

## Written in Indian Ink

“On the Gaya Express,  
I was watching her face,  
As the east and the west,  
found an uneasy grace.  
But my mind cannot rest,  
and my heart has no place,  
Like an unwelcome guest,  
In an unholy space ... “

Going to India for the first time felt like an existential crisis. On returning to the UK, I was physically and psychically ill for weeks and I knew I had to write a song about it all. Music and lyrics usually arrive like seeds blown through a suddenly open window but the song Indian Ink felt more like a blast of icy, rainy air. I had gone to the edge of what I knew and writing this song was a desperate attempt to stretch my imagination so I could make more sense of my anger and confusion.

While in India we travelled for nearly 8 hours in a tiny train carriage with an Indian family. Opposite was an elderly and quite ill old woman who spent most of the journey staring at me with pale, weary eyes as she lay on her bunk. In the verse above, I wanted to capture my feelings of distress and failure as two people tried to connect and coexist in this space. It felt like a huge, comforting YES when I wrote the line; “as the east and the west found an uneasy grace ...” It was a relief when these lyrics fell out of the air with such simplicity and directness, formed as a metaphor that could also frame the idea of countries trying to coexist on the planet.

Similarly the line: “Like an unwelcome guest, in an unholy space ...”, the two words “unwelcome” and “unholy” don’t rhyme but are like two bookends, rhythmically matched and able to hold the irony of feeling so alone in a country alive with Buddhist Compassion.

The title of the song “Indian Ink” was another YES moment. I wanted to catch the handwritten, earthy quality of being in India, the sense of having an experience scratched indelibly into my experience. Naming a song sometimes feels like naming a child; it has to be chosen from the heart and the title for this song felt like that.

As a Buddhist, I find the idea of the World being Mind-forged deeply moving and reassuring; it helps me make sense of my experience of being alive. As a Buddhist songwriter, I try to write melodies and words that articulate and deepen this understanding and this somehow eases the loneliness and confusion of being alive. A song’s narrative, rhythm and rhyme breathes a pulse of life and clarity into my life experience.

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