhir/randhir.html



Interview

Riz Khan talks to Dr. Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic.

Riz is an international award winning journalist who needs no introduction. In 2011 he authored a preface for the [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](http://Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) annual report 'Attacks on the Press 2010') annual report "Attacks on the Press 2010", which examined working conditions for journalists in more than 100 countries. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rizwan_Khan - blip.tv/al-jazeera-riz-khan www.facebook.com/AJERizKhan - www.youtube.com/show/rizkhan



Fast track BBC

Carmen Roberts dances with criminals in jail

Carmen Roberts is an award winning journalist for Fast Track, BBC World's flagship travel programme since 2003 and has reported from over 60 countries. After the Asian Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004, Carmen cut short her holiday in Langkawi, Malaysia to report from the devastated resort town of Phuket. www.bbc.co.uk



Terry McDonagh

Irish poet and dramatist, A Double Act...

Terry McDonagh, poet and dramatist, has published four collections of poetry; a play; a book of letters and a novel and poetry for children. His work has been translated into Indonesian and German, funded by Ireland Literature Exchange. www.terry-mcdonagh.com



Bobby Chinn

A food addict's guide to detox

Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and now based in Hanoi. He is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. His series on Asia is being filmed for Discovery. He has also appeared in the UK on BBC2's Saturday Kitchen and Full On Food. A must read is his best selling book Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam. www.bobbychinn.com



Mayan Calendar

Vasumi Zjika

Vasumi Zjika has been a student of the Mayan Calendar for the past 13 years, sharing through workshops, lectures, seminars, sacred theatre and readings. She has worked and studied with some of the world's finest teachers including Jose Arguelles, Drunvalo Melchizedek. As a devotee of Ramana Maharshi she had her strongest awakening which led her to the Mayan Calendar and its deep wisdom. She is also an avid astrologer and student of both paths, Vedic and Western. www.vasumi.com/home.html



Portrait of a Photographer

Clay Patrick McBride by Mark Ulyseas

Who is Clay Patrick McBride what is it that tickles his sense of perception in a turbulent world; in a society that continues to play Russian Roulette with all of us?

"Eddie Adams told me that a good picture is one that moves you (pointing to his heart). Before leaving his studio he put his hand on my shoulder and told me that I reminded him of when he was young", says Clay Patrick www.marculyseas.wordpress.com



Ubud

Filters of introspection by John Chester Lewis

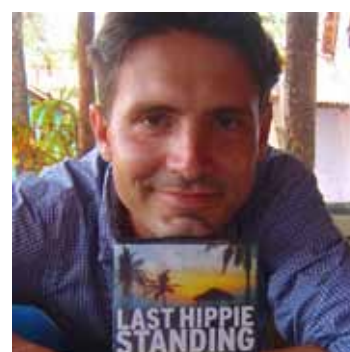
John Chester Lewis was born in Southern California and began writing poetry during university in Colorado. He lives in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia where he works on his poetry, music, and painting, when not running JL Galleries fine art. www.poempres.com - www.jlgalleries.com - www.johnniechester.com



Perspective

Natalie Wood writes on same sex marriages in Israel.

Born in Birmingham, U.K. Natalie began working in journalism a month prior to the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She continued in regional Jewish journalism for more than 20 years and left full time writing to assist her husband open a bargain books business. A year ago, Natalie emigrated to Israel. She can be contacted on - www.alwayswriteagain.blogspot.com - my.telegraph.co.uk/perfectlywriteinIsrael/



Live Encounter

Marcus Robbin, Director and Producer of the film Last Hippie Standing speaks to Mark Ulyseas.

"I have always felt uncomfortable with mainstream society. The hippie felt so, that's why I identify myself with them," says Marcus Robbin www.lasthippiestanding.de - www.youtube.com/marcusrobbin - www.cultureunplugged.com/play/2357/Last-Hippie-Standing



THE DANGS SACRED GREEN

Randhir Khare

Every forest in the Indian sub-continent has its own special personality – Shivpuri with its multiple rhythms of tree cover, grassland and water bodies, Bharatpur with its mirroring jheels, Mudhumalai with its dense green and brown, the Sundarbans with its dramatic mangrove world...and others too, the variety is awe-inspiring.

However, there is a lesser known, yet equally spectacular, naturescape flourishing in the South of Gujarat - the forests of The Dangs – which offer an unforgettable experience that the patient and strong-hearted can savour if they are willing to put themselves through the power of the encounter. This is because one is faced with an energetic ebullience that verges on the challenging when one enters these forests.

Despite the fact that human habitations have their places and spaces within this world and the familiar security of homesteads reassures the visitor, nature here displays her own wildness. In season, the roar of the rivers echoes through the wooded hills, pathways become streams, the green darkness is alive with mysterious creepers, flowers and fruits...bamboo groves and thickets release a horde of insects and reptiles and the very air is laden with presentiment.

These forests are the way they are because of the geographical location of the area, the geological make up, the soil and climatic conditions.

One end of The Dangs falls from the range of the Sahyadris, in the east, towards the plains of Gujarat in the west. From rugged mountains, the land slopes towards low plateaus before it finally sinks to the plains, carrying river waters of the Khapri, Purna, Ambika and their tributaries seawards. This land is covered by lava flow from the Deccan, cooled over the ages. The traps are Plateau Basalt - dark grey, on the verge of green ... some hard, compact and others soft and crumbly. In the valleys and lowlands there's black cotton soil that is rich, ranging from a clay-like to a loam-like texture if one holds a piece between the fingers. It is very fertile and has a lot of alumina, lime and magnesia with varying amounts of low nitrogen and phosphorus. And, in the uplands, there's red soil that is light, porous and moderately fertile. But then, the divisions don't stand so firm. Because of the undulating surface of the land, varying composition of parent rock and the extent of erosion, there is often a mixture of both red and black soils, making it possible for an incredible variety of trees and shrubs to be neighbours.

Ancient wooden Vaghdev (Tiger God) Totems

Photograph© Randhir Khare

© www.liveencounters.net



Contemporary (Tiger God) Vaghdev in stone Totems

Photograph© Randhir Khare

Summer stretches from March to the middle of June and then the monsoons take over, watering the land till late October. The months that follow bring in a mild winter.

There are two forest types here - south Indian moist deciduous forests and southern dry deciduous forests. The main feature of the moist deciduous forests is a leafless period in the dry season. The Dangs forests start becoming leafless from winter, the moment the climate becomes dry, the upper canopy of the forests becomes leafless whilst down below them there is a reasonably good spread of evergreen trees in underwood and shrub cover. Quite a number of the moist deciduous trees sprout new leaves long before the monsoons - as if it's an invitation to the coming rains. Teak is almost evergreen in these parts.

On the other hand, the dry deciduous forests in Dangs have a lower canopy which is made up of deciduous cover with a faint sprinkle of evergreen trees where it is sheltered and moist. There're few creepers in this sort of cover and the bamboo is sparse, dry and spiny. These two categories of forest have as many as eight types - very moist teak forests, moist teak forests, slightly moist teak forests, southern moist mixed deciduous forests, dry teak forests, dry mixed deciduous forests, dry bamboo clumps and dry tropical forests. But the nature of the forest being richly gregarious, these types don't exist like islands but are intermingled and in close proximity with one another.



Photographs© Randhir Khare

The larger trees include Teak (*Tectona Grandis*), Sadad (*Terminalia Tomentosa*), Haldu (*Adina Cordifolia*), Kalam (*Mitragyna Parviflora*), Modad (*Lannea Coromandelica*), Kakad (*Garuga Pinnata*), Bahedo (*Terminalia Belerica*), Bondaro (*Lagerstroemia Parviflora*), Sisam (*Dalbergia Latifolia*), Tiwas (*Ougeinia Ogenensis*), Khair (*Acacia Catechu*) and a wealth of others whilst the trees growing beneath their canopies are the Ambado (*Spondias Pinnata*), Kumbhio (*Careya Arborea*), Kusum (*Schleicheria Oleosa*), Kudi (*Wrightia Tinctoria*), Timru (*Diospyros Melanoxylon*), Amla (*Emblica Officinalis*), Asitra (*Buhinia Recemosa*), Aledi (*Morinda Tinctoria*), Garmalo (*Cassia Fistula*) and many more.

The undergrowth is made up of the Antedi or Murdasing (*Helicteres Isora*), Karvi (*Carvia Callosa*), Dhayati (*Woodfordia Fruticosa*), Karvand (*Carissa Carandas*), Nigodi (*Vitex Negundo*), Ukshi (*Calycopteris Floribunda*) and others and the ground cover includes Pular (*Leea Aspera*), Fulari (*Leucas Biflora*), Sevra (*Asystasia Coromandeliana*), Sonero or Zinzudo (*Achyranthes Aspera*), to name a few. The climbers are Vela Bivla (*Millettia Racemosa*), Palasvel (*Butea Superba*), Nandanvel or Panivel (*Vitis Repanda*), Kangvel (*Ventilago Denticulata*), Medhvel (*Cryptolepis Buchanani*), Vaghatvel (*Wagatea Spicata*), Gharvel (*Tinospora Cordifolia*) and a host of others.

There are several types of grasses. Among them are Polada (*Spodiopogon Rhizophorous*), Tokarbund (*Panicum Monatanum*), Bhatado (*Themeda Ciliata*), Dabor Dhruvo (*Cynodon Dactylon*), Sukli or Kasur (*Hetropogon Contortus*) and Rosha (*Cymbopogon Martinii*). Many of the trees, shrubs, smaller plants and climbers have known medicinal properties.

Although two dozen mammals have been spotted in the past, a visitor may encounter Wild Boar (*Sus Cristatus*), Hyaena (*Hyaena Hyaena*), Ruddy Mongoose (*Herpestes Smithii*), Hare (*Lepus Ruficaudatus Geoff*), Jackal (*Canis Aureus*), Spotted Deer or Chital (*Axis Axis*), Honey Badger (*Melivora Capensis*), Jungle Cat (*Felis Chaus*), Common Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus Hermaphroditus*), Indian Grey Mongoose (*Herpestes Edwardsi*), Four Horned Antelope (*Tetraceros Quadricornis*), Barking Deer (*Muntiacus Muntjak*) and Rhesus Macaque (*Macaca Mulatta*). The Tiger (*Panthera Tigris*) is rare in these parts and the Leopard *Panthera Pardus* is elusive. Among the reptiles are the Common Garden Lizard, Common Monitor Lizard, Common Wolf Snake, Trinket Snake, Rat Snake, Common Krait, Indian Spectacled Cobra, Russells Viper and Vine Snake.

Birds, unlike mammals and reptiles, are relatively more visible. Apart from the common ones like Crows, Sparrows, Bulbuls (Red Vented, Red Whiskered, White Cheeked), Mynas (Indian Myna, Pied Myna, Jungle Myna, Bank Myna and Brahminy Myna), Cattle Egrets and Pond Herons, there are a number of smaller birds like Wire-tailed Swallows, Spotted Munias, Small Green Bee-eaters, Weaver birds, White eyes, Tailor Birds and Purple Sunbirds. There were four types of doves too (Emerald Dove, Ring Dove, Red Turtle Dove and Spotted Dove), two types of Kingfishers (White Breasted and Pied), two types of Jungle Fowl (red and grey) and Grey Partridge. Apart from these one may see the Ashy Wren Warbler, a number of types of hawks, kites and eagles, Blossom Headed Parakeet, Black-headed Oriole, Black Drongo, Black Ibis, Common Peafowl, Common Hawk Cuckoo, Curlew, Crow Pheasant, Cormorant, Indian roller, Golden Backed Woodpecker, Indian tree pie, Jungle Crow, Magpie Robin, Hoopoe, Red Wattled Lapwing and Spotted Owlet (apart from other owls).

Many have a doomsday view of the forests of the Dangs. They believe that the forest cover has been pillaged and reduced to a withered mass by human habitation. Some even go as far as saying that there is little or no wild life remaining. Though part of what they say may be true, a large chunk of it is an overstatement because Nature here has a way of preserving herself. If you visit the Dangs and exercise patience enough and observe forest etiquette, you'll discover that there is a wealth of life in there. Birds, mammals, reptiles and other moving beings have a unique way of 'falling silent' and becoming almost 'invisible' when humans are passing through. When they don't feel threatened, they reveal themselves.

To illustrate this, let's spend a day in the Mahal area of the Dangs where most people say little or no wild life exists.

Imagine you are there...silent and respectful.

Standing beside the trickling stream which runs along the side of the jungle road, you watch sunlight drip through fissures in the green roof. Drop by drop silent sunlight falls on red and brown spears of bamboo leaves till it almost seems that the hulls of the curled leaves cannot contain them any more and overflow, pouring light on to the damp earth. The warmth brings beetles, bugs and insects of different colours, shapes and sizes out of their hiding places. Puffs of tiny yellow butterflies spring up from the foliage and spread out.

You sit down on the trunk of a fallen tree, waiting in anticipation for the performance to begin.

"Woop, woop, woop," calls a crow pheasant from the thicket.

It is like a signal.

A green barbet seems to return the call in translation, then a Magpie Robin joins in. Jungle Babblers fly noisily from one bush to another. A Grey Jungle Fowl flaps across the road from behind you. He isn't flying, but running and flapping his wings. If he really considers you dangerous he'd take off. But he hasn't. He is still on his feet. And then a Barking Deer shoots out into the open patch across the road. Stops dead in his tracks and trots off into the half-lit interiors of the grove.

The play has begun.

You get up and walk across the road, then stepped down along the slope that eased off into the jungle of bamboo. The Barking Deer is ahead of you. You can hear him moving over the carpet of leaves, somewhere ahead. Then there is a gentle splashing. He is walking across a stream. Stepping along inside a passageway of bamboo, fragrant with fresh shoots, you follow the retreating sound.

Fording the stream, the climb becomes steep. At the top of the ridge the thicket begins again but thins out into a wide open grassy field that falls rapidly into bamboo groves that run along the banks of the Purna river. You know the animal will be hovering around near the rim of the field, so that it could make a quick getaway when danger threatens. Yes, that's exactly what he does. But then his curiosity gets the better of him and he trots out into the field. You get a good look at him in the sunlight which is growing increasingly brighter. His shoulder must be about two and a half feet off the ground. A beautiful chestnut brown coat, small antlers. He stands there surveying the scene around him ... then he bends down and starts pulling at the grass. There is a short dog-like bark, a warning call from another Barking Deer, from the jungle beyond and he stops chomping grass, raises his head, looks over his shoulder away from you then bursts into a run- straight in your direction. You duck as he comes your way – leaping clean over you and vanishing into the grove behind.

This is typical Barking Deer country - densely forested hills which offer open patches for them to feed in. It is also an ideal spot for the Jungle Cat which is just about three feet long, nose tip to tail tip. Like a largish domestic cat, sandy yellowish - with a grey cast. A graceful tail, ringed black and green eyes. Hardly has the thought crossed your mind when you nearly step on one of them hidden there amongst the tall grass. He sits crouched, looking up at you - then in a single leap bursts into the air almost past your face and lands a little ahead. It seems that you have chosen the wrong time to set out into the jungles of Mahal. The creatures are still feeding so you decide to stop and wait till the sun is higher. You climb up on to a low hillock, near a clump of bamboo and settle down. Riding the air, over the field, a Golden-backed Woodpecker with his stubby wings bobs into the jungle.



Roots of an ancient banyan tree

Photographs© Randhir Khare



A Bhil infant asleep in a hammock

The sunlight loses its golden tint and a noisy party of Baya Birds come out, spreading themselves across the grassy field, swinging on the slim ends of grass blades till they touch the damp earth - then flying off, let them spring back again. Bright yellow blobs of colour on their heads, flash in the light. ... "chit-chit-chit" they call. Spotted Munias join them.

Three Chitals come out into the open, stand close together in the middle of the field and then swiftly glide through the grass and into a narrow passageway that is wedged between two groves on the other side of the field.

It is an interesting experience, lying quietly in a shady spot in Mahal, listening to the throb of life around. Initially, more obvious sounds pervade the air ... the wind, the call of birds, an occasional barking deer ... but as you relax, smaller sounds, quieter sounds, emerge. The sound of flipping blades of grass as Munias and Bayas collect nest-building material, the sound of Red Turtle Dove wings rising in flight, fine bamboo stems gently rubbing against each other to produce musical notes.



Photograph© Randhir Khare

‘I heal them with herbs and roots and seeds and leaves and bark from the forest. This is possible because of the great power of The Dangs. The green spirits around me are the real healers. That’s why we honour them with shrines everywhere. They protect our forest...and if we don’t honour them, it means that we don’t value our forest anymore.’

-Janubhai

Kunbi shaman and healer



Photograph© Randhir Khare

Late afternoon. Time for you to start moving towards the river. When you walk out into the field, there is a flurry of activity as birds retreat to safety. Silence again. There is enough water in the river bed to attract birds. You spot a couple of cormorants sunning themselves on rocks. Pond Herons poised near the water side, wait to strike at passing water creatures. A Black Winged Kite is perched high up on a bare branch and a few stray stilts dot the sandy strips.

It is a long walk and for some time the only sound you can hear is the soft lapping and grinding of the river. Outside the gateway of bamboo arches where the road vanishes into the jungle, you stop and sit down on a cluster of rocks. Given half a chance, you would like to sleep out in the open. But tonight, you aren’t ready for it. You need a soft bed with a fan whirring overhead, the comforting feel of two large cotton pillows, a thin sheet - and a good deep sleep.

As the forests of the world are rapidly vanishing, The Dangs survives and flourishes. This is because people from traditional communities who inhabit the region consider it to be the home of their numerous deities. Individual trees and often entire are sacred and treated with respect.

The Bhils were said to be among the earliest inhabitants. Driven by the Rajputs and Moghuls down south from their homelands around southern Rajasthan, many of them made the hilly forests of The Dangs their home. They protected their new home with their lives, fending off invading armies with their power long bows and guerrilla tactics. Even in early colonial times, The Dangs was considered ‘foreign territory’.

The British forces finally managed to enter the region by drawing up a pact with the Bhil Rajas, promising them an annual gift in exchange for precious wood from the forest. Not fully comprehending the implications of the deal, they agreed. And so, the invading forces managed to get a foothold and start pillaging the forests, carrying away valuable timber. Realising their mistake, the Bhils reacted.

The beginning of the nineteenth century found the Bhil Rajas and Naiks causing considerable turbulence in the regions surrounding the Dangs.

By 1825, they had even captured the fort of Mulher and defeated the Gaikwads’ ten thousand strong army. The East India Company formed the Bhil Corps to fight back the ‘plunderers’, but with little effect. Although the Company managed to get most of the jungle area of the Dangs on lease in 1842, they still could not stem the force of the people. By the time the war of 1857 broke out, the Bhils were pretty near breaking the spirit of the Company when major offensives were unleashed and they were virtually crushed.

But it didn’t end there.

A three-fold programme of repression was pursued...“shoot wild pigs, tigers and Bhils.” The leased area was notified in 1879 as a reserved forest under the Indian Forest Act. This prohibited cultivation in specified areas. The Rajas reacted. They were certain it was a step towards depriving them of their forest home. So, they went out into the forest and began to fell trees and forcibly cultivate land....

The fuse had been lit again and the turbulence continued till 1907 when droves of discontented people, led by Rajas and Naiks, moved into Ahwa. Since news had reached the local residents in advance they hurriedly fled the place, leaving their homes and property to the mercy of the advancing gangs.

The success of the attack was broken when the Raja of Gadvi, fearing severe punishment, switched sides and the situation was brought under control. But the festering continued until 1911 when there was another revolt. The Bhils felt that the strict enforcement of the provisions of the Indian Forest Act was unbearable and unacceptable. The revolt spread from the north-east down to the southeast.

According to G.E. Marjoribanks, assistant political agent of the Dangs, “The Bhils in the locality around Kadmal were in an offensive mood and were setting the forest rules at defiance and likely to subject the officials to violence; that other Bhils of Mohanamal had robbed the Singana liquor shopkeeper at midnight after threatening him, had paid half the price and told him that the Bhils were now sole authority in the Dangs.”



Memorial plaque of a family elder

Photograph© Randhir Khare



One of the many waterfalls in the Dangs

Photograph© Randhir Khare

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The first week of December 1914...

The Naik of Pimpri drew in the joint forces of the Rajas of Gadvi, Amala and other lesser chiefs. They were supported by the Rajas of Wasurna and Derbhavati.

Hundreds of Bhil guerrillas gathered in groups all over the Dangs and set the forests on fire. They intimidated anyone who tried to stop them. It took a long time for the trees to actually catch fire. There was winter dampness in the air and soil and wood. Strong winds beat flames into smoke. But along the southern slopes and exposed plateau areas, the trees burnt to cinders. Twenty-six square miles of land was laid waste.

Marjoribanks marched to Ahwa with joined forces from Surat, Broach and Khandesh, snuffing out the uprising. The Naik of Pimpri was imprisoned for six months and the Raja of Gadvi surrendered, handing over all the weapons he possessed. As for the Raja of Amala, he knew the jungles of the Dangs better than Marjoribanks, slipping out of the net on several occasions until the agent just gave up the chase.

Had anything really changed since then? At the beginning of the twentieth century the Bhils of the Dangs fought against outsiders who were preventing them from living freely within their own jungles. Their rights over the land had been challenged; their survival was at stake.

Post Independence, the situation hardly changed and the rights of indigenous people of The Dangs continued to be neglected. In the 1990s, the unrest increased and the Bhils particularly actively took part in hitting back at the Forest Department in region. 'Everywhere there was talk of freedom,' Jankiben, a Bhil, once told me, 'we were going to be our own masters. My husband never used to drink so much then. He was very strong and his mind was always awake. Day and night he moved with the other men in the jungle. Defending our land. I too went into the forest many times, side by side with my husband.

'We stoned forest guards, threw lighted torches at their jeeps. Chased them into the jungle. I slapped one guard myself. I tore his clothes. I, Jankiben. I did it. I was proud

to do it because I am a Bhil. At home, we had no weapons so we carried knives, axes and thick bamboo poles. Some of the men had guns. But they were too frightened to fire them. But we didn't think anyone would die.

'They shot Taraben in Kosimada. I saw her body, sahib. And when I saw her I knew that it was all over. Freedom? Independence? Bah! Nothing.'

'But they say that the Peoples War Group, misled you all....'

'That's not true. That was only one thing.... It will happen again. Maybe. I hope it does.'

The night was crowded with crickets and the rain had begun again. It fell on the tiled roof matted with vines of creepers, on shrubbery in the courtyard, on the battered and pitted track outside the gate, on the fields, the forests, the hills...the rain had begun again, growing from the gentle tap tap of fingers to the beating of a riot cane.

'Do you think it will happen again, sahib?'

'Maybe it will.'

The rain stopped suddenly. There was no breeze.

Like a camera flash, freezing that single moment so that I'd never forget it. I never have. Lying there on the veranda, on a mat spread over cow dunged flooring, I looked out into the night.

A decade and a half has passed since that meeting with Jankiben and I have returned to The Dangs innumerable times. The Forest Department is doing its utmost now to try and dissolve differences and become more respectful of the views and rights of the indigenous people.

And the forest survives and flourishes.

Not just because of the efforts of the Forest Department but more because of the indigenous people themselves and the sacred green that they have preserved. Their relationship with the forest has inspired others too and today we find people from other faiths and beliefs also treating The Dangs with respect.

My friend, Janubhai, a Kunbi shaman and healer who lives in the village of Dhavalidod, actually runs a 'clinic' where he treats people (irrespective of who they are). In fact his patients include those coming from far away places in the sub-continent.

'I heal them with herbs and roots and seeds and leaves and bark from the forest. This is possible because of the great power of The Dangs. The green spirits around me are the real healers. That's why we honour them with shrines everywhere. They protect our forest...and if we don't honour them, it means that we don't value our forest anymore.'



www.khare-bullough.com/randhir/randhir.html

Below : The writer with friends from the Dangs. Beside him, wearing a white topi is Janu Kaka, the bhagat of Dhavalidod.



© Randhir Khare

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Photograph© Riz Khan

Halfway Across the World...

by Riz Khan

I could tell he was about to enter the room by the urgency of the people who had just walked in. A handful of security service men scuttling in and looking around, rapidly assessing the “situation”, a video journalist walking backwards while glued to his subject ahead, and then a couple of well-dressed, official-looking types, faces almost expressionless with concentration. Then, in contrast, he casually strolled through the double doors of the large room, emanating a warm aura, taking the time to walk up and say hello to the small group of people milling around, and all the time, wearing a benevolent smile. The kind that said, “Anything is possible if you sit down and talk about it.”

And that’s what he wants to do. Talk about a pressing issue that is on the other side of the world from his home.

Dr. Leonel Fernandez is, as I write, into his tenth year in office as the President of the Dominican Republic. He first took office in 2000, completing his four years having crammed in a lot of new ideas and social and economic proposals. After a four year break, where his people opted to try something new, realizing that they were then worse off, Leonel Fernandez was elected again

in 2004 with a clear mandate from the masses, and then re-elected in 2008. I guess he must be doing something right.

When Dr. Fernandez first got the bug to pursue foreign policy, he was met with a fair amount of skepticism at home. The people of this small Caribbean island – shared with the troubled nation of Haiti – wondered why he didn’t look closer to home when committing national resources and efforts. Very soon, he demonstrated the benefits of shaping the Dominican Republic into a more active global player. The economy grew, and the country showed it was moving in the right direction.

So what has the Israeli-Palestinian situation got to do with it?

Well, that’s partly what he and I were sitting down to talk about. He came to the interview ready to give frank answers, and a clear explanation as to why he had devoted considerable personal time and energy, and resources to hosting the FUNGLODE Forum in Cap Cana this July.

It was an event that drew a number of key players from the Middle East on all sides; Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, Egyptian and so on.



Photograph© Riz Khan

INTERVIEW

The goal, said the President, was to examine why so many initiatives across the years have failed to produce lasting peace in the region, and then suggest something that might bring about a fresh approach.

Dr. Fernandez personally sat through every session during the two days of candid and energetic debate – contributing when asked, but mostly listening patiently to his eclectic mix of panelists. His forum team included a number of young and energetic Ambassadors of the Dominican Republic, hauled back temporarily from their postings to places such as Egypt and India, to help make this event a success. It became evident that a lot of planning and effort had gone into making this happen.

The President has made a name for himself because of his aggressive and dynamic foreign policy. He has brought a country that was sidelined in international and regional circles for years back into the fold, redefining its relevance. Dr. Fernandez even working on healing the bitter rift with neighbouring Haiti, becoming the first foreign head of state to visit the nation after it was devastated by the earthquake at the beginning of 2010, and dedicating millions of dollars of aid to the Haitian people.

But, when it comes to Israelis and Palestinians, people might ask why have such an interest in a far-off conflict that has lasted over six decades, almost without relent, and appears to have even lower prospects of resolution than ever?

“Because of globalization,” answers the President, adding, “This has become a borderless world... characterized by interdependence. Anything that takes place in one part of the world will have an impact, even in very remote areas.”

He gives oil as an example, emphasizing that, as an oil-importing country, the Dominican Republic is vulnerable to the price of such a commodity.

Dr. Fernandez does, however, go on to point out that his country has a large population of people of Arab origin, and many Jewish people too.

“...that have been living here in the Dominican Republic for many years now, peacefully. So, I think that if they can live peacefully here, then why not, exactly, in Israel, or Palestine, or other parts of the Middle East?”

It’s true, while on the island, I did meet a large number of his fellow countrymen and women who had Arab roots, who felt a direct connection to what was going on half-way across the world, in the Middle East – and were keen to do something positive about it.

For sure, it is easy to gauge President Fernandez’s genuine commitment to his foreign policy goals – his efforts to make his country a significant player in far off issues such as the Middle East peace process.

It’s certainly ambitious and, no doubt, will be met with a fair amount of skepticism, but realizing how much baggage is carried by the current players, it is refreshing to hear a different refrain – from a totally different direction.

It could just be the kind of focus and determination of someone like President Leonel Fernandez that gives the struggling relationship between Palestinians and Israelis the renewed impetus it needs.

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Dancing with criminals in jail !



Carmen at the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Centre, Philippines

The life of a travel journalists isn't always as glamorous as you might think, especially in these times of airline strikes, bankruptcies and volcanic clouds. But the last place you'd expect a travel and lifestyle reporter to end up is in prison.

I can safely say, our report from the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Centre in the Philippines was one of the most popular stories on the BBC website during the week that it aired, it garnered a huge audience response and most importantly, it was great fun to film too.

Yes, I'm talking about those orange jump-suited, dancing inmates made famous on YouTube with their version of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" back in 2007.

But what's this got to do with travel and tourism you might ask?

Well, very few people know that this maximum security prison opens its doors to visitors on certain Saturdays every month to watch live performances of the dance routines. You can even have your picture taken with the prisoners and buy souvenir prison t-shirts.

But as you might have guessed, the road to getting permission and access wasn't smooth sailing. It didn't help that we arrived right in the middle of a political (and sibling) bun fight between the head of the prison Byron Garcia and his sister Gwendolyn Garcia, the Governor of Cebu.

Just days before our arrival in Cebu, the dancing

program had been put on hold by the Governor amid concerns over accounting practices for generous donations to CPDRC program.

Nevertheless, after pleading emails and desperate phone calls to the governor's office, permission was granted at the eleventh hour. So, despite the suspension, we were allowed to film a live dance performance.

I should hasten to mention that the prison has been criticised by human rights campaigners who claim that enforced dance routines are exploitative and not proper rehabilitation. Some former prisoners have even alleged violence was used against those who refused to join in.

With this in mind, the air was tense when we arrived at the prison. As we emerged from the vehicle to get some shots from the outside gates, inmates from the jail next door shouted and leered at us through barred windows. But I must admit, all these worries faded away once we entered the prison.

It was also helped by the fact that we were running late. No sooner had we been ushered onto the viewing platform, a booming voice announced our names over a microphone, introducing our team individually to the inmates who had been waiting for us in the courtyard under the hot Filipino sun.

And then the distinct and catchy tune "Do The Hustle" began to blare from the PA system in surround sound and the courtyard beneath us began to pulse with a thousand rhythmic bodies all in sync. It was a spectacle.

A troupe of identically clad murderers, rapists, robbers and fraudsters, all dancing to the same tune. We were then treated to that viral hit, "Thriller" as well as the aptly titled "The Don't Really Care About Us", which was featured in the closing credits of the recent Michael Jackson documentary, "This Is It". It was all over in a matter of minutes.



I cannot tell you how many times I've watched these performances on YouTube, but to see it live is a whole other experience. I was truly blown away by the discipline of the perfectly timed, funky choreography - regimented, but in the best of ways.

I spent a good deal of the performance looking through the viewfinder of a SLR camera, as well as, a small hand held flip camera.

I even ventured down onto the dance 'stage' - otherwise known as the prison courtyard - to film some. And even though we were inside a maximum security prison, and I was close enough to touch some of the prisoners at times, I never once felt threatened or at risk.

The prisoners genuinely enjoyed the attention. Afterwards they eagerly posed for our personal instamatic cameras, while others continued with the dance moves. Certainly, of the inmates we saw, the dancing had given them a sense of purpose and pride, as well a degree of fame and notoriety on the internet.

We interviewed two of the star dancers after the routine.

One confessed to a crime of passion - killing his gay American lover.

While the other told us, quite matter of fact, that he was behind bars for multiple murder. It was hard to believe. But log onto YouTube, or indeed Fast Track, and see for yourself.

www.bbc.co.uk



© Carmen Roberts, Fast Track BBC

Horse Dreams

The horse under the chestnut tree
was not just avoiding flies – he
seemed to be asleep on three legs
with a fourth resting separately.

There wasn't a bloodsucker in sight,
not even a horsefly, so I concluded
he must have been dreaming when
his flank shuddered a slight flutter.

Could the horse have been reliving
a blissful summer with a French pony
– before castration – or was he
lost in an ancient horse song that

had come through the generations
like harness, horse sense or breeding
prior to science and sirens.

Was he sad because he'd missed out on
being a rodeo star, or a circus horse
– knowing, full well, he didn't have
the build or looks – and he'd been
very uneasy in crowds. *Dream on, horse.*

Where's my bike? It's time to return
to the song my forefathers obliged me
to continue with. I will sing, but I'll
need a drop of red wine to get started.

A Double Act

He was a juggler
on a unicycle bike.

She was a dancer
on the thinnest of ice.

His balls landed on ice
– nice
– a break through.

But as she had nothing
to dance on,
he packed up juggling
and she dancing
till he started skating
on fresh ice
and she took up clowning.

They wanted to be sure
of one another's feelings.

Ducks quack, lay eggs
and swim. The drake
pops up now and then.
It's easier.





A food addict's guide to detox - by Bobby Chinn

The inimitable Celebrity Chef at his best...



No one really appreciates the daily hazards a restaurateur faces day in day out. The diet, the second hand smoke, an open bar and the life style that comes with it. It can turn into a nightly party, which could be great for business, but its quite taxing on the body. When someone buys you a drink, you save money, when someone buys me a drink, I make money. There are the dangers of 'drinking the profits away' but these days as the restaurant loses money, I have gone from drinking my profits away to drinking my inventory! My new found logic is that during these tough times we need to get lean and trim down the fat by reducing inventory. If we go under, then at least I took as much of what was once mine before the creditor does!

What's worse is that I have become a very fussy drinker, especially if I have to make such unhealthy sacrifices. I generally drink wines that don't have sulphites and I only drink premium brands of spirits to reduce the risk of hangovers if I over indulge. Vodka is the cleanest alcohol for your system and cranberry juice helps you rehydrate while drinking. Yes, I plan and monitor my drinking based on a potential hangover. If I have to drink when I am exhausted, Patron Silver with Cointreu Margarita no salt. (Tequila is the only alcohol that is a non-depressant, an actual upper, and a mild hallucogenic. If your husband leaves you for a young bimbo with double d's, your partner embezzles all your money, your best friend runs off with your wife or you are simply constipated, try drinking a bottle of Patron and see what happens. Half way through the bottle, you could be happily dancing on the bar top doing body shots with a transgender male identified lesbian by the name of Michelle or Mitch depending on how far into the tequila you have gotten. In the morning, no hangover, just fatigue to override the emotional trauma, plus no constipation!

My acupuncturist says both my liver and kidneys are weak. Yes the two organs responsible for cleaning out all the toxins that have been on over-drive. My problem with the liver is that you don't get to see the damage you are doing to it and if can't see the damage then it's hard to really give a shit about it.

My diet is poor at best so I recently decided to give myself a break and check into Chiva Som in Hau Hin in Thailand, a Spa that specializes in detox, weight loss and fitness.

The best way to detox is to simply to reduce the exposure to toxins, which is too hard for people like me, plus it is so much easier just to detox for a week. I did it all, acupuncture, lymphatic drainage, abdominal massage to aid digestion and blockage, liver cleansers, milk thistle, fiber pills, antioxidants, vitamin supplements, a low sodium diet for a week, tons of fresh juices, daily steams, all while doing daily yoga and stretch classes at dawn until you start to reevaluate the life style.

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Everything was kosher except the colonic irrigation treatment. The nurse was very pleasant or as pleasant as it gets for such a job and seemed very well versed at recognizing a virgin to the process. In my spa issued robe I was requested to lie on my back, bend and spread my legs and turn sideways where she proceeded by inserting a well lubed tube inside of me, a very humiliating position to be in. It was like constipation for dyslexics. **Then came the small talk. 'Are you ok?' in which I responded 'Well considering I just met you, don't know your name and you've already had a good look at my butt hole and just shoved a hose up my arse, I can honestly say NO! I am so far away from ok!'** But that's her job, a real pro and I would hate to evoke an image of what would constitute a bad day for this sweet lady.

There I lied, with her one hand holding the tube between my legs while the other squeezed my hand for emotional comfort as if we were now a couple going through this together, while the water pumped into me exactly one temperature warmer then my body temperature. Watching a large machine with a built in display of a back lit rectangular tube filling in with rushing water as it found its way inside of me. I started to feel bloated, full up to the point that goose bumps filled my body where the nurse gave me the occasional smile talking me through it.

'Relax and take as much water as possible, and just let me know when you can't take anymore'

With each passing second I started to have the urge of stopping, but 'the more the better' as they say. In a sudden moment I recognized my limit and I screamed 'I CANT TAKE NO MORE!' Quickly hitting buttons to reverse the process, the water flow changed.

Then I realized that the water display was actually for me as I watched the tube fill up draining me of 45 years of constipation and crap, black death that had been inside of me for a long time, It was like watching a file download on the internet as it took forever. It just kept on going as she pressed my key point of my stomach where occasionally a new sensation would come in which she would explain "that's gas" and the humiliation continued, but my saving grace is that it was scent free, trapped into a tube. It was incredible when it was over. I jumped off of that gurney and did pirouettes and immediately weighed myself to find myself 3 kilos lighter. The next day you feel great, your skin feels great and people comment that you look more relaxed. 'That's because I was ravaged by a Thai nurse! Stick a pole up your ass for 30 minutes and then remove it and you can look the same. You feel clear-headed which made me feel like I am full of shit! The process makes great conversations with the ladies detoxing at the spa. If you ask them if they had their colonic yet and they say yes, lift up just one eyebrow and say 'oo baby'

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The 20 Count of Days of the Mayan Calendar and the Truths they reveal...

by Vasumi Zjika

The 20 Day Count of the Mayan Calendar represents the Story of Creation. Each of the 20 days is assigned one glyph or universal truth or tribe which connects sequentially to the tribe before and the tribe after in the cycle of evolution. By recognising each of the 20 tribes as interconnected Universal Truths representing a Universal Cycle of Understanding, we can perceive the Fabric of Reality, the Synchronic Order and the Science of Synchronicity. Synchronicity that is shown by adding glyphs together to find combined energies, or adding groups, to find their resonance and purpose.

The 20 Tribes represent radial fractals of consciousness, they can relate to 20 days, 400 years up to 1 billion years when looking at the evolution of our planet, and of course do not be limited there. Our consciousness expands exponentially.

For the sake of our dear planet, Gaia, we will journey thru the Story of Creation as it relates to our planet and her inhabitants, in order to remember that we are here as evolving humans on an evolving planet, connected to all of Creation ...

We come from Source, the SUN, Universal Fire that emits sparks of pure energy, enlightened particles of life and passion. Independent shining sparks of light, impersonal all encompassing consciousness. Universal love and freedom, whole within itself, crystal clear. The masculine principle of God. **AHAU**

From the universal fire, as enlightened sparks of life, we are birthed into being and nurtured by the mother. The DRAGON cares with her ability-to-respond, birthing responsibility. She is pure, calm presence of being when respected and supported in her role as nurturer, yet she can become the fierce fire-breathing dragon when the life she cares for is endangered. Remember, respect the mother, and our Mother Earth for she carries the greatest creation prayer for all beings. **IMIX**

As we are birthed, and nurtured into being over 260 days, we then take our first breath, where independent consciousness enters our body, allowing communication between the spirit world and the world of form. The WIND is akin to the hollow bamboo, seeing our vessels as the pure channel of spirit. The WIND, the messenger from the world of spirit to the world of form, the breath. **IK**

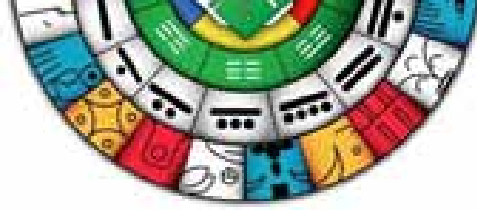
As we take our first breath, and become the vessel for spirit to communicate through, the eyes then close as we attune to the world around us - the collective subconscious dream we are born into. The in-tuition is activated, the tuition from within. The NIGHTS intuition is connected to the dreaming within our planet, Gaia, abundance for all - the earth providing all that is needed. The distortion of materialism, greed and favouring analytic mind, has resulted in lack and the reduction of earths abundant resource. Let us allow intuition to show us how to live sustainably with our planet, restoring abundance for all to live the dream we are here for. **AKBAL**

With intuition activated, we emerge from deep within the soil of the collective dreamscape, as the SEED targeting its potential of flowering into a life of abundance with all beings. In the beginning of our planet this was the time when the vegetation was created. Growing in awareness, ever focusing and evolving towards the potentised dream it can become. The SEEDs distortion is false spirituality which asks us to release our flowering awareness to an outer authority. We are all born from the desire to SEED. **KAN**



Peace Mandala

Photograph courtesy Vasumi Zjika



As we target flowering awareness, the instinct for survival is potentised, activating energy into pure life force. The SERPENT is our capacity to react instinctively from a primal place of survival, our base nature of fight or flight in order to live, leaping before looking. Pure, intense life force connected to our base chakra. Instinctual, intense and raw, the direct experience of life itself, our sexuality. Reprogram sex taboo and celebrate sex as a vital and alive part of life force. **SERPENT** represents the birth of the first animals on the planet. **CHICCHAN**

As we instinctively survive within the full force of life, we naturally face death as a constant. **WORLDBRIDGER** befriends death as a bridge between worlds, surrendered to the opportunity to come and go. Sensing non-attachment people trust the worldbridger and share stories which are in turn humbly shared onward, serving to weave the webs, effortlessly creating networks that equalise experience between people. The distortion here is death fear, let us regain control of our lives, celebrating death as the opportunity to let go, learning to say 'it is a good day to die', inviting journeys into unknown worlds. **CIMI**

After passing through death and equalising opportunity, the **HAND** knows that death takes us at any moment, and sets about accomplishing as much as possible, this is the time to be active. The **HAND** emerges connected to the source with hands of light, gathering knowledge of deeper layers of consciousness in order to heal. Although the **HANDS** accomplishments are many, it does not know itself as accomplished, for there is always more to know, accomplish and heal, before our time comes. **MANIK**

As we heal, accomplish and gather knowledge, we now create. The **STAR** is the artist, always beautifully elegant. Inspired by the elegance of the natural world, it has a refined sense of aesthetics, reflecting the divine proportions of nature. It is akin to Steiner art. The **STAR** works to harmonise disharmony by finding the beauty in every moment, living in beautiful spaces that creatively reflect right placement, inspiring art. Here is the epitome of the 'Time is Art'-ist. **LAMAT**

When life is elegantly artful, surrounded by natural beauty, our sensitivity expands, and our nerve endings become open antennae. This is the natural state for the **MOON**, it acts as a filter, purifying energy through its nervous system. Connected to the field of universal water, it is sensitive to the flow of energy. **MOON** people live near water, with the need to purify often. As a filter, the **MOON** needs to realise that not all it feels is its own, so it can easily 'go with the flow'. **MULUC**

As we purify and realise ourselves as part of the flow of lifes' universal water, it encourages our heart to open, and love to be shared. The **DOG** is loyal and available as family for friendships with all its relations, realising dependence as part of life, often attracting those that others push away, through its capacity to see the love that is beyond the patterns in every being. This is the loyal devoted friend, there in life's ups & downs; The feminine aspect of God through the eyes of other. **OC**

When we feel loved and our heart is open, with loyal friends, a sense of play and light heartedness develops, trust in the magic of life is born. The **MONKEY** is the childlike nature, full of joy and wonder, the trickster naturally pushing boundaries, playing with the real and unreal, seen and unseen illusions of life. Loving theatre, music, language, **MONKEYS** are creative & make good teachers through their insistence on pushing previously conceived boundaries. The Dolphin spirit. **CHUEN**

As we play with the magic of illusion, we gain experience and grow in wisdom. We realise how to influence life through the use of our free will. The **HUMANs** wise choices influence it to learn deeply from lifes experience, leading it to eventually recognise the ultimate wisdom of aligning its free will with the greater will of awakened consciousness. It then becomes truly influential its wisdom is noticed and others come for advice. The **HUMAN** may then dive deeper into the ancient wisdom paths of our ancestors. **EB**

As we are influenced to align our free will to wisdom, we begin to explore consciousness further, expanding and awakening further into unknown space. This is the 13th (of 20) universal truths, where we realise our ability to explore vast spaces, with the **SKYWALKER** travelling and awakening to new possibilities. Distorted by those interested in subservient sleepy masses, the 13 has been branded unlucky and superstitious with energy awakened by the 13th truth portrayed as airy fairy and hocus pocus, misguiding from the truth that awakening to multi-dimensional spaces is part of our birthright & evolution. **BEN**

The vast spaces explored initiating wakefulness are then anchored into form. The **WIZARD** is receptive to anchoring multi-dimensional spaces, entering into timeless states of consciousness. In this stillness the **WIZARD** is enchanted, an unobscured meditative anchor. The shaman, **WIZARD**, priestess is receptive to vast spaces of timeless enchantment allowing others to also explore and awaken. **IX**

Once we are receptive and enchanted by timeless spaces, our mind becomes open to the creative visions of the bigger picture. The **EAGLE** eye opens and wonderful creative ideas are born as mindful answers to the next steps in our collective evolution. The **EAGLE** stands back to observe life, where as the visionary it attains perspective and insight, receiving the greater picture that serves to evolve our minds consciously & creatively. **MEN**

As the mind receives the latest creative vision, we begin to question the intelligence of present states of consciousness, and move fearlessly forward towards the evolving vision that was seen. The **WARRIOR** fearlessly takes on the vision as its mission, questioning all that seems unintelligible and in the way of the natural evolution of consciousness. It steps where others fear to tread and is known for its capacity to tenaciously hold on to its mission despite all obstacles. **CIB**

As we intelligently question our previous fears, we begin to experience the synchronicities that help us navigate our path of evolution. The **EARTH** has a finely attuned sense of direction and movement through time and space, aided by listening to the messages of animals and elements that navigate the way. No maps are needed, as keen senses are awake and listening to navigate synchronicity and the cycles evolving through time. **CABAN**

As we navigate the synchronicities and evolve, we begin to reflect upon the endless cyclical order of consciousness and learn to judge realities as true or untrue. The **MIRROR** brings a direct unrelenting reflection of life, directly revealing polarities and imbalances. It has the capacity to create the temple of truth based on balanced order through the art of right placement inspiring endless flows of energy. Any imbalance encountered by the **MIRROR** is cut with the sword, restoring order. **ETZNAB**

As endless reflections reveal order, so all obstacles to energy flow are released, and we become self-generating catalysts allowing change and transformation thru the shear volume of energy that is freely moving. The **STORM** is the catalyst, the change agent, energy self-generated building upon itself, radical shift free of restricting concepts and limitations. **CAUAC**

As the self-generating energy builds we become catalysts, to transform and become one with the Universal Fire of life, enlightened sparks of pure energy, at one with the source. The **SUN** shines brightly, enlightening all around it, complete in itself, yet non-discriminatingly shining upon all life. **AHAU**

Here we return to Source, to begin the cycle of creation anew...

www.vasumi.com/home.html

A portrait of Clay Patrick McBride, a man with long brown hair and a beard, looking directly at the camera. He is surrounded by green foliage. His arms are crossed over his chest, revealing extensive tattoos. On his right arm, there is a large, colorful tattoo of a phoenix or firebird. On his left arm, there is a tattoo of a figure in a dynamic pose, possibly a dancer or a warrior. The background is a dense thicket of green leaves.

PORTRAIT

A photographer is a painter, a writer, a chronicler of what he/she sees, feels, hears and experiences. His/her work doesn't need words, the images reflect the essence of Life and therefore does not need to have a language.

Clay Patrick McBride

Portrait of a photographer
by Mark Ulyseas

Who is Clay Patrick McBride
what is it that tickles his sense of perception in a turbulent world;
in a society that continues to play Russian Roulette with all of us?

Read on...

“In my darkest work I see beauty in it – that’s where you let your guard down and absorb the feelings. I have had a couple of failed relationships. I saw everything in my life disappear – stuff/money. I was literally living in my office basement with rats and clogged bathroom. It was my art that kept me alive, it was all that I had, like floating on a raft. Raft was made up of everything I had made/created.”

Clay Patrick studied painting and art history at the Institute of American Studies: Sculpture and photography at the Leo Marchutz School; New York School of Visual Arts where he presently teaches, almost 20 years later in the same class room where he studied.

How did you become a photographer?

I was a bad kid at High School, dropped out and so I had to go to Junior College to get some grades. My teacher, Judith Taylor (mother’s namesake) told me I was good at photography. I think she inspired me to develop and build upon that spirit for creation in me.

My sister Dona lent me her old Nikon to use for a while. With this camera I would take black and white pics which I processed. In the dark room it was like science and magic, my experiment, my work came real before my eyes. I was around 19 years old.

I remember I used to live in this apartment in which a very rich woman resided. When I first walked into her apartment I passed these giant pictures and I thought to myself, I can do better.

And when did the break come?

When I was working as a ‘photo-illustrator’ I was given pics and from these I created collages and photo images from them, I was commissioned by TIME to design the cover of its international edition. I did two covers: illustration on Timothy McVeigh and Dodi Fayed/Diana, Princess of Wales. This was late 1990s.

After this assignment I stopped doing collages, because it wasn’t my photographs. I didn’t want to be a problem solver. I wanted to be an image maker, a Portrait photographer.

And your family?

Mother Judith cooked one helluva Thanksgiving Dinner. I miss her roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and stuffed clams. My late father John Strong McBride was a Trial Lawyer. As a son I never knew how my father really viewed me after all my shenanigans as a juvenile delinquent. It was only after his death when I went into his office that I found a battered copy of the TIME issue which I had designed. At the Wake I met Judge Williams who told me how my dad, whenever he met Williams, always showed him the TIME copy with pride and said “This is my son’s work”. Brother Jeff, a celebrated magician, has influenced me. He and his wife are pillars of society and loved by their community, generous to a fault and passionate human beings.

Is there a muse?

I am with Keara, the first girl I actually photographed and ended up in a relationship. She is a film maker and a writer, does music videos/art films. She is my first muse, though I have had other partners in the past, my ex-wife Silvia is very supportive. I don’t have children.

Are you inspired by any great artists?

Yes. Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha, Van Gogh’s Letter to Theo, Annie Leibovitz (the legendary Editor of RollingStone), and most specifically Eddie Adams. In fact I teach at his Workshop in Upstate New York, close to where I was born and grew up. I met Eddie Adams a couple of years before he died. He lived in an enormous studio. A Salty old man with lots of attitude. He is a legend – a photographer who covered more than 13 wars and even did assignments for Penthouse.

Have you seen his photograph taken in Vietnam where a man is pointing a pistol to the head of another? Apparently when the picture was taken the bullet was still in the man’s head. I think this was the defining photograph that probably changed how Americans thought about their country’s role in the bloody conflict.

Eddie Adams told me that a good picture is one that moves you (pointing to his heart). Before leaving his studio he put his hand on my shoulder and told me that I reminded him of when he was young.

Could you give us a glimpse of your work and future plans?

My favorite pics - IGGY POP, JAYZ 0 where I put him in the Oval Office, taken probably 6 years before we had a Black President, Kid Rock and Indian Larry who built motorcycles.

I see myself as a teacher, like to contribute a film, my mythic journey in a film script I have been writing. Rights of Passage. Becoming a man - relationship with my father, it’s about where we find love and how we love sometimes in the wrong ways, sometimes in the right ways. It’s a film that will help the people to see each other with more compassion.

I want to start a free workshop for 6-10 students, 3 days a week. I want to give back to my brother Jeff and his wife and the community that have supported me through terribly dark times. My life is like the mythical bird, Phoenix, it’s about falling to pieces and rebuilding...the world usually tells you its impossible, it’s no good; yet people around you, the community think otherwise. One needs to practice to trust and be disciplined. As Martha Graham said , “Through discipline we find freedom.

As artists we feel deeper (in a different kind of way) than the rest of the world. Our work is like a mirror or window. The artist’s responsibility is to project this in art so as to connect us all.



Lense to the filters of introspection

by John Chester Lewis

The concept known as sun
may only be witnessed
by the light of the sun
While the truth of sun
can never be seen
due to the power
of its own glare
in the futility of attempt
blindness ensues

Such is the knowledge
of one's own face
it may never be viewed
a mirror only gives a reflection
much as the moon reflects the sun

A mirror can not lie
yet the mind is often taken in
by its own perception
focus on the non-existent
manipulations of reflection
fears may enter the exchange
providing fuel of deception

Further still a mirror is capable of re-
vealing
yet unknown truth
energies of a personal paradigm
ancestral genetics
insight as to the current condition of the
soul
Yet these insights must be taken in grain

The mirror at best
is merely a painted window
that looks out upon the self

Light bends as it passes through glass
Thus truth is twice broken as it bounces
from the window of reflection
through the window of self

The tide pays not attention
to the variance
of light reflections
as it dances
to the lunar gravitations

Same-Sex Marriage: In The Pink Or The Infection Of Society?

by Natalie Wood



Natalie Wood

...not only is Tel Aviv recognised as an international centre for the gay community, but that in Israel generally there is widespread support for same-sex civil marriage.

I've just returned from a synagogue study session that was all about sex!

No wonder there are continuous and increasing complaints about the over-sexualisation of kids – adults of all stripes think of little else.

The lecture was part of a traditional overnight study series for the **festival of Shavuot which celebrates the Revelation at Mount Sinai.**

During it, the speaker claimed that the adulterous, murderous biblical King David would have made a fantastic modern politician.

Even more relevant would have been a look at the putative homosexual relationship between David and King Saul's son, Jonathan. Then we could have examined it in the light of the first same-sex Jewish marriage to take place in the U.K. – a significant matter for Jews worldwide – and to me personally for various reasons.

First, the union and so commitment between two men – **Jeffrey Levine and Roman Hunter-Fox** – happened immediately prior to Shavuot which among much else, is also about the story of Ruth and her inordinately deep, if wholly platonic commitment to Naomi and so the Jewish people.

Second, I am from England and the chuppah took place under the aegis of the relatively new Liberal community in Manchester, where I lived before I emigrated to Israel.

So far as I am aware, no religious institution in the U.K. – other than this local Liberal Jewish community led by Rabbi Mark Solomon – has performed a same-sex marriage.



Pic courtesy Natalie Wood

In the U.K., Liberal Judaism is regarded as akin to US Reform tradition while British Reform practice is similar to that of US Conservative communities.

Third, for some years I had served as a volunteer marriage registrar at my own congregation, Sha'arei Shalom North Manchester Reform, which is now about to debate the same issue. My role as registrar was to complete the civil paperwork and then to assist the presiding rabbi during the religious ceremony.

According to the U.K. Marriage Act 1949, Jewish and Quaker communities in England and Wales are allowed to perform their own marriages. The Act as a whole was updated in 2005 to allow same sex-couples to marry in 'civil partnerships', so granting them the same rights and responsibilities as couples in a civil marriage.

Sha'arei Shalom is a largely ageing, right of centre community and congregants include many diehard traditionalists who dislike the idea of women reading from the Torah or leading services, let alone that of employing a woman rabbi. So imagine the dismay when the issue of possible same-sex marriages arose.

The topic is to be debated at the congregation's annual meeting later this month and the current edition of its newsletter carries letters both in favour and against their being performed under its jurisdiction.

Moreover the editor remarks: "Apart from the rather bald statement from our rabbis at the Movement for Reform Judaism, there has been virtually no information about how ceremonies might be arranged or their content."

On research, the only information available is that:

"Rabbi Colin Eimer, who chaired the MRJ Assembly of Reform Rabbis working party on the topic said that his colleagues will only conduct same-sex commitment ceremonies with a prior or concurrent Civil Partnership ceremony."

I am sure that many people reading this have relatives and friends who are gay and who live quiet, fulfilled lives in one-partner unions, so belying the view that homosexuals are almost indecently promiscuous.

Indeed, when same-sex 'divorce' rates in the U.K. were published last year they revealed that while the number of partnerships had dropped and the dissolution of such unions had increased since they began in 2005, the figures were *'beginning to stabilize, rather than fall.'*

Perhaps the initial flurry of interest was simply its novelty. It is amazing that following centuries of criminalisation, how much advance has been made in favour of homosexuals during the past 45 years.

The U.K.'s once strict laws criminalising male homosexual activity were abolished in 1966, due mainly to the efforts of a Jewish Welsh Member of Parliament, Leo Abse. Now to be homophobic is to be a social pariah but still the gay community feels it will not be equal in law until members may marry in religious ceremonies.

Meanwhile I understand that not only is Tel Aviv recognised as an international centre for the gay community, but that in Israel generally

Even more relevant would have been a look at the putative homosexual relationship between David and King Saul's son, Jonathan. Then we could have examined it in the light of the first same-sex Jewish marriage to take place in the U.K. – a significant matter for Jews worldwide - and to me personally...

there is widespread support for same-sex civil marriage.

Indeed, five years ago, the Supreme Court ordered the government to recognise same-sex marriages performed abroad following a case filed by several male Israeli couples married in Canada.

The ruling dealt with the registration of the marriages in Israel, noting that it did not refer to the validity of those marriages. However, same sex couples in Israel enjoy most of the rights of married couples, as unmarried opposite sex couples.

This past weekend coincidentally marked the 30th anniversary of the first report in the US of acquired immune deficiency syndrome – AIDS. At its peak, the pandemic reached such monstrous proportions that many people were frightened even to shake hands with victims – mainly gay men - for fear of contracting the disease. That myth was dispelled finally when patients were befriended by celebrities like the late Princess of Wales.

Such is the secular social background. Now let's look at Jewish law:

• **The best known Torah proscription against male homosexuality is Leviticus 18:22:**

“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is abomination.”

• **Then comes Leviticus 20:13:**

“And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”

The punishment for violation is death but as there are so many factors preventing the ultimate punishment being carried out, there is no account of capital punishment in Jewish history due to acts of homosexuality.

So what do I think?

• **In many countries throughout the west, homosexuals are allowed to enter civil partnerships and have the same rights in law as heterosexual couples. That is the law and I must accept it.**

• However, I can't acknowledge the demand for same-sex religious ceremonies as the couples involved live in a manner which flagrantly disregards the very ethics the three main monotheistic faiths seek to uphold.

• **I cannot approve of same-sex marriage as the concept of matrimony originated as the ideal environment for heterosexual couples to produce and raise children in a loving, protected environment.**

• But as there are famous examples of homosexuals raising children successfully in such a manner, what is my argument against this?

• **If children see and experience home life only with “two dads” or “two mums” they will treat this as a norm, not the exception I believe it to be and society will suffer the same terrible imbalance it ever did when gays were considered criminals and their way of life was pushed underground.**

• All this fuss, I'd be tempted to mutter in a dark moment, about a group of British people - gay, lesbian and bisexual - who in a recent Office of National Statistics survey was discovered to number no more than three-quarters of a million adults – or 1.5% of the population. Indeed, this figure is far lower than the 6% - 3.6M - estimated in 2005 when civil partnership legislation was introduced in the U.K.

• **Jewish tradition views the actual ‘chuppah’ – wedding canopy – as representing a couple's home as a mini temple where even their dining table symbolises the altar with blessings over food staples like bread and salt symbolising the ‘sacrifice’.**

• **If homosexual couples – right or wrong - are considered to live in total contradiction to Biblical and Jewish law and values – they immediately violate the hallowed concepts outlined above.**

• **The ‘kiddushin’ – sanctification of the marriage – is just that. It is not about sexual orientation. As illustration in a complete aside, I must point out that during the recent Christian marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, they did not kiss inside Westminster Abbey as the action would have appeared indecorous - unseemly even – after the awe-inspiring holy grandeur of the ceremony.**

• More mundanely I do not believe that anyone should join a particular synagogue depending on their secular lifestyle but because they are Jewish and wish to express their Judaism in a specific way.

• **Moreover, I suggest that the persistence of the gay community in pushing back the boundaries of long-held values ever yet further is part of the presently universal over-sexualisation and degradation of society.**

• **All this comes as a report has been published in Britain by the international Christian charity, the Mothers Union and supported by Prime Minister David Cameron calling for popular television programmes like the talent show, The X Factor to moderate their graphic content and for high street retailers to stop selling sexually suggestive clothing to children.**

• Further, the Jewish Chronicle has just featured a story about a YouTube clip of a batmitzvah party showing a father-of-five rapping to Usher's OMG. So what's not to like? After all, it began life as a simple joke to amuse the family's guests.

• But I was appalled, not because I'm prudish or humourless, but because of the way the girls' mother was dressed. She looked like a burlesque dancer. Is this a good role model for her children? More especially, is it the way to behave after a ceremony marking her teenage daughters'

religious coming of age? Perhaps she could take lessons from the former Catherine Middleton!

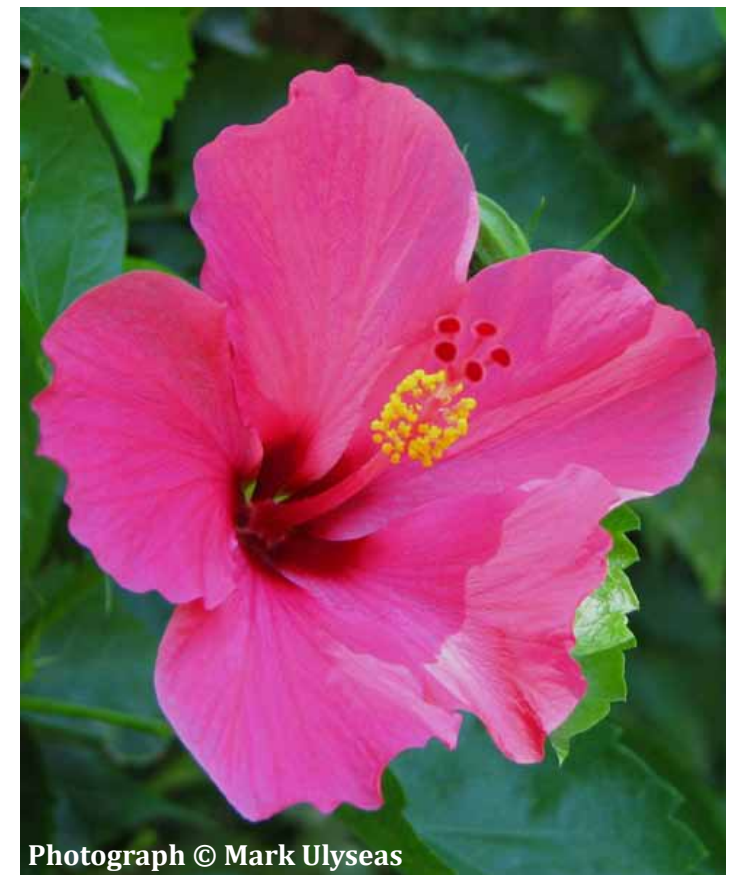
• **And finally? Well, I consider it strange that even as Leo Abse fought so tenaciously for gay rights, he felt that “those who do not procreate are deprived or stunted.”**

• I can't agree with him as I have no children of my own!

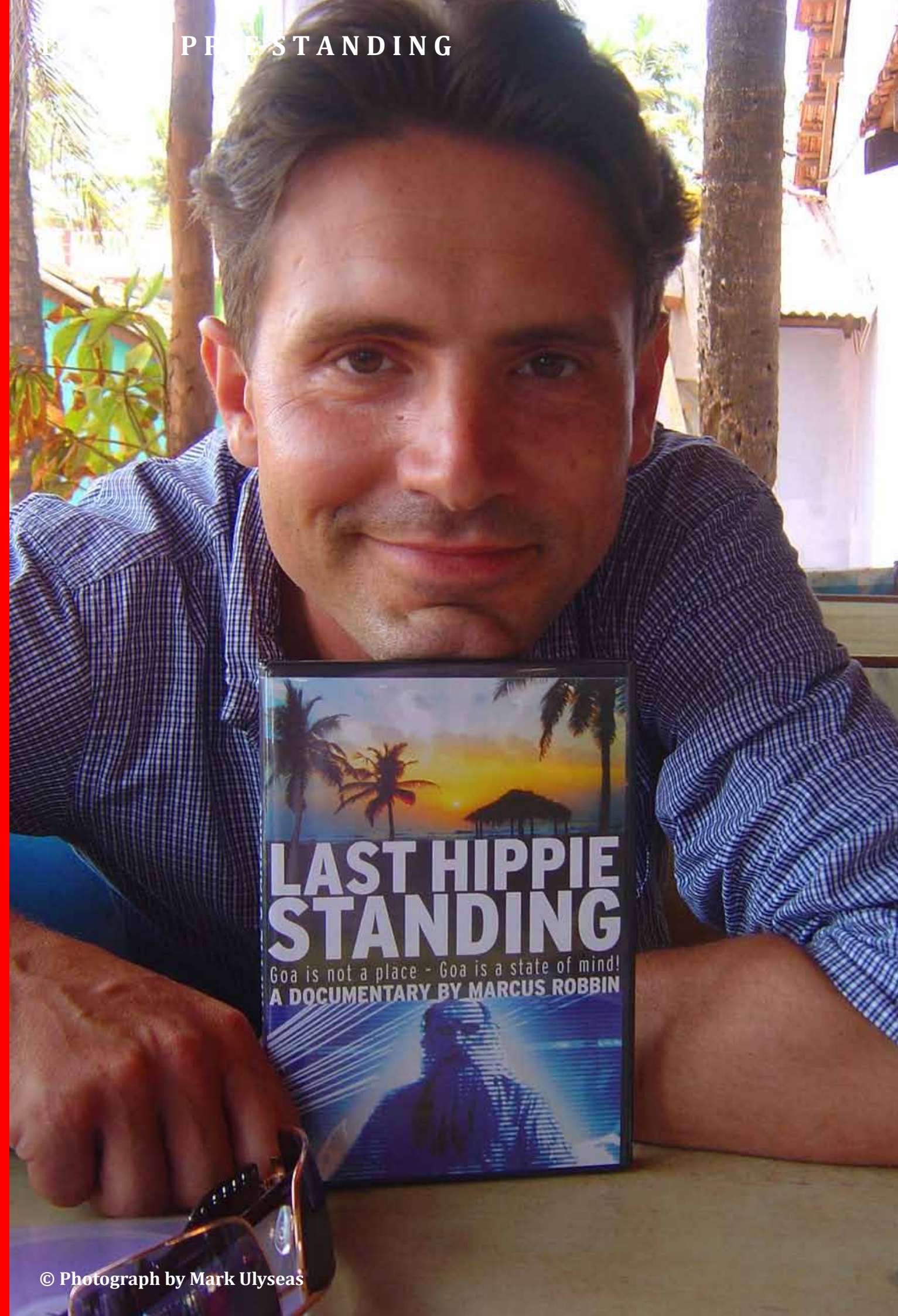
• But I do remember vividly almost 30 years later, how I felt when I read the anthology of Jewish lesbian writing, Nice Jewish Girls: The authors, I then said, use only one half of Rabbi Hillel's quotation.

• Sure enough, if they are not for themselves, who will be for them? But as they are so ridiculously self-obsessed – what are they?

www.alwayswriteagain.blogspot.com - my.telegraph.co.uk/perfectlywriteinIsrael/



Photograph © Mark Ulyseas



Marcus Robbin
Director and Producer
of the film **Last Hippie Standing**
speaks to Mark Ulyseas.

"I have always felt uncomfortable with mainstream society. The hippie felt so, that's why I identify myself with them. I feel that Goa is a place of the meeting of two cultures – East and West. It is nothing else then a disco ashram...the gateway to enter Indian philosophies for it is here that there exists a profound background of spirituality."

Now read on...



"I'D WAKE UP AND GET STONED.
IT WAS PURE PLEASURE."

LAST HIPPIE STANDING
Goa is not a place - Goa is a state of mind!
A DOCUMENTARY BY MARCUS ROBBIN

"I left the United States because I had to work and I didn't want to work. I grew up in a very rich family and my father died of Parkinson's disease when I was sixteen and till then nobody told me anything about money or work; and I just left. I said I am leaving forever. There was a hippie movement I knew travelling across Europe and I heard about freaks in India. But you know it is something you hear, a word here and there. And then one day I saw a sign that a bus was leaving from Athens to Goa, India. I had never heard of Goa. We went from Greece through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan (which is now gone), Pakistan and into India...Goa!" (Late) Dr. Cleo Odzer

I grew up on the cusp of a chillum and rock music in bell bottoms and a floral shirt. India then was in the throes of change. The seventies were a great time for music, reefers, Marx and Sartre. Like me, many from my generation lived in a psychedelic world of acid rock and Hendrix. Some fell by the wayside, dead, others crawled out of the cauldron when the party was over to finish college and get married and have children.

Memories of those years were washed away by the surging waters of the monsoon. All I carried was the debris of a lost inheritance, or so I thought, till I encountered Marcus Robbin in a restaurant overlooking the Arabian Sea. The ensuing conversation unhinged the sluice gates and let loose a flood of memories, which overwhelmed me and prompted this interview with Marcus.

MU How do you define a Hippie, Marcus?

MR In the words of Walter (English chap) who has been in Goa since 1972 - A typical hippie is a person who believes in peace, love and freedom. If you want to live outside the system run by the government then you could become a hippie.

MU Why this fascination with the Hippies?

MR Around 25 years ago I witnessed my friends going where their parents were going instead of taking time off for reflection on life. You see, many people don't take time off now instead they continue to stuff their heads with education. Searching for a meaning to life in general does not exist in this generation. I have always felt uncomfortable with mainstream society. The hippie felt so, that's why I identify myself with them.

MU And Goa?



"GOA-PARTY IS NOT JUST A DISCO
UNDER A COCONUT-TREE.
IT'S AN INITIATION!"

LAST HIPPIE STANDING
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"I was born into a family that was five generations San Francisco. In '65 I was like 14 years old and I had already been listening to music for a long time 'cause I grew up on Elvis and Big Bopper and then all kinds of like Motown and whatever. There were certain groups in the underground that I started to like and that kind of went along with what was starting to happen in The Hague so I started to hang out there when there were just 30 people sitting on the side walk in front of the Psychedelic Store and stuff. When the magic was lost in '69, many people from all over the world started to head to India. It's been like an evolution going on and on..." Goa Gill

MR I have been travelling to India since 1991 and I always found Goa fascinating. It is a mingling of cultures, unique in India, as it is, for the world. I feel that Goa is a place where there is a meeting of two cultures - East and West. It is nothing else then a disco ashram...the gateway to enter Indian 'philosophies' for it is here that there exists a profound background of spirituality.

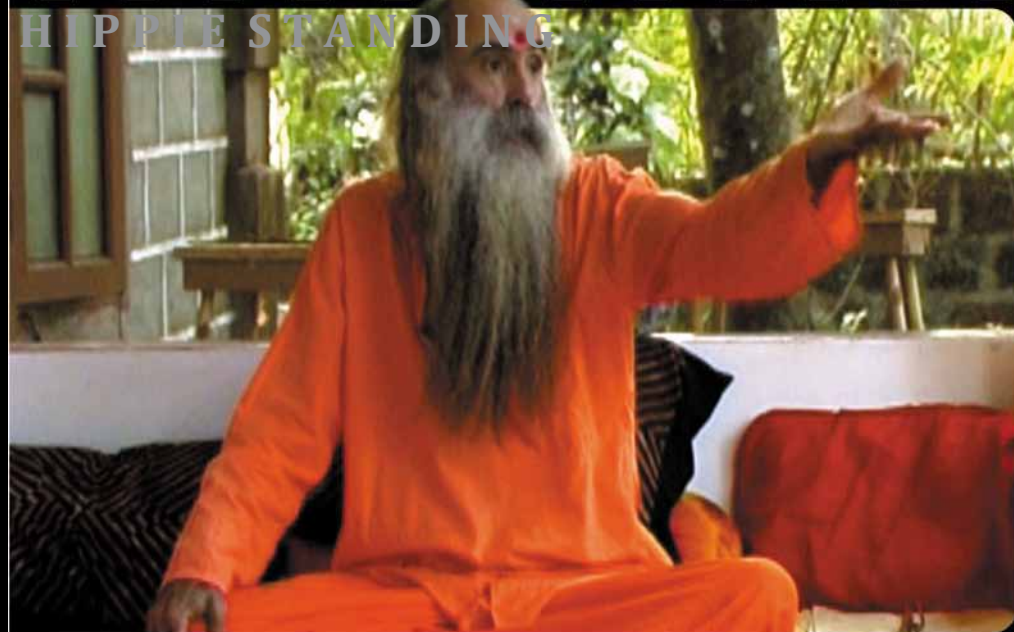
MU What inspired you to make this film ?

MR Sometime ago I had written a script "Vermischung" (Mixing) because I wanted to highlight the interconnection of Europe and Asia on the cultural level; And specifically how places like Goa accelerate this process. It is essential to preserve the knowledge emanating from this fusion of cultures. This was the precursor to LHS.

Have you seen the massive banyan tree at Arambol? It is symbolic of Goa. It feels like the whole world has been sitting under it. Its branches extending metres around are representative of people who have come to Goa and left taking its energy to another part of the Planet (even George Harrison sat under this tree). **Last Hippie Standing, the first in a trilogy, demonstrates that Goa is not a place, it is a state of mind.**

MU Did you write the script ? In LHS there are three main protagonists - Cleo Odzer, Swami William and Goa Gill. Could you tell us a bit about them?

MR No, we didn't follow a script. I set up a number of interviews and hoped to meet the legendary "Cleo Odzer", but was not sure we would meet up. Fortunately, she was here and she obliged me by sharing aspects of her life including handing over an invaluable cache of Super 8 film of the hippie era in Goa filmed in the moment! Cleo had different values, different aims and she tried to maintain the hippie values against all odds.



"THERE IS A CONNECTION
BETWEEN
PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS AND YOGA"

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"India, it was most exotic, most different from Protestant America...The materialism of Protestant America didn't provide Spirit. The youth of America in the 60s who were then in their 20s had everything and it wasn't enough because everything was all things and there wasn't spirit, and mystery and creativity and magic..." - Swami William from San Francisco, Sadhu and Visual Artist, first went to India to make a movie about hippies and sadhus.

MR On the one hand she was a fragile person and I felt she could break in the moment. I suspect it was an aspect of protection, maintaining this other world. Cleo was a 'soft hippie' - an integral element of the band of Groupies. In March 2001 she was found comatose in a hotel room in Goa and died two days later in hospital... "Sie war die Verkörperung der hippies" - She was the personification of a hippie.

Swami William, I met in a bank while changing money! He was a hippie going into the spiritual and carrying it forward into our time. He has opened a Spiritual Park north of San Francisco and is now known as Swami Chaitanya.

Goa Gill is a cyber-sadhu. He combines the hippie with a guitar on the beach into a new generation 'Psychotrance'.

These hippies reflect a truth that many among us fail or simply refuse to acknowledge.

It is not about the weakness of a single human being, it is the importance of ideals, going new ways as a civilization. There are things in the Western World that are not expected like intuition/emotions.

MU So where to from here?

MR I am working on the second part of the trilogy - Global state of Goa, of the mind. It goes away from Goa to portraying the world made in Goa, about the state of the world and it goes back to the idea of the global village, which already has partly materialized in Goa. **But I urgently need a producer. This second part of my project is hanging fire at the moment and I hope someone somewhere will come forward to finance the project.**



"DANCE IS
ACTIVE MEDITATION"

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Goa is not a place - Goa is a state of mind!
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If anyone is interested in producing the second part of the trilogy please contact at marcusrobbin@yahoo.com
www.lasthippiestanding.de
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Hippie_Standing
www.cultureunplugged.com/play/2357/Last-Hippie-Standing
www.youtube.com/marcusrobbin

2010-2011:
Pre-production for "Last Hippie Standing: Global State of Mind"

2004-2010:
Living, building and farming on Azores Islands

2001-2004:
Studies of German, Literature and History

2001:
Making-Of director for Rajkumar Santoshi's movie "Lajja" in Mumbai and Hyderabad / Line Producer for the awarded documentary "Howrah, Howrah" in Calcutta

1999-2000:
"Last Hippie Standing" in Goa

1997-1999:
Production Coordinator for Wim Wender's "Road Movies Filmproduktion" in Berlin / Studies of Film Sciences at "Freie Universitaet Berlin"

1996:
Assistant director for Bharathi Raja in Chennai for the movie "Tamil Selvan"



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