

Sikh and Muslim Media Monitoring and Response Project

FAITH MATTERS
www.faith-matters.org

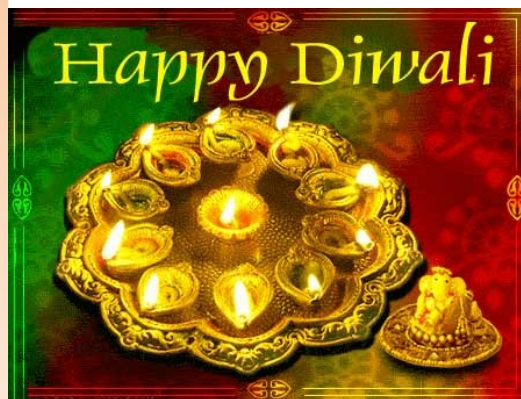
Welcome to the fourth edition of the SMMR Newsletter!

Dear readers welcome to the fourth edition of the SMMR newsletter covering October-December 2011.

This has been a busy period for all of us as we have held a Sikh Muslim Group meeting in Ealing at the end of October. We have attended a Volunteer Awards Ceremony in Ealing during early November. Another major success we have had was in organising an inter-faith event marking Inter-faith Week 20th—26th November.

Happy Diwali!

Faith Matters would like to wish all of its Sikh and Hindu supporters a very happy and joyful Diwali!



Diwali was celebrated by people across the globe on Wednesday 26th October 2011.

The word Diwali means 'rows of lighted lamps' and Diwali is known as the festival of lights.

The festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

Eid Mubarak!

Faith Matters would like to wish all of its Muslim supporters a very happy and blessed Eid!

Muslims across the world celebrated Eid-ul-Adha on Sunday 6th November 2011.

Eid-ul-Adha ('Festival of Sacrifice'), also known as the Greater Eid, is the second most important festival in the Muslim calendar.

The festival remembers the prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son when God ordered him to.



Sikh and Muslim relations By Hari Malhi



Many liberal theologians and knowledgeable students of comparative religion would agree that whilst Sikhism and Islam differ on a few foundational beliefs, both these religions are completely dedicated towards one fundamental aim, which is to help people perform good, honest deeds throughout life. This includes showing respect for people of other faiths. Muhammad (PBUH) and the ten Sikh Gurus recurrently emphasised the importance of human improvement; this incorporated, as Muhammad (PBUH) has stated, showing love and deference for people of the book. Disappointingly, these beliefs are being lost on some of today's Sikhs and Muslims.

In the past, I have spoken with groups of people who express an utter hatred for either Islam or Sikhism. Interestingly, the vast majority of people who harbour feelings of hatred towards Muslims are usually the ones who have either had bad friendships with some of them, or have stereotyped

Islam after hearing some negative race related stories regarding Muslims. For instance, there have been many times throughout my life where I have tried to question some Sikh people as to why they detest Muslims with such a passion. Unsurprisingly, over 80% of them have not read the Koran let alone read it in any depth, and have subsequently based their views on negative hearsay or experiences they claim to have "heard about." Similarly, some Muslims are equally ignorant of Sikhism's teachings or often become infatuated with fervidly opposing non-Islamic beliefs.

During my childhood, I was encouraged to only read about Sikhism and was told by most of my Punjabi and Hindu friends to stay away from Islamic beliefs. It is only after reading more about Sikhism that I became encouraged to deepen my understanding of all faiths and cultures because this, according to the Guru Granth Sahib, is a great way of building positive interfaith relations with people from all backgrounds. Religions and many spiritually orientated texts have many pearls of wisdom and beauty in them that can help people to live more fulfilled lives.

I recently read a book centred on Buddhist beliefs and opened my mind to the benefits of meditating and practising its different techniques. After a few days of following these exercises, I felt more buoyant and active throughout the day. As suggested by many religious monks, regular meditating techniques remove most of the negative thoughts in our subconscious. Similarly, peace loving Sikhs and Muslims who practice regular prayer and live healthy lifestyles maintain a far more positive outlook on life and construct workable solutions to interfaith problems. In contrast, the groups of Sikhs and Muslims who remain at arms with each other are constantly developing negative psychological thoughts. Since these people cannot distinguish from right and wrong, their subconscious chooses to believe the most dominant thought pattern. Unless these misguided individuals learn about their religion in depth and feed more positive messages to their subconscious, they will become prisoner to their negative thoughts.

Sikhism and Islam would find broader support in contemporary society if it wasn't for religious extremists and all the interfaith disputes around the world. The God of the Koran and Guru Granth Sahib are the same; people can only become emotionally involved in their worship to him if they control their feelings of anger and hatred, and learn to coexist in harmony. When people are relentlessly fighting over faith issues, they are doing a disservice to God and jeopardising their relationship with him. The Sikhs and Muslims who quarrel and fight amongst one another are too blind to understand what their scriptures are trying to tell them. This point is specifically mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib: "he [God] cannot be understood by reading scriptures; the deceitful pretenders are deluded by doubt." Through the guru's teachings, the lord is always found, and the tongue is permeated with the sublime essence of the lord." As this verse advocates, an individual can only become God conscious and if they learn to meditate and appreciate the uplifting quintessence of the Lord. The 'deceitful pretenders' are those religious hypocrites and troublemakers who claim to follow faith, yet contradict its teachings by carrying out sinful acts, such as sparking hostile intercultural tensions. They are distinctively called deceitful pretenders because by contradicting their core belief system, they are more or less living a lie.

Our Volunteers Receive Awards at CSV Ceremony in Ealing

Two members from the Sikh/Muslim project received Exceptional Achievement Award certificates at the Ealing Volunteer Awards Ceremony on Friday 4 November 2011. The ceremony was organised in order to mark CSV Make A Difference Day.

The ceremony took place at the Ramada Ealing London Hotel and certificates were presented to the nominees by the Mayor of Ealing Cllr John Gallagher .

Ravinder Kaur Dhesi (pictured below right), Hari Malhi (pictured below left) and Shah Shahin had been nominated by Faith Matters for their hard work and dedication towards the Sikh and Muslim cohesion project. They have all come together to share their experiences and work towards making a difference in their communities.



On the day Ravinder and Hari were joined by The Sikh/Muslim Project Manager Hasina who collected the award certificate on behalf of Shah. The event proved to be a great day out for all and Ravinder also scooped a prize at the raffle draw that attendees had entered at the ceremony.

Well done to our volunteers!

Faith Matters holds Sharing Stories event to mark Inter-faith Week 2011



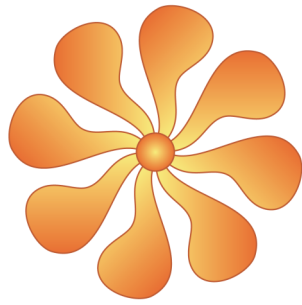
In collaboration with Westminster University, Faith Matters held an event on Thursday 24th November entitled; Sharing Stories, in celebration of International Interfaith Week 2011. The event, which discussed the importance of religious articles, brought together speakers from a diverse range of backgrounds who explained what role objects and symbols played in their various faiths.

Professor Harbhajan Singh opened the evening with an engaging and exciting talk on the various articles that exist in the Sikh faith. He explained the history of the turban and Chooda and why these play such a vital role in the Sikh community.

Other speakers from different faiths included; Barend Velleman (Jewish), Kamalaksha Das (Hindu), Reverend Rana Khan (Christian) .

The event was closed by Shah Shahin from the Muslim College, who spoke about the Hijab and what role this has played for Muslim women in history and today.

The event was incredibly interesting and allowed for much debate and discussion. It also allowed for a meeting of a diverse range of faiths who were able to compare and contrast their various traditions and practises. Faith Matters wants to thank everyone who attended in celebration of Interfaith Week 2011 and for your support.



FAITH MATTERS

“Capable of opening paths to understanding and so to tolerance”

Faith Matters is a not for profit organisation founded in 2005 which works to reduce extremism and interfaith and intra-faith tensions and we develop platforms for discourse and interaction between Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish and Hindu communities across the globe. We have offices in the United Kingdom, Pakistan and the Middle East (Jerusalem).

Below are just some of the projects which our dedicated team are currently involved in:

Community Cohesion

Community Cohesion is integral to Faith Matters. Community Cohesion is what we do well and Community Cohesion is what drives us. We have worked on various Community Cohesion projects: such as “Our Shared Faiths Our Shared Futures,” which brings together theologians from the Abrahamic faiths “Christianity, Islamic and Jewish” monotheism faiths. As well as our Resisting Through Resilience Project, which aims at providing a platform for young Muslims to discuss.

Building divides between Muslim and Sikh Communities

Faith Matters explored local areas of tensions among young Male Sikh and Muslim men which threatened to create local and national hotspots of tension. The project culminated in the Cohesive Community report to be used by communities as a resource to develop cohesion and to look at divergent dialogues.

One Community Many Voices

Faith Matters has developed an online blog which provides a space for people to post their thoughts, articles, opinion pieces and photographs on faith related themes as well as relevant current affairs. It’s a space to express yourself! So if you want to post something then email through to hasina@faith-matters.co.uk

People can access the blog using the link below:

One Community Many Voices <http://onecommunitymanyvoices.blogspot.com/>