

## DARK Discussion Seminar

THE DARK DINNER 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Distinguished Guests all,

It is a great privilege for me to be invited by Shamshir Human Rights Campaign to speak with you and to meet Saru Rana and find someone who understands what I have been trying to do.

My retirement Ph D about love marriages in India and Nepal 1993-2013 was because in 1993 I read in *The Guardian* of an Indian man who hanged his own son in public outside the Hindu temple with villagers looking on. I did not understand.

With the help of the late *Dilawar Chetsingh* from Delhi I assembled more and more stories including a Reuters article that showed the bodies of two lovers who had been strangled, sprawled on the roadway and left there to show everyone in the village that justice had been served and honour restored. From 1993 on, reportings in the global media of the killing of love marriage couples increased to 37 in 2012 and then lessened. Previously left to local authority with no action taken, the public response demanded High Court and Government intervention. The period 1993 to 2013 is a microhistory within Indian History of great significance.

My study has a message of hope. The stories show progression from lethal violence, to violence withheld, to separation, to resigned tolerance, to acceptance, and eventually to celebration of marriage. To illustrate stepping stones along this pathway of peace, I would like to quote a Hindu father who after 10 years when he and his wife tried to prevent their daughter marrying a Muslim, eventually gave in. He said, *'it will ruin our family business, make it hard for our other daughters to find husbands, we won't go to the wedding, and we will probably never see them again, but, we will not become violent.'*

In another village an elder said of a couple who were killed when they returned to seek family blessing, *'They should have stayed away and never returned. In this village Muslims marry Muslims and Hindus marry Hindus.'*

Another father said, *'If my daughter did this I don't know if I would have killed her or killed myself.'*

From Nepal where I went several times to do voluntary work in Pathology at the Patan Hospital in Kathmandu, three happenings captured my interest. I call them Gospel in a Nutshell. The first reporting was of village routing, expelling a whole lower caste community after a young inter-caste couple married. The second was from our hosts who told us their story of elopement followed by family reconciliation two years later after the birth of a son. The third, a journalist who wrote how amazed he was to receive a publicly open invitation to the celebration of an inter-caste marriage.

What I do want to emphasise is that social change takes time and may be generational. My father-in-law, a veteran of WW1 would have had a heart attack if my wife Topsy had brought home a Japanese lover. Our children were free to choose. I was aged 9 when WW2 ended, and I remember the Peace Stamps that were issued. A unilateral declaration of Peace after atomic bombs had fallen on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It would take 70 years for Japanese and Americans to celebrate together the end of hostilities. Likewise it took Germany and France 70 years for them to celebrate together the end of the hostilities of WW2.

Storytelling is foremost in my mind as a way forward. It may be a bold decision to tell your story. Being silent is an option. Other reactions to unbearable shame are self-harm(suicide), aggression(murder), and, leaving the scene permanently. All unhappy and nonconstructive outcomes as the reality issues are not addressed.

In Haryana in India there are now 22 safe houses with police guard where eloping couples can go for a fortnight. Four honeymoon couples in one room at a time. Where do they go afterwards? That is the question. People with nowhere to go have my greatest sympathy.

In November this year Topsy and I will be attending the International Peace Research Conference in Ahmedabad in India. Afterwards in Haryana we hope to find out more about safe houses and hopefully hear of success stories of couples finding a new life.

I am interested in your stories that you are willing to share. Some time ago after giving a talk to a seniors group on the Romeo and Juliet phenomenon before and after Shakespeare, I received an anonymous letter entitled, *I am Juliet*. You can read it in my big book, free on the net at [www.ddeevans.org](http://www.ddeevans.org) . The little book, a readable summary is also free to download, although hard copies can be bought through Amazon.

My vision of Peace is, *Peace is the enjoyment of good relationships*. Recently at the Central Market as I was buying flowers a lady came up to me and said, *Happy Wife-Happy Life*.

Indian taxi-drivers are surprised when I ask them, 'Which is your favourite Hindustani love story, Sassi Punnu, Mirza Sahiba, Heer Ranja, Sohni Mahiwal, or Anakali?' Intrigued, they say, 'How do you know about them? One driver gave me his email address to continue the contact and I have sent him this paper. He was pleased I included this reference to taxi drivers. If you have a story to share, my email address is [ddeevans1@gmail.com](mailto:ddeevans1@gmail.com) . I have pretty little cards with the website and email addresses.

In Dark Discussion there are horrific stories that must be told, and there are better stories that need to be told. My favourite reading on domestic violence in my culture is from Mandy Sayers, who, in her book, *Married to a Poet*, describes her angst without bitterness or anger. She asked her sister to do the proof reading and her sister decided then and there to leave her own marriage too.

I do have a message of hope

We are looking to a vision of family integrity that is indeed honorable, or in the words of Portugese philosopher Boaventura de Sousa Santos, '*pragmatic knowledge for a decent life*'.

My best wishes to the Shamshir Human Rights Campaign here in Adelaide.

Thank You.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Deevans', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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David Evans OAM

Retiring from his career as a Medical Pathologist and Sexual Health Physician in 2004, David Evans began studying with the Humanities Department (Peace Studies) of the University of New England in New South Wales. After completing his Ph D on *Romance Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet Style in India and Nepal 1993-2013*, he published a small book entitled *Honour and Love? Marriage for Peace* which is available on the net free to download at ([www.ddeevans.org](http://www.ddeevans.org)) Hard copies are available through Amazon. He presented his thesis material at the APPRA (Asia Pacific Peace Research Association) Conference in Kathmandu in 2015.