

RISING STARS

The Young People's Page

Mind Your Own Business

from Shampa Bari (8th grade) in Malaysia

I live in a country where a number of religions co-exist peacefully. When we first moved here I was curious as to how they could live together in such peace, since in many parts of the world there is conflict between religions. After a while here, I realized that it was easy: all you have to do is mind your own business and have an open mind.

At school, in my Humanities class, we were taught about the five major religions in Malaysia: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Chinese folk religion. We learned all their important beliefs and rituals. That helped us understand the way people of other faiths practice their religion. Before criticising a religion or a community, you must know about it. Since Malaysian children are taught about different faiths, they grow up respecting other religions, instead of hating or looking down on them.

Next we were taught about Darwin and his theory of evolution. Darwin was a scientist and philosopher who lived in the nineteenth century. He thought up the theory of evolution, which means the way a species changes through time. In his book, "The Origin of Species" he wrote that all creatures went through change, and were not created in an instant as it says in the Bible. His next book was "The Descent of Man", which describes man's descent from the apes. People in Darwin's time believed in the literal translation of the Bible, and were very upset with him for his theories. Darwin got into trouble with the Church.

Everyone believed that God created human beings in one moment, and that evolution was a scandalous theory.

Not only Christianity has creation myths: all religions have their own explanation of how the world was made. But how does someone who believes strongly in his or her religion reconcile that with scientific thinking? Our teacher asked us to interview someone we knew on how they resolved the conflict between creationism (all things being created in one instant) and evolution. The person I chose was a practising Muslim. He told me he made his religious beliefs and scientific thinking run in parallel lines, not forcing them to meet or cancel each other out.

He believed that no one should reject anything they do not know about well. Since there is no concrete "proof" of either religious myths being true or of there being only a scientific basis to the universe, he would not reject either belief.

From the reports of the rest of the class, I found that people mostly believe in a figurative translation of creation myths; that is, they think the stories of the holy books are

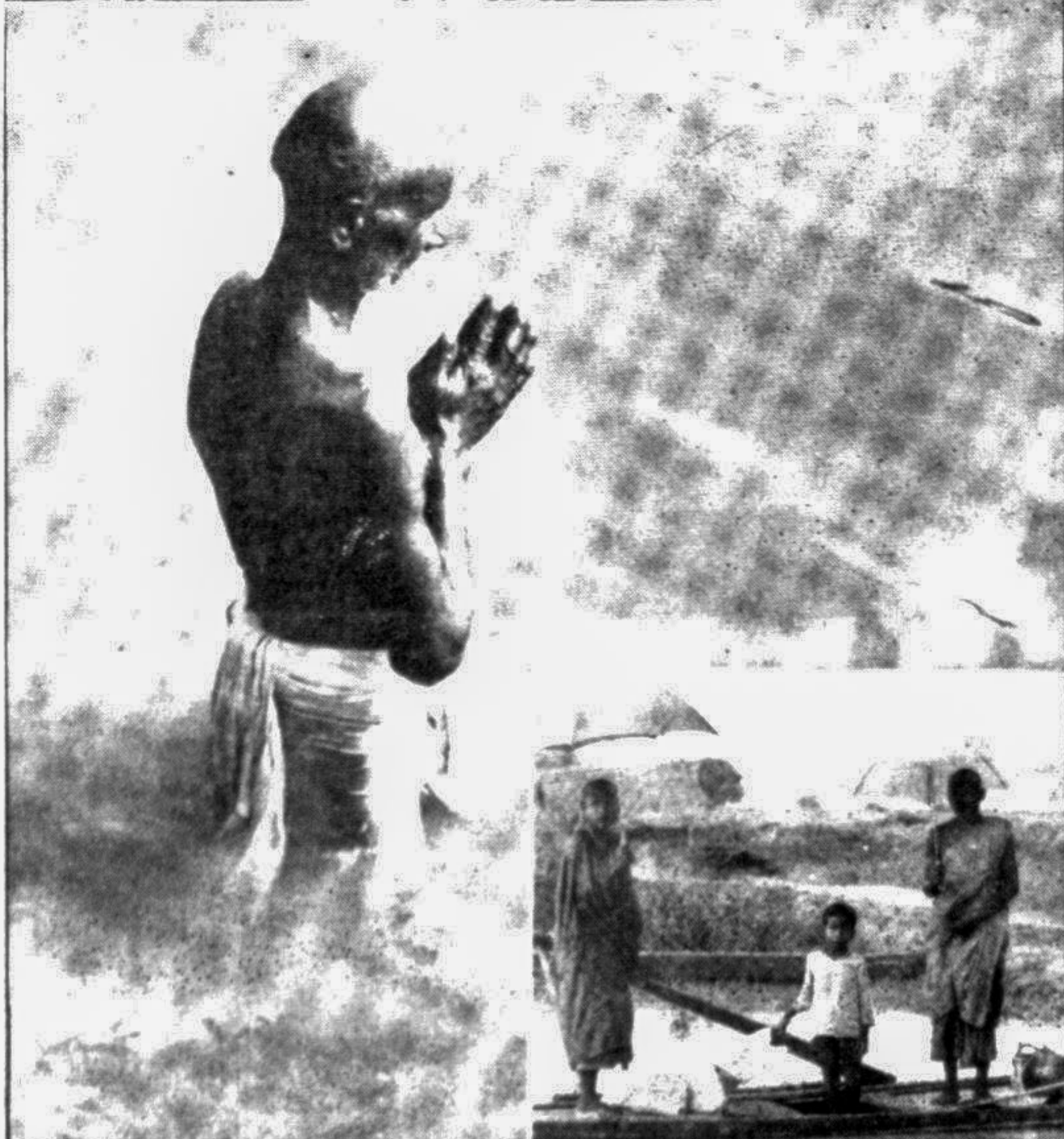
symbolic, not literally the truth. But unfortunately many people think their religion is superior to others. Religions are different because they each offer differing explanations of human nature and destiny, but one is not necessarily better

closer to them, and hatred will disappear.

Even if you don't agree with what someone believes, that doesn't give you the right to impose your belief on him. The way someone prays is their

own business. Religion is many things to many people. Some believe it is a set of given rules to be followed rigidly; others believe it means being good, truthful, and giving. Religion isn't necessarily a set of rituals made by someone else, and followed by millions around the world.

It can be rules you make for yourself: your own personal code of behaviour. I may not call myself a Hindu or a Jew or a Buddhist but still be a religious person by following my own values of good and bad. On the other hand, if I pray



However we pray, however we worship, it is only a matter of names. We are all doing the same thing: acknowledging that there is good in the world, that there is something higher.

than the other. We must learn about each other's beliefs so that we can live in peace. The reason a lot of people don't live in peace is because they hate each other: they hate each other because they fear one another. We fear what we don't know if we learn about others, we feel

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five times a day and disrespect my neighbour, I am not truly religious.

All religions carry the same message: to be good and honest. What you call those guidelines — Christianity, Islam, Judaism or animism — is your own business.

The Chair

comfortable. His face glowed with pride and satisfaction. He was sure that no one else could think of that design. A cobbler outdoing carpenters in their own trade would certainly make sensational news. He showed the model to his neighbours. They like it. He could not wait to carry the seat to the palace: and present it to the king. The king, who had by now almost given up hope, was glad that some one had succeeded

in designing the kind of seat he had in mind. He liked it and rewarded the cobbler suitably, and ordered him to make enough seats for the royal conferences. When the new seats arrived, the king called a conference. When all the honorable men present had taken their seats, he asked them to suggest a suitable name for the seat. Suggestions started flowing. No two persons agreed. Each one was trying to win the king's favour, trying to prove

that his own was the best suggestion. Excitement was growing. Tempers were rising high. The honourable men, forgetting the presence of His Majesty, started heated arguments, calling each other names. Eventually, they started hurling the seats at one another. All the seats got smashed except one. All scrambled for that one seat that was left. Each one of them asserted his right to sit on it. At last the king, who was silently watching the drama, asked them all to leave the hall. The king was worried. He blamed himself for having ordered the seats to be made. All had been going peacefully without them. He sent for his minister and asked his advice. The minister said, "Your Majesty, please call the gentlemen again tomorrow and do not give them any seats. They will be all right."

The next day, all the honourable men were again summoned by the king. There were no seats at all, not even one. They all sat down on the carpet. The king reminded them of what had happened the previous day. Then he asked them again for a suitable name for the seats that they had smashed. The men lowered their heads and said humbly, "We shall accept whatever name Your Majesty suggests." The king smiled and said, "Thank you. The name is not



Time to Stop Being Blind

by Ashek Sakhawat (O-levels)

I was sitting in my car wondering what to do to celebrate my coming Birthday, as I waited for my mom to come out of the market. I suddenly noticed two big black eyes staring at me, then came a smile — he was barely seven with a huge basket on his head. Waiting, waiting for someone to hire him. What could his wish be? No one called him out. He was so small to carry all those which he wouldn't dream of tasting. Why? I couldn't suppress my curiosity any longer: I finally called him and started talking. His name was Kamal and he was a porter. His life followed chains of nightmare, and happiness was as if a dream. They were not rich, he said, but they use to have three

meals a day back at their village. Their financial condition began to deteriorate when it was time for his sister to be married. What ever little assets they had were sold for the wedding and above all the demands of their new son-in-law were to be met. Things were rough but life went on. One day unexpectedly his mother fell very sick. They scraped together all that they had for her treatment; she did not make it. She died of cholera. They were now left with barely anything except themselves. His father had heard that work could be found in the capital. They came with high hopes and full of expectation. Everything began to fade away. Finally he was employed as a rickshawpuller.

Though his father's income was very little, they somehow managed with two meals a day. The only possession that they had was hope. It was the news from his neighbour which shattered every little dream into pieces and hope was not to be spoken of. His father was in the hospital — he rushed over and found him lying in a bed half paralysed. He was hit by a car — quite like the one I was sitting in, listening to his heart-breaking story. Now to feed himself he must work.

Where is the world heading? Kamal is one of the many boys and girls who stroll around the city in search of work or just a meal; where we just have to walk up to the dinner table — it's all there. We never stop for a minute to count our blessings; to think how fortunate we are to have all the material comfort that we take for granted. We teenagers suffer bouts of depression that we are not loved and that we are deprived of what we cannot have. What about them? Do they not dream of having the things that we already have? I think we have all avoided them for long enough. In today's world the rich declare themselves poor, while the poor are as if in a world apart. It is now that we take off the masks of those who hide themselves among us and think only of self-achievement. It is now that we must help Kamal and many many like him.

Heaven or Hell

by Naheed Kamal

It begins with images of serenity: wild flowers gently stirring in an almost imperceptible spring breeze; loons, bright-eyed and sleek, afloat on uncontrolled waters; the lake itself shimmering in the backlight of a dying sun.

These are images, glimpses of what we once had, of better places and times, burnished light colours like all our recollections of the past. A picture of the earth as it once was. Each passing day our perception of such virginal beauty is shattered for real.

As I read a paperback come across a description of the Goddess of love, Venus; my mind drifts further to the planet of the same name, lingers for a moment and zooms back to earth.

Venus is the Roman Goddess of sensual love and feminine beauty. Her son in Greek myth was "Eros", better known as Cupid. The planet Venus itself signifies love, sensuality, virginity and feminine beauty, all blended into one utterly feminine image.

The earth too is feminine. The spirit of procreation and motherhood, Gaia or Ge. There is nothing that is even close to being "hellish" in such images; both the planets or images are essentially feminine and so essentially good in origin.

However as Carl Sagan likes to point out at closer inspection, our planetary neighbour seems less the goddess of love and more like an incarnation of hell. Wrapped in a dense carbon dioxide atmosphere with clouds of sulfuric acid, it is a Dantesque world where surface temperature reach a lead-melting, 900° F and atmospheric pressure are 90 times greater than on earth. In so grim an environment no life could exist. Every day even our beautiful green planet is being transformed into such a wasteland. Because Venus is such an infernal mystery, the heavenly goddess has held a special fascination for our scientists. Why, they wonder, has a planet so close to earth and so like it in size and density evolved into a world so vastly different and hostile?

NASA has provided us with the insights into Venus and some warnings about the earth's our future. Much of NASA's into comes from an

unmanned Pioneer spacecraft. Since it went into orbit in the late 70s it has studied the planets weather by photographing changes in cloud patterns and so lifted the veil off the planet. Venus was seen to have continent size land masses topped by a mountain a mile higher than Everest, it has volcanoes accompanied by lightning and flowing lava, and an otherworldly version of earthquakes.

As dissimilar as Venus is from earth, scientists see its history as a cautionary tale. They warn that if carbon dioxide continue to build up in the earth's atmosphere as rapidly as it has been in the past few decades from burning wood and fossil fuels, the atmosphere will become increasingly like that of Venus.

Sunlight will continue to filter through the atmosphere, but the CO2 will block the heat from radiating back into space, raising global temperatures to the point of melting the polar ice-caps and flooding all coastal cities.

There is still time for us to beat the odds and change our ways. We see it all around us. "SAVE THE PLANET", its become a fad to make much noise about "EARTH DAY" and "WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY". We have to take substantial steps to save the planet and perhaps prevent it from becoming a twin to our neighbour, Venus, Hell or Earth... take your pick. Just keep in mind: If You DON'T LIKE THE WAY THE WORLD IS CHANGE IT!

Saint vs sinner!

One night a burglar broke into a seemingly empty house. Suddenly a sharp voice broke the silence. "I see you and the saint sees you."

The shaken thief took another step forward. Once more the voice repeated the same words. With that, the burglar shone his torch in the direction from which the voice was coming. There, in the circle of light, sat a parrot.

"Stupid bird," the burglar muttered in relief. "I see you," the parrot repeated, "and the saint sees you."

"Shut up," the man snarled as he turned on a lamp. That's when he saw the menacing Doberman pinscher sitting beside the parrot's perch, staring at him with glittering eyes. "Get him, Saint", squawked the parrot.

important: is an assurance from you that the seats will not be smashed again." The honourable men felt quite ashamed of their behaviour. They nodded. "Yes, Your Majesty." The meeting was adjourned. New seats were ordered. But the fight for the chair had already begun!

from "Laughing Together", a UNESCO publication

Can you think of a single word anagram of MONDAY? Ans: DYNAMO

ANIMALORAMS: Unscramble the words to give the name of an animal.

- (1) PEA Ape
- (2) ART Bat
- (3) TAGS Stag
- (4) STREET Setter
- (5) LADEN Eland
- (6) CREMATION Manticore

Overheard: Mom, docs satisfaction come from a satisfactory?

QUIZ CLUB

This week's Quiz questions are:

1. Which continent does not have any desert?
2. Which is the world's largest salt waterlake?
3. Why is the Dead Sea called the 'dead sea'?
4. What was Steve wandler's original name?
5. What does the Olympic Motto 'Citius, Altius, Fortius' mean?
6. What was the first music video nominated for an Academy Award?
7. What is an oboe?
8. How old is the moon?
9. Who was elected king of Bengal in 7500 AD?
10. When was Abahani Krira Chakra established?

Here are the answers to Quiz Club 3rd Jan 1992:

1. Empress Michiko.
2. Philippines.
3. A 14th century ruler of the Mongol empire.
4. Son of Sheikh Fahd who was killed during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.
5. 1770, Bonn, then in West Germany.
6. Sir Robert Walpole from 1721.
7. The Abominable Snowman.
8. Daniel Defoe.
9. "..... in possession of a fortune must be in want of a wife."
10. 1648

Riddles

7. A rock was split and a rock was seen; That rock was split and silver was seen; In the well of silver, water was seen.

Sri Lanka

8. Who am I? I wear a white petticoat and I have a red nose. The longer I stand, the shorter I grow.

Papua New Guinea

9. The man who has been inside doesn't know it. The man who has never been inside does know it.

Japan

10. It has three noses, but walks on ten feet; It has four tongues, where the noses meet.

Sri Lanka

11. Too many to count, But when totalled up, they form one whole. It can jump like a monkey, But cannot climb up a door. It gives life and preserves it. But we both hate and love it. Although it haits from the sky, The sky is not its birthplace.

Sri Lanka

Gracefully and merrily it falls, Strange! some people fear it. If we don't take shelter quickly We'll be shivering with cold.

Malaysia

12. It is there when touched, but not when glanced sideways.

Indonesia

13. When still a bud, it is a heart; When ripe, it is like a comb.

Philippines

14. A bird am I and a male, On my head I wear a crown, and coins galore adorn my tail.

India

Answers to riddles from last week!

1. A clock
2. A mirror
3. O I C U (Oh, I see you)
4. A matchstick
5. A pineapple
6. A wild goose

Fill out this form and send it to us, and you will be a member of the Rising Star Club. Send in your writings, illustrations, and cartoons. It is an ideal opportunity to express yourself through the print media.



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