

 I appreciate, Miguel, how your scientific insistence has stimulated deeper thought on the controversy of Creationism vs. Evolution, how hearsay myth vs. one's own beliefs and experience. etc. and also how it has made me dig a bit deeper into my own psyche to wonder what was the purpose of my witnessing the star on astral night and also the "leper's nose." I do feel however, you skipped over and missed somehow the main point.

There is some background on the leper woman. Father told us the following story: he had come to believe that leprosy, as well as other diseases, was the external manifestation of greed. The leper woman at the Sonarpur station was an extraordinary example of the disease.

(I had already been in Sonarpur a few times but I first saw the leper woman when I arrived at the station with Carmel Clark [later Begun] and she pointed the leper to me, stating something like, "that's the worst case I've ever seen." Indeed in the center of the woman's face, where the nose would have been and a larger radius around that, there was a hole of decaying flesh and tissue. It was horrible! By the way, it occurs to me that beloved Carmel was not only with me but pointed my attention to both this leper and later to the star moving. Would any Australians still in touch with Carmel, please tell her I am remembering her with great fondness and gratitude. I was very happy to see her again at the Aussie Maha -- does anyone have an e-mail address for her?)

Well, Father began (this was before the Spiritual Summit Conference and the arrival of the Westerners -- somewhere in the time covered by Shakti's superb memoir) a communication with this woman, asking her what her thoughts and life were like just prior to the onset of her leprosy. As I recall it, she could not relate to Father other than as another person from whom to beg money. Father asked her to stop begging and said, if she did, he would take care of her -- he was a "beggar" himself and would add begging for her as well as his own family to his daily chores. She did not understand and went on begging.

Scene shifts to the time Don and Sheila and Shotsy were staying in Gorkhara with the Indian family just before the rest of us Westerners began to take up residence there. Father was going into Calcutta with the others (at least with Don McCoy, who figures in this story) when the leper woman approached them at the Sonarpur station begging. Don McCoy started to give her money. Father stopped him, saying something like, "No, no, that will only feed her greed." He might have gone on to explain his "relationship" with her but Don, I suppose imagining that Father was lacking compassion for her, ordered Father to "hug her then." Father said to Don, "I call you 'emperor' and your wish is my command," and Father embraced the leper woman with what I imagine was all his heart and body, just like and as completely as when he hugged any of us..

Don then gave his money to Father to hold. Father protested, "but money never stays with me," and indeed at the end of the train ride and after they had taken a cab to the Astoria hotel on Sudder Street Father reached for the money to pay the cabbie and found it was gone. "I told you money does not stay with me," he said. Now this happened about a week or so before I went to live in Gorkhara with the family (as recounted at the end of "Hariyana"). Anyhow, I can't tell you the number of times I heard the story of the missing money from Father in the early days, in the States as well as in India, and surely, surely, surely others remember hearing this -- I am certain the wives

heard it many times.

About a week after I had first come to stay in Gorkhara Father came bounding down the road from the train station, jumping in the air and shouting, "It's happening too soon, the leper has a nose." he then quickly told us the story -- of his "experiment" with the woman to cure her of her greed, of the embrace and now the new baby-like nose on her face. We then all ran with Father to the station to see her but she was gone. After that I saw the baby nose as had others. When I saw the hole in her face with Carmel the nose had not yet come to appear. By the time Tony/Drew first saw her, as he reported, she had the beginning of the nose.

The woman never gave up her begging and her healing halted and the nose grew no further. Father's point was about Greed and how it narrows one's perception so that one cannot, so to speak, see the nose on one's own face. There was no cruelty or tease to the leper woman, Miguel. She might have healed completely if she had chosen to change her ways, but she did not.

Father was not into miracles per se -- in fact, he said, Jesus performed so many miracles and still they crucified him." Father had said the Indians in general were hostile to him but I personally witnessed only affection for him in the village -- until he performed the "miracle" of the leper's nose. A whole group of us was going into Calcutta with Father and we were waiting for the train at the Sonarpur station. Father began speaking of the leper's nose, first to us in English and then to the other waiting passengers in Bengali. He spoke loudly and began to touch his nose to illustrate it. The crowd became hostile and tried to push us in front of the arriving train. Vasudeva was the hero of that particular day. He began to shout at the Indians, in English, of course, "don't you realize you are all dead already." He stunned them enough for us to proceed unmolested.

Father was not into miracles, as I've said. He said, "If you see it properly, everything is a miracle." He added, "Don't forget what you have witnessed for I'll do no more miracles." As I understand, the point of both the moving star and the leper's nose is that Father took a handful of us "behind the maya" (the laws of physics and other scientific principles all operate well within the maya of things) to show us that in its purest state the only causality is what we call "God's will," the mysterious force that holds the entire illusion together.

It doesn't matter, Miguel, if independent observatories did not record the moving star (I never knew it was Venus -- I just thought of that heavenly body as "the morning star") or if the other inhabitants of the village never acknowledged the nose on the leper's face (I'm sure the so-called "miracles" of Christ reported in the Gospels were not verified by the science of that day -- they were demonstrated for the edification of the disciples, not the world at large); it doesn't even matter if we were stoned or hypnotized by the Old Man (indeed, much of what we witnessed around Father was the result of what western psychology might deem "a consensus reality") -- what does matter is that we experienced around Father a transcendent reality the entire purpose and benefit of which was that we might glimpse another sort of truth beyond the mundane perception and habitual causality. Indeed, if each of us did not witness something "miraculous" in the years we hung around the physical form of Father -- seeing him disappear for a moment, for example, or hearing him predict the fall of various world leaders and then reading in the papers of their disgrace, fall or demise -- we weren't seeing with the divine eye, the deviva chakshu, weren't paying full attention, so to speak.

Returning to Father's prediction of the fall of certain leaders, the mundane world of newspapers would attribute their fall to various logical causalities but we who sat around Father knew the fall had been caused by Father "thundering" on them. Both "realities" exist and apply but most of the world only sees the mundane causality. Our privilege was to experience the transcendent one as well.

An epilogue on the leper woman -- When we returned with Father in '75 we asked people around Gorkhara about her. No one had seen her for some time and, even though only 6 years had passed, many had forgotten her completely. I was in Gorkhara again in '89 with my son Max. I asked about her. No one knew anything. Shakti told me that he had heard the story of the "leper's nose" many times "but I myself never saw her." At that point I resigned myself to the realization that that whole remarkable story had been for my own and a handful of others personal "enlightenment." But, I received a more satisfying (from a literary point of view) though somewhat horrible conclusion to this tale. I went to Gorkhara with Nando and his son Raj in 2006 and Nando told me that he had heard that the leper woman had been murdered by a relative, I think it was a nephew, murdered for the money she had hoarded all those years -- so, it was a severe case of greed after all.

Bom Shankar Bholenath,

Hari