DISSOCIATION AND SURVIVAL: A REAPPRAISAL OF THE EVIDENCE

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Introduction

Despite more than a century of thoughtful and often meticulous investigation of the evidence for postmortem survival, it is still difficult to say what the evidence shows. Even sympathetic writers tend to hedge their bets when drawing conclusions. They recognize that no matter how strong the cases may be, certain empirical and conceptual problems remain (see, e.g., Almeder, 1992; Gauld, 1982). For one thing, no case is so overwhelmingly coercive evidentially that all but the most obstinate skeptics feel compelled to accept the reality of survival. And for another, nagging philosophical difficulties are almost impossible to eradicate. Indeed, they seem to appear at every step, both before and after deciding which hypothesis best explains the evidence. For example, even those who accept survival must grapple with venerable and thorny issues about the nature of personal identity and about what sort of thing survival is.

Despite those problems, however, the literature abounds in provocative cases that simply cannot be ignored. In fact, the entire tapestry of cases, considered as a whole, is perhaps more tantalizing than any of its components. Taken together, the best cases present a formidable challenge to those who would deny some sort of personal survival. But since the case for survival is still far from conclusive, what is the next step? I would say that the one thing writers on survival no longer have to do is to find cases that may reasonably be regarded as authentic. That is, we now have a substantial body of cases for which the hypotheses of fraud, malobservation, or misreporting are highly improbable. That is perhaps the major respect in which survival research has genuinely progressed over the last century. The present task for survival research, as I now see it, is to focus on problems of interpretation—in particular, either to reject paranormal explanations altogether in favor of novel conjectures about human abilities and

information acquisition, or else to find a more sophisticated way to choose among rival paranormal explanations of the evidence.

In my own initial forays into this area, I have commented on what strike me as the most serious common defects in even the best works on survival. Four such defects are particularly outstanding:

1. Writers on survival have an impoverished grasp of the literature on dissociation generally and multiple personality in particular. As a result, they frequently offer naive opinions about the nature of mediumship and the likelihood of dissociation in those cases as well as in cases of ostensible reincarnation.

2. Discussions of super-psi counter explanations tend to underestimate the subtlety and force of the super-psi hypothesis; that is, they set up a straw man by considering that hypothesis in an unacceptably weak or implausible form.

3. The literature fails to address central issues about the nature and limits of human abilities, especially those arising from the study of savants and prodigies, but also in connection with the vast literature on dissociation.

4. Authors who personally investigate cases tend not to probe beneath the psychological surface. As a result, subjects and relevant others appear to be mere psychological stick figures. This is a serious obstacle to evaluating any competing explanation (including super-psi explanations) in which needs and motivations play a role.

Each of these problems afflicts what is unquestionably one of the most interesting and potentially most valuable cases in the literature on reincarnation, the case of Sharada. Until the problems are addressed squarely, that case will remain more unconvincing than it perhaps deserves to be, and (more generally) future discussions of survival will likely continue to exhibit the same old flaws that have plagued survival research for more than a century.

I propose, then, to outline the salient facts of the Sharada case, and review some complaints I have lodged elsewhere about the literature on survival generally and that case in particular. Then I shall focus on a recently published study that appears to address some of my concerns, but instead shows even more clearly how naive the analysis of the Sharada case has been.

First, however, I must make some additional preliminary remarks. To begin with, I've been surprised at reactions to some of my previously published remarks on survival. Apparently, and despite explicit statements to the contrary, they have created the impression that I am opposed in principle to the survival hypothesis, and that I think that the evidence can all be accommodated by positing some form of super psi. So let me try again to make my position clear.

I can imagine nothing more exciting than indisputable evidence for survival. In fact, if I have any bias in the matter, it is that I would *hope* that we survive the death of our bodies in some sort of interestingly robust way. But for the evidence to be convincing, it is simply not sufficient to reject alternate explanations (especially super-psi explanations) in the anemic or simplistic forms in which they have been considered. So my earlier efforts have been directed toward making clear just how daunting a task it is to rule out the likelihood (not just the possibility) of super-psi. And the primary reason for that has been, not to mount a case against survival, but to help the literature on survival generally attain a hitherto unprecedented level of conceptual sophistication.

The rival hypothesis I want to take seriously in the Sharada case, and which I submit has been egregiously underestimated, is not simply a super-psi hypothesis. We should perhaps call it the *dissociation + psi* hypothesis, although even that does not do it justice. The hypothesis holds that the puzzling aspects of the case can be understood in terms of dissociative processes similar to those found in multiple personality, and that dissociation facilitates the use of rather refined psychic functioning at critical points along the way. The hypothesis also countenances the possibility that latent and impressive abilities or capacities may be developed or liberated in dissociative or other sorts of unusual states.

One final comment. In what follows I shall be addressing certain matters of depth psychology in the Sharada case. Now I do not pretend to be a mental health professional. But I do know a bit about dissociative phenomena, and I feel I have a reasonable (though hardly prodigious) grasp of at least some sorts of real-life human needs and dilemmas, as well as a variety of coping strategies and hidden agendas. So if it is easy for *me* to detect the psychological shortcomings in the

discussions of the Sharada case, I would imagine that persons more cunning and penetrating than I can find additional and perhaps more persuasive reasons for challenging (or possibly for accepting) the reincarnationist or survivalist interpretation of the case. And again, my aim is not to lobby for a position that I antecedently believe to be correct. Rather, I want to raise the discussion of the evidence to the level of sophistication (both psychological and parapsychological) at which it should have been conducted from the start.

Similarly, although I shall focus my criticisms on two authors in particular (Stevenson & Akolkar), I am not interested in "picking on them" or in singling them out for attack. Rather, I want to illustrate how the analyses of even allegedly strong cases have been psychologically superficial and therefore weak in a crucial respect. The case for survival and against dissociation + psi simply cannot be made on the basis of the sorts of surface details typically offered by Stevenson, or with the quality of the supplementary analysis provided by Akolkar.

Outline of the Case

The Sharada case is not simply a case of ostensible reincarnation. It is also a case of apparent responsive xenoglossy. And one reason this case is so important is that, unlike most cases of responsive xenoglossy, the subject spoke an apparently unlearned language quite fluently. Another reason is that the previous personality (Sharada) made several verified statements about a family that lived at the appropriate time and location. However, I would say that the case's most compelling features are linguistic. Other examples of ostensible reincarnation have offered more impressive (that is, finer-grained and more specific) evidence for the knowledge of a former life.

The subject in the case is a Marathi-speaking woman named Uttara Huddar, born in 1941, who lives and works part-time as a lecturer in Public Administration in Nagpur, India. At the age of 32 she began to manifest a personality named Sharada, who spoke fluent and somewhat archaic Bengali, and who claimed to be and acted as if she were a Bengali woman of the early 19th-century. Sharada claimed to have died

at the age of 22 after a cobra bit her on the toe. When she "awoke" in 1974 she did not recognize Uttara's family and friends, and she apparently did not understand them when they spoke in Marathi, Hindi, or English. (She did, however, eventually learn a few words and phrases in Marathi.) Uttara never married, and as we will see, she appears to have been quite disappointed and frustrated in affairs of the heart. But Sharada dressed and behaved like a married Bengali woman. She spent a great deal of her time in (sometimes old-fashioned) Bengali religious practices, and she appeared perplexed by modern ways and somewhat repelled by Marathi customs.

When Uttara's mother was pregnant with Uttara, she often dreamed of being bitten by a snake on the toe. Those dreams ceased when Uttara was born, and her mother claims to have forgotten them until Sharada appeared and mentioned that she had died of a snakebite on the toe. The mother's claim to have forgotten the dream may not be entirely credible, however. Indeed, both parents report that Uttara had a severe phobia of snakes throughout much of her childhood, and that after the age of sixteen her attitude toward snakes changed to one of attraction. Hence, there is reason to believe that the topic of snakes would have been a fairly common one in the household, at least until Uttara's phobia disappeared.

As previous investigators have recognized, it is important to determine the extent of Uttara's normal exposure to the Bengali language and to Bengali customs. And initially at least, it looks as if one should be skeptical, because there is no doubt that Uttara had studied Bengali to some extent, and that she had at least a modest ability to read the language. On the other hand, certain features of the case lend support to a survivalist interpretation of the evidence. For one thing, it is not clear whether Uttara had demonstrated the somewhat independent ability to *speak* Bengali. And for another, Sharada's spoken Bengali differed in various ways from the modern Bengali Uttara presumably learned while in school.

Nevertheless, a survivalist explanation of Sharada's proficiency in Bengali faces serious obstacles. Since Uttara had learned some modern Bengali, her proficiency as Sharada is not totally without foundation. Moreover, it is probable that learning a second language is a distinct process from learning a language for the first time. And when the

second language is not radically different from one's native tongue (or from a second language one has already learned), the process may be relatively easy. Furthermore, Uttara spoke English, and she had also studied Sanskrit in high school. So we know that she was reasonably sophisticated linguistically and that she had the ability to learn new languages. In fact, since Sanskrit is the language from which North Indian dialects evolved (just as Spanish, French, and Italian evolved from Latin), Uttara's proficiency in Bengali does not seem particularly mysterious, *if* we allow that additional exposure to Bengali could have occurred normally (but unconsciously) and also possibly through ESP. It might also be relevant that approximately ten thousand Bengalis live in Nagpur. Hence, although the city in which Sharada claimed to live was 500 km from Nagpur, there may well have been numerous opportunities for exposure to crucial information about the Bengali language and customs closer to home.

It is also worth noting that Uttara seemed to be deeply interested in Bengal and the Bengalis, and she even "claims that she had a strong desire to learn Bengali" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 214). Beginning in her teens, Uttara became quite attached to her father, who was "a great admirer of Bengali revolutionaries and leaders" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 214), at least one of whom had stayed with him in his home. Moreover, some of Uttara's relatives spoke Bengali, and Uttara had read Bengali novels translated into Marathi. According to Stevenson (1984), Uttara "complained that Marathi literature displayed no real heroines; in contrast, she thought that Bengali women were more courageous and also more feminine than other Indian women" (p. 81). Furthermore, as Anderson (1992) properly observes, both Akolkar and Stevenson "include information on the linguistic features of Sharada's Bengali suggesting that her command of the language, while impressive, is not that of a native" (p. 252).

Sharada first appeared in 1974, during which time Uttara was experiencing a variety of emotional and physical problems. In the early 1970s Uttara developed a deep attraction to a former childhood friend, F, with whom she had recently restored contact after a lapse of several years. (Stevenson refers to F as "Priyadarshan Dinanath Pandit.") But F did not reciprocate her feelings; in fact, he was interested in another woman. Uttara felt so exhausted and shaken by F's rejection that she

decided to devote herself to a life of spiritual development and meditation (which she had practiced regularly since 1965).

While all this was going on, Uttara was also contending with various physical maladies, including asthma, menstrual problems, and a skin disease that seems to have been eczema. In 1970 she was examined by a homeopathic physician, Dr. Z (referred to by Stevenson as Dr. J.R. Joshi), described by Akolkar (1992) as "an elderly man in his fifties" (p. 217). Dr. Z had established a combination ashram/hospital in Dabha, 7 km from Nagpur, and for several years he treated Uttara as an outpatient.

Uttara's relationship with Dr. Z is puzzling, and it deserves close scrutiny. Indeed, their first meeting proved to be a very intense experience for Uttara. She reports that when Dr. Z first touched her, it felt "familiar" and she found herself irresistibly drawn to him. She also felt that there was a connection between Dr. Z and a recurring vision she had experienced during meditation and in dreams. The vision was of a fair, tall, slim man on horseback, and it may be related to a recurring childhood dream reported by Stevenson (and in less detail by Akolkar). In that dream, which Uttara reported to her parents until the age of eight, "she saw her husband (as she said) coming to her riding a pony; he caressed her pleasantly" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 81).

Uttara claimed that her interest in Dr. Z differed from her attraction to F. Presumably, what Uttara meant by that was that her interest in the doctor was not romantic. Now whether or not that is true, Uttara's interest in Dr. Z (whatever it may have been) was apparently expressed differently from her interest in F. Indeed, it bordered on the obsessive.[8]

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[8] Actually, it is difficult to judge from Stevenson's and Akolkar's accounts whether Uttara's interest in F was expressed with the same intensity and insistence she displayed in her behavior toward Dr. Z. In his all too brief discussion of the possibly significant relationship between Uttara and F's father, Bhau, Akolkar suggests that there may not have been much of a difference. He notes that Uttara implored Bhau to intervene in her behalf, and one gets the impression that Uttara was fully occupied emotionally over her relationship with F and her desire to be part of his family.

In 1973 Uttara went to stay at Dr. Z's ashram with the intention of never returning home. She acknowledged feeling a maternal need and thought of adopting an infant and marrying Dr. Z. Uttara claimed that she didn't really care to be a wife to Dr. Z, but she wanted their relationship to take a socially acceptable form, and she also maintained that by marrying Dr. Z her friend F might feel free to marry the woman of his choice. Moreover, although Uttara insisted that she wanted only a spiritual relationship with Dr. Z, her behavior often suggested otherwise. Dr. Z told Uttara's father that she claimed they had a relationship in a previous life (Akolkar, 1992, p. 221). And indeed, Uttara sometimes behaved as if she were a jealous spouse or lover. On one particularly notable occasion, Uttara "suddenly burst into the room" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 74) where Dr. Z was dining with one of his female assistants, and began berating him in what appeared to be the Bengali language. According to Stevenson, this is one of several incidents that contributed to Dr. Z's desire to send Uttara away from the ashram.

One further interesting hint emerges from Akolkar's report, although Akolkar himself apparently fails to notice it (like many other hints discussed later). Uttara's physical ailments may have been linked to emotional problems, and possibly even to problems of a psychosexual nature that had begun to develop before her frustrating rejection by F. In fact, Akolkar cites Uttara's own accounts of how menstrual difficulties followed the reading of certain evocative pieces of literature. For example, after reading T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," Uttara felt "as though woman's womanhood had come to an end; only lust remained" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216). This was followed by profuse menstrual bleeding described by Uttara as "like abortional bleeding." Uttara continues, "the next day as I taught the poem 'The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck' to my class, I experienced great mental restlessness at the thought that I should have such a son, and once again there was profuse bleeding" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216).[9]

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[9] It is unfortunate that Akolkar again omits crucial details when relating this information. Was Uttara having these episodes during her period? Might she have found passages in her reading so arousing that she

Objections to Stevenson's Report

Until recently, the principal source of information concerning the Sharada case has been Stevenson (1984). But his report either glosses over or omits altogether the sorts of interesting details contained in Akolkar's independent and recently published account. These deal primarily with psychological and sexual issues mentioned earlier, which I will discuss more fully in the next section. One of my original criticisms of Stevenson was that because the sorts of issues and tensions noted by Akolkar seemed clearly to figure into the overall scheme of things, Stevenson's avoidance of depth-psychological probing left the reader in no position to settle on a plausible explanation of the case. Fortunately, Akolkar recognizes the relevance of depth-psychological issues, and he has filled in at least some missing details. Still, it is worthwhile reviewing some of my earlier objections to Stevenson before considering Akolkar's problematical handling of the material. The main reason for this is to illustrate again why Stevenson's psychologically superficial approach to case investigation (despite its undeniable virtues) does not deserve its present status as exemplar in the field. (For a sampling that adopt a similar approach, see, e.g., Haraldsson, 1991; Keil, 1991; Mills, 1989, 1990a, 1990b; & Pasricha, 1990a, 1990b, 1992. See also Braude, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c for additional criticisms.) I shall avoid, for now, my earlier objections to Stevenson's claims about the likelihood or possibility of super-psi.

In earlier articles (Braude, 1992a, 1992b), I noted that Stevenson seems to have made at best only a cursory effort to determine whether

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experienced contractions that promoted serious bleeding? Obviously, these questions must be addressed in order to determine whether Uttara's bleeding was psychosomatic. Akolkar seems to interpret Uttara's menstrual problems generally and some of her other physical afflictions as intimations of an emerging and genuine previous personality (Sharada). He seems not to consider that Uttara's persistent physical problems might have been psychosomatic, or that as a hypnotically gifted individual she might have been expressing her emotional turmoil somatically, as multiples often do.

there were good reasons to explain the Sharada manifestations in terms of motivated psi. I pointed out that if the appropriate sorts of motives existed, they would only appear in the course of "an extensive and penetrating examination into the lives of clearly relevant (and perhaps even seemingly peripheral) personnel" (Braude, 1992a, p. 133).

For example, I observed that Stevenson had surprisingly little to say about the apparently pivotal relationship between Uttara and Dr. Z. Regarding Dr. Z's first touch, which Uttara said felt surprisingly "familiar" and as the result of which she felt drawn to the doctor "like an iron particle to a magnet" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 217), Stevenson (1984) says only that Uttara felt "strangely moved" (p. 105). Not only is that far too little to help one examine the relationship between Dr. Z and Uttara, but Stevenson offers no reason for thinking that Uttara's intense reaction to Dr. Z's touch was particularly strange, or different from a rather common phenomenon. I suspect that most adults have at some time experienced a sudden, intense, and apparently inexplicable—but seemingly cosmically significant—attraction to another person, only to discover later that the intensity of the original experience was readily explicable in terms of rather pedestrian hidden needs and agendas. Akolkar, at least, seems more sensitive to that possibility.

More important, however, Stevenson (1984) fails to explain what, on the surface at least, seems to be puzzling behavior on the part of Dr. Z. Stevenson notes that Dr. Z visited Uttara at home "a few times" (p. 105) after her discharge (or banishment) from the hospital. That is at least initially perplexing, because Dr. Z had apparently been feeling beleaguered by Uttara's annoying displays of interest and affection. One might think, then, that if Dr. Z had found Uttara's behavior objectionable enough to send her away from the ashram, he would not have wanted to risk deeper or additional entanglements by visiting her at home. Stevenson (1984) explains Dr. Z's actions in terms of his "interest and perhaps compassion," but he says the doctor "indicated no deeper attachment to either Uttara or Sharada" (p. 105). Evidently, Stevenson attempted to figure out whether there had, in fact, been a deeper attachment, but according to Stevenson Dr. Z was evasive and unrevealing during his interviews. The only explanation Stevenson

offers for that evasiveness was that the doctor found Sharada's attentions embarrassing.

But that explanation is difficult to accept, especially in the face of rather obvious sorts of doubts that Stevenson makes no effort to dispel. For example, it is not clear why Dr. Z would have felt embarrassed by Uttara's attention and affection. Since patients often fall in love with their doctors, one would think that a doctor in his late 50s might have encountered that phenomenon before. Therefore, one might have expected Dr. Z simply to take Uttara's interest in stride. Moreover, if Uttara's behavior was so embarrassing and her attention "discomfiting and potentially compromising" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 105), why did the doctor visit her several times at home? That could not have helped to quell any affection Uttara might have felt for him, and it could only have offered further opportunity for embarrassing confrontations. If Dr. Z was moved only by interest or compassion, as Stevenson claims, then one would think that either his embarrassment was not all *that* acute or else the doctor's interest and compassion were strong enough to overcome it. But in either case it is unclear why Dr. Z would have been evasive in an interview. If he felt no (or only a little) embarrassment, it is difficult to understand what he might have wanted to conceal, especially in conversation with a psychiatrist who presumably understands the concepts of transference, countertransference, and other aspects of the patient/doctor relationship. And if Dr. Z was feeling ordinary human compassion and a strong (but merely professional) interest in the case, one would again have expected him to be more cooperative and forthcoming in his interview, even if he felt embarrassed by Uttara's behavior. After all, he was talking to a medical colleague, not (say) a tabloid reporter.

There may, in fact, be nothing worth fussing over here. But given the superficiality of Stevenson's discussion, there is no way to know. The important lesson this teaches is that it is simply not enough to be told *what* subjects said. For example, it is not particularly helpful to learn simply *that* Dr. Z. denied feeling attracted toward Uttara (or Sharada). It is important also to know *how* he denied those feelings—that is, what his tone and manner were. Might they have shown that he had something to hide? Stevenson tells us only that the doctor "practiced masterly evasion" (p. 106) during their interview.

As I had also noted in my earlier article, Stevenson sheds equally little light on the subject of Uttara's feelings for men. He recognizes that there may be some significance in the fact that Uttara never married and that Sharada claimed to be married. In fact, he concedes that "frustrated aspirations for an independent domestic life may have found fantasied satisfaction in the role of Sharada" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 144). But after noting that Sharada "hardly satisfies all the criteria of the idealized, fulfilled, married woman," (p. 144), Stevenson dismisses that possibility with the rhetorical question, "why did she not complete the fantasy with a happy ending?"

It is rather astonishing that Stevenson abandons the topic at this point. Apparently, he made no effort to understand Uttara's fantasy life in all its richness and subtlety (and Akolkar's report shows that Uttara's fantasy life seems quite robust). Or, if he did undertake the appropriate depth-psychological investigations, he does not share his results with his readers, so that they could answer his rhetorical question. But perhaps more important, Stevenson seems to think it obvious that if Uttara *had* used another persona to act out her fantasies, that persona would have been an idealized model for her aspirations. But it is quite incredible (especially for a psychiatrist) to think that people generally express their fantasies in such a straightforward and flagrant way. For one thing, if a person lives out a fantasy in too obvious a manner, it loses much of its psychological utility. Moreover, our fantasies may simultaneously represent our feelings on many different issues. We need to know how, exactly, Uttara felt about men, children, and marriage generally, and perhaps also her parents' marriage in particular and the major male figures in her life (her father, Dr. Z, and F). And we need to know how that entire *constellation* of feelings might have expressed itself in fantasy.

Since Akolkar's report deals more thoroughly than Stevenson's with depth-psychological issues, let us now turn our attention to his efforts.

Akolkar's Report

As I suggested earlier, one reason Akolkar's report is so striking is that he shows, much more clearly than Stevenson and much more

clearly than Akolkar himself realizes, why it is plausible to interpret the Sharada case in terms of dissociation + psi. The evidence seeming to point in that direction strikes Akolkar as suggesting instead either possession or the persistence of a really previously existing Sharada residue deep in Uttara's mind. Perhaps Akolkar's conclusion is correct. But I submit that he has unwittingly presented a stronger case *against* that position. Apparently, that is because (a) he seems unfamiliar with the literature on dissociation and perhaps also with the more general literature on psychopathology, and (b) he seems both clearly disposed in favor of reincarnation and also rather credulous and naive about parapsychology generally and the reports of Indian mystical phenomena in particular. For now, it will be sufficient to consider only the first of these problems.

Before launching into specific criticisms of Akolkar's report, one general observation merits our attention. Our present concern is to consider the viability of the dissociation + psi hypothesis as an explanation of the evidence for survival. And that means we must take seriously the possibility that subjects in survival cases are displaying phenomena akin to those described in the literature on dissociation generally and dissociative psychopathology in particular. The usual form this has taken in the past has been to consider whether subjects (usually, only mediums) are really manifesting a form of multiple personality. And typically, the problem afflicting those discussions (even very good ones) is that by relying on a somewhat outdated picture of multiple personality, they have underestimated the scope and variety of dissociative phenomena one might reasonably expect to find in survival cases (see, e.g., Broad, 1962; Gauld, 1982).

Interestingly, an analogous problem may threaten to undermine discussion of the evidence of survival even when the author is well aware of the current state of research into multiple personality. For example, in a recent paper, Hughes (1992) examines similarities between multiple personality disorder (MPD) and trance channeling, and concludes that the two activities differ in many respects. But she does not address the crucial underlying issue. What matters is not whether we can explain the evidence for survival as a form of multiple personality *disorder*. In principle, there may be various, and relatively functional, forms of multiple personality that do not qualify as types of

psychopathology (or instances of MPD). Hence, what matters is whether mediumship and subjects in reincarnation cases display possibly non-pathological forms of multiple personality, or else other dramatic dissociative phenomena closely related to MPD.[10]. (See Braude, 1991.)

Returning now to Akolkar's report, consider, first, that Uttara's personality changes began at age 32. That is late for a typical reincarnation case, but not at all surprising for someone suffering from a dissociative disorder. (See Braude, 1991.) Moreover, the Sharada personality appeared after Uttara entered Dr. Z's ashram and while Uttara was apparently preoccupied with "emotionally charged thoughts regarding her friend F as well as Dr. Z" (Akolkar, 1992, p.223). Let us assume (as we have good reason to do) that Uttara is reasonably gifted hypnotically. Then it is not at all difficult to imagine how her painfully thwarted relationship with F might have led to the creation of Sharada as a dissociative defense, a defense that would accomplish at least two important goals. First, by developing an alter-like entity (Sharada), Uttara could express and experience emotional and physical urges she could not reasonably expect to satisfy as Uttara. And second, that alter personality (or ego state) would allow Uttara to feel as if she (that is, Uttara) had become "spiritual" in the sense of transcending the physical and emotional needs manifested by Sharada. Unfortunately, however, Akolkar accepts Uttara's description of her spiritual quest at face value. Indeed, he claims there is no reason to assert that Uttara suffered from any emotional or psychological disorder. He writes, "There is no evidence of mental illness or behavioral abnormality" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 241).

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[10] Hughes' study might be somewhat misleading in another respect as well. The multiples surveyed in her analysis seem to have exhibited the now-classic symptoms one finds in cases in North America and Western Europe. One can only wonder, then, what Hughes' results might have been had she included in her study cases of MPD from (say) Brazil or India, where the symptom language of multiple personality seems to assume culture-specific forms, and where the similarities between MPD and mediumship may be more striking.

But that claim is quite preposterous. Quite apart from the evidence suggesting that Sharada was created as a dissociative defense, Akolkar (1992) notes that at the onset of the Sharada phenomena, Uttara "experienced spells of blankness and an inability to recall" (p. 220). In Uttara's own words, "there was a veritable tug of war" that would make her weep. "She would gaze at the moon for hours and would sometimes stay awake for four or five consecutive nights" (p. 220). Sometimes she would "feel frightened, hear strange sounds, see luminous columns of air infused with consciousness, and occasionally have sensations of soft, cool, fragrance." More interesting still, Uttara suffered "repeated occurrences" (p. 221) of visions, including (Uttara reports) "somebody beating me," which "would interrupt her meditations and prayers" (p. 221). "Sometimes, in a frightened state of mind, she would feel like running, shouting, rolling at someone's feet, and she would long for somebody to console her" (p. 221).

Akolkar's report contains several other puzzling comments, which suggest that Uttara had various intense relationships and feelings that required further exploration. And some of these additional hints are disquietingly reminiscent of patterns emerging from the literature on dissociation and abuse. For example, the curious reader can only want to know more about Uttara's relationship with F's father, Bhau, which seems to have been rather intimate. Uttara dreamed "of becoming the daughter-in-law of Bhau's renowned family" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216). She also apparently confided to him her interest in and frustrations regarding F. In fact, she "implored" him to intervene and convince F to marry either her or the woman in whom he claimed to be interested. But Bhau took no action. In itself, that reticence is not peculiar; Bhau might simply have felt it was not his place to interfere. But Akolkar quotes Uttara as saying something that suggests a rather different sort of motive on the part of Bhau. Uttara claims that Bhau told her, "Like a straw to a drowning man, your support is like that of a little goddess" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216). But Akolkar provides no context for that remark. Not only does he fail to note and explain its sexual overtones, he never even explains what sort of support Bhau might have been referring to.

And as if all this were not enough, Akolkar gives many examples of the overlapping of Uttara and Sharada. But he apparently does not

realize that dissociative processes seem never to be totally independent, and that the overlap of Sharada and Uttara looks very much like the familiar phenomenon, *co-presence,* observed in many cases of MPD. Hence, he fails to see how that overlapping strengthens the dissociation + psi hypothesis. An additional fact supporting that hypothesis is that Uttara engaged in automatic writing, which not everyone can do. Dissociators (hypnotically gifted individuals), however, can. Also, when Prof. Kini (a consultant on yoga) touched Uttara's forehead with his index finger, Uttara went immediately into Sharada. That, too, looks like the behavior of a highly hypnotizable individual. And again, Akolkar (1992) reports that Uttara would "sort of see" (p. 223) another image behind her own in the mirror. That is also quite similar to a phenomenon reported by many multiples, who tend not only to be gifted hallucinators, but who even hallucinate their alters at distinct locations in a room.

Apparently to support his easy acceptance of Uttara's interpretation of the facts, Akolkar (1992) claims that "Uttara had the capacity for honest, self-searching introspection" (p. 241). Now it may well be that Uttara's accounts of her emotional life are honest. But contrary to what Akolkar apparently thinks, that does not rule out the possibility of various forms of self-ignorance and self-deception. Indeed, Akolkar offers several clues suggesting that Uttara's capacity for self-searching introspection had definite limitations, especially when it came to her sexual and emotional needs. We have already considered how Uttara seems to have suppressed or repressed her sexuality and need for a male partner and retreated to a form of sexless spirituality. In addition, however, Uttara was "enraged" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 212) when her responses to a Rorschach test were interpreted as indicating sexual abnormality. And she refused to reveal a dream with possibly erotic imagery to a psychologist "for fear of its being interpreted according to Freudian analysis" (p. 220).

In light of these clues, and also in light of Akolkar's (1992) admission of Uttara's "important biopsychological needs" (p. 241) and frustrations, it is quite astounding that Akolkar could claim that Uttara "did not derive any gain through the representation of Sharada" (p. 243). Quite apart from Sharada's obvious utility as a dissociative defense against Uttara's emotional and sexual frustrations, there are

even further clues, provided by both Stevenson and Akolkar, as to what Uttara could accomplish by creating an alternate personality. Sharada's behavior allowed Uttara to do many things that would otherwise have been unacceptable. For example, her jealous and intrusive behavior toward Dr. Z could be disowned, so to speak, and ascribed instead to a previous personality who claimed that Dr. Z had been her husband in a former life. Moreover, as I suggested earlier, Sharada provided a way for Uttara to behave, dress, and feel like a married, childbearing woman, while avoiding the condemnation she would almost certainly incur by acting out those feelings as Uttara. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the Sharada manifestations declined as Uttara reached her forties, at which time the prospects of marriage and childbearing would no doubt have seemed more remote. Moreover, Sharada, but perhaps not Uttara, could successfully criticize both the lifestyle and home of Uttara's parents, and she could get away with adopting superior and condescending attitudes toward them and toward Marathi culture. In fact, as Sharada, she could even avoid helping Uttara's mother with chores. I submit that these sorts of conjectures are hardly far-fetched in the case under consideration. Indeed, they are commonplace and plausible both in everyday contexts and in the clinical literature on dissociation. Hence, until investigators offer strong reasons for rejecting them, they must be taken very seriously in working out a plausible explanation for the many features of the case.

It also seems as if Akolkar (1992) errs when he claims that Sharada displays a "full range of...personality" (p. 242). Granted, Sharada is not an obvious or crude personality caricature; she does not seem to be as flat a character as some personality fragments in cases of multiple personality, which may have no more than a single identifiable function (Braude, 1991). But even if we grant that many non-multiples have rather severe personality limitations, it is questionable that Sharada was a robust personality, or at least more so than one finds in most highly developed cases of alternate personalities. Even in those cases one finds, at least after a while, that the personalities lack the depth and breadth of personality one finds in most non-multiples.

Conclusion

Akolkar's report disappoints on various other counts as well. But the foregoing considerations demonstrate clearly that the case of Sharada is more interesting as a human drama than investigators seem to have realized. In fact, there is reason to think that *most* cases are more interesting psychologically than their case reports would suggest.[11]. All too often, however, parapsychological case studies present subjects as if they were little more than mere possible emitters of psychic functioning. Case reports do not really describe their subjects; parapsychologists seldom make an effort to find out who they are and what really moves them. Perhaps that is understandable; perhaps such an inquiry is beyond their professional competence, and perhaps we should appreciate the fact that they have at least made the necessary first step toward ruling out counter explanations in terms of fraud, misreporting, and so forth. Nevertheless, the subjects of both spontaneous case investigations and experimental reports are full-blown human beings, who (like the rest of us) struggle with the intricacies and vicissitudes of life and who (like the rest of us) are teeming cauldrons of needs, fears, pains, and interests. It is reasonable to think that the better we understand those subjects, the more likely we are to be able to discover important clues to the correct interpretation of the evidence and generate plausible explanatory hypotheses. In fact, it is difficult to see how one could explain the *form* psi functioning takes in particular cases without first coming to grips with the psychological complexity of the subjects.

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[11] My own modest case investigations have only reinforced my conviction on this point. It has taken almost no effort to discover that the majority of subjects in those cases are either in abusive relationships with spouses or significant others, or else that they are in the midst of some other form of domestic turmoil. Moreover, in the few instances where it has been appropriate for me to inquire further, subjects report that apparent psychic phenomena did not occur prior to those relationships or situations.

So I think that the major lesson to be learned here is methodological. Ordinarily (that is, outside of case investigations in parapsychology), when we find people exhibiting striking behavior or exceptional cognitive skills, we naturally ask: what happened to these people? What's their story? Did anything in their life cause them to be this way? And generally speaking (or at least often), the answers to these sorts of questions have been fruitful and illuminating. That is why we now understand something about the etiology of MPD and other forms of psychopathology. More generally still, quite often we can gain considerable insight into people's present behavior by looking at their history, and the specific and often quite idiosyncratic forces and issues that shaped them.

So it is quite astonishing that we do not (and have not) probed as deeply into the psychology of mediumship or cases suggesting reincarnation. Here, too, we have examples of very unusual behavior, and once we start looking it appears that the lives of the people in these cases are at least as convoluted and psychologically rich as anyone else's, and quite possibly more so. But parapsychologists generally make only the most cursory inquiries into their subjects' lives. Instead, they too readily look for impersonal cosmic explanations, and apparently forget that they are studying real people grappling with real needs, fears, and other issues.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that we should ignore more cosmic or exotic (parapsychological) hypotheses. (In fact, I would be one of the last people to say that.) I am saying only that we resort to them prematurely in connection with survival research (and other case studies), long before we have exhausted reasonable alternatives having to do with real-life grubby issues and concerns, with an occasional amount of hefty psi among the living thrown in for good measure. (See e.g., Braude, 1986, 1987, 1989.)

So perhaps this is where the next breakthrough lies in survival research. Let us be as probing about the subjects in these cases as we are (or at least should be) in our own lives, and in the lives of those who display other peculiar types of behavior. Granted, this sort of inquiry may require a different type of researcher and different

investigative skills than those that have dominated parapsychology. If so, then I would suggest that it is time for the field to change.[12]

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DISCUSSION

OWENS: As a psychologist I'm very interested in the interaction of depth psychology, dissociative states, and paranormal process. I've been struck in this study of near-death experience the number of cases involving a loss of the babies in childbirth. I almost commented on the case of Sarah this morning. There was an odd tone to her narrative though these things are hard to prove. It was my sense that it was different from a typical case of out-of-body perception in making statements like, "I saw someone that looked like me," "I saw someone that looked like my father," and thinking that the problem with the leg was her baby's leg. I almost talked about this kind of motivated error

that she was making in that it was difficult for her to accept the fact of what had happened. I thought it was a little bit too far afield to bring in those kinds of psychological processes. I've seen evidence of them and I think that's a really interesting direction to take.

BRAUDE: I can only endorse that. My guess is that most cases, if they were described even cursorily, would have various kinds of details that might make us wonder about the possibility or the likelihood of other relevant, grubby, filthy psychological facts going on under the surface. It's unfortunate that most cases, though, are described at such a superficial level that perhaps all the relevant details are left out. For example, when Stevenson does his surveys about the cases in order to rule out possible counter-hypotheses, he focuses on such things as the interval of time between the death of the previous personality and the appearance of the apparently reincarnated personality, as if those kinds of details are going to be the sort that could possibly be meaningful to the particulars in the case. It seems to me those are precisely the sorts of details that are irrelevant. What matters are those details of the case which happen to be meaningful to the particular people in a particular given situation. And that may differ wildly and idiosyncratically from one case to the next.

OWENS: I don't know if you mean that the sexual part is the "grubby and dirty" part or the grief and bereavement?

BRAUDE: I just meant the stuff you have to get at.

TAYLOR: I have several general comments. I took the equivalent of two years of Hindi, which is the national language of India. You can't go to school in India without learning Hindi. I was told at the end of two years that if you remember 5 different rules and have 12 alternative words, that you could communicate with any Bengali that you met who also knew Hindi and they'll understand what you have to say. You'll begin to speak the language in a way which conforms to the popular way in which it's communicated. This instance brings up a point for me because I haven't ever studied Bengali, but I have been able to talk in a halting way with Bengali people by remembering those rules. It strikes me as being somewhat ludicrous because this lady comes from a culture which to me has a depth psychology which includes the paranormal, and it's so much more sophisticated than we have. It reminds me of the story that Carl Jung told of the wise old

man who was very revered by the young people in the village. He lived by himself and went into these deep profound states of meditation. Between times he used to amuse himself by doodling on the wall. The elders in the community finally rose up in arms against this man and killed him. They copied all the symbols on the wall thinking this was the source of his religion. They went back and created their new religion with themselves as the priesthood in the village, trying to get the young people to come to them using what were really doodles. It appears to me to be the same thing here. We have an empty tool box that we're approaching this with. I'm just affirming what you were saying. I didn't hear anything ethnographic or anything from a cross-cultural psychological standpoint that didn't try and superimpose a Western Judeo-Christian, scientific view onto this phenomenon. It just comes off as quite thin for me, as I think you were trying to indicate.

ALMEDER: I have a little problem with the alleged finding that Stevenson's case studies are incredibly superficial. The Sharada case strikes me as one that wouldn't be very interesting anyway, given the age at which she started. I don't think Stevenson would take that as a serious case.

BRAUDE: He devotes a lot of pages to it.

ALMEDER: Yes, he publishes. But I think if you asked him, "What are the five or six cases that seem to be very interesting?" I don't think he'd list that one because she started off at age 32 and she did have a lot of exposure to a lot of languages. It wouldn't be a case that I would pick out to be a good one. But on the assumption that it is out there and one should take it seriously I still wouldn't because I think the question to be explained here would be her capacity to speak this language. Let's suppose you're right and there was a liaison between Dr. Z and Sharada. That isn't relevant to the whole discussion of whether or not she could have acquired the language. In other words, depending on what you would think would be important in the evidence, you might not want to press the question of whether they were having an affair because presumably, even if it was true, it would not explain her ability to speak in a language that she hadn't had any prior familiarity with. So, there is a sense in which even if it turned out that this psychological explanation or description of the features of people involved is thin, it is not really relevant to the important

question. I have this gap between the things that you say a good case study would provide and the explanation of her ability to speak the language. You see what I'm getting at on that? As for the other cases, I want to be a little careful. If you examine the cases of children who remember previous lives and alternative objections that people give to some of the better cases, Stevenson has a model and they are well detailed and very strong. I would feel awkward saying that he was superficial in his analysis of the data. I'm sure he could defend himself much better than me. There may not be depth psychological dimensions to these discussions, although I do remember in the Sharada case, he extensively examines the possibility whether, for example, these are placed memories and how they could be placed. Who could be doing it? How is the child being tended to? Things of that sort. When he puts the thing all together and deals with an alternative explanation, I think he does it very well. Now, in this case you might be right. I had the same feelings about this one. I was wondering about that. By the same token, I wouldn't include it as one of the better cases to forge the issue. I have one problem with most of the discussion on these things: If you find a bad case, you don't want to generalize too quickly from a bad case or one that wasn't done well. The trick is to focus on the very, very good ones and explain these. If people start knocking off the good ones, then you're in trouble.

BRAUDE: My focus on the Sharada case was not because I thought it was particularly strong but because it's unprecedented in that we finally have some of the details which would allow us to generate a workable counter-explanation in terms of motivated psi. I would say that, contrary to your assessment of Stevenson's descriptions of the other cases, he doesn't have all the answers to all the other counter-hypotheses because he does not ask certain kinds of crucial questions. He really does not ask, "Whose interests would be served by there appearing to be evidence of reincarnation in this family of this form?" He addresses that in only the most cursory, superficial way. I think you can't address it only at the psychological level at which he proceeds. You need to ask the kinds of grubby questions that Akolkar is asking in connection with the Sharada case. So, that's the importance of the case, not that it's evidentially strong, but because it's psychologically rich in its presentation in a way in which no other case presented is. As

far as the linguistic evidence is concerned, there is an issue I didn't really discuss much here, and that has to do with, again, the question you raised about how good that linguistic facility is. I don't think we're in a position to judge that finally until we are somewhat clearer about the significance of the data on savants and prodigies who apparently display abilities at least as impressive and as discontinuous from some of their other capacities as what we see in the best cases of responsive xenoglossy, quite apart from the other issue about how easy it is to acquire or manifest a second language or a third language after one has already learned a first language or a second language.

GROSSO: Steve, I just have one comment. I certainly agree with you in terms of probing the needs and psychologies of the people who produce the evidence for survival. My only problem is that the prober also has a psychology. It seems to me that different kinds of psychologists could probe the same complicated rich story and come up with completely different kinds of interpretations. I couldn't help noticing, for example, you used the expression "sexless spirituality". Now, the way I caught it, it was kind of a condemnation. That implies a point of view. I'm not questioning your point of view. But it is a point of view. It is an assumption about human nature that you have imported into your analysis and your commentary. My misgivings center on who is going to do the analysis.

BRAUDE: I actually did not mean that as a condemnation when I referred to a sexless spirituality. But it is nevertheless true that that was the style of spirituality to which Uttara retreated. It's a common enough phenomenon in the psychological literature that one way of handling difficulty in love and life is to retreat to a lifestyle where those issues simply don't come up.

GROSSO: You use the word "retreat". See, you've imported a theory, I mean, an interpretation. I'm not denying that that interpretation may have truth or validity, too. But we are faced with the fact of who is examining this evidence from a psychological point of view.

TAYLOR: What did she retreat to? This could be an ashram that practiced Bengali Tantrism. That is not a sexless spirituality; that's sexual activity as the basic view. I think we need to know more of the details as you were suggesting.

BRAUDE: I have no objection to more details.

LAWRENCE: I'm not sure how this process of sorting for reincarnation goes about. The other question pertains to the word "hypothesis". It doesn't seem to be used consistently and I'm not sure how it is being used. Although I support your basic premise, I would assume that, if you're going to investigate a claim of reincarnation, one of the things you might want to check out first, to dismiss it as an alternate explanation, is somebody with multiple personalities or highly dissociative personality. It seemed to me that that might be a process. This probably goes back again to my question of evidence. How do you build a model for a case for study? Or is there a model? The word "hypothesis" is used and yet it doesn't seem to be a systematic investigation where you say, "You don't do this, and you don't do that, you check out this first, and then you proceed in this way." I don't know if you're alluding to the need to do more psychological probes, for example, in these kinds of cases.

BRAUDE: Definitely. I don't know that you have to approach these with any sort of Procrustean model in mind. We know quite a lot, it seems to me, at this point about various forms of dissociation and various kinds of dissociative psychopathologies. So, it's easy enough to inquire, given sufficient detail, whether there's any reason to think that what is going on in any particular case is something like what we already know. One can then frame various hypotheses about the likelihood of such and such a kind of dissociative process taking place rather than something that would suggest evidence for postmortem agency. I think you don't need anything more than that to frame a dissociation + psi or motivated psi counter-hypothesis. Is that getting at what you're asking?

LAWRENCE: The hypothesis to me is usually the question, then the evidence either supports or rejects the question or the direction that you're taking it. In other words, the hypothesis usually doesn't explain the data. You use the data to support or reject a hypothesis. Obviously that's more true in an experimental model. There are other models, if you're looking at case studies, of how to analyze the data.

BRAUDE: The hypothesis would be explanatory. That's the idea. I mean, you could make a general hypothesis about the evidence. You might say and I might say (in fact, I think I have said) that the evidence

for survival might all be explicable in terms of motivated psi among the living. I'm not sure I believe that's true. But I think that's what needs to be investigated. Now, that's a general hypothesis. We would look at the more specific hypotheses for each particular case. We might say in the Sharada case the best explanatory hypothesis is that Uttara contrived Sharada as a dissociative defense, possibly drawing on certain psi abilities along the way, at crucial points to make it look as if she was the reincarnation of this woman who lived in the previous century in a city 400 km away.

TAYLOR: That's not a hypothesis.

BRAUDE: That's not? What is it?

TAYLOR: Pardon me for calling out of turn, but to me from a strict experimental sense a hypothesis is something that's testable. It sounds to me like a conjecture.

BRAUDE: It's testable in the way that every psychological hypothesis is testable.

TAYLOR: But you didn't then follow a hypothesis with the method by which that hypothesis would result in some empirical conclusions. Because you kept on with it, it sounded to me like a conceptual conjecture upon which we would want to formulate a specific testable hypothesis out of which facts could be garnered to prove or disprove it from a strict experimental standpoint.

BRAUDE: An odd claim coming from someone who wants to demean that particular standpoint.

TAYLOR: I have a degree in experimental psychology. Why not?

BRAUDE: But I was not generating an experimental hypothesis. It's testable in the sense in which conjecture about the mental state of any human being is testable.

TAYLOR: Well, thank you. Because I was just responding to what Madelaine was saying about the use of the word "hypothesis". And in a strict sense to me that really has very definite limits within experimental psychology.

BRAUDE: I would never use the word that way.

PALMER: I'm particularly interested in the dissociation + psi hypothesis as a general alternative across all of the reincarnation cases. But there is a problem in trying to generalize to all cases from any particular case, for the same reason that C.E.M. Hansel would like to,

but can't, demolish all the evidence for ESP because he successfully demolished, say, the Soal experiment. In that connection, it occurs to me that one vehicle for gaining some insight into the generalizability of the dissociation + psi hypothesis would be to look at how well it can handle certain laws or generalized relationships that Stevenson has found in his cases. One of the most obvious ones is that most of the people who have these memories are young kids. That raises the question: Is the same true about dissociation? It would be nice to have that kind of data from India, but at least, I think, we have it from the States. In fact, you even mentioned that this morning in some other context. Is it, in fact, true that dissociation is more common in kids, and particularly in kids about the same age as when these reincarnation memories seem to come?

BRAUDE: I'm not sure we know that dissociation occurs more frequently among children. But certain kinds of extreme dissociative disorders appear to begin in childhood. So, children may, as a dissociative defense, become multiples; whereas by the time you're a teen or an adult your personality is already a little more rigidly fixed. And so, any dissociative breaks won't cut quite so deep, and you might develop other kinds of dissociative pathologies.

PALMER: I'd like to point out that the dissociation + psi hypothesis is not necessarily contradictory to either the reincarnation or the possession hypothesis. One of the areas where I would like some bolstering in terms of the theory I was presenting yesterday is, "what defines successful percipients?" Since I'm assuming that they don't have actual psi themselves, dissociation might provide part of the answer. That's one of the things I'd like to explore with you some time.

BRAUDE: Sounds good to me.

OWENS: I wanted to mention that at the Division of Personalities Studies there has been extensive discussion along these lines, looking at the motivations of the family in the child cases. Many cases have been studied by Antonia Mills, who's an anthropologist. She studied quite a large number of cases in India. I think anthropologists are a little more sophisticated about their personal perspectives and cultural perspectives and the way they interact with the data that they collect. She's sensitive to those issues. She has proposed a very large-scale

study comprising a comparison of India and the United States by looking at things like hypnotizability and imaginary playmates. She's doing this work in collaboration with Erlendur Haraldsson, who's developed a whole battery of psychological tests to give to these children who report these experiences, comparing them with various control groups. The need to look at the motivations of the family and cultural construction in these cases is something that she's very interested in and has been a subject of much discussion.

BRAUDE: I'm encouraged to hear that.

ALMEDER: On the business of motivated psi and PK explaining the data, in a rough and ready way I think a good explanation should allow you to predict the data to be explained. It seems to me there's a gap here with this model you're developing and the data to be explained. For example, how would motivated psi or PK explain, assuming it were true, this woman's ability to speak in a language she hadn't learned?

BRAUDE: The only way in this particular case I would see psi entering into it, given the weakness of the linguistic evidence, is that whatever additional exposure Uttara might have needed to the Bengali language and Bengali customs to come up with information about (and it was meager information about a family that lived about 100 years before) might have been acquired unconsciously and through ESP. It wouldn't require a whole lot of psi in this particular case.

ALMEDER: See, now, you keep coming back with what I take to be a very controversial claim; namely, that ESP can account for a person's ability to speak a language they've never seen before.

BRAUDE: No, account for the ability to acquire what little information might be needed in conjunction with her already robust linguistic abilities to do what she was doing, given the exposure she had to Bengali language and customs right at home.

ALMEDER: Let's assume (and I'm not sure it's true) she's speaking a language that she hasn't been exposed to. How would this explanation in terms of motivated psi and PK explain that unless you already assume in some other contexts we have independent evidence that through motivated psi and PK people can pick up languages they haven't been exposed to? I don't see any evidence for that.

BRAUDE: It may be the only sort of evidence we have for this kind of ability in connection with linguistic capacities. One of the reasons I take the evidence for savantism and prodigies to be relevant is that there we see people manifesting various kinds of abilities, usually more remarkable than the linguistic abilities demonstrated even in the Gretchen case, that are in many ways, in the case of savants, discontinuous with other things we know about them. In the case of prodigies they're pretty formidable, whether or not they're clearly discontinuous with other things we know about those individuals. We don't know how to explain that. So, until we have a firmer grasp on why prodigies and savants can do the things they do, I think we need to import all of that into this particular body of evidence and look at it on a case by case basis. It's not just that you explain it in terms of psi.