

KK are on the cusp.....

First the good news! Khwendo Kor have heard this month that their registration with the Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KP) Charity Commission is approved and they've been given the go ahead for their project in Upper Dir. Within days of the latter, they'd hired staff and got the work underway. This is an area they know well and they are hopeful that the funders will extend funding beyond its current end date. KK have also recently heard that its Social Harmony interfaith project is to be funded for a further two years.

Now the not so good news. In the summer, FROK instigated the transfer of its annual donation and the Covid-19 Appeal money.

Within weeks it was returned to our bank having got 'stuck' at the London branch of KK's Pakistan bank, due to an administrative error within the bank branch in Peshawar. KK decided to use a different bank for a second attempt at the transfer of funds. This time, the money reached Pakistan but has again been held up. In between the transfers being made, new rules have come in that will now require KK, for the first time ever, to apply to the Pakistan Government for what is called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to allow FROK to make the donation. Until now we have been able to make our donations without such a requirement.



Women and girls sharing food from KK

We were fortunate to have Khalid Usman, KK's Director of Operations, join our recent online Trustees Meeting. He is anyway in regular contact with FROK's Officers but this allowed all Trustees to discuss the situation with him.

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'There are so few leaders who have Maryam Bibi's sense of bringing all along. She just does not do Us and Them.' an audience member at our Human Writes talk

KK will now begin the formal application process for a MOU, first drawing up a

formal agreement with FROK about the way it intends to spend the money. Unfortunately this can be a time-consuming and lengthy process during which time KK will need to struggle on without our funding. It's disappointing and frustrating but it also gives us an insight into what KK has been facing for some time.

Talk on 'Human Writes: Pakistani Women Writers' —and hear Maryam Bibi share her thoughts!

We're taking the unusual step of providing a full page inside reporting our recent talk: 'Human Writes: Pakistani Women Writers'. FROK's first ever on-line event proved very popular. It's now uploaded to you-tube and the speakers kindly provided reading lists: both **are available on request to frok.events@gmail.com**.

"Both talks and Maryam's reflections at the end were very informative and inspirational"

an audience member

Human Writes: Exploring Pakistani Women Writers

One casualty of the C19 pandemic was our June AGM. So we were delighted when Claire Chambers, Professor of Global Literature, University of York, agreed to do a talk online this autumn instead. Earlier disappointment turned to opportunities for far-flung people to join, from South Africa, India, Australia, USA and, of course, Pakistan and UK. It also allowed Claire's PhD student, Sauleha Kamal, to co-present from Islamabad.

Claire started with a broad overview of recent Pakistani history, from British colony to Partition in 1947 with catastrophic loss of life and trauma. She talked us through the views of Jinnah (initially hoping for a loose federation of India), the British (desiring a quick solution to growing factional unrest) and Choudhry Rahmat Ali (supporting 2 states and who had, while a student at Cambridge in 1933, created the name Pakistan: Punjab – Afghanistan – Kashmir – Sindh and Baluchistan). Unexpectedly to many, Pakistan in effect became a country of two parts—East and West—separated by thousands of miles of an un-friendly neighbour, and populated by people with a different language, culture and history. A devastating cyclone in the east in 1971 and a power struggle over disputed election led to

I loved the talk, so absolutely fascinating and I immediately ordered some of the recommended books. Itwas honestly the most interesting and thought provoking hour I have had in lockdown!

war and the birth of Bangladesh.

Claire related this background to different fictional periods for women writers. The first was on the effects of Partition. The Big Five, well-known authors writing in English, included one woman, Kamila Shamsie, author of "Kartography". Important female writers in Urdu included Rashid Jahan and Ismat Chughtai while another writer in English, Bapsi Sidhwa, produced

"Cracking India" and "Ice-Candy Man".

The second period focussed on the shock to Pakistan of the results of the Bangladesh war. Pakistani writers to reflect on this cataclysmic event included Moni Mohsin ("The End of Innocence") and Soryaya Khan ("Noor") and a Bengali woman, Tahmina Anam ("A Golden Age").

The third period concerned the struggle by women against Zia-ul-Huq's conservative Islamist government, 1977-1988. Ramifications continue to the present, complicated by the effect of 9/11 on Muslims worldwide. A 1980s poetry collection "We Sinful Women" protested against political suppression of women while more recently films such as "Saving Face", directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, featured victims of acid attacks, and "Slum Child", by Bina Shah, highlighted the poor in Karachi.

Claire and Sauleha discussed the sometimes unhelpful conflation of "women's" rights and "human" rights, the latter perceived by many Pakistanis as international interference. "What business is it", they say, "of the UNHR what we do in our country? Who are they to criticise what happens here?" Some are angered by attempts to "liberate" women through movements such as #MeToo. In similar vein while the international standing of Malala Yousafzai grew to the point of addressing the UN General Assembly when still a schoolgirl, her reputation in Pakistan fell so low she is no longer able to return freely. She was seen by many in Pakistan as a tool of the west, the personification of criticism of human rights, especially women's rights. There was also resentment that the west saw Malala as an exception, the only Pakistani female able to stand up for herself. Sauleha spoke of Kamila Shamsie's recent book "Home Fires" comparing the very different life experiences of 2 Pakistani women.

Sauleha challenged the view that Muslim women are oppressed

only by their religion not by issues that affect all women, and they need "liberating", even to the point of military intervention. This is further compounded by books about suppression being more likely to be selected by publishers as popular for the international market. The fact that most publishers are in the West and men, the risk of "lazy stereotyping and gate keeping" is heightened, fuelling a genre of literature called "veiled bestsellers", following the monolithic view of a Muslim woman's life.

Happily, change is starting. In 2010, Granta magazine published a Pakistan-focussed issue which introduced the world to many young women writers. Women are now also writing science fiction

It was a delight to hear Maryam Bibi talk: "It's not what you do but how". I love her stories illustrating her points.

and pastiche. Unmarriageable" by Soniah Kamal and Austenistan" ed by Laaleen Sukhara, are modern Pakistani stories in the style of Jane Austen.

The expanding number of books published in English, films and art is giving wider voice to Pakistani women's experiences and enabling women to express themselves more than ever.

Maryam Bibi reflected on issues raised by the talk and paid tribute to the many brave women in Pakistan unknown by the world as they have no one to tell their stories. KK creates space for rural women to express themselves without retaliation, and strives for organic change owned by the whole community. With this comes the need to appreciate diversity, to unite, not divide.

Maryam described KK's interfaith work where a Christian and a Hindu recently addressed a group of Muslim women. Trust building was central as change cannot come without collaboration, working to close gaps. KK has to be accountable to the people they work with as much, and maybe more, than to their funders.

KK's recent work in pictures



I wonder what the young boy on the left is saying to his sister?

Dasterkhuwan, a Turkish word meaning "tablecloth or floor mat" is also found in other South-Central Asian languages, incl Urdu and Pashto. It usually describes serving food to family members or guests to enjoy collectively. As a response to Covid19, KK mainstreamed it as



a regular programme to feed people in need every Thursday, with help and generous regular support from friends/ well-wishers.

KK continues its distribution of food, poultry, sewing machines, kitchen gardening, food for livestock as well as ongoing community work in schools, health and so on. It has now reached more than 2,500 households.



Poultry Distribution at Barawal Bandi



Food served to local Christian community at their church



Food Package Distribution in Tarpatar



Sewing machines in Jabbar

Anyone for a cuppa? Still looking for an unusual Christmas present?



The women learners at Elma Bibi Handicraft Centre, named after FROK's founder member Elma Sinclair, has started producing tea cozies! Aren't they wonderful!

Some are on their way to FROK so let us know if you're interested and we'll post one to you (or your preferred recipient) in exchange for a donation! A unique way to support KK!



2021 'A New Year awaits—Let's hope it brings more good news to KK and its communities.....

Right: Collecting livestock feed in Palam

**Seasons Greetings to all
our members & supporters!**



**Want to Donate to FROK or get a friend to join
and not sure how?**

Advice from our Treasurer

There are many ways through which you can support KK financially:

- ◆ Set up a membership, standing order, or make a donation by cheque (made payable to FROK please) or bank to bank through our **website** (www.frok.org.uk) or by **writing to me**.
- ◆ **Use an on-line** banking transfers using the bank account details on the website and let me know you're doing this by putting your surname in 'payee reference' or emailing me on the first occasion you go down this route so I can confirm receipt.
- ◆ Fill in a **Gift Aid form** if you're a UK tax payer (If you have already completed one for us in the past, you don't need to do one on every occasion. I'll come back to you if there's a problem).
- ◆ For those with **Charity Aid Foundation (CAF)** accounts you can send me a voucher or set up regular payments.
- ◆ Donate either a one-off or regular amount through **Just Giving** (www.justgiving.com/frok/Donate). If you declare you're a UK tax payer, Justgiving will add gift aid to any donation.
- ◆ Support **FROK** when you make on-line purchases by using the THEGIVINGMACHINE.

**You can also now donate to FROK each time you buy through Amazon
if you select Amazon Smile as we are now one of their
registered charities.**

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) 2018

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***Helping women live with dignity and self
reliance in northwest Pakistan***

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