

Response to the book launch of Beacons of the Light

Challenges for religions and faiths in the 21st century

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'Beacons of the Light'

Address and Book Launch by Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke

16th October, 6.00pm – 7:00pm Reception & Book Signing

[43 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3NA](#)

7.00 pm Keynote Address

Followed by Respondents and Q&A

It was a pleasure attending the book launch and thanks to Robin Marsh and Margaret Ali for giving me an opportunity to forward a response to the book.

It was nice the way Dr Marcus Braybrooke introduced his book as the spiritual rich list. In a very meaningful, humorous way, Dr Braybrooke described his remarkable book to showcase people who have shaped our world and the history of humanity. In a sense it is about our interconnectedness. We are all responsible for one another's actions as we will live in an age of mutual engagement.

In his introduction Marcus has pictured the spiritual history of mankind and I quote *"as a great river with various springs, sources and tributaries, always changing sometimes dividing, but moving forward enriching the present and opening new vistas for the future."* What a profound statement. I have

picked up a few highlights from the book. However I am not able to do justice as the book only arrived yesterday owing to the postal strike."

Among the outstanding features is a continuous stream of spiritual people who have influence and inspired us by the writings and actions defining in different ways our relationship to the divine and supreme. One common theme appears to be the desires of all people of all faiths to be in oneness with the Supreme Being as the ultimate goal. This thought of oneness is still inspiring the religious followers of all faiths and is still the ultimate goal which in other words can be put as salvation.

According to the Hindu scriptures the human body is gained after 840,000 births and deaths. When you are given the precious gift of being a human, you are given one chance to be free from the endless circle of death and birth and obtain moksha (salvation) through prayer, meditation, penance, devotion, good deeds, love, forgiveness, tolerance and kindness. That is in essence the teaching of all faiths and religions. In certain cases, it is the selfless service, sacrifices through non-violence, interfaith fellowship to reach the ultimate reality.

Out of the 100 holy men described in the book 23 are from the Indian Origin and many others who are influenced by Indian thought and philosophy. Their influences are far reaching and is felt in all part of India and around the world. This is evident from the fact that you can find Holy Men in most parts of India seen everywhere in daily life. Among the great Indian Holy men, the notables are Buddha, Chaitanya, Shankra, Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Gandhi just to name a few. Their influence has been far reaching specially Buddha and Gandhi whose theory and practice of non-violence which has reached worldwide practiced by the likes of Dalai Lama and Martin Luther King. I should also mention Emperor Asoka who is credited with making Buddhism a world religion. It is fair to say that if there is no Asoka, then there would be no Buddhism today.

In the last chapter, *'which beacon shines most brightly'* is fascinating not because it lists holy people who made a difference but it also gives the much needed perspective of other religions and gifts and inspirations to the people who have very little knowledge of other religions than their own. Religion no doubt has been a great source of strength and a source of cross-culture harmony in this world full of turmoil.

However, there are things hard to explain in religion which maybe legitimising violence, holy wars, killings and genocide. Is god a loving, supreme, holy light which is so tolerant that these questionable atrocities keep happening in our world? Among other questions which can be asked is if the dominance of patriarchal attitude of religion (of which women have been excluded for so long) and god has always been portrayed in the masculine form. Also one's own salvation an ultimate goal of religion is meaningless if billions of people around us are living in poverty, squalor and hunger. Also, the author orthodoxy and radicalism in religion needs to be dealt with. The obvious example is the extremism of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and how it can be contained. How can we make religion and faith meaningful in the 21st century, especially to the younger generation and teach them the rights/wrongs of this world.

However, on a positive note as Marcus Bray-book said in his introduction, and I quote *"my hope is that we all become aware of the varied spiritual heritage which we now share we shall now discover the spiritual resources to enable us to live together in peace, to relive the suffering of the hungry and marginalise and to treasure the planet that has been entrusted to us."* I hope the book *'beacons of light'* will transform our lives in a meaningful way and awaken our quest for truth. If that transpires then the writing of the book by Marcus Braybooke will be an invaluable contribution to humanity.