

Analysis of 'Asariri'= Voice from the Sky= Astral Voice

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Famous people who heard voices are Socrates, Joan of Arc, Mahatma Gandhi, Sigmund Freud and Charles Dickens.

An 'asariri' is a voice that comes without a 'sarira'(body), usually from the sky.

There are two types of voices which interest the medical people and the religious believers. Both of them are "heard" when no one is in the vicinity. If anyone approaches a doctor and says that he or she is hearing voices, the doctor asks two more questions, "Are you worried about others talking about you? Do you think that life is not worth living (suicidal)" If the client says 'Yes to all the the questions', he or she is given psychiatric drugs. Those drugs are very strong that will make one a real mental patient.

Believers also 'hear' voices from the angels or gods. In those days they were considered great pathfinders. Later scientists dubbed them as mental patients. The most famous person in the history who 'heard voices' was a little girl known as Joan of Arc. But the latest research shows that all of them were not mental patients. An international team of researchers led by experts at Durham University (United Kingdom) and backed by the Wellcome Trust is aiming to delve deeper.

"Many people think that that voice hearing is just a symptom of severe mental illness like schizophrenia or psychosis, but what they don't know is hearing voices is also an important aspect of many ordinary people's lives, said Charles

Fernyhough, Professor of Psychology at Durham University and the Project's Director.

Dr Angela Woods, Co Director said that there was also a correlation between voice hearing and creativity – Charles Dickens and Socrates are among those thought to have heard voices. Peter Bullimore 52, from Sheffield, hears voices 24 hours a day. One voice urged him to do something creative, so he wrote a children's book which was published last year. There is a support group—Hearing Voices Network-- for people like him.

Some voices are distressing and malevolent; others are kind and encouraging, providing a person with an important source of comfort and support. But this is different from the 'inner voices' heard by some great people.

Joan of Arc (1412-1431)

A French peasant girl beat the English army who occupied Northern France. She led the French army under the instruction of 'heavenly voice'. Her conquests secured the coronation of Charles VII of France. Later when she tried to conquer Paris, French church officials who were in favour of the British captured her and sold her to the English. They dubbed her as a witch and burnt her alive. Bernard Shaw has written a beautiful drama on her life.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

The most famous English novelist Charles Dickens wrote Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations, David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, A Christmas Carol and many more stories. Dickens wrote about his experiences in which he describes how his characters (in the novels) spoke to him. The nurse in the novel Martin chuzzlewit, Mrs Gampo who told him dirty stories in the church during Sunday services. He used to laugh loud in public.

Socrates (BC 469-399)

Athenian philosopher wrote nothing but he was immortalized in the dialogues of his pupil Plato. Accused in 399 of impiety and corruption of youth he was sentenced to death. He willingly drank the poison hemlock. Plato and Xenophon described the voices heard by him. The voices told him what to do or not to do. He always listened to them.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Mahatma Gandhi wrote about how 'the inner voices' guided him. He wrote about it in many of his articles in Young India. It told him that he was on the right track. The penances he did were according to the inner voice. When he had doubts his final arbiter was his inner voice.

Sigmund Freud (1856—1939), Father of Psychoanalysis, said,

Austrian physician who pioneered the study of unconscious mind said, "During the days when I was living alone in a foreign city ... I quite often heard my name suddenly called by an unmistakable and beloved voice ..."

There are many more famous people who talked about their inner voices.

'Asariri' in Hindu Scriptures

But Hindu mythologies in Sanskrit and Tamil say that the Asariri comes from divine sources and it never fails. They are not oracles. Oracles are coming from people who are possessed. But Asariri has got none behind it. It is a divine voice. The most famous sky voice was the one Kamsa heard which told him that the eighth child born to his sister Devaki would kill him. It came true in spite of his precautionary measures.

In Tamil Tiru Vilaiyadal Puranam has got many references to Asariri. It shows such beliefs existed until 17th century writers.

Even in the story of launching the Tamil Veda Tirukkural (5th Century AD), Asarii plays a key role. In the very first stanza of Garland of Tiruvalluvar (Tiruvalluva Malai), astral voice says Rudrasanman is the equal to Tiruvalluvar and so he can be seated along with valluvar or Kural.

Narayaneeyam (45-9) of Melapathur Narayana Bhattathiri (1560) and Geetagevindam of Jayadeva were all approved by god through an Asariri.

In the Mahabharata we come across Asariri in the birth of Draupadi. She was born out of a holy fire along with his brother. When she was born a disembodied voice said (MB 1-46), “The dark one will be the most beautiful woman in the world. She is born to fulfil a divine purpose. She will be the nemesis of Kshatriya kind”.

Asariri is on the decline in later literature. Asari was replaced by dreams. In later literature God conveyed most of his messages to his devotees through dreams.

Please read my posts on dreams:

- 1.The Role of Dreams in Saivite literature
- 2.Do our dreams have any meaning?
3. 60 Second Interview with Socrates

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