

The Van Allen Radiation belt already exists. Tests with nuclear devices would have damaged it seriously.

Faith healing—fact or hoax?

ERRORS IN THIS ARTICLE ARE MARKED "X"

TILL MONDAY last, there were two remarkable Englishmen in town. They were remarkable because they were unlike the normal concept of the Englishmen known for his reserve and formal manner. One of them was a 62-year old lawyer and the other a 39-year old teacher. Both were very free-spoken and both came here not in pursuit of their normal vocations but on something new. They were here as spiritual healers or to be more precise, psychic healers.

Wasn't like carrying coal to Newcastle, especially as it was India which normally exported every kind of healing including modern doctors and surgeons to other countries? No, Brian Hurst, the teacher-turned-clairvoyant, did not think so. No doubt, they had much to learn from India but they believed that they had much to give to Indians also and, they had come here to give of their best.

There was little in common between the two Englishmen except that they belonged to the same Church back home and both believed in invoking the spirit world to heal the mortals of this world. Brian Hurst, the younger of the two, who described himself as a clairvoyant, discovered his own hidden talents to receive messages from the spirit world 15 years ago and also found that he could use this gift for the benefit of the suffering humanity. He began to hold seances where the dead spirits of the patients were summoned and they would tell what was wrong with the patient or what line of treatment the patient should take.

Mr. Hurst, who has the air of an earnest young man about him, said that he and his companion, the older Mr. Copley had come to India to warn this country that something "deadly and dangerous" by way of crime and violence was waiting towards this ancient land from the West and to put us on our guard. Mr. Copley, who is a lawyer in private life, is the psychic healer. He took great pains to draw a distinction between faith healing and psychic healing. In faith healing, he said, everything de-

pended on the patient who first had to have faith in the healer. In his own system of healing, the patient should only co-operate but need do no more. Could he heal without the patient's co-operation? No, Mr. Copley was firm on this point. Everything depended on the patient's mental attitude and the co-operative spirit that he displayed. Some higher power believed to be God lent skill to his fingers and enabled him to locate the disease spot and heal it.

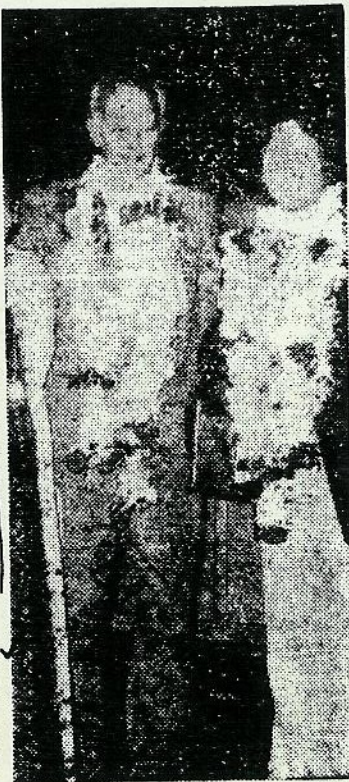
Mr. Brian Hurst and Mr. R. A. Copley, who were in Bombay by courtesy of a leading city cardiologist, help a number of healing sessions in Birla theatre, drawing a fairly good crowd every time. They spoke persuasively, urging the people to go back to their ancient spiritual culture and not to ape the West. They spoke of the importance of love in human relations, not physical love but some kind of a superior ethereal love where in one felt a kinship with ones fellow human beings. Mr. Hurst particularly spoke of the close contact which the spirit world held with this physical world. He said that way back in the early '60s, the United States was experimenting with a new kind of nuclear device which it fired would have enveloped the entire globe in a radiation belt to be known as Van Allen radiation belt to serve as a protective device for this planet against stratospheric or atmospheric disturbances. However, this radiation belt would have cut off communications between the earth and the spirit world, and therefore (said Mr. Hurst) the spirits effectively interfered and short-circuited the electric mechanism of the nuclear device with the result that the entire experiment was a damp squib and could not be fired at all. Phantasy? Mr. Hurst said that anyone could check up US records to know for himself how and when this radiation belt project was abandoned. The US scientists were mystified why their elaborate planning should have got unstrung but, spirits from the other world had come and told a medium, Miss Grace Rosher that they were responsible for the misfiring. The spirits had said that it was absolute

By Sriram Trikannad

madness to fire any nuclear device in the atmosphere as its impact on earth and the human mind would be disastrous.

Mr. Hurst had other things to say about the spirit world. He said that when a person died, his nearest and dearest who had

left behind on earth all the ailments and diseases that he might have been suffering from, when he died and went into the other only in spirit. Yet, the denizens of the spirit world loved one another as the mortals did, they even embraced and kissed each other, but it was only



preceded him came to welcome him into their world. They would warmly embrace him, fuss over him and make him feel 'at home' in the new world. Yet, it would take some time for the one-time human being to realise that he was there only in spirit and not in body. He would have

Bombay has always been a happy hunting ground for spiritual healers, who have claimed miraculous cures for impossible ailments. In town, till recently, were two English healers who gave a new slant to this business of spiritual healing

with their 'spirit bodies' which was made of ectoplasm. A person, after leaving the world of mortals, remained in the spirit world for a year before he moved into higher worlds according to the sum total of the merit earned by him on earth.

Mr. Hurst was also a strong

believer in reincarnation. He believed that if a person, at the time of dying, had some strong tie linking him to somebody or something on earth, that bond brought him back him to the earth but the reincarnation was not an immediate affair. It would take years and years before a man was reborn on earth to complete his worldly experiences.

Mr. Hurst said that since his early '20s, he had been having psychic experiences and had become sensitized to such an extent that he could "frequently" pick up the thoughts, feelings and voices of invisible people around him who had once lived on earth and had since passed on into a "higher life and different environment." They used him as a sort of radio set, transmitting symbols, messages and meaningful information to other people on earth may or may not be near him at that time. Invariably the spirit people came in love and service to mankind with the message that the quality of our earth life, the nature of our actions here and now, helped to determine the spiritual environment one would eventually occupy in that higher life.

Mr. Copley, who has been a spiritual healer for 40 years, learning among others from the late Mr. Lalbhai Patel of Bombay, had only one regret while leaving India. And, that was that he could not meet Sathya Sai Baba personally even though he went to Phutaparthi in Andhra Pradesh specially to meet him. He regarded Sri Sathya Sai Baba as a rare example of a spiritual healer who could even heal bodies by mere thought. Mr. Copley said that the most remarkable sight he had witnessed was in Philippines where he came across many spiritual healers who even performed major surgeries. These faith healers, who numbered in all 50 or so, said that in their young age, a golden-hued "divine figure" who said he was sent by Jesus Christ had appeared before them and imparted the healing touch to them. Mr. Copley has filmed the surgeries carried out by these Filipino spiritual healers. The healers were themselves largely illiterate persons who knew little

of modern medicine or surgery. But, their 'magic fingers' could open up bodies and enable them to spot diseased and remove it and patch up the place again.

The film shown by Dr. Copley to his audience in Bombay, which included some of the top surgeons of Bombay, actually showed the dextrous fingers of the Filipino healers carrying out major surgeries like removal of stones in the gall-bladder, stones in the kidney, etc. As one of the healers themselves explained, some hidden power guided the fingers to the diseased part and then, magically enough, a slit would open in the body and their fingers would be guided to the same mystic power to the diseased part. The most bizarre part was the 'patching up' for merely dabbing the operated part with a swab of cotton, they could make the skin whole again leaving no trace of the surgery except for a small scar, hardly half-inch in length. If this wile of hand, it was too ingenious a feat that even deceived a camera lens. The deep crevices that sprang up beneath the fingers of the Filipino healers, the diseased parts that they generally pulled out from the body of their patients and the patching up that was done afterwards appeared too realistic to be dismissed as mere sleight of hand. There was also some flow of blood which is normal to an operation but it was minimal. The Filipino healers were said to have cured even cases of cancer. They carried out their surgeries in school halls, before a big audience of young and old all in the open. On an average each of them did 100 to 200 cures per week, said Mr. Copley, a remarkable thing about it was that they remained unaffected and humble enough to give credit to a higher power as being responsible for these feats.

Mr. Copley was human enough to ask one of the leading Bombay surgeons at the end of the film-show what he thought of Filipino 'surgeons'. "It gives something to think about," said saucily and, perhaps, comically. "Do you accept it?" Mr. Copley persisted. Well, seem to have something to say to the Bombay surgeon, who was as to concede.