



RACISM IN BANGLADESH – FAIR AND LOVELY!

Assembly 18 – January 30th 2003

Not everything about one's own culture is good. People of other nations used to say that the British were snobs because we thought we were better than anyone else. In particular, they said, that the British, with their white skin (well it is a pinky-brown actually) thought they were better than people with black or brown skins. This is called RACISM – and it is a horrible prejudice and has caused much unhappiness and injustice. In the past, some British people DID think that people with darker skins were inferior. We were racist. I was brought up by people who had listened to that criticism and said, "That is true. Some of us are snobs and racists and we should not be – and we will see that our children are not like that." So I was brought up NOT to be a snob and NOT to be a racist – not to think that anyone with a different colour of skin to me was inferior. I was taught in church that the Creator had made all people to be brothers and sisters and he had made us all different and he loved us all, as we were.

Then I came to Bangladesh and what did I see but advertisements for creams that make your skin more white – Fair and Lovely! And I heard people say that some girl's parents would find it difficult to find her a nice husband because her skin was dark – and I was shocked. A lot of Bangladeshis are racist! I still find it hard to believe this!

I want you to know that I think you are all beautiful and none of you are inferior because your skin is a little bit browner or a little bit whiter than other people's. I would like to tell you a nice story that I heard, about a Bangladeshi boy who was very nice and very clever and his parents were looking for a wife for him and

they found a very nice girl and introduced him to her. Afterwards, he said that he was very disappointed because her skin was dark. His parents asked him, please, to think again as she was a very nice girl and they were sure that they would be happy together. In the end, the boy agreed with them. That was 40 years ago and the marriage has been a very strong and very happy one.

I do hope you will be very critical of this part of your culture. Just because something is in our culture, does not mean that it is good or bad. We all have to decide which part of our culture we want to practice because it is good and which part is bad. There are parts of my British culture that I do not like at all. I do ask you to think very seriously before you copy the racist thinking that is in Bangladesh and I invite you to say, "NO!" to racism because it makes people think that, because their skin is darker, then they are less beautiful or less valuable than others. The Creator made us all and he made us all to be loved and respected by him and each other.

God bless you.



FORGERIES – AND THE REAL THING!

Assembly 19 February 2nd 2003

(Take a forged 500 taka note) What is this? (Show note round and when they say, "It's 500 taka," note, shake head.) When I tell you that this note was returned by the bank with a little note with it, can you guess why?

FORGED! It is not a real 500 taka note but a forged one! It is a very good forgery but it was discovered by some well-trained person in the bank. The bank people are trained now, as are some people in shops, to tell the forged note from the real one. Some people try to be clever and forge bank notes – that is they try and