

# **CHANNELING:**

## **Extrasensory Deception?**

### **by Suhotra Swami**

"If the guides were not guides after all, who were they?"

-Hungry Ghosts by Joe Fisher, p. 202

Seth, Ramtha, Lazaris, Ashtar, Mashiyach - the vaguely Biblical-sounding names have the ring of "prophet" to them. Indeed, for millions the world over, these and other garrulous "channeled entities" are prophets who enjoy a command of mass-media access that would have left the sandal-shod Old Testament visionaries tongue-tied with astonishment. Alexander Blair-Ewart, publisher and editor of the Toronto esoteric magazine *Dimensions*, notes a bit ruefully that "in sensationalist fashion, journalists and cameramen zoomed in on crystals, channeling and a confused and over-excited Hollywood actress" as the the burgeoning New Age movement's instant celebrities.

Channeling is defined by Arthur Hastings of the California Institute of Transpersonal Philosophy as "the process in which a person transmits messages from a presumed discarnate source external to his or her consciousness." The most widely researched kind of channeling phenomena is communication with the dead, which, as eerie as it may sound, seems to be on the increase. The University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Council recently found that 42 percent of American adults believe they have made contact with the spirit of a departed individual. Of these, 78 percent said they saw, 50 percent heard and 18 percent talked with the deceased. Thirty percent of Americans who say they don't even believe in life after death still claim to have had contact with someone who has died. It is the surfeit, not the rarity, of channeling that puzzles investigators.

Acolytes of the New Age hail channeled entities to be "highly evolved beings", "spirit guides for all mankind", "angels", "devas" or even "God." There are precious few suggestions that they might be demonic. Since cameras and microphones won't penetrate the veil of oblivion that separates us from them, all we get to see are the subjects through whom the entities speak - housewives, schoolteachers, insurance salesmen and similarly quite ordinary people.

Channeling is a little different from mediumship. Mediums are experienced clairvoyants who "fish" for discarnate entities. Channellers are initially psychic greenhorns who, unwittingly or even unwillingly, are taken over by the entities. The first contact can be most disconcerting. In 1963, thirty-four-year-old Jane Roberts of Elmira, New York, was suddenly

overwhelmed by what she called a "fantastic avalanche of radical new ideas burnt into my head with tremendous force, as if my skull were some sort of receiving station turned up to unbearable volume." The entity in this case was Seth, who turned out to be a prime catalyst of the emerging New Age. From the early 1970s until her death in 1984, Mrs. Roberts channeled a series of best-selling "Seth Books" that blazed the way to public acceptance of what in an earlier period would have been condemned as necromancy.

Even more shivery-quivery is the Australian channeler Shirley Bray's description of how a group of entities called "the Nine" contacted her: "I felt as if thin wires, like acupuncture needles, were being inserted into the base of my skull. It was uncomfortable so I stirred, moving my head from side to side. A voice firmly but gently said, 'Be still, it will not be long.'"

But once the channeler overcomes the shock of such close encounters of the first kind, the relationship may prove to be profitable beyond his or her wildest dreams. Jack Pursel, who admits that he was frightened to tears the first time he channeled Lazaris, now runs a highly successful corporation called Concept: Synergy that markets Lazaris audio- and videotapes to 500 metaphysical bookstores worldwide. The erstwhile ordinary housewife J.Z. Knight takes in more than two hundred thousand dollars per weekend for a channeling seminar featuring her guide Ramtha; she says he's earned her millions of dollars.

A glance at the teachings of the discarnate entities reveals an intriguing pattern. Here's a sample from Mashiyach (pronounced Moor-shark), channeled by Shirley Bray: "He who would find power must know that he extends from balance in Me, that I am he. He and thee and Me are ONE in light ... Create ye a world within the knowing of Me within you. Look upon your creation and know it is the sum total of your thinking. Thinking is creating. Man has created his world." From a Krsna conscious standpoint, this is called Mayavadi philosophy. Mayavada means "doctrine of illusion" - indeed, there's a chapter in Ms. Bray's book (A Guide for the Spiritual Traveler) that's entitled, "Life is Just an Illusion."

When psychology professor Jon Klimo recounts the themes commonly expounded by channeled entities, he's giving us nothing more than a breakdown of the main tenets of Mayavadi philosophy, to wit: we all have a higher self, which is ultimately One Self (called "All-That-Is" or "The Universal Mind"); this One Self is an impersonal, absolute God, perceivable only as light and achieved only through silent contemplation; the material world is an illusion, merely the dream of this God, and until we realize we are God, we are subject to that dream of our separate individual existences in the cycle of birth and death. [See Chapter Four of Klimo's Channeling: Investigations on Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources, 1988]

We'll return to these philosophical issues a little later on. It's clear that the entities have an agenda and, uncorporeal though they may be, they have the means to fulfill it. But who are they? That's what a British-born investigative journalist named Joe Fisher wanted to find out - because, while

gathering material in Toronto for a book on channeling, he fell in love with a channeled entity named Filippa.

Fisher, who's written two best-selling books (*The Case for Reincarnation* and *Life Between Life*), met Filippa in Toronto in the summer of 1984 through a channeler he calls Aviva in his latest book, *Hungry Ghosts*. Aviva, an avowed Marxist, was forced to suspend her disbelief in the supernatural after she was taken over by an entity calling himself Russell Parnick while being treated by hypnotherapy for myelocytic leukemia. The more she allowed Russell to use her body as a channel, the more her disease gradually subsided. As word got around Toronto's esoteric scene, Aviva's regular seances attracted followers, among them Joe Fisher.

There was no doubt in the minds of those in attendance that something very extraordinary happened to Aviva each time she was put into trance by her hypnotist. As Fisher describes it, "her voice was barely recognizable. Gone was the high-pitched jocularity ... Her enunciation was now unequivocally masculine; the English accent was unmistakable. This was an entirely different Aviva, strangely assertive and uncompromising. This was a voice which claimed to belong to Aviva's guide [Russell], a discarnate individual who had lived as a sheep farmer in Yorkshire during the last century." Russell in turn introduced other entities: Hanni, Willian, Mi-Lao, Sebotwan, Ernest, Sonji, Tuktu, Kinggalaa - and Filippa Gavrilos. They became the guides for the regulars attending the seances.

Through Aviva, Filippa spoke to Fisher with "Greek inflection lending charm to broken English. Her delivery was subdued, pensive and poignantly tender ... Whatever the quality of her speech, Filippa always spoke to me like a lover for whom the fire still smoldered."

Filippa told Joe that they'd indeed been lovers in the 1700's, when they lived in Theros, a Greek village "five day's walk from the Black Sea." He had been Andreas Cherniak, a militiaman born of a Greek mother and a Slavic father. Filippa was a small, fair-skinned, black-haired Mediterranean beauty. But their affair ended tragically when the village elders disapproved. Andreas/Joe was judged by the priest and banished from Theros. After her death at age fifty-three, Filippa's astral self withdrew into the non-physical plane of existence (called bardo by the Tibetans: bar - "in between lives", do - "island"). Joe was now in his fourth life cycle since Andreas.

Joe found Filippa's chronicle appealingly plausible. "Sitting on the floor of Aviva's living room, I found myself breathing the air of a bygone era, roaming parched valleys and ancient crypts. I imagined Filippa's dark eyes and long black tresses." Ten years before, he'd written his first novel on the Greek island of Siphnos and had been quickly captivated by the land and its culture. He had a natural fondness for small, dark-haired women. As a boy, he'd felt a strange fascination for the name Filippa. Now he knew why.

Joe longed to establish "guide contact" (direct mind-to-mind communication) with Filippa. To this end he took up daily meditation, never

completely linking up to Filippa but coming tantalizingly close. Once he had the insight of a dusty pathway winding to a stand of tall, spindly trees in the distance. Through Aviva, Filippa excitedly proclaimed that this was where they used to meet as lovers. Sometimes he'd get a loud buzzing in his ears. He'd then feel Filippa's presence strongly, and "a strange sense of contentment and reconciliation and a suspension of worldly anxiety" would settle around him for as long as the buzzing lasted. In March, 1985, he had the fleeting vision of a young woman walking towards him wearing a long white garment. He knew this to be Filippa, and wept out of joy and sadness, loss and anguish. "My terrestrial love life was doomed," Fisher writes. "No woman of flesh and blood could hope to emulate Filippa's love and concern."

Joe became obsessed by his impossible love. "If Filippa could have assumed a physical body, I'm sure I would have married her. But she was only a voice, a voice that resonated with more love, compassion and perspicacity than I had ever known. Within the space of a few months, she had demonstrated an acute awareness of my feelings and foibles, she knew the people in my life and their effect upon me, and she was even able to relate specific circumstances in which I had found myself, situations unknown to Aviva or anyone who attended" the seances. "I can see energies,' is how she explained her ability to know me inside out. 'I can see in your mind. If you make in your mind, I can see.'"

The more Joe Fisher loved Filippa, the more he hungered for tangible proof of her existence. Proof that Filippa was really who she said she was would further lend force to the book he was preparing to write. And proof would require a journey to Theros, the mountain village in the parched mountains of northeastern Greece, to find evidence of her earthly sojourn.

Not only did Fisher set out to unearth Filippa's past life, he wanted to verify the last incarnations of Englishmen Russell Parnick, William "Harry" Maddox and William Alfred "Ernest" Scott. Two, Harry and Ernest, said that they'd died in this century, Harry in WWI and Ernest in WWII. These claims could be easily cross-checked by a look at British military records. Russell, Aviva's guide, had given ample dates and placenames from his life in the Yorkshire Dales for Joe to trace.

But as Joe Fisher would find out after two trips to Europe, the four entities had been clearly and deliberately lying from the start, though they'd managed to string him along by clever use of half-truths, ambiguity and obfuscation. Filippa's lies turned out to be the most blatant and most crushing for Joe personally. She'd repeatedly claimed to have journeyed by foot from Theros to Alexandroupoli. But Alexandroupoli, which Fisher presumed to be an ancient site of Alexander the Great, turned out to have been founded only in 1920. It got its name from King Alexandros, who visited it in 1919. For a seventy-year period before that, it was known as Dedegats, a settlement of Turkish merchants; prior to 1850, the place had no history at all. Thus Filippa, deceased in 1771, remembered a city that was not then built. She called it by a name that she could not have known and told of ships in a harbor she could not have seen. A professor of Greek language found many

other discrepancies in her memories of life in eighteenth-century Greece. There was no trace of a town called Theros. And no Greek could understand Filippa's taperecorded utterances of her putative native tongue.

"Their knowledge is impressive," writes Fisher of these four and other channeled entities he investigated, "their insight remarkable, their charismatic hold on their followers undeniable. Moreover, the voices' ostensible link to a higher and greater state of being seems to place them above suspicion in the minds of those who prize their counsel. Yet surely it is important - essential, even - to establish, if possible, the nature of the beast that is shuffling through the pipeline created by the trance state. Who are these entities really?"

"The answer to that question is as unwelcome as it is unavoidable ... the evidence left me in little doubt that earthbound spirits or 'hungry ghosts' have wormed their way into that juicy apple of spiritual regeneration known as The New Age."

But is it logical to suspect all channeled entities because of the mischief of a few? Can't we hope that there are some genuine guides out in the ether somewhere?

Joe Fisher tried to keep this hope alive even after being cheated by Filippa. He visited renowned channeler George Chapman at his home in the Welsh village of Trer-Ddol. Chapman's special distinction is that his guide, Dr. William Lang, has been authenticated beyond reasonable doubt as the spirit of a distinguished Middlesex ophthalmologist who died in 1937. Despite their initial disbelief, surviving members of the good doctor's family have testified that the entity speaking through the entranced George Chapman can be none other than Dr. Lang himself. Medical professionals have confirmed the entity's thorough familiarity with the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases - even as they watched, Lang through Chapman has healed hundreds of patients.

But Fisher came away from his session with Dr. Lang unsatisfied. "...I felt much the same in the company of the charming and deferential Dr. Lang as I did while conversing with the spirits whose claims remained unsubstantiated. I couldn't put my finger on it, but something was wrong. While seeming to co-operate fully, Dr. Lang was fudging. He told me nothing new, nothing incisive. And when I raised the question of charlatan spirits who crave physical sensation, the discarnate surgeon avoided the topic completely ... Comparing him with other, blatantly suspect entities, I was haunted by one of Lt. Col. Arthur Powell's observations in *The Astral Body*. He wrote that it was impossible to distinguish truth from falsehood in communications from the next world 'since the resources of the astral plane can be used to delude persons on the physical plane to such an extent that no reliance can be placed even on what seems the most convincing proof.'"

"Hungry ghost," the term Fisher uses for the entities who speak through channelers, is a translation of the Sanskrit word *preta*. According to the *Preta Kanda* section of the *Garuda Purana*, an ancient book of Vedic wisdom, a

preta is a human being deprived of a gross physical body because of sinfulness. His soul is trapped, earthbound, within the subtle body (composed of mind, intelligence and ahankara or false sense of identity). Like any ordinary human, the preta's mind is agitated by the urges of lust, but he lacks physical senses with which to satisfy his desires.

Milton, in *Comus*, captures the pathos of "shadows" (ghosts) clinging to this world even past the point of death.

Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,  
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave  
As loath to leave the body it lov'd,  
And linked itself by carnal sensuality  
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Having no bodies of their own, pretas hunger (hence their name) for vicarious pleasures through the bodies of humans, much like decrepit lechers who seek gratification through pornographic movies. Hungry ghosts seem benign because they are genuinely attentive to the physical health of their subjects - witness Aviva's remarkable turnaround in her fight with cancer when Russell arrived. But as Joe Fisher states, "Their eagerness to communicate, their concern for the medium's health and strength, their preoccupation with life after death and reincarnation and the occasional admission that they missed the pleasures of incarnate life, all suggested humans who no longer had physical bodies yet longed to live and breathe once more." Seth, who called himself an "energy essence personality," sometimes requested his host Jane Roberts to drink beer or wine for his gratification. Joe Fisher tells of two entities who seemed to want sex through their subjects. He recalls the mental exhaustion, emotional turmoil and muddled thinking that plagued him during his time with Filippa - symptoms hinting of psychic vampirism.

The Garuda Purana states that in cases of preta-possession (pretadosa), "mysterious events do often occur ... many are the signs of ghosts." Dr. John Nevius, who studied possession extensively in China during the last century, wrote, "The most striking characteristic ... is that the subject evidences another personality, and the normal personality for the time being is partially or wholly dormant. The new personality presents traits of character utterly different from those which really belong to the subject in his normal state ... Many persons while 'demon-possessed' give evidence of knowledge which cannot be accounted for in ordinary ways ... They sometimes converse in foreign languages of which in their normal states they are entirely ignorant." And Emanuel Swedenborg, the famous eighteenth century clairvoyant, warned: "When spirits begin to speak with man, he must beware lest he believe in anything; for they say almost anything; things are fabricated of them, and they lie..."

Pretas hover in homes where Vedic principles are not observed and haunt persons who are unclean and unregulated. By these standards, practically the whole population of the western world is open to pretadosa, New Agers

included. And what better way is there for a hungry ghost to seduce starry-eyed New Agers than with pap "we're all one" philosophy? Joe Fisher takes point-blank aim at the whole fraud. "When all is said and done, there is no shortcut to Nirvana. But in this narcissistic age of instant gratification and swift solution, the great deception of channeling is that we may glide effortlessly back to the Godhead. All we have is pay our money, take our seats and dream on as loving discarnates lead us to enlightenment. Why, the Big E. is just around the corner and anyway - didn't you know? - we are God."

Many bogus gurus have succeeded in the West the same way. In fact, in the late 1970's a world-famous Mayavadi yoga society was almost shaken apart when a Sanskrit-quoting preta that claimed to be the group's deceased founder began speaking through a senior staff member. Though at last exposed, the spook held sway over fifty people who deserted the organization rather than give up their belief that the great yogi had returned to them.

The way Back to Godhead is not the way of pretadosa. Krsna declares in Bhagavad-gita, bhutani yanti bhutejya: "those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings." By the chanting of the holy name of Krsna, the evil influence of ghosts and sinful life is destroyed immediately (bhutebhyo 'mhobhya eva ca sarvany etani bhagavan-nama-rupanukirtanat prayantu sanksayam sadyo, from Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.8.27-28). But as Srila Prabhupada used to say, "This world is a place of cheaters and cheated." People's spiritual aspirations are channeled by their stubborn resistance to the holy name of Krsna into the most inauspicious realms of consciousness. Their welcoming of hungry ghosts as spiritual guides is indicative of their desperate devotion to lowly habits and fallacious ideas.

The desire to understand the real self beyond the body and to link our consciousness with the Supreme is an exalted aspiration, indeed the only goal of human existence. But successful completion of this goal requires that we be purified of lust, which impels us to the sinful activities of meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication and gambling - activities that according to the Garuda Purana are very attractive to ghosts. Purification need not be troublesome, however. Krsna is the Supreme Pure, our dearest friend and indwelling guide, and He has made Himself available to the fallen souls of this dark age of Kali-yuga by the simple process of hari-nama, His holy name. We should obtain the holy name only from those devotees whose attentive hearing and chanting of transcendental sound has carried them beyond the grip of material desire.

For all their seductive cant, the hungry ghosts and bogus gurus are dead wrong. We are not God, and our individual existence is not a figment of cosmic imagination. Life is not an illusion. There is a purpose to everything, and it is realized when we recover our eternal link to the Supreme Person and His pure devotees.

## **A comment on the channeling file by the author:**

I wrote the article entitled *\*Channeling: Extrasensory Deception?\** in 1991 after I read Joe Fisher's *\*Hungry Ghosts--an Investigation into Channelling and the Spirit World\**, which was published in 1990. At that time I was concerned about the phenomenon of ISKCON devotees getting involved with karmi channelers. Around that period, a number of my Godbrothers and Godsisters were followers of the channeled entity called Lazaris. In my article I tried to show that such entities who speak through ordinary, unregulated karmis must be pretas. I submitted that article to the BTG. Jayadvaita Maharaja politely rejected it. The major reason he gave was that I depended too much on Joe Fisher's book in my presentation. But he also mentioned that this article would displease a prominent leader in ISKCON who has a disciple who channels.

I was informed by a sannyasi Godbrother at this past 1998 Mayapur festival that channeling has gradually become an "in-house" ISKCON activity. At Mayapur, so he told me, some devotees were even holding a seminar at which the highest stage of Reiki was being advocated, whereby subtle beings are sought out for guidance. This sannyasi Godbrother was astonished when these devotees advised him to take help from these beings for not only health but even for spiritual reasons. Other devotees were told that the spirit guides could fill in for their gurus who might be too busy to give them close, personalized instruction.

An argument is offered to defend devotees involvement with spirit guides. "Yes, karmis who are unregulated, who are in the modes of passion and ignorance, will attract pretas when they seek out spirit guides. But devotees are in the mode of goodness. Thus devotees will only attract auspicious beings: devas. The tangible proof is that these beings help the health of the devotees."

My article on channeling dispenses with the second part of the argument, that the tangible proof that the subtle guides are devas is that they help devotees' health. Pretas are very interested in the health of the bodies that they haunt, because they want to satisfy their desires through those bodies. But what about the first part of the argument, that since devotees are in the mode of goodness, they won't attract entities in the modes of passion and ignorance? What follows is a scriptural answer. The essential point is that a true follower of Vedic knowledge is *\*above\** the modes of nature, even the mode of goodness. Worship of demigods is a deviation from Vedic knowledge. Comments that appear in brackets [like this] are my own.

\*yajante sattvika devan  
yaksa-raksamsi rajasah  
pretan bhuta-ganams canye  
yajante tamasajanah\*

Men in the mode of goodness worship the demigods;  
those in the mode of passion worship the demons; and those  
in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits.

(\*Bg\* 17.4)

[In his \*Gita Bhasya\* commentary on the above verse, Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana writes,] \*karyabhedena sattvikadi bhedom prapancayati yajanta iti\*: "Thus Lord Krsna reveals the distinction of one mode from another on the basis of worship." [His commentary goes on to tell us that] worshipers of demigods lack proper spiritual understanding. The faith of such worshipers, conditioned as it is by the mode of goodness, obliges them to serve deities like the Vasus and the Rudras. Then there are people who worship Yaksas and Raksasas like Kuvera [the treasurer of heaven] and Nirrti [a fierce, inauspicious goddess of the southwest with a black complexion and golden hair, who holds an iron noose].

These worshipers are in the mode of passion. And those who worship the Pretas [spirits of the departed] and Bhutaganas [other kinds of subtle entities] are in the mode of ignorance. Even twice-born \*brahmanas\* [who are supposed to be in the mode of goodness] and \*ksatriyas\* [who are supposed to be in the mode of passion] who leave aside their \*svadharma\* or prescribed duties [fall into the mode of ignorance]. Neglectful \*brahmanas\* receive the airy bodies of a type of firemouthed demon called Ulkamukha, while neglectful \*ksatriyas\* assume the forms of a type of demon called Kataputana. [And so this verse (\*Bg\* 17.4) depicts] those who, due to laziness in their observance of real \*vidhi\*, [remember: in \*Gita\* 9.23 Lord Krsna says that to worship demigods is \*avidhi- purvaka\* or a violation of the real injunction of worship] are situated by their materialistic nature in one of the three modes. Of course, by the potency of contact with genuine Vedic knowledge, they can rise above their materialistic nature and come to the factual Vedic level.

The original Sanskrit of Baladeva's commentary is as follows.

\*karyabhedena sattvikadi bhedom prapancayati yajant iti  
sastriya viveka samvit hina ye janah svabhavajaya sraddhaya devan  
sattvikah vasurudradin yajante te 'anye sattvikah  
ye yaksaraksamsi kuvera nirrtiyadin rajasani yajante te 'anye rajasah  
ye preta bhutaganamsca tamasa yajanti te 'anye tamasah  
dvijah svabharmavibhrasta dehapatotara labhdavayaviya deha  
ultkamukhata patanadisamjnah preta manusah pisaca  
visesa va iti vyakhyatarascat sapatmatrkadaya  
evam salasyat tyakta veda vihadinam svabhavat satvikatad  
ya nirupitah ete ca balavad vaidika satprasangat  
svabhavan vijitya kadacit veda 'pyadhikrto bhavaniti bodhyam\*

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A comment on the channeling file by Gauranga Dasa:

Undoubtedly in many cases these channelled entities are ordinary pretas, souls who are bereft of their physical bodies because of grossly sinful activities. So they try to gain possession of others' bodies for gratifying their sinful desires for intoxication, violence, and carnal pleasure. I will give some

quotes from the Garuda Puranam regarding the pretas in the near future to this conference.

Meanwhile I would like to refer to a case from a few days ago. I met a girl on sankirtana who looked like a really haunted person. I began talking with her. She had different kinds of psychologic diseases like fears, anxiety etc. She had attempted to commit suicide several times. She showed me her hand. It was cut in many places by a razor's edge. She confessed me that she liked seeing blood. Once she started practicing so-called Transcendental Meditation taught by Maharishi but all she was seeing during meditation is how she tortured killed other people and children. She was 14 years old. I began to explain her something about ghosts and possession and she grasped the idea. She related to me a recent event when she was sitting in a class in the school and suddenly she felt like someone took over her personality and began vibrating in her mind: "Kill yourself! Kill yourself!" She started yelling in the middle of the classroom and ran out, trying to cut her arteries. Somehow the others stopped her and the ghost let her go. So this possession can be very severe, especially in the case of those who are very mental, subject to the modes of passion and ignorance, and full with negative feelings and desires. The influence of the pretas can be decreased by cleanliness inside and out and around us, practicing the habits of the mode of goodness, mental strength, positivity and Krsna-consciousness, especially chanting Hare Krsna.

My conclusions are however that not all subtle beings are exclusively demoniac and harmful. There are some who are more sattvic than the pretas. I base this on my talks with Bhanu Maharaja and Bhakti Tirtha Swami's book entitled *Spiritual Warrior (Uncovering Spiritual Truths in Psychic Phenomena)*, especially chapters 3 (Angels and Demigods) and 7 (Strangers in our Bodies).

I was talking to Bhanu Maharaja about the healing with reiki energy and prana. I mentioned to him that many healers report the appearance of celestial beings during the therapy who had radiant bodies and made the healer and the patient feel comfortable and safe. Many times these beings personally assist in the process of healing, entering the body of the patient and cleansing the aura, repairing cakras, removing poisoned and diseased tissues, sometimes even operating the organs in the body by using even instruments like scalpels and others. Of course all this is happening with the subtle duplicate of the body, and most often only the healer notices their presence and help. I asked Maharaja about who they were. He told me that they are guardian spirits or angels, who are lower than the demigods, but still pious and who always accompany the person and try to save him from bad deeds and help him. Maharaja said that everyone of us has at least one or maybe three or four of them always watching him. Although they are pious, they don't have completely realized spiritual knowledge, like the Yamadutas, who are servants of Yamaraja, but although he was a mahabhagavata, they didn't know that they couldn't snatch someone calling out the name of God like Ajamila did. So trying to establish the communication with our guardian angel, or "inner guide" as popularly named, is not in any way replacement for accepting and surrendering to a Gaudiya Vaishnava guru, who can take us back to Godhead and give us Krsna-prema, because he is a pure devotee. The guardian angels (called

amanava purusa in Sanskrit) are not pure devotees, but they are pious, so they can't answer all philosophical questions but usually tell us to accept what the devotees say. Both amanava purusas and pretas or bhutas can have superhuman abilities or a capacity to heal etc. but if accepted from a pious entity, you can eliminate your debt by worshipping Krsna, if accepted from a demoniac entity you will have to pay the price of being exploited for sense gratification and gaining very bad karma resulting in utmost suffering.