

Asia looks to Britain

NEERJA CHOWDHURY of New Delhi speaking in London this week, said that Britain could be 'a guide and a teacher and a friend to the nations of Asia and Africa.'

She said, 'Her past and her heritage and her experience is actually her preparation for her vast appointed role in the future.'

Miss Chowdhury, who writes for the Indian newsweekly *Himmat*, said she disagreed with people in Britain who believed Britain had no role because the country had little economic power.

Men and women from Britain had recently gone to India with the programme of MRA and in three weeks they would be travelling with a force of Indian and Ceylonese to the countries of South East Asia. 'Britain, India and Australia could be God's highway for a new world,' she said.

A Sikh's view



photo Strong

COUNCILLOR S Gill, the first Indian elected a Labour councillor in the London borough of Ealing, urged the ending of 'the evil and hate in people's minds' between the races in Britain.

He said there was still time in the country to bring a change 'if we see the problem against the background of the attitude of the world'.

Although necessary, legislation alone could not solve the racial problem said Councillor Gill of Southall, speaking at a MRA meeting in the Westminster Theatre this week. 'If we change our approach to this problem we are going to build a new Britain which can be a bulwark, a shining example,' he said.

Home-made revolution

by Evelyn Thomsen

DRIVING ALONG IT, you might think that Shrewsbury Lane in Greenwich, SE18, is a very ordinary street, with its neat houses, well-tended gardens, and cars parked snugly against the curb. But it's not at all ordinary, because revolutionary things are happening at number 76.

People of all races and backgrounds come and go regularly from this home where geography teacher Soobiah Kistasamy lives with his wife Indrani and their five children. This man and his wife, who immigrated to Britain from South Africa and Ghana have known all the hatred and bitterness of people who have seen their own community killed and mutilated in vicious race riots and who have suffered racial discrimination in Britain and elsewhere.

But those who come to their home find not only a warm welcome, and perhaps a cup of tea, but also the experience of an approach to life which answers every form of conflict, whether in home or nation.

It all started one cold winter day three years ago, when Bob Riddell, who works as a senior local government official for the borough of Greenwich and lives nearby, knocked at the door and sold two tickets for *Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill* at the Westminster Theatre to the Kistasamys. It was the first time they had had the opportunity to go to the theatre in London, and that visit was followed by many others to the Westminster on coaches from their area.

After seeing several plays at the Westminster, Soobiah and Indrani took a big step forward. They gave an Indian meal in their home to raise money for the filming of the pantomime, *Give a Dog a Bone*. For the first time, Indrani went out on the 'knocker' to meet her neighbours and 28 of them came for the meal.

Then the two of them went to Trolley Garth, the Moral Re-Armament



The Kistasamys greet their neighbours

photo Leggat

centre in Cheshire, and it was there that Indrani talked with a white South African who had changed her attitudes and was fighting for MRA in her country. Indrani realized that her own deep hatred helped no one and thought to herself, 'Why not forget the past and start a new life?' She did just that.

Soobiah too decided there to make Moral Re-Armament his battle and shortly afterwards he was working with West Indian cricketer, Conrad Hunte, and others in Sheffield.

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About a year ago Soobiah met, at Stafford Place in London, with Conrad Hunte, members of the West Indian National Association and various people working with MRA, Soobiah suddenly thought, 'Everything is being done for us by the host community. We should not entirely depend on the host community's doing things for us, but should take responsibility ourselves and see what we can do for integration.'

Since that time, the Kistasamys have had ten major parties in their home, to which between 250 and 300 people have come from all the different communities which make their homes in Britain. The Kistasamys work together with British couples, for instance the Riddells, and others who live in their area, and for these occasions they pool resources of china, cutlery and chairs. So many people come to these evenings, that they often end up sitting on the floor of the average-sized living room.

American visitor

The chief guest one evening recently was Mrs Henrine Ward Banks, the Dean of Women at Bethune-Cookman College in Florida. A Negro, she had become disappointed and disillusioned about the racial situation in America, and had completely lost the will to fight. In the Kistasamys' home, where she saw people from all races and backgrounds meeting together and heard their convictions, she noticed that people were beginning to change before her very eyes.

With her faith restored and her spirits revitalized, she returned to bring a new element into America's racial crisis. She has never ceased to write and talk about her experience at the Kistasamys.

One of the most amazing things about these evenings in the Kistasamys' home is that they have included representatives of the host community and the police. One night two members from Scotland Yard were also present, sitting on the floor. Indrani has gone out visiting with the wife of a policeman, and she and her husband emphasized that this kind of cooperation was truly revolutionary for them.

Soobiah said, 'For us, police represent something completely different from what they do to you from Britain or America. In South Africa the police represent the law and enforce apartheid. To be able to work with police



Indrani Kistasamy serves tea to the Riddells and Henry Bouch from nearby Lewisham
photo Leggat

in complete equality is very different.' People go away from these evenings changed. One West Indian lady came with her husband. Their home was a desperately unhappy one and this was the first time they had gone out together for six years. They had been separated at one time and were now living 'separate' lives, although together, when they were invited to the Kistasamys'. The wife was never given money for household expenses or for the children's clothes. This couple listened to all that was said, and the next day, the wife returned to see Indrani and Soobiah.

She poured out the story of her married life and then told of a miracle that had just happened. After they had gone home the previous evening, her husband had given the children spending money for the first time.

That night neither one of them slept and the following day her husband gave her housekeeping money and money to buy school clothes for the children. Her husband's change so struck her that she gave up smoking and handed over the money saved to Conrad Hunte to help send someone to the MRA Training Centre at Caux, Switzerland.

No doubts

Soobiah and Indrani have no doubts as to what lies behind their effectiveness in bringing a new spirit to others. 'We have dedicated ourselves to the principles of MRA, absolute moral standards and the guidance of God,' says Soobiah, 'and that is why we have the strength to take on this task.' Furthermore, they now work in unity, though this was not always the case.

One time, not so long ago, Soobiah was away with his students in Guernsey, and it occurred to Indrani that

she and Soobiah were meant to cooperate in a new way. She also had some concrete ideas as to the kind of changes in her own living that would make this possible.

Instead of taking off somewhere with the five children in tow, as she usually did when Soobiah was away, Indrani decided to stay at home, and do something for the house. 'Most of the trouble was in my kitchen,' she says, 'because it was a mess. That's where quarrels always used to start.' So, with the help of a friend, she re-did it completely in three days.

Then she would always nag Soobiah to fix something the moment he came home from work, no matter how tired he might be. She discovered while he was away that she was perfectly capable of repairing some things herself and it also occurred to her that it might do more for her husband to offer him a cup of coffee when he came home, instead of a list of things to do.

Since they have learned to work un-itedly, they feel they are really forging ahead, and, they add, 'A united family is the best means of having a united nation.'

Nations are made up of ordinary people, but when ordinary people, like the Kistasamys, change, they remake nations. 'There's a multi-racial society already at work in Britain.' This is the Kistasamys' conviction and their home is a working example of it.

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ASIAN AND AUSTRALASIAN JOURNEY

Interview with senior engineer and his wife

Mr and Mrs Brian Robbins arrived back in London recently after an 8 month journey through many nations, including India, Australia and New Zealand. Mr Robbins, who has retired as Secretary of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, also served on the Senate of London University for eight years. He is currently Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham.

Q Mr Robbins, why did you undertake this journey?

A We were so impressed by the cast of *India Arise* when they visited Britain last year, and so challenged by what they and Mr Rajmohan Gandhi have taken on in Asia, that when we were invited to go there last autumn we decided to accept.

Q Who sponsored your trip?

A We took responsibility for our fares and expenses. It meant realising some capital and we sold our car.

Q So you did not go in a professional capacity?

A Yes. Indeed I did. I have always realised that man must be modernised to keep pace with the incredible expansion of technology. When I attended the passing out parade of the National Defence Academy at Poona, where the President of India took the salute, I was very interested in his closing address. In it he said that India needed officers in the defence services not only efficient in their specialist knowledge, but officers with moral fibre who, in their living, were prepared to obey the will of God.

By virtue of my association with the Royal Military College of Science, I was also invited to address the staff and students of the College of Military Engineering in Poona.

Not just technical

Q I imagine that as an engineer, your technical advice is exactly what India needs at this point?

A Well, at Panchgani I found that Mr Rajmohan Gandhi had the right approach. He is not primarily interested in creating another centre to alleviate suffering or just to give technical training, but the thing he is daring to do is to deal with the root cause

—human nature—which produces the colossal problems.

Q Mrs Robbins, could you say something about the women you met?

A Yes. I addressed many business and professional women, especially in Australia and New Zealand. I found most of them deeply concerned about the devaluation of character in their communities.

Many complained about the TV plays and films coming from Britain and the damage they were doing. I had to apologise for some of the programmes from my country. On the other hand, one lady from New Zealand told me that while in London she had gone to the Westminster Theatre

four times to see *Happy Deathday*, because she was so gripped by it. When we told her it was going to be filmed, she and her husband set to work raising money towards the cost of it.

Melbourne University are having Moral Re-Armament films every week.

Future

Q Having visited most of the Commonwealth countries East of Suez, what do you feel Britain's role should be in the future?

A I believe we have to create a new form of Commonwealth—of selfless men and women. I also believe that just as in the old Commonwealth, Westminster, mother of Parliament, was the centre, so in a new Commonwealth of the spirit, the Westminster Theatre can be the centre of new ideas and a new culture.

CAMPBELL LEGGAT

SOWING DRAGON'S TEETH

Reviews of two recently published books

WHEN GOD SUMMONS people to battle, He gives the weapons. Some of the weapons are books. 'Books', said Milton, 'are as vigorously productive as those fabled dragon's teeth that, being sown, spring up as armed men.' Two more 'armed men' have newly entered the fight.

The first is *Builders and Destroyers AD 300-700* by Mary Wilson, illustrated by Vera Louise Drysdale and published by Blandford at 12s 6d as the fourth volume of the series *God's Hand in History*.

In those centuries, as now, Europe was divided into East and West: then, as now, dictators tried to regiment people's thinking: then, as now, some Christians explained away the words of Christ.

These pages describe the dramatic adventures of men who contended for truths and freedoms vital to our own generation. Athanasius cheerfully accepting his fourth banishment and misdirecting his pursuers up the Nile: Basil, defying the Emperor's threats: Patrick 'who never let people push him about just to show how Christian he was' establishing a new civilisation in Ireland: above all Augustine, whose change in character led him, as the Roman Empire finally crumbled, to the concept of the City of God built from the lives of men and women who put Him first: these and

many others are portrayed in brilliantly simple language.

Religious Education for Today's Children by Joyce Kneale, published by Blandford at 12s 6d; had been written to meet the need expressed by the Plowden Report 'to relate the background and facts of the Christian revelation to situations which are within the children's experience' and has been tried out for two years in a London school before publication.

Biographies

Centred round themes such as Living in Today's World, Daring to Stand Alone and A Family of Nations, it provides a year's course for the top classes in primary or the lower ones in secondary schools. Bible stories (some from the series *God's Hand in History*) are combined with biographies of great men of this and earlier centuries. Suggestions are given for much extra teaching material and for questions and activities which encourage children to think of the world in which they live and of their own part in it. A good bibliography and an index are included.

This is the kind of book that teachers have been crying out for. Its use will do much to eliminate current queries about the relevance of Religious Education.

CONSTANCE SMITH

In my view

TEACHING IS FASCINATING

I AM A CLASSICAL DANCER, who always wanted to be a doctor to find a cure to cancer. Never once I thought of teaching, as I was convinced it was boring.

I come from a very orthodox Brahmin family of nine children and I am the eldest. (My father is a mines manager). In my life I had not cared for my own brothers and sisters.

Three years ago I decided to give my life, my talents and my dancing to God for the Moral Re-Armament of the world. Since that time God has opened new horizons and given me an opportunity to do the things I had never done before.

For the first time I felt responsible for the millions who were hungry, homeless and hopeless. Together with my friend, Jayashree Sonalker, I took on to care for the children of the workers on the building site of the Moral Re-Armament centre in Panchgani.

They were very dirty and had never had a bath in their lives. To bathe, to educate, to make responsible citizens of these children was a revolution in my life. God told me clearly not to treat them as masses of dirt but as individuals under Him. They returned tomatoes which they had stolen and said sorry. I found teaching most fascinating and creative.

I have been in Switzerland and Britain for the last two and a half months. At the invitation of some Swiss children I went to St Gallen with an English teacher. These children (between the ages of 11 and 13 years) after their school hours had gone out into different homes collecting newspapers, made articles and raised money for the children in Panchgani.

The reason for inviting me was to find out more about India. All they knew was that we were poor and did not know how to read or write. Earlier a boy had asked the teacher whether

I was a heathen coming from India. After telling them stories about people in Indian villages and schools who had found an answer to dishonesty, jealousy and hatred, we then listened to God. A boy remarked: 'Many Indians seem to have taken good decisions, it is high time we started.' All of them wanted to come to India to work, to learn the language and get to know people.

In another school where the children were between the ages of 8 and 10 they felt there was stealing and quarrelling in the country and decided to deal with it in themselves. Recently one of them, an eight year old girl,

wrote to me, 'I made my bed before my mother asked me to.' A new sense of responsibility is beginning to dawn. I salute these children for it.

When so many debate what is right and what is wrong, the absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love come in handy. I know for myself that I would not like to be told what to do. The most exciting and adventurous thing is to find out for yourself by listening to the deepest voice in your heart.

I have decided to lay down my life for the children of the world and to teach right from wrong.

VIJAYLAKSHMI SUBRAMANIAM

2nd week of 'Happy Deathday' filming

BREAKFAST in the barn. That is how the working day starts at Aston Bury, where *Happy Deathday* is being filmed on location. Beneath this roof built of timbers from ships which beat off the Spanish Armada, steaming coffee revives the actors and technicians who have driven out from London in the early morning.

Soon at work

Across the neat gravel drive and flower-beds, through Tudor red-brick walls and mullion windows, the film unit are soon at work inside the house, lighting up the 'set'. One day this is the panelled dining-room where the reddish-brown of the woodwork comes alive under the brilliant lights. The next day it is the drawing-room, now transformed into Josh Swinyard's bedroom, complete with massive four-poster bed.

If the weather is fine the entire unit, with lights, camera and sound equipment, moves quickly outside into the spacious grounds, to catch the precious hours of sunshine. Now a game of hide-and-seek begins with sun and cloud and with passing aircraft making the perfect permutation of sunlight and silence more difficult to achieve.

This week Yvonne Antrobus, who plays Jetta, joined the unit for the first time. On Wednesday evening she opened in the leading role in a new play in London, giving what Harold Hobson of the *Sunday Times* described as 'a remarkably successful performance'. The following morning she



The atheist professor, played by Clement McCallin, reads from the Bible in the final scene to Josh Swinyard, played by Cyril Luckham
photo Neiman

left home at 7.30 for her first 'call' on *Happy Deathday*.

The filming continues to keep up to its exacting schedule and forty-two minutes were 'in the can' by the end of week two.

HSW

NEXT EDITION

The next edition of the MRA Information Service will publish a series of articles on films produced by MRA and their significance for people and nations. There will also be a photo supplement of the filming of *Happy Deathday*.