

Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood 2016

## Send A Message To The Cloud by Imaad Majeed

performance art/ritual



The architect and artist, and fellow #etinterbro Andreas Angelidakis had told me about a poem he had read of, Meghadutta by Kalidasa, that speaks of a cloud messenger. The idea is that you convince a cloud of the beautiful scenery it would pass through if it were to carry a message to your beloved.

I decided that I could craft a performance that synthesized rituals from Buddhism and Muslims, with an attempt at cloud messaging. I had learnt that, coincidentally, Sigiriya, the lion rock that is central to the lore of Dambulla, was in the same direction from our compound as Mecca. So, I decided that my cloud message would be carried across to Sigiriya, calling upon the ancient kingdom to resolve this matter, while my prayer would travel all the way across to Mecca.

I started by taking ablution in the lotus pond, as the lotus blooms out of muddy water, and observed a prayer. I then took a raft and made my way out in the center of the pond, where I would sit, half lotus, and chant "Buddhang Sarang Gachchami", praising Buddha, the clergy and the dharma. I would then write directly onto the water, as it evaporated in the afternoon sun, a message that included: "This is a message from the blood of my people. Sanctify our place of worship." I would then meditate for a few moments, before returning to the banks of the pond, and concluding the performance.

This was, to me, a transformative experience, as I had never attempted performance art of this kind, before, having mostly explored poetry on the page or the stage, but never in a site-specific nature such as this. I felt very comfortable amongst the brothers and sisters I had gotten to know, over those few days. And I was glad to hear that they appreciated the work.



So, what is 'sacred space'? Did I ever arrive at an answer to the guiding question behind my contribution? What I discovered upon visiting the mosque was that it had nothing to do with aesthetics.

An answer that I have found helpful is that of Jonathan Z. Smith who suggests the metaphor of sacred space as a "focusing lens." A sacred place focuses attention on the forms, objects, and actions in it and reveals them as bearers of religious meaning. This view of sacred space as a lens for meaning implies that places are sacred because they perform a religious function.

With this in mind, does it mean that I transformed the compound in which we resided into a sacred space, by virtue of the rituals I synthesized and performed at the lotus pond?

I would like to think that I have.

- Imaad Majeed