Global Dharma
Category : May 1995
Published by Anonymous on May. 01, 1995

Global Dharma

A Monthly News Digest

Remarkable Research on Reincarnation

A small group of researchers continues to explore real-life cases offering evidence of reincarnation. "The father of this effort is psychiatrist Ian Stevenson, at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. For 30 years Stevenson has investigated children who claim past life memory. Stevenson has developed a data base of more than 2,500 cases suggestive of reincarnation in eight countries."

The Brain/Mind Bulletin [Jan. 1995] reports that now three independent researchers, anthropologist Antonia Mills and psychologists Erlendur Haraldsson and Jurgen Keil, working at Stevenson's request, have performed a kind of replication, drawing equally remarkable evidence from 123 new cases. Only one of these appeared to involve fraud or self-deception. Many of the tales were strengthened by highly specific parallels between the children and the people they claimed to have been-behavioral traits, birthmarks corresponding to injuries; phobias relating to traumatic events, distinctive likes and dislikes, untrained skills and detailed personal knowledge.

The researchers report contained three unusually impressive case studies. Jurgen Keil studied a boy born in Turkey in 1980. Before his second birthday, the child was describing details of a life lived in a nearby village and calling himself by the name of a man who had indeed lived there. At the other village, he accurately identified the man's family members and possessions and accurately recounted true episodes from his life.

Mills tracked an Indian boy with a fascination for camels. Around age two he announced that he was from another village and had died near the Ganges River. He begged to be taken to his wife and identified a passing camel dealer as his brother. This dealer had indeed a deceased brother who died near the Ganges. When his relatives visited the child, his behavior and explicit knowledge convinced them he was the same man reborn.

Haraldsson's study of a Sri Lankan girl was one of 19 cases in which a child's statements were recorded before any match was found. The girl described living as a married woman with the last name of Nanayakkara in the distant city of Akuressa, becoming pregnant, then drowning after falling from a rope bridge into a river.

Years later, one of Haraldsson's research assistants traveled to Akuressa and learned of a pregnant married woman bearing the correct surname who had died in exactly the manner described. The rope bridge was the only one in the vicinity of this city of 20,000, and the woman's death was the only such drowning on record at the site in the past 20 years.

Mind Over Matter Melts Cancer Tumor

According to a Newsweek report, "When Peter Hettel's doctors told him what it would take to save his life, he knew he wanted no part of it. Laser surgery hadn't tamed the aggressive tumor on his sinus, so the physicians proposed opening his head to remove the whole gland and the nearby pituitary as well. After surgery would come radiation therapy and, possibly, blindness. Rather than submit to that ordeal, Hettel, a fortyish software designer, followed what he calls "my tendrils of intuition." He gave up a cigarettes-and-stale-coffee diet in favor of carrot juice and vitamin supplements. He took up meditation and yoga. Just a few months later, when Hettel was practicing a wide yogic yawn, he got a terrific nosebleed and found himself spitting out chunks of flesh. When the bleeding stopped, there was just a hole where the tumor had been pushing through the roof of his mouth. As a medical exam later confirmed, he was "cancer-free." The report describes a rare phenomenon where the body's own immune system has the power to throw off malignant tumors. "Every year a handful of mortally ill cancer patients refuse treatment and get better anyway," it says.

"Cow Slaughter May Ruin India"

Geeta Ben, a cow-lover and champion of ahimsa, was recently murdered, highlighting a crucial struggle in Bharat. According to a report in India's Organizer, "The prevalent violence in the country is the result of sins committed against the mother cow by way of cruelty." India slaughters 35,000 cows a day and the export of beef has increased 40-50 times in ten years. The number of cows slaughtered during the last 45 year's of India's independence surpasses the total slaughtered during the Moghul and British periods. The report describes the horrific treatment of cows in India, said by the Organizer to be "the most inhumane treatment of cows in the world."

Many new slaughter houses are being built, leading to rapid reduction of Bharat's bovine herd with potentially disastrous effects. "In India, every year 800 million tons of cow dung are produced, the value of which runs into billions of rupees. Alber Einstein was of the view that chemical fertilizers have considerably reduce soil fertility in just 400 years, whereas in India, the fertility of the soil is intact even after 10,000 years of cultivation." Dried dung, once a primary source of fuel for fires, is now scarce, leading to the ruination of India's forest which are cut for wood fuel. A decade ago Indira Gandhi said, "Cattle power produces more power than all the power plants in India combined." Cattle power comprises 65% of agricultural energy input, 20% is manpower and only 15% mechanical. A switch to tractors with enormous petroleum requirements will have disastrous consequence on rural economies. But the number of calves being slaughtered has doubled. Some analysts worry that before long, men will have to pull the ploughs as is already happening in Indonesia and various parts of India.

The cow has served mankind since the beginning of time. The Vedas call her "the Mother of the world." Gandhi said, "Whenever a cow is killed, I feel I am being butchered."

Hindus Protect Siva's Public Image in Trinidad

The 1995 Carnival, South America's traditional annual bacchanalian revelry, viewed by many Hindus as "negative and obscene," coincided this year with Sivaratri celebrations. Peter Minshall's "Hallelujah" band came under sharp scrutiny

during pre-carnival registration. Hindus of various organizations and the pandits of the Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha objected to the direct representation of Shiva-Nataraja in the head-dress of one of the band's costume. In Trinidad and Tobago it is against regulations "to portray or appear wearing any costume which portrays, or represents in any manner, any deity of a living religion; or portray any event in a manner likely to bring into disrepute, ridicule or contempt any religion practised in Trinidad and Tobago." Peter Minshall entered into cooperative discussions with the Pandits and replaced Nataraja with a dancing child (left). After the amicable resolution, the pandits' secretary, Satnarine Maharaj, stated in a local paper: "We are all God's children. Lord Shiva will reappear, not as Nataraj, but as a child of the universe. In this child we can all share." Minshall's band had 3,000 performers and won the "Band of the Year" award.

Observers at the Carnival say that the "Hallelujah" band gave an uplifting and disciplined presentation in contrast to the usual intoxicated and licentious displays of other participants. Some Christian sects remained unappeased, however. Prior to the Carnival, the "Body of Concerned Pastors"-representatives of 240 small Pentecostal and Evangelist churches-had lobbied to ban the band's name, since "Hallelujah" was a common Christian term of praise for God. Minshall declined and the name was passed by officials as no images were involved. At the time, Pastor Winston Cuffie said, "Clearly it shows that Minshall is willing to accommodate one side [Hindus] and disrespect the other." Satnarine Maharaj said that, "Hinduism was important to them [Minshall's band] and they want to work with Hindus on the coming 150th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of Hinduism to Trinidad and Tobago."

With reports from Paras Ramoutar and Pandita Indrani Rampersad

Trends to Watch: The Metamorphosis of Arranged Marriage

Bridal days where the groom sees the bride's face for the first time during the wedding or only once before at an engagement meeting may be gone forever. Indicative of the reaction against the somewhat mythical beast of the "blind/forced/arranged" marriage is a UK survey in which 70% of Hindu students planned to have a love marriage. But media reports from Hindu communities in India, Jewish families in Australia, Vietnamese and upscale Pakistani Muslims show another powerful trend in mature fellowships. Smart young adults worry that a blind marriage based on purely economic, community or astrological points may lead a

couple into a loveless wasteland for life. They worry equally about the love marriages they see leading couples into a hell of unresolvable differences initially glossed over in the heat of passion, only to end in divorce. The new trend combines 20th century personal choice with old-fashioned scrutiny. Basically, couple are engineering their own arranged marriages more, letting families do it less, yet using many of the same tools grandpa would have.

Choice and compatibility are the watch words. A report from India Today describes how young people are painstakingly choosing prospects, often with the help of huge companies, like the Tresna Marriage Consultancy in Delhi, which has 5,000 candidates.

Initial introductions by family go-betweens or through letters are followed up with more personal contact. Parents are fairly supportive as they appreciate the renewed respect for old wisdom. Primarily due to the rise of women's status, compatibility issues are taking on new dimensions. Girls expect more participation in the arrangements. Women are cautiously and personally checking out the boy's finances and attitudes. The boy wants a better understanding of her intellectual abilities and her feelings about family, sex and children. This requires frank, face-to-face discussions. Meeting 3 or 4 times or dating for a while before marriage is now the norm with a trend toward privacy. Parents may take the couple out, but sit at another table for a couple of hours. Unchaperoned, "investigative," usually chaste, dating, with parental consent, before and after engagement is common.

Through all the discussions, the attitude that "marriage is forever" seems unshakeable.

Teenage Vegetarian Resources

Last month we reported on the spontaneous rejection of meat by small US children. You may have thought this a fringe phenomenon, but this month we received a remarkable package from the Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG) which contained winning essays by American vegetarian teenagers (all proud girls, aged, 8, 13 and 15) an outstanding teachers' plan for an introductory lesson on vegetarianism, a vegetarian nutrition pamphlet for teenagers and a vegetarian colorbook for kids. One cute cartoon conveys the childrens' perspective, "Animals

are my friends. I don't eat my friends." For info send SASE to The Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203-410-366-VEGE.

Half-Ton of Gold to Amritsar

The magnificent Golden Temple of Amritsar, the holiest shrine of Sikhism, will soon receive new gold-plating. The original plating, done by 18th century Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh, is nearly worn out. This 20th century plating will require an estimated 1,100 pounds of gold. It's being donated by the Sikh community of Britain. Not all the gold will need to be purchased. Much will come from personal holdings. But, were it purchased outright at a present world price of us$381.60 an ounce, the gold being sent to Amritsar would be worth us$6,716,160!

Methodists Block Free Sunday

Fiji's Sunday ban on activities, instituted as a security measure in 1987 after the military coup, is considered unconstitutional in a multi-religious nation. After years of debate, the elected House of Representatives recently repealed the ban. But then, using an impressive show of pacific force and anti-government sloganism in rallies of 12,000 (left), the Methodist Church of Fiji managed to sway the appointed Senate to vote against the decision. The ban will now stand for at least another year. Cheering Methodists claim the ban is a core element of the "indigenous" value system. Opponents call it anti-democratic, deploring the use of fundamentalist force.