

## A FEW WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR



### RELIGION AS A CULTURAL EXPRESSION

In diverse cultures throughout the world, a thread of similarity exists - they share mystical traditions - a way to honor, and worship the Divine. Often they are expressions of nature, of unseen forces, a way to acknowledge the mysteries of life....to answer the age old questions, "Why are we here? What happens when we die?" In indigenous cultures, the form is often worship of the elements, which are assigned names and images. The practices and beliefs are universal, they have developed in a similar fashion all over the earth, ancient man has looked to the heavens for an explanation of natural phenomena. The spiritual traditions of these cultures have uncanny resemblances...in their practices, art, and beliefs; such as prayer, icons, scripture, saints, worship, use of fire and water, and ceremonies. The list goes on and on.

### WORLD VIEW

From a universal perspective, our world cultures are a rich fabric woven together, and our belief systems are colorful threads in the design. Symbols and myth exist in all cultures as explained by Joseph Campbell, they are expressions of humanity's quest for something greater than ourselves. The texture of this cloth binds us together, all of our cultures form integral parts of the pattern in the multicultural tapestry to be enjoyed and celebrated.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Today, more than ever, we need to accept and rejoice in our differences. And above all, to not force our beliefs on others. Interfaith groups teach exercises to do this. Meet people of other faiths, and go to the holy places of different traditions, as suggested by the Dalai Lama - what you'll find there is very much like your own tradition. Then, when conflict arises, discuss the differences, find a common ground. Developing compassion is of the utmost importance, since seeing and feeling yourself as one with the other, really breaks down barriers.

### MOTIVATION

I was trapped in a religious riot in 1984, when Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards. Some Hindu extremists began killing Sikhs in retribution. I was horrified, because Hindus had warmly embraced me as one of them. Suddenly I saw another side. I realized this hatred, this seeing humans as "the others," projecting on them, was universal. Violence by a small number of radicals leads to problems for all. The fact that freedom of faith is a human birthright hit me, and how something so beautiful can be turned so ugly.

### INDIA

I loved geography as a child in school and was presented with an opportunity to go to the Far East at age 19. I lived in Nepal and India for many years, originally sent as a University student by Pitzer College, the Claremont Colleges. I was enthralled by such a peaceful culture - and alternately shocked when it turned so violent.

### DEVELOPMENT

A deep fascination and respect for world cultures with a recognition of our overwhelming similarities has always enthralled me. My parents and grandparents have a Spanish background and are world travelers. From a young age, I was exposed to the arts, music, and world travel. I had a Catholic upbringing and respected and was interested in all religious paths.

### DOCUMENTARY FILM MAKING

My family was in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles when I grew up. I felt film was the way to reach a large audience. With the advent of digital cinema, the previously expensive film making process became affordable to produce. Since India is such an overwhelming colorful, dramatic, and beautiful backdrop, it is the perfect location to shoot a film. It is also very inexpensive to house a crew. This film was very difficult, because religious tolerance is such a huge subject. We had to re-edit the film several times, cutting it down, because one can get lost in the enormity of the issue of tolerance. The documentary genre is an important tool to shed light on social injustice. Non-fiction can be more unbelievable than fiction sometimes. Our world is full of amazing stories just waiting to be told. It is wonderful that documentary film has become so popular in recent times.

### THE ARTS

Great interest in the arts of other cultures was instilled in my family at a young age. As a Fine Arts major, I studied super realistic drawing, ceramics, and photography. I co-authored a photographic book, Shiva, on Hinduism, and have written several screenplays. Film is another creative medium that reaches a lot of people to get out a very important message.

### SPIRIT IN MOTION

The spiritual and religious beliefs of humankind are often expressed in music, dance, and art. This genre has always been a particular interest since it expresses the divine in us all and helps us to transcend our day to day consciousness. It can actually evoke ecstatic states both in the performers and in the audience. Such performances heighten awareness and can raise us to feelings of great joy and realization of our oneness. The performing arts are a universal vehicle to experience that which is great and limitless, that which is beyond ourselves, which we all share.

### IMPORTANT MESSAGE

We are all human beings. How ridiculous that we should kill or hate each other on the basis of a cultural or ideological difference. We all have the same blood running through our veins. Through respect we can co-exist peacefully, although we may have cultural differences. Compassion is the view we should have towards each other.

[Back](#)