

# SACRE NEWS



Issue 26

## FROM THE CHAIR...



I wonder how many of us have been involved recently in interfaith activities as part of the first national interfaith week? In a flurried few weeks at the start of the summer, members of the NASACRE Executive worked together and in partnership with the

National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE), the Interfaith Network UK and 3 Faiths Forum to produce support materials to help SACREs and schools to celebrate this week. Our thanks go especially to our Vice-Chair, Bruce, who had the unenviable task of pulling all this together! He did a wonderful job and we trust that many of you were able to access these and use them either directly, or (more likely) as a springboard to your own ideas. We recognised that a week is good to focus people's minds, but not enough to do justice to the importance of interfaith work, and so some of the suggestions can and should be carried on throughout the year. So – if you have not yet had the chance to get involved, please look to the longer term and see if there is something you can now start to develop locally! Let us hope that this will be the first of many such national weeks.

inter faith  
week

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The range of activities set up, involving local interfaith groups as well as schools, has been impressive. People from all ages and backgrounds have been involved in gatherings large and small to share their own stories and listen to other people's in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. Music, dance, sharing food, speaking, using art – all these have been used to bring people together and the 'outcomes', as we are encouraged to say, may prove to be immense.

Certainly the intended outcomes and the fundamental purposes of the week are ambitious and important:

- to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels

- to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief

(The latter is particularly significant, I feel, in that it is inclusive of all beliefs – of listening to all stories and not just some.)

However, I wonder if the world works in this way. Maybe the overall aims will be realised – and we would certainly hope so – but if so, will it be in the formalities that this is achieved?

It brings to mind an experience I had early in my teaching career. I was at an all boys, all white school outside Reading and I took a group of about 20 students in Y11, of all abilities, to observe puja in a community centre in Reading. The visit was late morning and so all the worshipers were retired and therefore quite elderly! An atmosphere of formality and difference was quickly and naturally established. We 'looked on' as the worshipers observed the rituals and towards the end, I was invited to perform Arti. Knowing, as an RE Teacher, that this was symbolic of the fire god Agni carrying my prayers to the Deity, I was able to interpret this in the context of my experience and accepted the invitation. I cannot remember what I prayed for, but I did feel the weight and formality of the occasion....

After all was 'done' and we had shared prasad (which, of course, I explained to my



students, as any good teacher would), we were invited to share in food at the end. This may well have been the first time some of these students had tasted Indian food. I was eating and talking

and finding out that actually I had rushed through the Arti (far from the formal and dignified expression that I had intended to impress on my students) and that they had been worried that I was going to set light to the whole place! We were very much divided – the young white students and the elderly Asians, and I was feeling dismally aware of how inadequate I was in bringing the people together. Then one bubbly Hindu man came up to us with a glint in his eye.



*"I see you are eating with your left hand"* he said with a knowing smile. My heart sank. *"Ah, yes, er..."* I spluttered, wondering how I was going to make up for this faux-pas. *"We do not eat with our left hand – we eat with our right hand"* he continued, smiling, indeed almost giggling by now. *"Ah, yes, I know – sorry"* I said, and I was about to turn to my students and formally explain to them about purity and custom and ritual and..... *"No, we do not eat with our left hand"* continued the man, now positively laughing (which at least made me feel a bit less embarrassed) *"No, we use our left hand for..."* and then he turned round and very graphically demonstrated what the left hand was used for! The students gawped and then burst out laughing, as did everyone in the room. The atmosphere lifted, the smiles and laughter and sharing of stories opened up and strong, if brief, bridges were built between people who were separated by age, faith and culture. As we said our good-byes and thanks some 20 minutes later, there was a real warmth in the handshakes and namastes that were exchanged. In the mini bus on the

way back to school the conversation was animated. *"They were brilliant!" "Sir was a bit naff at the Arti"* (said with good humour and accurate use of terminology), *"I will never look at my left hand the same"* said one lad.

This was in the days before 'Learning Intentions', a three part lesson, PLTS.....

What had I intended for their learning? How had I planned for this and what had I done to structure it? Well, I had prepared, I had researched and explained and participated. What DID they learn? They did learn a lot about Hindu worship. But more than this – they learnt about shared humanness and that despite all our differences, humour and humanity shine through when we allow it to. Formal interfaith work is important, but it is in the smiles, the laughter, the mistakes, the forgiveness, the warmth, that true learning and real harmony thrive.

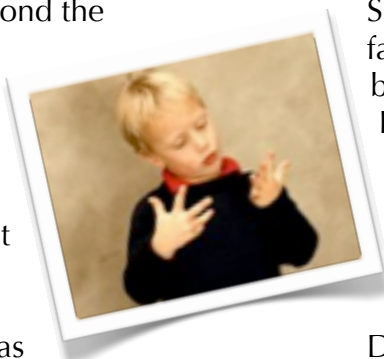


Speaking of learning and harmony, some of us attended a very useful conference run by

**AREIAC** (the Association

of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants) in mid November. It was a stimulating experience and challenged everyone to reflect on the role of the local dimension in relation to quality RE. Clearly this is important for SACREs to consider, both in developing new Agreed Syllabuses that promote good learning, and in terms of how to work together to support visits and visitors for schools so that local faith is well represented in and beyond the classroom. You can read the report of this meeting later in the newsletter.

We have just heard that the new and long-awaited Primary National Curriculum has



been published. It is important to be very clear about this. The National Curriculum is **only part of the statutory Primary Curriculum**, and it does not include RE because RE is locally, and not nationally determined. It is disappointing that the Government chose not to publish the RE Programmes of Study alongside the National Curriculum, nor to publish the new Guidance at the same time and NASACRE, along with other national RE groups, wrote separately to the Secretary of State expressing this. Of deeper concern was the wording of the publicity announcement, in which it was not made clear that RE is a statutory part of the curriculum that is locally determined through the Agreed Syllabus. I have made sure that NASACRE's views on this are clear to the DCSF! Please use all of your influence locally to ensure that Directors of Services, School Improvement Partners, Headteachers and Governors are fully aware of the true status of RE. Equally importantly, we all have to work together to ensure that the RE in our schools is of a good quality: we cannot expect RE to have a high priority on legal status alone!!

The new RE Guidance and the non-statutory programmes of study for RE will be published in the new year. Members of NASACRE Executive were involved in the development of these documents and they are of a high quality. So...please look out for them and use them to help in the promotion of good quality statutory, local RE, and draw them to other people's attention!

Speaking of members of the Executive, it is fair to say we have been busy on your behalf. A lot of partnership work with the Inter Faith Network has resulted in a conference and report that will be published shortly, which has explored current good practice and potential developments for SACREs and local faith groups to work together on youth issues. Denise Chaplin and Michael Metcalf in particular have liaised closely with Dr

Harriet Crabtree on this and Denise has led the writing of the SACRE part of the report. We have met, collectively and as officers, to arrange the AGM, discuss business and finances, respond to letters, issues and questions and to provide training and support for SACREs across the country. Denise, Julie and I report quarterly to the DCSF on the RE Action Plan, and especially on the Recruitment and Training part of it, which seems to be taking as much of Julie's time as her full time job used to! We represent the interests of SACREs to the RE Council and the Government, as well as with other agencies and groups. I am blessed with an executive which works tirelessly for the good of SACREs and RE, and when I am unable to go to a meeting to represent your interests, there are always people who will step in.



In relation to this, I am particularly grateful to Denise, Michael and Bruce, who have stood in for me so often: without this team approach, there is no way that we would be able to represent your interests so effectively.

As I am sure many of you are aware, 2011 will be designated as a celebratory year for RE. Denise will chair the task group for this and it is encouraging that her commitment to and passion for the work of SACREs

will form a leading role in the development of this initiative. I will keep you up-dated as events progress and I anticipate that NASACRE will support this initiative in every way it can.

It only remains for me to wish you all the very best for the weeks ahead.

*Bill*

## The RE self-evaluation form

A late addition to the RE Action Plan with the REC and the DCSF, was to develop an amended version of the Subject SEF. The original had been intended for the purpose of supporting subject leaders in the evaluation and development of RE in their school. What was proposed this time was to amend the SEF so that, in addition to doing that, SACREs would also be able to use it as part of their monitoring function. In addition, this would mean that schools would be able to compare their provision with schools locally and nationally.



This expanded remit means that we are having to meet a wider range of need and it is proving to be a lot more complex than had originally been thought. Deborah Weston has developed a workable pilot version and we will trial this and develop it further between now and the summer. It is intended to have this ready for September so that schools, SACREs LAs and the RE communities can work together to improve the experience of pupils and support the work of teachers.



The intention is that this will be placed on-line through REOnline, linking to NATRE and NASACRE websites, so that data can be drawn together safely and anonymously, but allowing for local and national trends and issues to be identified. We hope that all with an interest in improving RE will actively support this initiative. I would particularly like to thank Deborah for her hard work and patience in this!

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## **The AREIAC conference on Agreed Syllabus development - the local dimension**

Having looked last year at two Agreed Syllabuses, and the way in which learning can be planned, the theme of the AREIAC Conference Agreed Syllabus development was the role of the locality in RE and Syllabuses.

We had an interesting introductory input from an absent Mark Chater from QCDA, through a very present and capable Mary Myatt!

The key message is that the New Curriculum can be a friend to RE – concepts, Personal Development, Importance Statements.... all help to structure what is already good in much RE and learning in general. It is vital that locally Agreed Syllabuses find the right balance between fighting our own corner (isolationism) and absorption into mish-mash of loose topics with no coherent and explicit RE. Agreed Syllabus development should navigate carefully between these two jagged rocks. Syllabuses need to address weaknesses in assessment and progression, which are constant issues in schools across the country, but we should also articulate the strengths of RE – wellbeing, community cohesion and thinking skills (PLTS). The message for SACREs here is to develop Agreed Syllabuses that have coherence, progression and challenge built into them, using the local and national faith communities as a vehicle for stimulating learning. We need to promote consistency, not uniformity.



## **Alan Brine [Ofsted]: Agreed Syllabuses a Classroom perspective**

Inspection tries to find out the support that underpins the A.S. as well as the Syllabus itself. So what is OFSTED finding?

**Primary** - Even good teaching does not translate into good progression over time. Teachers are not empowered to be able to plan effectively. They tend to be over-reliant on a scheme of work rather than to plan from the Agreed Syllabus and have no concept of what good planning is, missing the obvious such as key questions, concepts etc. So too much task-driven teaching



takes place rather than a process of learning. RE is isolated from the rest of the Curriculum as a result. Does the Agreed Syllabus need to make learning more explicit and cohesive so that teachers have a clear framework to follow and progression is built into the learning process? Alan reflected why RE is still taught in 6 units a year for 1 lesson a week?

How can SACREs address this? What training is needed to back up an Agreed Syllabus (and what does the LA need to do to address this)?

### **What Should the A.S. look like?**

Key messages from the classroom are to simplify the process. Ensure that sample schemes of work exemplify clearly what the learning process should look like. It is vital to balance innovation with LA capacity to deliver and support it.

### **Should an Agreed Syllabus:**

1. Limit the range of defined attainment to an enquiry – based model of learning with a focus on skills and not knowledge as the means of assessment?
2. Focus progression on the narrower view of attainment and not
3. Clarify and exemplify a Concept based approach to learning?
4. Incorporate an enquiry based learning process?
5. Take a more radical approach to the breadth of content? Less content, more process?

These issues are related. How can we as SACREs respond to them so that both through the syllabus and the support we give, we enable teachers to provide quality RE for the pupils?

### **Dave Francis: Agreed Syllabuses: the way forward now**

What is the value of studying what and who is local? The answer to this somewhat rhetorical question is, of course, 'tremendous'! However, we need to be up-beat and explicit about why this is of so much value and the leading role that RE can play in understanding locality in all its various (including global) contexts. We had a discussion about what we would understand by and be able to include in 'locality' and the responses were rich, varied and linked to the self- and community-understanding of the pupils.

Dave helped us to see the real value that RE has in its local determination. Good use of the Agreed Syllabus as a means of reflecting the diversity and shared values that are part of the daily world-experience of children and young people whatever their



geographical context. The media, internet and cultures bring diversity into the lives of all communities.

Afternoon discussion focused on learning, concepts and the value of good RE in the context of both the new Primary and the Secondary National Curriculum. It was agreed that we need to do more to promote more coherent understanding of what good RE looks like, especially in the use of concepts and enquiry to plan stimulating and meaningful learning. ASCs will need to consider the changes that have taken place for all other subjects in the curriculum and build in the strengths of RE so that schools can engage children and young people in a content-light, process rich experience. We have much to contribute to Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills, well-being and community cohesion. We need to ensure that this is explicit in the newly developing Agreed Syllabuses.

**Geoff Teece** was given the unenviable task of pulling this together in a final reflection! He drew our attention to two key strands that had emerged during the day:

- Political strands
- Philosophical and pedagogical strands.

He outlined some of the key things that were said and then referred to some specific issues that had arisen:

- Do agreed syllabuses transform teaching and learning?  
The evidence might suggest not.
- Should AT 1 and 2 be integrated? Learning about and from religion are terms that were first developed by Michael Grimmitt and Garth Read but they have now become axiomatic and simultaneously uprooted from their original meaning and context.
- How do we choose content? Are concepts and content opposite polarities and mutually exclusive? We have had a period –post 1988- of obsession with content but we seem now, happily, to be moving away from that.
- Is human development the principal aim of RE? Does this fit with the political priorities of how education is viewed in our schools?
- Where do we go now?



Geoff made reference to, what he believes to be a key article by Judith Everington (*Everington Judith (2000) 'Mission Impossible? Religious Education in the 1990s' in Leicester M., Mogdil C and Mogdil S, Spiritual and Religious Education London, Falmer Press*) arising from the SCAA model syllabuses but still relevant today. In this article Judith notes the three aims for RE as outlined in the SCAA Models namely, knowledge and understanding, pupils' spiritual and moral development, and social cohesion. The question posed by her paper is are these three

inter-related aims of one subject or do they represent three related by essentially different subjects? We don't seem to have solved that one very well.

He then asked what it means to learn from the history of RE and he quoted a range of examples, including some from his experience of supporting trainee specialist teachers and he questioned the relevance of some of the materials to which children are introduced. It is not always clear why teachers have chosen the content of the lesson or what they intend their pupils to gain from it. Insecurity and lack of expertise can make RE a difficult subject area for many teachers.

He ended by saying that in religious education the study of religion should enrich the experience of the learning that is taking place. In reality religion is often reduced to the experience of the learning.

Thanks to Joyce **Miller** and Geoff **Teece** for this latter section.

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## **AGM 2009 - Reflections**

It's always rather tedious when one is asked for an evaluation of a hotel or an event. It's tempting to skip it and go on one's way...which is what most people did after the AGM in Birmingham in June 2009. That's not meant to be a criticism; we understand there are trains to catch and car park charges to be mindful of, to say nothing of the potential for traffic build up out of the city. We hope the minority return might mean general satisfaction among the majority with the event, the programme and the venue, but we are aware it could mean the opposite! However, it does make any analysis of the evaluation returns more impression than critical assessment. Nevertheless, the executive has looked carefully at what 30% of delegates to the annual meeting said...



Everyone who responded liked the venue and almost everyone felt the communication, booking procedures, documentation and food were all good. The majority of you enjoyed the speakers, especially Cllr Salma Yaqoob and all but one person felt the business had been conducted efficiently. So far, so good!

Unfortunately there was a statistically significant percentage (within the 30% of delegates who responded) of negative responses about the use of time overall, the balance of activities, the quality of information about national developments and the opportunity for personal response although, because of the size of the sample, the actual number of people represented here was small. The executive was concerned about this response and realised, on reflection, the timing of the meeting was such that some of you wanted a greater focus on what had been



happening nationally and saw the meeting as another consultation opportunity. That was understandable, but it was never envisaged as such, given the timing of the formal consultation.

On a brighter note, the majority of respondents (90%) said they had a clear idea of what they would do as a follow up to the day and had received the documentation they needed to inform colleagues. Most people (80%) found the NASACRE AGM a useful opportunity to network and a valuable opportunity to keep up to date with NASACRE activity. A similar number said they were happy with the work the NASACRE executive did on behalf of SACREs and confirmed that the event had helped them in their role as SACRE members. All of this is encouraging to those of us who work voluntarily to serve the association.

The list of suggested areas of focus for NASACRE in the future was very interesting and has given the executive some food for thought, as have the comments about what SACREs expect of the association. We would need at least one full time paid officer to address them all, but it is nevertheless salutary for us to know what you expect of us.

The suggestions can be categorised generally into those concerning individual SACREs: initiating dialogue and raising the issues that local SACREs should be debating, improving good practice, modelling documentation including constitutions, clarifying issues of membership, suggesting strategies for monitoring, and helping SACREs retain and enhance their distinctive role as representative groups promoting the role of faith in society and helping faith groups to resource RE. These are all themes that are constantly on our agenda and as much as possible picked up in the newsletter and on the website.

The second general area of work for us concerns relationships with other bodies, principally government departments and NGAs. You clearly wanted a structured platform for discussion of national developments and more time for questioning key people after national updates, as well as an association's response to those developments. We had done the latter, but admittedly missed the need for the former. You also want us to work with interfaith groups (which we have now done), oppose city academies, encourage DCSF and Ofsted to be more supportive of RE (which we never stop doing) and press for a review of the rest of Circular 1/94, to sort out the 'woolliness' of collective worship in schools, which we have tried but without success. The need to clarify the issue of 'delegate' or 'representative' and amend the constitution accordingly is something the executive will take on board and we are constantly reviewing the newsletter distribution. That covers broadly what you think NASACRE should be doing!

Other roles you entrust to us, many of which we already fulfil, include giving guidance on agenda items for SACRE meetings, support with tricky questions and legal challenges, advice on how to be more effective and regular updates on current thinking.

On improving the AGM, there were many suggestions, mostly about organisation of the day. We have heard the messages about improving seating arrangements and offering more variety

in the programme, with more 'interactive stuff'. There was a request for a later start and some people wanted a venue that could be accessed by car while others wanted us always to look for good public transport links. Some of the comments were mutually exclusive: one person wanted more analysis than opinion while someone else said how inspirational it was to listen to the first speaker's 'powerful personal story'. A very helpful comment concerned the need to sharpen up the election process, making the collection of voting papers less haphazard. We will do our best!

Your suggestions for keynote speakers range from Peter Vardy to the Archbishop of York; Richard Dawkins to the Archbishop of Westminster; David Cameron to Ed Balls. We started thinking about 2010 in January 2009 and have been turned down by two invitees so far, neither of whom was on the list, and we are currently awaiting a response from a third. We do our best to capture someone who will be interesting, high profile and relevant. Do come to BMA House in Tavistock Square, London, on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010 to find out who has taken up the challenge of Religion, Politics and Community: SACREs' capacity to engage...!

One comment on the evaluation form has definitely been acted on. What would improve the AGM? 'An analysis of the feedback'! Well, here it is, warts and all.

And to the person who wrote: 'Thanks to everyone on the exec for your continued support to enrich RE for all SACREs'...your comment was greatly appreciated!

Julie **Grove** - November 2009

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## **Exploring the significance of faith and the environment Year 6 residential**

**By Lisa Absalom RE Coordinator at Stockwell Primary and Vice Chair of Lambeth SACRE**

Lambeth SACRE funded and arranged a residential for year 6 children and their teachers to visit Cudham Environmental Activities Centre - an outdoor centre in Kent. It took place during half term in February 2009. The focus of the visit was to explore the significance of faith and identity for the environment and the world of nature and to use story, music and movement to help pupils understand faith and the environment. Sixteen children from both Stockwell and Jessop were invited to take part in the residential.

Coincidentally, I had recently been awarded a Farmington Fellowship to research 'Awe and Wonder' in the context of primary community schools. As Vice-Chair of Lambeth SACRE, I was delighted to make the most of the opportunity to not only lead the residential, but also to observe, as part of my research, the impact on children given the opportunity to step away from the familiar setting of home and school to experience learning in a more daring, energetic, exciting, fun way ie. To experience 'Awe and Wonder'.



Once we had arrived and had lunch, the afternoon then consisted of 2 music and movement workshops lead by Marie and Akosua, two artists from an organisation called L'Ouverture. The theme of faith and creation was introduced by thinking about what is precious to us, sharing this with others, exploring how we feel when it is lost and putting all of these feelings into movement and song (a rap song called Tsunami).

After dinner, Sarah Percevel (Heart of Storytelling) set up a magical story corner before her session began after dinner. Sarah told 4 stories from different faiths (Buddhist, Muslim, Baha'i and a Hindu story). In the morning, after breakfast and a walk through the woods, she led a story telling workshop. She taught the children how to structure a story and how to create sounds of different settings that add flavour to stories. The children did it brilliantly and we all thoroughly enjoyed the session once again.

Before lunch, Milini Trehan and Margaret Amaechi (Stockwell teachers) lead a very thought provoking workshop on 'Special Places'. The children discussed, in groups, what or where their special place is, why it's special, what the rules are- if any etc. The children then presented their drawings and notes on their special places to everyone. What I did find quite interesting was that no one drew or spoke about their place of worship, even though the adult leading each group brought it up as perhaps their special place or even as a suggestion. I was so encouraged that the children felt that they could be completely honest and open about their thoughts.

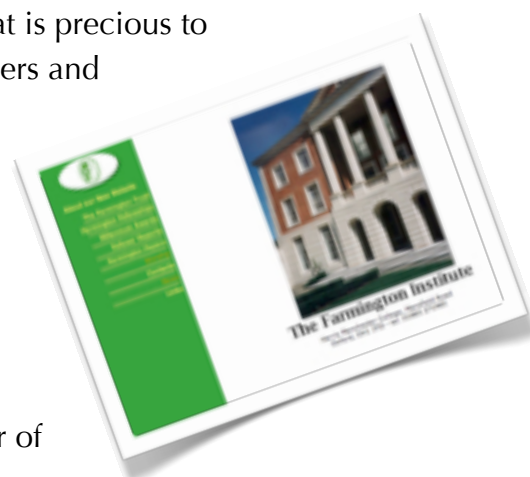
Marie and Akosua lead the final workshop on drawing together all that we had done the day before and getting it into shape for a performance. It is amazing how well the children remembered the songs and dances we had done the day before- far better than I had!

I then wound the session down and drew the residential to an end with a quiet time of reflection. To settle the children, I used Brain-Gym® movements with Massenet's 'Meditation' playing quietly in the background. I encouraged the children to ponder on the past 2 days, and to reflect on their favourite moment, how they felt they had perhaps grown or changed because of it and if they pray at home, perhaps they might want to thank God or anyone else etc.

What the children (and staff!) achieved over these 2 days was amazing. By spending the time in a beautiful rural setting, being given space and time to explore it, being creative with song and dance, listening to stories, thinking about what is precious to them, and about why some places are more special than others and why, eating great healthy food, spending extended times with friends etc. gave the children a wonderful experience of 'awe and wonder'

'The Wonder of it All!' (the DVD recording of this residential) can be obtained from Brian Netto at [bnetto@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:bnetto@lambeth.gov.uk)

You can download and read my research paper 'The Wonder of it All!' at <http://www.farmington.ac.uk/>



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## Jainism and Knowledge



Jainism has a profound description of epistemology, explaining the total knowledge system at the subtlest level. However, here is a brief introduction to Knowledge in Jain philosophy.

Knowledge is an inherent quality of the soul substance [**Jīva**] which is one of the two constituents of the total universe; the other being the non-soul [**Ajīva**]. The difference is that soul is the only substance in this universe which is conscious, has the power of cognition. This is the inherent capability of perception and knowledge in each and every living being.



Soul is bound by its past deeds, karma, which covers it in the form of material particles and obscures its knowledge. This causes the differences in levels of knowledge in each and every being, even when they have been through the same path of learning.

In the popular Jain text, **TATTVĀRTHA SŪTRA**, right knowledge is defined as one of the three constituents essential to get to the path of liberation:

**samyag darśana jñāna cāritrāṇi mokśa mārgaḥ** [TS:I.1]

right perception, right knowledge and right conduct are the path to liberation.



In defining this spiritual path to liberation, the author has expounded an interdependent trinity. Right perception as a cause results in right knowledge and that in turn cultivates right conduct. Hence, all three are essential to reach the path of emancipation.

Knowledge therefore is an inherent faculty of all living beings in Jain philosophy. The trinity however, has been conditioned in this aphorism by the prefix RIGHT which must apply to all three constituents. Without right knowledge, right conduct cannot arise.

Let us investigate the difference between right knowledge and wrong knowledge in this context. Knowledge is classified into five types:

**mati śrutāvadhi manaḥparyāya kevalāni jñānam** [TS:I.9]

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. <b>mati</b>         | knowledge gained by grasping through senses ~ inexpressible       |
| 2. <b>śruta</b>        | sensual grasping converted into expressible knowledge in the mind |
| 3. <b>avadhi</b>       | power of clairvoyance in sighting object beyond sense range       |
| 4. <b>manaḥparyāya</b> | mind reading capability of knowing the thoughts of another        |
| 5. <b>kevala</b>       | omniscient knowledge of all substances in all modes               |

**āni jñānam** are the (5) types of knowledge.

All living beings, in any form including the micro-organisms, have at least the first two types of knowledge. This paper will be limited to just these two types of knowledge as the other three are only possible at higher levels of spirituality.

Knowledge is related to objects of our senses and mind. In Jain philosophy, all objects have multiple facets and it is not possible for ordinary beings to perceive all the facets simultaneously. Hence, knowledge in pragmatic world view is always partial and/or relative. Whatever we express as knowledge is at best partial truth or relative



truth, but never the absolute truth. For example, we cannot define happiness or sorrow in words.

This is also called indirect knowledge because it is dependent on our senses and senses have their own limitations. For example, if we stand between the two tracks of the railway, we see the tracks merging in the distance. We know that this is not true, yet this is a sight limitation. Similarly with other senses, there is usually a difference of opinion in what we touch, taste, smell, or hear. This is because of the differences in the karmic levels of knowledge obscuring karmas of each individual. Sense dependent knowledge is termed as wrong knowledge in Jain philosophy from the absolute point of view. This partial and/or relative truth is accepted as right knowledge from the pragmatic world point of view because without accepting that, life cannot go on.

Referring to the first aphorism above, **samyag darśana** or right perception precedes right knowledge. If the perception is right, only then can the knowledge be right. In Jainism, absolute faith in the ontological belief in 7 verities is defined as right perception:

**tattvārtha śraddhānam samyag darśanam TS:I.2**

To keep matters simple, consider the two substances defined as the constituents of the universe as two verities. To have absolute faith and to believe that the soul [**Jīva**] is a different and independent element which exists in the material body which is non-soul [**Ajīva**] is right perception. All expressions made with this awareness in mind will rationalise the speech, renouncing absolute statements and singular claims, conditioning the speech to take into account substantial, spatial, temporal and modal effects on any view.



Such awareness will result in decline of new bondage to the soul thus increasing its purity and hence its level of inherent knowledge. Eventually it will reach a state of purification in which it will gain experiential knowledge of the self. Such beings will demonstrate a total change in character as rational behaviour will result from this faith and knowledge. This is termed as right conduct.

In scriptural definition, right perception is absolute faith in the ontology as preached by the omniscient, right knowledge is the awareness and distinction between the absolute reality and relative reality, [also as knowledge of the canon which states this] and right conduct is the behaviour which emanates from this faith and knowledge.

**NOTE:** All SACRES that have a JAIN representative please send an email with full name and address of the Rep to: [harshad@jainology.org](mailto:harshad@jainology.org) with a copy to [education@jainology.org](mailto:education@jainology.org)

The Institute of Jainology would like to form a group of all JAIN SACRE Representatives and appoint new ones where there is a need.

## **"Entering the Mysteries" .. news from the National Learning Outside the Classroom Sacred Space Partnership Group.**

**Janet Marshall, Education officer at the Anglican Shrine, Walsingham writes on behalf of the group**

The Sacred Spaces Partnership group was launched this Summer in order to promote and more to the point 'support' all those who are already working hard to promote Learning outside the classroom in sacred spaces. Its members come from a range of sacred spaces in the U.K and are representative of many world faiths.

### **Popularity speaks for itself!**

The phenomenally high statistics across the UK speak for themselves in terms of the thousands and thousands of children and young people from schools, colleges and universities who visit the wonderfully diverse collection of buildings on day visits during the academic year. These mosques, temples, gurdwaras, synagogues, greater churches, chapels and parish churches, cathedrals and shrines KNOW the immense value of the high quality visit programmes and activities they offer but the group recognises that there is still a long way to go in encouraging, enabling and building up the confidence of teachers across the UK, many of whom, particularly at primary level, do not have specialist R.E. training.



### **Having courage to enter the mystery zone....**

It does take great courage often to enter these amazing places of worship, prayer and heritage.



There are all sorts of worries about who they'll meet there, will it be 'appropriate?' 'Will the kids get bored and mis-behave? and 'what if they say something embarrassing? One of our tasks as a group is to inform teachers that in fact they are in very safe hands. There are teams of professional leaders/teachers and volunteers on hand in so many sacred spaces to lead some amazing educational experiences.

The group is looking at developing effective networks to 'spread the word' through web resources that help teachers to plan and embark on visits to sacred places, media coverage, raising the profile through being present at leading conferences and exhibitions and through personal contact with schools themselves.

**Far more than just R.E.!**

It is vitally important that we continually seek to get the message across to teachers that experiencing sacred spaces is far more than just R.E. Sacred spaces are an absolute gift to the primary and secondary curriculum. There are so many ways that visits can offer valuable input across many curriculum areas such as: art, maths, geography, history, science.

**Quality assurance...**The group is working very closely with LOtc with regard to the newly launched Quality Badge scheme to ensure that a 'stream lined' service is developed. There are various training courses on offer around the country to inform and train sacred places, museums and the like so that high standards and comprehensive systems are in place for the safety and benefit of all who visit.

**Comments from the places themselves.....**

**Norwich/Norfolk Interfaith project** ' It shows what can be achieved when sacred places/faiths link together....the recent interfaith week speed date session was amazing...where else can you quiz Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, RC and Anglican priests, a Jew, and learn about pilgrimage at Walsingham's Shrine in an hour? Awesome!'

**Manchester Cathedral** 'Our links with Manchester Buddhist Centre mean we can both offer schools a quality day out with so many topics/ study units/aspects covered'

**Southwark Cathedral** 'Using the Cathedral as an inspirational resource, we provide curriculum-linked trails and workshops for children and young people that are exciting, engaging and experiential'.

**St Paul's Cathedral** 'Such an amazing national treasure, so much history but mind blowing R.E. as well....all on offer in one day!'

**The Anglican Shrine Walsingham, Norfolk** ' One minute you are at a Tudor banquet, or lamenting the devastation of Henry VIII's destruction of the priory the next the children are spell bound by the awe and wonder of the silent Holy House! Spiritual development at it's best!'

These are just a few of the quality places on offer for schools. Log on to [www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk) and [www.reonline.org.uk/sacredspace](http://www.reonline.org.uk/sacredspace) Google 'cathedralsplus' website too for links to many cathedrals/greater churches and shrines.





**What about the big ogres like CRB, Safeguarding/vetting and barring?**

There has been much negative press coverage this past year about all the downsides to taking groups of children out of school, health and safety issues, problems with using parent volunteers on trips because of these issues. BUT it need not be a massive obstacle. It is our task to help teachers seek the appropriate professional support in setting up systems in their schools to ensure they have a bank of 'checked' volunteers to call on for trips etc. and to help them 'keep it all in perspective'. The bigger obstacle is often lack of money and the extortionate cost of coach hire.

**Your help is needed!**

We do need your help in passing on information to schools, advisers, committees, clusters of schools etc. We need your help to help spread the word about the fantastic opportunities offered at sacred places around the country and the great resources they also offer. Publicity flyers/posters are available along with bookmarks and more to inform teachers at all key stages about what treasures await them.



For further information contact the sacred space partnership group chair Sarah Lane-Cawte [sarah.lane@cte.org.uk](mailto:sarah.lane@cte.org.uk) Please help us to enable more teachers and their students to gain from these amazing places!

Janet **Marshall**

**A fantastic new resource**

Friends and Heroes is the tale of two young people - Macky and Portia - whose idealism and friendship leads them across the ancient world, from the fabled Egyptian port of Alexandria, to the besieged city of Jerusalem and finally, to the very heart of the Empire: Rome. This is an incredibly high quality RE resource costing over £10 million to make and available in 10 languages. For more details see the website at:



<http://www.friendsandheros.tv>

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### SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ...

#### JANUARY

1st	Japanese	Ganjitsu
1st	Secular	New Year's Day
5th	Sikh	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh
6th	Christian	Epiphany
	Orthodox	Christmas Day
14th	Hindu	Makar Sankranti / Lohri
16th	Buddhist	Shinran Memorial Day
18th	Christian	Week of Prayer for Unity
25th	Buddhist	Honen Memorial Day
27th		Holocaust Memorial Day
30th	Jewish	Tu B'Shevat

#### FEBRUARY

1st	Pagan	Imbolc
2nd	Christian	Presentation of the Lord
3rd	Japanese	Setsubun / Bean Scattering
8th	Buddhist	Parinirvana
12th	Hindu	Mahashivrati
14th	Buddhist	Losar
	Chinese	New Year (Yuan Tan)
16th	Christian	Shrove Tuesday
17th	Christian	Ash Wednesday
19th	Hindu	Vasant Panchami
26th	Muslim	Muhammed (pbuh) birthday

For more festival information see [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)

### ON THE WEBSITE ...

Do keep an eye on the website where you will find:

- 📡 News updates
- 📡 Information about NASACRE
- 📡 News about events
- 📡 News on projects
- 📡 The Newsletter Archive
- 📡 The FAQ archive
- 📡 Agenda items for your next SACRE meetings
- 📡 A membership list
- 📡 Exemplar documentation



#### Contributors

BILL MOORE  
JULIE GROVE  
JOYCE MILLER  
GEOFF TEECE  
LISA ABSOLOM  
HARSHAD SANGHRAJKA  
JANET MARSHALL

Please also check your details and if necessary update the membership section and add to the exemplar documentation. Contact us at [web@nasacre.org.uk](mailto:web@nasacre.org.uk)

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