**The milk and the jasmine flower**

Guru Nanak believed firmly that everyone, whoever they are is seen equally by God.

In India, over 500 years ago, Nanak travelled to a new city with a dear friend of his called Mardana, who was a Muslim. Nanak was by then such a famous holy man that the news about his arrival spread; before he even got to the city gates, holy men in the city were talking about him.

They did this because they were worried. They knew Nanak, they knew he was a truly good and holy person, and they had promised to try to be good like him …… in theory …. but in practice they had fallen far short of that ideal and had been greedy and unkind to those around them.

Scared of Guru Nanak’s arrival, they decided to send a messenger to greet him with a bowl full of milk and to tell him that, unfortunately, there was no room for anyone else in the city: like the bowl, the city was so full they could not receive Nanak and Mardana. Would the Guru and his companion please go on elsewhere instead?

As Guru Nanak walked up the road to the city gates, the messengers met him as planned, carrying the gift of a large bowl, full to the brim with fresh milk.

‘Our holy men send you this milk, and apologise that they cannot receive you’ the messengers said, on cue.

‘Our city is already too full of holy men. You could go somewhere else.”

Unruffled, Nanak sat down with the messengers and their bowl. Before he drank any, he picked a jasmine flower from a wayside bush and floated it on the top of the milk. Not a drop spilled out. He looked around the group before he said, with a smile:

“I think the city is not quite full. As the flower finds space in the full bowl of milk, so there is always room for more holiness in the world.”

As the flower continued to float on top of the milk, still not a drop spilt over.

The messengers went back into the city and told the holy men what had happened. They saw how ridiculous their plan had been and felt ashamed of what they had tried to do. So they threw open the city gates, asked Nanak and Mardana to stay with them, and to teach them how they might fill their city with good things as they could.

*Adapted from ‘Stories From Faiths: The Milk and the Jasmine Flower and Other Stories’ by Anita Ganeri and Hannah Rey, QED Publishing 2007*