Nostradamus; Seer of Destiny
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"In the year 1999 and seven months, from the sky will come the great king of terror. He will revive the memory of the king of the Mongols."

A recent United Press International wire service report flashed this 400-year-old quote with speculations that its 16th century clairvoyant author, Nostradamus, might have been predicting current heightened tensions in the Middle East as a prelude to worldwide destruction around the year 2000. Grim speculation indeed. Yet, not unlike similar wonderings ventured often by many through the years about this mysterious man and his foretelling riddles of the future - several of which appear to involve Hinduism.

In Nostradamus and the Millennium, John Hogue writes of Hermetic (literally "secret" or "hidden") mysticism, Nostradamus' strongest occult influence "It is the oldest mystic tradition in the West, having many parallels with the Eastern school of Tantra and Saivite Hinduism which saw the universe as a divine play or dance of paradoxes." Nostradamus was also trained in Jewish and Sufi mysticism. His favorite philosopher was Meister Eckhart who said, "The eye, with which I see God sees me; my eye and God's eye is one eye, one seeing, one realizing and one love."

Michel de Nostredame, astrologer, prophet, doctor of medicine, herbalist, magician and noted creator of fruit preservatives and cosmetics has mystified occult enthusiasts from the fading twilight of the Dark Ages to the present day. Had his predictions been an accurate few about events having come and gone, his name would perhaps be quietly relegated to a tattered page of history long forgotten. But Nostradamus endures, not only because his writings make predictions until the year 3797, but also because his method of rhyming in riddle and code makes his work impossible to analyze conclusively (See side bar). Fascinated and curious, we can't really know him - yet we can't forget him. Thus was born on December 14, 1503, in the south of France, a man destined to influence mankind - perhaps (ac

cording to his own calculations) until the end of the time. Today, almost 500 years later, Nostradamus is distinguished as the most widely read seer of the European Renaissance.

Because most of his predictions were so gloomy, some antagonists fault Nostradamus as being a negative influence upon history. Yet, he felt that fate was not fixed and by simply knowing the strongest possibilities for the future, disaster might be averted through understanding. He also felt himself to be an instrument of God. In describing his gift he writes. "I wish to acknowledge that all has been accomplished through divine power and inspiration." Nostradamus' predictions were compiled in The Centuries, the only book he ever wrote.

In one of his most intriguing predictions detailing events taking place in the 1990's Nostradamus wrote. "He will appear in Asia and be at home in Europe. The man from the East will come out of his seat passing across the Appenines. He will fly through the sky."

In another slightly more obscure verse, he writes, "Against the red ones religions will unite. The rose (color) upon the middle of the world scene. To speak the truth they will have closed mouths. Then at the time of need the awaited one will come late." It is generally believed by interpreters of Nostradamus that reference to the color red relates to revolutionaries. Another theory speculates that this red is meant to indicate the orange or rose colored robes worn by Hindu and Buddhist renunciate monks. Together these two verses may be predicting a powerful world teacher arising within Hinduism.

Not all of Nostradamus' writings were morbid. He had ecstatic visions and tried also to share these yogic experiences through the medium of his verse: "Sublime essence forever visible to the eye, come to cloud the conscious mind for reasons of their own. Body and forehead together, senses and the overseeing ego become invisible, as the sacred prayers diminish."

The Centuries

Nostradamus kept his psychic gift secret for much of his life. When he finally decided to bring his visions of the future forward to the public, he explained his purpose in a letter to his new-born son, "Foreseeing the advent of the common people [modern times], I decided to relinquish withholding my tongue and pen from paper by declaring in dark and cryptic sentences the causes of the future changes of mankind by clouding them in obscure but, above all. prophetic language."

Nostradamus had long contemplated an ambitious project. He wanted to write a book that would describe all of man's future until the end of time. The book would be set in ten volumes called "Centuries," each containing one hundred quatrains (verses), totalling one thousand predictions in the entire work. He would call the book The Centuries.

With the 1555 publication of the first edition of The Centuries, Nostradamus' fame as a prophet spread throughout Europe. An enlarged second edition of The Centuries, dedicated to the King of France, was published in 1558. The immediate fulfillment of several of his prophecies made him the rage of the Paris court. He was appointed physician-in-ordinary by Charles IX when Charles became King in 1560.

Personal Life

Nostradamus' mysterious talent for prophecy was first perceived and encouraged by his grandfathers. They were Jews who had been forcibly converted to Christianity yet remained secretly rooted in their Jewish heritage of rich scholasticism and spirituality. They oversaw the training of their young and eager pupil in a variety of subjects including the Greek, Latin and Hebrew languages, mathematics, astrology, classical literature, history and herbal folk medicine. They also schooled the boy in the Jewish Kabbalah and alchemy (the science of converting base metals into gold). During a time in history when most of Europe was plagued by war and disease, Nostradamus spent an idyllic childhood in a peaceful country environment fringed with the finest cultural influences.

Had Nostradamus not made a single prophecy, he would have still endured in history for his contributions in the field of medicine. He cured whole villages of the

dreaded black plague known as "Le Charbon." While Europe was emerging from the Dark Ages when even bathing was considered a sin, Nostradamus was practicing medicine with a working knowledge of germs and the importance of sanitation - perhaps from his visions of the future. One of his later quatrains would describe the work of, and specifically name, Louis Pasteur hundreds of years before the great 19th century medical pioneer of micro-biology and vaccination was born: "The lost thing, hidden for many centuries, is discovered. Pasteur will be honored as a demigod. This happens when the moon completes her great cycle. He will be dishonored by other rumors."

Yet "Le Charbon," which he had so masterfully controlled in its ravaging devastation upon others, mercilessly took the lives of his first wife and two children, despite his efforts to save them. This twist of events cost him his credibility as a doctor. He lost many friends and patients. To make matters, worse he was called before the Church Inquisitors at Toulouse on charges of heresy because of a casual remark he had made in jest some three years earlier. Narrowly escaping with his life, he spent the next six years in hiding, traveling the back roads of Western and Southern Europe. It was during this period that his prophetic powers awakened in full.

Ten years after the death of his wife and children, he settled in the town of Salon in southern France. Again he married and again he rose to fame and prominence as a respected physician. In this reestablished security he brought out all of the forbidden magical devices he had collected on his travels: magic mirrors, astrolabes, divining rods and a brass bowl and tripod designed after the classical oracle, Branchus. On the surface he was a model Catholic, but people began to wonder what was going on in the upstairs study of the good Dr. Nostradamus where mysterious candle lights burned all night long. Soon, he became a celebrity of quite another sort. During a period of history haunted by witch hunters, he was a clairvoyant unveiled. It was during these latter years of his life that he wrote The Centuries.

The End

Nostradamus died on July 2, 1566, at the age of 62. His house still stands in Salon, and the road upon which it is located has been renamed Rue Nostradamus.

There is one especially charming prophecy made by Nostradamus that won't be found in The Centuries. It concerns his death which, as might be expected, he foresaw.

Shortly before the fated hour, Nostradamus started a rumor that he would have a document buried with him that would decode all of his prophecies. Many wondered about this strange prophecy, but no one was curious enough to actually dig up the body of the illustrious seer until in 1700 - 134 years after his death - it became necessary for the elders of the community to move the grave. As they did so, they took a quick look inside the coffin. No paper was found, just a medallion with the date "1700" inscribed upon it.

Although many of Nostradamus" prophecies appear to have been fulfilled, they were officially condemned in 1781 by the Congregation of the Index, a special delegation set up by the Roman Catholic Church for the examination of books and manuscripts. Because of their cryptic style and content, these prophecies continue to create controversy even today. Many of them seem to clearly prefigure important historical events that have occurred since Nostradamus' time. Others appear to have no meaning or conceivably foretell events yet to occur.

Yet, even the hardiest critics can't deny the clarity of certain quatrains like the one predicting Edison's discovery of electricity: "When the animal is tamed by man and after great efforts and difficulty begins to speak, the lightning so harmful to the rod will be taken from earth and suspended in the air." The quatrain describing the coming of Hitler is also very clear: "From the deepest part of Western Europe, a young child will be born to poor people who by his speech will seduce a great multitude." There are many indications in the quatrains of Nostradamus that he was, first and foremost, a deeply spiritual man. From the same pen that scribed the coming of Hitler came this message of heavenly realms beyond. "The divine word will give to the essence, that which contains heaven and earth. All existence is beneath His feet as at the feet of heaven."

The Code

The practice of occultism was dangerous during the domination of the Catholic church in the 16th century, it was a common practice to speak of mystical matters

in code. Centuries of investigation have unraveled many of his coding techniques, making the interpretation of Nostradamus' quatrains less a matter of speculation. Here are a few:

1. Anagrams: Words and phrases are scrambled to make other words and phrases using the same letters. Example: Rapis means Paris.

2. Synecdoche: A grammatical trick from Greek and Latin in which the part represents the whole. Example: Paris stands for France.

3. Play on words and phrases identifying people and movements in history through their insignias. Example: The crooked cross means the swastika.

4. Common names can be hidden in normal words and phrases. Example: The Gaul means Charles de Gaulle.

5. Countries are described as animals. Examples: Cock for France, Bear for Russia, Wolf for Italy.

6. Phonetics are altered slightly. Example: "U's" become "V's" as in Nostradamvs.

A Comment

Historically, the quatrains of Nostradamus have been used by less enlightened men to validate biased points of view. Of particular interest to Hindus is a book written recently by G.S. Hiranyappa of New Delhi for just this purpose. Hindu Destiny in Nostradamus is designed to supplement and support a radical hatred of Muslims. For example, with regard to one verse vaguely referring to "the orient" - which other interpreters of Nostradamus generally agree cannot be accurately understood for several reasons - Hiranyappa comments: "This quatrain from

Nostradamus lays bare the greed, cowardice, selfishness and treachery which have made India a victim to the monster of Muslim blood-thirstiness."

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