

INTERROGATING THE EXPERIENCE OF QUAKER SCHOLARS
IN HINDU AND SIKH STUDIES: SPIRITUAL JOURNEYING
AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article reports a recent investigation of the relationship between the spiritual and academic journeys of seven scholars whose fields involve the study of aspects of Sikh and/or Hindu faith. Several frameworks for the study are suggested, including Quaker encounter with Indic religions; the changing nature of social diversity; and the insider/outsider discussion in religious studies. Discussion of their experience highlights the participants' faith background and promptings to attend a Quaker Meeting for Worship as well as the initial impetus to their academic specialism, their guiding values and their self-identification. Multiple connections between the two 'journeys' emerge—not least the convergence between participants' values and the Quaker testimonies—and this 'career coherence' illustrates an emergent emphasis in literature on the role of spirituality in career development.

KEYWORDS

Hindu, Sikh, spirituality, inter-faith, career, Buddhism, testimonies, truth, peace, equality

MAPPING OUT WHAT FOLLOWS

An alternative title for this article, which is a longer version of the George Richardson Lecture given at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre on 3 October 2009, would be 'Truth, Peace and Non-violence, Equality, Service and Spirituality: Convergences between Personal Faith and Academic Practice'. But that is to pre-empt my findings.

On 6 May 2009 in its regular 'Face to Faith' column, *The Guardian* published a piece on the Ravidassia movement, a *dalit* religious movement which is variously defined as being Hindu and as being Sikh (Lum 2009).¹ I start with this article for two reasons. First, the author, Kathryn Lum, is described as being 'a Quaker' as well as 'an anthropologist'. Second, the 'Hindu and Sikh studies' of my title are not two discrete fields but a continuous field, and the Ravidassia (or Ravidasi) movement

which Lum featured (see Takhar 2005) is one of the communities in North India, and in the European diaspora, including the West Midlands region of the UK, which highlight the arbitrariness of attempting to draw firm boundary lines between supposedly discrete religions with the names of 'Hinduism' and 'Sikhism' (see Ballard 1999; Geaves 1998; Nesbitt 1991, 2005). I should also clarify right away that the 'Hindu and Sikh studies' of my title are both multi- and inter-disciplinary: they encompass the work of specialists not only in religious studies but also in anthropological and sociological research on Hindu and Sikh communities as well as scholarship adopting historical, theological and philosophical approaches.

To return to the matter of Lum's identification as 'a Quaker' in *The Guardian*: other scholars of religion, too, have seen fit to inform their readers of either their current Quaker allegiance or (in the case of Paul Heelas in his introduction to his book on the New Age Movement) their Quaker upbringing (Heelas 1996: 10). Kim Knott, who is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Leeds, entitled the first chapter of her book, *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction* (1998), 'The Scholar and the Devotee'. Here she set out the importance of recognising how the backgrounds and viewpoints of the authors of books on Hinduism affect what they write. Accordingly, she explained that she is a 'woman scholar', 'a white British person' and 'Additionally, I am a Quaker by religion, not a Hindu' (1998: 5). Similarly, and in the interests of transparency, in the methodology chapter of my study of 'the religious lives of Sikh children' I mentioned my 'Quaker commitment' (Nesbitt 2000: 37), and in the introduction to a publication which brings together a number of my studies of young people in various Hindu and Sikh UK communities, I mentioned that 'For over 30 years I have been part of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)' (Nesbitt 2004: 6).

Why did we do it? Knott seemed to be acknowledging the importance of her readers knowing that she was not Hindu, rather than to be claiming any particular relevance for being Quaker as compared with being, say, Methodist or Buddhist. At the same time her statement that 'what I have written is not intentionally influenced by my own religious identity' (1998: 5) might be an admission that there is the likelihood or the possibility of an unintentional influence, and so an indication that readers should read her work in the light of it.

The relationship between individuals' cultural backgrounds, their values and their career choices and trajectories is complex. Commentators on distinguished scholars increasingly see fit to identify connections. For forty years the central concern of the American South Asianist, Eleanor Zelliott, has been 'bringing the condition of oppressed people in South Asia to the attention of elites in the region and the world' (Bhagavan and Feldhaus 2008a: 2). In the introduction to their two-volume festschrift, Manu Bhagavan and Anne Feldhaus elucidate:

In some measure as a result of her Quaker background, Zelliott has single-mindedly 'spoken truth to power' through her work. That is, rather than seeking merely to study passively and objectively the 'others' who have been the focus of her work, Zelliott has sought to involve herself in their plight, their misery, and their hope, and she has used her position and her writing to advocate their cause (2008: 2).

This article teases out ways in which the spiritual journeys (rather than simply ‘background’) of some British scholars of Hinduism and Sikhism, who are Quakers (Attendees or Members) connect with their academic journeys. (Their preferred self-designations will come later.) Each has come *to* Quakerism rather than, like Zelliott, coming *from* a Quaker background.

In his book, *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society*, Edward Bailey wrote:

Thus, there is an ‘elective affinity’ between [religious studies scholars’] personal experience, context, and experienced audience, and their understanding, definition and description of religion (1997: 2).

Whereas Bailey mentions the ‘sitzimleben’ or ‘setting in life’ of scholars of religion, I will use the metaphor of journeying. By ‘personal journeying’ I refer to the spiritual dimension of individuals’ experience, including their values, their response to beauty, ritual and meditative practices, plus their sense of underlying meaning (and maybe of ‘God’), and their awareness of seeking out companions with similar understanding and aspiration.

My hope is that more widely relevant ideas (and even hypotheses for future larger-scale studies) emerge from my very specific focus on British Quaker scholars in Hindu and Sikh studies. Now here are several frames for my enquiry:

- Quaker encounter with Indic religions;
- the autobiographical writing of scholars of religions;
- the changing nature of social diversity (including ‘interfaith’ philosophical and theological responses to it); and
- the insider/outsider discussion in religious studies.

My study leads into a brief consideration of:

- the counselling and management literature on spirituality and career.

ENCOUNTER BETWEEN QUAKERISM AND INDIC RELIGIONS

First the encounter between Quakerism and Indic religions: Sheila Laxman’s doctoral thesis (2001), submitted to the University of Birmingham, profiles P.C. Sirkar of Calcutta, ‘a Hindu Quaker’, a self-description also currently adopted by Ashok Jashapara (2009).² The ‘Quaker-Gandhian’ (Dart 1995), Marjorie Sykes, details the embrace of Quakerism by some Hindus in nineteenth-century Calcutta and traces contact between Quakers and India back to the mid-seventeenth century (1997). Another British Quaker, Geoffrey Maw (1997 and no date), sensitively recorded his early twentieth-century encounters at Hindu places of pilgrimage and an American Friend, Martha Dart (1989), has suggested resonances between Hindu and Quaker insights.

Increasing numbers of Quakers and (other) Christians turn to the Buddhist tradition for insight and guidance in their spiritual practice (see Pym 2000: 77–89; Lovett 2009). This connection will surface in my own study, but my remit has not included discovering Friends whose academic field is Buddhism.

Twentieth and twenty-first-century reflections by Hindus and Sikhs on Quakerism are few: from Sikhs come Dharam Singh’s comparative insights (1994). He highlights

convergence; for example, both traditions ‘put equal emphasis on the sacredness of every part of life’ (1994: 7). Also Gopinder Kaur Sagoo has suggested that the active volunteering of a Birmingham-based Sikh organisation, the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sevak Jatha, combines awareness of the legacy of the Sikh Gurus with awareness of Birmingham’s Civil Gospel, an approach to urban regeneration in which ‘Non-Conformist groups such as the Quakers played an instrumental role’ (2009: 20, 23). I have no record of Quaker encounter with Sikh tradition prior to the Sikhism specialists, working in the latter half of the twentieth century, who are featured in this article. The autobiographical writing of Prakash Tandon, a Punjabi Hindu, includes his affectionate description of Hay’s Farm, a Quaker guesthouse, below Pendle Hill (1968: 219–20). Tandon recalls his sense of peace in these surroundings, and the fact that Mahatma Gandhi had also once visited, and Gandhi himself alluded to his Quaker friends, notably Horace Alexander.³

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING BY SCHOLARS OF INDIC RELIGIONS

In the wider arena of religion scholars’ autobiographical reflection, my paper connects particularly with a flourishing tradition of autobiographical writing by scholars of religions (e.g. Hedrick 2008) and of Indic religions more particularly—most recently *Cole Sahib: The Story of a Multifaith Journey* (2009) by Owen Cole, a Quaker specialist in Sikhism.

Some issues are highlighted by the autobiographical narratives of two major scholars from non-conformist (though not Quaker) backgrounds, Diana Eck and Hew McLeod. Eck, an American Methodist scholar was challenged at the age of twenty by people (friends rather than ideas) (1993: 7–8). The challenges of encountering the Hindu vibrancy of Banaras led Eck to ‘deeper faith’ (1993: 21) and evolved in continuing interfaith dialogue. McLeod, the New Zealand scholar of Sikh tradition, was a Presbyterian, but here his faith trajectory diverges from Eck’s, as he reached in Punjab ‘the splendid awareness that I did not believe and that I was gloriously free from any obligations to pretend that I did’ (2004: 3) coupled with unremitting commitment to truth as a historian. We will be revisiting these themes of friendship, interfaith dialogue and truth in the lives of my Quaker research participants.

MODERN PLURALITY

Contextualising these autobiographies, and the narratives that unfolded in my interviews, is the intensifying interconnectedness that is often dubbed globalisation—involving a social diversity that is changing in character from a ‘traditional plurality’ (of more or less distinct ethnic and faith communities, at least as these are conceptualised by some Western European scholars writing about Western European societies; Jackson 2004; Skeie 1995) to a modern plurality of multiply influenced individuals. For encounters between the faiths of ‘traditionally plural’ societies, philosophers of religion and theologians offer analysis and insight. The scholarship of John Hick (1985), Paul Knitter (1995) and Alan Race (2001) suggests ways of understanding the

relationship between faiths. These very encounters and the reflection on them are also intrinsic to the evolution of ‘modern plurality’. The Quaker, Douglas Steere’s, metaphor of the ‘mutual irradiation’ that can occur in interreligious dialogue is apposite (1971). Not only can the world map no longer be ‘color-coded as to its Christian, Muslim, or Hindu identity’ and not only is ‘each part of the world... marbled with the colours and textures of the whole’ (Eck 2000), but increasingly individuals are themselves existentially ‘interfaith’ (Nesbitt 2003). ‘Their own personal life-journey... has become entwined with several religious traditions’ (Schmidt-Leukel 2009: 7).⁴ Thus, individuals are not only involved in dialogue with those of other faiths, but that dialogue is occurring increasingly *within* individuals, whatever their religious label may be. The American scholar, Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, has described the outer orthopraxy of the inwardly heterodox:

Once we enter other people’s heads through their myths, we may find that we cannot get out again... [W]e discover that their myths have always been our myths (1999: 336).

This is akin to the ‘double belonging’ of individuals who sense that they are living interior dialogues and feel that they belong to both Christianity and Buddhism (Fitzgerald and Borelli 2006: 194).⁵ The insights of Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2009) into the transforming of Christianity through Christians’ integrating encounters with other faiths offer one framework for examining my data.

INSIDER/OUTSIDER PROBLEM

A methodological frame for my investigation is provided by the surge in interest—from the 1980s to the present—in the insider/outsider problem (McCutcheon 1999; Arweck and Stringer 2002). It is noteworthy that (a) each of my participants is multiply related to his/her field of study. To describe any of them as simply an ‘outsider’ to the Sikh or Hindu faith tradition is to exclude the social, intellectual and spiritual interplay that constitutes individual scholars’ experience. Moreover (b) my own situation as ‘insider’ to the group of Indic religions scholars whom I am studying, and the probable influence of my particular journey, needs to be declared.

My personal history includes my upbringing in an English, middle-class, observantly Anglican home (with my mother’s subversive spiritualist/Swedenborgian undercurrent), then study of the Classics and of Theology and Religious Studies. Teacher training and subsequent school teaching in north India (with mainly Sikh and Hindu pupils) were followed by teaching in the British Midlands (where many of my students were Sikh, and a smaller number were Hindu). The past thirty years have been devoted to teaching and research. I married into a Punjabi Hindu family. I have researched diverse Christian groups (Nesbitt 2004), but aspects of Hindu and Sikh tradition have been my major concern: especially the religious socialisation of young people in the UK’s Gujarati and Punjabi communities (Jackson and Nesbitt 1993; Nesbitt 2000). I have published overviews of Sikhism (e.g. Nesbitt 1988, 2005) and of Punjabi Hinduism (2009a) and books for young people on Hinduism

(Jackson and Nesbitt 1991) and Sikhism (Nesbitt and Kaur 1999). My interest in reflexivity (awareness of the impact of the researcher and the field on each other) resulted in publication on Quaker ethnographers (Nesbitt 1999, 2002), while my Swarthmore lecture reflected on spiritual pilgrimage and 'modern plurality' (Nesbitt 2003) and recent articles have allowed me to explore the assumptions and motivations of successive scholars on Sikhism (Nesbitt 2007) and the relationship between the Quaker testimonies and interfaith understanding (Nesbitt 2009b).

THE PARTICIPANTS

Quakers who are specialists in Indic religions are few, but they are a professional group as worthy of exploration as Quaker industrialists and entrepreneurs (Zenner 1991), including chocolate makers (Wagner 1987), and scientists (Cantor 2005), including botanists (Nichols 2006). The participants in my study are: Rex Ambler, Owen Cole, Shirley Firth, John Hick, Kim Knott, Kathryn Lum and Mary Searle-Chatterjee. I have not included my own responses to the questions that I posed, but my engagement with these has informed my investigation throughout, while Eleanor Zelliott has been a trans-Atlantic reference point.

In alphabetical order:

- * Ambler's work encompasses Mahatma Gandhi (1986, 1989a, 1989b) and Quaker spiritual practice (2002).
- * Cole's major contribution has been to the teaching of Sikhism. His many publications include introductions and overviews, exemplified by Cole and Sambhi (1978) and Cole (2004), as well as writing on Hinduism (Kanitkar and Cole 1995) and Christianity (Cole and Sambji 1993).
- * Firth's field is the study of Hindu and Sikh experience of dying, death and bereavement (see especially 1997, and also 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b).
- * As a philosopher of religions, Hick's study of Hindu and Sikh understandings is but a part of his scholarly embrace of the world's faiths. However, it has particularly influenced three of his publications (Hick 1985, 1989 [2004], 1999), and his periods 'with Hindus in India' and 'with Sikhs in the Punjab' provide two of the chapters of his autobiography (2002).
- * Knott's scholarship encompasses ethnographic study of the Hindu community of Leeds (1986a), of the Hare Krishna Movement (1986b) and of Hindu women (1996), as well as a published introduction to the Hindu tradition (1998).
- * Lum has researched Sikh women students' aspirations, as well as caste in Sikh communities in Punjab, Italy and Spain.
- * Searle-Chatterjee's focus as an anthropologist has included caste (1981; Searle-Chatterjee and Sharma 1994) and she continues to expose the use and misuse of the terms 'world religion', 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' (2000, 2008).
- * Zelliott's work focused on caste, and especially *dalit* movements, in the Indian state of Maharashtra (see Bhagavan and Feldhaus 2008a: 230-39 for her publications).

METHOD

The fewness of British scholars of Indic religions, who attend Quaker Meetings, simplified sampling: I contacted all of whom I had prior knowledge, and any to whom they pointed me, and interviewed those who agreed to participate.

My research questions were:

- * How did you come to Quakerism?
- * How did you come to the study of Sikhism and/or Hinduism?
- * How do these two journeys connect—if at all?

As for my initial assumptions: my prior contact suggested that the participants in this study would be from a Christian background, and that their developing interest in ‘other faiths’ had brought them to the Religious Society of Friends because of its degree of openness (unequalled among historically Christian denominations) to religions other than Christianity. Beyond that, I was open to the emergence of potential hypotheses from my data.

Before interviewing I sought and gained participants’ permission to quote and name them in my lecture and any subsequent publication. Each participant is also my colleague in higher education, and during interviews I have discussed my paper with them. My source material also includes their autobiographical writings.

FAITH BACKGROUND

All participants currently attend Quaker Meetings for Worship, but none of their parents were Quaker. Their parents range from ‘atheistic’ and non-committed to church-goers and indeed in the cases of Cole’s and Firth’s fathers ordained Congregationalist ministers.⁶ Firth’s parents were missionaries in India, and the home was alive with theological discussion. Hick’s family, too, a shipping family from Scarborough (2002), had been Congregationalist, though his parents were nominally Anglican, and his mother was ‘psychic’ (2002: 29) and a Spiritualist. Through his grandmother Hick had contact with Anglicans, Methodists, British Israelites and the founder of what was later to become the Elim Pentecostal Churches (2002: 29). As a child Knott came across Methodists, the Church of England and Catholics, but was ‘highly secularised all through my education and upbringing’ (tel. 21-9-09).

Lum’s experience, too, was secular:

I was not raised in a particular religious tradition (although both my parents come from a Christian background), [the ethos of my earlier life] reflected a mixture of European and East Asian influences (I am the child of a mixed marriage). I was not baptized, and grew up in a largely secular environment (email 2-3-09).

As well as her father’s atheism, Searle-Chatterjee’s childhood included Protestant contact and influence:

When I’m being sociological I label myself of non-conformist puritan protestant ancestry i.e. distanced from that identity, yet not completely (email 18-2-09).

I was sent to Sunday School Baptist or Methodist depending where we lived... My father was a sceptical scientist, moral with a Puritan imprint, so I was brought up with the ethos, so it's not odd that I've ended up in Quakers (tel. Dec. 2008).

Although, unlike Eleanor Zelliott, none of the British scholars was brought up as a Quaker, several had childhood encounters with Quakers. Indeed Hick attended a Quaker school, Bootham, of which his memories are 'wholly good'. Firth and Searle-Chatterjee also recalled hearing of Quakers, positively, from their mothers.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Most participants were adults when they first attended a Quaker Meeting for Worship, and (in the case of Members) their age on applying for Membership varied widely. Lum began attending as a student and Knott 'was 30, I'd finished my PhD a few years before' (tel. 21-2-09), whereas Searle-Chatterjee's more regular attendance and Cole's Membership followed retirement.

Recounting their spiritual journeys, participants recollected transformational experiences of encounter and of growing in faith, of their conversion and of the disintegration of earlier certainties: for example, Ambler was 'nothing' in terms of faith allegiance as a child, then experienced evangelical conversion as a teenager. He was a Baptist for a number of years and began training for ministry. It was during doctoral study of philosophical theology at the neo-Calvinistic School of Philosophy in Amsterdam that 'everything began to crumble' to the point when, 'I more or less identified as humanist/atheist until 1981'. It was in Amsterdam, too, that Ambler heard (the Baptist) Martin Luther King speak, and embarked on a practical path of non-violence, which led to engagement in Peace Group activities, and with Liberation Theology and the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Ambler recalled:

In 1972 I realised I couldn't hold onto Christianity any more... I found to my surprise in 1974, in this room, sitting with John Hick... John said, 'So you're giving up on Christianity, Rex...what do you believe now? Anything?' I said, 'I'm left with only two things—truth and love', and he said to me, 'It sounds to me as if you might be interested in the Quakers. I went to a Quaker school. I'm not a Quaker myself. I know they have this pared down spiritual life which might suit you'. I started to go to [a Birmingham] Meeting... (int. 22-6-09).

Like Ambler, Hick, too, had experienced an evangelical conversion (at the age of eighteen while a student at Hull) and this had led him (to his father's dismay) to theological training and ordination as a Presbyterian minister (though he only served as minister of a congregation for three years) before becoming a 'heretic at Princeton Seminary', by failing to affirm 'the virgin birth' of Jesus (2002). Of his conversion experience he subsequently wrote:

I would say now that there was a genuine impact upon me of the ultimate divine Reality and that I was conscious of this in the way then available to me (2002: 34).

Cole's spiritual journey was a 'rebellion against narrowness in religion' (tel. 16-1-09). His motivation to study theology came from wishing to think out which approach—the liberalism of his minister father or the evangelicalism of the Christian Union

which he attended as an undergraduate—was ‘right’. ‘I found myself liberal but soundly Christian’ (tel. 16-1-09). In 1960 he became an Anglican, and indeed subsequently the Interfaith Consultant to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Personal encounter was catalytic in the journey towards Quaker Membership:

It was listening to Paul Oestreicher in Chichester cathedral on Good Friday in 2003 that made me feel I could be both [Anglican and Quaker] (int. 16-1-09).

(There were also family precedents: both Cole’s daughters had become Quakers years earlier.)

Encounters that led towards Quakerism were not, however, necessarily with a Quaker (or indeed a Christian). Knott recalled:

The invitation that the Hare Krishna movement gave me to pay more attention to my spiritual journey was certainly part of what brought me to Quakerism (tel. 21-9-09).

Together with face-to-face encounters, reading, too, was transformative for participants—both in terms of personal engagement with Indic traditions of spirituality and in relation to embracing Quakerism. Unsurprisingly, significant encounters in turn prompted seminal reading: Rex Ambler’s discovery, via Satish Kumar, of J. Krishnamurti’s thought gave him ‘insight into a way free not just of dogma but of the need to think things through’ (int. 22-6-09)⁷. As a fourteen-year old, Searle-Chatterjee, who was unhappy and unable ‘to believe in Christianity’, ‘by chance’ discovered S. Radhakrishnan’s book *The Hindu View of Life* in her school library (email 1-9-09).⁸ Lum mentioned the impact of reading *A Light that is Shining* by Quaker author, Harvey Gillman (2003). For Firth, *Silent Music* by William Johnston and Thomas Kelly’s *Testament of Devotion* were ‘life changers’⁹ (tel. 25-2-09).

As noted, Ambler came to a commitment to non-violence, and through this he met some Birmingham Quakers in the local Peace Group. For Cole and Hick, too, it was conflict, and non-violent alternatives to it, that introduced (or strengthened) a Quaker element in their life stories. The Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) provided them with an early point of contact with Quakers: Hick was a conscientious objector in World War II. Cole was a pacifist when he was called up in 1954 for national service. In the FAU, he recalled:

Most people were agnostic but the teaching I was aware of, which perhaps I got from my father anyway, was ‘that of God in everyone’... I didn’t become a Quaker till the Iraq crisis in 2003, and I felt that somehow I needed to be with other people who shared my views (tel. 16-1-09).

Peace and non-violence were important in Searle-Chatterjee’s childhood: she traces her interest in Gandhi back to her parents’ being CND supporters and to her going on Aldermaston marches.¹⁰

As we have seen in the case of Ambler, a growing unease with the theological position of their churches also predisposed them to attend a Quaker Meeting. Hick began attending in Birmingham (where he had been a professor for 15 years):

I had long left my original evangelical Christianity behind and was now increasingly liberal and then radical in my beliefs... I became increasingly dissatisfied with [URC]

form of worship and experimented by visiting Bournville Friends Meeting, very near to where I live¹¹ (email 7-5-09).

Firth similarly alluded to the ‘bad theology and bad hymns, no oomf, no message’ of her local URC congregation (tel. 25-2-09), together with her ‘journey into meditation and silence’. Her movement towards Friends had begun with her mother talking about Quakers and the practice of silence; and as she moved about, as an adult, she ‘tried several meetings’ and became a Member in the mid-nineteen-eighties.

The Meeting House notice board also played its part in Knott’s and Lum’s spiritual journeying, stimulating memory of prior knowledge and precipitating further investigation (cf. Gillman 2009: 6). Having spotted the board in Brighton, Lum ‘vaguely recall[ed] the role of North American Quakers in transporting black slaves to safety and freedom in Canada’. She then ‘called up Friends House and was sent an information pack... It resonated with me and I decided to attend the nearest Meeting, which was in Guildford’. Knott remembered:

I already had the sense that other Christian denominations wouldn’t be the place for me, nor would Hindu ones, for the reason I had a strong belief I’d feel most at home in my own environment of tradition and culture—a religious movement related to the history of Britain, that wasn’t imported from some other cultural context was important to me (tel. 21-9-09).

A sense of needing to be part of a community predisposed some participants to visit a Meeting for Worship and to continue to attend. To quote Knott:

The most important thing was community—above all else. Even now, as a Friend, I have a simply Durkheimian view of religion... Practice is important. The reason for bothering is not to do with personal spiritual development but entirely to do with community (tel. 21-1-09).

Searle-Chatterjee explained that when, on retirement to Ulverston, she went to Swarthmoor Meeting:

I was looking for community. I thought there are ten things I’ll try...and I went to Swarthmoor—quite a walk. It’s a very serene meeting and I liked it and to my surprise I find I’ve become a very regular attender (tel. Dec. 2008).

Participants felt that their breadth of experience of other faiths was accepted. In Knott’s case:

I’d participated in a lot of worship on the floor, chanting, singing, sitting round a fire, and I felt I could go in with all that without having to demonise it, explain it or brush it away... I didn’t have to account for it, or eradicate it, or absolve myself of it (tel. 21-1-09).

Participants’ levels of satisfaction with their experience of attending their first Meetings for Worship and their attitudes to subsequent commitment to the Religious Society of Friends were, however, diverse. At the positive end Lum said:

I will never forget the feeling of peace, lightness and serenity I experienced that first Meeting. I connected with the mode of worship (silence) and left feeling that I had

experienced something that I could not quantify and yet was important for me on my spiritual path (email 2-3-09).

Knott related how she became a member about 18 months after attending first Meeting:

My character trait is whole-hearted social participation... Once I started to go to Quakers I went pretty well every week... I believe in membership, perhaps because of having been an outsider in so many ways (tel. 21-1-09).

Searle-Chatterjee, too, acknowledged:

When I first started attending I felt a great sense of nourishment... Meeting serves as a reminder...all week that it's possible to be more peaceful or quieter (tel. 2008).

At the same time her attitude to commitment diverged from Knott's:

I don't know that I can call myself a Quaker—perhaps a one foot in and one foot out kind of Quaker but that I think is the situation of many Quakers (tel. 2008).

The Meetings which participants have attended are many and various: Ambler and Hick mentioned attending Meetings in Birmingham, Firth in Hampshire, Knott in Yorkshire, Searle-Chatterjee in Manchester and at Swarthmoor. Lum's experience of Meetings is unusually international—the UK, Sweden and Italy.

Ambler and Firth experienced disappointment in the Meetings that they initially attended for a lack of spiritual depth and liveliness. Moreover, Firth voiced a sense of loss as her Meeting failed to nourish her in ways that other contexts did:

I desperately miss music, especially Taizé type music, chanting... I miss discussion and really good quality Bible study (tel. 25-2-09).

Searle-Chatterjee felt that certain kinds of nourishment came from other sources:

I feel I cannot be contained in the label. My non-Quaker friends in Ulverston are vigorous atheists. They laugh more... Their quest is social/political rather than inward—but they are serious and moral too, and try to improve themselves (email 18-2-09).

Historically from my father's side there's a strong argumentative Puritan side, and I'm made in that mould, reinforced by being in India—certainly with Bengalis¹² (tel. 2008).

Realistically, Lum wrote:

I don't expect the Quaker community to satisfy all my spiritual needs... I believe it is healthier to nourish oneself from a variety of spiritual sources (forthcoming).

Buddhism provided some participants with a valued stepping stone towards Quakerism and a continuing supplement to it, and Firth mentioned using Buddhist meditation in Meeting (tel. 25-2-09). In his suggested draft for his own obituary, Hick disclosed, 'He practised a form of Buddhist meditation' (2002: 323). Searle-Chatterjee 'came to it during a stressful period at work' and 'I did Buddhist meditation for 4 years in the Samatha tradition' (tel. 2008). Ambler had begun to practise Zen meditation, before learning about Buddhism further during his stay in Bodhi Gaya in 1976. He acknowledged, 'Buddhism became important in the last ten years,

not as a contrast but as an extension, because I was interested in the meditative'. However, none of my interviewees had identified themselves as 'Buddhist', unlike the American Quaker and Buddhist, Sally King (Schmidt-Leukel 2009: iii) and, in Britain, Jim Pym (2000).

PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC JOURNEY

Cole and Searle-Chatterjee highlighted the teaching aspect of their professional aspirations. Cole charted his progression from 'a straight down the line Christian RE teacher in a school, supporting school worship daily', his growing feeling that RE lacked direction, his encounter with the religious studies specialist, John Hinnells,¹³ and then his founder membership of the Shap Working Party on Religions in Education (<http://www.shap.org.uk>). Cole maintains: 'My interest has always been in multifaith and multicultural education. I'm a reluctant academic' (tel.16-1-09).

While Cole is primarily an educationist, his disciplinary path was through undergraduate study of history and a London Bible College correspondence course for a University of London Diploma in Theology. For other participants, too, the way has been multi-disciplinary, including law, philosophy, theology (Hick); General Arts, systematic and philosophical theology (Ambler); history and religious studies (Knott); Indian philosophy, anthropology (Searle-Chatterjee). Initially moved by her reading of Radhakrishnan, Searle-Chatterjee went to India at the age of 21 on a scholarship for two years to study Indian philosophy and religion, and came to anthropology three years later. 'Now I see Social Anthropology as nearer the search for truth' (email 26-11-09). A strongly social moral impetus drove her academic choices:

The things I chose to study were more sociological than many anthropologists choose: low castes, gender, minority group Muslims—my left wing/political/not established church type of approach...strong stress on equality—religio-political ethos—pulled me to the sociological end of anthropology and I wanted to look at similarities between different cultural groups. Difference has been the bread and butter of anthropology. But the egalitarianism of Puritans—at its best you want to see people as the same.

Likewise, by way of perspective on her scholarship, Knott went on to clarify that:

Hinduism has been the dominant religious tradition in my academic work, but I've never seen the religious tradition at the forefront of what I've done... I was interested in all South Asians in Britain—migration, ethnicity, linkages between people who were Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, coming from the sub-continent, their pre-colonial identities, and I was interested in the broad socio-cultural issues for those people who happened to be Hindus... I was always interested in values and practices per se (tel. 21-9-09).

In Cole's case his school teaching—in classes with increasing numbers of Sikh pupils—in Leeds, together with encouragement from John Hinnells, resulted in his co-authoring a book on Sikhism with his local Sikh friend, Piara Singh Sambhi (Cole and Sambhi 1978 [1995]).

Firth's childhood in India, her ongoing friendship with religiously diverse school friends in Pune, as well as her missionary father's love of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, nurtured her interest in Indic traditions. Hick's interest in Eastern religions

started with the loan of some Theosophical literature to him by one of his mother's friends, a Theosophist (2002: 31).

I was attracted by theosophy as the first coherent religious philosophy that I had met... But after a while I consciously dismissed it, with its precise levels of existence and invisible spheres and ranks of angelic beings, as too neat and tidy and professing to know too much. What I gained from it however was an interest, which continued until my evangelical Christian conversion, and then hibernated for many years, in the eastern religions (2002: 31).

In Lum's case:

My first exposure to Sikhism occurred in Montreal, when I was completing my BA in Anthropology. There was an old church that had been converted into a gurudwara [Sikh place of worship] on the corner of my street. And one morning I summoned up the courage to attend alone. At that time I knew nothing of Sikhism.

The next step in my journey into the academic study of Sikhism took place in Barcelona during the 4th Parliament of the World's Religions... The Sikh community provided langar [free vegetarian food] for up to 7000 people daily, held kirtan [singing of scriptural hymns] sessions, an akhand pat [*sic*] [*akhand path* is continuous 48-hour reading of the entire scripture] and set up an exhibition on Sikhism in the langar hall. Seeing this massive seva [voluntary service] in action made a deep impression on me, and later on motivated me to study the Sikhs for my MA in South Asian Studies at Lund University, Sweden. The hospitality and open[n]ess of a local Punjabi Sikh family in nearby Malmo further convinced me that the Punjab and Sikhism would now be my focus of study (email 30-1-09).

Thus, Quakerism was not *per se* a contributory factor in these British scholars' various paths to their chosen field of Hindu or Sikh studies. By contrast, the USA historian, Eleanor Zelliot, stated unequivocally:

My studying Dr B.R. Ambedkar and the Untouchable movement is directly related to my being a Quaker and involved in American matters of race from early adolescence on (email 6-6-09).

TRAVEL TO INDIA AND LIVING IN INDIA

All participants in this study have spent time in India, and—as in Zelliot's case—a major motivation was academic, except for Firth's childhood experience of India. Cole's 'ten journeys to the Indian sub-continent since 1973' intensified his 'awareness of global history, religious diversity and eastern culture' (2002: 110). Hick set out 'to learn about Hinduism [and] spent several sabbaticals in India as a visiting professor'. Lum went to Punjab to study female college students' aspirations, and returned for a Punjabi language course and then to research for her PhD on caste among Sikhs. Searle-Chatterjee lived in North India for many years. As a Commonwealth Scholar she studied Indian philosophy and religion. After studying anthropology in the UK she later studied sweepers in Banaras for a PhD. In 1986 she examined Muslim-Hindu interactions.

In various ways participants became part of Indian families—Cole through friendship (Cole 2002: 109) and Searle-Chatterjee (like myself) through marriage. Among

participants' spiritually as well as academically significant encounters in India was Hick's with Kushdeva Singh whom he met in Patiala (1999: 205–11; 2002: 209–15) and remembers as 'a Sikh in the original mould of Guru Nanak' (1999: 209) who 'had moved beyond self-concern, so that the transcendent Reality that he experienced as the divine Thou of the Sikh tradition became manifest in his life and personality'.

Ambler went to India in 1976

to find a spiritual, ethical grounding for the non-violence which I'd become committed to, and I thought...I should go to the great source of thinking and immerse myself, so I went to the Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi (22–6–09).

His four-month stay allowed him to meet Gandhians, including Marjorie Sykes, whose adherence to her ideals impressed him, and to visit Gandhian ashrams.

VALUES

The participants' own ideals and adherence to certain values—especially a resolve to serving disadvantaged minorities, a devotion to truth and a commitment to peace—ring out in their interviews. Cole, for example, narrated how:

Real change came when I got a job in Leeds and found myself among all the other faiths and asked myself questions about how schools should respond to their academic and social needs. And, if you want a eureka moment, one afternoon I went to see one of my students doing teaching practice in a primary school. She...said to me, 'I've nothing else I can talk about', and so I...told the story of Bhai Ghannaiya,¹⁴ and...the Sikh pupils grew taller, hearing something in a British school about their culture (int. 16–1–09 and see Cole 2003: 55).

In similar vein, Firth's PhD topic, and ongoing specialism in issues for UK Hindus around dying, death and bereavement, arose 'because in the Leicester hospital people were coming off the M1 in multiple accidents and no one knew how to deal with it' (tel. 25–2–09). She 'sought to lessen the anguish of dying and bereavement for families and individuals by sensitizing and informing members of the medical and caring professions'. Moreover, Firth's 'experience of living among very poor people in India...certainly informed my awareness of inequality and injustice' (email 28–8–09). These values underpinned her approach, most recently when providing an expert report in the case concerning the right of UK Hindus to be cremated on an open pyre.¹⁵ Likewise Knott emphasised that:

Peace and social justice resonate with me... [I]t's more to do with engaged work—meaning engaged with people, about things that other people are interested in, that have relevance NOW. I couldn't have worked on mediaeval theology (Knott int. 1998, cited in Nesbitt 2002: 139).

Similarly, it was Searle-Chatterjee's commitment to 'the egalitarian principles that have in practice imbued much of British sociological tradition' which influenced her decisions to study low-caste groups that suffered discrimination as well as her anti-racist approach to her teaching on ethnicity. Nevertheless, for her the link between

her personal and professional journeying shifted from an aim to ‘spread tolerance’ towards the aim of ‘seeking truth’ (tel. 2008). ‘I always saw my academic work as part of that endeavour—to do with truth-seeking and to improve society’ (tel. 2008).

On truth I will quote first Searle-Chatterjee and then Ambler. Searle-Chatterjee explained, ‘My upbringing emphasised plain speaking: in practice what I do have as my highest value is truth rather than love and kindness’ (Searle-Chatterjee tel. 2008).

Ambler recalled:

Via psychotherapy I learned that the truth that matters to you as a person is truth about yourself, and that later connected with early Quakers, and the biggest discovery of my life because everything came together... I found through psychotherapeutic practice that the emotional, rational and practical are integrated when we discover truth about the self...and sources for deeper understanding are within the body already. Hindus understand this—the deep self, atman you can draw on (Ambler int. 22-6-09).

PRESENT IDENTIFICATION

In the course of their responses participants volunteered definitions of themselves in religious terms. Like Eleanor Zelliott, who wrote ‘As for label, I would simply say Quaker or Society of Friends’ (email 12-8-09), one British participant (Ambler) defined himself as ‘Quaker’, which he glossed as ‘practical mystic’ (email 8-09). Others’ self-descriptions included ‘secular’ (Knott and Searle-Chatterjee), ‘Universalist Quaker (no Christian identification)’ (Lum) as well as ‘Universalist, in the sense of a religious pluralist, one who believes that there are many ways to Ultimate Reality, not only Christianity’ (Hick) and ‘Christian pluralist’, or ‘Christian universalist’ (Cole, see below) and ‘Christian on my own terms—fundamentalist in the sense that I take much of my understanding from the Gospels and not from Church History’ (Firth). Knott indicated:

I’d call myself a secular Quaker... I would never tick the box for ‘Christian’ on the Census except strategically (tel. 21-1-09).

She expressed certainty that ‘Evangelical ministry would have frightened me off’.

By contrast Cole characterised his theological position as that of ‘a Christian pluralist, who adheres to one religion but respects them all, which does not mean that I am no longer a Christian but it does mean that the horizons of my spiritual and cultural understanding have been widened’ (2002: 113). He self-defines as:

A Christian universalist. In other words it is through Christianity that I develop and maintain my spirituality, but I accept the authenticity of all the other faiths... I see God as pure love, unconditional love... God draws the devotee to himself and the idea of grace is very important in Hinduism and Sikhism as well as Christianity (tel. 16-1-09).

Participants also articulated differing relationships with contemporary calls for interfaith dialogue. Cole saw a professional commitment to increasing understanding between communities via deepened understanding of faiths, especially through multi-faith religious education in schools. Firth wished that she had been invited to ‘be involved with Quaker interfaith work’, and Lum regarded her ‘study of Sikhism

as forming part of my commitment to an interfaith and universalist spirituality' (email 30-01-09). Knott, however, voiced reservations:

I'm not personally wanting to do interfaith dialogue... I have enjoyed that separation [between personal and professional life]. I've probably given ministry relating to Hinduism no more than twice or three times...[but] I have felt an obligation to see there was no religious discrimination in my Meeting, or they didn't speak about religions inaccurately... (tel. 21-1-09).

To return to my original assumption that the participants in this study would be from a Christian background, and that their developing interest in 'other faiths' brought them to the Religious Society of Friends because of its unusual degree of openness (among historically Christian denominations) to religions other than Christianity: my participants were indeed from backgrounds that had been influenced by Christianity. (In all cases these were English Protestant apart from Lum whose Chinese father and Irish mother had been Catholics at an early stage in their lives.) All concurred with the understanding that Quakers are, among historically Christianity-related bodies, the least problematic because of affirming 'other faiths'. In Cole's words 'Now every missionary hymn sounds blasphemous' (2002: 110). Knott admitted that she would possibly have been a humanist if Quakers didn't exist—she could have joined no other Christian group, and for Searle-Chatterjee Quakers are possible because theism (let alone Trinitarian belief) isn't *de rigueur*.

A SINGLE JOURNEY?

To return to the autobiographies of the two non-Quaker specialists in Indic religions whom I mentioned: McLeod's dedication to truth and Eck's celebration of friendship's transformational power resonate strongly with Cole's and Hick's autobiographies and with the words of other participants, which also disclose shifts between an early secular unconcern or Christian belief, doubt and awareness. Cole's account of his 'journey of faith', like Eck's, affirms friendship as central to 'meeting with and listening to other people of faith' with 'human and religious insights' coming 'way behind' after friendship, and he writes of his 'brother Piara Singh', his co-author for many years (2002: 109). In Hick's story, too, of his pursuit of philosophical truth, it is his tributes to inspirational individuals, especially the Sikh, Kushdeva Singh (1999: 205-11; 2002: 209-16), that soar over his accounts of valuable intellectual exchanges in his philosophical pursuit of truth.

This article has reported participants' responses to my questions, and the recurrent themes in their accounts of their professional and academic lives, namely truth, concern to help minorities and the marginalised and—in the case of four participants—peace and non-violence. These map onto the Quaker testimonies of truth and integrity, equality and justice, and peace (Nesbitt 2009a). Searle-Chatterjee traced the appeal for her of the value of simplicity (subject of another Quaker testimony) back to the influence of Gandhi and of living in a Gandhian ashram (email 1-9-09). Given this holistic resonance of their narratives with Quaker testimonies, the

strong sense of connection between participants' scholarly and spiritual journeys is unsurprising.

First, as I have demonstrated, participants' professional academic activity was motivated by and embodied values of truth and of social concern which are central Quaker priorities.

Secondly, on an experiential level some participants articulated the contribution of the Indic faiths that they had studied to their own spiritual nurturing. To quote Firth:

The mystical part—the Upanishads, the Gita¹⁶—I love. You can take something out of the mystical side of Hinduism... My religious experience has been *bhakti* and *advaita*.¹⁷

On her experience of *bhakti* (devotion in Indic religious traditions) Knott reflected:

My scholarly perspective on Hinduism is really focused in the area of North Indian Vaishnavism... It would be impossible for me to deny that *bhakti*...has been an important spiritual resource for me (Knott int. 1998, cited in Nesbitt 2002: 147).

More recently Knott reflected: 'It's difficult at the level of habitus to know how the Hindu practice I so often participated in informs my sitting' (int. 21-1-09), and Ambler recalled that:

My spiritual line developed because I read part of the Bhagavad Gita on the terrace of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and I was also reading Gandhi's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita...and Vinoba Bhave's.¹⁸

Indeed, 'an important breakthrough in understanding Gandhi' was also a breakthrough that fed later into a new awareness and interpretation of truth in the experience of George Fox and early Friends. In conversation with Gandhi's secretary, Pyarelal, 'something clicked' as Ambler realised that for Gandhi truth was 'more like how you see your own life', it was 'existentialist' (int. 22-6-09).

Thirdly, it was immersion as a scholar in the Hindu tradition that had specifically contributed to Knott's and Firth's journeying into Quakerism: 'Researching contributed to my becoming a Quaker', said Firth. Knott told me, 'My context for coming to Quakerism is entirely through Hindu religious practice and Hindu and Buddhist religious ideas' (tel. 21-1-09).

Fourthly, scholars articulated a convergence both between Quaker and Indic religious insights and between their spiritual and academic journeying. Thus Cole sensed a convergence between Guru Nanak's awareness of immanent divine presence and (almost uniquely among Christians) a Quaker intuition. He wrote:

To sum up:
There is light among all, and that light is God's self which pervades and enlightens everyone (AG 663).¹⁹

....Among Christians only the Quakers and some mystics might feel able to support this belief (Cole and Sambhi 1993: 198).

Lum sensed both convergence and complementarity of practice between Sikhs and Quakers:

As for the connections between Sikhism and Quakerism, two that come to mind are the emphasis on simplicity (perhaps this is stronger in Quakerism), and also the idea of

service/seva. I think more of the Sikh concept of seva could be imported into Quakerism. Both traditions stress equality... Finally, the emphasis on collective worship. In Quaker meetings in silence, and in Sikhism, with sacred sound (email 13-5-09).

But none came near to the strong resonances suggested by the American Quaker, Martha Dart (1989): pure principle, the light, unity, simplicity and silence.

Some participants themselves explicitly highlighted their sense of a powerful convergence between what I have called their professional and personal journeys. Ambler said, 'My interest in indigenous Indian spirituality coincided exactly with my interest in Quakerism' (22-6-09). And the convergence had increased with time:

At that time I realised I could not pursue spiritual interest in a purely academic way. I had a distinction between my academic work and spiritual development, so I didn't study Quakerism till I began to take early retirement. Nonetheless there were always those overlaps (int. 22-6-09).

Ambler also mentioned a specific Quaker/Gandhi-related convergence in his experience of contributing (Ambler 1989b)—with two other Quakers, Steven A. Smith of Claremont, USA and Margaret Chatterjee of New Delhi—to an edited volume arising from an international colloquium on Gandhi. Both scholars were themselves 'subsequently to write about the similarity of eastern thought and Fox's theology of truth, as spelled out in my *Truth of the Heart*' (email 21-9-09).²⁰

One senses convergence of another sort in Knott's reflection that:

I think of all my writing...in a way as a kind of meditation...a way of working out both my ideas and my outreach (int. 1998; Nesbitt 2002: 139).

Moreover, Lum wrote of a single journey: 'The hopes I have for this journey are personal understanding and enrichment, along with an academic career in the study of religions/India studies' (email 30-01-09) and Searle-Chatterjee explained that, 'It's not a question of *either* academic *or* spiritual—it's the same thing' (tel. Dec. 08):

I have never viewed academic life as just a job or a game but have connected it to wanting to produce a useful effect in the world or to gaining understanding of myself and others (email 26-11-08).

Firth pictured 'a zigzag journey' to Quakers via Indian philosophy (25-2-09), with her academic and spiritual journeys 'very much of a piece' (int. 25-2-09).

Participants' narratives certainly reverberate with the 'career coherence, or the finding of meaning and purpose in a career' identified by specialists in career counselling and management studies (Duffy 2006: 2 citing Lips-Wiersma 2002), of which more later.

At the same time, together with their experience of being nurtured by the faith traditions which they were exploring as scholars, it is noteworthy that participants remained sharply aware of their own cultural conditioning. (Their present spiritual community is Quaker rather than Hindu or Sikh or, for that matter, Buddhist.) Thus

Knott articulated the appropriateness of staying within one's 'ethnic' tradition, Searle-Chatterjee emphasised her English 'Puritan' background and her 'resistance to making offerings' (tel. 2008). Firth had not felt drawn to become Hindu: 'Everyday, practical Hinduism [was] too tied up with caste and dharma, and I never felt I could join... I love Hinduism, but it's not where I belong (tel. 25-2-09).

Insofar as some had previously espoused other denominational forms of Christianity, their narratives also illuminate understandings of intra-religious 'conversion' (see Lamb and Bryant 1999).

Searle-Chatterjee's analysis concurs with Pam Lunn's on Quakerism and ethnography (Nesbitt 2002):

The two journeys are connected... What I would say is I had certain dispositions in Bourdieu's sense and these shaped my movement into Quakers and into anthropology (tel. 2008).

And Knott attributed her coming to Quakerism as to do with her 'character and temperament'. Furthermore, several participants' reminiscences of childhood include indications of parental and/or educational emphasis on openness to philosophical and religious ideas and a valuing of learning. But the multiple criss-crossings are uniquely diverse, while each case has a strong internal consistency. Two scholars from 'secular' backgrounds define themselves today as 'secular' and two from strongly 'Christian' homes still self-define as 'Christian', albeit with qualification.

My earlier study of Quaker ethnographers disclosed characteristics of the Quaker way that are pertinent to ethnography: the affirmation of silence, practice of listening, the marginality of Quakers in relation to mainstream Christian theology, their openness to diverse religious insights and their distrust of theological terminology, and I noted the potential for one's research to be a catalyst in spiritual development (Nesbitt 2002). My recent interviews highlight the Quaker emphasis on truth and on justice and equality, which supportively matched the participants' pre-existing values, and the way in which the weekly Meeting for Worship met some of their need to belong to an affirming community that was culturally continuous, to some extent, with their own (in the main English, Protestant) family backgrounds, as well as providing a practical stance on non-violence and receptivity to 'other faiths'.

SPIRITUALITY AND CAREER

My present study has focused on participants' careers, though not on interviewees' disciplinary approach, such as ethnography (as in Nesbitt 2002), nor on their decision to make a career in higher education, so much as on their decision to pursue the study of certain fields associated with Indic 'religions'. In their interviews participants allude to resonances between their academic enquiry and their spirituality, and between their scholarly focus and their personal values. Their narratives contribute to an incipient literature on the role of spirituality and religion in career development. From a background in counselling and personnel services Ryan Duffy (2006) provides an overview of such scholarship. 'The investigation of the role spirituality and religion play in the promotion of health functioning has provided a framework from

which to study...how spirituality and religion relate to career development, work, and the workplace'. Duffy indicates that 'most of the studies examining the *interplay* [author's emphasis] between spirituality, religiousness, and work are found in the management and organizational literature' but that 'counseling and developmental researchers' are now showing more interest (2006: 2).

Certainly my small-scale enquiry bears out the finding of Lips-Wiersma (2002) cited in Duffy that 'spirituality was found to inspire a desire to serve others and positively relate to career *coherence* or the finding of meaning and purpose in a career' (2006: 2, author's emphasis) and it illustrates 'the premise that spirituality influences values and purpose, which in turn influence work' (2006: 2). My interviewees' narratives revealed 'an equilibrium' between meaning, being and doing' (Brewer 2001, cited in Duffy 2006: 3), but an equilibrium arrived at over (in some cases) several decades.

Perhaps others will investigate the 'interplay between spirituality, religiousness, and work', the 'career coherence' (Duffy 2006: 2) between the spiritual and professional trajectories of Quakers (and of members of other religiously aligned groups) in other occupational groupings, so contributing to our understanding not only of contemporary faith communities (for example the spectrum of values and 'beliefs' of those involved) but also to the conceptualisation of vocation and career.

In terms of inter-faith dialogue and intercultural theology, these scholars' lives exemplify the spiritual enrichment that encounter with more than one faith tradition offers and they illustrate the transformational effect on individuals of Christian cultural background (and so on the Christian tradition itself) of receptivity to insights from other (in this case, Indic) religious tradition and culture. Schmidt-Leukel has argued for this 'transformation by integration' by reference to Christian encounter with Buddhism: my own study provides examples of this from Christian (culturally Christian through to less ambivalently Christian) encounters with two other Indic traditions.

In terms of Quaker history, future generations of scholars may discover the extent to which the principles of truth, peace/non-violence and equality and justice maintain their profile in individuals' motivation, and the degree to which a constellation of 'Quaker', 'secular', 'universalist' and 'Christian' identities distinguishes the self-identification of those in British Quaker Meetings for Worship from the range of labels with which members of other religious and spiritual organisations are comfortable.

NOTES

1. Dalit is the currently preferred term for use by (and of) members of hereditary groups (castes) once referred to in India as 'untouchable' and currently listed as 'Scheduled Castes' by the Government of India.

2. In Jashapara's case the identification illustrates Ben Pink Dandelion's observation that 'present-day Liberal Quakerism is highly permissive of differing belief systems and there are, for example, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and non-theistic Quakers within Liberal Yearly Meetings' (2008: 67).

3. According to Swarthmore (2009), 'Gandhi described Alexander in 1942 as "one of the best English friends India has"'.

4. Thanks to John Hick for drawing this theologian's work to my attention.
5. My thanks to Bill Ozanne for drawing this to my attention.
6. Congregationalist here refers to the Congregational Church of England which—along with Scottish and Welsh Congregationalists—united with the Presbyterian Church of England in 1972 so forming the United Reformed Church (URC) which now also includes members of the Churches of Christ.
7. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), an internationally influential Indian philosophical teacher.
8. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), India's philosopher President, whose ideas are set out in *The Hindu View of Life* and his commentaries on the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita (see n. 16).
9. Kelly 1941; Johnston 1974.
10. CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, was founded in London in 1958 and the first London to Aldermaston march was held that March, strongly supported by Quakers.
11. See n. 5 for the URC.
12. Indians' argumentativeness is central to the thesis of the Bengali laureate, Amartya Sen (2005).
13. John Hinnells, a prolific author and an authority on Zoroastrianism, has been a pioneer and strong supporter of a 'world religions' (as opposed to a confessional) approach to religious education.
14. Bhai Ghannaiya (also spelled as Khanayah) was commended by the tenth Sikh Guru for giving water to those on both sides who had fallen in battle. See, e.g., Cole 2004: 97.
15. In 2009 a judge refused Davender Ghai's appeal, on the basis of his Hindu belief, to be allowed the right to an open air funeral pyre. See, e.g., <http://www.anglo-asian.moonfruit.com/#/funeral-pyre-campaign/4529275628>.
16. The earliest Upanishads (perhaps composed 600–400 CE) are texts suggesting that the self (*atman*) is identical with ultimate reality (Brahman). Gita = the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna's battlefield exhortation to Arjuna, which forms part of the Mahabharata epic and is the primary scripture of many Hindus.
17. Advaita (Sanskrit: 'non-dual') refers to Advaita Vedanta, a philosophical understanding, articulated by Shankara (eighth century CE) that Brahman is one and that any appearance of difference between the *atman* and Brahman is illusory.
18. Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982), a Hindu reformer and follower of Gandhi.
19. AG = Adi Granth, the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikhs' scripture. In all the 1430-page editions these lines, in their original language, appear on p. 663.
20. For Ambler this, taken together with the fact that it was the editor, John Hick, who had both suggested that he join the Quakers and encouraged his work on Gandhi as 'theologically significant', 'completed two other small circles. All four of us... have been thinking for a long time about how eastern, and particularly Indian religious thought, can help us in the West to sort out our problems with religious diversity and secularity, which have derived—I think we all agree—from a too dogmatic and objectivist interpretation of our own religious tradition' (email 21-0-09).

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