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Dear Friends,

By the time you read this I may very well be in India. A group of people of different faiths, and none, are travelling to West Bengal on an aid visit to a rural hospital. This is a part of my Sabbatical plans which mean that I shall not be generally available from now on until Holy Week in the middle of April.

I am aware that whilst we are in India we shall meet some of the world's poorest people, whose individual lives are likely to put my own life and struggles into perspective. I shall have to learn to 'get over' myself. The area we shall be visiting is generally unaffected by the 'caste' system which permeates so much of Indian society.

The people of the villages the hospital serves are mainly tribal peoples, who are way more affected by grinding poverty and, for the most part, do not seek the hospital's help – because they have no money to pay hospital fees. The hospital offers its services free of charge, however, and therefore much of its work is going out into the villages, to spread the word, identify diseases and bring people in for treatment. All that we shall see is perfectly 'normal' as far as their society is concerned, it is just the way things are out there. Individual people do not generally have more than a glimpse into the world we live in, with its wonderful NHS and social and welfare payments.

This got me wondering about the contexts of some of our arguments. Yes, I am thinking of the 'B' for Brexit word and the comparative insignificance of the way in which we order our lives alongside our European and Worldwide neighbours. The people we shall meet in India have far more important things to think about and fret over. So do many individuals and families in our own country and across the world. Everything is relative.

It is not that Brexit is unimportant, far from it. Unfortunately, some people in our nation have shown their intolerance of others and their views – and I can be like that myself at times. We have become so polarised. I hope that we can learn to be better than that and can reason carefully and considerately together to forge a common future, which while not satisfying everybody is good news for all the people of these islands – especially those who have the least.

I expect to be challenged and changed by our Indian travels and encounters. I will let you know how we get on.

God bless, **Nigel**