

The conundrum of death

by Suthan Kokila Kerkera

SEVEN people sat in a semi-dark room in a house in Ahmedabad. A voice spoke to them in a husky tone, staccato sentences and with distinct Chinese accent.

It predicted "major earth disturbances in South America and North Turkey soon and in California, U.S.A., in the near future." This was in October 1974. In March, 1975, North-West Turkey was rocked by an earthquake. And the voice was that of a dead man, who lived 800 years ago in China!

And so unfolds the conundrum of what happens to life after death—a question that has haunted man down the ages. A reply could be found only if one believes in the supernatural.

There are people in the world of the living with extra-sensory perception who have communicated with those long since dead. These gifted individuals are called mediums, individuals chosen by the spirits to communicate with people on earth.

Brian E. Hurst, currently teaching English at B.M. (Bakubhai Mansukhbhai) Institute, Ahmedabad, is one such medium. And the Chinese spirit mentioned above spoke during one of his seances in Ahmedabad.

Hurst is an Englishman who does not quite look like one. He distinctly looks French. Nothing unusual, of course, at least not until he tells you he has reason to believe that in his former birth he was a Frenchman. That a French poet's spirit haunts him insisting that they both had lived during the French Revolution and had been friends. Besides, he is a psychic, clairvoyant, and telepathic person who has had strange experiences during his childhood and has given public shows in clairvoyance, clairaudience and psychometry.

One sunny day he was having tea in the canteen at B. M. Institute. He picked up a spoon and it broke into two, exactly in the centre without pressure. This was not the first time, says Hurst.

At a seance in London, some years back, the French spirit manifested itself before Hurst to convey the message that the spirit world had chosen him as their mediator to do good to the world. But Hurst does not know the shape of things to come. "The spirits will decide and direct me," he says.

Every Friday evening, since October 1974, seven people have a session with the spirits in his house in Ahmedabad. "They are good friends of mine who are genuinely interested in helping me develop my mediumship. For every seance to be successful there should be a peaceful atmosphere and I should be relaxed. There have been unsuccessful sessions when the spirits have not come through. Every session has been taperecorded so far."

Many spirits have communicated with this group. The most frequent visitors are Maria Kunz, William John Bryant and the Chinese spirit Lee Chung-hui. Maria Kunz is said to have been a Romanian nurse while on earth and died in 1914, when her town was bombed and blown to bits during World War I. Speaking in a melodious, friendly voice which at times is

some darkness here, but in higher levels it is day always. There are streets with buildings, empty of traffic for they are not needed here. We can come and go freely. Life is restricted on earth. The good Lord cares for us and takes care of us. I visited Hong Kong and our ship called at a South Indian port on the way. We have lovely parties and jolly times here, when we get together and laugh a lot".

Before Hurst goes into a trance he gets a shrinking and floating sensation, of gradually becoming smaller and lighter. Other people in the dark room feel a considerable lightening of atmosphere. "I feel exhausted after each seance and when I regain consciousness I just don't have any idea of what



Brian E. Hurst

has taken place". Hurst has yet to develop the faculty of independent voice phenomena, where the medium does not go into a trance, but is able to take part in the conversation that takes place between the spirits and the sitters. During such a phenomena, a life force called ectoplasm exudes from the medium. This is fashioned into a replica of the human voice box or the ectoplasmic larynx by the spirits. Then the communicating spirit concentrates his or her thoughts into this, creating vibrations which reach the sitters on earth as objective sound. The larynx can be seen though the infra-red telescope. Sometimes, apparitions which are distinct and separate from the medium's body, which move and speak, can be heard, felt and seen. According to Hurst this physical mediumship is an inborn gift and takes a long time and much patience to be fully developed.

In the tense room thick with vibrations, sometimes one can hear the laboured breathing of the medium (at times, it sounds like loud snores emanate from the medium). The spirits seem to talk with great difficulty, as exhibited by the slow painful dialogue interspersed with long pauses, at times tapering off into inaudible whispers. Hurst explains that it is due to the fact that every spirit's voice differs after death, since they do not use the same vocal chords and they have to remember their earth voices and simultaneously lower their

gagged, sealed up, tied boxes up, held and yet the voices have come.

"I have not heard anything unpleasant, bad or frightening during any seance so far," says Hurst. "There are some people who don't use their psychic powers in the right way". Every medium has to be helped by the spirits to develop himself and the medium has to have a guide, a spirit with similar vibrations who will, henceforth, be present at every seance and act as a sort of 'mediator cum organizer' for each medium. The degree of development will depend on the spirit.

Thus, the medium is but a puppet in the hands of the spirits, explains Hurst. He is unable to predict whether a seance will be successful or not. "The spirit people cannot be called against their will to communicate with those on earth. They will come only if they wish to do so. Besides, the mental attitude of the sitters is very important. It should be one of peace, love, harmony, and trust. Honest scepticism is no barrier though, but," says Hurst, "if the attitude of the sitter is downright malicious, then possibly he can inhibit the phenomenon".

The members of Hurst's group in Ahmedabad have received crucial evidence of near and dear ones who have passed over to the other world. Yet they are disappointed that none of them have manifested so far and have only sent messages. Hurst is at a loss to understand the reason why no Indian spirits have communicated. He explains that it may be because he is English and that too in the early stages of development, therefore his vibrations may not correspond with theirs.

He says, "sitting with unknown people is very risky and endangers the life of the medium." Hurst recounted a bad experience he had, when as a student he sat with two unknown girls in London. As soon as the voices came through, one of the girls screamed in terror. Immediately the 'entity' rushed back into Hurst's body and he felt he had been kicked hard on the stomach. "I was laid up in bed for three days. Since then I'm very careful not to sit with anybody with a nervous disposition. I prefer to sit with known people."

Hurst came to India in January 1974, on a third visit. His former two visits were in 1967 and 1973. He was lured to India "due to a desire to be of service in some capacity or other. Maybe I was drawn to India because it has such a wealth of occult and mysticism. Besides, I once read an autobiography of an Indian yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda, and was immensely impressed. I even feel his spirit visited me in London, for I remember seeing a hazy vision in white which said, 'You will go to my hometown (Calcutta)'. This prediction came true in 1967, when I visited India, went to Calcutta and visited his murti in Dakshineswar."

Known as the 'telepathic teacher' in a London school, where he taught English for three-and-a-half years, he is close to being called the same in India, too. His students at the Institute have been taken aback on more than one occasion when he came up

saying, 'Go into the next field and you will find mushrooms in plenty and, sure enough, as he stepped into the field he would find a wide expanse of mushrooms.

Despite his own psychic experiences he was quite a sceptic teenager about medium, physical manifestation and spiritualism. When he heard a tape-recording of his dead uncle's voice at a seance where his aunt was present, he did not really believe that the dead could speak. But, his curiosity got the better of him and spurred him on to his first seance. In a dark room tin can phones were kept round a bowl of water. The medium went into a trance and started snoring. Soon tin megaphones started whizzing round the room at a fantastic speed, shining brightly as if covered by luminous paint. Then a male voice was heard speaking in a cockney accent. Hurst, who was 22 years then, felt nervous and surprisingly heard the voice say, "I won't be near ya, if ya're feeling wimpy (feeling nervous)".

So the sceptic turned believer after this session. Yet little did he realise then that he was destined greater things and that his childhood voices were but a harbinger of things to come!

And it happened — in the year 1960, in a dark room where he was sitting with his college friends. "We sat talking, I felt myself going to sleep. Then I lost consciousness for the next hour. When I recovered I had no inkling of what had taken place but for exhaustion," says Hurst. While he was lulled into a trance, his friends were jerked into awareness as strange voices started filtering into the room. A very unexpected encounter with the other dimension, for Hurst it was the beginning of the possibility of his future as a medium. He was then attending lectures at the College of Psychic Sciences, Kensington.

One day in Ahmedabad he found his house lock with its key, which had been inserted into it, neatly bent and broken into two on the table and nobody had touched it! That day, as he was talking to the house boy he had felt an 'extra presence' in the room. He saw, at the same time, the French spirit standing near the staircase. "The broken key was a way of letting me know that he was there," says Hurst.

For several years a house in Ahmedabad City was haunted by a 'ghost' which pushed the children down and created havoc in the kitchen. The distressed owner approached Hurst a few months ago. Hurst, who had done 'exorcism' once before in London, promised to help. As soon as he entered the house he felt waves of hatred and resentment fill the room. Suddenly, a male voice started flinging abusive language at Hurst, calling him an 'English dog'. The entity claimed to have been the owner of the property and resented it being divided and owned by low caste people, its bad maintenance and the closure of a door. Acting as a mediator Hurst calmed the spirit and a settlement was brought about by the owner. Since then the owner claims that they have not been troubled by the 'ghost'.

Brian Hurst is also a psychic. Sometimes, he claims to be so clairvoyant that he feels the