

Madeleine Bunting

NOTHING is as powerful and insidious as parental guilt. There is something about the complete dependence and trusting innocence of a child that makes us feel our responsibilities for their welfare and development so keenly.

Alongside the guilt has grown a belief in the developed world that we are better parents than our own parents. To most people this is their most tangible measure of progress; our children have a better lot than we did. More toys, more activities, more entertainment, more legal rights, no corporal punishment, better health, no harsh punishments, and parents as friends. As long as we feel we are doing better than the previous generation, the guilt is assuaged; we feel good as parents. To bolster this self-congratulatory belief in progress, we build up a picture of past parenting of Dickensian awfulness where incest and violence were rife.

But the Mental Health Foundation's report last week blew all that apart. Mental illness in children and young people in Britain has increased since the 1940s, and now afflicts one in five. And it's going to get worse: "As a nation, we have an insidious and growing problem on our hands that may soon start undermining the very fabric of our society."

Children are failing to thrive emotionally. Beyond these grim warnings, lay worse; all our most cherished illusions were smashed. "Despite the miles of pop psychology shelves in bookshops, the acres of daily psycho-journalism, and the hours of navel-gazing broadcasting, we are probably less able to stand in a child's shoes, certainly those of a troubled child, than many of our Victorian forebears were." Ouch! Surely there can be nothing more insulting than saying you're a worse parent than a Victorian.

The only solution, the report concludes, is a massive investment in mental health services; a therapist in every doctor's surgery and every school. The analysis of the problem was alarming, the solution even more so.

From 'The Guardian Weekly'
Feb 14th 1999

The Daily Mail splashed the report on its front page: Terrible Toll on Children of Family Break-Ups. The plight of children is hitched to the moral conservative bandwagon of Britain's "social decomposition" — as the Daily Telegraph now describes it. Indignant liberals respond by refusing to recognise the problem, insisting it's nonsense to hark back to some mysterious golden age. Plenty of heat is generated, but little light.

Nothing shows up the inadequacies of individualised culture more sharply in Britain than the welfare of children. Their well-being depends on the ability of their parents to form lasting and strong relationships, firstly with each other, secondly with everyone else. Raising children can never be anything other than a collective enterprise. Theodore Zeldin, in *An Intimate History Of Humanity*, gives a wonderfully obscure quote from a Naskapi Native American to an 18th century Jesuit: "Thou hast no sense. You French people love only your own children but we love all the children of the tribe."

There's a thirty-something moment, shortly after the pram purchase, when you start caring about things like dog-shit on the pavement and the razor blades in the local park. You suddenly notice that traffic and crime have pretty much driven children off the street. It's children who suffer the most from a lack of community; how do you explain the anonymity of the city to a curious child, hurt by the strangers who refuse to respond to a hello?

In one of its most striking paragraphs the report acknowledges that the emotional literacy that it advocates is being undermined by this lack of a safe communal context whereby an increasing number of children "are unpractised in making and consolidating friendships, dealing with conflict, the taking of risks and team games".

But it has little to say of the collective culture we do have and from which parents, consciously or not, shield their children for as long as possible — a competitive consumerism which exploits our, and our children's, neuroses, promising happiness and fulfilment with a thousand products, a million images, and thus undermining our sense of self-worth and our own judgment.

All of which goes back to what James Park, director of Antidote: the Campaign for Emotional Literacy, talks of — in the current issue of *Renewal* — as the central challenge of our time: the need to "foster forms of communal solidarity" in a society dominated by individualism. No one is near reaching that Holy Grail, so no wonder we burrow into our books, consult the experts or rail against the breakdown of marriage — they all momentarily ease the guilt.



Australian 13th Feb '99 Sahaja Newsletter

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"So the first thing of surrendering it is important to reach the state of your spirit of Shiva and Sadashiva. But the second state is that you have to now think of others. First it is, as they say in Sanskrit, is vrishti, means individual gain. And then it becomes samristi, means the collective. People who never even got realisation,

nothing of the kind have been doing so much organisation and this and that. While you have got it, so now it is important that you should now extend this light to others."

HH Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

Shri Sadashiva Puja Talk- Delhi, India 1994

Advice on Children

In summer if the juice of radish can be given then it would be very good. Give the children lot of radish to eat. For the children radishes are very good. Give them those things to eat which do not have lots of fat. We give lots of fried food to the children, and not think at all. Do not give them fried food at all. And secondly here you get liv-52 a good medicine. If that is used then it can be worked within a year. But one thing called 'Aronya', small and black - found much in Nagpur - that is why in Nagpur they do not have liver trouble.

And in winters add sugar to ground ginger, give to the child in the morning, when it is cool. Secondly sugar cane juice, however much a child can drink can be given. Fresh ginger and lemon can be added, which is also good.

Also children should not be told too much 'Do this, Hey do that.' "Get up early, walk faster" - should not talk like that, with this their spleen goes bad - and can get blood cancer. Leading a hectic life can cause blood cancer. Children should not be hectic. They should be made peaceful.

Country Tour News

Last week South Coast Yogis welcomed the country tour as a great boost to the spreading of Sahaja Yoga in the area. The morning programme in **Nowra** was attended by 17 new people, with a followup seminar being arranged in the near future.

In **Ulladulla** 23 seekers attended with 14 coming to the follow up, several of whom had not come to the initial programme.

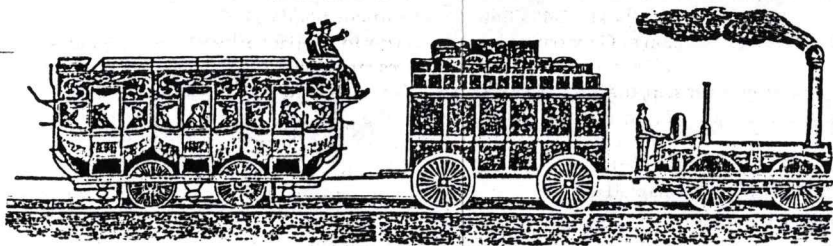
Bateman's Bay had seekers at the programme with 23 returning.

In **Bega**, the advertisement did not appear in the local paper and from posters alone 9 people attended.

There has been a lot of positive feedback from those who came and a real sense of appreciation for our efforts, some people even offered donations after getting their realisation. We, the Sahaja Yogies of the South Coast certainly appreciate the time and effort of all those involved in the country tour and thank them for coming to our area.

Judy and Albie would like to thank Avinash and the Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne collective for all their support and attention on the **Wagga** Program. The program went very well with not much trouble from the protesters. About 30 new seekers turned up and 30 Sahaja Yogies.

Jai Shri Mataji.



From: Mark Mays

There will be a Public Program in Mumbai with Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi on 20th February, 1999 at Shivaji Park, Dadar, Mumbai, India at 6.30 pm, after the Mahashivaratri Program - all are welcome. Those of you traveling to India may want to consider adding this event to your travel schedule.

ATTENTION ALL SAHAJ YOUNG PEOPLE (and their parents)

- AGES: FROM TURNING 12 TO 15 IN 1999 (juniors)

AND 16 TO 25 IN 1999 (seniors)

Last year the young people in the Sydney area began putting their attention on properly establishing the **Yuva Shakti** and the ways in which that could be done. So at a small Yuva Shakti meeting last December the kids in attendance expressed this wish: would we set our collective attention on establishing Australian Yuva Shakti. The kids say that mainly they want to be together as often as possible. We, as parents, see the teenagers are finding it difficult to express their need to find their place, their role, within the Sahaja collective. They need to help each other discover their own path (with some subtle guidance from their parents, aunties and uncles).

The young people in the Sydney area started modestly in early 1998. They understand that on a national, even regional, basis they are far flung and have different cultural situations to address than, for instance, the European Yuva Shakti or Poona Yuva Shakti. They started by getting together for simple fun activities (movie nights, weekends with sports and recreational activities at someone's house/ashram, time at the Balmoral property helping with planting and clearing, swimming) which included group meditation. This year there will be weekend drama classes and holiday drama camps at Balmoral. Some of the older ones want to learn how to operate the sound panel for the radio program and be otherwise useful as lighting/sound people for plays at Burwood.

In December most of the teenagers of NSW sent photos of themselves with a handmade card to Shri Mataji at Ganapatipule praying for Her attention on them at this precarious stage in their lives. The kids in Sydney originally wished that photos of all the young people around Australia could be gathered together for this presentation but time constraints prevented it. However, this can now be done for presentation to Shri Mataji at Birthday Puja this year. If you could please send SOON your group or single photo's fully labelled with names, ages and city/town of residence to:

Yuva Shakti, 2/45 Gipps Street, Concord NSW 2137

An idea for presentation at Ganapatipule (Dec.'99) was to prepare artwork, poems, tapes of personal music and/or songs, written personal messages, etc.

As another step, the Sydney young people have decided that they want to be put on the collective Puja roster so as to learn all the protocols and practicalities of performing Puja (eg stage set-up & puja preparation, cooking, dismantling, washing up).

On a very interesting note, Uncle Michael Fogarty has provided a copy of an International Yuva Shakti Newsletter describing the Daglio Yuva Shakti Camp near Cabella last year (first week of August coinciding with Raksha Bandhan). He wrote, "It would be quite something to have a representative from Australia, or more than one, at this year's camp....could be partly funded by the collective and partly by the parents." (I would venture to add partly funded by fundraising events). The idea of sending a senior representative(s) is a fabulous idea and after reading the Int'l Yuva Shakti Newsletter, I think anyone would be inspired to achieve this goal! As Uncle Michael suggested, I will send a copy of this to your main contact in each State to copy and circulate to your young people. We could hold a national raffle for fundraising plus local events like video nights, etc. Let's keep in touch with ideas - it's less than six months away!

Would someone in each town/city of each State undertake to provide to me information on all your age 12 to 25s (set up as on the list attached)? We could circulate a copy of the completed list to each young person (and to the Int'l Yuva Shakti Newsletter in Europe) so all the kids can be aware of how many young Sahaj people there are here. Hopefully they'll begin communicating between themselves. Please send the information to the abovementioned address.

It would be wonderful if a few adults (male and female) could make themselves available to help the kids in a lighthearted advisory capacity until they find their own footing (eg. Yuva Shakti meetings, driving them to and being present at their gatherings). Our role as chauffeur/chauffeuse may seem mundane and time consuming, but it's very useful for keeping the kids moving in the right direction.

JAI SHRI MATAJI!!!

- Love, Liallyn Fitzpatrick