

Dr. Chubb

Dr. Chubb was the most unforgettable person I ever met. I first heard of him in the summer of 1975, I believe it was, when I received a letter from him. He was at that time at Oxford University in England. He said that he had met a former student of mine, Dr. James Hall, a professor of philosophy at the University of Richmond in Virginia, who was in residence at Oxford that term. He said that Dr. Hall had suggested that I might be able to help him get a position in philosophy in America. He told me very little about himself, only that he was a native of India and held a Ph.D. in philosophy from Oxford University, having studied with the distinguished philosopher, Gilbert Ryle.

I assumed that Dr. Chubb was a young man who had recently received the Ph.D, and was looking for what perhaps would be his first teaching position in philosophy. At that time the market for young Ph.D.s in philosophy was very tight. We were having a very hard time placing our own graduate students. So I wrote Dr. Chubb a cordial letter expressing my appreciation for one in philosophy with his apparent background, but I painted a very dismal picture of the job market in philosophy in the United States and of my ability to help him. Furthermore, I told him that while I would like to help him, my first responsibility was to our own students. I intended the letter to discourage him from coming to America at that time and fully expected that it would.

About two or three weeks later I got a phone call from Dr. Chubb. He was at the local bus station here in Chapel Hill. I got quite a surprise when I went down to the bus station to meet him. The only man there who could be Dr. Chubb was a very dignified man whom I took to be well into his sixties. I introduced myself and began learning something about this remarkable man. I took him to the Carolina Inn to get him a room, for it was obvious that he would be here for awhile. The price of a room at the Carolina Inn was more than he wanted to pay. So I took him to the University Motel on the Raleigh road, but their prices were too high also. I then took him to the Tarheel Motor Lodge near East Gate where the Days Inn is now located. Their rooms were cheaper; so he checked in there. I then took him to lunch at the old Pines restaurant on the Raleigh Road.

Over a three-hour lunch I learned a lot about Dr. Chubb. He had gotten the Ph.D. in philosophy at Oxford in 1937 and had had a distinguished career as a professor of philosophy at the University of Bombay. At one time he was president of the Indian Association of Philosophy. He had had to retire from his professorship

at the University of Bombay under their rule of compulsory retirement at the age of fifty-five. After that, Dr. Chubb came to the United States and was a professor of philosophy at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland for a number of years, nine I believe. In the economic downturn in this country in the early 1970s, he had lost his position and had spent the past year as a resident scholar in Oxford University, where he had met my former student, Dr. James Hall.

At that luncheon, I learned not only about Dr. Chubb's distinguished academic career in philosophy; I heard something about his role in India's struggle for independence from the British and his involvement in Sri Aurobindo's ashram.

We had a wide-ranging discussion of Anglo-American philosophy, especially the philosophy of the key figures in British philosophy in the twentieth century. And we discussed Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Judeo-Christian thought. My encounter that afternoon with this remarkable man was a memorable occasion. I had never seen the likes of him, nor have I since. He seemed at home in the philosophy and religious thought of all the major cultures of the East and the West.

It became clear that Dr. Chubb had two reasons for seeking a teaching position in an American University. One was his passion for sharing his learning and insights with others and his hunger for dialogue with people who valued the life of the mind and spirit. His second reason was a very practical one. His years on the faculty at Case Western University had fallen short only three quarters of the time required for him to draw minimum Social Security benefits. Of course the benefits would be very modest, but Dr. Chubb didn't require much of the material world. He had money and property in India and could have lived there comfortably, but he could not continue to teach. And he could not take more than fifty dollars with him on leaving India. Minimally, he wanted to earn enough in this country to collect at least the minimum Social Security. That would take only earnings of \$50 in each of three quarters.

I had no hope of Dr. Chubb's getting a professorial position, given the dismal financial situation in American Universities at that time and the over supply of qualified people competing for the few openings there were. But I thought that certainly we could help Dr. Chubb meet his minimum requirements to stay here, I knew that he was a rare resource and that we should try to keep him in the University community. It would be a great privilege to have him available for faculty and students to interact with on an informal basis.

I took him to the Philosophy Department and asked for two things: First, that we have Dr. Chubb give a lecture to the Philosophy Colloquium for \$200 in the fall term and pay the Social Security tax on it to give him credit for one quarter. and, second, give him the use of a small office in Caldwell Hall so that he would be around for ad hoc discussions with the faculty and students. With this arranged, I took him to the Religion Department and got them to pay him \$200 for a lecture in the Spring term for another quarter's credit with Social Security. I then took him to the Extension Division and arranged for him to offer in a third term a special interest course in Eastern religious thought, which would be contingent on a certain minimum enrollment. In the end, he was able to teach special interest courses for several years. After his course offerings failed to enroll sufficient numbers to satisfy the Extension requirement, some of his devoted students arranged for him to give private courses. They were delighted to pay him a small fee; indeed, they would have been glad to pay him much more than he asked. He wanted only enough to meet his modest needs.

After we had completed arrangements that would make it possible for him to qualify for Social Security benefits after three more quarters, his business here was finished for then. He wanted to know the departure schedule for the next bus. I asked, "Where to?" He replied that it didn't matter. He wanted to take the next bus out of town. He had a pass for riding Trailway buses and he was prepared to go wherever the next bus was going. He returned in the fall and made Chapel Hill his principal home for the next twenty-five years.

Yes, Dr. Chubb was the most unforgettable character I ever met. He was not of this world. He was the most spirit-filled person I have ever known. He showed many people the life of the divine, for in him the divine shown brightly.

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