

QUAKER SOUTH ASIA INTEREST GROUP (QSAIG)

NEWSLETTER – Sept 2021

<http://www.qsaig.co.uk/>

What is QSAIG?

- QSAIG is a 'Quaker-recognised body' focusing on South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan and neighbouring states)
- It started in the 1990's
- It has approximately 100 members and correspondents who are interested in South Asia-related issues



Our Aims

To assist in the building of a peaceful, just and sustainable world inspired by our Quaker faith and focusing on the South Asia region by:

- Connecting people and organisations working/interested in South Asia
- Raising awareness about issues in South Asia of interest and concern to Quakers
- Providing a source of Quaker support for peace and development initiatives relating to South Asia

What We Do

- Members and friends take part in various events in the UK on issues and projects relating to South Asia
- We connect with friends and partner organisations overseas
- We meet annually in London, Leeds or Birmingham
- We produce a newsletter at least once a year
- Website: <https://www.qsaig.co.uk/>

Up-coming Event: **QSAIG Meeting and AGM**

Date: Saturday 23rd October 2021

Time: 10am-12.30pm, and 1.30pm-3pm

Location: 12 Montagu Place, Leeds, LS8 2RG
Also on Zoom

If you can join us please let us know, either for catering in Leeds or for a link on Zoom.

Invitations from: info@qsaig.co.uk

Contact: Norman Smith, info@qsaig.co.uk

Tel: 07947273545

This Newsletter

The past year in South Asia and the UK has been dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. Covid 19 was first identified in Europe and South Asia around Jan/Feb 2020 and is still prevalent, though now it appears to be declining thanks to growing 'herd immunity' and preventative measures, particularly vaccinations. The past year has also seen major political upheavals, both in Myanmar with the military coup of Feb. 2021 and the recent takeover in Afghanistan by the Taliban.

For QSAIG members and organisations that we are in touch with, the past year has been much affected by lockdowns and the effects of the pandemic. Travel has been much restricted, and organisations have re-oriented their activities to cope with the new situation. This newsletter contains news from some of the organisations we correspond with, including:

- Bhopal Yearly Meeting page 6
- Action for Bhopal page 7
- Indra Congress page 8
- Tamwed page 9
- Ekta Parishad / Jai Jagat 2020 page 10

The newsletter also has a brief overview of the Covid-19 crisis in India and Bangladesh (page 3), a letter from a Chippenham Quaker about hosting two young Afghan refugees (page 11), and an article on Marjorie Sykes and Rabindranath Tagore (page 13).

QSAIG's Activities during the past year

The lockdowns have forced QSAIG to find new ways of communicating.

QSAIG AGM, 24 Oct. 2020: The AGM was held as on ZOOM and 28 people attended, which was higher than most previous AGM's. ZOOM thus enabled more people to participate and from further afield including India, Bangladesh and USA. Notes of the 2020 AGM are available on the QSAIG website. Martin Schweiger agreed to take on the role of QSAIG Convenor for one year and Norman Smith (the previous Convenor) agreed to co-ordinate QSAIG's communications.

Mid-Year Meeting, 24 April 2021: Reflecting the success of the ZOOM-based AGM, a mid-year meeting was held on ZOOM. Reports were presented from West Bengal, Rasulia/Bhopal, Jai Jagat UK, Nagaland, Bangladesh and Myanmar, and summary notes are available at the QSAIG website.

Britain Yearly Meeting, July-Aug. 2021: Two QSAIG events were held on ZOOM at the BYM: a 'virtual' stall at the Groups' Fair, and a Special Interest Group Meeting on 5th August. The latter attracted a large audience of 33 people from as far apart as India, Australia, Ireland and Scotland. Some were new to QSAIG, and the presentations focused particularly on Jai Jagat UK and Bhopal.

Coronavirus in India and Bangladesh

Rob Gallagher, Sept 2021

Coronavirus has affected South Asia as badly as anywhere in the world. However, an accurate picture is hard to establish because the countries' monitoring and reporting systems are so weak. The following article briefly highlights some key features of India and Bangladesh's experience over the past eighteen months. Readers are also encouraged to read more detailed accounts such as:

Sonia Faleiro: 'What went so wrong with covid in India?', MIT Technology Review, July 5, 2021 https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/07/05/1027834/covid-india-crisis-mistake-failure-modi/?utm_source=pocket-newtab-global-en-GB

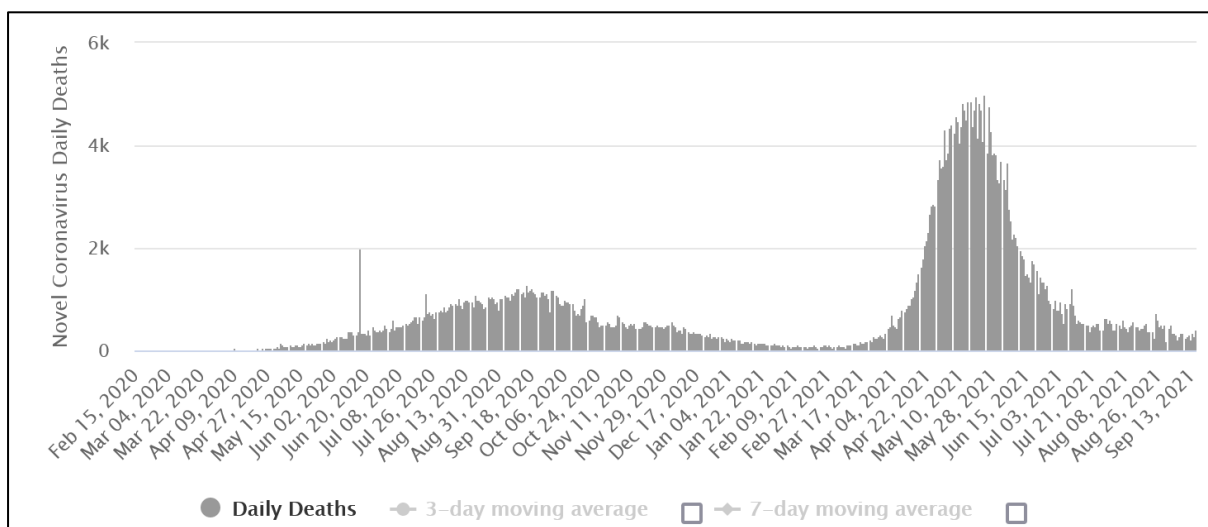
Mahfuz Anam, 'Decision games that we play with our people', Bangladesh Daily Star, Aug 13, 2021 <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/the-third-view/news/decision-games-we-play-our-people-2150986>

Ali Riaz, 'A Tale of Misplaced Priorities', Bangladesh Daily Star, July 20, 2020: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/black-white-grey/news/tale-misplaced-priorities-1928729>

India:

India has experienced two main waves of coronavirus. The first peaked in August/September 2020, and the second – and very much worse wave – in April/June 2021. According to the official statistics, nearly half a million people have died to date (445,000 by 20/9/21). India has the world's second highest number of infections (after USA) and the third highest number of deaths (after USA and Brazil). However, the official statistics are serious underestimates, and other sources estimate the true totals are at least 3-4 times the official figures.

India: Daily Deaths from Coronavirus (to 13 Sept 2021)



Source – <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/india/>

The central government's response has been very poor. The first wave did not seem to affect India as badly as some other countries and by the autumn of 2020 some political leaders were claiming success in handling the crisis. But by December 2020 the Delta variant had emerged and then spread worldwide. This new wave was much more devastating and India's medical system was overwhelmed:

"The second wave filled hospitals, which quickly ran out of beds, oxygen, and medication, forcing gasping patients to wait—and then die—in homes, in parking lots, and on sidewalks. Crematoriums had to build makeshift pyres to keep up with the demand, and there were reports that the outpouring of ash drifted so far it stained clothes a kilometer away. Many poor people couldn't even afford to pay for funeral rites and immersed the bodies of their loved ones directly into the River Ganges, which led hundreds of corpses to wash up on the banks in several states." (Sonia Faleiro, op cit)

Like many countries, including the UK, major errors were made in responding to the crisis. Some of these were inherent in the weak health and social systems and government administration, and some were directly the result of flawed decision-making at the top level:

".....the crisis was not an unavoidable tragedy. Even the new Delta variant discovered to be sweeping through the country was not some terrible random error. Instead, the catastrophe that has struck millions of Indians is the direct outcome of the government's failures: its failure to plan ahead by increasing hospital capacity and acquiring medicines; its failure to figure out contact tracing, collect adequate data, and purchase vaccines. Even after it became clear that a second wave was inevitable, the government went ahead with super-spreader events that served its own political purposes—and gave the virus a new opportunity." (Sonia Faleiro, ibid)

Currently, the worst of the coronavirus wave seems to have passed, and things are gradually returning to normal. However, coronavirus is still endemic, travel is still restricted (e.g. the land border with Bangladesh is still closed except for returning Indian nationals), and India is still on the UK's 'amber list'.

Bangladesh:

Bangladesh's experience with coronavirus mirrors that of India, though the official response has perhaps been even worse.

Early on in the coronavirus crisis, the weaknesses in the country's health and administrative systems were brutally exposed. Great scandals emerged over administrative corruption: for example, the failure to properly register and regulate the private health sector; massive embezzlement of funds by syndicates of equipment contractors which had gone unchecked for years despite official investigations and court cases; systemic corruption in staff recruitment and medical students' examinations; and so on.

The country was rocked by disclosures in the media, and some of these cases are now being pursued in the courts. However, it remains to be seen to what extent this will lead to long-term reform.

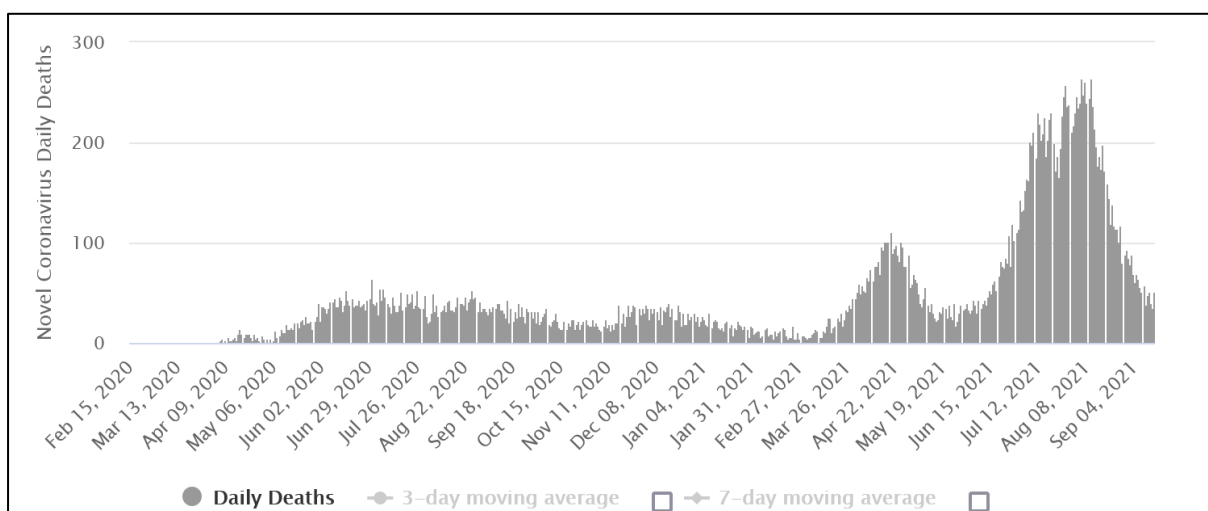
The difficulties Bangladesh faced in following the same approach as more developed countries were demonstrated in the non-observance of various government proclamations and edicts. ‘Lockdown’ in the Western sense is almost a non-starter for Bangladesh due to the crowded housing and transport, lack of social welfare, lack of resources to fall back on, and so on. The lock-downs declared by the government were hardly observed. Indeed, the whole decision-making process was ‘confused and chaotic’ and sometimes ‘absurd’ (see article by Mafhuz Anam, cited above).

The official statistics do not give a reliable picture of how badly Bangladesh was affected by coronavirus. Like India, the number of cases and deaths has significantly decreased since the worst peak in July/August 2021, though Bangladesh remained on the UK’s ‘red list’ until 22/9/21.

The differences between the UK and Bangladesh’s ability to respond to coronavirus is illustrated in the different levels of testing between the two countries. To date, the UK has carried out 81 times as many tests per head of population compared with Bangladesh (4.3 million tests per 1 million population, compared with 53,000 tests per 1 million population). Bangladesh ranks only 172nd in the world (out of 223 countries) in its per capita testing rate, whereas the UK is ranked 11th.

Without testing, there is no knowing the true extent or impact of coronavirus in the country. But without doubt, the suffering experienced by the population reflects the legacy of past mistakes and neglect, as it has with the UK too.

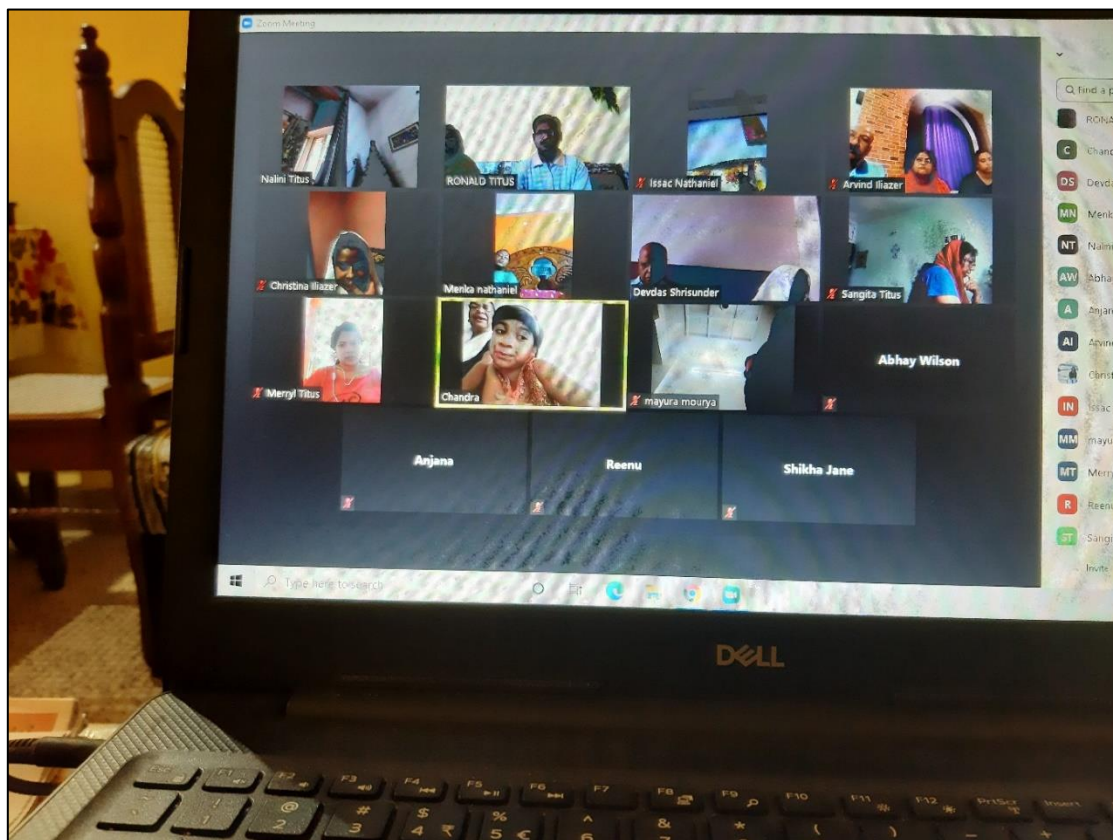
Bangladesh: Daily Deaths from Coronavirus (to 13 Sept 2021)



Source – <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/bangladesh/>

Letter from Merryl Titus, Bhopal Yearly Meeting, India

Monday 14th June 2021



ZOOM Meeting, Bhopal YM

Dear Norman,

We are doing well. Hope you are well. India was under lockdown from March 26th 2020. Lockdown ended for a couple of months but it has continued since April 2021. Yearly Meeting's Friends were deprived from meeting for worship in Church on Sundays. We decided to use ZOOM for online worship. Most of us were unacquainted with online systems, but every one learned to operate it and started online worship on Sunday morning. We sang songs praying and reading some pre-decided verses from the Bible and shared by many members and attendees. We all were happy to meet one another again. All of us felt another happy moment while chatting with each other after the worship. Young and children are also enjoying this time and wait eagerly for Sunday morning. We feel that God has blessed us this time by giving His presence among us. Children and young people are also growing in the Word of God.

Also, we are watching the stringency of our close people. We helped our Church caretaker many times, who is living a hard life. Many of us are helping individually also to the needy people. Thus we are expressing our action in faith.

In Peace and Love,

Merryl Titus
Bhopal YM

Annie Murray writes on ‘Action for Bhopal’

For a brief background on Bhopal, the following brief slideshow is helpful. It was made for the 35th anniversary of the 1984 gas explosion in Bhopal and lasts about 2.5 minutes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh7z9KoS-qw>

BHOPAL: 1984 – 2019

Recent Happenings:

Since 2019 Prime Minister Modi’s clampdown on NGOs and charities receiving funds from abroad is affecting the work of the clinics in Bhopal supported by the UK-based **Bhopal Medical Appeal (BMA)**. And of course, there has been the Covid 19 pandemic. According to figures being gathered by the BMA, a disproportionately high percentage of Covid deaths in the city of Bhopal as a whole have been those of Union Carbide/Dow Inc’s toxic gas survivors, whose health is already frail and compromised.

However, the Sambhavna Clinic in particular has done far-sighted exemplary work in grass roots public health during the pandemic, mobilising their communities to create a ‘Community Shield’ against the virus. You can read more about this here: <https://www.bhopal.org/covid-19/bhopals-community-shield/>



One of the remaining solar evaporation ponds left in Bhopal by the Union Carbide pesticide factory which was ineffectively lined and started leaking toxins such as carbon tetrafluoride into the water supply in the early 1980s. The ponds were finally dug out and some of the material removed.

Activism has been difficult during the pandemic. **Action for Bhopal, (AfB)** the BMA’s sister organization, is constantly trying to find ways forward in this complex and difficult situation – made even more intractable by the current national politics.

However, one potentially fruitful area is that of investment. Environmental and other ethical pressures are increasingly coming to bear on investors – an increasing number of whom claim to be Socially Responsible Investors (SRI), signing up to pledges of ESG (Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance) – to ensure this is not greenwashing but is actually acted upon. For example, as you will see in the slideshow, Dow Inc’s own website says that their 2025 Sustainability Goals include ‘to ensure clean, sustainable water for all.’ So far there is no sign of this extending to the communities of Bhopal where Dow Inc’s toxins are still spreading through the water supply.

Many people try their best to invest their pensions or other savings in ethically positive funds. I have been told that British ethical fund investment managers do not, on principle, place their funds with large chemical corporations because the latter’s track records are so unethical.

There are some simple ways you could help and get involved:

1. **Write to your pension provider** or other fundholder to request verification that none of your investments have been placed in funds linked to Dow Inc. or any of its subsidiaries. Even if you use an ethical investor, it is still constructive to remind people of this issue.
2. **Write to Jim Fitterling, CEO of Dow Inc** to say that Dow, as the corporation that acquired Union Carbide should take responsibility for cleaning up its toxic site in Bhopal and ensuring a safe water supply in the area. Address at Dow HQ, as below.
3. If you would really like to go for it, the **board of directors of Dow** can be reached here: <https://investors.dow.com/en/corporate-governance/board-of-directors/default.aspx> Addresses can be tracked down for them, but all should be contactable at: directors@dow.com or the Company HQ : **Dow Company Headquarters, 2211 H.H. Dow Way, Midland, MI 48674. USA.**

Annie Murray

Action for Bhopal and Trustee of the Bhopal Medical Appeal

Peter Squire of The Indra Congress writes:

11th June 2021

The following link: <https://vimeo.com/256097398/f558722e5c> leads to a short film of what I help with now; it is called The Indra Congress. I work with it in Palestine. I’m in a crowd scene (needs sound). We were planning to visit Lucknow this year but have cancelled due to Covid.

Your Friend,
Pete Squire

COVID, TAMWED AND INDIAN TRIBALS



Tamwed is a small charity, based in Cornwall and well supported by Friends, that supports an NGO working with tribal people in the Nilgiri Hills of South India. As Covid started having an impact in India, we tasked ourselves with rewriting our plans for the year to prioritise the urgent need for relief for the 25 villages in our project area while ensuring that field staff were properly resourced and paid. Travel to the villages meant a level of risk by staff, none of whom at the time had been vaccinated, but meant they could provide health and other support as well as providing food and urgent supplies with funds raised by an appeal. We are continuing this response during 2021.

Tribal people in our villages, as they can be in the rest of the world, are particularly vulnerable to diseases from which they have little natural resistance. Having lost their traditional land and way of life, they become less sustainable entities and increasingly reliant on outside resources such as markets for food and the government for ration hand outs and health care. Our aim has always been to encourage tribal families to become more self-sufficient and the pandemic has reinforced the need for this in a dramatic way. As I write (21st June 2021), our villages are in another lockdown and we have launched a further appeal to provide fruit and vegetables and other supplies for 150 families with local government providing basics such as rice and dahl.



A tribal family with their bag of supplies



Distribution of the herbal drink

One sad aspect of the pandemic is an increase in child marriage while schools are closed and food is short. Parents believe that marriage is better than the potential sexual abuse and violence suffered when children are sent out for employment to add to the family income – although during lockdown no one should be working. Staff are talking to families and distributing stickers to show disapproval of child marriage and leaflets with legal and health implications.



Oz Osborne, Tamwed Secretary
www.tamwed.org
www.facebook.com/tamwed.org
info@tamwed.org

Ekta Parishad / Jaijagat 2021

Members of QSAIG are actively engaged with JaiJagat–UK and Ekta Parishad.

Ekta Parishad is a mass-based peoples' movement for land rights with an active membership of 250,000 landless poor and is one of the biggest people's movement in India. Since its inception in 1989 as a Gandhian organization, Ekta Parishad has constantly striven to promote non-violence as a way for the struggle, dialogue, and constructive actions towards building a peaceful and just society.

Source: <https://www.ektaparishad.in/>



Jai Jagat 2020 UK is part of a European network supporting Jai Jagat 2020. It works closely with QSAIG and is recognised as a 'concern' by Stourbridge Quaker Meeting.

The Ekta Parishad launched JaiJagat 2020, a new campaign for poor and marginalized people. It proposes global action, as genuine social change requires collective action across groups & countries.



JaiJagat 2020 aims to work with as many organizations as possible at every country and global level.

A key component was a Delhi to Geneva march in support of the four pillars of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From Oct. 2019 to March 2020 the marchers covered 2,300 miles but had to halt in Armenia due to the Coronavirus crisis

Jai Jagat is now planning its programmes for 2021-2030. For more details, see:

<https://jaijagat2020.co.uk/>

On-Line Resources for South Asia:

Links to some South Asian Newspapers (*English Language versions*)

The QSAIG website recently added a list of South Asian newspapers (English language versions) for people interested in reading more about events in South Asia. The list was compiled by QSAIG members, though none are specifically endorsed by QSAIG:

Bangladesh

The Daily Star: <https://www.thedailystar.net/>
Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/>
English Prothomalo: <https://en.prothomalo.com/>

India

Deccan Herald: <https://www.deccanherald.com>
Times of India: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>
The Financial Express: <https://www.financialexpress.com>

Myanmar

The Irrawaddy: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/category/news>

Nepal

The Himalayan Times: <https://www.thehimalayantimes.com>

Pakistan

Dawn: www.dawn.com

Sri Lanka

Island: <https://island.lk>
Daily Mirror: www.dailymirror.lk

A list of many English Language papers published in South Asia is available from: <http://abyznewslinks.com>

Our Afghan Friends

Chas Lillystone (Chippenham Meeting) writes about his and his wife's experience of providing a home and support for two young asylum seekers who arrived from Afghanistan in 2020:

Watching news reports of asylum seekers risking their lives to escape war, cruel regimes and poverty, we were moved to offer a home to a couple of asylum seekers. After months of checks and rigorous examination of all areas of our lives, we were approved to look after two teenagers in the 12-18 age group.

Our two lads were brought to us one September evening in 2020, directly from the police

station where they had been held after being picked up jumping from the lorry that had carried them from France to the U.K. They said they were 15 years old and from Afghanistan. They spoke no English. They had not been to school in Afghanistan so could not read their own language. My attempts at using Google translate to reassure them fell flat as they couldn't read my prepared message of welcome in Pashto.

Their first night is a memory that will stay with us. They were so tired, they could barely keep their eyes open, their body language was 'closed'. They seemed unable to respond to us. They were terrified. They lay on their beds hugging their pillows. They unplugged the tv's in their rooms, night lights, etc. They were afraid of the tiny blue lights on our technology..... I brought them chicken soup and opened the fridge so they could choose something to eat – eggs, cheese, bread, fruit. Due to the coronavirus situation they had to isolate in their rooms for two weeks. After a week, we had access to an interpreter and could reassure them that they were safe and we would look after them. They began to relax and we entertained them with Afghan wrestling and music on our iPad.



It's been harder than we expected. Non-verbal gestures only go so far. The lads were traumatised from their journey and from what prompted them to make this journey. They miss their family. Coming to our home must have felt like landing on the moon – everything is so alien to them. Our house full of appliances that beep – microwaves, washing machines, dishwashers and ovens. The lads had never seen any of these before. They had, however, heard of iPhones and coveted this from day one!!

One year later and after a few months of school, the lads speak reasonable English. They go to the gym, play cricket, hang out with friends. They've started college. They hug me. We remember their brave mothers who paid for them to make the journey and find a safe place. They are affected by the recent changes in Afghanistan and worry for their families left behind.

They are now occasionally stropky teenagers, their bedrooms are chaotic.....and we regard this as a success! They are on the surface at least two regular 16 year olds!!

They will leave us soon to live independently. We have learned so much from each other.

How Marjorie Sykes found Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate for Literature in 1913

Abu Siddique (Bachchu)

14 June, 2021

A great friend in a great habit of writing

It was the early 1990s, having received cordial invitation from Barbara Bowman, I went to West Yorkshire to spend couple of weeks at her residence. There, to my utter surprise, I met Marjorie Sykes. Although Marjorie never visited my former employer organisation, GUP, in Bangladesh, she was accepted by our all colleagues as one of the best Quaker friends. Whenever the late Mohammed Aatur Rahman, Director, GUP, used to visit England, he never forgot to see Marjorie, and he had done same when she and he met at Rasulia, India. She was an early riser. In the morning, before breakfast, I used to find she was minutely reviewing her book *Quakers in India*. I would take a seat and be waiting till she raised her eyes. She understood I was interested to listen to her about the writing so far she done. I was fortunate to have her company as she was a special, living person used to be closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Indian independence.

Beginning of her work in India

Marjorie began to work in India when she was very young, and she continued for a long time. She was born in South Yorkshire, England, where her father was a school teacher. She graduated with first-class honours degree in English language from Cambridge University. As a first work, in 1928, she became an English teacher at Bentinck Girl's School in Madras. Later she came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi and, following the path of non-violence, took part in the independence movement of India. Then onward, her life become entangled with India.

It was the Mahatma Gandhi's Seva Gram Ashram where she began her real work

Mahatma Gandhi chose her to become the Principal of Basic Education Programme for Social Reform for his Seva Gram Ashram. At the same time, working from a Quaker Project in Rasulia in Uttar Pradesh, she also involved herself in promoting peace activities and organic farming, namely, '*rishi kheti*' (agriculture of the Sages), avoiding chemical fertilizers. However, probably, the best part of her life in India was meeting and working with Nobel Laureate, Guru Dev, Rabindranath Tagore.

Marjorie felt a deep attachment with Bisha Bharati University

Rabindranath already established Bisha Bharati in 1941 with the motto: "*Yatra Visvam Bhavaty ekanidam*", "where the whole world meets in one place". To Marjorie, it already became a true meeting place of the East and the West, beyond the boundaries of politics, race and creed. Rabindranath made it an innovative university where an interplay would take place amongst society, culture, tradition, economics, philosophy and music of the world. At the same time, to initiate and practise new ideas for rural reconstruction, he also established 'Sri Niketan'. Rabindranath wanted resourceful people from anywhere of the world to come to Shanti Niketan and work for Bisha Bharati University and Sri Niketan.

Marjorie enjoyed the environment of Shanti Niketan

From the outset, Marjorie liked to live and work at Shanti Niketan as it had a peaceful international environment. She was given a three-room cottage, surrounded by enough space to develop a garden. Her cottage was 'open-door' for everybody: students came in anytime to discuss anything and foreign visitors came in to have chat over a cup of tea. She was also used to welcome the visitors who not necessarily were friends but an acquaintance she met once somewhere. Overall, Marjorie was over-joyous to meet, work and make friends with the people who were very close to Rabindranath. This group included Rabindranath's son, Rathindranath Tagore, who guided Bisha Bharati from 1951 to 1953, and Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, who edited several books of Rabindranath.

Her hilarious communication system with Rabindranath

Marjorie was amused by the way Rabindranath established communication with her. The means of the communication was manuscript going back and forth. As a messenger, Rabindranath used to pick up one of many children who loved to be around him. Marjorie remembered, once he took an instant decision to write something. In Marjorie's words, 'He called a little boy and sent him into the bazaar to buy an ordinary children's school exercise book. When he got it out came his pen, and he said to Marjorie, "When I've finished writing this, I want you to put it into English"'. Rabindranath loved to review his work many times till he was satisfied with the final outcome. Here is an example what Marjorie found: 'Every now and then a messenger, usually a child, would appear saying "Please, Guru Dev would like that book back. He has thought of something else"'.

Rabindranath was saddened on the death of his friend Charles Freer Andrews

The pleasure of working at Shanti Niketan began to be laden with sad incidences. In the early in April 1940, news came from Calcutta that Charles Andrews was gravely ill. Charles was a strong bond of friendship between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath. Rabindranath asked Marjorie to travel to Calcutta to see Charles to give a message of friendly assurance to Charles. On Charles's death, Rabindranath organised a service of prayer at Shanti Niketan Mandir and read out a heartrending speech in his memory. Later, Marjorie used the translation of the speech as a foreword to the unfinished book of Charles Andrews.

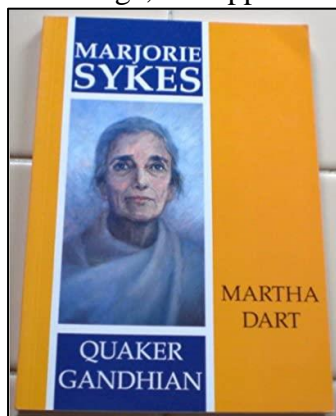
Rabindranath's final journey from Shanti Niketan to Calcutta

Meanwhile, Rabindranath's health was deteriorating. In July, 1941, he was suffering from a prolonged illness, no sign of recovery; he required improved treatment. Decision was taken he would be taken to Calcutta immediately. The whole Shanti Niketan students gathered at the gate of his residence to say goodbye. As the car was moving slowly carrying ailing Rabindranath leaving behind his most favourite place, everybody sang: '*Amader Shanti Niketan*: Our Shanti Niketan, Ah! Our beloved Shanti Niketan! She is the dearest of all to us'. In Calcutta, everything possible was done to save his life, but all effort went vain. On 7th August, 1941, he died peacefully in his Jorashako house where he had born and been brought up. Thousands of people witnessed his funeral cortege was carrying his body to the Nimtala Ghat by the Ganges, to cremate.

She was heartbroken but continued work in India

Marjorie continued teaching at Bisha Bharati up to 1947. Then she joined the Seva Gram

Ashram. During this period, she concentrated on writing Rabindranath. She wrote an inspiring book for young people naming 'Rabindranath' in 1943. In explaining the purpose of the book, she wrote, 'It seeks only to present Rabindranath Tagore as a man, a thinker, and a poet, in such a way that the young student or general reader, without any specialist knowledge, can appreciate something of his greatness'.



Marjorie passionately kept herself engaged in finding the elements of truth, non-violence and peace in the lives and works of Rabindranath and Mahatma Gandhi. She was given the citizenship of India right after the independence in 1947. In 1992, Bisha Bharati conferred her with an honorary doctorate in literature but she was unable to receive the degree in person. Her life, which was full of dedications, came to an end in 1995 at the age of 90.

Reference:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Marjorie-Sykes-Gandhian-Martha>

QSAIG – Get in Touch

We are always interested to hear news of friends and groups in South Asia and Europe. If you have anything you would like to share, please do get in touch with:

- QSAIG information co-ordinator, Norman Smith: info@qsaig.co.uk
- QSAIG newsletter editor, Rob Gallagher: gallagher.rob@hotmail.co.uk
- QSAIG website manager, Martin Schweiger: germ.buster@phoncoop.coop
- QSAIG membership secretary/treasurer, Anne Smith: m_anne_smith@yahoo.co.uk

QSAIG Membership Subscriptions

This year we request members, new members and donors to pay QSAIG on-line or by cheque in the post: Subscriptions: £10 for those working, and £5 for the unwaged

Bank Transfer details:

Account name: Ecology Building Society
Sort code: 08 90 72
Account no: 70361591
Reference: 2601-00524-7

Please let the Treasurer know that you have made the payment: m_anne_smith@yahoo.co.uk

Paying by Cheque:

Made out to: the Ecology Building Society
On the back write: 'Quaker South Asia Interest Group Account no 2601-00524-7'
Post it to: Anne Smith, 37 Hermitage Court, Woodford Road, London E18 2EW

Privacy and Data Protection Requirements

If you no longer wish to receive communications from the Quaker South Asia Interest Group, please contact Anne Smith at m_anne_smith@yahoo.co.uk and your details will be removed from our list.

Some of the Organisations we interact with:



Asia-Pacific Section

www.brickkilnnews.com



JAI JAGAT 2021-2030
ON THE MOVE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

- *Ekta Parishad, India*
- *JaiJagat 2021-2030*
- *Tamwed, Tamil Nadu*
- *Indra Congress*
- *Action for Bhopal*
- *Child Labour-Free Bricks Campaign*
- *Institute of Indian Mother and Child, W. Bengal*
- *Vikramshila Education Resource Centre, Kolkata*
- *Nepal Dialogue Forum for Peace and Human Rights, Germany*
- *Nepal Alternatives to Violence Programme (AVP)*
- *Bangladesh: Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP)*
- *Myanmar: Scholarships for Street Kids*
- *Asia-Pacific Region: Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)*



More details about the activities of these various organisations can be found at the QSAIG website:
<https://www.qsaig.co.uk/about-us-and-our-contacts/resources/> (see 'QSAIG Interests')



Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP), Bangladesh



The Indra Congress