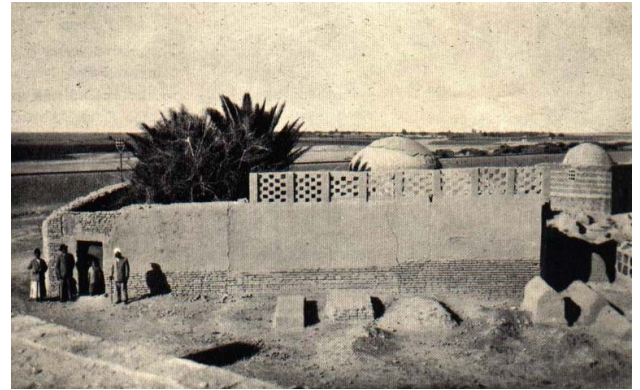


Sikh and Muslim Media Monitoring and Response Project

FAITH MATTERS
www.faith-matters.org

Sikhs gain access to Historic Baghdad Gurdwara

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry has agreed to give the Sikh community access to the 15th century Gurdwara in Baghdad. Guru Nanak Dev Ji spent significant time travelling in the region, and he stopped in Baghdad on his way back from his visit to Mecca and Medina. The Gurdwara itself was discovered when the British entered Baghdad during the Great War.



The Gurdwara suffered considerable damage in 2003 as a result of the War on Terror in Iraq. Now that they have access, the Akal Takht will now be sending a delegation to the Gurdwara to assess the damage, and establish what work needs to be done to reconstruct the Gurdwara.

We at Faith Matters are thrilled to see the Iraqi Government cooperating with the Sikh Community to allow them to restore this historic site.

“Terrorism has no Religion”

Faith, prayer and peace are often the terms that we associate with religion. In fact, these are what are known to *define* the Holy Scriptures of many religions worldwide. Religion was core to the beliefs held and implemented by the likes of Gandhi and Mother Teresa. These beliefs are core to the basis of much of today's structures which underlie society's norms of right and wrong. How have we come to *associate* religion to the brutality of terrorism?

The team at Faith Matters would like to wish everyone a blessed and joyous Ramadan.

The Koran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during this month. Every Muslim should try to read the entire Koran at least once during the Ramadan period.

Eid Mubarak!



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“ People are strange when you’ re a stranger ”

Westminster Interfaith held their 26th Annual Interfaith Pilgrimage in Southall this June. Here is a first pilgrims impressions of the day...

This is the opening line and title of a song by one of my favourite bands, The Doors. Nowhere is this truer when we cross the religious divide. People of different faiths are a bit scary especially when they are from a different ethnic group and we do not understand their tradition or heritage. What are they about, what they do and practice? It was with the aim of breaking down these unknowns that Brother Daniel Faivre in 1986. This year’s walk took place in the “Holy City” of Southall, organised by the Rev Jon Dal Din a Catholic Deacon.

My wife Julia and I heard about these walks at Wondersh where I am taking part in the Diaconate Formation Programme. We really had no idea what to expect apart from the fact that we would be walking with others and calling in at various places of worship from different religions and traditions. So it was with some trepidation that we went across London from Bromley to Southall by train. We met a fellow pilgrim from Guildford as we walked to Holy Trinity Church (C of E) for the official 09:30 start; although for us this chance meeting was the real start to the day.

It was a varied group of some 250 people that assembled of all ages, colours and creeds. After a brief prayer service we left on a short walk to a Hindu Temple. We were warmly welcomed and given a high level overview of the Hindu faith and the significance of the different statues. I was impressed by the constant trickle of people entering the Temple to pray. We were offered refreshment and then made the short walk to Southall Park where the Southall Sai Centre had organised an Interfaith Day. As we walked into the park we were greeted with applause and were led to the front of the gathered crowd – something I had not been expecting.

There was a stage and religious leaders from different faiths led us in prayer and singing. The message from them all was there is one mankind; one should love all and we should hate nobody. Singing and dancing by different religious groups followed this. In the park were tents with displays and explanations of various faiths. A Sikh group based in Birmingham provided a free lunch, which was gratefully received by all.

After lunch we left the festival and continued our walk to visit other places of worship. At each place of worship we were warmly welcomed and given a brief overview of the faith with a chance to ask questions. For me the highlight was the visit to the Buddhist Temple; but then my daughter-in-law is a Thai Buddhist and so perhaps I can be accused of bias. Buddhism is an interesting faith/belief system. Is it a religion or a philosophy was one question that was asked; there is more than one PH.D thesis in the answer to that question. It is mainly in the West that we are intent on putting people and faiths into boxes.

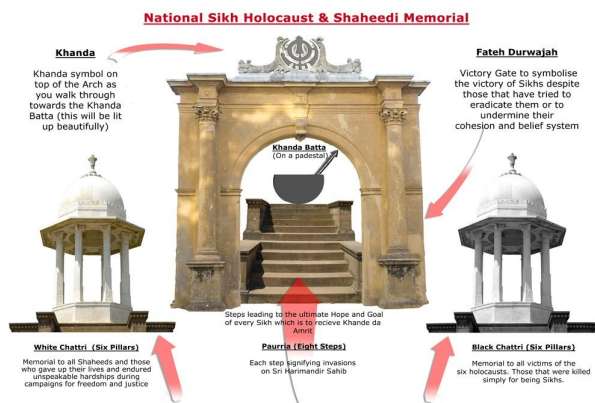
All in all it was a great day and I have come away with a kaleidoscope of memories and a slightly better understanding of other people and other faiths. Perhaps the best part of the day was that it gave me the chance to meet and talk to others of different faiths and cultures, something I do all too rarely. People will not be quite so strange anymore.

Derby gives go ahead for Sikh War Memorial

The plans to build a Sikh war memorial have been approved in Derby. The National Sikh Holocaust and Shaheedi Memorial has been granted planning permission by Derby City Council.

The memorial is set to be a 25ft (7.62m) stone structure. Sikhs from across the World have donated to fund the £125,000 project that will highlight the huge contribution of Sikhs to the UK – 83,000 Sikhs died in the world wars and a further 109,000 were injured.

The memorial is the first of its kind anywhere, and it will no doubt attract attention from the international Sikh community. Construction will begin at a site next to the National Sikh Heritage Centre on Princes Street later this spring and should be complete early next year.



Around 1.5 million Sikhs fought in the old Sikh regiment of the British Army in the Second World War and some 90,000 lost their lives.



“Terrorism has no religion”

Continued from Page 1

If we think back to the tribulations of September 11th, the Madrid bombings and 7th July attacks, we can see how a growing majority of the nation have made the hapless link between religion and terrorism, a thought process which has heightened up to the present day. This unfortunate link has resulted largely because of the fact that the majority of the attackers were Muslim, and now, as a consequence, many hold the *mistaken* belief that terrorism is at the heart of Islam.

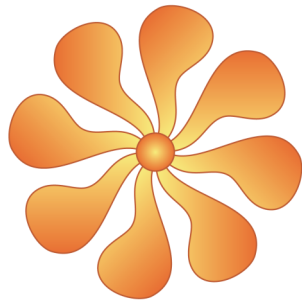
Clearly, as human beings, we are enraged towards those who harm innocents-especially in the country in which one lives. What’s more complicated is, if we begin to associate the religion of those people with the acts they carry out, this can incite racial hatred that further makes it acceptable to single out a particular group of people as a result of the acts carried out by only a minority.

Many of the attacks carried out by terrorists are largely due to political gain as opposed to direct religious beliefs: We know the likes of Hitler and the KKK are no example of good Christians; nor are the Tamil Tigers a complete representation of how the Hindu community are. In the same way the Taliban and Al Qaeda are no reflection of the entire Muslim community.

Yes there are those who will use religion as a reason or in fact an excuse as to why they committed such an act, but their implications have no place in the scriptures they claim to follow. We need to, as respected members of a multicultural and multi faith society, realise that terrorism has NO religion, and has no acceptance IN religion. They are in fact complete opposites.

Of course you shouldn’t have to be religious or in fact believe in any religion at all to realise this, what seems to be the case is lack of knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs. We are now living in such diverse communities, that different religions are spread across the globe; from Hinduism and Sikhism, to Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and many more.

It is far better to have an understanding of people’s religious values and beliefs, through conversing with ordinary everyday people who will tell you the true meaning of how their religion teaches peace, love and equality, rather than basing an opinion solely on the political stance of a particular newspaper or channel.



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 Europe Many Voices

Faith Matters hosted a bilateral youth exchange in London. The exchange included 20 British and Italian young people who were between 18-25 years old of age. The aim of this exchange was to allow young people to explore their European identity in relation to their religious and cultural identities. By undertaking various workshops and activities, the young people looked in depth at what cultural diversity means to them and how it can be of strength and how this can be integrated into the values of being a Young European citizen.

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