

FALL  
2010

# Families

## WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES

### Indra's Magnificent Jeweled Net

A HINDU AND BUDDHIST TALE, RETOLD BY MARY K. ISAAC

O, Sparkling  
World of  
Difference!

**F**ar, far away, in the abode of the great god Indra, king of heaven, hangs a wondrous vast net. Like a spider's web in intricacy and loveliness, it stretches out in all directions. At each node, or crossing point, of the net hangs a single glittering jewel. Since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are impossible to count. The sparkling jewels hang there, suspended in and supported by the net, glittering like stars, dazzling to behold.

Imagine what this magnificent, jeweled net looks like, spread across the vast expanse of space. Now, move in close to one jewel in the net. You will see that the gem's polished surface reflects all the other jewels in the net, infinitely, just as two mirrors placed opposite each other reflect an image *ad infinitum*. Each jewel reflected in this gem you are gazing into also reflects all of the other jewels, so that the process of reflection is itself infinite.

Know that you are a sparkling jewel in Indra's Net, as is every person around you. As every jewel is connected with all the other jewels in the net, each person is connected with every other person in the universe. Each has a place in the interdependent net. We all reflect and influence each other. A change in one jewel—or a person—produces a change, however

slight, in every other.

Realize that the infinite reflections speak to the illusory nature of appearance—only a reflection. No, the true nature of a thing cannot be captured in its appearance. However powerful that appearance might be, it is yet only a reflection of what is real.

In addition, whatever you do to one jewel affects the entire net, as well as yourself. You cannot damage one strand of a spider web without injuring the entire web. You cannot damage one strand of

the web that is the universe without injuring all others in it, whether that injury is known or unknown to them. This can work for ill or good because, of course, just as destructive acts affect the entire net, so do constructive, compassionate acts affect the entire net. A single helpful action will send positive ripples throughout the infinite net, touching every jewel, every life. ♦



The Family pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

[www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith)

Evolving, infinite diversity is a feature of life on Earth. Our nation, our communities, our congregations, our families are each a microcosm of life's marvelous variety. Explore the diversity in and around your family.

## WHO ARE YOU?

■ Write your name in the center of a piece of paper. ■ Draw a circle around it. ■ Begin creating spokes, offshoots, and sub-offshoots listing attributes that describe who you are. ■ When the inspiration comes, begin to represent who you are ... with a drawing or sketch ... words or music ... you might even use movement.

**What are your identities?**

**What are your dreams?**

**How do you see yourself?**

## Tell Me Your Name, The One You Call Yourself

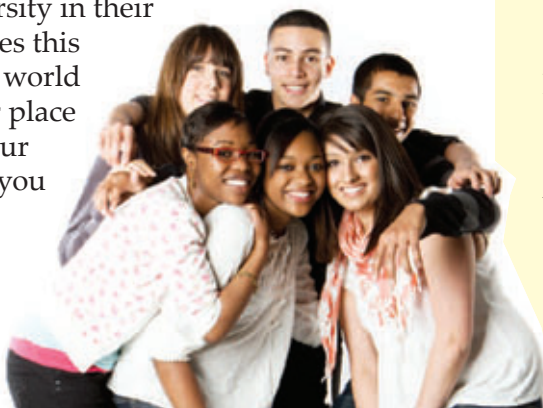
## WHO ARE WE?

■ Now consider your family or household. ■ What is your role in it? ■ Take turns sharing your representations. ■ Introduce this self to the others. ■ Listen to the others, paying attention to ways your fundamental nature is supported or challenged by the natures of others. ■ Share your observations about how your identities and natures affirm, support, or challenge one another.

Adapted from The Mosaic Project Report (UUA, 2009) by Laura W. Spencer / Activity title from a Carolyn McDade song on *We Are the Land We Sing* (1999)

## My World, Your World. Old World, New World?

A Pew Research Center report on the “millennial” generation shows today’s teens and 20-somethings live lives more ethnically and racially diverse than have older generations. Consider your own experience, and share perspectives with youth in your family: Did you grow up in a diverse environment? How much diversity did you encounter at school, among your friends, in your faith home? What is it like for the youth you know? Do they see more diversity in their environment? How does this affect their view of the world and their sense of their place in it? Think of ways your shared UU faith helps you embrace a pluralistic world view, where differences can create joy instead of conflict.



## Take Me to the Movies



### WATCH A FILM TOGETHER

on a theme of accepting and celebrating differences. These films are fine to enjoy with younger children: *A Bug's Life*, *The Little Princess*, *Ratatouille*, *The Tale of Despereaux*, or *Whale Rider*. Watch these films, with more mature topics, with youth or older children; they show the

harm intolerance causes and model appreciation for each person's unique gifts: *Finding Forrester*, *Gentlemen's Agreement*, *Lars and the Real Girl*, *The Other Sister*, *Real Women Have Curves*, *Something the Lord Made*, *The Visitor*, or *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*?



## Move Around on Our Interconnected Web! Exercise Your Multicultural Competence

Where do you, or could you, gain more than a glimpse of humanity's sparkling diversity? If your life feels too segregated, make changes. Explore places to shop, eat, play, and learn as a family that are likely to involve a multicultural encounter.



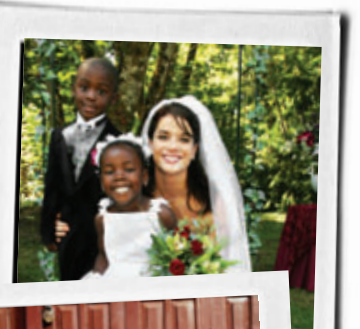
- Ride the train to the next stop and visit a new community.
- Attend heritage festivals.
- Sign your child up for sports or arts activities where you will find or bring diversity.

Multicultural competence requires us to seek out people

and groups unlike ourselves in a spirit of curiosity, openness, and respect. It asks us to communicate and share across cultures with a willingness to self-reflect and self-critique, and without using assumptions or biases. Make multicultural competence an intentional practice: ■ Become more aware of groups/people who are not like you. ■ Acquire specific knowledge about individuals and groups from other cultures and affiliations. ■ Maintain a receptive attitude and openness to all forms of diversity. ■ Build cross-cultural communication skills. ■ Cultivate a passion for multicultural settings and intercultural engagement.

## Family Diversity Collage

Family diversity is today's norm. Collect photos that show diverse kinds of families and arrange a collage with your family at the center. How does your family look like other families? How is it different? Do families with different structures still serve the same purpose? What can you appreciate about diverse families?



## We Are Stitched and Sewn Together



We share the interconnected web with millions of people we will never meet who do jobs that make our lives better, in farms or factories where we will never go. Gather some garments and foods with labels identifying fabrics/ingredients and where the item was made. Use clues from the labels and the items themselves (without opening packages or taking any clothing apart) to list all the people connected, through each item, to you.

- How did this item get from its point of origin to us today?
- What exactly is it made of? Where do those materials come from? Are they manufactured, found, or grown? Where, and by whom?

■ How can we affirm that the people whose hands' work we use are each a sparkling jewel, as singular and valuable as you or I? By treating every person we encounter with respect, we convey our gratitude for things we use that others made. We show that every person is equally important, no matter where they live, what kind of work they do, or whether we know them or not.

## Beloved Community, A Dazzling Vision

In my vision of a beloved community, I see a dazzling, light-filled, breathtakingly beautiful mosaic, a gigantic, all-encompassing mosaic, where each of us can see, can really see, and deeply appreciate each piece. We know that each piece is of immeasurable value. We know that each piece is part of a larger whole, a larger whole that would not be whole, indeed would not BE, without each piece shining through to be seen and appreciated as its unique self.

— **MARLA SCHARF**,  
member of First  
Unitarian Church  
of San Jose,  
California, in a  
homily given  
on March 4,  
2009

*Each blessed.  
All connected.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Scientists now believe an enriched, more stimulating, and diverse environment can cause the adult brain to grow new neurons and increase its capacity for memory and learning.

### FAMILIES:

#### WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

Provided by the Lifespan Faith Development staff group of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

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Each day brings opportunities to advance this compelling vision. Yet, sometimes we have to seek them. ■ **Can you do more?** Look to your own experiences of being an outsider—feeling excluded—to help you discover ways to become more welcoming and behave more inclusively in a variety of situations.

### The View from Outside

Think about a time you felt like an outsider. Recall as much detail as possible.

- What made you the person who was “different”?
- Did others see you as an outsider, or did you only feel that way? ■ How did others treat you?

- How did feeling like an outsider shape how you felt about and participated in the group?

- Afterward, how did that experience shape your sense of who you are? ■ Does it still influence how you behave in the world, or in similar settings?



### FIND OUT MORE

- The UUA has many resources to help UUs and our congregations become more multiculturally welcoming. For example, read the 2009 Mosaic Project Report by the Rev. Laura Spencer to learn more about the ministry needs of UU youth and young adults of color. [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org) (keyword: mosaic)
- The Tapestry of Faith curriculum, Building the World We Dream About, invites UU adults to explore their racial/ethnic identity, develop their antiracist/multicultural competency, and lead their congregation toward multicultural faith community. Does your congregation engage in this work? If not, can your family encourage the congregation to start?
- Nature's diversity of flora and fauna helps all life thrive. The United Nations has proclaimed 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, to mobilize response to findings that “the natural systems that support life on earth, from the Amazon forests to coral reefs, are close to the tipping point of collapse because of human activities.” The Green Wave ([www.greenwave.cbd.int](http://www.greenwave.cbd.int)) is one international children's program to promote global biodiversity.

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