

Rt. Hon Rev Justin Welby,  
Archbishop of Canterbury  
Lambeth Palace, London, SE1 7JU

15<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Dear Justin,

**Re Forthcoming Trip to India, Apology for Spiritual Harm etc.**

It's been some time since we met but I have been following your work, albeit from a distance, with great interest and came to be aware of your forthcoming trip to my motherland and my spiritual homeland, India. On the occasion of India's Independence and hard-fought freedom from Colonial rule, I would like to send you best wishes on behalf of the Hindu community of the United Kingdom.

I have been reflecting upon your trip to India and would like to share some thoughts which may make the trip more contemporary, relevant and productive, especially as far as promoting dialogue and trust between the Anglican faith and the Dharmic traditions, is concerned.

Under Hon. Prime Minister Modi, India has been gradually recovering from the physical ravages of colonisation for only a few years and recently the Dharmic traditions have also begun to recover from the devastating assault on the indigenous Dharmic identity, not to mention the deeply destructive spiritual harm which was visited upon them for over two centuries. It is in this space that I think that we could work together to accelerate this recovery and I hope that this desire will find a favourable response from your good self.

As I'm sure you are aware, an apology was issued by Primate Michael Peers in Canada for the Church's colonialist "methodology", as far back as August 6<sup>th</sup> 1993, commemorated 15 years later in 2008, and last month revitalised by Archbishop Fred Hiltz, available on YouTube and at our website. It is undeniable that an apology from the Church of England is due to the indigenous peoples of India based upon the same principles of justice and due to the inflicting of precisely the same harm, perhaps in the psychological space, to an even greater degree, than in Canada.

In his apology, issued in an open letter the Archbishop, the leader of the Anglican Church of Canada, apologizes for its "cultural and spiritual arrogance" that caused harm to Indigenous peoples. He writes as follows:

*In the Apology to survivors of the Residential Schools delivered on August 6, 1993, Archbishop Michael Peers expressed his remorse on behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada that "we tried to remake you in our own image".*

*Today, I offer this apology for our cultural and spiritual arrogance toward all Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Inuit and Métis – and the harm we inflicted on you. I do this at the desire of many across the Church, at the call of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, and at the request and with the authority of the Council of the General Synod... contd*

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*I confess our sin in failing to acknowledge that as First Peoples living here for thousands of years, you had a spiritual relationship with the Creator and with the Land. We did not care enough to learn how your spirituality has always infused your governance, social structures and family life.*

*I confess our sin in demonizing Indigenous spiritualities, and in belittling the traditional teachings of your Grandmothers and Grandfathers preserved and passed on through the elders.*

*I confess the sin of our arrogance in dismissing Indigenous Spiritualities and disciplines as incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus, and insisting that there is no place for them in Christian Worship.*

*I confess our sin in acts such as smothering the smudges, forbidding the pipes, stopping the drums, hiding the masks, destroying the totem poles, silencing the songs, stilling the dances, and banning the potlatches. With deep remorse, I acknowledge the intergenerational spiritual harm caused by our actions.*

*I confess our sin in declaring the teachings of the medicine wheel to be pagan and primitive.*

*I confess our sin in robbing your children and youth of the opportunity to know their spiritual ancestry and the great wealth of its wisdom and guidance for living in a good way with the Creator, the land and all peoples.*

*For such shameful behaviours, I am very sorry. We were so full of our own self-importance. We followed “too much the devices and desires of our own hearts” (Confession, p. 4, Book of Common Prayer). We were ignorant. We were insensitive. We offended you. We offended the Creator.*

*As we look to you today, we have come to acknowledge our need to repent.*

Although inadequate in many areas, as well as needing extension and modification in order to accommodate the history of the Anglican Church and its adherents in British Occupied India, the apology has started the process of dialogue and may one day result in a genuine healing. I and many of my Dharmic brothers and sisters agree that it is time to start the same process of reconciliation in India.

We have been in consultation with our Dharmic scholars in India, in the UK, in Malaysia as well as the members of the NCHT(UK) and the HFB(UK) and we are in agreement that there is need for a Truth and Reconciliation Council to address the actions of Anglican's in India during the period of occupation.

There is great sadness associated with so many colonial actions and impositions, the Bengal Famine and so many others, and possibly the most poignant, the “Jallian Wallah Bagh” incident where a white supremacist and devout Anglican, clearly a war criminal yet honoured upon his return to the United Kingdom, drove Indians to slaughter their own unarmed and vulnerable, innocent kith and kin, including children. The Rowlatt Acts which followed, the further suffering and humiliation inflicted upon Hindus and Sikhs etc, are stories which are only now beginning to be articulated.

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By confronting with honest acceptance, the suffering inflicted upon Hindus, Sikhs and other peoples of India, in the same manner as the Anglican Primate of Canada has undertaken, we may be able to create an environment whereby Anglicans and Dharmic peoples could work together to navigate a path to reconciliation.

We started this process within our own community in Mauritius where the Mauritius Dharma Declaration was created and approved by Hindus from all over the globe and we now have over 10,000 signatories to the Declaration. Its available on the Declaration website [www.themauritiusdeclaration.org](http://www.themauritiusdeclaration.org) but if possible, myself and a delegation of Hindus would like to visit you and present it to you in person. Please do let me know whether this would be possible and if so when.

Dear Justin, I recognise that this is not going to be an easy or comfortable process, but people of spiritual courage and an authentic desire for mutual happiness and wellbeing, in an ever shrinking and more connected world, must find the courage to make such choices and begin such initiatives. At this time, with the blessings of my Gurus and lineage, the guidance of ParamAtma, Sri Vishnu the divine manifestation of harmonious continuity, it has been determined that perhaps you and I may be able to make some small contribution towards this long overdue healing.

If you wish to speak with me, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

I remain humbly at your service.

Yours sincerely



Pt. Satish K Sharma MBCS FRSA  
President Global Hindu Federation.  
Chair British Board of the Dharmic Scholars.  
General Secretary (NCHT(UK))

Cc:

Dato' Shri P Kukreja, Chairman, Global Hindu Federation  
Pt Madhu Shastri, President NCHT(UK)  
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