

UNFINISHED PILGRIMAGES: GEOFFREY MAW AND JACK HOYLAND IN INDIA

The map of India is rather like an irregular diamond, with its long axis lying north and south. The northern point of the diamond is in the mountain barrier between Kashmir and Tibet, the southern at Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin). Westward, the diamond is fairly regular; the peninsular of Kutch, north of Bombay, forms its western point. But eastward there is a great bulge, as the frontier of India follows the giant curve of the Himalayas from furthest north to furthest east, where the mountains of Nagaland merge into those of China and Burma. That eastern region was familiar terrain to many Friends Ambulance Unit men during the 1940s, as they flew “over the hump” from India to their service in western China. But if one does not use wings, the journey to that eastern point from southern Cape Comorin by train, bus, and jeep can take a full week, as your speaker personally knows.

It was not however to the wild beauty of the east that the great ancient pilgrimages were made. Pilgrims from furthest south and west turned instead to the central region of the great Himalayan curve, where Mother Ganga, the river Ganges, rises among the eternal snows. Pilgrims still travel in their thousands along those ancient routes, and some of the pilgrimages we shall describe in this lecture followed the same paths.

Geoffrey Maw and Jack Hoyland spent much of their time in India very near the centre of the Indian diamond, in the Hoshangabad district of what was then the Central Provinces of colonial India. Hoshangabad town lies on the south bank of another great river, “Mother Narmada”, at about the middle of its course. The Narmada rises among forested hills 400 miles or more to the east, and runs westward for a total of over 800 miles to reach the sea at Bharuch (Broach) north of Bombay. Very close to its source is that of the Sone, which turns away north-east to become one of the major tributaries of the Ganges and discharge its waters into the Bay of Bengal. Narmada, Sone and Ganga together practically turn the Indian peninsula into an island. But they are not formidable barriers. Hoshangabad itself is an ancient ferry town, and in

spite of its modern rail and road bridges the ferry boats are still in very active use. Alive and active too is the old Narmada *parikrama*, the great pilgrimage which circumambulates the whole course of the river, The pilgrim, keeping the sacred river on his right and (wherever physically possible) within view, traverses its whole length from source to mouth, and back again along the other bank. The great bathing ghats and temples at Hoshangabad are a favourite starting point. This pilgrimage too, with its inward and outward spiritual disciplines, is part of the background of our study today.

Geoffrey Maw and Jack Hoyland came to India in 1910 and 1912 respectively and the legacy of thought and achievement they have left to us was shaped very largely by their experiences during the next 20 years. It was a time of "the shaking of the foundations", of far-reaching political, intellectual and spiritual upheavals in India, which preceded, accompanied and followed the first world war. Before dealing with those creative 20 years, however, we should attempt briefly to set them in the context of what had gone before, of the contacts which Friends from the British Isles had already established in India.

The roots of British Quaker concern for India go back to their part in the long struggle against slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their allies in that struggle were men whose compassion, and whose crusades for justice to the weak and down-trodden, had been inspired by the evangelical movement in the English church. Quakers themselves had been concerned for public righteousness from the beginning of their history; William Penn had declared in the earliest years that true religion 'don't turn men out of the world but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it'. But from the beginning of the eighteenth century Quakers had tended to withdraw from the world, and many of them needed the stimulus of the evangelical inspiration to send them back to their own tradition. As they became aware of things going wrong in the India of the East India Company, of famines, indentured labour and so on, a number of Quakers, including the noble statesman John Bright, felt called to intervene.

Many other Quakers, influenced by the evangelical movement, were strongly drawn to the foreign missionary work which their friends in other churches were undertaking, and in 1866 they finally founded their own Friends Foreign Mission Association. Its leaders included many of the wealthiest and best-known Quaker families, the Quaker "establishment" of London Yearly Meeting, and there is no doubt about their sincerity and devotion. But there were elements in their attitude which were

more controversial; their compassion was not unmixed with a patronising paternalism. In England and India alike they offered the poor and illiterate a “simple Gospel” of salvation very much like that of their fellow missionaries, and neglected the distinctively Quaker witness to the divine Seed in every human heart. Their paternalism was strengthened by the great British complacency of the later nineteenth century; most of them shared the assumption that Britain’s mission, both in politics and in religion, was to bring a superior “Christian” civilisation to replace the inferior and positively evil systems of the “heathen” world.

From the beginning there were voices within the Society itself which questioned these attitudes. A few Quaker missionaries, whose roots were in what was regarded as the “old-fashioned” conservative tradition, wanted to see the full Quaker message emphasized – but they carried little weight with the FFMA committees. Increasingly, however, as the century drew to its close, a younger generation of university-trained Quakers were calling on the Society to study and re-assess its whole religious inheritance and think out its relevance to a modern world of scientific discovery and increasing global communication. These sensitive and articulate thinkers carried increasing weight in the Society; their influence led to the founding of Woodbroke in 1903, when Geoffrey and Jack stood on the threshold of young manhood.

The divergence between “evangelical” and “conservative” in Quaker missionary work was brought dramatically into the open at a Quaker missionary conference in 1896. An FFMA missionary had insisted that non-Christian India should be thought of as living entirely in “black” darkness with no relieving gleam of light. The Chairman of the meeting intervened, and reminded those present that Quakers had always borne witness to a different faith. The human heart, he said, is a kind of palimpsest, a document in which the original (divine) writing has been hidden and over-written by something else. With care, the original may be brought to light again. As we have seen, there had always been *some* Quaker missionaries who recognized and responded to that divine writing in the heart of India, though they were a small ignored minority and among FFMA recruits the evangelical outlook remained understandably strong.

In the early years of the twentieth century Quakers in touch with religious thought in the English Universities were learning to combine the passion for social righteousness of men like Joseph Pease and John Bright with an appreciation of much they might *learn* from India in matters of spiritual insight. In 1907, when Jack Hoyland entered

Christ's College Cambridge, University circles were being stirred by C.F. Andrews, fresh from the impact of his first years in Dehli and the creative Indian nationalist thinking he found there. Andrews was one of the chief catalysts for a great deal of what Douglas Steere was later to call 'mutual irradiation', which was going on among thinkers of many traditions during the decade preceding the first world war.

This situation was reflected in microcosm at a Young Friends Conference in 1909 at which Geoffrey and Jack were both present. Jack's father, John William Hoyland, who had just returned from a visit to the Quaker "mission field" in the Hoshangabad district, was one of the senior participants, and among others were an FFMA missionary Joseph Taylor, and William Paton, a non-Quaker "missionary statesman" who represented the new outlook. Joseph Taylor had lived in India for 20 years; he was the only FFMA missionary of his generation to offer sympathy and friendship to the independent Indian Quaker group in Calcutta which had found its way to Quakerism outside the Missionary framework.¹ In that very year, 1909, the most articulate member of the group had completed a kind of testimony to their experience of 'the universal religion of God on earth', the "Substance" (he used Isaac Penington's phrase) of which our various human insights into truth are the "Shadows". The next year, 1910, another member of the group was to visit England and talk, in Jack's rooms, to the Young Friends at Cambridge.

Of the Young Friends themselves, no less than six were to give some significant service in India. Along with Geoffrey and Jack there were Horace Alexander, Howard Somervell, Frank Cheshire and Roderick Clarke. There was also Amy Montford, later to become secretary of the Friends Service Council, which from the 1920s onwards strove to unite Quaker spiritual and social concerns in one integrated witness to truth. From the Netherlands came Kees Boecke, who later did some revolutionary social thinking which was amazingly akin to Mahatma Gandhi's, and was rooted, as Gandhi's was, in the life of his own country. There was 'mutual irradiation' here too, and some of the ideas put before the conference are relevant to our whole discussion today.

Joseph Taylor spoke of the 'open-minded agnosticism' of many educated men in India, which if it met no sympathetic response, could easily slide into 'careless materialism'. William Paton emphasized how much India and the west had to learn from one another: 'We need India as much as India needs us'. John William Hoyland spoke of the 'sheltered Christian education' he had seen carried on in Hoshangabad,

in the weavers' colony at Khera and the industrial school at Rasulia, and of the need for excellence in all such endeavour. Someone raised the profound question of a salvation which could only be wrought by personally accepted suffering, not by any "Cross" external to ourselves. Probably the speaker did not know that Mahatma Gandhi was even then leading *satyagraha* in South Africa, based on the same principle of the redemptive power of willingly accepted suffering.

The concept of "sheltered education" has a certain ambiguity. Many missionaries undoubtedly used it to mean that Christian children should be protected from too much contact with a non-Christian society which might "contaminate" their minds. In the thought of Rabindranath Tagore the phrase has a different connotation; he believed that there is a psychological need for the young human plant to be protected from too much exposure to the rough and tumble of the world until it has developed its own inner strength. Is "sheltered education" a valid concept, and if so, how? Geoffrey and Jack were both to be concerned with finding answers to such questions.

The next year, 1910, an International Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh, a conference which was in many ways a landmark, signalling a new phase, more open and sympathetic, in western Christian relationships with Asia. Geoffrey and Jack were both present, acting as door-keepers and listening in to the proceedings. Soon after that Geoffrey and his fiancée, Mildred Brison, went straight to India to work in the FFMA. They were sternly separated as soon as they got there, sent to places as distant as possible from one another, and forbidden to think of marriage till they had learned Hindi and passed their examinations. A very powerful incentive to study, and it worked! Both passed with flying colours, Geoffrey at the top of the first class. They started work, quietly and sensitively, in the Boys' Boarding Home at Seoni Malwa, itself a piece of "sheltered" Quaker education.

Jack had a different experience, and one very significant for the future. He spent 1911-12 in U.S.A., studying theology at Hartford, but also partnering Rufus Jones in an effort to bring into closer fellowship the different branches of American Quakerism. In U.S.A., as in U.K., there were "evangelical" and "conservative" Quakers, as well as a third group, the "Hicksites", who strongly emphasized the universal element in the Quaker tradition and tended to reject the "orthodox" or "evangelical" theology. Differences had become so acute that these groups had separate Yearly Meetings, almost completely isolated from one another. Jack had already been successful, as a student in Christ's College, in bringing together two "rival" Christian student organisations,

one “evangelical” the other “liberal”, into one College Christian fellowship. The divided, mutually suspicious American Quakers were a tougher proposition, but real progress was made. ‘The conservatives are the key’, reported Jack. ‘They have a spiritual robustness which the Hicksites often lack’. His work culminated, in July 1912, in a summer gathering of Young Friends to which “Old Woodbrokers” in U.S.A. invited six Young Friends from U.K. A young “orthodox” Quaker, Clarence Pickett, discovered there to his astonishment how “Friendly” Hicksites might be! In later years, as a distinguished secretary of the AFSC, he was to work happily with them all. Since then these pioneering efforts have been followed up, and some of the rival groups have come together again. But in 1987 it is still possible, as a concerned American Friend Jack Willcutts has recently reminded us, for “evangelical” and “liberal” Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic to hold misleading and unfriendly stereotypes of one another. Here is one of Jack’s “unfinished pilgrimages” which we do not need to go to India to share.

Jack Hoyland reached Hoshangabad in December 1912, to be warmly welcomed by Joseph Taylor. He rode over from Khera, outside Itarsi, on the sturdy bicycle his father had given him, and looked with a friendly eye at the little town but he did not at once settle down there. When he had returned home from U.S.A. the previous summer C.F. Andrews and his friend S.K. Rudra, principal of St. Stephen’s College Delhi, had been visiting England, and Andrews’ newly-published book *The Renaissance in India* was being eagerly read in University circles. At his invitation Jack moved on to Delhi, then newly-proclaimed as the capital of India, to study the language and see the “renaissance” for himself.

Thanks to Andrews, Jack met there Gokhale, the great Indian liberal statesman whom Gandhiji regarded as his “political guru.” Gandhiji himself was still in South Africa, and Gokhale inspired Jack, as he had inspired so many others, with a deep concern for the issues at stake there, issues of national self-respect and racial equality. Back in Hoshangabad a few months later Jack began demonstrating racial equality by sharing a little bazaar house with Percy Herring, a young man of Gurkha extraction who had been cared for by John William Hoyland while he studied commerce in Birmingham, and who now planned to open a commercial training school in Hoshangabad. Jack also tried to get a public meeting in support of Gandhiji’s work in South Africa, only to be harassed, as Andrews had been in Delhi, by suspicious police spies. In the face of this official hostility he got no public support,

and little sympathy from his fellow Quaker missionaries, with the exception of Joseph Taylor.

Andrews also took Jack to visit the Gurukul, the school at Hardwar which trained boys in the Arya Samaj's ideals of renascent Hinduism. He met its great Principal, Mahatma Munshi Ram, and was deeply impressed. 'He is a shining example', he wrote, 'of the fact that those who follow the light within must come to the fulness of truth'. 'The Quaker missionary's duty is to help men to follow truth by whatever road lies open to them'. Such suggestions met with even less sympathy from evangelical fellow missionaries, who insisted that there was only one path on which to follow truth. Jack on his part found Hoshangabad meetings for worship very uncongenial; they were 'more Methodist than Quaker'. There was none of the silent waiting on God to which he was accustomed; instead the time was filled with what he called "hot air" – evangelical hymns, readings and preachings. 'Words are not real things', he exploded: 'they can be used to hide truth instead of set forth truth... in a *real* Quaker meeting the difficulty does not arise'. He found it true in India as in U.S.A., though in a different context, that "*both* intellectual re-statement *and* living spiritual experience are needed'. Intellectually, they must be able to speak to the condition of Joseph Taylor's 'openminded agnostics', and must be able to offer them also that 'spiritual robustness' which knows the Light within not as theory but as reality.

In Delhi, Jack had also been involved in the debate about missionary methods which centred on Andrews. Andrews said, in effect: 'Live your faith, don't talk about it; let your life speak: be content with the slow permeation of the life of India by the living spirit of Christ'. Others, equally sensitive, said that was not enough, there should be a positive witness also. How, Jack asked himself, should a Quaker give that witness? Over the next few years, as he married and settled down, re-opened and began to develop the Quaker High School at Hoshangabad, he found some answers to that question.

The search for "answers" was not carried on in isolation. By the early months of 1914, when the High School was re-opened, Geoffrey and Mildred Maw were living close by, looking after the Boys' Boarding School in Hoshangabad. There were other young recruits, the farmer Ratcliffe Addison, and Basil Backhouse. There were Indian friends such as Dr Johory from Bhopal and Eliathamby of the Y.M.C.A. There were young Indian teachers in the school, as well as congenial older folk like Joseph Taylor and "uncle" A.H. Smith. They sought and found "answers" together; if in describing them I use Jack's language, it is for

two reasons: that it is his letters and comments that have been best preserved, and that he was undoubtedly the most articulate of the group and the most disposed to think aloud on paper.

The Quaker witness, said Jack, is something India understands well: that religion is not just a matter of creed and ritual but is involved with the whole of life. In school it is not just a matter of the Bible class, but of the whole social and intellectual life of the community, including the life of the play-ground, so every boy in the school was encouraged to join in games and sports for sheer fun, for pride in skill and for practice in unselfish team work, scrupulous fair play and honesty. Boats were built and launched on the river, excursions took off to the jungles on the further side. There were camps to which other schools were invited, where active fun of this kind was combined with worship and Bible study, and where Dr. Johory, at 55 years of age, delighted everyone by demonstrating how to turn cart-wheels. The boys put on plays, with all the practical mutual cooperation that involves; *Hamlet* was orientalised and performed in Urdu to appreciative audiences, and enlivened, on the boys' initiative, with topical comic entr'actes. School elections showed that in this open friendly atmosphere the boys could and did chose those best fitted for the job in hand, regardless of their caste. 70 per cent of the school was Hindu, but to a committee of six they elected three Muslims, one Christian, one non-Brahman Hindu and one Brahman.

Another aspect of Quaker witness, said Jack, is that a living religious experience inspires ethical enthusiasm and practical programmes for righting wrong. Noble human example has a powerful appeal, and the more living ones there are the better. But above all daily regular Bible study should set before the boys the life and example of Jesus as a great human leader, one who met wrong-doing with 'humble self-forgetful love', and challenged them to follow. 'We aim', he wrote, 'at a character like Jesus Christ, and this is impossible without the personal experience of the divine which is the essence of religion. We do not aim at winning proselytes for a particular social unit, but at calling out impulses which may lead the pupil into a fuller life'.

This matter of regular definite religious teaching was, and is, of wide general interest. In 1913, when Jack was preparing to re-open the High School, the Government of India issued a statement of educational policy which called this 'the most important educational problem of our time': Recognizing that 'the most thoughtful minds lament the tendency to develop the intellectual at the expense of the moral and religious faculties', but bound by its own commitment to religious neutrality, it invited the public to provide 'practical solution'. One suggestion was a

“conscience clause” permitting individuals to opt out of the religious education programme of their school. Jack himself strongly opposed it, and quoted Edward Thring: ‘the practice which separates brain-work from religion and morality and calls it education is simply the devil let loose’. The devil is still loose in India; the “practical solution” for which the Government hoped in 1913, if it has been found, has not yet been accepted. We still have more to say of Jack’s unfinished educational pilgrimage, but this is part of it.

Though no written record remains we know that Geoffrey, among his younger boys, was engaged in the same faithful daily Bible teaching and “life education”. But Geoffrey’s thoughts were turning also to another possible dimension of Quaker witness. The Friends’ compound on the outskirts of Hoshangabad over-looked the great river; Geoffrey’s children, with their Indian friends, would lie on the high bank watching the crocodiles below. Geoffrey himself was fascinated by “Mother Narmada”, and by the pilgrims who had undertaken the *parikrama* and trudged past on their way downstream. There were others too, devotees for whom the holy river was the centre of their life. Geoffrey made friends with them. ‘You are a lover of the Narmada’, said one of them to him. ‘So am I, therefore we are brothers’. He was strongly attracted to these men, *sadhus* and *sannyasis* who had renounced all worldly ties for the sake of that ‘personal experience of the divine’ which Quakers too recognize as the heart of religion. He longed to enter into a more intimate spiritual dialogue with them.

Meanwhile, the first world war had begun, and as the years went by its impact was felt more and more in India. Communications with England became more difficult, there were serious money shortages. Missionary allowances had never been more than barely adequate. By 1916 Geoffrey and Mildred had been in India nearly six years; Mildred’s health had broken down and their youngest child had died. A furlough was overdue. As the time for leaving approached, Geoffrey felt restless and depressed. ‘Do you think I should come back?’ he said to Jack. ‘There seems to be no real sphere of work for me here in the FFMA’. ‘I’m sure you are mistaken’, pleaded Jack urgently. ‘You must indeed come back’.

And in fact the year that followed, 1916–17, proved significant for both of them. During his summer holiday in 1916 Jack met Sadhu Sundar Singh at Kotgarh near Simla, and was greatly impressed. A little later he was visited in Hoshangabad by a man named Sherwood, who had been at Cambridge with him, and who had now become a Christian *sannyasi*. Jack admired his sincerity and pluck, but wondered whether

the witness of such a life would not be too “defuse”. It was the same question that had arisen in Delhi about the “silent witness” of men like C.F. Andrews. But he invited Sundar Singh to Hoshangabad, and at the end of the year the Sadhu took part in the Christian *mela* at Makoriya. In the High School at Hoshangabad the boys hung on his words, and he spoke to packed meetings, mainly of non-Christians, in the Meeting House.

Later in 1917 Geoffrey returned alone to India; the sea voyage in war had become too potentially dangerous for him to bring Mildred and the children. On board ship he too came into contact, through books, with the *sannyasi* ideal among Christians. *The Love of God*, by Samuel Stokes, told how in 1908 he had joined with Sundar Singh and a young English friend of C.F. Andrews, Frank Western, to form an “order” of Christian *sadhus*, “The Brotherhood of the Discipleship of Christ”. The Brotherhood as such had not lasted long (Stokes married an Indian lady and gave his service henceforward as a “householder”; Western became a much-loved Bishop of the English church) but it had started Sundar Singh upon his life-long vocation. The other book was by Jack’s friend Sherwood, telling the story of his own chosen vocation as a Christian *sannyasi*. One can imagine, though there is no record, how eagerly Geoffrey and Jack must have shared their thoughts when Geoffrey got back to Hoshangabad. What appealed to them both was the commitment “one hundred percent” to try to live out the Christian life.

Both men had felt this keenly with regard to the Quaker peace witness in wartime. ‘It is our chief religious business’, Jack had written in 1915, ‘to see that in the midst of this criminal madness there is a little enclave of the kingdom of love... We need to get back to the ideal of our Society as a real kingdom of God, (“a peculiar people”) in which Christ must be followed at all costs... The salvation of the world comes by this little kingdom, so long as its members do not compromise its ideals.’

In 1917, after some uncertainty, all Quaker men of military age in Hoshangabad district were given exemption as conscientious objectors from military service. The test had come for Geoffrey on board ship. As they passed through the Mediterranean they had a narrow escape from being torpedoed and sunk. When they reached the safe waters of the Red Sea passengers and crew celebrated their deliverance and paid tribute to the army and navy. Geoffrey gladly drank the toast to the navy, but the speaker for the army made some unjust remarks about conscientious objectors which he could not ignore, so he remained

seated and did not drink. He was summoned to a passengers' meeting to explain his conduct. 'I fully share your respect for the courage of the army', he told them, 'but I know the criticism of C.O.'s to be unfair'. It was decided to ostracise him for the rest of the voyage, but long before the ship reached Bombay some of its passengers were reflecting that this friendly, gentle man had after all shown considerable pluck in standing up all alone for his beliefs, and were beginning to talk to him again.

Then came a tragic interlude. In the autumn of 1917 Jack fell seriously ill, at a time when Helen and the children were away. Dengue fever was followed by enteric, and he went to Makoriya to be cared for by Ratcliffe Addison's doctor wife Gail, so weak that Ratcliffe had to carry him from the railway train to the waiting bullock-cart. By doctor's orders he did not return to Hoshangabad till the rains had set in in July 1918. He set to work again, full of vigour and creative ideas, but barely three months later, in early October, the disastrous influenza epidemic struck the district. Jack himself, and his family, were among the first and mildest cases.

Nowadays, even in India, the extent of that disaster has been largely forgotten. Official census figures show that during the final months of 1918 the population of India as a whole was reduced by 10 per cent; in the Central Provinces alone the mortality during those terrible few weeks was greater than the war casualties of the whole British Empire during the whole war. Bad harvests and near-famine conditions made things worse. Some villages were practically wiped out, many lost 50 per cent of their people, the Quaker weavers community at Khera near Itarsi, where Jack had spent his first weekend in India, lost 111 out of 262. Geoffrey and Jack plunged into their first experience of major relief work. Geoffrey, now posted in Itarsi, would begin each day by getting a huge supply of medicine made up from the prescription given by the local Government doctor; he spent the whole morning giving it out to all comers in the tiny Friends Hospital. In the afternoons, for as long as light lasted, he visited every village he could reach, after darkness fell there were the Christian families in Khera and Itarsi to be cared for. Jack did the same sort of thing in Hoshangabad and the villages round about. High School boy volunteers went out two by two, with a tonga or a bicycle, giving out medicine and persuading people to take it. They all worked furiously, 14 to 16 hours a day, week after week, snatching a little food when they could. The need was equally desperate in Bhopal, and in answer to appeals for help Jack sent two of his best boys there. Friendly officials supplied a bullock cart, and a soldier to guide them

and give them authority; local doctors supplied the medicine and the instructions, and magnificent work was done. Jack was proud of his volunteers; his one regret was that there were not more of them, and he suspected that at least in some cases parents had intervened to forbid it.

By mid December the epidemic was over, but for Jack the greatest tragedy of that time was yet to come. At the end of the month Helen gave birth to a baby boy, Peter. A few days later she died from what proved to be enteric fever. She was indirectly a victim of the epidemic; the infection was bred in the insanitary conditions inevitable when nearly all the municipal scavengers were themselves sick or dying of influenza. Baby Peter survived only a few weeks, and Jack, desolated, took the two older boys back to England to be cared for there. It was the end of an era.

In the spring of 1919, when the war was over, a number of new Quaker enterprises were in the air. Joseph and Katherine Taylor, retired from the Hoshangabad district, were about to take up their long-felt concern for service in Calcutta. A new generation of Quakers was less interested in conventional missionary work than in the possibility of witnessing to their faith while doing some ordinary "secular" job in India, earning an independent livelihood. Preparations were beginning for an All-Friends Conference in 1920 at which for the first time Indian Friends would be present. There seemed, however, to be no such new inspiring vision for the Hoshangabad district. There the mission seemed to be suffering, in Jack's words, from 'a species of malignant dry rot'.

Early in the year, soon after Jack reached England, he was visited by two young men, Hugh Maclean and William Pitt, who had got to know Geoffrey during his furlough in 1917, when they were in the Friends Ambulance Unit. They now planned, with the blessing of the FFMA, to try to earn their own living in India, if possible in agriculture, and give their witness through their work. Jack was interested and attracted; he had never met any Quakers quite like them, 'very strongly Quaker, and at the same time evangelical'.

By the end of February Hugh and William had reached Itarsi, and Geoffrey was telling them of his and Jack's concern for the "dry rot" in the meetings, and the need for a new spiritual vision and power. He invited two Indian Friends to meet them, who shared the same concern. The older man, Khushilal, came from a village on the Bhopal side of the river; the younger, Kampta Prasad, had been three or four years earlier one of Jack's boys in the High School and shared in the schoolboys'

camps. The little group sat down together, Quaker fashion, to wait on the Lord, and felt among them the living Presence and Power. Then, and at many meetings in the days and weeks that followed, Khushilal spoke as the spirit 'gave him utterance', others were rapidly drawn in, and there was a remarkable spiritual awakening which spread, through a worker called Samuel Harry James, to Sohagpur also. After two or three weeks Hugh and William moved on to find their own work, but Khushilal's inspired leadership continued. The spirit of the Khera weaving community was transformed, and people from outside were also attracted, among others a remarkable Hindu *sadhu* who, convinced of the reality of the experience, cast in his lot with Friends.

Was there any link, one wonders, between the devastating sufferings of Khera in the epidemic a few months earlier, and this reponse to the new spiritual vision? Jack Hoyland had known a deep religious experience during the exhaustion of body and mind that followed his illness in 1917; during the influenza epidemic he and Geoffrey had both been profoundly moved as they had travelled the death-stricken villages and felt themselves so powerless to help. Some of the young men who had been Geoffrey's best fellow-workers at that time now became close comrades in the new spiritual adventure. Khushilal became a very close friend.

It was not long before Khushilal asked that he might be released from the paid service mission in order to live as a Christian Quaker *sadhu*, depending for his daily needs, as other *sadhus* did, on the freely-offered gifts of the people. He turned first to the villages north of the river, in his own home region, and Geoffrey joined him there whenever he could free himself from the routine of his own regular mission work. Soon another mission worker, Dharma Sevak, also asked for release from paid service and joined the little team. It was among those villages that Geoffrey first discovered and used his own gift of spiritual healing, praying in faith for the sick they encountered on the way. Geoffrey was grateful to be used as a channel of healing power, but he spoke little of this gift, and not many records have survived; those that do are mainly from these Bhopal villages.

As Geoffrey talked once more with pilgrims and *sadhus* along the banks of "Mother Narmada", and with those who each year at the time of Mahasivaratri (the great annual festival of Siva, also named Mahadeo) climbed to the mountain shrine of Mahadeo beyond Pachmarhi, in the south-east corner of the district, his mind turned more and more to the greatest pilgrimage of them all, to the three sources of Mother Ganga herself at Badrinath and Kedarnath and Gangotri in the central

Himalayas. Could not he and Khushilal undertake this pilgrimage together, travelling as other pilgrims did, sharing the same experiences, making friends, meeting and talking with fellow-seekers of the divine Reality? Khushilal was very willing, and the Friends in Itarsi became interested also, and gave Geoffrey his first set of *sadhu's* robes – the long saffron-coloured shirt and the dhoti or waist-cloth, and the saffron-coloured turban. Quaker as he was, Geoffrey added a plain Cross on a chain around his neck. He wanted no deceit, and this would proclaim without words that he was a disciple of Jesus. He found that it gave no offence, and that his fellow pilgrims accepted him naturally as one of themselves. He and Khushilal had great fun with the turban. Geoffrey's own attempts to wind it with his unaccustomed fingers met with no approval. 'It makes you look like an unemployed waiter!' declared Khushilal, and took the matter in hand. The cloth would be fanned out on Geoffrey's head into a jaunty crown, while his spine was protected from the sun by the long end hanging down the back.

Geoffrey and Khushilal made their first Himalayan pilgrimage in the summer of 1923; they went again in 1930 and in 1934. From the railhead at Hardwar where the Ganges emerges from the Himalayan valleys into the plains of North India, the pilgrim track stretched before them for 225 miles, climbing and descending, and climbing steeply again. Here and there, especially at the "prayags" where major tributaries join the stream, are little clustered bazaars. One of them is Rudraprayag, whose name is well known to those who have read Jim Corbett's account of the man-eating leopard which once terrorised the area. When Geoffrey made his first pilgrimage in 1923 the leopard was still at large. The scenery was breath-takingly beautiful; Geoffrey feasted his eyes on some of the most magnificent mountains in the world. The lure of these mountains had from time to time brought climbers like F.S. Smythe, and botanists, as well as passionate hunters such as Jim Corbett, along the pilgrim route. But Geoffrey's journeys were unique; he was, so far as we know, the only foreigner in those days that followed that track as a pilgrim among pilgrims, sharing their spiritual aspirations and the hardships and accidents and many minor irritations of the journey. It is an experience that cannot now be repeated; since the 1940s the old pilgrim track has become a motor road, and most pilgrims now travel by bus. Those who still walk, on principle or from necessity, have new irritations to contend with, in the choking dust and stinking fumes which pollute every stretch of the way. The friendly comradeship of the road and the road-side camps, the goodwill and good temper and mutual helpfulness which were among Geoffrey's pleasantest memories, are largely gone.

In 1934 Geoffrey was already crippled with the arthritis that troubled his later years, and was often in great pain. He did not expect to make the pilgrimage again, but shortly before he left India in 1948 he did go, travelling by bus as far as it would then take him and walking the remaining 50 miles or so. Later, in England, he put together from his diaries a consolidated account of his experiences on all four pilgrimages, of the people he met, the intimate friendships he made, the daily incidents – some comic, a few tragic, all very human – the saints and the scoundrels, and the plucky patient ordinary folk, who were part of the great panorama. It is a wonderful story.

Hardships there certainly were. The old track was rough, narrow and in places extremely dangerous, especially for people with no head for heights. Yet Geoffrey met one blind man, quite alone, who pluckily edged round those dangerous corners with his two sticks, and got there. So did the old woman with one leg, who travelled on two rough bamboo crutches with no padding under the arms. At some halts the only firewood available produced a most acrid smoke, while mosquitoes, scorpions, and the swarms of flies and inevitably inadequate sanitation all added to the physical strain. What tried Geoffrey's patience most however were the "sharks" who set themselves to make every possible profit out of the pilgrims. Many of these were *pandas*, priests attached to the various temples. Poor simple people, many of whom had saved for a lifetime in order to make this pilgrimage, would be ruthlessly told that unless they gave so and so at this shrine or that, their pilgrimage would not be "successful".

Yet angry as Geoffrey could be at this callous exploitation of the poor, he takes pains to record times when the divine spark shone out even from the *pandas*. On one pilgrimage he was struggling alone up the last steep climb to Badrinath (for Khushilal had been left behind sick at an earlier halt). He was shivering with malaria, stung by a fierce storm of hail, and near exhaustion. A party of *pandas* overtook him, looked at him, and saw his condition. One of them took and carried his bag, another took off his own coat and put it over his shoulders, they took his elbows and supported him up the slope. Arrived at Badrinath they took him to an inn, settled him comfortably, and brought him blankets and hot tea – all in pure disinterested kindness.

On another occasion Geoffrey and Khushilal were being cross-questioned by an official of one of the temples, one of the very few unfriendly people they met. 'What right have you, a foreigner, to wear the *sadhu's* robe?' he demanded, deliberately speaking in Sanskrit to humiliate Geoffrey who did not know it. Khushilal, who did know it,

answered for him, quoting chapter and verse from the Hindu scriptures: any genuine seeker may wear these garments. The bully changed ground. 'Why do you Christians go round preaching? Where is the need? Let the people come to you of themselves!' Khushilal indicated the group of *pandas* who were sitting listening to the debate. 'What do these men do in the winter?' he asked, 'when the mountain shrines are blocked with snow? Don't they go down to the plains and preach to the people, and persuade them to make the pilgrimage?' Geoffrey had come away depressed, thinking what a poor show he had made. To his surprise he found himself surrounded by a friendly crowd of *pandas*. 'You had the best of it', they said. 'You are quite right, we do go round preaching. And he lost his temper but you didn't, you remained calm, and smiling. Yes, *you* had the best of it!'

By 1923, when Geoffrey found his special sphere of service with the pilgrims and the *sadhus*, Jack had been back in India for over three years, not in Hoshangabad but in Nagpur, at the Hislop College of the Scottish church mission. The decision to take up work there was in some ways the outcome of much earlier thought, for at Hoshangabad he had often reflected about how Friends might best cooperate with others in providing a Christian higher education, and he had talked his ideas over with other missionaries both in Jabalpur and in Nagpur. He believed that Quakers had their own distinctive religious witness to make, but that did not prevent them from cooperating with others in the task of 'forming a character like Jesus Christ'. From the beginning of 1920 he had taken charge of a hostel, and a teaching programme, in Nagpur. It was a stirring place to be, just then. 1920 saw the start of Mahatma Gandhi's first great non-cooperational movement, and Nagpur itself was the venue of a critical session of the Congress. Gandhiji had called, among other things, for a boycott of colleges, and when Hislop College reopened in 1921 four students were present out of a total of 320. Maharashtrians were a militant race; in spite of all that Gandhiji could do there was much fanatical hatred of the British, and before the year was out one student had attempted to murder Jack. Jack's response, when later the boy was threatened with TB, was to do all he could to secure him the proper treatment in a sanatorium. His patience, good humour and athletic enthusiasms, his knowledge of Tagore, of Kabir, of the Gita, steadily changed hostility into friendliness; boys who a few months earlier had torn up their Bibles began willingly to attend scripture classes.

The experience of the influenza epidemic had made Jack, like Geoffrey, keenly aware of the oppressions of the poor. One result was

that he put together a book of Bible studies called 'Christ and National Reconstruction', for study in High School or college classes. It studied Jesus' attitudes to the national problems of his own day in relation to those of modern India. In Nagpur, he again and again led parties of college students to help in cholera epidemics and other emergencies in villages, as he had led the High School Boys in 1918 into the stricken villages of Hoshangabad. But he remained critical of *political* nationalism as such. Mahatma Gandhi won his admiration in 1922 by his courage in calling off a movement that had failed in non-violence, even at the risk of alienating his own followers. Jack himself had risked unpopularity among his own students by insisting that Jesus was *not* a "nationalist" in the accepted sense of the word.

It is interesting that at the time of the next India-wide non-cooperation movement in 1930, after Jack had been forced by ill-health to withdraw permanently from India, Geoffrey felt compelled to raise the same questions with Gandhiji: did not "non-cooperation" inevitably, even if unintentionally, give scope for hatred and inhumanity? Was there not a better way? Gandhiji answered his letter with his usual courteous thoughtfulness, writing from his salt camp at Dandi on the west coast, where he had that very morning scooped up his illegal and historic handful of salt!

In 1926 Geoffrey visited Jack in Nagpur. They must have had much to share with one another about their respective "pilgrimages". Jack arranged for Geoffrey to give a series of public lectures about his experiences in 1923. The meetings were crowded out; all kinds of people flocked to hear him, far more (reported Jack) than even for a political meeting. And in those days before Independence political meetings were the great draw, especially in such a politically conscious place as Nagpur.

There, in Jack's home in Nagpur, we will leave them, looking back together over 15 years of an Indian friendship in which, throughout, each had held a deep respect for the different pilgrim paths followed by the other. We still need to get side by side with the serious thinkers of the other religious traditions of India, not only the Hindu but also the Sikh and the Jain, the Muslim and the Parsee, hoping that in open-hearted friendship we may help one another, by the faithfulness of each to the guidance of the Inward Teacher, to follow Truth "by whatever path lies open to us". That perhaps is a pilgrimage that will never be finished. And its counterpart is the call to explore further those questions which Jack asked nearly 70 years ago, about the relation of Quakerism to the Christian tradition in India. 'Our function', he wrote

in 1921, 'is not to be a sect, but a vitalising force in all, including the "United church" of the future'. Now, the United Church of North India is an accomplished fact, but Indian Quakers stand officially outside it, a tiny local sect. Is it possible to carry forward Jack's dream of a non-credal basis for Christian unity?

Finally we turn to the other side of their common witness, the search for a "sheltered education" in community, in which children may grow into a wholeness of physical well-being, mental alertness and spiritual understanding. Here we must add one more element to our picture of Jack's own inward pilgrimage on this path. It came to him in 1918 as he rode his faithful bicycle from one desolate jungle village to the next scene of helpless human misery. 'There should be a school especially for the underdog, which could help them to economic independence of the landlord. It must cut clean loose from the Government educational machine, syllabuses, examinations. It should offer every oppressed group the best indigenous craftsmanship in their own caste occupation (tanning, basketry or whatever); it should offer agriculture for all. Teaching must be by the best Indian craftsman obtainable. Along with this there should be the right kind of scripture teaching and the training of character through many cooperative activities'. How close Jack's dream comes to the educational vision which Mahatma Gandhi was to place before India nearly 20 years later! But there is a long pilgrimage ahead before we can come near it.

Marjorie Sykes

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ For further details see M. Sykes, *Quakers in India*, 1980.

The principal sources for this article are:

1. Printed reports of FFMA (India).
2. Copies of letters in Friends House Library from Geoffrey Maw to FFMA 1912-22, describing a) the "revival" at Itarsi, and b) his experience of healing through prayer.
3. Unpublished accounts by Geoffrey Maw of the Himalayan and Namarda pilgrimages with other notes by him in the Central Library Selly Oak Birmingham.
4. John S. Hoyland's letters from India 1912-27, chiefly written to his father, now in the possession of his daughter Rachel Gilliatt.

The above is a slightly amended text of the Presidential lecture given to the Friends' Historical Society on 17 October 1987 (Ed.).