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September 2012

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The Way of Apostle Thomas

A Journey into antiquity

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"You can chain me, you can torture me, you can even destroy this body, but you will never imprison my mind." - Mahatma Gandhi

Dear Readers,

- History is often embellished with legends that over centuries morph into facts that become unquestionable until a seeker of truth begins a journey into antiquity to rummage for tangible evidence to substantiate the facts. It is then that history begins to unravel and the truth emerges albeit in a different form. Many believe Apostle Thomas never visited India. The cover story in this month's edition – **The Way of Apostle Thomas**, *A journey into antiquity* – should shed light on the truth. Many have a religion but how many have Faith?

- The Best Wells are Deep**, a poem by Terry McDonagh, the Irish poet, writer and playwright. It is a deeply sensitive portrayal of the role of the water diviner among the Irish farming community.

- One sign of having healthy boundaries is the ability to say no when you want to say no and also to say yes when you want to say yes. Candess Campbell's - **Creating Healthy Boundaries Part III** - is the concluding part of this series. Essential reading for all those among us who need to draw our boundaries.

- Gorkhaland**, *Crisis of Statehood*, is a book that delves into the ongoing crisis in the Darjeeling hills, where the Nepali-speaking community is fighting for a separate State. The author, Romit Bagchi, a senior correspondent with the venerable Calcutta publication, *The Statesman*, speaks to Live Encounters on his life, work and the book.

- Geikos (that's what Geishas are called in Kyoto) always remind me of Zen monks – a Westerner can't imagine discipline, ascetic life and dedication necessary to perform this art* – Joo Peter the intrepid German Photographer on his enchanted depiction of **Geikos in Kyoto** in the Photo Gallery.

- "Ultimately, the struggle has got nothing to do with finding a publisher or a readership, it's about bringing the story into being, struggling with a blank sheet of paper or a blank screen...but it's worth it in the end...its worth all the heartache and loneliness, all the exhaustion, everything. Write ...that's all that should matter,"* says Randhir Khare, author of the just published book, **Walking Through Fire**, in a one-on-one interview with Mark Ulyseas.

- Convenient Thugs, FPI in Indonesia**, by Henky Widjaja, is an indepth article on the Islam Defenders' Front (FPI). Widjaja bites the bullet. It is reprinted by Special permission of Jemma Purdey, Inside Indonesia.

- Natalie Wood *is back* with a scathing column on the ground realities prevailing in her country - **Israel's Dog Day Afternoons**.

- Anat Hoffman, Civil & Human Rights Activist, pens a Letter to the readers of Live Encounters on her trip - **From Jerusalem to Maple Lake – My Experience at Camp George**.

- A short story by Arjun Bagga, **Infantaria**, is written, I believe, to impose on your sense of proportion. Enjoy!

Kindly share this free magazine with everyone you know.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas

Publisher/Editor

[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)



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The Way of Apostle Thomas

a journey into antiquity - **Mark Ulyseas**

This is a brief encounter with antiquity; A meeting with Father Jose Frank CMI of the Mar Thoma Pontifical Shrine at Kodungallur, Kerala, India, where Apostle Thomas landed in 52 AD. Kodungallur is also known as Cranganore with its once ancient seaport, Muziris, that saw over 200 ships pass through every year because of the flourishing trade between India and Rome. This area is believed to have been a Roman settlement with a temple dedicated to Augustus.

www.marculyseas.wordpress.com

www.coroflot.com/markulyseas



The Best Wells are Deep

Terry McDonagh

Poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh has published four collections of poetry; a play; a book of letters, novel and poetry for children. His work has been translated into Indonesian and German, funded by Ireland Literature Exchange. *In the Light of Bridges – Hamburg Fragments* is his latest book that was launched in Hamburg on 26th April, 2012. www.terry-mcdonagh.com www.podcasts.ie
www.killedan-and-nowhere-else.com



Creating Healthy Boundaries Part III

Candess M Campbell

Candess M. Campbell, PhD is an internationally known Intuitive Life Coach, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Seminar leader, Hypnotherapist and Author. She specializes in assisting others to gain their own personal power and to live a life of abundance, happiness and joy. Early 2012 she will be releasing her book *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine*. www.12weekstoselfhealing.com



Gorkhaland - Crisis of Statehood

Romit Bagchi

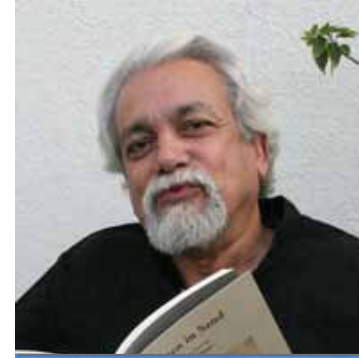
He is a senior correspondent with The Statesman posted in Siliguri. He is currently looking after the north Bengal and Sikkim bureau of The Statesman. He has published a number of articles on the ethnic unrest related to north Bengal and the political situation in Sikkim. An avid reader, Bagchi is interested in topics such as ethnic complexity, the Indian Renaissance as pioneered by Raja Rammohan Roy, Indian politics, and particularly, Indian spiritualism. www.sagepub.in



Photo Gallery - Geikos, Kyoto

Joo Peter

Aka Joachim Peter is a Visual artist and writer based in Southwest Germany, presently working on documentary & travel photography in Asia right. He loves to explore and combine all arts in his work. Joo has studied Arts; painting and graphics, worked for theatre (designing stage, costume and light), did some work for television and film, went into teaching. He writes essays and a blog in his native tongue, German, for he feels his language combines philosophy and humour. www.joo-peter.photoshelter.com



Walking Through Fire

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



Convenient Thugs - FPI in Indonesia

Henry Widjaja

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Widjaja is a PhD researcher at the Anthropology Department of Leiden University and currently stationed at the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Development, Leiden Law School. Previously he worked as a consultant for various development programs in Indonesia. As a consultant and researcher he is interested in agrarian political economy, regional development and Indonesian politics.



Israel's Dog Day Afternoons

Natalie Wood

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month before the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and has remained in regional Jewish journalism for more than 20 years, leaving full-time writing to help run a family business. She emigrated with her husband, Brian Fink, from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and lives in Karmiel, Galilee. Her work features in *Smith Magazine's* new *Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life*. She also contributes to *Technorati*, *Blogcritics* and *Live Encounters*. <http://www.perfectlywritefamilytales.blogspot.com>



A letter to the readers of Live Encounters

Civil & Human Rights Activist **Anat Hoffman**

She is a major leader for social justice in Israel best known for never giving-up, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Born and raised in Jerusalem, she served in its City Council for 14 years, leading the opposition to the right wing and ultra-Orthodox administration. She is a founding member of Women of the Wall and continues to be a tireless advocate for freedom of religion and women's rights. From 2002, Hoffman is Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the legal and advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel. www.irac.org



Infantaria

Arjun Bagga

Oscillating between low and high life, Arjun ran his bakery business for nine years but landed in Mumbai and joined movies. Known more for the fights that he's had with his colleagues on set and the times he's been chased by the cops from dance bars, he's been a damn good movies guy. He's made a bunch of friends who swear by him and a number of enemies who might want to...



The Way of Apostle Thomas

A Journey into antiquity

by Mark Ulyseas

History is often embellished with legends that over centuries morph into facts that become unquestionable until a seeker of truth begins a journey into antiquity to rummage for tangible evidence to substantiate the facts. It is then that history begins to unravel and the truth emerges albeit in a different form.

Sometime ago a question arose in a conversation about St. Thomas Mount and whether the apostle of Christ had visited India. Having lived on the Mount in the early sixties and receiving my First Holy Communion and Confirmation at this very church I decided to delve into history for the answer to this question for I believed Apostle Thomas's visit to India and his subsequent martyrdom in the South was merely a legend.

My search took me to Kochi (Cochin) in Kerala on the West Coast of India. After a night's stopover in the ancient city port I proceeded to Kodungallur (Cranganore), which is few hours by road.

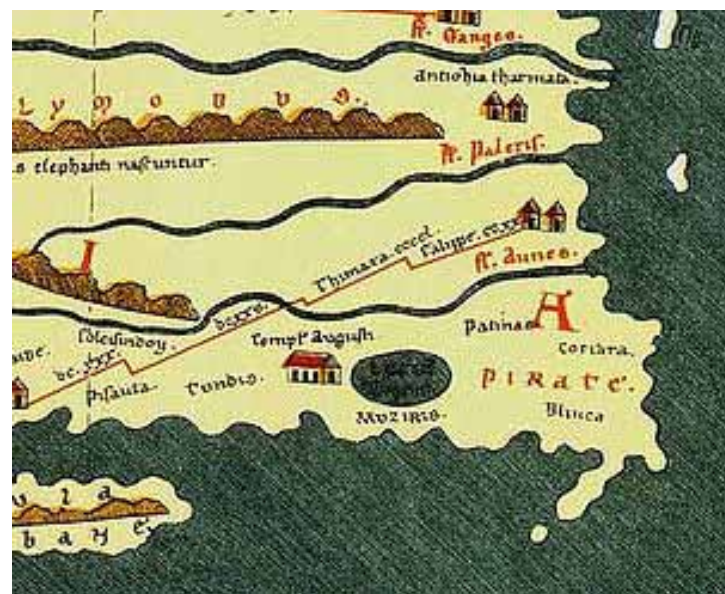
It is believed that the Apostle Thomas landed on the shores of Cranganore in 52 AD.

In 1953, the 19th centenary of Apostle Thomas's landing in Cranganore (Kodungallur) in 52 AD, there were great celebrations in Kerala and this shrine, Mar Thoma Pontifical Shrine, was built to commemorate this occasion. The Vatican, as a sign of recognition of St. Thomas Christians to profess the heritage of St. Thomas – Father of the Faith – gave the right arm of St. Thomas. The relics of St. Thomas are buried in Ortona, Italy. Mar Thomas means *My Lord Thomas* in Aramaic.

India-Rome Trade Route 1st century AD



Roman trade with India according to the Periplus Maris Erythraei.



Left : Muziris, as shown in the Tabula Peutingeriana, with a "Templum Augusti". Right : Bilingual inscription (Greek and Aramaic) on an edict of Emperor Ashoka, from Kandahar. Kabul Museum.



Indo-Roman relations were built on trade. The route started from Muziris, the port at Cranganore in South India to Rome in Italy; reached Berenice or Myos Hormos at the Red Sea coast of Roman Egypt; by overland caravans to Nile river; by boats to Alexandria and finally by ships to Rome.

Pliny the Elder (ca. 23- 77 AD) gives a description of voyages to India in the 1st century AD. He refers to many Indian ports in his work The Natural History.

"To those who are bound for India, Ocelis (On the Red Sea) is the best place for embarkation. If the wind, called Hippalus (Southwest Monsoon), happens to be blowing it is possible to arrive in forty days at the nearest market in India, "Muziris" by name. This, however, is not a very desirable place for disembarkation, on account of the pirates which frequent its vicinity, where they occupy a place called Nitrias; nor, in fact, is it very rich in articles of merchandise. Besides, the road stead for shipping is a considerable distance from the shore, and the cargoes have to be conveyed in boats, either for loading or discharging. At the moment that I am writing these pages, the name of the king of this place is Caelobothras (Keralaputras)..."

Travellers set sail from India on their return to Europe, at the beginning of the Egyptian month of Tybia, which is our December, or at all events before the sixth day of the Egyptian month Mechir, the same as our Ides of January; if they do this they can go and return in the same year. They set sail from India with a south-east wind (Northeast Monsoon), and upon entering the Red Sea, catch the south-west or south."

In 1983, a large hoard of Roman coins was found at a site about six miles from Kodungallur in a small village called Pattanam on the northern shore of Paravur Thodu, a tributary of the River Periyar.

Further evidence has been unearthed to prove beyond doubt the close contact of Malabar with the Euphrates Valley and the Mediterranean countries. Logs of Indian teak have been found in the temple of the Moon at Mugheir and in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar; the temple dedicated to Augustus; and the then literary references to the presence of Greek and Roman mercenaries in India.

The Greek Geographer, Strabo, mentions the fact that over 120 ships sailed from Myros Hormos, a port on the Red Sea, for India.

Muziris was the primary port for trade in spices, teak, silk etc. with the Roman world and a transit point for traders from the Far east.

The principal document concerning Saint Thomas is the Acta Thomae.
LINK

NOTE : The Indian Buddhist emperor, Ashoka, of the Mauryan dynasty (269 BCE to 231 BCE) erected edicts - inscriptions on stone - all over his empire stretching from Afghanistan across the length and breadth of India. An edict found in Kandahar, Afghanistan, is bilingual i.e. in Greek and Aramaic. This proves beyond doubt the connection between India, Middle East and Europe well before Apostle Thomas arrived in India. LINK

**In conversation with
Father Jose Frank CMI (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate)
of Mar Thoma Pontifical Shrine
Azhicode, Kodungallur**

Father Frank, do you believe that Apostle Thomas visited India because there are no written records of the time he arrived in this country?

This is a question that many have asked me. Yes, he did visit India and was martyred here. There are no written records by the early Christians because they never felt the need to write down events that occurred. We have to solely rely on Syriac and Greek authors for data who, unfortunately, had no particular interest in India at that time. Therefore information is sketchy because the community was very small and was scattered amidst Brahmanism and Buddhism in this great country.

But there is one element that had/has been kept alive and that is tradition. It is through tradition that the Truth has been handed down through the ages.

The seven “churches” founded by the Apostle are Palayur, Kodungallur (Cranganore), Korkkhamangalam, Parur, Niranam, Nilakkel and Kollam (Quilon).

To help your readers comprehend what I am speaking about here is an excerpt from [Origin of Christianity in India – A Historiographical Critique by Benedict Vadakkekara \(2007\)](#). It focuses on the “tradition of St. Thomas Christians” that has acted as a “confirmatory” record of the arrival of Apostle Thomas in India in 52 AD.

The tradition of the Indian Christians about their origin is quite unlike a vague and indistinct belief entertained by certain sections of the community. According to tradition, “there is no evidence whatever of his (St. Thomas) having visited Ceylon and Madura nor of his journey from Mailepur to China. But about his apostolate in Malabar there can be no doubt”.

It is precisely this concreteness of the tradition of the Indian Christians that makes it distinct, for example from a general and imprecise belief in a mission to China on the part of the Apostle Thomas. As a matter of fact, in the 17th century, a group of Jesuit missionaries in China went out of their way to uncover in China the footprints of Apostle Thomas. They sifted through all the possible leads in order to arrive at some direct or indirect pointers to St. Thomas. They tried even to identify the statue of Ta-Mouo (Bodhidharma) in the pagodas with Apostle Thomas. Their efforts led nowhere precisely because there was no living tradition in the land to give concreteness to such a vague belief. In other words, there was locally no, “St. Thomas Christian community” as the embodiment of such a tradition in order to keep celebrating the memory of its Father in faith.

If we now turn to the native Christians in India we shall find their testimony clear and unhesitating. It was not suggested to their minds by early Portuguese writers. When they first came in contact with the Christians of Malabar, at Calicut, Cranganore, and other places, they found them chanting from their Syriac (Aramaic) Service Books: ‘By St. Thomas the errors of the idolatry of India were abolished’.

[Origin of Christianity in India – A Historiographical Critique by Benedict Vadakkekara \(2007 © Media House\)](#)
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The altar and tabernacle of the Mar Thoma Pontifical Shrine built in 1953 by The Deva Matha Province of Syrian Carmelites to commemorate the 19th centenary of the landing of Apostle Thomas in Cranganore in 52 AD. It houses the sacred relic (the right arm) of St.Thomas that had been given by the Vatican on this occasion. The photograph of the relic is hazy as it is encashed in two layers of glass in the tabernacle.



Pics 1,2 and 4 © Mark Ulyseas

The tradition of the St.Thomas Christians speaks about a precise date i.e. 52 AD as the year in which the Apostle arrived in their midst and his subsequent martyrdom in 72 AD. The reports of Marco Polo, John of Monte Corvino, Friar Jordanus and others (from the end of the 13th Century), contained the essentials of the tradition that they then found current. The elaborate accounts of the Westerners from the 16th century onwards testify how faithfully and reverently the community nurtured its tradition. The negative verdict of noted scholars notwithstanding, the tradition continues to be unanimously upheld today also. The professional historians of the community hold fast to it with ever greater enthusiasm.

The formation itself of the community of the Indian Christians occurred solely on the basis of this tradition. The communal persuasion regarding the genuineness of the tradition acted and still acts as the binding force of coalescence within the community. The only element that the members have in common is their shared belief that their ancestors had been converted by Apostle Thomas (known as St.Thomas Christians). **In fact, it was on the merit of their conviction that theirs was the Way of St.Thomas, that they confronted the crucial situations in their history. The very existence of the community today, in this sense, is the direct outcome of the tradition.**

Western missionaries accepted and appreciated this tradition and in their turn were befriended by the Indian Christians. However, when it came to altering their communal way of living, the endeavours of the missionaries met with dogged resistance. The Indians put up a stubborn defence against the overseas meddlers because they were resolutely convinced that their communal and cultic life was integral to *the Way of St.Thomas. This intense and passionate attachment to their customs was based solely on this traditional belief of theirs and they were prepared to pay any price for defending their lifestyle. When seen from this perspective, it becomes evident how the tradition of the Indian Christians differs from a fable or legend. It was in every way a "living reality" for the entire community. Even those who are reluctant to concede an apostolic origin to the community respect its traditional belief.*

At the time of Apostle Thomas's landing in Maliankara close to Cranganore, the port Muziris was an international maritime centre for a flourishing sea trade route between India and Rome. There were a number of Jewish communities existing at that time. Curiously the seven communities that are believed to have been founded by the Apostle were situated in or near these Jewish colonies. Not far from the ancient church of Palayur there is an area called "Jewish Hill".

Mention of Christian presence in Ancient India

Pantaenus (ca AD 179) came across a primitive Christian community in India and he introduced reforms in their liturgical practices. David, Bishop of Basra (end of 3rd century) was a missionary in India. In the list of the bishops who attended the Nicean Council of 325 AD is mentioned one



"John the Persian", who according to the history of Gelasius, written in the second half of the 5th century, was bishop of the whole of Persia and Great India. Theophilus the Indian (ca 354) was a confidant of Emperor Constantius. Cosmas Indicopleustes (ca 550) speaks of Christians in India. The Syrian priest Bud or Buddas Periodeutes (ca 570) speaks of Christians in India who had been living there from ancient times.

These references from the first six hundred years of the history of Christianity show that India was known to the Christian writers not only as the land where Apostle Thomas preached and died but also as a country, where Christians lived. For the Christian world, India was besides the unique source for the accredited relics of Apostle Thomas. Therefore, viewed in the historiographical perspective, these references make sense only when placed in relationship with the tradition of Indian Christianity.

There are many opposing views of how Christianity came to India. In some circles there are doubts raised as to the veracity of the claim made by St.Thomas Christians that the Apostle came to India. Here are some of the arguments put forth.

- Apostle Thomas was for the whole Nestorian Church its special patron. It is believed that the South Indian Church was chiefly founded by Nestorian Christians from Persia who fled to India during the violent and cruel persecution of Shahpur II during the first half of the 4th century AD. Having an Apostle of the Lord as patron enabled them to find their level against the Latin Church which had Apostle Peter as its official patron. The so called tradition of the Indian Christians must have reached them through the Nestorian missionaries, who inculcated among their Indian proselytes a special devotion to Apostle Thomas.

- Manichaeism was basically a propagandist movement founded in the 3rd century by a Persian named Mani or Manes. It is probable that Mani himself preached in India. One of his works was a Greater Epistle to the Indians. Manes is believed to have despatched a disciple of his called Thomas. It was this Thomas that St.Thomas Christians mistakenly identified as the Apostle Thomas.

- 'Knai Thomman or in English, Bishop Thomas Cana, was a prominent Knanaya merchant or a Bishop from Edessa (Or Urfa), now known as Şanlıurfa, Turkey. According to tradition recorded in eighteenth century document, with the instructions from the Patriarch of Antioch, Mor Yusthedius, he came with 72 families to the Malabar Coast (present-day Kerala, India) in 345 AD. The arrival of Thomas of Cana figures in traditions concerning the division of the Saint Thomas Christians into "Northist" and "Southist" factions. In these versions, the Southists or Knanaya are the direct descendants of Thomas of Cana and his followers, while the Northists descend from the pre-existing local Christian body converted by Thomas the Apostle. In some versions, Thomas of Cana had two wives or partners, one the ancestor to the endogamous Southists, and the other (generally described as a Kerala native) the ancestor to the Northists. Both Southist and Northist groups use variants of this story to claim superiority for their faction.

PATRONS OF THE KUNNAMKULAM ECUMENICAL FELLOWSHIP



H. G. Paulose Mar Milithiose

H. G. Mar. Andrews Tazhath

Rt. Dr. Mar Aprem

Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Juliose

- *Christians arrived with West Syrian traders in the 4th century. They settled in the southern west India. It is believed they were well received by people of that area. Subsequently they inter-married with high caste Hindus and formed the Syrian Church of Kerala.*

- *Some conclude that Christians of the primitive church of Alexandria accompanying the Egyptians travellers to the east stopped at the island, Socotra, which was a halting station for merchants travelling to India. It could be that some of these Christians preached the Gospel to the islanders. Therefore, it is plausible that some of these Christians continued on to India.*

Indian Christians never developed a theology of their own nor did anyone from their community become Bishop. They depended on the Church of Mesopotamia for theology, liturgy and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Syrian Christians in Kerala absorbed indigenous Malayalam cultural patterns, in ecclesiastical matters they looked to the Middle East, especially for the supply of clergy. At an early stage they established a working relationship with the Seleucia-Ctesiphon Church of Persia, expressing allegiance through the See of Rewardashir. Thus, the Nestorian orientation of Syrian Christianity, which lasted for centuries, was established. Later, when the advance of Islam made it more difficult to maintain the Persian connection, Kerala Christians gradually began to turn to West Syria for clerical help, thus bringing the influence of Antioch and the Jacobite tradition into Malayali Christian Life.

Could you share with us a glimpse of your life and work?

I was born in 1936 into the family of a Malabar farmer. Ordained in 1964, I taught Syriac (Aramaic) and Latin in Kottikal Seminary. Then I went to Rome to study spirituality and did my MA in spiritual theology at the Vatican. I returned to take charge of Priestly Formation at Dharmaram Seminary in Bangalore. In 1985 I was sent to Koln, Germany, to work with Indian Christians for ten years. In 1995 on my return to India and for the next eight years till 2003 I worked with the poorest of the poor in the slums of Trichur organising 2500 women through education, teaching the basic math skills for saving and getting them jobs. We, the church, built three villages for these destitute people. Unfortunately I couldn't carry on my work as I was transferred in 2003 to work in the Ecumenical Fellowship.

What is the Ecumenical Fellowship?

The Ecumenical fellowship was formed by me and inaugurated in 2005 to create an understanding between the various Christian churches of Kerala. It is the "dialogue of the heart". In the 19 and a half centuries since Apostle Thomas came among us much has changed. Sadly, the Christian Church in Kerala has fragmented into many congregations. This fellowship is based on the premise "we agree to disagree" but we will talk and debate. The principle key focus is about Jesus Christ's teaching of Love. I help set up the [Kunnamkulam Ecumenical Fellowship](#) to bring all the churches together – the unification of the faithful through a program of – [Study together, Pray together, Work together, Celebrate together](#). On the first Monday of every month we come together to

THE WAY OF APOSTLE THOMAS



Most. Rev Cyril Mar Baseliose

Rt. Rev. Dr. K.P. Kuruvila

Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timothiose

Rev. Fr. George Pius C MI

together to worship...each church of every denomination get a chance to host the prayer meetings. This helps in generating interaction between the clergy, laymen, faculty and students. A common song titled "Peace Giver" is sung at every meeting. [Taize in France is similar to our fellowship.](#)

We have built an Ecumenical village in which Christians of all denominations reside. 17 houses have been built by the [Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church](#), [Malabar Independent Syrian Church \(MISC\)](#), [Mar Thoma Syrian Church](#), [Syo Malankara Catholic Church](#), [Roman Catholic and Church of the East](#). Priests from all these churches helped collect funds for the construction. This represents a vision of Jesus that "all will be one" – that all the believers will be one.

In May this year I was transferred to this Shrine of Mar Thoma.

What are your future plans?

I want to develop this into a Pilgrim Centre. We are presently constructing 20 rooms, a suite and an auditorium. Plans are being worked on for the inclusion of a museum where the traditions of all Christians will be displayed; a tower that will have steps leading to the top for a panoramic view of the mighty Periyar River and the surroundings settlements. Along the inside walls of the tower leading up there will be images displayed of the life of St. Thomas. I hope to make it a centre for research and fellowship for Christians not just for Keralites but from the rest of India and abroad. This will all come to fruition by the blessings of St. Thomas.

I noticed that Mar Thoma holy oil is available at the shrine. Have there been any miracles?

Many people have narrated their experiences in the church of favours granted. They come and testify about the miracles in their lives. The problems are usually to do with finance, family or illness.

What are the upcoming events?

On November 23, 2012, we will be celebrating the Great feast of St. Thomas. You must come and please invite all your friends. It will be a spectacular event. The masses, the adoration of the relic of St. Thomas and the grand procession in boats down the River Periyar.

In September 2013 to mark the 19th and half centenary of the landing of St. Thomas in Cranganore, we will be conducting an international seminar focusing on the history of this area. (We know that this was a Roman settlement, an international maritime centre and the place where Apostle Thomas landed).

Even though it rains a lot in Ireland, I have an abiding memory of shortage of water in summer. The water diviner had a special place among small farmers, as he was the one who could find the precious liquid by waving his hazel rod. He had the power.

I wrote this poem a number of years ago at the airport in Paris. Three men sitting across from me looked like people who'd buy and sell anything – even water if the price was right.



The Best Wells are Deep

The diviner cycled easily, mostly away from rivers
with rods lashed to his crossbar – a quiet man
who never asked, but did get paid in cash and kind
and by the sight of forty fresh pumps on the landscape.

Water was drawn to him and he to water.

His name hung on the flight of a rod.
The diviner!
Resolute as a single note, he'd prowl and map
field after field till he struck the hardest vein.

Water was drawn to him and he to water.

Deep springs. Springs from rock. Cold,
ice-cold water, water to be talked about.
Time goes slowly round a holy well.

Here in Paris at the airport, three men sit opposite.
They drink.
They know everything about water,
shots and guns buried.

I'm listening for the flow and balance,
for the deep slow breath of the man
who didn't gather things about water;
for the water in rice. The best well are deep.

There'll be no flood, he'd repeat. Water comes
shaped into pipe shapes, or tap shapes, or trough shapes.
What's left leaves traces in land-dips
or finds river currents
to ease out into with the grace of a beautiful woman.

The water diviner does small things.
He leaves a water song and there's no struggle.

Water is drawn to him and he to water.
A silent thought.



Creating Healthy Boundaries Part III

by Candess M Campbell, PhD.

In July I focused on Crossing Boundaries and Collapsed Boundaries. In August we looked at the effects Rigid Boundaries have on your relationships and your health. This third article is about **Healthy Boundaries!**

One sign of having healthy boundaries is the ability to **say no when you want to say no and also to say yes when you want to say yes.** So often people say yes when they really don't mean it. They are afraid someone won't like them or will reject them and they end up agreeing to something they really don't want to do. Caroline Myss talked about this in her book *Anatomy of the Spirit*. She referred to people who continually give and give in situations where they lose their personal energetic power. She talked of the correlation between this over-doing and breast cancer. In response to doing this, she said it was like "suckling a dead litter."

Many of us who are parents find ourselves in this situation. We want to give to our children and so we say yes and give a lot and then feel we have over-given and pull back and don't give for awhile, then feel guilty and over-give and the situation goes on and on.

Think about your own life. Where have you over-given? What you are doing that you really don't want to do. What are you not doing because you don't have the time because you say yes when you really wanted to say no?

What about saying no rather than yes? Do you ever say no to something that would be good for you or you would enjoy, but you don't allow yourself or give yourself permission? Write out some activities you have said no to, when in your heart, you would really like to say yes. When have you not allowed yourself to receive from others?

Being unclear on yes and no can come from habit, from low self-esteem, or just not knowing what you want. We talked about this in the previous article on rigid boundaries. It can be confusing for you, but also can be confusing for those around you. Give yourself permission to say yes and to say no, and really mean it!

Another example of a healthy boundary is **making a request from someone.** If they cannot give you what you want, you **find another solution.**

Just recently I heard about a situation where a woman put herself in a bad situation with her alcoholic husband with whom she was separated. Uncertain whether she should or not, she trusted him alone with their young daughter. She needed to make an appointment and could not bring the child. I asked her why she didn't ask her mother for help and she said that she didn't feel safe asking her mother. It appeared that she didn't feel safe because her mother may say no and she would feel hurt or rejected.



Pics © Mark Ulyseas

It is okay to ask for help and it is okay for others to say no. If the person you ask cannot help you for some reason, don't take it personally. Find another solution. I would encourage you to ask the person for help again soon so you don't begin to think they are not a valuable option for support. Sometimes people make up stories in their head about what others are thinking or doing. If you wonder about why, just ask them.

Healthy boundaries come from a **strong sense of identity and self-respect**. If you find you have collapsed or rigid boundaries begin to identify when this happens and use the suggestions in the earlier articles. It is often by behaving in new ways that you begin to respect yourself. Take some time to become clear on who you are, what you think and what you value. Bring your behavior in alignment with your beliefs!

Sometimes people align with groups or others and take on their values and attitudes and never take the time to explore for themselves. When they are no longer with this group or person, they find themselves feeling lost and insecure.

Another sign of healthy boundaries has to do with self-disclosure. It is important to **disclose to others appropriately**. Reveal information about yourself that is relevant to the situation and do this gradually. Be sure to self-disclose at a similar rate to others and not over-disclose or under-disclose. Whether it be social, business or personal, this creates a mutual sharing that can develop into a long time relationship.

Health relationships are where **both people take a shared responsibility** in the growth and development of the relationship. If you find you are continually doing all the work to keep the relationship together, you may want to create some new relationships where others take the time to stay connected as well. Being the only one to manage the relationship can create low self-esteem, pain and anxiety.

A client of mine was in a relationship with a man who was emotionally unavailable. She was the one who planned all their activities together, did most of the initiating in the relationship and much of the talking. As I listened to her share, I could see she was forcing the relationship and was fearful to stop because deep down, she knew he would not take the time to call her at all. She was giving all of her life energy to him! We discussed this and she became honest with herself and began to take better care of herself. She shifted from being needy and overly focused outside herself to becoming a beautiful, healthy woman who attracted attention from many men.

When boundaries are healthy you can **recognize whether the problem is yours or the other person's**.



When boundaries are unclear you can become enmeshed and not sure where you start and the other person ends. Your relationship becomes a mix of thoughts and emotions. When your boundaries are healthy you can determine if the problem is you and make the necessary change. If the problem belongs to the other person, you give them room to figure it out and don't try to rescue them.

I recently worked with a man who was married to a woman whose life was coming apart. Her drug use was out of control and she continually would spend all their money and leave him struggling to pay the rent. This went on for many years and he kept trying harder, thinking she would change. What really happened is he took responsibility for her behavior and she didn't have to change at all. He enabled her to continue her dysfunctional behavior because for some reason he felt guilty and responsible. He started attending Al-Anon, a program for friends and family of alcoholics and addicts and became clear on how he was not responsible for her behavior. He made positive changes.

The last attribute I'll share here of a healthy boundary is **not tolerating abuse or disrespect**. It is true that people will treat you the way that you allow them. Setting a boundary around behaviors that are abusive or disrespectful is important. A rule of thumb here is to leave a situation when this first begins to happen. If you begin a relationship with someone and you see they have a tendency toward abuse or disrespect, remove yourself as soon as you can. People who are abusive tend to become more so the longer you know them and the abuse becomes worse the longer you are in relationship with them.

I have had more clients than I would care to count who have entered into relationships with men or women who tended to be abusive in the beginning and they stayed thinking they could help, fix, or rescue them. The situations have always accelerated and become worse. The client ends up in my office in an effort to pick up the pieces and create healthier relationships in the future.

As you can see from this series on Creating Healthy Boundaries, that taking time to assess your own boundaries is a valuable choice. When you set appropriate boundaries it helps create healthy relationships and is preventative health care!

You deserve a healthy, happy and abundant life! Only you can create this for yourself!

I would love to hear your feedback. Contact me through my website. Like me on [Facebook \(1st Profile\)](#) and/or friend me at [Facebook \(2nd Profile\)](#).

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Gorkhaland

Crisis of Statehood

Romit Bagchi

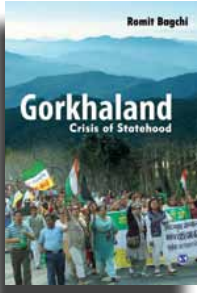
senior correspondent with *The Statesman*
and author of *Gorkhaland - Crisis of Statehood*
(Published by Sage Publications)

in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas

Live Encounters, the title of your renowned e-journal, is a wonderful phrase. Encounter may mean meeting by way of chance, or it may mean meeting as adversaries. The book I have written on the crisis of statehood involving the hilly terrain of Bengal is no less than a live encounter between the author who is an outsider in the strict sense of the term and the people who are raising a cry for Home Rule. I wonder whether the people residing in the hills of the state I belong to would take this encounter in the adversarial sense of the term, encounter.

Such encounters, are, however, taking place at each moment. Life, devoid of such encounters, whether fortuitous or adversarial, is not worth living. For, life is essentially an encounter with the unknown. Encounter enriches life and ensures progress. Absence of encounter would reduce us to the proverbial frogs that wallow in the marshy bogs of stunted growth.

But the question is-can encounters with the world at large sufficiently broaden our outlook to the extent of erasing the ego-blocks and making us feel one with all unlike us? Now the scope of encounters is immense. If we look at the world it seems it has narrowed to a neighbourhood. The world is called a global village. But has the sense of neighbourhood broadened into the sense of brotherhood? The answer is negative, though it is true that constant intercourse is changing the surface texture of our mental world. But the matter ends there. For vanity-signifying separative consciousness on the individual and the collective planes-is like a river that constantly passes away and yet constantly comes in.



Please give us a glimpse of your life and work.

Now, when I look over my life I feel, as if, I was privileged from the beginning to be born in a **Brahmo** (**Brahmo Samaj** is a sect born from Hinduism that believes in monotheism as contrasted with the polytheism and idol-worship that is the essence of popular Hinduism) family. The domestic ambience was free from the socio-cultural stereotypes that pass for an orthodox Hindu view of life. My grandmother used to tell us how our great grandfather had been subjected to social ostracism after he had rid himself of the 'sacred thread', the quintessential mark of Brahminism in hierarchical Hindu society, and embraced the Brahmo religion which, pioneered by the '**First Modern Man of India**', **Raja Rammohun Roy**, sought to discard the antediluvian paraphernalia of orthodox Hinduism and strove to new-make the old society in the image of monotheism-oneness of God and omni-presence of the **One spirit (Brahma)** in everything, inanimate and animate. I felt proud as belonging to a family which was involved in the social-reform movement that was going on side by side with the political movement for Independence during those eventful times.

But there was another thing-our family was free from any sectarian narrowness. **My mother was a descendant of Rishi Rajnarayan Basu who was regarded as the 'grandfather of Indian nationalism'**. She was a proud Indian apart from being a proud Brahmo. Her eyes used to get moistened with tears whenever we asked her about the freedom movement, about the Indian civilization and the galaxy of saints and sages that has hallowed our hoary soil since time immemorial. My father was, however, an orthodox Brahmo who used to steer clear of the Hindu festivities. But at the same time, he never imposed on us any diktat against participating in the puja festivities. I had my early studies at Patha Bhavana, Santiniketan which is part of Visva Bharati-the dream University of Rabindranath Tagore. We could feel the presence of the poet in the ambience there and this is principally because of the teachers who embodied the essence of the Tagorean view of life in themselves. Apart from the formal education, we were taught to feel part of nature. This is in accordance with the Tagorean concept of Pantheism.

After studying there for around five years I returned to Calcutta. Just after I joined a college beginning my studies in English literature my father died. This marked a turning point in my life as my world, caringly nurtured in course of my childhood and adolescence, came crashing in on me. It is, as it were, I lost my way in the labyrinthine mazes of life. The pre-conceived notions of life were crushed under wheels of time. Life turned hostile and those on whom I banked turned their backs.

Later I realized it was not simply a case of friends turning foes. There was a far greater riddle involved in the situation turning hostile. Gloom descended on me and my deeper soul began questioning the basic foundation of the ephemeral life that we lead on the surface. I realized that the Brahmo creed which is nothing more than a scratching the surface ritualistic evocation of the commonly unrealizable One in Many Brahmo could no longer satisfy me. I was frantically groping for a profounder foundation of life which would guide me out of the morasses of the grim crisis I was in. At that critical point of time, I came into contact with the spiritual vision of life-all-encompassing and intellectually satisfying and invigorating- as being epitomized by **Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The day I started reading The Life Divine, (the greatest work of the sage of Pondicherry), marked the beginning of the subjective transformation.**

It is still a long, long way to go. As the **Mother of the Pondicherry Ashram** wrote a mere span of a single life is nothing as compared to the monumental task of transformation down to its grossest physical atoms. '**Soul is willing, but flesh is revolting**' syndrome keeps haunting and it is proving enormously difficult to successfully grapple with the gravitational pulls of mundane, ego-based life.

Now let me come to my professional life. Since my childhood I kept nurturing a wish to become a journalist. It was not so much for the glamour that is supposed to be involved in the particular profession that made me opt for it. Rather a romantic idealism was there. But when I seriously got into the field the idealistic passion was no longer there. I realized the limited role of idealism in the collective life. But it is a passion all the same. It is a kind of make-believe that we are influencing public life though from afar.

I worked in some newspapers and periodicals in Calcutta for some years before I joined The Statesman as a Senior Correspondent in 2007. I asked the Editor and the Deputy Editor to post me in Siliguri because of its nearness to the Himalayas on its north and dense jungles on the south.

A question often comes to my mind about the role of a journalist in the society-should a journalist strictly act as a detached observer of the moving drama that life, in my view, is or should he directly intervene in life when he feels things are going wrong.

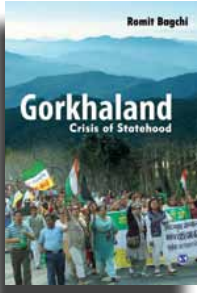
I have not yet found a satisfying answer to this query that keeps haunting every sensible journalist all over the world. But I think the role of a journalist is primarily to observe life from upon a detached pedestal, though this should not mean that there should be an ivory tower distance from the moving life. Our role is to present the myriad facets of life as objectively as possible. But at the same time, I must admit that often a passion to prod things the way we want these to move overwhelms a journalist. This is tendency we should not encourage far.

Moreover, a journalist often tends to lose sense of proportions. George Bernard Shaw wrote, newspapers are unable, seemingly, to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of civilization. This might be an exaggeration in line with the Shavian sense of wit, but there is grain of truth, for blowing things out of proportions to make them look sensational has become a trend.

I am proud of being a journalist, though I ask myself sometimes whether journalism has reduced itself to an intellectual brothel a la Tolstoy.

I have written many articles on the ethno-political complexity involving the society in north Bengal and Sikkim. Besides, the Renaissance of India with a pantheon of giants striding across a particular landscape for, say, around 100 years keeps attracting me irresistibly.

The mutual relation involving those illustrious figures-like the encounters between Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore and Swami Vivekananda, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose interests me immensely. I have written several articles on this subject in the paper I work with-The Statesman.



GORKHALAND, Crisis of Statehood, is a book that delves into the ongoing crisis in the Darjeeling hills, where the Nepali-speaking community is fighting for a separate State. Could you please extensively elaborate on this book?

Literature and journalism are two different domains and I think it is difficult for a journalist to churn out a true piece of literature. It is said and rightly too that literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice while journalism is what will be grasped at once. An eminent European critic once said journalism is literature in a hurry. And this is exactly what can describe my book on Gorkhaland best-something written in a hurry.

The book, which deals with the multi-layered crisis born of the Nepali-speaking people's resolute unwillingness to remain a part of Bengal, seems to have been written in a hurry. And a journalist can hardly get over his sense of hurry. Being full of care we seem to have no time to stand and stare. The crisis of statehood the book deals with is not a static thing either. The trajectory seems to be moving with baffling pace from one mode to another. It is difficult to keep pace.

Leisure is called the mother of philosophy. Or to put in other words, to be able to fill the leisure intelligently is the last product of civilization. But a journalist can hardly find leisure engrossed as he must be with the passing things.

Returning to the book, the cry for home rule was raised first in 1907. An organization representing there communities residing the Darjeeling hills-Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas- in Bengal raised the cry together.

However, the history dates far back. The whole of the Hills that include three sub-divisions-Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong- was part of Sikkim under the Namgyal dynasty that was founded in 1646 at the behest of three Tibetan monks. Nepal, ascendant in the wake of the exemplary martial exploits displayed by the legendary Prithwi Narayan Shah, grabbed a large chunk of the hills that include Darjeeling and Kurseong in 1787. Kalimpong was under Bhutan, though it was too part of Sikkim before Bhutan annexed it in 1706.

The British, then the East India Company, fought Nepal and won the first Anglo-Nepal war in 1815. A treaty known as Treaty of Sugauli was signed that year (ratified a year later). The Company returned the Hills which Nepal had annexed to the Sikkimese rulers by way of Treaty of Titalya which was signed in 1817.

But the Company dispensation got these parts back by way a gift deed executed by the then king of Sikkim in 1835.

The British, then the Crown government, dispossessed Bhutan of Kalimpong in 1865 by way of Treaty of Sinchula and thus Kalimpong was added to the hilly terrain the possession of which the British had been enjoying since 1835. Thus one thing is clear that the Darjeeling hills have never been an organic part of Bengal. So it is said that Bengali 'paranoia' at the possibility of division of the state does not hold much water.

But, at the same time, the Nepali-speaking people who are in the van of the statehood movement are not the original residents of the hills. They began migrating from Nepal after development projects in the form of tea and Cinchona plantations, railway and road building were taken up in earnest by the Company dispensation. Lepchas and Bhutias are the original inhabitants of the hills. Taking cue from this demographic fact, the Bengali intelligentsia as well as the political class in the state claim the Nepali-speaking people are migrants from Nepal and can have no legitimate claim to demand statehood.

Though the statehood movement began in 1907 it got its true fillip after Subash Ghising came into the scene in the early half of 1980s. Ghising was ousted and his one- time crony, Bimal Gurung emerged as the champion of the cause in 2007-8.

Ghising era was marked with gore as nearly 300 people were killed in a span of a few years. Gurung's party claims adherence to the Gandhian postulate of non-violence. But the same stain of intolerance that marked the Ghising era can be discernible in the Gurung era. Things reached down to their macabre depth with the daylight assassination of the All India Gorkha League president, Madan Tamang in May 2010. Tamang's was the lone voice of dissent in the intolerance and fear-struck political ambience in the hills.

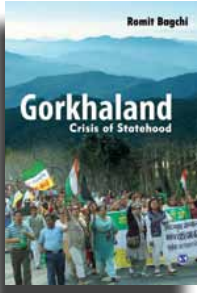
The first phase of the Bimal Gurung era has ended with the election to the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration-an autonomous body endowed with considerable executive and financial powers in July 2012. The party Gurung founded in 2007-Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM) - swept the election winning all the 45 seats either unopposed or with huge margins where elections were held. Democracy has thus remained at a discount in the Hills with no presence of the Opposition in the autonomous council.

However, the Gorkhaland- phantom is still alive. The alternative council can hardly prove the exorcist. It is to be seen when and how the now-bottled genie would be uncorked in course of the moving political trajectory in the hills.

But one thing is certain. Democracy would remain elusive for the hills and that too in line with the character of the monopolist hill politics. It is anybody's guess where the moving drift would finally land the hills in. There are reasons to suppose that the hill trajectory would keep moving on from storm to storm with little likelihood of the people having a tryst with peace and development.

The book approaches the century-old tangle from four perspectives-the history of the region, the problem of assimilation of the various ethnic groups, the course of the movement in course of vicissitudes and the hurdles in the way of the fulfillment of the statehood dream.

The problem seems insoluble given the odds set against it. The citizenship-identity crisis of the Gorkha settlers is a serious issue that has international ramifications involving both India and Nepal. The book has tried to give expression to the poignancy associated with the real Nepali-speaking Indians' crisis of identity in the face of continuing migration from Nepal thanks to certain clauses in the 1950 India-Nepal Friendship Treaty.



Here, another thing must be remembered. Mere formation of a Gorkhaland state would not automatically solve the citizenship-identity crisis of the Gorkha settlers as is being claimed by the statehood advocates. The identity issue is a serious one with international ramifications involving the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty, which is the fulcrum on which the entire gamut of bilateral relations between two neighbours is based. The Government of India seems indifferent to the issue, for it is convinced that any initiative on this side might bring in its wake problems on the other.

The citizenship issue involving the settlers on both sides of the Indo-Nepal border is a complex one and the matter might prove extremely difficult to handle given the volatility in the bilateral relations between the two neighbours.

As things stand now, a final solution seems a distant dream. Unrest would keep haunting the hills and the administration and the law enforcers would remain focused on keeping the situation from spinning out of control. Time would ultimately solve the problem, for Nature abhors disharmony. She presents opposites and contradictions and challenges man to reconcile these in a harmony. For, as Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine*, all problems of life are, in essence, problems of harmony.

What are you working on now?

I am now busy giving the final shape to the book on Sikkim, the tiny neighbouring State of Bengal, which is endowed with a unique history of its own. Sikkim was an independent Buddhist monarchy till 1975. It became a constituent state within the Union of India by way of a constitutional amendment during the Indira Gandhi regime. The manuscript begins with the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet and later in Sikkim which became vassal state of Tibet with the consecration of the Namgyal dynasty in 1646. It has dealt with the frequent incursions from Nepal and Bhutan into Sikkim and finally with the advent of the British in the Buddhist kingdom.

The migration from Nepal and the consequent demographic changes reducing the indigenous communities to minority has also figured. The demographic upheavals led to the merger in 1975 as the Sikimese society got polarized on ethno-religious lines-on one side, the Buddhist Bhutia-Lepchas (the autochthones) and the Hindu Nepalese (known generally as migrants). The Nepalese community favoured merger while a majority of the Bhutia-Lepchas were opposed to it. China has remained an important player in the unfolding trajectory as Sikkim had remained a vassal state of Tibet which is under the Chinese occupation since 1950. I have given the manuscript the title 'Sikkim in India: Crisis of Integration and Chinese Shadows'.

The manuscript mainly deals with the crisis of integration of the Sikimese Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas into the Indian mainstream. These communities are yet to adapt themselves to the changing demographic equations with the 'mainland' Indians allegedly swarming in the state.

It is unclear even now with over 35 years having passed since the merger of the former Monarchy into India how much rights the so-called 'mainland' Indians have as regards those being enjoyed by the indigenous Sikkimese communities in Sikkim.

The inter-ethnic incompatibility involving the Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas has also figured in details in the manuscript. This aside, it has dealt with the intra-ethnic tension involving the Nepalese community, as it has remained divided into mainly two groups-Mongoloid and Aryan. The attitude of these three communities towards India is also an important part of the manuscript.

What is your message for the readers of Live Encounters?

Live Encounters, the title of your renowned e-journal, is a wonderful phrase. Encounter may mean meeting by way of chance, or it may mean meeting as adversaries. The book I have written on the crisis of statehood involving the hilly terrain of Bengal is no less than a live encounter between the author who is an outsider in the strict sense of the term and the people who are raising a cry for Home Rule. I wonder whether the people residing in the hills of the state I belong to would take this encounter in the adversarial sense of the term, encounter.

Such encounters, are, however, taking place at each moment. Life, devoid of such encounters, whether fortuitous or adversarial, is not worth living. For, life is essentially an encounter with the unknown. Encounter enriches life and ensures progress. Absence of encounter would reduce us to the proverbial frogs that wallow in the marshy bogs of stunted growth.

But the question is-can encounters with the world at large sufficiently broaden our outlook to the extent of erasing the ego-blocks and making us feel one with all unlike us? Now the scope of encounters is immense. If we look at the world it seems it has narrowed to a neighbourhood. The world is called a global village. But has the sense of neighbourhood broadened into the sense of brotherhood? The answer is negative, though it is true that constant intercourse is changing the surface texture of our mental world. But the matter ends there. For vanity- signifying separative consciousness on the individual and the collective planes- is like a river that constantly passes away and yet constantly comes in.

All in the universe are related. When one tugs at a single thing in nature he finds it is attached to the rest of the world. But it is yet to turn into a living truth on the collective plane. No theory or philosophy, however lofty, can help us beyond a certain point. What matters are churning and purification and expansion. Only some individuals can become truly international by dint of cleansing, expanding and universalizing their individual minds. The rest would keep on theorizing.

Goethe said rightly-All theory, dear friend, is grey; but the precious tree of life is green.

Geikos (that's what Geishas are called in Kyoto) always remind me of Zen monks – a Westerner can't imagine discipline, ascetic life and dedication necessary to perform this art.

Meikos (Geisha apprentices) sleep every night with their head resting precisely in a special position on a wooden pillar, so the elaborate hair dressing is not damaged.

Visiting Kyoto, I discovered less known connections between Zen and the world of Geikos.

Their teahouses are just next to the oldest Zen temple in town, a major origin of the tea ceremony, which is such an important part in the arts of Geikos (which means art-person) and Japanese culture as a whole, focused in the tradition of Geikos. Putting on the white make-up dissolves all personal aspects, selfless, timeless.

In an Onsen (hot bath) a well-educated Japanese asked me: "Do you know the difference between Buddhism and Shinto?". He smiled - and added the well-considered, but provocative and enlightening statement: "...because we Japanese don't see any difference".



www.joo-peter.photoshelter.com

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Randhir Khare

Writer Artist Teacher
talks about his latest book

Walking Through Fire

published by niyogibooks

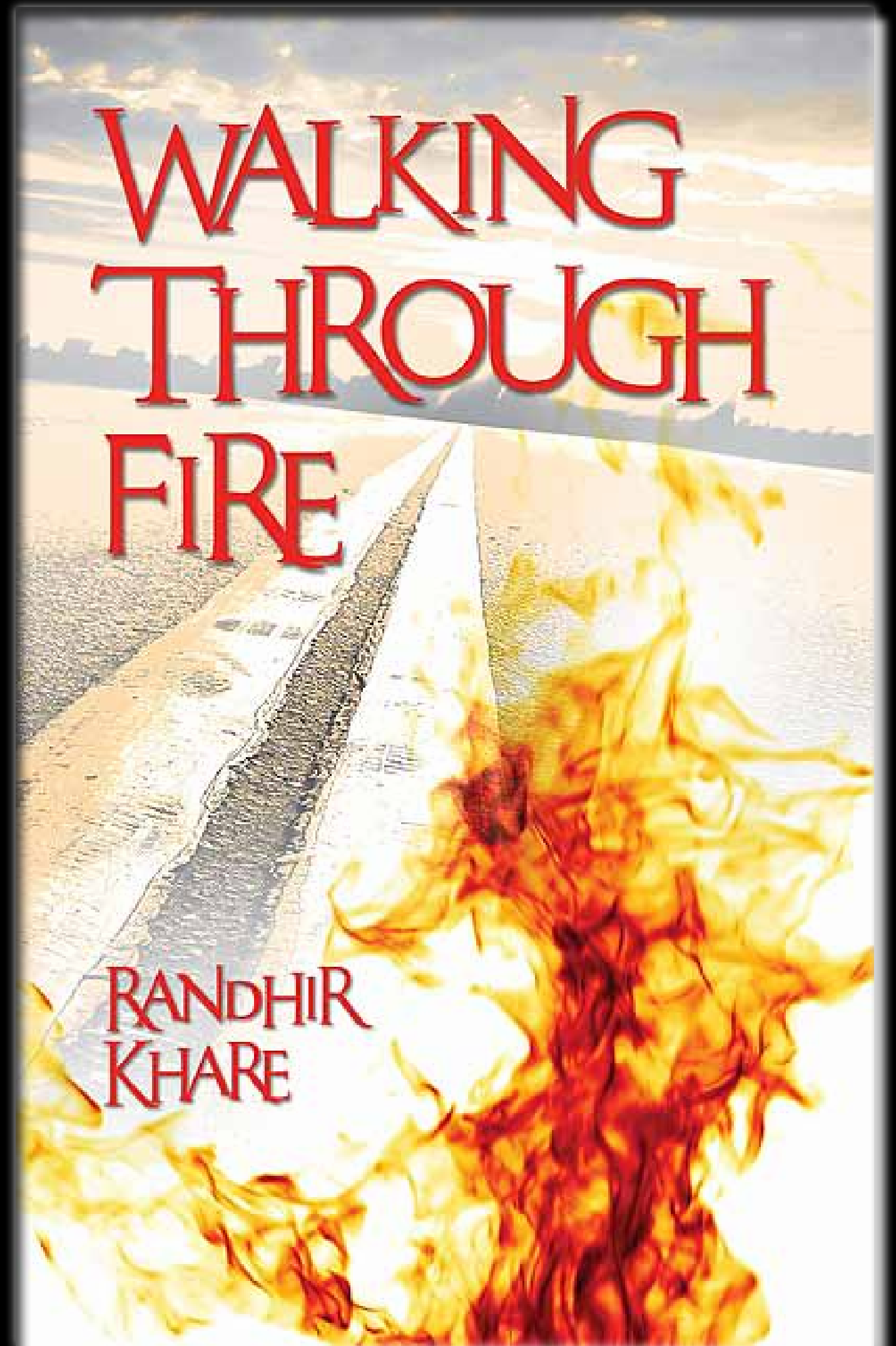
in a one on one interview with Mark Ulyseas

Why did you write *Walking Through Fire*? And is it fiction or biographical?

I wrote *Walking Through Fire* because I had a story to tell. Not my story but a story. I am a story-teller and a story-teller constantly writes stories in his head, struggling with characters, ideas, feelings, situations – like trying to create a Big Bang so that a universe may be born. The universe that is the story. But from where did these characters, ideas, feelings and situations come? From deep within my own life and all that I have seen and felt.

People, events, experiences, feelings had over the years gathered up inside and over time mutated into vibrant source material, waiting to be drawn upon and shaped into a novel. This source material gathered in layers. When I felt that there was enough in there to tell a story I dug deep through all the layers down to the very core and scooped out segments of many layers, one mingling with the other. Writing this novel was a challenge – it forced me to rise out of the circumstances of my own life, transcend it and tell a story out of it. Transforming the material of my life into pure fiction. I believe that it was as much an act of heroism as it was the skill of a story-teller.

Is this novel autobiographical? No, it is not. My life is my life with its struggles and triumphs, its moments of glory, moments of disaster and moments of absolute tenderness. But it is my life and concerns no one else but me and those who are close to me. This novel grew in my creative womb, out of my life, and when it was ready burst out into the world and was held up by its legs and bawled its slimy lungs out. Today, complete, it has its own identity, its own reason for being and I let it go to walk its way into the world.





At the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival, Bali, Indonesia

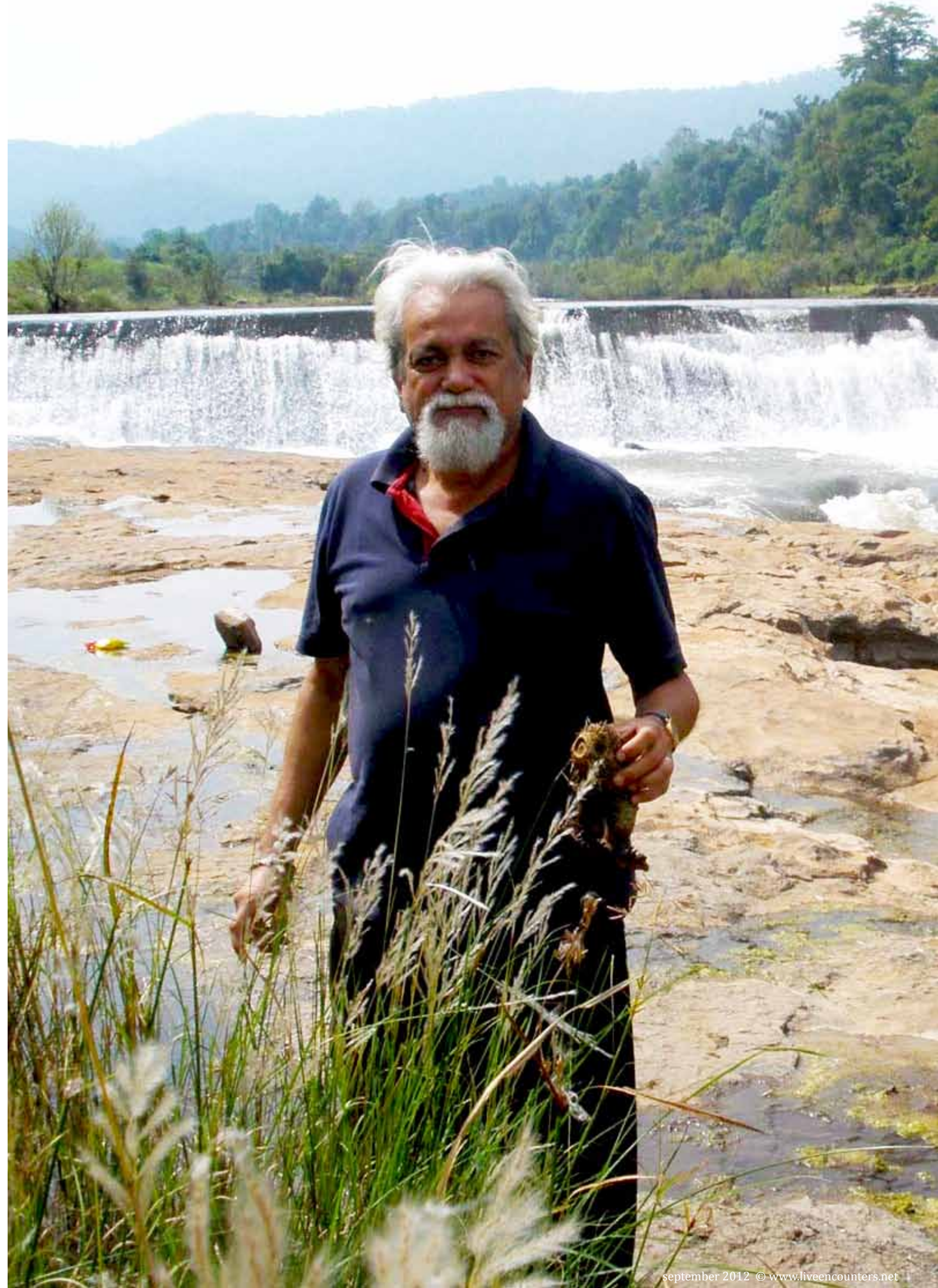
What went into the *creation* of *Walking Through Fire*?

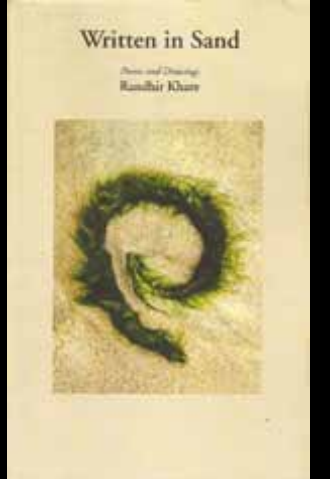
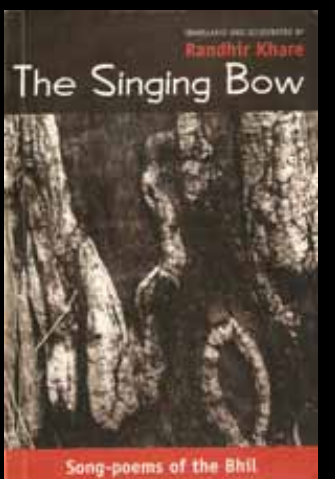
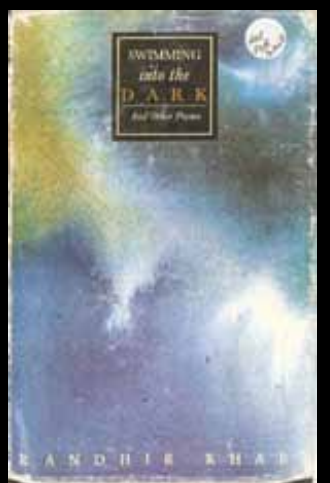
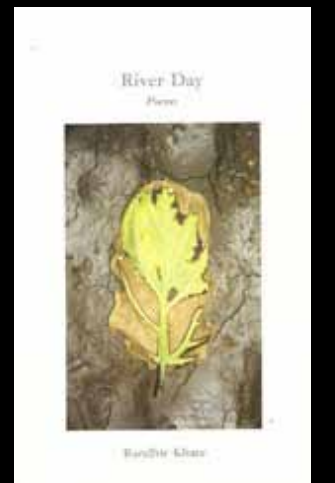
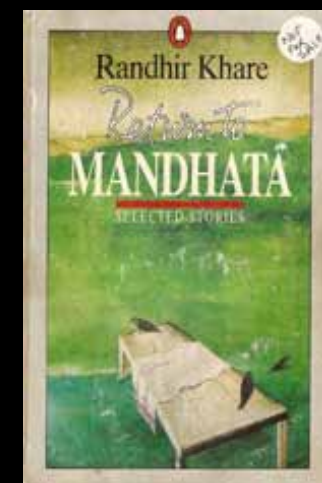
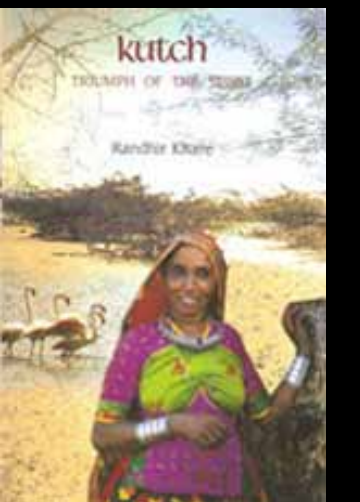
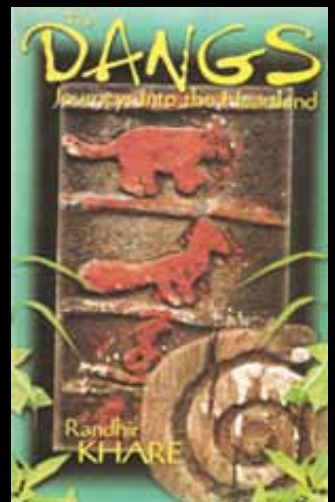
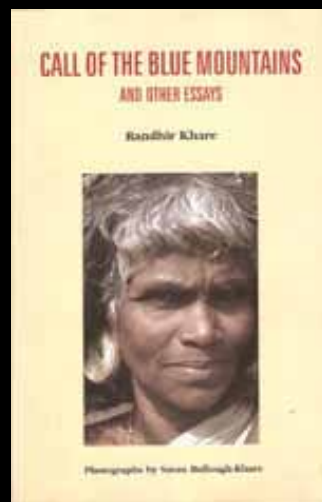
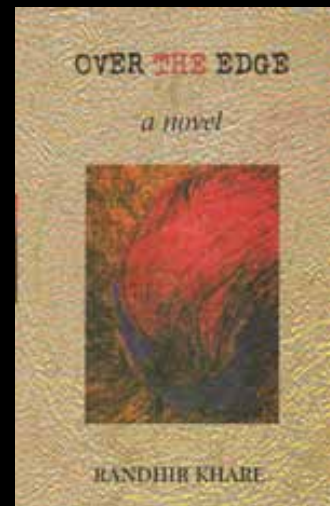
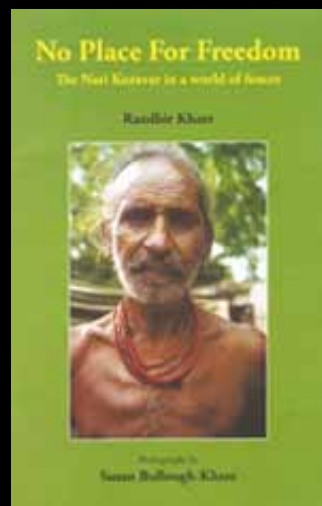
The seed idea of *Walking Through Fire* arrived when I was having a chat over breakfast with the travel writer Jake Bullough, in a quaint resort in South Goa, whilst dolphins bobbed close to the shore and sandpipers skated along the glass-like water's edge. The air around was licked fresh by a salt wind and I felt good to be alive. Anyway, as I was saying, we got talking about books and films and I found myself saying that the film I'd like to make, if I was a film maker, would be about a young man of hybrid parentage in post Independence India. I went on to describe the difficult circumstances of his childhood and youth and how that planted in him a powerful feeling of violence, a sort of inner rebellion (against his lot in life). And while this inner violence grew, the violence in his family persisted... and outside the country around him was going through its own fair share of violence...the Naxalbari bloodbath in West Bengal, The Bangladesh War of Liberation, insurgency, terrorism. And as he grows up into manhood, he can feel his inner violence rapidly surfacing....until that single apocalyptic moment when his own hidden violence bursts out and joins the violence raging about him. This becomes his ultimate act of liberation.

The story for the supposed film emerged almost effortlessly and when it had spent itself, the conversation meandered off in different directions and silence then took over. In the days and months and years that followed the story stayed with me, somewhere deep inside, and in time I began to regard it as the storyline of a potential novel.

Then I started taking it seriously, turning it over and over, upside down and inside out. A story of that nature couldn't possibly be linear in its narrative. The sheer complexity of its driving preoccupation, demanded that it transcend the straight forward passageways of time and become more organic – moving from time zone to time zone, back and forth. And not just that, the complexity of the central preoccupation also demanded that I begin representing various dimensions of reality. And as the story took on the form of a living breathing organism, I began enlivening it with felt, seen and experienced narratives from my own life, picked out and placed in such a way that they were divested of their original context and took on a new meaning. **Something like the transmigration of a soul.**

When I finally plunged into the narrative, I discovered hidden worlds revealing themselves. Some of them seemed like my own but they were not. The character resisted my writerly manipulations and rapidly evolved, tracing his own steps. Swinging back and forth through his own time and space.





Books published
by
Randhir Khare



Reading at the Empress Gardens, Pune, India

Is *Walking Through Fire* different from your earlier published work?

I have published more than twenty books, each one a step beyond the other. I think that's what's important. To keep pushing the borders of theme and plot, character and action. To go beyond, moulding newer forms of narrative. I am concerned with what lies within and its response to what lies outside the individual, the conflict between the individual and the circumstances he or she finds herself in.

Walking Through Fire is a step beyond all the fiction that I have written and published so far. I had kept the creative source of my earlier fiction pretty much away from myself and drew upon other people but in the case of this novel, I drew upon myself and my own life. Familiar ground made me bolder and muscularly engaging in my style. It also offered me infinite possibilities as I moved with the character backwards and forwards through time. By doing this, I managed to create a separate reality, a new reality, the reality which belonged exclusively to the character and his story and not to me.

Walking Through Fire, is my most accomplished work of fiction.

What message do you have for aspiring writers?

Be yourself, no matter what the cost. Find your own way of telling a story, there's no joy in trying to be someone else.

Write out of your own life, write out of the lives of those you are familiar with. Familiarity gives you wings.

Tell a story. Tell it with your heart. Make it breathe. Give it life. Give it detail.

The universe lies in the particular

Ultimately, the struggle has got nothing to do with finding a publisher or a readership, it's about bringing the story into being, struggling with a blank sheet of paper or a blank screen...but it's worth it in the end...its worth all the heartache and loneliness, all the exhaustion, everything.

Write ...that's all that should matter.



Pic © Henky Widjaja

Convenient thugs - FPI (Islamic Defenders' Front) thrives when mainstream Muslim groups remain silent
 by Henky Widjaja, PhD researcher at the Anthropology Department of Leiden University. *Reprinted by Special Permission of Jemma Purdey, Inside Indonesia.*

For the first time last year in Makassar, the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI) conducted raids on food outlets trading during daylight hours in the Islamic fasting month. Raids during Ramadhan are not in themselves new. Another organisation, Laskar Jundullah, launched a series of raids on hotels and entertainment venues in the early 2000s. But these attacks on food outlets marked FPI's emergence as South Sulawesi's leading Islamic paramilitary organisation, and one that was more confident than its predecessors to intervene in new areas of daily life.

Across Indonesia, many groups have long disapproved of FPI and their vigilante attacks. When the group raided an interfaith gathering at the national monument in Jakarta in 2008, former president Abdurrahman Wahid called for the group to be disbanded. Most recently, Adat (traditional culture) groups rejected FPI's attempt to form a branch in the Central Kalimantan's capital city Palangkaraya, a crowd gathering at the airport to ensure FPI leaders did not disembark from their commercial flight. In Makassar, too, human rights groups and secular NGOs organised large protests against FPI's vigilante attacks.

Yet the group continues to operate, and typically receives only a slap on the wrist for its violent actions. FPI's national head, Habib Rizieq, received just an 18 month sentence for inciting FPI members to carry out the national monument attack. In Makassar, after their food stall attacks went unchallenged, FPI attacked the provincial secretariat of Ahmadiyah, an Islamic sect that has suffered violence and harassment across Indonesia. Only then did police arrest FPI's provincial chief and two of his followers. The trio were sentenced only to the five months they had already served in prison by the time of their trial, a token punishment that saw the men immediately released.



**FPI national head Habib Rizieq.
 Banner reads
 'We are Indonesia!
 Neither Civil nor Adat (customary) law
 will ever rival Allah's law'**

To understand why FPI can operate as it does in Makassar, we need to examine the attitudes of mainstream Islamic groups to the organisation. Amidst the chorus of criticism of FPI in Makassar, these groups have remained noticeably silent. Their silence reflects an unease regarding social ills that they share with FPI, stemming from increased conservatism in society. When mainstream groups feel the government is not acting on their concerns, FPI serves as a convenient pressure group.

Following in Laskar Jundullah's footsteps

Since FPI established a branch in South Sulawesi in 2008, it has followed in the footsteps of fellow Islamic militia Laskar Jundullah, doing best in districts known to be Laskar Jundullah strongholds. Often, the two groups share followers and supporters. In Bulukumba, for example, FPI established a branch in February 2011. Soon after, the two groups came together in protest over a decision by the district government to allow Catholics to conduct mass in the disused former office of the district head. Minority religions are a common target for FPI, who act as a leading pressure group to seek to prevent them establishing places of worship, whether temporary or permanent.

Laskar Jundullah itself was established in 2000 as the paramilitary wing of the South Sulawesi-based Preparatory Committee for the Implementation of Islamic Law (KPPSI). KPPSI was a political front led by Aziz Kahar Muzakkar, one of the sons of Kahar Muzakkar, a leader of a Darul-Islam rebellion in the 1950s and 1960s. KPPSI achieved some initial successes, inspiring many districts and municipalities issued local regulations based on Shari'a. During the same period, Laskar Jundullah reached the height of its influence. Headquartered in Makassar, the militia also established branches in other municipalities and districts. It was well-known for its violent acts, with political scientist Michael Buehler observing that the militia serves as a kind of informal Shari'a police force in many districts and also helps candidates in many district head elections to intimidate their rivals.

But two rounds of arrests in 2002 marked Laskar Jundullah's downfall. First, Laskar Jundullah's head Agus Dwikarna was arrested in the Philippines in 2002 in possession of explosives. Then



Pic © Henky Widjaja

eight Laskar Jundullah members were convicted for the December 2002 Makassar bombings, which targeted a McDonalds restaurant in the Jusuf Kalla-owned Ratu Indah Mall as well as a car dealership owned by Kalla. One rumour suggested that Kalla, a KPPSI advisor, was attacked for not delivering on a promise to help free Dwikarna. Another interpretation maintained that Kalla was targeted because Laskar Jundullah disapproved of his role in brokering the Malino peace accord in the Poso conflict, where the group had sent fighters.

The bombings were a serious miscalculation on Laskar Jundullah's part. Elite supporters abandoned the group, which was forced to scale back its operations and relocate its headquarters to the small coastal town of Pare-Pare. Nevertheless, Laskar Jundullah has maintained political support at district-level in some parts of South Sulawesi such as Bulukumba, and continues to operate in these districts.

Explaining immunity

FPI is also active outside Laskar Jundullah strongholds. In December 2010, FPI members disbursed a transgender beauty pageant in Makassar, proclaiming the event in violation of Shari'a. The group has also repeatedly raided parks to search for prostitutes, and has targeted street vendors and kiosks selling alcohol. As in many other provinces in Indonesia, FPI has also repeatedly attacked the local Ahmadiyah congregation, and demanded that the provincial government ban the group.

The attacks on Ahmadiyah spurred calls to ban FPI in South Sulawesi by local human rights groups and secular NGOs, along with research institutes and youth organisations affiliated with the mainstream Islamic groups. The provincial government has resisted these calls, claiming that they do not have the legal grounds to disband the group. In part, government inaction reflects FPI's elite backing. But this inaction also shows that conservative Muslims have become a significant political constituency in South Sulawesi, which political leaders are reluctant to alienate by taking firm action against FPI.

One sign of rising religious conservatism in South Sulawesi over the past decade is increasingly open displays of Islamic piety. It is no longer considered old-fashioned to wear Islamic dress,

FPI has emerged as South Sulawesi's leading Islamic paramilitary group

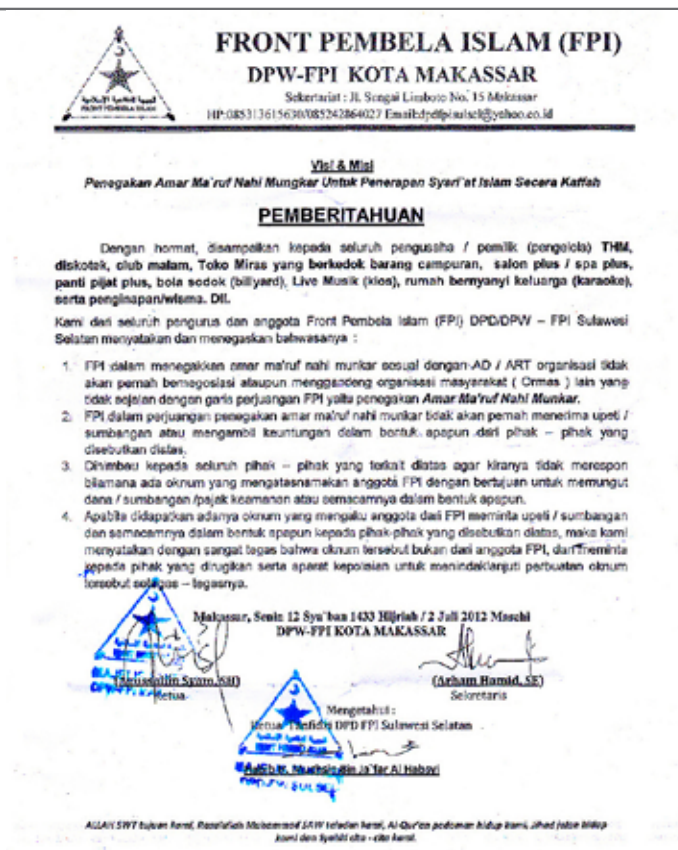
join a prayer group or send one's children to an Islamic school. Public piety is now in fact a sign of social status, amid efforts to make religion fun and trendy. These social changes are supported by Shari'a-inspired regional regulations, which promote an explicitly religious lifestyle. The relationship between the two is mutually reinforcing: the more popular such lifestyles become, the more incentive there is for politicians to enact Shari'a-inspired regulations to win votes and raise funds.

As conservatism has grown, Islamic politicians have also achieved new electoral success. One clear example is the electoral fortunes of Kahar Muzakkar's three sons. Aziz Kahar Muzakkar has twice won office as one of South Sulawesi's four representatives on the national Regional Representative Council (DPD), although he also unsuccessfully ran for governor in 2007.

His brother Buhari Kahar Muzakkar is a provincial parliamentarian for Islamic party PAN, while Andi Muzakkar is the district head in Luwu. At the same time, other political figures have started to return to KPPSI, seeking to gain popularity by pledging their support for the implementation of Shari'a laws or calling for the release of Laskar Jundullah head Agus Dwikarna.

As well as contributing to the impunity enjoyed by FPI, rising conservatism also helps the organisation to gain young, well-educated members. People often assume FPI's ranks are populated with thugs and criminals, but many members have good jobs at top companies and government departments. Joining groups like FPI can also be a way into politics for educated youths, when these organisations have elite backing or unofficial associations with political parties. FPI and its ilk are also attractive because they are visible advocates of issues that concern Muslims, and sometimes take direct action. These issues include support for Palestine, as well as domestic problems such as religious conflicts and moral degradation.

More broadly, university campuses have long been home to radical groups. Members of these student groups then joined mainstream radical organisations such as Laskar Jihad, which sent volunteers to Ambon and Poso during the violent conflicts there. Some students conducted sweepings to look for non-Muslim students at the height of these conflicts, or have carried out other violent acts, such as burning a Catholic church on Hasanuddin University campus in 2009.



Pic © Henky Widjaja

Support from mainstream groups

FPI's symbiotic relations with elites and the state's failure to curb religious violence have each contributed to the organisation's rise. But the ambiguous attitudes of mainstream Islamic groups have been another key factor. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah both objected when calls to ban FPI peaked earlier this year. One interpretation of this stance might be that these groups want to maintain their progressive credentials by supporting secular and tolerant movements, while also pleasing conservative and radical constituents. For Nahdlatul Ulama in particular, this represented a significant shift. NU had itself urged a ban after FPI wounded some of its members in their 2008 Monas attack. In NU strongholds in Java such as Jember and Banyumas, pressure from NU also forced FPI to dissolve its local chapters.

NU's change of heart suggests a new resonance of FPI's name as the 'Islamic Defenders' Front' for other Islamic organisations. When NU and Muhammadiyah objected to calls for a ban, each emphasised the role of FPI in 'embracing virtue and rejecting vice' (amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar), contrasting it to the slow response of state authorities to issues of concern to Muslims.

A senior member of NU's youth wing, Choirul Anam, urged the groups members not to lend their voice to calls for a ban, saying people must look at the root cause of FPI's actions – the lack of law enforcement in cases where social norms are flouted – rather than to simply blame the group. Along similar lines, senior Muhammadiyah figure Agus Trisundani observed that despite its shortcomings, FPI was needed to maintain the spirit of amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar among Indonesian Muslims.

Calls to ban FPI also spurred demands that the government ban secular and liberal groups, including the prominent Liberal Islamic Network (JIL). Even Hasyim Muzadi, a progressive figure and former NU chairperson, made comments of this sort.

While criticising FPI's violent acts, Muzadi deemed that efforts to ban FPI would be ineffective, and said that if FPI were banned, the government should also outlaw organisations that exploited issues such as humanity and democracy to promote foreign interests in Indonesia.



Pic © Henky Widjaja

Attack dog?

Last September, the anti-secrecy website Wikileaks published the leaked US diplomatic cables reporting that FPI had been sponsored by the Indonesian security forces to play the role of 'attack dog', making it possible for the military to intimidate various targets without incurring the criticism that direct action would have generated.

FPI might play the same role for other Islamic organisations. In South Sulawesi, it is part of the Forum Umat Islam (FUI), which also counts among its members Hizbut Tahrir, Nahdlatul Ulama, Wahda Islamiyah, PITI (The Association of Chinese Indonesian Muslims), and KPPSI. It operates in tandem with other groups in this forum in activities such as the protests against Ahmadiyah.

Mainstream groups, such as Muhammadiyah and NU, take no active part when FPI acts violently in South Sulawesi though. But nor do they raise their voices in condemnation. Their silence may well be a sign of approval, and reflect a symbiotic relationship whereby vigilante groups like FPI exert pressure on issues of mutual concern.

Viewed in this light, FPI and other similar groups in Indonesia are likely to continue to operate for as long as there is demand for their services. It is hard to imagine them disappearing any time soon given the growing conservatism in society, the ongoing failure of the state to address the problem religious violence and the ambiguous attitude of mainstream Islamic groups.

Israel's Dog Day Afternoons

Natalie Wood



"He can die for all I care,' snarled a kid involved in last weekend's anti-Arab lynching in Jerusalem. Even worse, the teenage thug had been incited by a girl.



Israel is a happy society. But it's become a tough job explaining why.

The dog days hang low with sullen menace and all the talk is of war.

Not 'if'.

'When'.

We have a surprise visit late one Friday afternoon. It's almost the Sabbath, but a friend has wandered our way, seeking comfort. Her soldier son, on weekend leave, has been recalled to base and as we sit on our balcony offering sympathy, sipping tea, the jets whine overhead, drowning our weak attempts at artificial chat in misery.

Flashes of hate erupt like bolts of lightning. Would a war cool us down? Concentrate the bad energy making us fight among ourselves?

Would it prevent:

- Women being arrested for wearing prayer shawls at the Western Wall?
- Men pelting rocks and abuse at little girls for so-called 'impropriety'?
- Jews attacking black immigrants?
- Desperate men burning themselves to death?
- The murderous antics of Jewish boys - and girls - lynching Arab kids in Jerusalem's Zion Square?

We didn't come to Israel for this or to read that the Prime Minister seeks rabbinical approval before he wages war. I expect our clergy to be men of peace. How naive am I!

Two years ago we left Manchester basking in good will. And when we landed here in Israel we grabbed the generous grants, the wise counsel, the practical help and the enthusiastic cries of 'welcome home' from people who at first were just kind and trusting strangers. They, too, became our friends.

Now we must accept the inevitable:

Other people's stories will become our own and for the black-hole-in-time it takes, we'll be part of one large family, sharing fear - maybe loss - and understanding at last, that when others had named us 'brave', they'd really called us 'fools'.

When had things been ever 'happy'?

On another Friday, in another world, I'd seen people on our street laughing, eating, joking.



The social demonstrations had just begun. Their tone was buoyant, good-tempered; the protests were well-managed. This was how right and left would meet, I mused.

At first, all looked good and I told to a friend after a 'demo' near home in early September last year:

"At least 95% of the population of Karmiel was there - including Arab residents - with the elderly, infirm and even infants carried in their fathers' arms. The jolly party atmosphere encouraged people to 'meet and greet'. Many carried flags. It seemed like fun.

"We joined a march in the suburbs, but not caring to wait for the Hebrew-language rally and speeches, we sauntered into town which was also crowded and where people were surprisingly animated; even happy.

"But the real shock came on our return a bare hour later. It was as if nothing had happened. There was little traffic (the police and their barriers had vanished); no mobs, no drunks - and no more litter than usual.

"I believe the secret is thus: Israel, despite its external foes and internal vicissitudes is a happy society, content with itself without being complacent. This is part of the continuing argument; the eternal, loudly declaimed debate. This is why there was - is - so much angst about issues like women's rights; the exchange of one IDF man for more than 1,000 terror-mongers; the execution of a single Nazi.

"Israel is happy because it has a conscience. This is our choice; our 'chosen-ness'. We may not be anywhere near to that precious ideal of being a Kingdom of Priests but so long as we keep fighting to reach it, we will survive."

But matters became worse. Attitudes hardened.

As we crawled out of Rosh Pina late on another - now joyless - Saturday night, I felt briefly threatened by a man in a placard-waving crowd. His 'gimme money' gesture against our car window unnerved me and rattled yet more loudly when we learned - almost 12 months later - how Moshe Silman and Akiva Mafi had killed themselves.

Profoundly 'un-Jewish' gestures? Universal cries for help?

"He can die for all I care," snarled a kid involved in last weekend's anti-Arab lynching in Jerusalem. Even worse, the teenage thug had been incited by a girl.

This is not just playground intimidation. This could be used to start another war - one much nearer to Israel than Iran.

Whatever our choice, its is our conscience which will cool us down.



From Jerusalem to Maple Lake – My Experience at Camp George

Shalom Chaverim, hello friends

The Union of Reform Judaism's Camp George in Canada doesn't pay a water bill. This is my 4th summer as faculty at Camp George, and I can't get used to the absence of a water bill. The water bill is one of the biggest expenses in our movement's summer camp in Israel (Havaya), but Camp George simply pumps all the water it needs directly from nearby Maple Lake.

I came to Camp George for a week to teach kids "Trouble making 101 – social action in Israel, from the back of the bus to the top of the agenda," a unique curriculum for a unique summer camp. At URJ Camp George, I am part of an energetic faculty of educators, rabbis and activists who volunteer at the 13 URJ camps.

As a team, we work with Rabbi Noam Katz, Camp George's "Dean of Jewish Living", and engage campers in Judaism, activism, and Israel. It's a challenge to teach youngsters about Israel. Some of them feel mixed emotions about the Jewish state – fear, pride, sadness, and curiosity all meshed into one. Some youth are apathetic, uninspired, and bored. My aim is to wake them up to the diversity and the great potential that engaging in Israel possesses.

I want them to be turned on to the many ways in which Diaspora Jews can, and should, get involved in steering Israel in the direction envisioned by our ancient and modern-day prophets. But how much truth about Israel can these kids take? It seems that part of what they are taught to believe is fable and legend, setting the stage for future disillusionment.

One such example is the building up of Israelis as "Super Jews," Hebrew-speaking military heroes like Ari Ben Canaan (Paul Newman in "Exodus"). I struggle with the "Super Jew" notion, and even if historical examples of these people exist, their actions do not tell the complete story of how modern Israel developed.

Many secular Israelis speak Hebrew, but they are quite ignorant of Judaism. Military service is but one of the many ways one can be a Jewish hero. In reality, 50% of Israeli youth do not serve in the army, and just because they did not wear a uniform does not mean they cannot be heroic or make a positive contribution to the state.

In fact, I would argue that many Israelis who do what is called National Service do as much or more than the Israelis who don the uniform. These "other" Israeli soldiers serve in hospitals, old age homes, work in education and outreach, and a variety of other social service organizations.

Is it possible that the glorification of the Israeli military is a result of a lack of knowledge and lack of identification with Judaism in Israel?



**They tell me, “Give them the truth about Israel when they are older and more connected to Israel and able to digest this.”
I am not sure that we can wait with introducing our youth to the real Israel.**

So there I was with Canadian Camp George campers, trying to make a case for Rabbi Miri Gold as a Jewish hero (the first Reform Rabbi recognized by the state, and a female no less!) or for Women of the Wall as modern heroes. These men and women devote their lives to promoting equality, diversity, tolerance, pluralism, and values we share as liberal Jews around the world.

To illustrate my point, I needed to break some bad news to those campers. To explain how we stopped segregation of Israeli women on buses, I must disclose that such a phenomenon exists. To explain the great victory of Rabbi Miri Gold, I need to tell them that the Reform Movement’s Hebrew Union College and the Conservative Movement’s Jewish Theological Seminary are not recognized in Israel as institutions of Jewish learning. This is often shocking for young Jews who have been told their whole lives that Israel stands as the physical and spiritual home for all Jews. Not all Jews are equal in the eyes of the Israeli state.

When I give talks like this, I first run into resistance from the Israeli staff at camp. These young Israelis, selected by the Jewish agency to work in a summer camp in the Diaspora, feel that the kids will be “turned off” before they get a chance to be turned on to Israel. They tell me, “Give them the truth about Israel when they are older and more connected to Israel and able to digest this.” I am not sure that we can wait with introducing our youth to the real Israel. Information is available to them in multiple ways. They can access it faster and better than any generation before them. Is it possible to expose kids to the fact that Israel is a “start-up nation” in Herzliya and Kfar Vradim, without revealing that it has a racist as the Chief Rabbi in Safed and a chauvinist as the Rabbi of the Western Wall?

Israel challenges us to be intelligent, to tolerate ambiguity, to walk and chew gum at the same time. When I list to the campers at URJ Camp George the remarkable achievements of the Israel Religious Action Center this past year, they witness first-hand that Israel is a thriving modern democracy. The very fact that we were able to stop the conversion law by lobbying the Knesset with representatives of all Diaspora Jews proves that Israel has a democratic parliament and that votes count.

When I describe to our youth that the Supreme Court receives our petitions against state policy and many times rules in our favor, this means that the Israeli legal system is one of the shining stars among our often dysfunctional public institutions. I tell them that Israeli Arabs save Jewish lives every day as EMTs. They are also firemen, judges, physicians and nurses. Jews save Arab lives every day too. Israeli society includes over one million Muslims. They are not the enemy, but rather full citizens of our state. This is also proof that Israel is a democracy of which we can be proud.

Finally, I describe my own life as a civil activist and as executive director of the legal and political arm of our movement in Israel. We are the only religious movement in Israel with an elaborate civil rights arm involved in much more than its own immediate needs.

Is it possible to expose kids to the fact that Israel is a “start-up nation” in Herzliya and Kfar Vradim, without revealing that it has a racist as the Chief Rabbi in Safed and a chauvinist as the Rabbi of the Western Wall?

We fight on behalf of gays and lesbians, immigrants from all nations, and people of different minority groups and religious affiliations.

When my week at URJ Camp George came to a close, I could not help but think about the infinite differences between Israel and Canada, but also their many similarities. While our Jewish community up at Maple Lake does not pay a water bill and does not speak Hebrew, they are forever intertwined and connected to Israel because they are a Jewish camp. As a faculty member and activist, I know that the lessons that I have taught our youth have been absorbed as they wrestle with issues of Israel.

It has never been harder to support Israel from abroad and it has never been easier for diaspora Jews to simply disengage with Israel while not sacrificing their “Jewishness.” I think that the only way to keep the next generation supportive of Israel is to present the whole story from the beginning, cracks and all, while at the same time giving youth the tools to advocate for their values. I say this because in my experience it works. After all, real love is what remains after you know the truth.

*B'Shalom,
Anat*





Infantaria

"Fernandes!" It works. Call out for Fernandes in any restaurant or a bar in Goa, you got to find one.

I had been sitting in a stupid corner table by a stupid well, propped up with a stupid bucket. An Old Portuguese house converted into a Resto-bar. I dread stepping in bars, with no bar counters, no bar stools. You got no choice but to sit on a table of four or worse on a table of two but I needed a drink badly.

"Fernandes"

"Was I loud?"

Puny nose, squeaky eyes, lips like two thin blades, mean-chop-chop monster frowning at me "bitch". Fernandes was standing in front of me. "Large rum and a pint." I looked at that bitch "Hey, Fernandes." He turned back. "Get me a repeat, I hate to wait"

Two on table no 6. I could hear her squirrel, her black halter, back facing me, curvy neck, a few strands of her hair waving me a hello but guy next to her was smothering his belly. Severe case of ulcer. Table no 5. Nice smile, gentle eyes, white teeth, perfect paused on me but then I had to let her go. She was cute. I had to.

Outside on the bench a couple, hooked on a joint. They seemed alright and then, she walked in and I liked her, very much. Strawberries chimed her fluttering feathers, streaks of red splashed on my cheeks, a blush. She was alone, I was alone. She pulled out a book from her bag, lit a cigarette and sunk in. The author had her.

"Fernandes, repeat, double it". But I couldn't take my eyes of her. I didn't want to. Her light brown hair was tied back but the tail was resting on her shoulder, almost touching her breast. Her loose white shirt, top two buttons untied and I could see her flawless skin breathing gently as she slid the pages of the book.

She asked for her check and I called for that steward. That's when she noticed me, the first time, I guess but that's when our eyes met for the first time. This time I didn't bother about Fernandes. "Get me my check before hers".

I was ready with my wallet in my hands. I had calculated the amount in my head and checked in my wallet to make it quick and I made it damn well quick. I walked out of the place and stood outside the entrance. I pulled out a cigarette and waited. I knew it was her.

"You got a light on you?"

She smiled and pulled out the book of matches from her bag. "You got one to spare?" She asked.

I could feel her warm breath on my fingers when I had my hands close to her face, with a lit match. I didn't want to take my hands off but she had managed to light her stick.

"Care for a walk on the beach?"

She said "Let's go to the end of Baga Beach, its quieter there"

Yes, I am the troubled, miserable heart, savor me, and pull me out of my dark hole. Rescue me.

She ignited her rented bike and I hopped on the back seat. My heart was pounding, pleading me to hold her and I did while she drove on the empty street. I held her waist with my unsteady hands and she didn't mind it. We were walking towards the beach, our hands rubbing, my knuckles knocking against hers. I slid my palm insider hers and held her hand softly. She didn't pull her hand away. We had reached the thin river stream flowing into the sea by the hills.

"Angela"

"Hi, Arjun, you on a vacation?"

"Yeah" She paused for a while "I thought I will find my answers on this trip"

"Did you?"

"I think I am left more confused, and it's getting only tougher for me"

Blood gushed in my head like a storm and it threw me in her arms and I kissed her.

Sand sucked us in her hollow. Tequila waves high on full moon hid behind the sly clouds. Her shut pressed eyes and a lonesome jived with strings of his guitar not so far away but my bladder was full and I badly wanted to take a piss. Our tongues were snaking wild, our mouths pressed against each other and I had the most beautiful woman in my arms and I had forgiven every bitch but my bladder...

"Can you give me a minute?"

"Sure "she said

I got up, looked around to find some place to walk behind and empty but where could I on that beach. I walked as far as I could and unzipped. I knew she was watching me. I walked back alight, making plans in my head to take her to my room or hers, I didn't care.

She was waiting for me, her bag on her shoulder, she was upright. I walked to her, she didn't look the same. Something had changed. She took a step, pecked on my cheek and then she left. I chased her but she waved me off. Just a while before she had me and I had her. The moonlit sea and our kisses and the quicksand.

My phone rang. "Our microwave is a mess, just doesn't heat up". "Yeah? Baby, buy a big one, a very big one"



Elephant Aid International. Working to improve elephant welfare.

Elephant Aid International (EAI) provides education and hands-on assistance to improve the lives of captive held elephants worldwide.

EAI projects include elephant foot care, mahout and elephant training and the creation of elephant care centers and retirement homes.

Our work is based on respect for elephants and the culture and traditions of the countries in which we work, appreciation for the men and women who live and work with elephants and the knowledge that small changes can make a huge difference.

EAI projects engage mahouts, local NGOs, tourist facilities, elephant welfare groups, researchers and government officials in joint efforts to:

- Improve living conditions for elephants in captivity.
- Offer alternatives to the use of chains to control and contain elephants.
- Eliminate abusive training by teaching mahouts humane methods of care.
- Facilitate the establishment of lifetime care centers (sanctuaries) across Asia.

In spite of a long history of coexistence, elephants and humans in Asia are now competing for limited land and food resources. How governments deal with the problem will determine whether elephants have a place in this rapidly developing world and what that place will be.

We cannot wait to see who will fix the pressing problems facing captive and wild elephants. EAI believes we must all be part of the solution - *one world, one elephant at a time. Please join us.*



A Carol Buckley Project

ELEPHANT AID INTERNATIONAL
One World. One Elephant at a Time



Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

For more information visit www.amazonwatch.org

Live encounters

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