

My guardian angels

ROBIN BELA conducts workshops for something called 'angel healing'. She talks to SHANA MARIA VERGHIS about her energy healing therapy which uses intermediaries in the form of spirit beings



AS A CHILD, BELA HAD A DEEP CONNECTION WITH THE IMAGES OF FAIRIES IN PICTURES, THE WAY PEOPLE HAVE WITH GOD

Josephine Backus is a consultant with a firm. She shared how there was a theft of a large sum of money in her office. "Instead of attacking the employees, we decided to speak to people separately and non-confrontationally. You know what? Two of the workers actually came forward and confessed they took the money. It was our love and the angels that did it. The amount was around Rs 5 lakh."

Josephine is a modern-day believer in the concept of angels as spiritual helpers. And we met her at a workshop on "angel healing" by Robin Bela in Gurgaon. The knowledge of angelic beings has existed among many spiritual traditions like Islam and Christianity, where spiritual beings and messengers are mentioned as helping connect to a God idea, which is energy of a very high frequency. On a metaphorical level, angels could even be deciphered one's own angelic energy.

The Bible for instance, mentions Archangel Gabriel, who told the Virgin Mary, she would be the Mother of Christ. In Islam, where the Angel Jibreel brought Allah's world to Prophet Mohammed, a belief in angels, is one of the six Articles of the Faith. They were believed to be created of light.

Both the Hadith and Quran mention different kinds of angels. The blind poet John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is just one of many texts that mentions the hierarchy among angels, including the fallen ones.

Robin Bela, who was born Sikh and is based in UK, said that as a child, she had a deep connection with the images of fairies in pictures, the way people have with God. When she grew up, Bela had a high-paying job, with perks like a car. But an accident dislocated an already weak knee.

GOOD BREAK

Bedridden for a year, she reevaluated her life and junked much of it including the car and the job.

Bela now conducts "angel healing" workshops where people come with various problems and are led through guided meditation and energy healing where the angels act as the intermediaries. When we attended one day's class in Gurgaon, we found people who already had angels as their spirit guides. As an aside, we must share, that like Robin, they belonged to different religious denominations. There is nothing religious about this "angel healing." It is like an aid to connect with the psychic, intuitive self. Which is where most solutions to problems supposedly lie.

In the course of the morning, the subject turned to *Indigo Children*, which like the 2012 prophecy, has a fairly strong following. The concept emerged in the 1970s when Nancy Ann Tappe wrote about a generation of unusually gifted children, more sensitive than the previous one. Supposedly those born post-1975 belong to this group. While those in the 90s are *Crystal children*. Even before them, in the 60s and

the early 70s, came the forerunners, who were similarly gifted.

Bela explained, "All these are psychic and intuitive kids. Very sensitive to pollution. Often their parents don't get them. They have strong sense of injustice. And about doing the right thing. In the classroom they get bored by having to study what they consider is irrelevant." Bela added, "Lee Carroll has written a book on them."



SAFE AFFIRMATION

She continued, "Now people are breaking free from how society was, before regarding the ills, like corruption. They have begun to stand up to them. They follow their heart. Instead of only focusing on a salary. Two hundred years ago none of that existed and people did something of their own."

How does all this connect to "angel healing"? "Many people who come to me are extremely

sensitive, and require protection from negative energies." "Angel healing", like pranic healing and reiki, which Bela has learnt, uses symbolic protection shields and invisible cords. But "protecting oneself against other people's energies" sounds a bit self-absorbed and nihilistic, since we all must live in the world. After all, who is to say that your own energy isn't negative to someone else? Like a point of view. Bela agreed, "I don't use many guards these days. The technique is to release our insecurities and the need for protection. And then a safe affirmation becomes enough for inner-strength. Because we as spiritual beings must live in the world, not get isolated in mountains. We must accommodate all types." And so to "be more centred", she said, "Is to be centred in the heart, not the ego." As an example, she told us, "It's like when you are in a crowd and some shock unbalances you. If you stay in your own skin and spirit, you will be able to gauge the best reaction to make at the appropriate time."

She went on, "If you don't stay positive, you simply cannot attract anything positive towards you. If your mind even suggests a 'I hope', rather than an 'I know' it defeats your purpose. And your intent must also be clearly conveyed to your mind as a very positive one."

NON CHRISTIAN ANGELS

Angels in this context, she said are the energies, and not figures in pictures with wings, sometimes cherub or seraphim like.

She added, "Only by 18th century, when artists painted them so, did we start to imagine angels this way. And some people's brighter orbs and auras were imagined as wings."

Bela said she was reading a lot about angels. And then she started to teach and developed a structured course and did some programmes on them. "But the information," she added, "Was not properly researched, so I did the basic work. And while I was healing, the angels began to appear. Mind you, I had my doubts because I'm not Christian. But things were happening to me. I had no choice." Bela went on, "Different angels are called on for different things." It's a bit like Hindu gods or Catholic saints. There are guardian angels. There are archangels. As in colour therapy and reiki, they have different colours. "The archangel Uriel is believed to have appeared to Noah and told him to make the Ark before the Flood. He is summoned for ideas, or if one is in trouble." Thesis for healing. Archangel Michael for protection. So on.

SPIRIT GIFT

"As people get spiritual and meditate frequently, they get more communication from the other side." Bela said. "Gradually, life in spirit will be normal thing, and we will not need angels and other beings for protection or guidances. As the wisdom of living peacefully will be shared among young and old." Bela's father used to be a policeman. She told us, "My father once shared with me how they had to deal with terrorists. And when treated with love, they responded beautifully." Several of those at the workshop shared how they were decluttering their lives of excess, and learning to give and receive.

One gentleman mentioned he kept seeing "all sorts of demonic spirits" but never any angels. Bela's response was, "You don't have to see angels. And that if you have a gift of seeing spirits, you should put it to some use for others, instead of punishing yourself by encouraging demonic visions."

She commented later, "If you frequently tell your mind 'I see the devil', you actually could invite it."

Then she said, "All of us have the potential to be healers. More you do, the more you have. I'd say I'm psychic and clairvoyant before all this. But there's a process. And it involves another person it is harder to control. So its really about transforming yourself. Not trying to change others. And doing what your heart says. If you feel good, it is a yes. If it is a no, it means negative. And it goes for creative ideas. For relationships too. Where people have to learn not to bury everything and be sensitive. And also connect to their emotional centre. I think God is telling us there won't be easy handouts anymore. Like a pill for every problem. So we have to busy ourselves and find new energies to learn to live." Robin is conducting a retreat in Mussoorie on September 18.



Face of triple tragedy

Little Big Tragedies, the latest play by National School of Drama, was woven around three tragedies, all dovetailing each other with seamless continuity. UTPAL K BANERJEE finds out

Can theatre be a carnival of sheer visuals? Do the visible have such an arresting quality that it can dwarf the audible completely and the text — of the calibre of Alexander Pushkin's embalming poetry — can be relegated to the dark backstage or even virtually behind the wings? Except when mouthed by the frenziedly-moving actors and creating visual compositions to almost erase the text?

NSD Repertory's latest production, *Little Big Tragedies*, under the direction and design of Ovyakuli Khodjakuli from Turkmenistan, revealed on centre-stage a giant-sized, all-engulfing human figure, like a mammoth muppet, which had rolling red eyes and stumps for arms that could twist and tweak menacingly when need arose and which held lit-up candles: dominating every proceeding. Then came the stunning visuals, one after the other. First was the assembled orgy of group-sex: to reflect the debauched Austrian court of the 18th century. Then appeared Mozart, restless and furiously gesticulating in the air on an invisible notation-sheet: perhaps composing his immortal *Marriage of Figaro* or *Magic Flute* or *Cosi Fan Tutte!*

The second act had choral figures dissolving into tombs with sepulchral silence. In the torrid love-making scene of Don Juan with the slain captain's comely widow, the mounted giant gestures menacingly from high above and pelts stones on the hapless hero's head. The third act is the incongruous feast in the middle of the surrounding dead: with corpses being dragged all over; to mimic the coffin-boxes. Enveloping it all is the ubiquitous presence of huge cloaks with every single actor: used either as clergyman's majestic robe, or the veil of secrecy for the youthful damsel falling into Don Juan's trap, or flailing as banners. This was the surest Central Asian touch from the designer.

The play was woven around three tragedies: dovetailing into each other with seamless continuity. First was Mozart and Saliери, based on the historical fact-sheet about the jealous Antonio Saliери without a modicum of musical talent haunting Amadeus Mozart — described as "the miracle that God allowed to be born in Salzburg" — before the maestro succumbs to death at the age of 35. The genius and the villain are juxtaposed well. The second was *The Stone Guest* with the semi-historical character of the eternal philanderer, Don Juan, not even letting the burial ground alone to pursue his victim of amour and, in turn, falling a prey to the assassinated Captain's ghost. The last one is *The Feast during the Plague*, where there is merry-making in the middle of devastation and death: let loose by a killing epidemic. The feast is stopped by a moving song to bring piety to all. But nothing happens and even the pious clergy's call for respect for the dead goes unheeded.

This is where the play goes all wrong.

If visuals were to preponderate and text put on the backburner, the physical actions — generally admirably done, though somewhat repetitive — should have been accompanied by ethereal music and breath-taking choreography. The music miserably failed to rise above crude intonations, which was a shame when Mozart's name was being invoked. On questioning, Music director Kajal Ghosh pleads helplessness. "Khodjakuli was trying to achieve an action theatre based on the Central Asian ethos and banned use of any musical instrument, by confining only to pots and pans to be beaten! The repertory actors are not trained musicians unlike their Middle East counterparts who both act and sing. The result was not music, not even stilled incantations, but cacophony. I walked out in the midstream." Choreography, too, never rose above the ordinary. Again, it was a pity, coming from the talented French dancer, Gilles Chuyen, not available for comment. Suresh Sharma, Chief of Repertory, sums up, I'm not much acquainted with the Central Asian theatre, but the visual images did seem repetitive and static beyond a point, with the text — which is all-important in an Indian play — rather neglected. But, on the whole, it was a good training exercise, though not necessarily very apt for the theatre-professionals.

The theatre of Khodjakuli, who is widely experienced in the dramatic scenario of Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Uzbekistan, is a paradoxical phenomenon. In general, he apparently combines skills of the Russian theatrical school with later "sovereign" views that believes art to be free from the idealised binders of the Soviet Age, — known to be pragmatic and tuned in to human ideas on passions and feelings. In particular, he notes for the present Pushkin plays, "The purpose of these three tragedies — jealousy, adultery and arrogance in that order — is to keep a track of human sin-count through a process of development. There are no specific lead heroes. All of them come from the crowd which is played by the chorus, as a blend of characters from different cultures, but with the same destiny. For me, a work like this is not measurable — the person having a collision with paradoxes of life, and making the journey from beginning to end in order to attempt to answer the basic questions about happiness and freedom."

And here is Pushkin — the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature — with his mellifluous poetry, written in 1830, at its epigraphic best: *O you Fates with old wives' chatter, Sleepy night so softly swaying, Life with mouse-like pitter-patter, Why vex me, what are you saying? Boring whispers what implying? Do you murmur or complain? Can't you tell me what you're seeking? Calling me or Prophesying? Oh for someone to explain, That dark language you are speaking!*

TECHNOCRAT

Now, fry potato chips sans oil

Fried food can never be a healthy option, at least for those who tend to put on weight. But now global electronics giant Philips has come out with an AirFryer that it claims gives you that same satisfying deep fried taste — minus oil. The device uses rapid air technology or hot air, to cook the kind of stuff that would be deep fried, reports *the Daily Mail*. By circulating air up to 200 degrees Celsius around foods like chips, chicken, fish or pastries, Philips claims to be able to brown them off nicely with up to 80 percent less fat. The AirFryer resembles a large rice cooker and has a largish tray which can be removed, stuffed with food and put back inside. Twelve minutes later, a meal emerges hot and according to Philips, far healthier for you. How it tastes is another question—the 200 pound cooking machine will only be available to pre-order. Crucially, whether it tastes as satisfying as the real thing remains to be seen. On its website, the electronics firm admits that fresh French fries need "half a table spoon of oil for extra taste" when put through the machine.



IANS

Facebook users 'more narcissistic'

People who constantly update their profile on Facebook are more likely to be narcissists, researchers have claimed. The social networking site is a haven for narcissistic people because they can establish a large number of hollow 'friendships' without having to establish a real relationship, a study found. Facebook also enables them to control how they are viewed by friends or people they would like to be introduced to. Soraya Mehdizadeh, of York University in Canada, questioned 100 students aged 18 to 25 about their use of the site, before giving them psychological examinations to determine how self-important and attention-seeking they were. People with poor self-esteem also monitored their Facebook more frequently than usual. Men were found to be more interested in written entries, while women placed more value on which pictures appeared on their page. The report was part of journal *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour And Social Networking*.



You may dismiss a clay pot today but it may be dug up years later to tell the world of the way of life as you have lived it today. Kings built their legacy and architectural marvels with the most basic offerings of earth and we still visit their ruins, pick up the shards with awe," says ceramist PR Daroz, who has resurrected himself after six years. Much like a long lost treasure. "Clay is pliable and tactile. It is versatile as it can bend and mould the way the artist wants it to. It gives me freedom of expression, which is why I enjoy putting my ideas on ceramic," says he.

The 66-year-old artist, who specialised in clay design at Baroda's Maharaja Sayajirao University and has been working in ceramics for several decades, says he waits for a collection till his inner being and imagination fuses with the elemental earth as one whole. Perhaps the reason why his present show is called *I Am Clay*. Besides, he always researches before he can stretch the limits of his ordinary medium to extraordinary perfection. For example, he stayed at Jingdezhen in China for six months in 2007 before experimenting with fine porcelain using its translucency and light to good effect. The result is a series in white called *Luminous Excavations*. "One of my friends told me that porcelain had been produced in Jingdezhen for over 1,800 years." The artworks in this series are abstract with pyramid-like engravings.

Straight from the fire

Veteran ceramist PR DAROZ has come up with his solo exhibition after six years. NEETI NIGAM takes a look



"The idea is to bring about a depth of civilisation, a sort of rediscovering of our roots," says he. His *Earth Series* is reminiscent of the aerial view of natural topography while *Seabed* — in white and turquoise-glazed porcelain — mimics the natural ruggedness of weathered rocks and sea beds. This collection is wholly textured with crevices and shows his fascination for fossils. "I vis-

ited Egypt some time ago. I walked along the coast of the Red Sea and it was a beautiful experience. The water was crystal clear. I loved the fossils. It is amazing to see how Nature gives you variety. The colour of sea is green in one country and blue in another," he says excitedly. His observations of natural processes at work, be it weathering rocks or a looping coastline, have been translated into clay using his famous copper-turquoise blue matte glaze with pink overtones. A series titled *Fired Canvas* comes alive because of the use of gold on abstract forms hewn out of square tiles. Made from manganese and

cobalt, its hard glass patina is a result of kiln-firing. Daroz has prepared the colours himself and used them to good effect to highlight different textures and etchings. Daroz's work also includes a largescale ceramic installation called *Unending Rhythm*, which is a modular wall series in matte bronzed surfaces, all 7 ft high. Shaped like musical notes, bronze columns sinuously curve around square blocks and integrate into a pleasing visual asymmetry. Daroz has done a large number of ceramic installations for corporates, notable among which is the one he had done for Nita Ambani's office atrium. With Commonwealth Games around the corner, Delhi is decorated like a princess. How does he see Delhi as a muse? "I came to the city in 1980 and since then have been attached to this place. From its monuments to the newly-built super-structures, the ever-changing skyline inspires me to be more creative," adds he. *The exhibition is on till October 15 at Art Alive Gallery, Panchsheel Park.*