Reaffirming the Brotherhood of Celestials and Men
Category : June 1993
Published by Anonymous on Jun. 02, 1993

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In 1981, New Yorker Karen Goldman began tuning in to the celestial worlds and communing with their sublime inhabitants - the devas, or angels. "I would occasionally see them," she explains. "Converse with them, receive life-transforming thoughts and be filled with wonder for all of existence." But she did not dare speak of her experiences, for in those days, she bemoans, "angels were unacceptable." But things began to change quickly - and soon Karen was not alone. Many others were experiencing angels, and the wall of silence suddenly broke. By the end of the decade, angel books were pouring off the presses - including her own, The Angel Book, the first edition of which sold out in two weeks - and personal testimonials by the thousands poured back to the authors, telling of life-saving encounters, amazing synchronicities, "little miracles" and more.

In 1992, the Wall Street Journal carried this front-page headline: "Long Unemployed, Angels Have their Work to do now that they Have Been Rehabilitated. "[See HINDUISM TODAY, September, 1992.] The enthusiasm continues to this day. "People of all ages and backgrounds are reading about, attending workshops on, learning to contact these magnificent beings and having their lives transformed in the process," Alma Daniel told HINDUISM TODAY. She is one of the authors of Ask Your Angels, current number one best-seller among religious books in America - with 165,000 copies sold already.

Sophie Burnham's Book of Angels was the best-seller in the same category for several years, and has been reprinted some 30 times! Of the top six best-sellers today, five are angels books. Readership, in the USA and elsewhere, has reached into the millions. But even more impressive is the fact that what they are reading, absorbing and creating more demand for is quite deep and spiritually potent.

Interestingly, the imagery, nomenclature and classification of the angels, and the historical references, scriptural quotes and illustrations found in these books are drawn almost exclusively from the Western religions, while the spiritual substance

is not really Western at all. In fact, Hindus will feel quite at home here among such concepts as: there is no intrinsic evil, all humans are essentially divine and evolving toward realizing that truth, existence is form and form is consciousness, all is possible through a change in consciousness, God, angels and humans are co-creators.

HINDUISM TODAY asked some of the authors why this pure Hindu teaching was put into Western garments. Daniel and Goldman explained that their editors and themselves - and the angels too - wanted the broadest common ground to allow as many people as possible to catch a glimpse of celestial vistas and possibilities. This easy approach may be why the angel "movement" has been mostly well received by the dominant Christian community. There have been only a few hesitations. In New York Newsday, Yale theology professor J. Pelikan faults the movement for not being grounded in specific religions, for being satisfied with a "vague spiritually [without] the loyalty, obedience and faith" that established religions demand. And in a recent article in Christianity Today, Protestant clergy would have an angel movement limit itself to Biblical teachings, although, the article admits, there are only 300 angelic references in the Bible, most of which are sketchy or ambiguous. Traditional theologians will have to be creative indeed to keep up with a trend which is capturing the imagination of so many. "People are starving, starving for this, and they're not getting it in church or synagogue," said Sophie Burnham.

A great part of the angel books consist of direct communications from the angels, messages captured either clairaudiently or as "bright new thoughts" that come unbidden, and "ring a bell," as Goldman puts it. To determine the authenticity of the message, "Judge by how you feel when you hear it," one is advised in Ask Your Angels. "Feelings of love, greater self-acceptance, inner peace, of being deeply cared for, are signs of angelic connection."

The reader also becomes convinced when he notices a consistent "angel style," a one angelic voice, coursing through all the books. Whenever it comes the angels' turn to speak, there is an increased brilliance, words become pure, simple, direct, unforgettable. Their speech flows not the usual expository way, but rather marches forward from depth to depth. The reader may also notice that the concepts, the vision and purpose echo from book to book, that they blend and complement and never contradict. This consistent harmony is miraculous enough, and quite convincing of the message' authenticity. One can understand why the authors feel that the entire "movement" must be orchestrated by the angels themselves.

Barbara Shor, a reputed editor, believes "It is the angels who are drawing closer to us at this time, because we are not ready to hear, and because they know we urgently need their help." A common theme is that a time of massive change is upon us, that we are going to have to make major adjustments, and that closeness with the celestials will be immensely necessary and beneficial. "At this time of planetary acceleration, the angels are more open to working with us than they have been in thousands of years and contacting us openly, reaching out to everyone, in every way they can," (Ask Your Angels). If we respond and keep tight connections with them, all may go smoothly. "A species that in angel-aware cannot pollute, enslave, destroy or kill...We will look back and wonder how it all happened. How did we slip so gracefully into a new era of light and life where spirit and matter are united?" (Ask Your Angels).

Celestial messages recorded in The Brotherhood of Angels and Men, prophesied, as early as 1924, a coming major transformation in consciousness which would require angelic help: "The time approaches when we will no longer remain invisible to you...all your faculties will be increased, your powers enhanced..." And again in 1943 angels explained, in Talking With Angels, that the hells of World War II were but old conditions breaking up to make way for the new: "A wonderful transformation begins. It will not always appear good to you, for the old hulls burst, rot and decay. Do not be afraid. What happens to you is good." Jacques Bolduc, a Montreal psychotherapist, has been told by angels that the next hulls to burst will be obsolete and encrusted belief systems.

How, then, to accomplish contact and cooperation with angels? Logically enough, the words "handbook" or "practical guide" are now appearing on the covers of new angel books. These offer practical instructions for the establishment of working rapports with our celestial brothers. The idea of accomplishing this through ritual and temple and home worship is just beginning to dawn, though seventy years ago, Hudson had heard powerful instructions from the angels in this regard. For the Hindu, the structure is, happily, all in place in the form of traditional temple and home worship whose entire purpose is contact and cooperation with the Gods and devas of the subtle worlds. And he may rejoice in this trend and to know that some of these books are being translated into oriental languages, all of which can only help to infuse more understanding and clarity of purpose into ritual and bhakti (devotion).

"You are standing at the doorway to the next stage in your evolution [where] conscious connection between human and angels will be the norm...and love and joy will be your teachers, not suffering and pain." (Ask Your Angels).

Next time grandma mentions at the breakfast table that last night she heard Radha or Durga or Ganesha speak to her, don't scoff. Grab an angel book instead.

Subtle Worlds, Subtle Bodies

Contrary to what materialism believes, the world we can see and touch, the Bhuloka, is not the only world. There do exist other, altogether real, non-physical worlds. According to Hindu teaching there are two other worlds (containing many subdivisions) besides the Bhuloka - the Sivaloka, or causal world, a world of highly refined energy, of superconsciousness, and the Antarloka, or "in-between world," the intermediate dimension between the physical and the causal worlds.

All of these realms are peopled, managed and enlivened with God's children - souls who act, live, love, serve and evolve just as physical beings do. They do, however, live in different kinds of bodies. Whereas Bhuloka residents live in physical bodies, souls in the Antaraloka, sojourning between incarnations or during sleep, live in astral bodies. In the Sivaloka, greatly evolved souls, Mahadevas, or Gods live in their self-effulgent bodies made of actinic particles of light, lovingly guiding the evolution of all the worlds and ever shedding their precious grace.

Within the Antarloka are different levels of existence, from the hellish regions of the Naraka, to the sublime reaches of the Devaloka, "plane of radiant beings," or world of the devas. Because they live in highly refined bodies, devas are able to perform many wondrous feats, are imbued with love, and live only to serve God and other souls.

The Western "angel" corresponds quite closely to the Hindu deva, and the wings that virtually always adorn angels are not a necessary part of their "anatomy." And they are certainly not functional. Angels' wings entered Western lore in the fourth century BCE, an import from Persia that became traditional symbolism for painters and sculptors, a convention which was not always followed. Michelangelo, for example, painted wingless angels, and so are some modern Western painters today.

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