

Homebush

Sahaja Newsletter

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5 JUNE 1992

GURU PUJA 1992



The 18th & 19th July brings the opportunity for the collective of Sahaja Yogis from N.S.W. to meet together and celebrate Guru Puja.

The venue is Bundilla Scout Camp situated on three hectares of bushland near Parramatta. The address is :- 6 Baden Powell Place Winston Hills.

The camp is available from 9am on Saturday morning we can't arrive on Friday evening. We are starting the weekend at 10am on Saturday with Meditation. The meals served will be from Saturday lunch to Sunday's Lunch (Puja Meal). A music Programme will be held on Saturday evening. The weekend will conclude approximately at 5pm on Sunday after Puja. We will need to tidy the camp before we leave.

The costs to follow cover accommodation, all food, Dakshina and hiring expenses. Due to our tight budget, we cannot offer concessions to people just coming for the days .



	Adult	Youth/Concession Student /Pensioner	Child 3 to High School
Sydney	\$65	\$40	\$10
Canberra	\$60	\$40	\$10
Wollongong	\$65	\$40	\$10
Blue Mountains	\$65	\$40	\$10
Central Coast	\$65	\$40	\$10
Newcastle	\$62	\$40	\$10
Other NSW Areas	\$60	\$40	\$10
Interstate	\$45	\$35	\$10

IMPORTANT

Because of limited beds (100) we ask everybody to bring camp style bedding similar to what you would use on India tour. The beds are for our interstate guests who have had to travel great distances to be with us, and those who need a bed because of health reasons.

Registration Forms will be sent to all Sahaja Yogis in N.S.W.
if you do not received one, please contact Stratfield Ashram
on 02 747-2820

All registrations should arrive before 27/6/92
a late registration fee of \$10 will be required after that date



CENTRAL COAST NEWS

Hello from the Central Coast East Gosford Ashram. Marlene, Diana Alberry, Julie, Patrick and Judy have settled in well and are enjoying the relaxed atmosphere of the Coast. We are living in a lovely house that overlooks the Brisbane Waters.

Jilliby (Suzy and Phyllis) and East Gosford have started a four week series of public programmes on Monday nights at the Health Centre in Bateau Bay. Last Monday eight enthusiastic new seekers came and got their realization. Every Wednesday evening we hold programmes at the East Gosford Ashram.

SHRI LAXMI PUJA - SATURDAY, 27TH JUNE, 2.00 P.M.

On Saturday, 27th June East Gosford are having their Shri Laxmi Puja. All welcome (informal dress please - our neighbours are somewhat conservative!) All welcome to stay overnight - BYO sleeping gear. Please ring to let us know if you are able to come. Address: 79 Caroline Street, East Gosford. Phone: (043) 23-1913.



A NEW DAY TIME PROGRAMME

Programmes will begin on 12th June in Campsie. They will be held on Friday mornings 10-12 at the Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource centre, 139 Beamish St. Campsie. All Sahaja Yogis are welcome. If you would like to help posterizing etc... phone 745 2393.



PUBLIC PROGRAMMES IN LONDON

2 public programmes are to be held at the Royal Albert Hall in London in the second week of June 11-12th? Shri Mataji will be there.

NEWS FROM CABELLA

Shri Mata has bought another property near Cabella. It is a large house and will be most useful for the overflow of yogis at major pujas. It was a goat farm that went bankrupt.



BRIEF NEWS FROM HONG KONG

Things start moving over here. The local yogis deepening, doing pujas, havans etc...They are 4 programmes per week and the atmosphere is like India tour 24 hours a day. There are plans for Sahaja yogis from Hong Kong to go to Taiwan where the Taiwanese yogis are holding a seminar.



HIGHER EDUCATION

St Australian 3/6/92

India, where English sings

The BBC's JOHN SIMPSON delights in the strange English spoken by Indians

INDIA lifts an Englishman's heart as few other countries can. Pakistan is much more pro-British, with its ubiquitous Union Jacks and the proud GBs on the vehicles of those with relatives who have made it good, and it resembles more closely the Raj of our nostalgic imaginings.

But India has far greater colour and complexity; a vast country, mostly well-ordered and peaceable, where hundreds of millions gain a precarious living by developing an ecological niche for themselves in the vast network of minuscule services which constitutes daily life in India.

I reflected on this as I walked across the well-kept park in the middle of Connaught Place, that charmingly dilapidated colonnaded circle built by the British as the commercial hub of imperial Delhi. Over the ornamental trees and bushes I could see the advertisements: "Cupta Suitings and Shirtlings", "Exclusive Hankies", "Modlstone Tyres - They Take You Home, Safe". Behind me a voice spoke: "Excuse me, sir, but would you like your shoes shined?"

Without turning I said no, as one does so often here.

"You will not find a better shining in the whole of Delhi, sir; possibly not in the whole of India. Most reasonable, sir." I turned round then. The voice was that of a sub-continental Jeeves, but it came from a small boy, ragged and grave. If Hollywood had done the casting, his part would have been played by some laughing, white-toothed Sabu; this child was dirty, his teeth were brown, and he had the earnestness and wisdom of a man in middle age.

Where, I asked, had he learned his superb English? "In the streets, sir; where else? No need to undo your laces, sir. I will do that."

As I sat down on the carefully cut grass an ancient leathery character appeared from nowhere and grasped my stocking foot. "Mr Ram Sebun will give you a foot massage, sir. Very relaxing," Mr Ram Sebun, smiling, worked away with one hand and held out a grimy book of handwritten commendations with the other. "You don't get this sitting in Hyde Park." Bob of London's Crouch End had inscribed in it, accurately enough; someone else had written mysteriously, "Watch out for the ear-treatment."

The ear-treatment arrived be-

side me at that moment. "Mr Lal, sir," said the 13-year-old Sohan, bashing away at my brogues. Mr Lal the ear-cleaner smiled a beet-redened smile and produced the tools of his trade: miniature chimney-sweep's brushes, which looked almost long enough to reach through to your left ear when inserted in your right one. I drew the line at Mr Lal. Then a photographer appeared: "Sir, just one little picture." "Better not, sir," Sohan advised. "You do not know which of these fellows may be a rascal."

Its vibrancy is entirely its own

I realised then where his English came from; the marvellous, diverse, expressive Indian press, in which "rascal", like "dacoit", "dreaded ultra" and "wicked miscreant", is a description to be found daily. Just that morning I had been honoured to find an article of mine from The Spectator reprinted in the Pioneer of Delhi and Lucknow - Kipling's old paper and the one for which Churchill briefly worked as a war correspondent.

The Pioneer and the other Indian papers are a joy to read for their vitality and exuberance: "Former Health Minister Narendra Singh shot the third letter to the Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav yesterday. He said that the political power in the State was under the influence of a leader who had been hobnobbing with the animal husbandry mafia groups."

"A 30-year-old man was set on fire by three unidentified men who first objected and later fought with him for urinating in the open. The target of the trio's ire, one Ram Niwas, has been admitted to hospital."

In the Indian press, criminals are not arrested but nabbed, proposals are not criticised but flayed, politicians are not asked for reasons but issued with a show-cause notice, and they do not fly to conferences but alrash to meets. This is a country where headlinism has entered everyday language, and where technical terms are there to be flaunted: "Sine die", "suo motu", "paradigm", "modalities" are used without explanation. Latinate words have a special attraction. "The PM arrived sans his entourage."

There is an instinct for the polysyllabic; "conditionalities" instead of conditions, "emporium" instead of shop. The sweetnes of disposition which leads even the police to put up signs at road-blocks reading "Kindly Bear With Us" also produces an emotional quality in the press: "He expressed his anguish at the news of the hitch."

Some of this language has a wartime, clerical touch to it: "Jalpur was on red alert today." And although American slang is fashionable, British slang too gets into the bloodstream of Indian English fast; "dosh" and the awful "bonk" are familiar here.

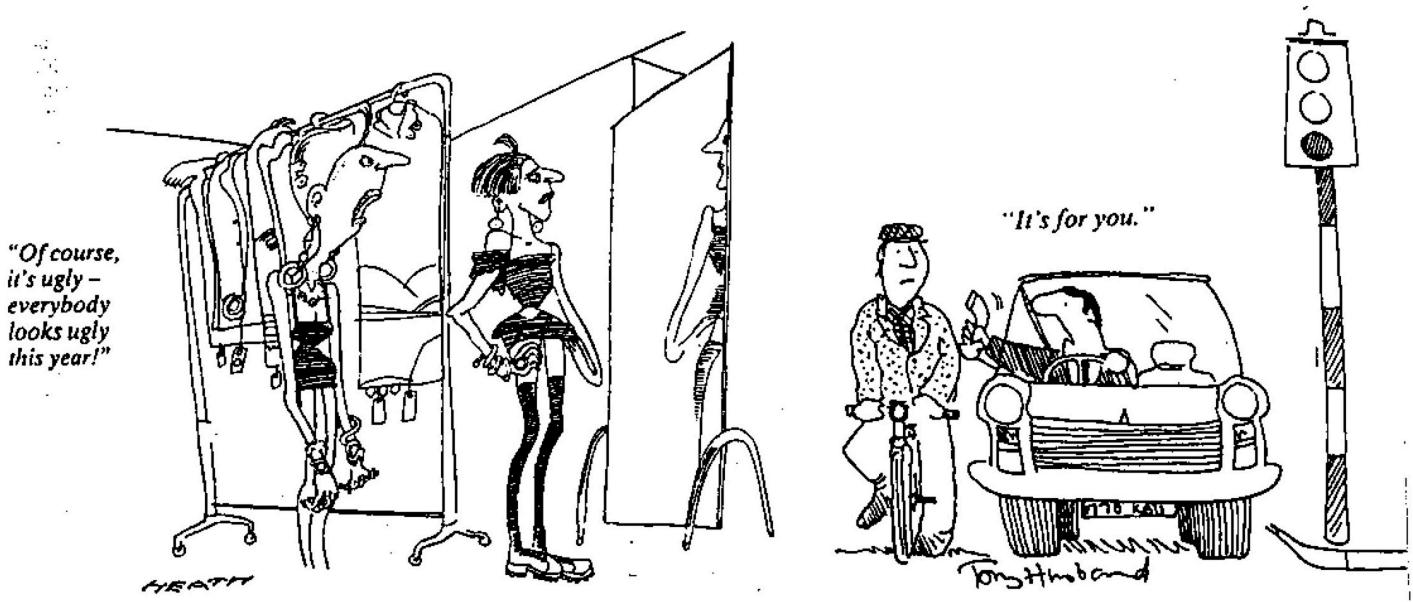
On the way back from Connaught Place I took in the powerful evening scents from the flowerbeds at the tidy roundabouts, and noticed how even the women who swept the streets wore chiffons of a marvellous rose-red or magenta or pale green.

The same instinct for vividness is evident in the language. Words are used in Indian English in the manner of colours, clashing yet harmonious, raw and uncoordinated, with a lavish interest in their tone, for pure pleasure. Indian English is not a pastiche of the original; its vibrancy is entirely its own.

The Spectator



H. L. Goldstone



HEATH

Tony Husband



"Oysters followed by the pork. Pearls before swine."

DON'T WORRY

EXCEPT ON WEDNESDAY

Here's a way to deal with worry.

It works.

What you do is set aside one day of the week as a worry day.

Wednesday will do nicely.

Make yourself a worry box; anything will do, a Cornflake box with a slit in the top. As worries occur write them down and put them in the worry box.

Then forget them.

Wednesday arrives, you open the box and read them all.

The amazing thing is that most of the things you were fretting over have settled themselves or have been taken care of in some other way.

That leaves you only the *important* things to worry about. And they'll probably have gone by next Wednesday. Try it!

Handmaid Or Feminist?

More and more people around the world are worshipping Mary—and it's led to a holy struggle over what she really stands for

By RICHARD N. OSTLING

When her womb was touched by eternity 2,000 years ago, the Virgin Mary of Nazareth uttered a prediction: "All generations will call me blessed." Among all the women who have ever lived, the mother of Jesus Christ is the most celebrated, the most venerated, the most portrayed, the most honored in the naming of girl babies and churches. Even the Koran praises her chastity and faith. Among Roman Catholics, the Madonna is recognized not only as the Mother of God but also, according to modern Popes, as the Queen of the Universe, Queen of Heaven, Seat of Wisdom, and even the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Many may also be history's most controversial woman. For centuries Protestants have vehemently opposed her exaltation; papal pronouncements concerning her status have driven a wedge between the Vatican and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Conflict surrounds the notions that she remained ever a virgin, that she as well as Jesus was born without sin and that her sufferings at the Crucifixion were so great that she participated with her son in the redemption of humanity.

Yet even though the Madonna's presence has permeated the West for hundreds of years, there is still room for wonder—now perhaps more than ever. In an era when scientists debate the causes of the birth of the universe, both the adoration and the conflict attending Mary have risen to extraordinary levels. A grass-roots revival of faith in the Virgin is taking place worldwide. Millions of worshippers are flocking to her shrines, many of them young people. Even more remarkable are the number of claimed sightings of the Virgin, from Yugoslavia to Colorado, in the past few years.

These apparitions frequently embarrass clerics who have downplayed her role

since the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65. "It's all the fashion," sniffs Father Jacques Fournier of Paris, reflecting skepticism about the populist wave of sightings. The hierarchy is wary about most of the recent claims of miraculous appearances; only seven Marian sightings in this century have received official church blessing.

Church concern has served to highlight "The world will recognize in due time that the defeat of communism came at the intercession of the mother of Jesus."

The most interesting aspect of the growing popular veneration: the theological tug-of-war taking place over Mary's image. Feminists, liberals and activists have stepped forward with new interpretations of the Virgin's life and works that challenge the notion of her as a passive handmaid of God's will and exemplar of some contested traditional family values. "Mary wants to get off the pedestal," says Kathy Denison, a former nun and current drug-and-alcohol counselor in San Francisco. "She wants to be a vital human being."

Whether they hold to those views or not, people the world over are traveling enormous distances to demonstrate in person their veneration of the Madonna. The late 20th century has become the age of the Marian pilgrimage. Examples:

At Lourdes, the biggest of France's 937 pilgrimage shrines, annual attendance in the past two years has jumped 10%, to 5.5 million. Many new visitors are East Europeans, now free to express their beliefs and to travel. Despite the inevitable attraction of Lourdes for the ill and aged, one-tenth of the faithful these days are 25 or younger. "We also have new kinds of pilgrimages," reports Loïc Bondu, a spokesman at the site. "They dance, they sing, they praise out loud. They're more exuberant."

In Knock, Ireland, where 15 people saw the Virgin a century ago, the lines of the faithful lengthened dramatically after Pope John Paul II paid a visit to the shrine in 1979. Since then, attendance has doubled, to 1.5 million people each year. To handle the influx, a new international airport was opened at Knock in 1986.

At Fátima, Portugal, the shrine marking the appearance of Mary before three children in 1917 draws a steady 4.5 million pilgrims a year from an ever-widening array of countries. One million devotees turned out last May when John Paul made his second visit.

In Częstochowa, Poland, attendance at the shrine of the Black Madonna has increased to 5 million a year, rivaling Fátima and Lourdes, since John Paul's visit in 1979. Last August the Pope spoke there to 1 million Catholic youths.

In Emmitsburg, Maryland, attendance has doubled in the past year, to 500,000, at one of the oldest of 43 major Marian sites in the U.S., the National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The boom at such long-established sites is almost overshadowed by the cult of the Virgin that has developed through new reports of her personal appearances, most

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it happened. In a sub-subservient vision, she directed the Pope and his bishops to consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart in order to bring communism to an end.

According to Lucia, papal attempts to carry out that consecration failed in 1942, '52 and '82. John Paul finally carried out Mary's directive correctly in 1984—and the very next year Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power inaugurated the Soviet collapse. Says Father Robert Fox of the Fatima Family Shrine in Alexandria, South Dakota: "The world will recognize in due time that the defeat of communism came at the intercession of the mother of Jesus."

With such a powerful institutional presence behind the effort to revive Mary's influence, it was to be expected, at least to some degree, that her popularity would grow. What was far less predictable was the outpouring of new interpretations of the Virgin's message for believers. In his writings, the Pope has given a conservative tilt to the meaning of Mary's life. The Pontiff's 1988 apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women), citing positions taken at Vatican II, declared that "the Blessed Virgin came first as an eminent and singular exemplar of both virginity and motherhood." He extolled both states as ways women could find their dignity.

John Paul's traditionalist leanings find their most pointed expression in the Pope's continued refusal to consider the ordination of women as priests. The Vatican's argument is that if Christ had wanted women priests or bishops, Mary above all would have become one. On the other hand, John Paul does not argue that women must shun careers just because Mary was a homebody. Although the Pope lauds Mary for her submissiveness, it is in relation to God, not to male-dominated society.

But a much more aggressive view of Mary is emerging from feminist circles within the church, emphasizing her autonomy, independence and earthiness. Old-fashioned views of the Virgin, complains Sister Elizabeth Johnson, a theology professor at New York City's Fordham University, "make her appear above the earth, remote and passive," with "no sex and no sass." She adds, "There's still a strong element of that in the present hierarchy."

The revisionist views of the Madonna claim her as an active heroine who was variously an earth mother and a crusader for social justice. Mary, says Sister Lavinia Byrne, who works with non-Catholic groups in Britain, stood by loyally during her son's crucifixion while all but one of his male disciples ran away. Her agreement to bear the Son of God, argues Ivone Leal de Portugal's Commission on the Status of Women, was the act of a "strong woman. She followed her son's adventurous life, which was known to be doomed to failure, and always sustained him." Says French writer Nicole Echivard:



MOTHER OF BELIEVERS

The traditional view is that Mary led a perfect life on earth and now reigns as Queen of Heaven. There she continues to pray to help believers. Mary is the most powerful of the saints in interceding with God and dispensing gifts to supplicants.

"The Mother of God is the one from whom women are created in their preference for love and for people, rather than for power or machinery. Mary is the most liberated, the most determined, the most responsible of all mothers."

Others emphasize the political dimension. "Mary stood up for the poor and oppressed," says Sister Mary O'Driscoll, a professor at the Dominican order's Angelicum university in Rome. She and others point out that in the Magnificat (*Luke 1*), the pregnant Mary declared that God "has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away."

The activist interpretations do not necessarily run counter to Vatican teaching.

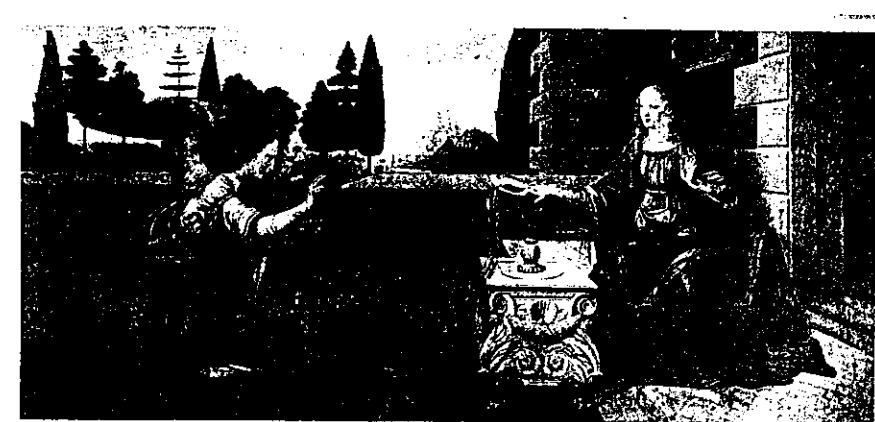
Modernists argue that the notion of the woman who was free of original sin and rules as a heavenly monarch detracts too much from the rest of humanity. She should be taken off her pedestal and understood as a flesh-and-blood woman.

Back in 1974 Pope Paul VI portrayed Mary as a "woman of strength who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile." John Paul II has said much the same thing, referring to Mary's "self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work."

But some other views strike dangerously close to fundamental Catholic truths. Among them:

Virginal Conception. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke state that Mary was a virgin and that Jesus was conceived miraculously without a human father. This belief is also included in the ancient creeds, and traditional Christians insist upon it. Some liberal Catholic scholars, however, increasingly follow liberal Protestant thinkers and doubt that this was literally true. Father Raymond Brown, the leading U.S. Catholic authority on the Bible, has declared the issue "unresolved." Jane Schaberg, who chairs the religion department at the University of Detroit, goes further. She contends, to traditionalists' scorn, that the unwed Mary was impregnated by a man other than fiancé Joseph and that she was a liberated woman who was "not identified or destroyed by her relationship with men."

Immaculate Conception. This tenet holds that Mary was conceived without



HANDMAID OF THE LORD

When the angel Gabriel brought the news of God's plan for the birth of the Messiah, says the Gospel of Luke, the young Nazarene girl said, "Let it be." Her response thus provides believers with the perfect model of humility and submissiveness.

Mary's submission was to God alone, not to Joseph or other male authority figures, feminists argue. Contemporary women can be inspired because Mary was a strong person who acted independently when she affirmed the course of her life.

the growth of faith in the Virgin—or feel more unease at some of the pathways it has taken—than John Paul II. Devotion to Mary was ingrained in the Pope in his Polish homeland, where over the centuries the Madonna has been hailed for turning back troops of the Muslim Turks, Swedish Lutherans and, in 1920, Soviet Bolsheviks. The precious Black Madonna icon was a mobilizing symbol for the country's efforts to throw off communism, and is still a unifying image for the entire nation.

When he was made a bishop in 1958, John Paul emblazoned a golden M on his coat of arms and chose as his Latin motto *Totus Tuus* ("All Yours")—referring to Mary, not Christ. Once he put on St. Peter's ring, John Paul made Mary's unifying power a centerpiece of his papal arsenal.

He has visited countless Marian shrines during his globe trotting, and invokes the Madonna's aid in nearly every discourse and prayer that he delivers. He firmly believes that her personal intercession spared his life when he was shot at St. Peter's Square in Rome in 1981; the assassination attempt occurred on May 13, the exact anniversary of the first Fátima apparition.

Moreover, John Paul is firmly convinced, as are many others, that Mary brought an end to communism throughout Europe. His faith is rooted in the famed prophecies of Mary at Fátima in 1917. According to Sister Lucia, one of the children who claimed to see her, the Virgin predicted the rise of Soviet totalitarianism before

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LADY OF SORROWS

In the past, Popes have deemed Mary's maternal sufferings at the Crucifixion to be so profound that she took part with Jesus in the mystery of salvation and that therefore she should be recognized as the Co-Redeemer of humanity.

Catholics now avoid the term Co-Redeemer, which offends other churches. Feminists note that Mary stayed by Jesus' side at the Crucifixion while male disciples fled. Liberationists see her sufferings in terms of political injustice.

original sin. The concept was popular for centuries but was not defined as Catholic dogma by the papacy until 1854, partly in response to popular pressure stirred up by Marian apparitions. Unofficial belief adds that Mary lived a perfect life. Protestants insist the Bible portrays Jesus as the only sinless person. Marina Warner, author of *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, contends that Rome's dogma artificially sets Mary apart from the rest of the human race.

There is yet another kind of rethinking of Mary going on. Protestants see no biblical basis for praying to her for favors, and they believe veneration of her can slide into worship that is due to God alone. They also reject the idea that human beings, Mary included, can contribute to humanity's salvation. Nonetheless, some Protestants are softening aspects of their hostility. Church of England theologian John Macquarrie has proposed revisions of such dogmas as the Assumption of Mary into heaven, which could then be seen as a symbol of the redemption that awaits all believers. Theologian Donald Bloesch of the University of Dubuque in Iowa says fellow conservative Protestants "need to see Mary as the pre-eminent saint" and "the mother of the church." Similar convergences will receive a thorough airing in February, when U.S. Cath-

olic and Lutheran negotiators issue an accord years in the making, on Mary's role.

The shift in the debate over Mary represents a delayed backlash against the influence of the Second Vatican Council, which made Mary emphatically subordinate to her son in church teachings. Prior to Vatican II, Popes had proclaimed Mary the Co-Redeemer with Jesus. During the council, bishops were under pressure from the faithful to ratify the Co-Redeemer doctrine; instead they issued no decree on Mary at all. Rather she was incorporated into the *Constitution on the Church*, a move that placed the Virgin among the community of believers in Christ rather than in anything resembling a co-equal position.

The effects of that downplaying have rippled through the observances of the church to the point that Mary's statues have been removed from some sanctuaries and Catholic parishes have gradually reduced the traditional novena devotions to the Virgin. John Paul clearly thinks the reconsideration went too far, and his fellow venerated of Mary agree. In Eastern Europe, says Warsaw priest Roman Indrejczyk, enthusiasm for Mary is no less than a "reaction to the matter-of-fact religiousness of the West."

Behind Vatican II's reconsideration of the Virgin and some of the uneasiness expressed over her populist revival, say feminists, is a concern over making Mary into a competitive divinity, a tradition common to many of the pagan religions that Christianity superseded. Remarks Warner: "The great terror is that she will be worshipped above her son."

Even for feminists who have no desire to go that far, the idea of a return, however marginal, to that notion of supernatural feminine power is alluring. Says Sandra Schneider, a professor at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California: "There has been a stupendous upsurge in goddess research and the feminine divinity as an antecedent to the male god. It's not unrelated that the Virgin Mary's popularity has also increased. Judeo-Christianity has been exclusively male, leaving a gap that cries out for feminine divinity."

It seems clear, though, that the world is crying out for many things from Mary, and in some fashion is receiving them. Devoted mother or militant, independent female or suffering parent, she remains one of the most compelling and evocative icons of Western civilization. Renewed expressions of her vitality and relevance are signs that millions of people are still moved by her mystery and comforted by the notion of her caring. Whatever aspect of Mary they choose to emphasize and embrace, those who seek her out surely find something only a holy mother can provide. —With reporting by Hannah Block/New York, Greg Burke/Medjugorje, Robert T. Zint/Rome, and other bureaus

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