

Messiahs Of Peace

One an honorary knight, the other in pursuit of spreading the gospel of peace through spiritualism. Meet Sir C.P Srivastava and his wife, Nirmala Devi, whom *Citizen* met at their palatial residence on the outskirts of the city.

ON the face of it, the harmonious union of the two seems incredible, what with their interests as diverse as the sky and the sea. But an insight into their minds provides the answer. Both are in their own special way, endeavouring to bring unity and harmony to mankind through the message of peace.

Sir C.P Srivastava is the more earthly of the two. Having embarked on a career in the prestigious administrative services, he has achieved excellence in the maritime field. With a stint of over a decade from 1961 to 1974 as the Managing Director of the Shipping Corporation of India, he transformed this virtual non-entity into a profitable enterprise, which under his guidance became one of the largest corporations in the world. His subsequent association with the IMO, until recently, as its Secretary General, for a record-breaking four terms, earned him the knighthood from the Queen, besides the thirty one other highest awards that he has received from several European nations.

His spouse, Nirmala Devi is a spirited being, having carved a niche for herself by concentrating on matters, much above the material-

istic world. Through spiritual means, via meditation techniques like the Sahaja yoga and Kundalini, she claims to awaken the minds of the people towards self-real-

Sandesh Bhandare



High living : high thinking

sation and more energy. This apparently, inspires the person to become more dynamic in his day to day routine. Since the past two decades, she has attracted a large following, from all round the globe.

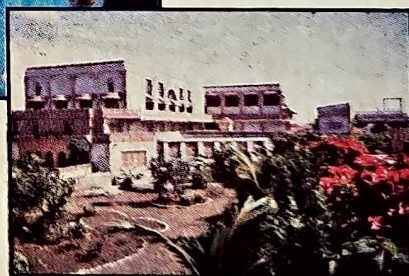
Obviously, both have travelled extensively around the world and have complemented each other in their respective endeavours. Their family comprising of two daughters have been given due attention. Nirmala Devi's spiritual mission took off,

only when the girls were big enough to be independent. Today, both are still active and energetic as ever and have chosen Pune for spending the remaining part of their

lives. Although Sir C.P Srivastava is the ruling Chancellor of the World Maritime University in Sweden, where he has to pay o c c a -

tened, is luxuriously surrounded with lush greenery boasting of hundreds of varieties of plants and trees flown from all parts of the world. And the insides can dwarf some of the best museums in India. Resplendent doors from all parts of India, marble written on all floors and pillars, cut glass put to the most creative use, exotic furniture, both traditional and modern and decorative pieces from practically every part of this country speak of the immense labour of time and money that has been channelised to build this palatial bungalow. The decorative pieces were still lined up in one huge room, waiting to be given their proper position.

Sir C.P Srivastava, the first Indian, since independence to be conferred the title of "Knight commander of the most distin-



guished order of St. Michael and St. George" in July 1990 was stationed in Pune for a few days. This unassuming man has an aura of immense dignity about him. Soft-spoken and elegant, his humility overcomes you. As he spoke about his present and past, his deep sense of commitment in

It is a breezy drive to their magnificent home on the NDA road. Sprawled over acres and acres of land, 'Pratishan', as this house is chris-

guished order of St. Michael and St. George" in July 1990 was stationed in Pune for a few days. This unassuming man has an aura of immense dignity about him. Soft-spoken and elegant, his humility overcomes you. As he spoke about his present and past, his deep sense of commitment in

whatever he undertakes forms the most striking feature.

Recalling the lavish dinner that was organised in his honour at the prestigious Lancaster House in London, the venue of many important social and political events, he says, "I was overwhelmed by the graceful manner in which the event was organised. My family had also been invited, which shows how meticulous they are in every little detail. It is just remarkable."

The address of Cecil Parkinson, the Transport minister who hosted the function was most touching, according to Srivastava. After carefully studying his bio-data, which spelt of a record breaking service in India and the numerous honours bestowed upon him by several nations, he said "I have heard of legends but had not met one until this evening."

Awards are a routine thing for Srivastava. Says he "The Padmabhushan awarded to me in 1972 by the Indian Government set the motion for the string of awards that followed." The Padma Bhushan which he received was in honour of his excellent contribution in establishing one of the most successful public undertakings, i.e. the Shipping Corporation of India.

During his tenure in India, his proximity to the Late Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri has inspired him to become an author. One of his major goals in life today, once he resigns from the Chancellorship next year, is to write the book in the cool ambience of his home here. Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was an epitome of

humility according to Srivastava, taught him some useful lessons in his life. He was acquainted with this dynamic Prime Minister, when he was posted to Lucknow in the capacity of the City Magistrate.

He recalls "A few years later, I went to the railway station in Delhi to receive my wife and children. I was standing on the platform when I could see several officers scurrying about as a train arrived from Lucknow. Shastri alighted from the train and when he spotted me, he came towards me and introduced himself. I

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was stunned! His memory, his greatness and his humility left a deep impression in my mind. Since then, I have left any inhibitions of taking the first step to greet a person. This taught me to brush away any ego from my mind - a useful education indeed!"

His respect for his wife Nirmala Devi's spiritual zest is evident in just about everything that he says about her. "When I first met her, through her brother who was my classmate, I could see that she was somebody special. Her face reflected her inner divinity and strength which became more and more evident as the time passed."

Appreciating her efforts to build a better world through her philosophy, he comments,

"Through her world of spiritualism, she is creating a new world for her disciples, who get totally transformed as they become self-realised. After having seen this genuine transformation for years, it would be much too irrational if I do not accept it." Explaining further, he says "This activity is important, as what you need is not science and technology but better human beings. What we need today, to make our country better, is half a dozen more Shastris."

What are his future plans after he vacates the

ity, motherly affection and bubbling enthusiasm to show you every part of her newly built home - every bit of which has taken shape under her keen supervision. Her garden and field that has blossomed into myriad shades of green, are a result of the tender care of her green thumb.

"Spirituality," she explains, "does not stand by itself. You can use your spiritual power, the all pervading power of self-realisation for increasing all activities in your day-to-day life, for example agriculture. You can feel this energy in the central nervous system. We have a mechanism, Sahaja Yoga, which can transform the person completely. He becomes dynamic. It is like electricity. It is there-only you have to use it."

Believing in the theory that material life should express spiritual life, plans to set a commune in Shere, 25 kms from Pune is already on the anvil. With the help of her disciples from abroad who have the spirit to work with dedication, she plans to engage the villagers into any economic activity which is viable.

Regarding the skepticism that is stamped with any spiritual movement, she says "You must have a scientific mind. Treat it as a hypothesis and have an open mind. Things won't be so haphazard then."

The smell of fresh paint and polish still pervades the air. And with both these celebrities having mega plans of active participation in our society, it seems, Pune is once again set to cut yet another interesting dimension.