

April 9, 2006 (Monday)

Am I a Hindu or Shinto Japanese?

Or just an Indologist?

私はヒンズー教徒なのか、

神道の日本人なのか、単なるインド学徒なのか。

Father: Ideas come in the air. Another ten hours' flight from Chennai, Dubai to London gave me lots of thought as well as jet-lag. Is death the end of one's life, or rather, the beginning? The in-flight movie "the Rising" on Emeritus got me thinking. It's an actual story of an epic Indian hero (the Untouchable), Mangal Pandey, who died a martyr's death, fighting the British East India in 1867. Sepoy's Mutiny? No, it was the first Indian's war of independence 50 years earlier than the real Day of Independence that gave India the freedom they had long coveted. The gut-wrenching lyric goes: How proud is the mother who gave a birth to such a son who gave his life to his country.

Mothers, sacrifice, death. Suttee, the abandoned practice of burning widows alive following their husbands' deaths.

Uncivilized, yes. But there's a kernel of nobility in such motherly sacrifice that often triggers a revolution.

Life after death? Death before life?

Son: Dad. Wake up. You're day-dreaming. You're supposed to be dead, aren't you?

Father: (He suddenly comes to) You're dead wrong, Son. I'm dead alive. I've been talking to myself, pondering...

Son: Pondering about what, dad?

Father: Those sad and dreamy eyes of my mentor who died at 91: Krishnamurti.

S: You saw him on video at the Krishnamurti Foundation, Chennai.

F: Yes, on the recommendation of a marvelous woman, his direct disciple. Miss Ahalya Chari (85) – a woman with the similar aura of her master.

S: Awesome discipleship! Who gave you her name?

F: Aftab Seth, former Indian Ambassador to Japan. A Kodokan's connection. Kodokan's a debating society. And that's relationship! That's en (縁).

S: Debating and India? And your being here. Any links there?

- F: The book, 'The Argumentative Indian' by Amartya Sen. He argues that religion create wars.
- S: He's a Hindu.
- F: He doesn't want to be identified with India as a Hindu nation. He discards it as a one-dimensional identity.
- S: He sounds like J. Krishnamurti, or a living economist Ravi Batra.
- F: The harder they try to deny their overidentification with a Hindu identity, the more am I convinced that they are Hinduistic.
- S: What do you mean by that, dad? How's Krishnamurti related to Hinduism? He's from Hinduism.
- F: Agnosticism. Hindu scriptures say the pursuit of agnosticism is the starting point of a relentless pursuit after truth. Here's a quote from a book, "Am I a Hindu?" by Ed. Viswanathan: I feel most agnostics will finally become personalities like J. Krishnamurti and Buddha, provided they do not try to seek intellectual answers to the riddles of the universe. As an orphan, Krishnamurti, hand-picked by the late Annie Besant, became a great leader of the Theosophical Society. But as time went on, Krishnamurti transcended all positions and power, and questioned the integrity of every minute thing in every religion. Finally he became an institution in himself without an iota of ego (p. 17).
- S: He was a logically-headed spiritualist way beyond agnosticism. Is that what you were after, while you were alive, dad?
- F: Yes, I was after what he was after. No, I'm after what he's after. And I shall be after what he's been after, dead or alive. That's what I call 'Michi' or the Tao of Taoism, the Brahman of Hinduism, the Ayin of Jewish Kabbalah mysticism, or the Jehovah ("I AM") of the Old Testament. Viswanathan argues it is an unnameable, undefinable pure being or power out of which, all else emerges. Let no religion have a monopoly on God. And that's Hinduism as a way of life, like Shintoism.
- S: Hearing your analysis, Hinduism is like a dead mother banyan tree, we see at the garden of the Theosophic Society.
- S: There you go, son. It's the dead mother's self-sacrificial love that has given life to many philosophical or agnostic derivations.
- S: Hinduism says, nobody knows what is right or what is wrong, or what's good or what's bad.
- F: That's right. And that's him. Vedas accept no idols. Upanishad says images are meant only as aids to meditation for the ignorant. Krishnamurti says it's the clashes of the images we have at one another that cause conflicts and wars. That made, or rather, makes his eyes sad and lonely. His deep blue eyes. Sad, benevolent and healing.

- S: He observes things with those eyes.
F: He doesn't observe; he gazes. He doesn't blink. He sees the truth beneath anything under the sun. No motives. He knows.
S: Dad, are you a Hindu or a Shintoist?
F: I'm thinking it over. Both look the same to me, now.
S: You seem to be under Krishnamurti's spell. You're more humble than you look.
F: More humble than before. I said to the group of Krishnamurti's devotees yesterday, "I'm a samurai - fearless." But Krishnamurti is the last person I'm tempted to kill. He's beyond fearlessness.
S: Why are you talking to me, instead of writing?
F: Hinduism, like Shintoism, started with Sruti, "that is heard." Rishi's vedic masters heard eternal truths in their hearts and taught their disciples telepathically - ishin-denshin.
S: Sounds like zen.
F: Yes, zen comes from India.
S: Don't believe anything blindly.
F: Except your mother's love. Unconditional love.

