

WHEN WISE MEN SPEAK

Wise Men Listen

A Vedic Anthology by Swami B.G. Narasingha



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Introduction

Nowadays, many people hold the opinion that modern science and academics can explain the origins of life, the universe and everything. From our very childhood, we are assured that physics, paleontology, archeology and social sciences can adequately explain the intricate details of where we originally came from, the evolution of mankind, the complexities of the human psyche, the mysteries of our planet, the historical events that have shaped us and the future of the human race.

But despite the prodigious stockpile of academic knowledge we have collected, the fundamental problems of life continue nevertheless. It may even be said that science and the academic world have contributed substantially to many of the disturbances that mankind presently faces.

Undeniably, over the last one hundred years, modern science has progressed in leaps and bounds. Yet despite the progressive steps it has made, many questions remain outside the purview of any experimental information that modern science may acquire. All departments of science are inextricably bound to the study of the finite – analysing terrestrial phenomena that are observable and repeatable. While science attempts to investigate the elements that make up our universe, it neglects to answer why the universe initially came into being. What is the fundamental meaning behind our human existence? What happens to us after death? What is consciousness? In its preoccupation with the finite, modern science fails to answer those questions relating to the Infinite.

Athato brahma-jijnasa – the first aphorism of the *Vedanta* invites us to inquire into the very nature of the Infinite, and inevitably into the essential nature of our true self. The Vedic literatures reveal the essential features of that which is beyond the jurisdiction of the limited academic knowledge of this finite world. Thus, the timeless knowledge of the Vedic literatures bridges the chasm of enquiry left by modern science.

In the articles presented in this book, His Divine Grace Swami Bhakti Gaurava Narasingha Maharaja writes on a variety of topics from the Vedic viewpoint – in particular from the theological perspective of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, the philosophical school founded by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the 15th Century. Among the subjects covered in these articles are the existence of God, the *Vedas*, ancient history, physics and archeology.

Some of the points made by the author prompt the sincere reader to question and challenge conventional knowledge. We are encouraged to listen to the ancient Vedic wisdom, examine prevailing theories and ‘think out of the box.’

We hope that these articles will enlighten our readers and inspire them in their quest for the truth.

The Publishers

East Meets West

Oriental Seeds in Occidental Soil

Although worlds apart in terms of geography and culture, no two nations have been so intimately connected as the United States and India. It was Christopher Columbus' fateful error, in his search for a new route to India, which led him to the discovery of America. He had heard of India from the writings of Marco Polo, whose descriptions of India's riches had fired the ambitions of many a traveler. "The part of India known as Malabar," Polo had written, "was the richest and noblest country in the world." And Marco Polo, it may be remembered, had by then seen many lands, not least China.

The hope of discovering a passage to India was not given up even after the time of Columbus and settlement in the New World. Rather, the hope intensified as Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton dreamt of discovering a land route to India – as opposed to Columbus' sea route – and with the coming of the railroads many thought that this dream would soon be realised. Senator Benton's statue in St. Louis bears an inscription which reveals his hopefulness: "There is the East; there lies the road to India."

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Up until the 18th Century, interest in India was largely for trade and other commercial purposes. India was a land with multifarious riches: silks, spices, diamonds, gold. And these brought good prices in Western ports. In Boston, for instance, merchants dealing with Indian trade quickly grew in wealth and prestige. It was considered a distinction to have one's office on 'India Wharf,' where American captains sought for their families and business acquaintances such treasures as carnelian necklaces, pieces of valuable cobweb Dacca muslin and even rare books in Sanskrit. When Captain Heard of the Salem brig *Caravan* set out for Calcutta in 1812, he took with him a request from his friend, Henry Pickering, for a 'Sanskrit Bible.'

Sanskrit literature was soon in great demand. And it was not long before Indian thought began to manifest itself in American writing. Defending Indian lifestyle against various attackers, American writers – especially those with a deep appreciation for Indian philosophy – began dedicating much of their work to establishing the undeniable value of ancient Indian thought. Pamphlets appeared criticizing the British attitude toward India, most notably the exploitative tactics that East India Company exerted on Indian villagers. Writing under the name 'Rusticus,' John Dickinson, author of *Letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer* said:

Their (Company officials) conduct in Asia for some years past, has given ample proofs, how little they regard the laws of nations, the rights, liberties or lives of men. They have levied war, excited rebellions, dethroned Princes and sacrificed millions for the sake of gain. The revenue of

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mightly kingdoms have entered their coffers. And these not being sufficient to glut their avarice, they have, by the most unparalleled barbarities, extortions and monopolies, stripped the miserable inhabitants of their property and reduced whole Provinces to indignance and ruin. Fifteen hundred thousand, it is said, perished by famine in one year, not because the earth denied its fruits, but this “Company” and its servants engrossed all the necessities of life and set them at so high a rate, that the poor could not purchase them.

For nearly three decades, from 1836 to 1866 or the end of the Civil War in America, the United States witnessed the flowering of an intellectual movement the like of which had not been seen before. The movement flourished in Concord, Massachusetts and was known—though it had no formal organization— as the *Transcendental Club* or *Circle*. Its members were Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the Unitarian Minister James Freeman Clark, the teacher and philosopher Amos Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and some clergymen. Their collective achievement in quality of style and in depth of philosophical insight has yet to be surpassed in American literature. And their major influence, without exception, were the Vedic literatures of India.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) wrote:

I owed a magnificent day to the *Bhagavad-gita*. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spake to us, nothing

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small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions that exercise us.

Emerson is the first great American literary figure who read deeply and fully the available philosophic literature from India. It certainly shows in his own writings. In a letter to Max Mueller, Emerson wrote:

All my interest is in Marsh's Manu, then Wilkins' *Bhagavat Geeta*, Burnouf's *Bhagavat Purana* and Wilson's *Vishnu Purana*, yes, and few other translations. I remember I owed my first taste for this fruit to Cousin's sketch, in his first lecture, of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna and I still prize the first chapters of the *Bhagavat* as wonderful.

By 1856 Emerson had read the *Kathopanishad* and his ideas were increasingly reflecting Indian influence. His poems, such as *Hamatreya* (a poem composed in 1845) showed he had digested his Indian philosophic readings well. *Hamatreya* apparently was inspired by a passage from the *Vishnu Purana* (Book IV). He was concerned with the subject of illusion – *maya*. He wrote about it. In his essay *Illusions* he said:

I find men victims of illusions in all parts of life. Children, youths, adults and old men, all are led by one bauble or another. Yogavindra, the goddess of illusion, is stronger than the Titans, strong than Apollo.

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In his poem *Maya* he wrote:

Illusion works impenetrable,
Weaving webs innumerable,
Her gay pictures never fail,
Crowds each other, veil on veil,
Charmer who will be believed,
By man who thirsts to be deceived.

But the poem by which Emerson is best remembered and one which is often quoted for the influence Vedic thought had on him is *Brahma*.

If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks that he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Fear or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.
They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt;
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek over good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

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Some of his stanzas were almost directly quoted from these lines in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

He who thinks that the living entity is the slayer or that the entity is slain does not understand. One who is in knowledge knows that the self slays not nor is slain. (*Gita*. 2.19)

O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of heat and cold, happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed. (*Gita*. 2.14)

Brahma was composed in 1856 and represents the maturity of Emerson's comprehension of some of the fundamental concepts of Vedic thought. According to Professor Frederic Ives Carpenter, those sixteen lines probable express those concepts "more clearly than any other writing in the English language—perhaps better than any writing in Hindu literature itself." Emerson also wrote knowledgeably about reincarnation, the theory of *karma* and of fate, of the latter not in the classic Greek sense, but in its Indian interpretation: "Fate is nothing but deeds committed in a prior existence."

The Great Transcendentalist: Henry David Thoreau

Emerson and Thoreau are invariably paired as the two leading Transcendentalists. Thoreau was the younger of the two.

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He was also the more exuberant and impetuous and the more frankly admiring of Vedic thought. There is no record that he read any Indian literature while at Harvard but in Emerson's library he found and read with zest Sir William Jones' translation of *The Laws of Manu* and was fascinated. In his *Journal*, he wrote:

That title (*Manu*)... comes to me with such a volume of sound as if it had swept unobstructed over the plains of Hindustan... They are the laws of you and me, a fragrance wafted from those old times, and no more to be refuted than the wind. When my imagination travels eastward and backward to those remote years of the gods, I seem to draw near to the habitation of the morning, and the dawn at length has a place. I remember the book as an hour before sunrise.

Later, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) he was again writing about the same work:

Most books belong to the house and street only, and in the fields their leaves feel very thin...But this, as it proceeds from, so it addresses, what is deepest and most abiding in man. It belongs to the noontide of the day, the mid-summer of the year, and after the snows have melted...(it) will have a place of significance as long as there is a sky to test them (the sentences of *Manu*) by.

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gita*.

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Thoreau read the *Dharma Sastra* in 1841, when he was twenty-four, and the *Bhagavad-gita* when he was twenty-eight years of age. Of the latter he wrote:

The New Testament is remarkable for its pure morality, the best of the Vedic Scripture, for its pure intellectuality. The reader is nowhere raised into and sustained in a bigger, purer, or rarer region of thought than in the *Bhagavad-gita*. The *Gita's* 'sanity and sublimity' have impressed the minds even of soldiers and merchants.

He had the *Gita* with him during his stay by Walden Pond.

"What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum," he remarked in 1850. "The religion and philosophy of the Hebrews are those of a wilder and ruder tribe, wanting the civility and intellectual refinements and subtlety of Vedic culture."

He writes in Chapter Sixteen of *Walden*:

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gita*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial.

Thoreau died very young but during his mature years he read a great deal of Indian literature, perhaps more than Emerson.

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In 1855 he received from an English friend an entire treasure—chest of forty-four volumes dealing with Vedic literature. For them he fashioned a new case from driftwood found in a New England river “thus giving Oriental wisdom an Occidental shrine.”

The extent of Thoreau's reading of Indian literature is astounding. He read Jones' translation of *Shakuntalam*; Wilson's translation of the *Sankhya Karika* and of *Vishnu Purana*; Wilkins' translation of *Hari-vamsa* (which he later put into English) and Garcin de Tassy's *Histoire de la Literature Hindoui et Hindoostan*. In his *Journal*, he wrote:

One may discover the root of an Indian religion in his own private history, when, in the silent intervals of the day and night, he does sometimes inflict on himself like austerities with stern satisfaction.

No wonder Gandhi loved and revered him and accepted Thoreau as his teacher. In another time and place, he would have been considered the ideal Yogi—ascetic, seeker after Truth.

An American scholar, John T. Reid, commenting on *Walden* has said that if one read it, without screening its lines for possible foreign influences, the net impression will be that of a frugal, practical Yankee, greatly interested in the details of New England's flora and fauna, gloriously happy in the tranquil peace of unsullied Nature, an eccentric at odds with most of his neighbor's foibles. “He was not in any accurate sense an Yogi,” adds Reid,” but he did pay

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devoted heed to those glimpses of light from the Orient which he saw.”

Teacher, Quaker, Rover, Mystic

Apart from Emerson and Thoreau, four other distinguished Americans of the period showed an interest in, or were influenced by, Indian philosophic thought. They are Alcott the Teacher, Whittier the Quaker, Melville the Rover and Whitman the Mystic.

Amos Bronson Alcott (1799–1888) was a visionary, a stimulating and original teacher whom Carlyle called “the good Alcott,” a kind of venerable Don Quixote whom nobody could even laugh at without loving. He was born poor and as a young man earned his livelihood as a peddler. But he taught himself, read widely in the well-stocked libraries of Philadelphia, and became acquainted with the Quakers and their doctrine of the ‘Inner Light.’ Born in Connecticut, he returned to his native New England and for a time carried out his well-known educational experiment at the Temple School. That did not succeed and for a time he did some writing, but with no demonstrable financial gains. So he went back to manual labor and in the meantime he held public “conversations” in the best Socratic style. He thus transmitted the sum of his own reading to young minds.

Alcott was an enthusiastic vegetarian (as were Emerson and Thoreau) and tried to introduce his ideas in his ill-fated utopian experiment of Fruitlands (1841). He was, in a

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sense, the father of the Organic Food concept, but, as with his progressive educational experiments, was too far ahead of his time.

Unlike Alcott, **John Greenleaf Whittier** (1807–1892) was a talented poet who was influenced by Emerson and from whom he borrowed a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita*. To Emerson he wrote:

I will e'en keep it until I restore it to thee personally in exchange for George Fox (founder of the Society of Friends, the Quakers). It is a wonderful book—and has greatly excited my curiosity to know more of the religious literature of the East.

The results of Whittier's reading are evident in a good number of his poems like *The Oval Heart*, *The Cypress Tree of Ceylon*, *The Dead Feast of the Kol-Folk*, and *The Khan's Devil*. A particularly striking example of his use of Indian material is his well-known poem *The Brewing of Soma*, which describes the preparation and use of the Vedic sacrificial drink.

Walt Whitman

The relationship of Walt Whitman (1819–1892) to Vedic thought is considerably complex. Emerson once described Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as a blending of *Gita* and the New York Herald. In his reminiscing essay, *A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads* (1889) Whitman claims to have read “the ancient Hindu poems” and there is enough evidence to show

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that in 1875 he had received a copy of the *Gita* as a Christmas present from an English friend, Thomas Dixon.

Although the mystic trend in much of Whitman's work is unmistakable, but he was never the less a product of America in its robust love for life and zest for living.

One report has it that it was Thoreau who led Walt Whitman to dip into what was then collectively called 'Oriental' literature. We have to take the word of his biographer for that. Whitman, from all the evidence, was vastly impressed by his readings. It is only in recent years that critics have come to recognise the deepening of Whitman's religious feeling and his far saner intuitions of human nature in such superb poems of the late 1850's and the 1860's as *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* and *Passage to India*—a term, incidentally, that E.M. Forster was to pick up in later years.

Of *Passage to India* it has been especially said that it "contains his most eloquent idealism." His main theme was the question asked by the feverish children of the modern age:

"Whither, O mocking life?" The coming together of the seas in the Suez Canal, the crossing of the great American continent by steel do not satisfy, they are but shadows of a greater dream. There must be a passage to more than India. The soul, "that actual me," must voyage

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beyond its material successes in order to amplify its love, its ideals, its “purity, perfection, strength.” So “sail forth—steer for the deep waters only.”

Passage O soul to India
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables...
The far—darting beams of the spirit, the unloos’d dreams,
The deep—diving bibles and legends
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;
O you temples fairer than lilies pour’d over by the rising sun!
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the
known, mounting to heaven!
You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as rose,
burnished with gold!
Towers of fables immortal fashion’d from mortal dreams!
You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!
You too with joy I sing!

Whitman’s constantly phrased and re-phrased conception of ‘the real me – ’I pass death with the dying’ brings to mind the reincarnation doctrine, as it is specifically mentioned in the *Gita*.

The Early American Indologists

The American Oriental Society, founded in 1842 though the study of Sanskrit itself, did not start in American universities until some years later. The first American Sanskrit scholar of any repute was Edward Elbridge Salisbury (1814–1901) who taught at Yale (Elihu Yale was himself ultimately connected

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with India and had profound respect for Vedic philosophy). Another early Sanskritist, Fitzedward Hall (1825–1901) was in the Harvard class of 1846 but left college to search for a runaway brother in—of all places—India, where he continued his studies of Indian languages and even became tutor and professor of Sanskrit at Banaras. He was the first American scholar to edit a Sanskrit text – the *Vishnu Purana*.

One of Salisbury's students at Yale, William Dwight Whitney (1827–1901) went on to become a distinguished Sanskritist in his own right having studied in Berlin under such distinguished German scholars as Bopp and Weber. Whitney became a full professor of Sanskrit language and literature at Yale in 1854, wrote his classic *Sanskrit Grammar* (1879) and was the doyen of Indologists of his period. Whitney was succeeded in the Chair of Sanskrit Studies of Yale by Edward Washburn Hopkins (1857–1932). Hopkins was an excellent scholar but made his name principally as an exponent of India's religions. His book *The Religions of India* (1895) was for many years one of the principal works on the subject available in America and his *Origins and Evolution of Religion* published in 1923, sold well.

With Yale leading the way, Harvard caught up and beginning with James Bradstreet Greenough (1833–1900), had a succession of great Sanskrit teachers, the most distinguished among them was Charles Rockwell Lanman who taught for over forty years, publishing such works as *Sanskrit Reader* and *Beginnings of Hindu Pantheism*. But his greatest contribution was planning and editing of the *Harvard Oriental Series*. In his

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time he was responsible for influencing such students of his who were later to achieve literary renown as T. S. Eliot, Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt. The tradition of American Indologists has been nobly kept up by those who followed: to mention only a few names, A.V. William Jackson, Franklin Edgerton, W. Norman Brown, and Joseph Campbell.

T.S. Eliot and the Three Cardinal Virtues

T.S. Eliot, who was born in St. Louis, Missouri, studied at Harvard, the Sorbonne and Oxford and received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948, drew his intellectual sustenance from Dante, Shakespeare, the Bible, St. John of the Cross and other Christian mystics, the Greek dramatists, Baudelaire, and the *Bhagavad-gita*. Over and over again, whether in *The Wasteland*, *Four Quarters*, *Ash Wednesday* or *Murder in the Cathedral*, the influence of Indian philosophy and mysticism on him is clearly noticeable.

Eliot was a twenty-three year old student at Harvard when he first came across eastern philosophy and religion. What sparked his interest in Vedic thought is not recorded but soon he was occupied with Sanskrit, Pali and the metaphysics of Patanjali. He had also read the *Gita* and the *Upanishads* as is clear from the concluding lines of *The Waste Land*. *The Waste Land* ends with the reiteration of the *Three Cardinal Virtues* from the second *Brahmana* passage in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: *damyata* (restraint), *datta* (charity) and *dayadhvam* (compassion) and the state of mind that follows obedience to the commands is indicated by blessing *Shantih shantih*

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shantih, that Eliot himself roughly translated as “the peace that passeth understanding.” But it is the *Gita* that evidently made a more permanent imprint on Eliot’s mind. It will be found relevant not only to *The Waste Land*, but to *The Four Quarters*, *The Dry Salvages*, and *The Family Reunion*. The tolerance preached by the *Gita* is echoed in Eliot’s use of imagery drawn from several religions. As Prof. Philip R. Headings has remarked in his study of the poet, “No serious student of Eliot’s poetry can afford to ignore his early and continued interest in the *Bhagavad Gita*.” In a sense Eliot follows in the giant footsteps of Emerson and Thoreau and the early Transcendentalists, but, it would seem, with a greater sense of urgency and relevance. There is a sharper, keener perception of what endures and should endure, and incessant demand that all traditions of literature, music, painting, architecture and philosophy be put to their proper psychic or religious use. In that sense, Eliot’s message is the message of the *Gita*, of the essential utility of all activity: a message for all time, though it is harder to understand because it must be united from the materials, tone and perspective of his poems.

Conclusion

In modern times (since the death of T. S. Eliot in 1965) the influence of India’s spiritual thought in America has taken leaps and bounds. Turbulent peace-seeking days of the sixties and seventies opened the doors for alternative thinking, and Spiritual India was welcomed with open arms. Words like *dharma* and *karma* have come to be listed in our English

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dictionaries, and meditation (of some variety) is practiced, or at least attempted, by millions of Americans.

The list of prominent thinkers over the last twenty years who have been profoundly affected by the spiritual precepts of India is too long to mention. In music, in art and in literature, as well as the political arena, the serenity of transcendental thought quietly expounded in humility from the shores of India has had a greater (although subtle) influence on the American public than perhaps any other since foreign culture.

Although a slight shift away from spiritual ideals was experienced in the early to mid-eighties, it appears to have been only a momentary hesitation. The now materially-exhausted yuppies are again searching for deeper values, and the New Age spiritualists, most of whom accept reincarnation, karma, meditation, chanting and vegetarianism are filling the spiritual gap. Of course there are unscrupulous persons who seek to flourish materially in the spiritual marketplace, and the New Age community is overrun with imitation. But the precious commodity of the spiritual gems of the *Vedas*, the *Gita* and India's other literary jewels continue to shine light on the proper utilization of the modern world of material affluence. With the spiritual eyes of the East and the material legs of the Western world, the lame man and the blind man may once and for all see and walk on the path of freedom from all anxieties.



The Heliodorus Column

Most Vaishnavas refer to Krishna as having appeared 5,000 years ago and generally credit Vedic civilisation and Vaishnavism with great antiquity. But what hard, empirical proof do we have for this assertion? Certainly some archeological or other evidence must exist to confirm or deny these claims. Herein, we shall survey the most prominent archeological discoveries that clearly demonstrate the antiquity of Krishna worship and Vaishnavism.

First of all, detailed historical evidence of Vedic civilisation is not that easy to come by, since the Vedic culture itself seems to have not valued the keeping of histories. In his book *Traditional India*, O. L. Chavarria-Aguilar writes of Indians: “A more unhistorical people would be difficult to find.” Vedic civilisation believed in recording the eternal and infinite. The ephemeral details of daily life (so much the concern of contemporary people) need not be recorded, since they had so little bearing on the larger, more significant goals of human life. Leisure time was to be used for self-realization, cultural pursuits, and worship of God—not rehashing current events or the past. Therefore, practically no histories, according to the

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Western concept of history, exist today about ancient India, because none were written.

Into this vacuum of historical data on India's past stepped the European scholars during the last several hundred years, and it is interesting to note how they first dealt with what they found. Religious scholars were especially shocked to observe the remarkable similarities between the lives and philosophies of Krishna and Jesus Christ. As a defensive reflex they automatically assumed that Indians must have come across Christianity in the early centuries after Christ's ministry and had assimilated much of it into their own religious tradition. This slant on Vaishnavism was called 'The Borrowing Theory' and gained many adherents in the West. Concerning this viewpoint, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri in his book *Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaishnava Sect* writes, "The appearance in India of a religion of Bhakti (devotion) was, in the opinion of several eminent Western scholars, an event of purely Christian origin. Christianity, according to these scholars, exercised an influence of greater or less account on the worship and story of Krishna."

In 1762 in Rome, P. Georgi was the first Western scholar to propound this theory. In his *Alphabetum Tibetanum* he wrote that 'Krishnu' is only a "corruption of the name of the Saviour; the deeds correspond wonderfully with the name, though they have been impiously and cunningly polluted by most wicked imposters." The extreme fanaticism of Georgi's position was soon repudiated by other Western scholars. Even pro-Christian researchers admitted that the name Krishna existed

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before the birth of Jesus, but they still maintained that the life of Krishna and the philosophy of Vaishnavism had undergone major transformations because of Christian influence.

In his monograph *Über die Krishnajanmāsthāmi*, Albrecht Weber pointed out the many and striking similarities between the birth stories of Krishna and Jesus. The following quote from his work notes many of these similarities:

Take, for example the statement of the *Vishnu Purana* that Nanda, the foster-father of Krishna, at the time of the latter's birth, went with his pregnant wife Yasoda to Mathura to pay taxes (cf. Luke II, 4, 5) or the pictorial representation of the birth of Krishna in the cowstall or shepherd's hut, that corresponds to the manger, and of the shepherds, shepherdesses, the ox and the ass that stand round the woman as she sleeps peacefully on her couch without fear of danger. Then the stories of the persecutions of Kamsa, of the massacre of the innocents, of the passage across the river (Christophorus), of the wonderful deeds of the child, of the healing-virtue of the water in which he was washed, etc., etc. Whether the accounts given in the *Jaimini Bharata* of the raising to life by Krishna of the dead son of Duhsala, of the cure of Kubja, of her pouring a vessel of ointment over him, of the power of his look to take away sin, and other subjects of the kind came to India in the same connection with the birth-day festival may remain an open question.

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Weber even contended that the whole Vedic system of *avatars*, or incarnations of God, was ‘borrowed’ from the ‘Incarnation of Jesus Christ.’

Dr. F. Lorinser translated the *Bhagavad-gita* and compared it scrupulously to the New Testament. He concluded, writes Raychaudhari, “...that the author of the Hindu poem knew and used the Gospels and Christian Fathers.” According to Lorinser, continues Raychaudhari, the similarities were “... not single and obscure, but numerous and clear ...” There was no doubt in Lorinser’s mind that the *Bhagavad-gita* had been largely ‘borrowed’ from the New Testament.

Other Western scholars disputed the Borrowing Theory. Sir William Jones’ studies found Krishna to be one of the more ancient gods of India, who Vaishnavas asserted was “distinct from all the Avatars, who had only (a)...portion of his divinity ...” In his fascinating and provocative work, *On the Gods Of Greece, Italy, And India*, Sir William Jones writes that:

In the principal Sanskrit dictionary, compiled about two thousand years ago, Krishna, Vasudeva, Govinda, and other names of the Shepherd God, are intermixed with epithets of Narayana, or the Divine Spirit.

Following in the direction of Sir Jones’ research, Edward Moore even went so far as to say that the popular Greek myths had some basis in real life and could be traced ultimately to India. However, solid proof for either side escaped their grasp, and the scholars theorized and debated the issue back and forth.

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Literary evidence did exist in India to prove that Vaishnavism predated Christianity, but this evidence was brushed under the rug and given little credence until a Western literary source decided the issue once and for all.

The most important and earliest non-Indian literary record of ancient India is found in the book, *Indica*, written by Megasthenes. Sometime in the 3rd Century BC, Megasthenes journeyed to India. The King of Taxila had appointed him ambassador to the royal court at Pataliputra of the great Vaishnava monarch, Chandragupta. Evidently while there, Megasthenes wrote extensively on what he heard and saw. Unfortunately, none of Megasthenes' original book survived the ravages of time. However, through Megasthenes' early Greek and Roman commentators, like Arrian, Diodorus, and Strabo, fragments of his original work are available to us today, as well as Megasthenes' general message. Dr. Hein reports that Megasthenes "described Mathura as a place of great regional importance and suggested that it was then, as now, a centre of Krishna worship."

Christian Lassen was the first Western scholar to bring Megasthenes into the debate on the "borrowing theory." He noted that Megasthenes wrote of Krishna under the pseudonym of Heracles and that "Heracles", or Krishna, was worshipped as God in the area through which the Yamuna River flows.

A respected Indologist, Richard Garbe, agreed with Lassen's analysis and called the testimony of Megasthenes

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indisputable. Soon, scholars like Alan Dahlquist, who had formerly supported the ‘Borrowing theory,’ changed their minds and admitted, in Dahlquist’s words, that Garbe had “exploded Weber’s theory once and for all.” The life of Krishna and the religion of Vaishnavism had not been influenced by Christianity, but had appeared autonomously on Indian soil and was already well-established by at least the 3rd Century BCE.

With Megasthenes’ proof in hand, the credibility of Indian literary sources became enhanced. The great grammarian and author of the *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali, who lived in the 2nd Century BCE, wrote that Krishna had slain the tyrant Kamsa in the far distant past. Raychaudhari tells us the exact words were *chirahate kamse* which means that Kamsa’s death occurred at a very remote time.” In the 5th Century BCE, the greatest Sanskrit grammarian, Panini, mentions that Vaishnavism “was even in the 5th Century BCE a religion of *bhakti*,” writes Raychaudhari. The *Artha-shastra* of Kautila, from the 4th Century BCE, also refers several times to Krishna, while the *Baudhayana Dharma Sutra* of the same century gives twelve different names for Krishna, including popular ones like Keshava, Govinda, and Damodara.

Since Krishna is mentioned in the pre-Buddhistic *Chandogya Upanishad* we must conclude that Krishna lived before Gautama Buddha (563?–?483 BCE). The scriptures of the Jains push Krishna’s life back farther still. Raychaudhari writes, “Jaina tradition makes Krishna a contemporary of Arishtanemi... who is the immediate predecessor of

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Parshvanatha.... As Parshvanatha flourished about 817 BCE, Krishna must have lived long before the closing years of the 9th Century BCE.” Of course, the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and *Mahabharata* themselves place Krishna’s life at about 3000 BCE. Still, whatever the exact dates of Krishna’s earthly appearance and disappearance, because of the abundance of evidence of Krishna’s antiquity, *The Cambridge History of India* definitely states that Krishna worship predates Christianity by many centuries.

Let us now turn our attention to the earliest archeological discoveries regarding Krishna’s antiquity. By far the most important discovery was made by the indefatigable General Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1877. During an archeological survey of Beshnagar in central India, he noted an ornamental column. The shape of the column caused Cunningham to attribute it erroneously to the period of the Gupta Dynasty (CE 300–550). Thirty-two years later, however, a Mr. Lake felt he saw some lettering on the lower part of the column in an area where pilgrims customarily smeared it with a lead, vermilion paint. When the thick, red paint was removed, Lake’s hunch was proven correct.

Dr. J. H. Marshall, who accompanied Mr. Lake on this investigation, was thrilled at the find’s significance. In the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1909, he described his conclusions. Cunningham had dated the column far too late and could little have dreamt of the value of the record which he just missed discovering.... A glance at the few letters exposed was all that was needed to show that

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the Column was many centuries earlier than the Gupta era. This was, indeed, a surprise to me, but a far greater one was in store when the opening lines of the inscription came to be read.

The following transliteration and translation of this ancient Brahmi inscription was published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London, JRAS, Pub., 1909, pp. 1053–54):

1. *devadevasa va (sude)vasa garuda–dhvajo ayam*
2. *karito i(a) heliodorena bhaga–*
3. *vatena diyasa putrena takhashilakena*
4. *yonadatena agatena maharajasa*
5. *amtalikitasa upa(m)ta samkasam–rano*
6. *kashiput(r)asa (bh)agabhadrasa tratarasa*
7. *vasena (chatu)dasena rajena vadhmanasa*

This Garuda–column of Vasudeva (Vishnu), the god of gods, was erected here by Heliodorus, a worshipper of Vishnu, the son of Dion, and an inhabitant of Taxila, who came as Greek ambassador from the Great King Antialkidas to King Kashiputra Bhagabhadra, the Savior, then reigning prosperously in the fourteenth year of his kingship.

The column had been erected in 113 BCE by Heliodorus, a Greek ambassador to India. He, like Megasthenes, hailed from Taxila in the Bactrian region of northwest India, which had been conquered by Alexander the Great in 325 BCE. By Heliodorus' time Taxila covered much of present–

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day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Punjab. Taxila's king, Antialkidas, had sent Heliodorus to the court of King Bhagabhadra, but while Megasthenes had only written about Krishna and Vaishnavism, Heliodorus had found them so attractive that he had adopted the practice of Vaishnavism for his own spiritual advancement!

Heliodorus' Column recognized Vasudeva, or Krishna, as the 'God of gods.'

- 1) *trini amutapadani(su) anuthitani*
- 2) *nayamti svaga damo chago apramado*

Three immortal precepts (footsteps)... when practiced lead to heaven – self-restraint, charity, consciousness.

From this inscription it is clear Heliodorus was a Vaishnava, a devotee of Vishnu.

Raychaudhuri maintains that Heliodorus most probably was already acquainted with Vaishnavism in Taxila, even before he went to India proper, since, "It was at that city that Janamejaya heard from Vaishampayana the famous story of the Kurus and the Pandus (the *Mahabharata*).” Furthermore, Raychaudhuri then suggests, "Heliodorus of Taxila actually heard and utilized the teaching of the great Epic, “ since we know from Panini that the Epic was “well known to the people of Gandhara (Taxila)” long before the time of the Greek ambassador.

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In any case, by 113 BCE Heliodorus publicly acknowledged in the most conspicuous way that he held Vasudeva, or Krishna to be the ‘Gods of all gods.’” He also had written on his column’s inscription that, “Three immortal precepts when practiced lead to heaven—self-restraint, charity, and conscientiousness.” These three virtues appear in the exact same order in the *Mahabharata*, which makes Professor Kunja Govinda Swami of Calcutta University conclude that Heliodorus “was well acquainted with the texts dealing with the Bhagavata (Vaishnava) religion.” Raychaudhuri concurs that “there was some close connection between the teaching of the *Mahabharata* and that of the Besnagar Inscription,” proving that Heliodorus was a knowledgeable devotee of Vaishnavism.

The Heliodorus Column also struck down the myth that the Vedic religion never condoned the conversion of non-Indians to its fold. While this exclusionary tendency has been manifest here and there in India (although much less so in Vaishnavism), the Islamic historian, Abu Raihan Alberuni, maintains that it was not practiced until sometime after the Muslim incursions into India, which started around AD 674. Alberuni went to India to study in AD 1017 and published his findings in his book *Indica* (not to be confused with Megasthenes’ work of the same title). He concluded that the violent conflicts and forced conversions of Indians into Muslims made Indians adopt an exclusionary policy, more out of self-defense than religious principle. He discovered that, for many centuries prior to the Muslim invasions, there

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was no bar to conversions, and the Heliodorus Column certainly attests to this fact.

Further Antiquities

Presently, Heliodorus is the earliest Westerner on record who actually converted to Vaishnavism. Moreover, many reputable scholars, like Dr. A. L Basham and Dr. Thomas Hopkins, declare that Heliodorus was not the only Greek to convert. Dr. Hopkins, Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Franklin and Marshall college, says:

Heliodorus was presumably not the only foreigner who was converted to Vaishnava devotional practices (although he might have been the only one to erect a column, at least one that is still extant). Certainly there must have been many other.

The Vedic religion saw itself as universal and welcomed all peoples into its embrace. As Raychaudhari writes:

The Beshnagar record testifies to the proselytizing zeal of the Bhagavatas in the pre-Christian centuries, and shows that their religion was excellent enough to capture the hearts of cultured Greeks, and catholic enough to admit them into its fold.

The Mora Well and Ghosundi Inscriptions tell us that the rich and complex Vaishnava conception of the Godhead and full expansions of the Godhead into the material universes were already well established in the first two centuries

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before Christ. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* says, that when the original Godhead, or Krishna, appears on the earthly plane, the Godhead always is accompanied by various complete expansions of the Godhead, who both possess the full potency of the Godhead and are worshipable. *The Srimad Bhagavatam* states, "Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, along with Balarama, played like a human being, and so masked, he performed many superhuman acts." His divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada explains the system of divine expansion:

Balarama and Krishna are original forms of the Lord. Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Balarama is the first plenary manifestation of the Lord. From Balarama the first phalanx of the plenary expansions, Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Aniruddha and Pradyumna, expands. Lord Sri Krishna is Vasudeva, and Balarama is Sankarshana.

Seven miles west of Mathura in the small and unimposing village of Mora, General Cunningham made another vital find regarding the historicity of Vaishnavism. In 1882, on the terrace of an ancient well, he discovered a large stone slab filled with inscriptions. Although more than half of the writing had already peeled away on the right side, the remainder was legible. It was transcribed, and a facsimile of the inscription was published in the Archaeological Survey of India's *Annual Report*. The message was clear. Not only was Krishna worshiped in the centuries before Christ, but also His expansions or associates, especially "the five heroes of the

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Vrishni Clan.” Scholarly research makes evident that these five are Krishna (Vasudeva), Balarama (Sankarshana), Pradyumna, Samba, and Aniruddha.

In 1908, a Dr. Vogel had the Mora Well slab removed to the Mathura Museum and tried to tamper with the translations of the inscriptions in order to throw the Vedic religion into a bad light. However, because the contents of the inscriptions had already been published authoritatively and were well known in academic circles, Dr. Vogel’s efforts at creating disinformation failed. The complex theology, metaphysics, and cosmology of *sanatana-dharma* and Vaishnavism definitely existed in an advanced state centuries before Christ. The Mora Well inscription is an important archeological proof of this historical fact.

In the village of Ghosundi in the Chitor district of Rajasthan is found the Ghosundi Inscription, which largely duplicates the message of the Mora Well Inscription. Kaviraja Shyamala Dasa first brought this evidence to light in *The Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society*. Today, the inscription can be inspected in the Victoria Hall Museum in Udaipur.

The surviving part of this inscription relevant to this chapter reads as follows:

(this) railing of stone for the purposes of worship is (caused to be made) in the Narayana-compound, (dedicated) to the Blessed Ones (*bhagavabhyam*) Samkarshana and Vasudeva, the gods...

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The inscription is in a form of Sanskrit script called Northern Brahmi script, which dates the inscription as being from the 2nd Century BCE in either the late Maurya or early Shunga periods. An almost identical inscription also was uncovered nearby and is called the Hathi-vada Inscription. These inscriptions also dispel the myth that Krishna was only revered by the *ksatriya*, or administrative-warrior, class of India, the class Krishna had appeared in. According to K. P. Jayaswal of the Archaeological Survey of India, these inscriptions demonstrate that *brahmanas*, the priestly and intellectual class, also worshiped Krishna as the 'Lord of all,' and thus Vaishnavism was entrenched in the entire Indian society.

The same point is made in the famous Nanaghat Cave Inscription in the modern state of Maharashtra, where Vasudeva and Sankarshana (or Krishna and Balarama) are included in an invocation of a *brahmana*. Additionally, Raychaudhuri reports:

The Nanaghat Inscription shows further that the Bhagavata (Vaishnava) religion was no longer confined to Northern India, but had spread to the south and had captured the hearts of the sturdy people of Maharashtra. From Maharashtra it was destined to spread to the Tamil country and then flow back with renewed vigour to the remotest corners of the Hindu world.

On epigraphical grounds, this inscription is dated conclusively as coming from the second half of the 1st Century BCE.

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A lot of numismatic evidence also corroborates the antiquity of Krishna. For instance, excavations at Ai-Khanum, along the border of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, conducted by P. Bernard and a French archeological expedition, unearthed six rectangular bronze coins issued by the Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles (180?–?165 BCE). The coins had script written in both Greek and Brahmi and, most interestingly, show an image of Vishnu, or Vasudeva, carrying a *chakra* and a pear-shaped vase, or conch-shell, which are two of the four main sacred symbols of God in Vaishnavism. Many other finds of ancient coins also prove the antiquity of Krishna worship in India.

To summarize, today the weight of empirical evidence proves that Krishna and Vaishnavism predate Christianity. Numerous literary, archeological, and numismatic sources build an unassailable case. Nevertheless, Vaishnavism and Christianity still show amazing similarities. In the chauvinistic and sectarian atmosphere of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, these similarities led most Western scholars to adopt the now discredited ‘Borrowing Theory.’ But these attitudes did more than distort the truth. In the 12th Century they directly led to two world wars of unprecedented ferocity and destruction. Therefore, sensitive and caring people perceive these attitudes as being obsolete, and, instead of clinging to them, more intelligent people now seek the path of unity. Even in religion, one of the key contemporary attitudes is the ecumenical spirit, the desire to emphasize more our similarities with other peoples, nations, and religions rather than our differences.

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If westerners can drop their defenses and look at Vaishnavism with unbiased eyes, they will see a religion and a philosophy which undoubtedly through the Greeks helped to shape the soul of western civilisation itself and its largest religion, Christianity.



Does God Exist?

Question: I have a friend who says that you cannot know whether God exists because you cannot see Him. Therefore he says that it is wrong to base one's life upon a guess. He also asks why religious people quote the scriptures – aren't they able to think for themselves?

Answer: Devotees quote the scriptures because the scriptures are the recorded examples of those highly advanced souls and great thinkers who have gone before us in the search to know the Absolute Truth. What they have recorded in their notes, in their doctoral dissertations – that is known as scripture. The experience of what is good and what is to be avoided on the path leading to God consciousness is recorded in the scripture. The words of the scripture are like so many lighthouses showing us the way through the fog or darkness of material conception.

Persons with a dull brain cannot understand scripture. Only those with *buddhi*, or purified intelligence, can understand the scripture. Is it not intelligent to take advantage of knowledge that is already recorded in authorized books? In

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a court of law, a lawyer will cite previous cases in the legal annals. Are we to assume that the lawyer has no capacity to think on his own simply because he quotes law books? The doctor also may be found to consult so many medical texts when attempting to cure a patient of a particular disease. Should we then assume that the doctor has no ability to diagnose the patient on his own?

Experience shows us that a good doctor and a good lawyer have volumes of related books for their reference. So why should it be any different in the search for God? If relevant textbooks are available, should one not take advantage of such books? The scriptures are written on the basis of personal experiences of those who have had some success in the world of consciousness, God consciousness. The scriptures say, "This has been discovered. Go there and see for yourself."

A man of scriptural knowledge is indeed a free thinker, a self-thinker. The ability to think for one's self is in fact a qualification to become God conscious. A dull brain cannot achieve God consciousness. What is a dull brain? One who thinks he is the material body consisting of material elements, has a dull brain. Such persons cannot think for themselves because they do not know what the self is. Under the guidance of scripture one becomes self-aware. Then one's real thinking begins. Only then can one think for one's self.

A person in material consciousness is never a self-thinker, because such persons are always under the mental and physical impressions of the material body, which is false. Only one

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who has understood the difference between matter and spirit can be a self-thinker. Such persons always take the scripture in close alliance with their practices. It is therefore not a sign of weakness that one quotes the scriptures. Rather, it is a sign of spiritual advancement.

Someone may say that we must prove that God exists. They will say, "Show me God, I want to see Him." But we will say, "Because you cannot see God does not prove that He does not exist." Should a blind man say that the sun does not exist simply because he cannot see it? The blind man cannot see the sun but his blindness does not disqualify the existence of the sun.

The argument may be put that the blind man cannot see the sun, but he can feel the soothing warmth of the rays of the sun. So we must be able to have some tangible experience of the existence of God before we accept Him fully. That is not unreasonable. Although the material eye has no capacity to see the transcendental form of God, we can nonetheless feel that He exists. Feeling is a higher and more reliable sense than sight. But that feeling is not skin deep, like the perception of the sun's rays; it is heart deep. With the feelings of one's heart one can confirm that God exists. God is on the deepest side of our existence. In the deepest plane of our consciousness, in the core of our heart, His existence can be felt. Indeed it is a profoundly personal experience, not something for the sightseers of the mundane world. We will exclaim, "Show me God!" and He will come and simply dance before our eyes? It is not like that. Many things are required if we want

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to see God.

It is not unreasonable. First qualify yourself. “First deserve, then desire.” Is there any valuable thing in this world that you can have simply upon demand? Simply saying, “I want to be rich!” Do you become rich? No – many things are required before that. Simply saying, “I want to be a doctor!” Do you become a doctor immediately? No. Then why should one think that the demand to see God should be met immediately? First, deserve, then desire.

An atheist has no proof that God does not exist, so is it not risky to base one’s life on something that is just a guess? The position of the theist is always more positive than that of the atheist. Let us consider for a moment. There are two men. One is a theist and the other an atheist. Each lives out his life according to his creed, and in the end both men have to die. Let us say for the sake of argument that when the theist dies there is no God. Then what does it matter? He believed in God, but in the end there was no God. So what does it matter? Death comes and life is over, finished, the end. No loss, no gain, it’s simply over.

On the other hand the atheist dies and he was wrong. There is a God! Then what? What does he do now? It’s too late. He again takes birth in the material world and suffers and enjoys according to the deeds of his past life. So to be an atheist is quite a risky proposition. The position of a theist is always safer and more desirable than that of an atheist.

The devotees of Krishna are not *muktivadis*, those who want

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liberation from material sufferings. Nor are the devotees of Krishna *jnanis*, who want to know God through empirical knowledge, calculation, and speculation. Nor are the devotees of Krishna among the *karmis* and *sahajiyas*, the sensualists, who want to experience God with their material senses, like the eye. The devotees of Krishna are *bhaktas*. They simply want to love God, and the reciprocation of their love for Him



is indeed the greatest confirmation of His existence.

Have the Vedas Advanced Civilisation?

Question: Have the *Vedas* advanced civilisation? If so, then how?

Answer: Yes. The *Vedas* always help to advance human civilisation, because such literature informs the inquisitive human being about his eternal nature, the Supreme Lord, the material world, the laws of *karma*, and the process of liberation from all material sufferings.

The *Vedas* have helped to advance human civilisation not just once but many times, starting from the very creation itself. In the beginning of the universe there was only Brahma, and he began the search for the origin of his existence. Brahma received *mantra* from Krishna and later he received the Vedic knowledge by revelation. Brahma in turn taught the Vedic knowledge to his sons like Narada. Indeed, that was the beginning of civilisation.

Some time later the *mantras* of the *Vedas* were stolen from the mind of Brahma by two Asuras named Madhu and Kaitabha.

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Then Vishnu again taught the *Veda* to Brahma in the form of what is now known as *Pancharatnika* literature. In the estimation of Lord Vishnu, Who is the maintainer of this universe, there can be no civilisation without the guidance of the *Vedas*. That is not unreasonable.

Civilisation, if it is to be called as such, must be based on complete and proper knowledge, both material and spiritual. This complete knowledge as a whole is called the *Vedas*. At the beginning of the age of Kali, some 5000 years ago, the *Vedas* were written down and have thus become available at present in the form of books. It certainly behooves any intelligent man or woman to take advantage of those books and advance the cause of civilized human life.

There have been many periods in history, particularly here in India, where kings took the injunctions of the *Vedas* very seriously and ruled their kingdoms accordingly. Thus civilisation in general prospered materially and at the same time many individuals made great spiritual advancement. Vijayanagar, the city never to be forgotten, is one such example.

The history of Vijayanagar has been thoroughly documented in numerous textbooks. When the famous world traveler Marco Polo reached Vijayanagar in the 12th Century, he was in awe of the incredible standards of that civilisation. Indeed he commented that a greater civilisation did not exist in the world. It should be remembered that Marco Polo, being a Venetian, had already seen the greatest civilisations

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in Europe, and he had also traveled extensively and seen the great civilisations of the world including China. But he looked at India, whose basis of civilisation has always been the *Vedas*, with the greatest admiration.

Ultimately the human form of life is meant for self-realization, and the *Vedas* are certainly meant for that aim. However, the *Vedas* also promote other activities, such as material enjoyment and elevation to the heavenly planets. These activities are recommended in the *Vedas* for those less intelligent persons who cannot understand the ultimate goal of life. In any case if one follows the injunctions of the *Vedas* then, step-by-step, one gradually advances and finally one becomes fully God consciousness.

In the arena of material life, the *Vedas* have given and continue to give great impetus to human society to become more civilized. From architecture to medicine, from astronomy to political science, from metallurgy to martial arts, and from music to pharmacology – to name but a few of the most prominent Vedic sciences – the wisdom of the *Vedas* today continues to amaze and inspire the advancement of civilisation in India and abroad.

Hundreds of thousands of educated persons and medical professionals in the West are turning to *Ayurveda* because of its notable contributions in the effective diagnosis and treatment of chronic disorders for which western medicine has mere palliatives. Without a doubt, *Ayurveda*, the mother of all healing, is the fastest growing medical

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science in the world today.

Equally impressive, but less well known by the western public, are the Vedic contributions to mathematics. It is no exaggeration to state that there would be no mathematics as we know it today without the fundamental contribution of the *Vedas*. In fact, not only are the very numbers that are used internationally of Vedic origin (erroneously called ‘Arabic’), but Vedic mathematics introduced the concepts of zero, simple and compound numbers, arithmetic progression, the radix 10, fractions, and multiplication by suffix, amongst other things.

We could continue enumerating Vedic advances to human civilisation, but we do not want to make this answer too lengthy. However, it is important to note that one of the major contributions of the *Vedas* is its system of social organization known as *varnashrama*, which is both natural and sophisticated. This system classifies individuals according to natural propensities and stages of life, and gradually leads all persons toward God consciousness, accepting their present situation as the appropriate point of departure.

Vyasadeva is the compiler of the *Vedas* and his treatise known as *Vedanta-sutra* was considered to be the end of knowledge. However, even after compiling the *Vedanta-sutra* Vyasadeva was not fully satisfied. Then under the instruction of his spiritual master, Narada Muni, Vyasadeva achieved the final perfection – he compiled the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* is therefore considered to be the most beneficial *Veda* for people in the age of Kali.

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*krishne sva-dhamopagate dharma-jnanadibhih saha
kalau nashta-drisham esha puranarko dhunoditah*

This *Bhagavata Purana* is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Krishna to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this *Purana*. (*Bhagavatam* 1.3.43)

In our modern times many sages and great thinkers like Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura and A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada have recommended *Srimad Bhagavatam* as the single most important literature in the world. *Srimad Bhagavatam* can certainly help civilisation to advance because it gives one direct perception of the self by realization and puts one in immediate contact with the Supreme Person, Sri Krishna.

Our conclusion is that any eastern or western civilisation that avails itself of the *Vedas* is sure to make advancement. The only requirement is that people must take the injunctions of



the *Vedas* seriously.

Avataras in Every Species

Question: Sri Krishna appears in innumerable forms throughout the universes. Some forms appear to be human-like while others resemble lower species, such as the boar, fish, tortoise, etc. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes:

In each and every universe there are innumerable planets inhabited by different grades of living entities in different modes of nature. The Lord (Vishnu) incarnates Himself in each and every one of them and in each and every type of living society. He manifests His transcendental pastimes amongst them just to create the desire to go back to Godhead. The Lord does not change His original transcendental position, but He appears to be differently manifested according to the particular time, circumstances and society. (*Bhagavatam* 1.2.34 purport)

The human form of life is the best for achieving self-realization. The activities of the animals are eating, mating, sleeping and defending. Animals cannot understand God. Yet, Srila Prabhupada says that Krishna is the friend of both human and animal society. I suppose if He appears among humans to

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deliver us, it would only be sensible that He appears among the animals to deliver them. I'm wondering if the dynamic is different among other species. When He appears among the humans or higher species, He can deliver those in His immediate association, and then His teachings are recorded to inspire posterity. When the Lord appears among the lower species, how does He deliver them? They cannot practice religion as humans do (though Lord Chaitanya made deer, tigers and elephants chant Hare Krishna and liberated the dog under Shivananda Sena's care). Does He deliver only the current generation among that species (after all, animals don't maintain written historical records)?

This may seem to be an obscure inquiry, but I was wondering if the *acharyas* offer us any insight into this matter.

Answer: The conception that God incarnates in the species of those living entities that are lower than human beings has always troubled the mind of the western theologian. Knowing this, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has dealt with the topic of the Lord's incarnations in lower species in his book *Sri Krishna-samhita*. I suggest that you consult that book in detail before writing your proposed essay.

When the Lord appears in lower species He delivers those species by giving them auspiciousness due to His association. The living entities are then promoted to human life and there they are given a chance to come to God consciousness and love of God. That is my understanding. By the Lord's association the living entity awakens a desire for God consciousness. This

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desire for God consciousness is also awakened by the association of pure devotees of the Lord and sometimes by *ajnata-sukriti*. Categorically the Lord appears in every species:

*jalaja-nava-lakshani sthavara laksha-vimshati
krimayo rudra sankhyakah pakshinam dasa-lakshanam
trimshal-lakshani pashavah chatur-lakshani manushah*

There are 900,000 species living in the water. There are 2,000,000 non-moving living entities such as trees and plants. There are 1,100,000 species of insects and reptiles, and 1,000,000 species of birds. As far as quadrupeds are concerned there are 3,000,000 varieties, and there are 400,000 human species. (*Padma Purana*)

That the Lord appears in all species of life, means that He appears in each category, not that He appears as each and every individual form like each and every type of fish, each kind of reptile, every type of quadruped (animal) etc. But in each category the Lord appears.

Among the aquatics in the water the Lord appears as Matsya-avatara. Among the trees and plants He appears as Daru-brahman – the trees bearing the signs of Vishnu from which the Jagannatha Deities are then manifested (banyan trees and others may also be considered as the Lord's incarnation). Among the insects and reptiles He appears as the *vajra-kita* (the worm from Vaikuntha) that carves the signs on the *shalagrama-shilas* and also as Ananta-shesha and Kurma-avatara, the tortoise. Among the birds He appears as Hamsa-avatara. Among the animals with four

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feet He appears as Varaha—avatara. And among the humans He appears as Krishna, Rama, and Sri Chaitanya.

As stated above the Lord creates auspiciousness for the living entities in the lower species of life by appearing among them. This would benefit those living entities who directly associated with the particular incarnation and it would also benefit all future living entities appearing in that species. That is my understanding. If any species comes in contact with any avatar then there is certainly benefit for those living entities, without doubt. What to speak of the particular species – each and every time the Supreme Lord appears in this universe all the living beings present in the universe are benefited. Some are liberated directly and others are elevated and liberated after some time. The ways of the Supreme Lord are wonderful and sometimes difficult for the tiny brain to understand. Nonetheless, *shraddha* (faith) tells us that the Lord is all-merciful, the friend of all living beings, and the knower of everything. How He is doing everything may only



be known by Him alone, but faith tells us that He is the doer of everything and whatever He does is for our benefit.

Modern Science and the Vedas

In 1959 two American atomic scientists, Dr. Emilio Segre and Dr. Owen Chamberlain were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for the discovery of the antiproton, proving (theoretically) that matter exists in two forms – as particles and antiparticles. According to one of the fundamental assumptions of the new theory, there may exist another world, or an anti-world, built up of anti-matter. This anti-material world would consist of atomic and subatomic particles spinning in reverse orbits to those of the world we know. If these two worlds should ever clash, they would both be annihilated in one blinding flash.

That same year (1959) A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada published a small essay *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. He began this work by quoting the above information and went on to say that indeed, two worlds did exist, the material and the spiritual, but the nature of the spiritual world was that it could never be annihilated.

I first read *Easy Journey to Other Planets* in 1969 and for many

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years after that I wondered why there hadn't been further research into the concept of antiparticles or anti-worlds. Almost 40 years later I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the theory of anti-worlds has been a hot topic of physics research all those years and remains so even today. In fact the anti-world theory now occupies a prominent place in theoretical physics as the Multiverse Hypothesis, sometimes known as Parallel Universes.

Progress however in the Multiverse Hypothesis hasn't been much to write home about. Concepts keep changing and no one has yet to make actual contact with a Multiverse or Parallel Universe. In other words there haven't been any tangible results in the field of Multiverse research. But of course, the scientists (physicists) who are doing the research are worthy of respect, honor, great laudations and sizable salaries because, even though unable to actually 'prove' their theories, they are great and deserve the perks of greatness, because they are able to think about such lofty concepts. They are great minds.

But what about the writers and commentators of Vedic literature who spoke of the anti-material world (Paravyoma and Vaikuntha) many centuries before the great minds of the west even realised that the Earth wasn't flat! Aren't those Vedic seers worthy of being counted as great thinkers, great minds and men of scientific fiber? If so, then why do we not give them their due and, more importantly, why do today's scientists, physicists and researchers not pay closer attention to their ancient achievements? I don't have the answer for that.

Modern Science and the Vedas

Lets look at some of the Vedic concepts and achievements in addition to Parallel Universes that have become trends in modern scientific disciplines and even quintessential to science itself.

In Kapila–deva’s system of *Sankhya*, the analytical study of material nature, matter develops from subtle to gross. The qualities of an element exist before the gross manifestation of the element. That is quite different than the way most of us think of matter. For example, aroma is the quality of earth and we therefore think that first there is the substance earth and then the aroma. But in the *Sankhya*, or Vedic way of thinking, it is just the opposite. First there exists the quality of aroma and then earth is manifest – everything begins from the subtle plane and moves toward the gross.

The subtlest aspect of matter in *Sankhya* is ‘vibration’ – also thought of as a sound vibration or frequency. That most subtle existence that precedes all aspects of matter is a vibration or sound called *tan–matra*. In layman’s terms, in *Sankhya*, a vibration or sound lies at the basis of matter. Everything springs from that original vibration – the basis of everything lies in sound.

Respectively, String Theory (a developing branch of theoretical physics that combines quantum mechanics and general relativity into a quantum theory of gravity) has connotations similar to the *Sankhya* conception of *tan–matra* or sound vibration being the basis of matter.

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Then there is the theoretical physics concerning Dark Matter or the missing mass in the universe. Physicists conclude, based on research, that as much as 80% of the mass of this universe has gone missing or is undetectable. Simply put, to account for the amount of gravity in the universe, 80% more matter than is visible is required. Where is it?

The first person to provide evidence and infer the existence of a phenomenon that has come to be called ‘dark matter’ was Swiss astrophysicist Fritz Zwicky, of the California Institute of Technology in 1933. Zwicky applied the viral theorem to the Coma cluster of galaxies and obtained evidence of unseen mass. Zwicky estimated the cluster’s total mass based on the motions of galaxies near its edge and compared that estimate to one based on the number of galaxies and total brightness of the cluster. He found that there was about 400 times more estimated mass than was visually observable. The gravity of the visible galaxies in the cluster would be far too small for such fast orbits, so something extra was required. This is known as the “missing mass problem”. Based on these conclusions, Zwicky inferred that there must be some non-visible form of matter that would provide enough of the mass and gravity to hold the cluster together. That was the beginning for the search for Dark Matter.

Seventy-six years later, science is still looking for Dark Matter. They know it is literally everywhere, but it escapes detection and thus they are unable to observe it. Millions of taxpayer’s dollars are spent every year by western super powers in the search for Dark Matter. Nothing has turned up yet.

Modern Science and the Vedas

On a parallel platform, *Sankhya* identifies a material element that among its other qualities is, for the most part, elusive (emphasis on elusive). It is everywhere (all-pervading) but at the same time undetectable (ethereal). That element in *Sankhya* is called *nabhas*, or as mentioned in *Bhagavad-gita*, *kham*.

The activities/qualities and characteristics of the *kham* element in *Sankhya* can be observed as accommodating space/room for existence. Space itself, both internal and external, is the element *kham*. This then, if taken notice of by physicists, may very well fit nicely into the ‘missing mass problem.’ *Kham*, being a material element, could theoretically be assigned a numerical code in the periodic table of elements like everything else – then they might find what they are looking for.

In the Vedic way of thinking the physical element is secondary to its qualities – when the qualities of a particular thing are understood, it is as good as or better than having the grosser subject at hand. In that sense modern science has already discovered Dark Matter, because they have understood something of its qualities...they just haven’t realised it yet. In the *Srimad Bhagavatam* we find the following verse:

*bhutanam chidra-datritvam bahir antaram eva ca
pranendriyatma-dhishnyatvam nabhaso vritti-lakshanam*

The activities and characteristics of the ethereal element can be observed as accommodation for the room for the external and internal existences of all living entities,

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namely the field of activities of the vital air, the senses and the mind. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.26.34)

In his purport to this verse, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada says that the *Sankhya* understanding of *nabhas* or *kham* (that he has called in English ‘the ethereal element’) is the basis for great scientific research:

This verse is the potential basis of great scientific research work, for it explains how subtle forms are generated from the ethereal element (*nabhas*), what their characteristics and actions are, and how the tangible elements, namely air, fire, water and earth, are manifested from the subtle form.

Sankhya does not simply list the basic material elements, but it explains quite scientifically how those elements evolve from the subtlest plane of existence up to the divisions of the universe – this is quite elaborate and scientific indeed.

Yet for science to take full advantage of the *Sankhya* understanding of matter and to discover how the universe came into being, they will have to do more than just add *kham/nabhas* to their list of elements, they will have to add *ahankara* (ego), *mana* (the mind) and *buddhi* (intelligence) to their table of elements for, indeed, *Sankhya* lists these as material elements. However, these elements *ahankara*, *mana* and *buddhi* are categorized as even more subtle than *kham*, because they are closer in character to *atma*, consciousness.

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Beyond the gross and subtle material elements being added to the scientific table of elements, *Sankhya* says that a complete understanding of existence, of reality, is not possible without adding two transcendental, anti-material concepts – namely *atma* and Paramatma (consciousness and super-consciousness). This, it seems, science struggles with even more than Dark Matter – we have dubbed it ‘Light Matter’.

The most intriguing physics discovery by far has to be the theory of the Warp Drive or the Alcubierre Drive, named after its inventor, the Mexican theoretical physicist Miguel Alcubierre Moya. Most of us know about the Warp Drive from science fiction movies like *Star Trek* and *Contact*, but Moya had the real deal.

In his 1994 physics paper Moya proposed a method of stretching space in a wave that would in theory cause the fabric of space ahead of a spacecraft to contract and the space behind it to expand.

The ship would ride this wave inside a region known as a warp bubble of flat space. Since the ship is not moving within this bubble, but carried along as the region itself moves, conventional relativistic effects such as time dilation do not apply in the way they would in the case of a ship moving at high velocity through flat space-time. Also, this method of travel does not actually involve moving faster than light in a local sense, since a light beam within the bubble would still always move faster than the ship; it is only ‘faster than light’ in the sense that, thanks to the

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contraction of the space in front of it, the ship could reach its destination faster than a light beam restricted to traveling outside the warp bubble. Thus, the Alcubierre drive does not contradict the conventional claim that relativity forbids a slower-than-light object to accelerate to faster-than-light speeds.

Pretty neat stuff – and NASA certainly thought so, mounting their ‘Time Warp’ program at a cost of many millions of dollars for more than a decade before they finally gave it up. “Yes, Time Warp is possible.” they said, “We just can’t do it!” Shucks!

But we are not surprised to find this same theory mentioned many thousands of years ago in the Vedic literature as a *siddhi*, or mystic perfection, by which one can travel to another planet or another galaxy without conventional propulsion and in zero time.

One may argue that although this is mentioned in the *Vedas*, it is doubtful that they were able to do it. That argument could be applied, but first one should realise that they could think about it thousands of years before NASA. Whether they could do it or not is irrelevant. After all, NASA was only thinking about it – they never actually did it either.

See the fun – the Vedic knowledge is easily dismissed or not recognized at all. These are simply stories and myths they say, but theoretical physics/science – now that’s something you can believe in!

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It might be fair to ask, “Who writes this stuff?” Have the intelligent people in this world forgotten how to think for themselves? Have we simply become the faithful followers of whatever ‘science’ has to say? Have we lost our reason and logic? Apparently some have!

If we were to list all the scientific discoveries that Vedic civilisation has given to the world, some in common use today like the one, the zero, the binary system, calculations regarding astronomical phenomena and more yet to be discovered or understood like the Warp Drive theory, then this article would become a book. So here we stop.



The Sindhu River

How India Got Her Name

The Sindhu River is one of the great holy rivers of India, from which the name of India is derived. Unlike other holy rivers in India such as the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, the Sindhu is masculine.

The Sindhu is virtually unknown to people in western countries, but for the people of India it has great significance. Indeed, the Sindhu gave birth to the earliest of India's civilisations known as the Indus Valley civilisation. For those readers who know their history, then the names of ancient cities and archaeological digs at places like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro will be familiar – the land of the 'Aryan Invasion' – a topic of much debate, even after more than two-hundred years of research and scholarly studies.

But one fact is for sure – human civilisation along the banks of the Sindhu River has been present since hoary antiquity. Archaeological evidence shows human habitation along the Sindhu for at least the past 17,000 years. In truth, the name Sindhu is older than civilisation itself and is mentioned in the classical histories of ancient India such

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as the *Rig Veda* (170 times), the *Puranas* and in the Iranic *Zend Avesta*. On modern world maps the Sindhu is marked as the Indus.

Beginning at Lake Manasarovara, at the base of Mount Kailash (the mountain sacred to Shiva) on the eastern side of the Himalayas in what is now western China (old Tibet), the Sindhu/Indus flows westward crossing into India into the Ladakh district of Jammu and Kashmir. The Sindhu then takes a southerly route, traverses the plains of Pakistan and merges into the Arabian Sea near the port of Karachi – a journey of 3,180 kilometers (1,980 miles).

According to the *Mahabharata* (*Bhishma-parva*, chapter 6, Verse 48) the spiritual – sometimes considered mythical – origins of the Sindhu River are stated as being due to the austerities of King Bhagiratha in Satya-yuga. Bhagiratha was attempting to free his ancestors from bad karma and their suffering in the lower planetary systems of Patala-loka. After performing his penance Bhagiratha summoned the sacred River Ganges to Earth. The Ganges descended from the heavenly planets and thereafter formed six separate rivers – three flowing to the east (the Hladini, Pavani and Nalini), and three flowing to the west (the Suchakshus, Sita and Sindhu). The seventh branch, the Ganga, then flowed from the Himalayas to Ganga-sagara, entering the Bay of Bengal, and then down to Patala-loka.

If not mythical, then the story of King Bhagiratha and the Sindhu is certainly mystical and no doubt took place

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a long time ago when the world was quite different. Indeed, the etymology of the name of 'India' takes us on a journey back in time and is also closely associated with famous personalities in western history such as King Darius of Persia, Alexander the Great, Megasthenes and others.

In bygone days, the people living east of the Sindhu commonly referred to themselves as Aryans – a term originating from the Sanskrit word *arya*, a self-designation meaning “honorable, respectable and noble”. But for the Arabs, west of the Sindhu, they were the al-Hindus, and for the Persians they were the Hindus.

It only came to pass, after centuries of use, that the word Hindu came to designate a people with particular religious beliefs. In the beginning 'Hindu' was simply a general designation for anyone living east of, or along the banks of the Sindhu. It also came to pass that the word Hindu became Sanskritized and the land of the Hindus became known as Hindustan, meaning 'land of the Hindus' – a name that is still in use today in India.

Thousands of years ago the people living between the Sindhu and the Himalayas called their land Bharata-varsha, the land ruled by Maharaja Bharata (in Treta-yuga), a character of great repute who is mentioned repeatedly throughout the *Puranas*. Prior to the reign of Maharaja Bharata, the land of Bharata-varsha and for that matter the entire planet Earth was referred to by the Aryans as Ajanabha (thus indicating a One World Culture once upon a time).

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West of the Sindhu was the empire of Persia – an empire so vast that it stretched from the Sindhu to the Mediterranean Sea. Though originally part of Bharata-varsha, Persia's ancestors had lost their connection to Aryan culture in Bharata-varsha, and well before the time of the Mahabharata War in 3138 BCE they had become known amongst the Aryans as Yavanas. Yavana is derived from the Pali word *Yona*, also used to identify the Greeks. These Yavanas were also sometimes referred to as Mlechhas. In Bharata-varsha lived two half-brothers, Vasishtha Muni and Jarutha (circa 6000 BCE). The brothers quarreled over theistic issues and afterwards Jarutha traveled west of the Sindhu to present day Iran in search of converts, eventually converting a king named Vishtaspa. Jarutha had a philosophy of his own liking, quite different from that found in the traditional Aryan (Vedic) literature, but in the kingdom of Vishtaspa, Jarutha found acceptance. Thus began the religion of the Zoroastrians and its founder, Jarutha, became known as Zarathustra or Zoroaster.

Incidentally, for the people of China during the early period, the land between the Himalayas and the Sindhu was called 'Yin Du' and for the people of Japan, pre-modern India was known as 'Tenjiku' meaning 'the Heavenly Centre of the World'.

In his book *Indica*, while recounting the exploits of Alexander the Great, the Greek writer Megasthenes calls the mighty Sindhu the 'Indus' (the name still retained today). Thus Indus is a Hellenic derivative of the Persian and Arab word *hindu*, from the Sanskrit *sindhu*.

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Greeks also called the land east of the Indus ‘Indike’ or ‘Indica’. And from the Greek we finally arrive at the English spelling ‘India’ first used by King Alfred (circa 9th Century) in his translation of the writings of Paulus Orosius, a Christian apologist (circa 375) who wrote in defense of the Pagan idea that the Roman Empire had declined due to its acceptance of Christianity.

Thus a modern nation attained her name ‘India’ – beginning with the Sanskrit ‘*Sindhu*,’ to the Persian ‘*Hindu*,’ to the Hellenic ‘*Indu*’ and ‘*Indica*,’ to the English, the name of India and a nationality of people was born.

In contemporary times the sentiment of many Indians is to change the Europeanized names of their cities back to their original names. Bombay has changed to Mumbai, Madras to Chennai, Bangalore to Bengaluru, Mangalore to Mangaluru and so on. One wonders then if India will eventually return to her original Sanskrit name of Bharata-varsha? * (see footnote)

I recently took a trip to Ladakh primarily to have a *darshan* of the Sindhu River and to complete my having visited all the main holy rivers of India, namely the Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Kaveri and Sindhu. It was a rewarding experience in all respects, and as for the landscape in and around the Sindhu Valley, it was absolutely stunning – snow capped peaks, glaciers, rivers, an inland salt-water sea (Pangong Lake) and rugged mountain people of Tibetan Buddhist descent.

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Travelers such as myself have been coming to Ladakh for a very long time. Legend has it that Jesus of Nazareth traveled to India/Ladakh in his youth to study the teachings of the great Buddha. In the 19th Century, Nicolas Notovitch, a Russian aristocrat traveling in Ladakh, reportedly happened upon a remote mountain valley and visited the monastery of Hemis, belonging to the Drukpa lineage of Buddhism. There, Notovich claims to have discovered an ancient manuscript/gospel that described Jesus (Issa) as having come to Ladakh and studied with Buddhist monks. Notovitch claimed that at the monastery of Hemis he discovered the *Gospel of the Life of Saint Issa, Best of the Sons of Men*. His story was published in French in 1894 and was later translated into German, English, Spanish and Italian – a popular book for the public, but one that created quite a stir in scholarly communities.

As far-fetched as Notovich's story may sound to many of us, it is plausible that Jesus may have come to India at one time or another. The 3rd Century Christian prophet Mani (founder of Manichaeism) is well documented as having come to India and studied Buddhism – something that he later introduced into Gnostic Christianity and which flourished between the Third and Seventh Centuries. At its height Manichaeism was one of the most widespread religions in the world. Manichaean churches and scriptures existed as far east as China and as far west as the Roman Empire. So if Mani did it, why not Jesus?

Christian gnostic gospels also account the story of Jesus sending his disciple Thomas to India to preach the word of

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God, so it may not be absurd at all to entertain the idea that Jesus may have come to India and even to Ladakh.

Notovich's story intrigued me, so I decided to visit Hemis Monastery to see if I could get verification. The monastery was very old, in a secluded valley, well maintained and the monks were friendly and accommodating. When asking the monks if they had any books, records or information about the Christian messiah (Issa/Jesus) ever having come to Hemis to study Buddhism, they looked curiously at each other and laughed. Then a senior monk respectfully and with folded hands replied that many western people have come to Hemis with the same question, but that there are no such books or records in their monastery that could verify the story of Notovich.

It seems Nicolas Notovitch was either a trickster, a man with a wild imagination or both. In any case, I wasn't able to find suitable proof for Notovitch's story. Incidentally, I found out later that shortly after the publication of Notovich's book in 1894, the head lama of the Hemis Monastery signed a document stating that Notovich's story was a complete hoax.

But if you are looking for a place to visit, rich in culture and history, with fantastic landscapes and a photographers dream come true – then you definitely should visit Ladakh. And while you are there, have *darshan* of the Sindhu River.

*The first Article of the Constitution of India (1949) states that, “India, that is Bharata, shall be a union of states.” Thus, India and Bharata are equally official short names for the Republic of India. Indians commonly refer to their country as Bharat, India, or Hindustan, depending on the context and language of conversation. This is even printed on their money.

Timingila Myth or Fact?

The *Srimad Bhagavatam*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and other Vedic literatures often speak of fantastic places and of creatures that may have once lived on this planet. One such creature was the Timingila fish. The Timingila is said to have been the most formidable predator in the oceans. It was enormous in size and its favorite food was said to have been whales. Whales are also very big creatures of the ocean, but unlike the Timingila, the whale has yet to become extinct. Some whales of our time reach up to 60 feet in length like the Whale Shark of the Indian Ocean. The Whale Shark is actually a whale that physically resembles a shark but is not a predator. The Timingila, on the other hand, was a fierce predator and used to eat whales in one giant gulp! But did the Timingila actually exist on this planet or did it exist only in the poetic imagination of the writers of the Vedic literatures? Certainly many mundane scholars would have us think so.

The etymology of the word '*timingila*' is as follows: in Sanskrit '*timi*' is the word for 'whale' and '*gila*' means 'to swallow'. Thus timingila literally means 'to swallow a whale' – not just to swallow, but to swallow in one huge bite!

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References to the Timingila fish of antiquity are to be found in numerous places. In *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Markandeya Rishi encounters the Timingila in his fantastic experience in the waters of devastation and survives the ordeal by the grace of the Supreme Lord.

*kshut-trit-parito makarais timingilair
upadruto vichi-nabhasvatahatah
tamasy apare patito bhraman disho
na veda kham gam cha parishramesitah*

Suffering from hunger and thirst, attacked by Makaras and Timingila and battered by the waves and the wind, Markandeya wandered through the infinite gloom that enveloped him. Overcome by exhaustion, he lost all sense of direction and could not ascertain what was the sky and what was the earth. (*Bhagavatam* 12.9.16)

In *Ramayana* the Timingila is mentioned as inhabiting the waters between Lord Rama and Lanka, the capitol of the demon king, Ravana.

*chandra udaye samadhutam pratichandra samakulam
chanda anila mahagrahah kirnam timi timingilaih*

When the moon rose, the ocean surged and the image of the moon reflected unlimitedly in it. That ocean abounded with huge crocodiles that were as swift as fierce winds, as well as whales and Timingila. (*Ramayana, Yuddha-kanda* 4.114)

Timingila – Myth or Fact?

Similarly, *Mahabharata* mentions the Timingila as being deep within the ocean along with other huge sea creatures.

*timingilah kacchapash cha tatha timi–timingilah
makaras chatra drishyante jale magna ivadrayah*

There were seen Timingilas, tortoises, Timi–timingilas and Makaras that were like great rocks submerged in the water. (*Mahabharata, Vana–parva*. 168.3)

The Ayurvedic text of the 6th Century BCE known as *Shushruta–samhita* also lists the Timingila as being amongst the formidable species of marine life.

*timi–timingila–kulisha–pakamatsya–nirularu
nandi–varalaka–makara–gargaraka–chandraya
mahamina–rajiva prabhritya samudrah*

The Timi, Timingila, Kulisha, Paka–matsya, Nirularu, Nandi–Varalaka, Makara, Gargaraka, Chandraya, Mahamina, and Rajiva etc., constitute the family of marine fish. (*Shushruta–samhita*, Ch.45)

Are these various accounts of the Timingila to be taken as factual or are they simply a part of fiction?

The Makara is also mentioned in several of these verses and according to scholarly opinion the Makara, like the Timingila, is more or less a fantastical, mythical, fiction. However, in *Bhagavad–gita* Krishna says that of aquatics He is the Makara.

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*pavanah pavatam asmi ramah shastra-bhritam aham
jhashanam makarash chasmi srotasam asmi jahnavi*

Of purifiers I am the wind, of the wielders of weapons
I am Rama, of fishes I am the Makara (shark), and of
flowing rivers I am the Ganges. (*Gita* 10:31)

From the story of Markandeya we can deduce that the Makara was a predator or at least aggressive since Markandeya was attacked by Makaras in the ocean. Temple art in India generally depicts the Makara as being a combination of several wonderful animals. Such renderings show the Makara as having the jaws of a crocodile, the trunk of an elephant, the tusks of a boar, the scales of a fish, the tail of a peacock and the eyes of a monkey.

Although translators of the *Bhagavad-gita* usually render the word ‘Makara’ as shark, this is for simplicities sake and for the ease of the reader. If Krishna was simply comparing Himself to a common shark then He would have used the Sanskrit word for shark, namely *graha*, but He didn’t. Krishna Himself is certainly not ordinary and can only be compared to the most extensive and wonderful things within our experience, and yet He is even beyond that. The Makara, like the Timingila, is certainly something more wonderful than just a shark – something difficult for us to imagine in this day and age.

If someone were to ask why Krishna compares Himself to a Makara rather than a Timingila, we would probably reply that the Makara is more wonderful than the Timingila in that it

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is a combination of many wonderful and beautiful creatures. So, are we to gather that in *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna has compared Himself to a creature that does not exist, and if so are we then to conclude that Krishna Himself does not exist? Should we then conclude that the wind, Rama and the Ganga are also fictitious?

After all, has anyone actually seen any physical evidence of one of these monsters of the deep blue? Well, in fact they have – meet the Megalodon!

Early accounts of large triangular teeth found imbedded in rock cliffs first appeared in Europe during the Renaissance period, but were believed to be the petrified tongues of dragons and snakes. In 1667 a Danish naturalist, Nicolaus Steno, recognized these findings as ancient shark teeth. In 1835 a Swiss naturalist, Louis Agassiz, gave this mysterious creature the name by which it is known today, Megalodon – which in Greek means ‘big tooth’.

Thought to easily reach 82 plus feet in length, weighing in at 70 plus metric tons, with teeth measuring 18 plus centimeters in length and capable of exerting a bite force of 40,131 pounds plus per square inch – the Megalodon is easily recognized as the predator of all time.

Fossil remains of the Megalodon, have been excavated from many parts of the world, including Europe, North America, South America, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Africa, Malta and India. Forensic studies of Megalodon fossils

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reveal that the predator was capable of eating anything in its path but favored whale meat.

According to scientific evidence it is estimated that the last of the Megalodons lived on this planet around 1.5 million years ago, give or take a few thousand. That is a long time ago, especially considering that the estimated age of the first human being was only 250,000 years ago. That would mean that the Megalodon became extinct 1,250,000 years before the first human being walked upright, spoke a coherent language, kept records or attempted to write anything.

By comparison of the size, haunt, predator behavior and dietary habits, the Megalodon and the *Timingila* appear to be the same creature. But what is so amazing or interesting about that and what is our point?

Our point is that western scholars assert that the *Bhagavatam* was only written in the 9th Century CE, the *Ramayana* in the 4th Century BCE, and the *Mahabharata* between the 8th and 4th centuries BCE. But if this were a fact then how did the writers of these books know about an ocean-dwelling creature, its size, its vicious aggression and its diet that had been extinct for 1.5 million years? *Bhagavatam*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* all mention the existence of the *Timingila*/Megalodon. Where did they get this information?

When (by scientific estimation) human beings have only been on this planet since 1,250,000 years after the Megalodon/*Timingila* became extinct – who told them about these

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creatures? If there were no humans present on this planet between the period when the Megalodon/Timingila became extinct and 250,000 years ago, how could the writers of the Vedic texts have known such things?

The scientist and scholar will have to answer this question, but for us it is simple – there have always been human beings on this planet from its very creation and the knowledge of all such things has been passed down thru the ages via the disciplic succession of gurus and disciples.



Makara

Myth or Fact?

In Sanskrit ‘Makara’ is a word that means ‘sea dragon’ or ‘aquatic-monster,’ long thought to be a mythical creature in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Paintings and sculptures of this fantastical creature are found in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, China and Japan – practically everywhere in Asia.

The Makara in India is known to be the *vahana* (vehicle) of Ganga-devi – the goddess of the river Ganges and the *vahana* of the god of the sea, Varuna. A Makara is also the insignia of Kamadeva (god of lust) and Kamadeva’s flag is called *makara-dhvaja*, a flag having the Makara drawn on it. In Hindu astrology the Makara is also the astrological sign of Capricorn. A little research reveals this strange mythical creature to have been very popular both in ancient times and in our present day. But is it mythical?

The Makara is often depicted with the head of a crocodile, horns of a goat, the body of an antelope and a snake, the tail of a fish or peacock and the feet of a panther. Varuna is said to be the only one who can control the Makara and does not fear them (save and except for Krishna that is).

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In some English translations of the *Gita*, for simplicity of reading, ‘makara’ has been translated as shark. But it is not a shark. The Timingila that is often mentioned along with the Makara in other Vedic texts is classified as a shark – a shark of monstrous proportions.

Mahabharata mentions the Timingila and Makara as being deep within the ocean, along with other huge sea creatures:

*timingilah kacchapash cha tatha timi timingilah
makaras chatra drishyante jale magna ivadrayah*

There were seen Timingilas, tortoises, Timi–timingilas and Makaras, that were like great rocks submerged in the water. (*Mahabharata, Vana Parva*. 168.3)

The Ayurvedic text of the 6th Century BCE known as *Susruta Samhita* also lists the Timingila and Makara as being amongst the formidable species of aquatic life:

*timi–timingila–kulisha–pakamatsya–nirularu
nandi–varalaka–makara–gargaraka–chandraka
mahamina–rajiva prabhritya samudrah*

The Timi, Timingila, Kulisha, Paka–matsya, Nirularu, Nandi–Varalaka, Makara, Gargaraka, Chandraka, Mahamina, and Rajiva etc, constitute the family of marine fish. (*Shushruta Samhita*, Chapter 45)

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In *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Makaras and Timingila are mentioned as predators, attacking Markandeya Rishi:

*kshut-trit-parito makarais timingilair
upadruto vichi-nabhasvatahatah
tamasy apare patito bhraman disho
na veda kham gam cha parishramesitah*

Suffering from hunger and thirst, attacked by Makaras and Timingila and battered by the waves and the wind, Markandeya wandered through the infinite gloom that enveloped him. Overcome by exhaustion, he lost all sense of direction and could not ascertain what was the sky and what was the earth. (*Bhagavatam* 12.9.16)

Bhagavad-gita mentions the Makara in Verse 31, Chapter 10 as follows:

*pavanah pavatam asmi ramah shastra-bhritam aham
jhasanam makaras chasmi srotasam asmi jahnavi*

Of purifiers I am the wind. Of the wielders of weapons I am Rama. Amongst aquatics I am the Makara and of rivers I am the Ganga.

The Makara is described in Vedic texts as half animal, half aquatic and an aggressor – a true monster of the deep. Often depicted in art as having the mouth of a crocodile, the body of a fish, the tail of a peacock and the paws of a panther, the Makara has attained mythical status.

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Now the question arises – is the Makara a mythical creature or was it actually real? And if so, then how could it look like it has been depicted in art for centuries with so many different animal body parts? When one looks at recent scientific discoveries and takes into consideration a bit of ‘poetic license’ that the artist may have employed, the so-called mythical Makara becomes as real as life.

Recent discoveries in archaeology have revealed what paleontologists call a Pliosaur. The fossilized Pliosaur was found in Dorset, England in 2003 and took until 2008 to remove from the rock cliff in which it was found. Once excavated it revealed a sea monster in remarkable detail.

Scientists suspect the Pliosaur fossil is approximately 155–million–years old and lived during the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods during which time it was one of the top predators of the oceans.

Paleontologist Richard Forrest commented to the BBC as follows: “This is an iconic specimen – one of the most exciting we have seen in years. It was probably the most fearsome predator that ever lived. Standing in front of the skull you can imagine this enormous beast staring straight back at you, fixing you with its binocular vision, and attacking. Just thinking about it raises the hairs on the back of your neck.”

Dr. Forrest went on to say that the creature’s bulky body, which would have been powered through the water with four

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paddle-like limbs, has never been found and may not have fossilized. Scientist's estimate based on the 2.4meter long skull, that the Pliosaur would have been 15 to 18 meters in length. Impressive indeed.

We are herein suggesting that the Pliosaur could easily be the Makara of myth, but we are not the first to equate a mysterious ocean monster to the Makara. We have also stumbled upon the reports of a creature called the Ambulocetus, a creature that could walk as well as swim. It lived during the early Eocene Period some 50 million years ago. The fossil of Ambulocetus was found on the coast of Pakistan from a time when Pakistan and India was a single island in the Indian Ocean slowly drifting toward the continental shelf of Asia. Some crypto-zoologists speculate that the Ambulocetus is a candidate for being the Makara, yet most scientists suggest that the Ambulocetus fills the evolutionary gap between aquatics and land animals.

Once, when discussing with Pusta-Krishna, Srila Prabhupada commented that there is no discussion of dinosaurs in the *Vedas*, therefore he did not believe that they existed. Then again, Sadaputa recounts that when Prabhupada was asked about the dinosaurs he replied that they were not extinct. So which is it? Is there really no mention of dinosaurs in the *Vedas*, or was Prabhupada just denying scientific knowledge and discoveries because most scientists of his time were denying the Vedic knowledge? We think so.

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In any case, we do find a reference to what easily could be understood to be dinosaurs in *Srimad Bhagavatam* when demons and demigods rode strange creatures into battle.

*gridhraiḥ kankair bakair anye shyena—bhasais timingilaiḥ
sharabhaiḥ mahishaiḥ khadgair go—vriṣhair gavayarunaiḥ
shivabhir akhubhiḥ kechit krikalasaiḥ shashair naraiḥ
bastair eke kṛishna—sarair hamsair anye cha sukaraiḥ
anye jala—sthala—khagaiḥ sattvair vikṛita—vighraiḥ
senayor ubhayo rajan vivishus te 'grato 'grataḥ*

O King, some soldiers fought on the backs of vultures, eagles, ducks, hawks and *bhasa* birds. Some fought on the backs of *timingilas*, which can devour huge whales, some on the backs of *sharabhas*, and some on buffalo, rhinoceroses, cows, bulls, *gavaya* (jungle cows) and *arunas*. Others fought on the backs of jackals, rats, *krikalasa*, rabbits, human beings, goats, black deer, swans and boars. In this way, mounted on animals of the water, land and sky, including animals with deformed bodies (*vikṛita—vighraha*), both armies faced each other and went forward. (*Bhagavatam* 8.10.10–12)

Here we find a fantastical description of the *vahanas* used in a great battle in horary antiquity, but some of the creatures described have no English or Indo-Aryan equivalent such as *bhasa*, *sharabhas*, *timingila*, *gavaya*, *arunas*, *krikalasa* and *vikṛita—vighraha*. So what are these creatures and why do they have no equivalent names in modern languages? Could they be extinct? Could any of these have been what we now call dinosaurs? We think

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so. The mere fact that the timingila is mentioned is proof enough that some of these creatures are going to be formidable predators – which ones?

Vikrita–vighraha translates as ‘animals with deformed bodies’ and *krikalasa* translates as ‘big lizard’. So when one’s opponent is riding a vicious animal like a rhinoceros or a timingila – then is riding an ordinary lizard into battle a good idea, even a big one? *Krikalasa* is a ‘big lizard’ – think dinosaur! And *vikrita–vighraha* are ‘animals with deformed bodies’ – think dinosaur! In any case, no *vahana* mentioned here could have been ordinary, – even the human *vahanas* must have been giants. So it is intelligent to think that if one takes these narratives to be true in the first place, then what we think of today as dinosaurs could surely be among the *vahanas* mentioned in *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

The *gavaya* mentioned in the above verse translates as ‘jungle cow’ and interestingly enough these ‘jungle cows’ (also known in modern Hindi as *nila–gaya*, blue cows) still exist in and around Vrindavana, India and, like the Makara, they have the distinct characteristic of three animals – a cow, a horse and a deer. Once seeing these strange animals there is no argument that they are a ‘three in one’ creature. So why not a Makara with a mouth of a crocodile, a body of a fish, and a tail of a peacock? You just haven’t seen one yet. But it looks like the archaeologists in England are on to something with their recent discovery of the Pliosaur.

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It is true that the *krikalasa* and *bhasa* are not easily equated with Tyrannosaurus Rex and Pterodactyl, but then again, why not? It seems to be a matter of putting one and one together and moving on.

Yes – there were dinosaurs mentioned in *Srimad Bhagavatam* and possibly other places in the vast Vedic literature. Unfortunately, it has been the thinking of some theists that the scientists have falsified dinosaur remains (“The Devil put them there”) simply to give credit to the evolutionary theory. But I think it is safe to say that such does not stand against the repeated discoveries of dinosaurs in different parts of the world and even in India.

Yes, dinosaur remains and even dinosaur eggs have been discovered in Gujarat, India. However, when the fossilized eggs were first discovered, villagers took them home and began worshiping them as *shiva-lingams*.

When it is obvious that scientists are not running around falsifying dinosaur fossils and that dinosaurs did indeed exist in India, then it is reasonable to conclude that dinosaurs are indeed mentioned in Vedic literature and that archaeologists may have recently found the Makara in the fossil record in England.

Admittedly, the case for the Megalodon fossil being the *Timingila* as discussed in our previous article may be more convincing than that of the Pliosaur fossil being the

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Makara, but the later is certainly probable. Thus, it is worth reiterating a previous point regarding the age of man.

According to scientific evidence, it is estimated that the last of the Pliosaur and Megalodons lived on this planet around 1.5 million years ago or before. That is a long time ago, especially considering that the estimated age (according to science) of the first human being was only 250,000 years ago. That would mean that the Pliosaur and Megalodon became extinct 1,250,000 years before the first human being spoke a coherent language, kept records or attempted to write anything.

The Pliosaur and the Megalodon appear to be the same creatures as the Makara and the Timingila mentioned in Vedic texts. But what is so amazing or interesting about that, and what is our point?

Our point is that western scholars assert that the *Bhagavatam* was only written in the 9th Century CE, the *Ramayana* in the 4th Century BCE, and the *Mahabharata* between the 8th and 4th centuries BCE. But if this were a fact, then how did the writers of these books know about ocean-dwelling creatures, their size, their vicious aggression and their diets if those creatures had already been extinct for 1.5 million years? *Bhagavatam*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* all mention the existence of the Makara/ Pliosaur and the Timingila/Megalodon, but where did the authors get their information?

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When (by scientific estimation) human beings have only been on this planet since 1,250,000 years after the Megalodon/Timongila became extinct – who told the Vedic authors about these creatures? If there were no humans present on this planet between the period when the Pliosaur and Megalodon became extinct and 250,000 years ago, how could the writers of the Vedic texts have known such things? And it is obvious that they did.

Scientists and scholars will have to ponder this question, but for us it is simple – there have always been human beings on this planet from its earliest beginnings and the knowledge of all such things has been passed down thru the ages via the disciplic succession of gurus and disciples.



Who Ruled India?

“Who Ruled India?” is an interesting question. The history of rule in India goes back to great antiquity – back to the days of the *Mahabharata* (with emperors such as Yudhisthira and Pariksit Maharaja) and before that to the days of the *Ramayana* when Sri Ramachandra sat on the throne of Ayodhya. Those days and subsequent times were known as the rule of *rama-rajya*, the saintly rulers of India. In those days India spread in the west as far as the Caspian Sea and in the east along the borders of the Himalayas to present day Burma. But the geographical borders of India have changed many times since then and so have her rulers.

In recent history we remember British, French and Portuguese rule in India. A little further back than that we remember the Mogul dynasty in India. But for most of us our knowledge of who ruled in India becomes a little hazy when we try to think prior to the Mogul period. Indeed, we may be shaken from our slumber when we hear that Persian, Greek, Chinese and even Ethiopians ruled in India and contributed to the development of India as a culture and a country.

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Indeed, the *Vana-parva* of *Mahabharata* contains verses in the form of prophecy complaining that, “Mlechha (Barbaric) kings of the Shakas (nomadic tribesmen residing in and migrating over the plains of Eurasia from Eastern Europe, from Siberia in Russia, from Xinjiang Province, China), Yavanas (Greeks), Kambojas (from Central Asia/Iran), etc. shall rule the earth (i.e. India) un-righteously in Kali-yuga.” And there would be others also.

Manu-smriti lists Yavanas, Kambojas, Shakas, Pahlavas, etc. and regards them as degraded *kshatriyas*. *Anushasana-parva* of *Mahabharata* also views the Yavanas, Kambojas, Shakas etc. in the same light. Patanjali’s *Maha-bhashya* regards the Yavanas and Shakas as *anirvasita* (pure *shudras*). The *Gautama-dharma-sutra* regards the Yavanas or Greeks as having sprung from *shudra* females and *kshatriya* males.

The Buddhist *Assalayana Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* attests that in Yona (Yavana) and Kamboja nations, there were only two classes of people, Aryas and Dasas (the masters and slaves) and that the Arya could become Dasa and the Dasa become Arya. The *Vishnu Purana* also indicates that the *catur-varna*, or four class social system was absent in the lands of Kiratas in the East (Tibet and China) and in the lands of the Yavanas and Kambojas in the West.

The *Hari-vamsha* attests that the clans of Yavanas, Kambojas, Shakas, Pahlavas etc. were “formerly noble *kshatriyas*”. *Manu-smriti* says that the Yavanas and Kambojas became degraded as *kshatriyas* because they failed to perform the Vedic rites and

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became disrespectful to the *brahmana* communities in their countries. Similarly, the *Mahabharata* notes that the Yavanas, Kambojas, Shakas, and Pahlavas were originally “noble *kshatriyas*”, who became degraded to barbaric status due to the wrath of the *brahmanas*.

Numerous Puranic literatures group the Yavanas, Shakas, Kambojas, Pahlavas, etc. together and refer to the peculiar hair styles of these people, which was different from those of the men of central India, who kept long hair and top knots. Ganapatha, while commenting on Panini, says that it was a practice among the Yavanas and the Kambojas to wear short-cropped hair, (*kamboja-mundah javana-mundah*), a practice that has become common among almost all men in India today.

The *Brihat-katha-manjari* of Kshemendra tells us that King Vikramaditya rid the sacred earth of the barbarians, like the Shakas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Tusharas, Hunas, etc, by “completely annihilating these sinners”. But as the saying goes, “evil things and their influences never die” – they came again and again.

Over the past three millenniums there have been many foreign rulers in India and influences left behind by them. It becomes difficult sometimes to say what is actually Indian. Some examples would be the contemporary *choli*, short hair style for men, the harmonium, sitar, chilies, tomatoes, etc, as well as influences in art, music, language, medicine, architecture and even philosophy. Many such things are

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commonly accepted as indigenous to India or being ‘Indian’, when in fact they are not.

Srimad Bhagavatam gives us a list of kings who ruled in India according to strict Vedic principles during the first 1000 years of Kali-yuga. After that 1000-year period the rulers in India went into sharp decline, resulting in weaker and weaker kingdoms with soft borders – thus entered the foreign conquerors. However, by this time in history everything west of the Indus River was already considered as the Persian Empire and not part of India.

In the ancient world the Persians of the 1st millennium BCE ruled parts of India that we now call Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Dates assigned by modern scholars for this period and those assigned by Vedic and Puranic sources differ greatly and are not easy to reconcile. But in any case India was not actually called India before 2500 years ago, it was called Bharata-varsha, a Sanskrit name meaning the region once ruled by Bharata Maharaja, son of Rishabha-deva. India being an English word is actually derived from the older Greek word *Indika*, referring to the land of the Indus Valley.

In antiquity the borders of Bharata-varsha extended to the Caspian Sea in the west, in the north it included what we now call Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and beyond and, as already stated, in the east the borders of Bharata-varsha reached up to Burma.

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Of course, according to some thinking, once upon a time the Vedic culture was spread all over the world, but in the places that I have mentioned above it has definitively been proven by archaeological discoveries that the Vedic culture existed in those lands 5000 years ago and possibly before.

The Persians

The first rulers, other than the Vedic kings, to rule over a vast area of Bharata-varsha were the Persians. The Persians however were not actually foreigners but people who came to abandon Vedic rites and philosophy. Persia declined in status within the Vedic society first due to their offenses to the *brahmanas* and later by wholesale conversion to Zoroastrianism. This was an internal event within the borders of Vedic society that occurred without any outside influence. The first degradation occurred when the *kshatriyas* offended the *brahmanas* and were thus cursed to become *shudras*. Later, Zoroaster (half brother of Vasishtha Muni) entered the scene and converted a local king named Vishtaspa. Zoroaster emphasized that good and evil are separate entities (Ormuzd and Ahriman) at war with each other, but that both Deities ultimately descended from the Wise Lord, Ahura-Mazda. Zoroaster's belief, although monotheistic, held many opinions that were diametrically opposed to the Vedic knowledge. Soon Zoroaster's teachings became state doctrine and a new kingdom was born. It took time but the end result was that half of Bharata-varsha became permanently deviated from the Vedic concepts. This happened even before the Kali-yuga began and remains so to the present day. Bhaktivinoda Thakura comments on Zoroastrianism as follows:

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Zarathustra (Zoroaster) is a very ancient philosopher. When his philosophy found no honor in India, Zarathustra preached in Iran. It was by the influence of Zarathustra's ideas that Satan, an equally powerful rival to God, made his imaginary appearance first in the religion of the Jews and then in the religion based on the Koran. Then, influenced by Zarathustra's idea of two Gods, the idea of three gods, or a 'Trinity' made its appearance in the religion (Christianity) that had come from the Jewish religion. (*Tattva-viveka* 1.21)

The Greeks

Next came the Greeks led by Alexander the Great ('Great' or 'Infamous' – depending on who's writing the history), who defeated the Persians and eventually made his way across Persia to India and conquered some of the territories along her borders in what is now Pakistan and the Punjab. This began what historians call the Indo-Bactrian period and therein begins an exchange of ideas between east and west that continues up to our present time. Alexander's career more or less came to a halt after his brief encounter with Raja Porus (Puru) of India. Alexander defeated Porus at the battle of Hydaspes (326 BCE). Afterward, Alexander and his troops (on the verge of mutiny), worn by years of battle decided to return home to Greece. Alexander never made it home. He died in Babylon (Iraq) in 323 BCE. The kingdom that Alexander had created then divided and the Indian portion of the kingdom east of the Indus passed back to Indian control, to Chandragupta, the first Maurya emperor.

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The Greeks however again pushed into India and had some success setting up cities and ruling as kings for quite sometime in places like the city of Taxila (located in present day Pakistan). Taxila had been a city of fame and learning since at least five centuries BCE. Taxila is supposed to have been the city of King Taksha, the son of Bharata and Mandavi mentioned in the *Ramayana*. During and after the time of Greek occupation in Taxila it continued to be famous as a place of learning. Some theorists are even of the opinion that Jesus of Nazareth studied in Taxila during his youth. In any case Taxila was famous during the Indo–Greek period as a place of learning and it was indeed visited by peoples from the Mediterranean and from even as far away as China.

Most contemporary scholars, and indeed even the ancients of India such as Emperor Ashoka, considered the Greeks to be Yavanas and mention them as such in numerous places such as the Edicts of Asoka wherein the Greek kings to the far west are associated unambiguously with the term *Yona* or Yavana:

amtiyoko nama yona–raja
param ca tena atiyokena cature
rajani turamaye nama amtikini
nama maka nama alikasudaro nama

The Greek king by the name of Antiochus, beyond whom live the four kings by the name of Ptolemy, the name of Antigonos, the name of Magas, the name Alexander.

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The Greco–Bactrians (west of the Indus) and the Indo–Greeks (east of the Indus) were known for their high level of Hellenistic sophistication but kept regular contact with India. They were on friendly terms with India and exchanged ambassadors and thus ideas. One such ambassador was Heliodorus who was sent from Taxila to the court of King Bhagabhadra at Videsha (Besnagar, central India). Historians and scholars have recognized Heliodorus as the first western convert to the principles of Vaishnavism.

An inscription from the 2nd Century BCE attributed to Heliodorus was found on a stone pillar at Besnagar and reads as follows:

*devadevasu vasudevasa garuda–dhvajo ayam
karito ia heliodorena bhagavatena
diyasa–putrena takhashilakena
yonadatena agatena maharajasa
amtalikitasa upamta samkasam–rano
kashiputrassa bhagabhadrasa tratarasa
vasena chaturdashena rajena vadhmanasa*

This Garuda–column of Vasudeva, the God of gods, was erected here by Heliodorus, a worshipper of Vishnu, the son of Dion, and an inhabitant of Taxila, who came as Greek ambassador from the Great King Antialkidas to King Kashiputra Bhagabhadra, the Savior, then reigning prosperously in the fourteenth year of his kingship.

There was also the Greek traveler and geographer Megasthenes (ca. 350 BCE – 290 BCE) who attended the court of Chandra

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Gupta as the ambassador of Seleucus I of Syria and who wrote in some detail about life in the kingdom of Chandra Gupta. There are accounts of Megasthenes having visited Mathura (on the banks of the Yamuna) and Madurai in the south (then, a bustling city and capital of Pandya Kingdom). His observations were recorded in *Indika*, a book that served as an important source to many later Greek writers such as Strabo (geographer) and Arrianus (historian).

However, the most famous archaeological discovery of the Indo-Greek period to show a unique blending of Indian and Greek cultures are the gold coins of Agathocles (2nd Century BCE) bearing the images of Balarama holding the plow on one side and Vasudeva Krishna holding the disc on the other. The contributions of the Greeks (Yavanas) to India were mainly absorbed in northwest India and included various social habits, dress, literature, art, striking coins, pottery, city planning, sculpture, open air theatre and so on. Even some classical Indian texts praise the Greeks for their scientific knowledge and contributions. The *Mahabharata* compliments them as ‘the all-knowing Yavanas’ (*sarvajna-yavana*). The *Brihat-samhita* of the mathematician Varaha Mihira says,

The Greeks, though impure, must be honored since they were trained in sciences and therein, excelled others.

That Greeks left their influence in India is certainly verifiable but that the Greeks as well as the rest of the world gained from India more than they gave is evident from the following statements made by notable personalities in history.

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Pythagoras went to the Ganges to learn geometry.
(Voltaire)

We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made. (Albert Einstein)

The Kushans

Next came the Kushans who ruled in India for some 150 years (circa 105 –250 CE). The Kushans conquered Tajikistan to Afghanistan, all of modern day Pakistan and the Punjab, down into the Ganges river valley in northern India and made Mathura (Vrindavana) their winter capitol. The Kushans originated in northwest China in what is now called Xinjiang and were known by the Chinese as Guishuang or Yuezhi. These were nomadic warlike people who after successful conquests settled down and became rulers, rulers of India.

The Kushans adopted the Greek alphabet Pali (Kharoshthi script), customs of the Afghans and north Indians and of course Buddhism, the then dominate religion in most of India. The throne of the Kushan rulers maintained diplomatic contacts with Rome, Persia and China. For several centuries they were at the centre of exchange between the East and the West.

Although contributing to trade in India, one outstanding characteristic of the Kushans did not attract many if any indigenous people of India, the artificially deformed skull. The Kushans practiced tightly binding the foreheads of newborns so that the skull grew to be elongated. Although

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a mark of beauty and even royalty, the practice never caught hold in India.

Various sculptures and friezes of Kushans have been found representing horse-riding archers, and men with artificially deformed skulls. On the ruins of ancient Hellenistic cities such as Ai-Khanoum, the Kushans are known to have built fortresses in India and the earliest documented ruler, and the first one to proclaim himself as a Kushan ruler, was Herais. He calls himself a 'tyrant' on his coins, and also exhibits skull deformation.

In the beginning of their conquest many scholars believe that the Kushans adopted Zoroastrianism and then later Buddhism but soon came to adopt elements of Indian culture and religion. Some Kushan kings apparently even converted to Shaivism. One has to wonder, what was going on in the Vraja during those times?

The recently discovered Rabatak inscription confirms a large Kushan empire under the great Kushan ruler, Kanishka as extending deep into the heartland of India. The inscription describes the cities that were under the rule of Kanishka, among which six names are identifiable: Ujjain, Kundina, Saketa, Kausambi, Pataliputra, and Champa. As late as the 3rd Century CE, decorated coins of the Kushan ruler Huvishka were dedicated at Bodh Gaya together with other gold offerings under the 'Enlightenment Throne' of the Buddha, suggesting direct Kushan influence in the area during that period.

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Kushan ruler Vima Kadphises was emperor from around 90–100 CE, the son of Sadashkana and the grandson of Kujula Kadphises, and the father of Kanishka I. He was the first to introduce gold coinage in India (or so it is believed), in addition to the existing copper and silver coinage. More than 30 different gods appear on Kushan coins belonging to the Hellenistic, the Iranian, and to the Indian religions.

The last of the ‘Great Kushans’ was Vasudeva I (191–225). He was the last great Kushan emperor, and the end of his rule coincides with the invasion of the Sassanids as far as northwestern India, and the establishment of the Indo–Sassanids or Kushanshahs from around 240 CE.

The Ethiopians

Possibly the most obscure history of foreign rule in India is that of Bengal which was ruled by Habshis from 1487 to 1493 CE. The name Habshi is an Arabic word for an Ethiopian or Abyssinian.

Habshi rule began at the close of the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Fath Shah. Shahzada, an Ethiopian eunuch and the leader of the Abyssinian slaves usurped the throne by murdering Jalaluddin Fath Shah in 1487.

The rule of the Habshis (Ethiopian slaves) lasted only six years during which four rulers, Barbak Shah Shahzada, Saifuddin Firuz Shah, Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah II and Shamsuddin Muzaffar Shah ruled Bengal.

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On his accession Shahzada assumed the title of Sultan Barbak Shah. His rule was characterised by a policy of systematic elimination of opponents. This policy, however, could not save him and Malik Andil ultimately murdered him. Barbak Shah's rule lasted only six months.

Malik Andil, with the consent of the nobles, ascended the throne with the title of Saifuddin Abul Muzaffar Firuz Shah in 1487. The Persian chroniclers praised him highly for his benevolence and kindness to the poor and needy. He valued justice and liberality and made noble efforts to secure peace and comfort for his subjects. He was also a patron of arts and architecture. He either died a natural death or was secretly murdered in 1490 after a reign of only three years.

Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah II succeeded Saifuddin Firuz Shah. During his reign, Habash Khan grew in influence and this excited the jealousy of another Abyssinian slave named Sidi Badr Diwana, who ultimately killed Habash Khan and Mahmud Shah. Mahmud Shah's reign lasted a few months.

After the murder of Mahmud Shah II, Sidi Badr ascended the throne in 1490 AD and assumed the title of Shamsuddin Abu Nasr Muzaffar Shah. His reign was, for all practical purposes, a reign of terror. In order to get rid of his opponents, he slew many nobles and scholars. He exploited his subjects and collected revenue at extortionate rates, disbanded the greater part of his standing army and reduced the pay of his soldiers. Though a brute, Muzaffar Shah was not altogether a heartless tyrant. During his reign he devoted himself to the promotion

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of education and culture. He was said to be a patron of saints. His reign lasted only three years (1490 AD to 1493). His kingdom included the whole of north Bengal and some portions of Bihar.

The tyrannical rule of Muzaffar Shah alienated the people; Sayid Hussain, an Arab by descent and the chief minister of Muzaffar Shah organized a revolt and killed the sultan. With the murder of Muzaffar Shah, Habshi rule in Bengal came to an end.

Sayid Hussain Shah (known also as the Nawab Hussain Shah) ruled Bengal between 1494 and 1538. His rule occupied a significant place in the medieval history of Bengal and he has been mentioned in *Chaitanya-charitamrita* by Kaviraja Goswami. The Nawab's rule marked the zenith of the independent Sultanate in Bengal. His rule was characterised by territorial expansion, stabilization of administration and significant developments in religion, literature, the arts and the economy. This period marked the appearance of the *yuga-avatara*, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the rise of the *bhakti* cult in Bengal, Orissa, and Vrindavana. This period also saw the advent of the first Europeans in Bengal, signs of the new forces that were destined to shape the life of the country for centuries to come.

Now in the 21st Century India is under 'home rule', ruled by her own people and India has become the largest democracy in the world. But the stark reality of the situation is that western influence on moral conduct, material advancement and even

Who Ruled India?

religion, with the tremendous advances of Christianity within the country, is more than at any other time in history. Indians rule India, yet India is more prone to outside influences now than at any other time in history. What the Greeks and Kushans failed to do, what the Muslims and Moguls could not do in 1000 years of rule in India, what the British could not finish in 200 years, MTV and Bollywood have managed in only 62 years of independence – the massive moral, social and cultural degradation of India.



UFOs

Is There Anyone Out There?

Are we the only intelligent life in the universe? Some people would think so, others not. If there is intelligent life on other planets and possibly more intelligent than we, have these intelligent beings visited our planet before? Many people believe they have.

UFOs and alien encounters became the stuff of legend in the 20th Century. Books, YouTube videos, newspaper articles, journals, websites and Hollywood blockbusters abound on the topic of UFOs and alien encounters. Occasionally a report or sighting of UFOs from the highest levels of government, particularly the military, hits the evening news causing a big stir but then vanishes and is forgotten almost as quickly and mysteriously as the illusive UFO itself. It is sometimes hard to figure out just what this is all about. Are these the tricks of hoaxers out for a good laugh? Could alleged UFO sightings be the delusions of paranoid schizophrenics? Or is the plot more sinister? Are governments hiding the facts about UFOs and alien encounters?

What is actually going on? What can we believe regarding the UFO and alien phenomena? Some researcher have

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pointed to ancient world civilisations such as those in Egypt and Mesoamerica and concluded that aliens definitely visited Earth people in the past and possibly passed on to them a superior technology. When looking at those research materials it seems that the argument for alien visitation is stronger than the evidence itself, which is usually an obscure stone etching found somewhere in an ancient Egyptian temple or Mayan tomb.

Of course, researchers could be correct in their speculation about tomb carvings but a more compelling evidence of intelligent life in the universe, other than our own, are the ancient Vedic and Puranic literatures of India. In many instance these literatures clearly state that there is intelligent life on other planets. For example *Bhagavad-gita* states that Sri Krishna spoke the science of self-realisation in a previous time to the ruler of the Sun, Vivasvan.

*imam vivasvate yogam proktavan aham avyayam
vivasvan manave praha manur iksvakave'bravit*

I disclosed this imperishable knowledge of *yoga* unto Vivasvan, ruler of the Sun. He then taught it to Vivasvata Manu, who then instructed the same knowledge to Ikshvaku. (*Gita* 4.1)

Similarly, the *Bhagavata Purana* records the following:

*deva-dvisam nigama-vartmani nisthitanam
purbhir mayena vihitabhir adrsya-turbhir*

UFOs – Is There Anyone Out There?

*lokan ghnatam mati-vimoham atipralobham
vesam vidhaya bahu bhasyata aupadharmyam*

When the atheists, after being well versed in the Vedic scientific knowledge, annihilate inhabitants of different planets, flying unseen in the sky on well-built rockets prepared by the great scientist Maya the Lord will bewilder their minds by dressing Himself attractively as Buddha and will preach on sub-religious principles. (*Bhagavatam* 2.7.37)

The renowned India scholar and *acharya* Jiva Goswami while commentating on this verse has stated that this incident of Buddha is not the same as the Buddha in our historical context but a Buddha from another Kali-yuga. However, it is important to note from this verse of the *Bhagavata* that intelligent life from other planets may travel to various planets in space ships that are invisible to the naked eye. Could the same be a clue to the UFO phenomena today?

In Vedic cosmology there are higher and lower planets in the universe, the higher planets being inhabited by pious intelligent life and the lower planets being inhabited by atheistic intelligent life. The atheists are known in the Vedic literature more for their destructive and evil tendencies than for their humanistic and philanthropic tendencies. This is stated in *Bhagavad-gita* as follows:

*etam dristim avastabhya nastatmano'lpā buddhayah
prabhavanti-ugra-karmanah kshayaya jagato'bitah*

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Atheists with deprived and small intelligence flourish and engage in malicious activities for the destruction of the world. (*Gita* 16.9)

The atheists become expert in *yantra-vidya* or the science of machines where as the Devas (intelligent life from higher planets) are expert in mantra and do not need the assistance of machines such as fire combustible engines or even electrical ones to move about from planet to planet. Nor are they destructive and violent wherever they go.

*tara-hema-maharatna-vimana-sata-sankulam
justam punyajana-sribhir yatha kham satadid-ghanam*

The airplanes (*vimanas*) of the celestial beings are bedecked with pearls, gold and many valuable jewels. The celestial beings are compared to clouds in the sky decorated with occasional flashes of lightning. (*Bhagavatam* 4.6.27)

To continue stating Vedic literature as evidence of interplanetary travel and intelligent life on other planets would turn this article into a sizable book – so let it suffice to say that from the Vedic point of view, intelligent life exists on other planets and may have the technology for interplanetary travel either thru *yantras* or *mantras*.

That said of the ancient references, what are the most reliable references that we can find today to support the existence of UFOs and alien intelligence?

UFOs – Is There Anyone Out There?

From my research I found that the most profound UFO event in modern times was that of a supposed UFO crash in which alien bodies were reportedly recovered near Roswell, New Mexico in 1947.

On July 8, 1947, the Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF) public information officer Walter Haut in Roswell, New Mexico, issued a press release stating that personnel from the field's 509th Bomb Group had recovered a crashed "flying disk" from a ranch near Roswell, sparking intense media interest. The following day, the press reported that Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force (Roger M. Ramey) stated that, in fact, that a radar-tracking balloon had been recovered by the RAAF personnel and not a 'flying disc.'

The Roswell incident was quickly forgotten and almost completely ignored, even by UFO researchers, for more than 30 years. Then, in 1978, physicist and ufologist Stanton T. Friedman interviewed Major Jesse Marcel who was involved with the original recovery of the debris in 1947. Marcel expressed his belief that the military had covered up the recovery of an alien spacecraft. His story spread through UFO circles, being featured in some UFO documentaries at the time. In February 1980, The National Enquirer ran its own interview with Marcel, garnering national and worldwide attention for the Roswell incident.

Additional witnesses added significant new details, including claims of a huge military operation dedicated to recovering alien craft and aliens themselves, at as many as 11 crash sites,

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and alleged witness intimidation. In 1989, former mortician Glenn Dennis put forth a detailed personal account, wherein he claimed that alien autopsies were carried out at the Roswell base.

Reports of the Roswell crash varied from the crash simply being that of a high altitude weather balloon, to the crash being that of an alien space ship in which bodies of dead aliens were recovered. What followed for decades was a flurry of information, misinformation, disinformation, books, testimonies and Hollywood movies. In the end, although many people in the UFO community believed the crash was that of an alien flying saucer and the government was covering it up, most thoughtful people were simply left scratching their heads or just wrote the incident off as per the RAAF version.

The Roswell incident was 65 years ago and although certainly one with many intrigues it was trumped in 2004 when the Mexican Department of Defense acknowledged a profound UFO sighting. The sighting was a high level incident in which a Mexican Air Force plane and its crew were involved in a situation with several UFOs while doing routine surveillance in an antidrug operation.

When details including video and radar tracking data were release to the mainstream media by the Mexican Department of Defense confirming the existence of UFOs the doubts of may were swept away. Yet the skeptics remain.

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Another astonishing support which I came across for the existence of UFOs in modern times and to support the allegations that the American government suppresses and hides such information from the public comes none other than from the American astronaut Edgar Mitchell who during the Apollo 14 mission became the sixth human being to walk on the Moon.

Mitchell has publicly expressed his opinions that he is “90 percent sure that many of the thousands of UFOs recorded since the 1940s, belong to visitors from other planets” and that UFOs have been the “subject of disinformation in order to deflect attention and to create confusion so the truth doesn’t come out”.

This is quite a statement – especially coming from a man who was an American astronaut, who walked on the Moon and who holds science degrees from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Carnegie Institute of Technology and the U.S Naval Postgraduate School. Indeed, an impressive set of credential.

Dateline NBC conducted an interview with Mitchell in 1996, during which Mitchell discussed meeting with officials from three countries who claimed to have had personal encounters with extraterrestrials. He offered his opinion that the evidence for such “alien” contact was “very strong” and “classified” by governments, who were covering up visitations and the existence of alien beings’ bodies in places such as Roswell, New Mexico. He further claimed that recovered

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UFOs had provided “sonic engineering secrets” that were helpful to the U.S. government.

In 2004 Mitchell told the St. Petersburg Times that a ‘cabal of insiders’ in the U.S. government were studying recovered alien bodies, and that this group had stopped briefing U.S. presidents after John F. Kennedy. Mitchell stated, “We all know that UFOs are real; now the question is, where they come from?”

In 2008 Mitchell was interviewed on Kerrang Radio. Mitchell claimed the Roswell crash was real and that aliens have contacted humans several times, but that governments have hidden the truth for 60 years stating, “I happen to have been privileged enough to be in on the fact that we’ve been visited on this planet, and the UFO phenomenon is real.” In reply, a spokesman for NASA stated, “NASA does not track UFOs. NASA is not involved in any sort of cover up about alien life on this planet or anywhere in the universe. Dr. Mitchell is a great American, but we do not share his opinions on this issue.”

In an interview with Fox News of that same year Mitchell clarified that his comments did not involve NASA, but quoted unnamed sources, since deceased, at Roswell who confided to him that the Roswell incident did involve an alien craft. Mitchell also claims to have subsequently received similar confirmation from an unnamed intelligence officer at the Pentagon.

UFOs – Is There Anyone Out There?

If one does a Google search for UFOs one will receive approximately 4,120,000 returns – many of those are affirmative. As Edgar Mitchell has said, “We all know that UFOs are real; now the question is, where they come from?” For many people there is hope that these aliens from another world come to us in peace with greater knowledge than our own. But from the Vedic point of view it would be expected that the supposed alien visits to our planet in flying saucers are from lower, not higher planets and thus would be more apt to be hostile than friendly or benevolent.

Not to sound the alarm, but such malevolent visitors have been here before...



The Struggle for Consciousness

The late Christopher Hitchens and his fellow atheist Richard Dawkins and skeptic Michael Shermer would probably feel a bit disappointed these days at seeing how many leading scientists are seriously entertaining the idea that consciousness is much more than just a function of the brain – indeed, consciousness may very well be the cause of the universe says biologist Robert Lanza. Such thoughts certainly do not sit well with any seasoned atheist because such unwittingly suggest the possibility of the existence of God. Unsettling as it may be, that is the current trend in science today.

With consciousness appearing as the next frontier of science the Intelligent Design community breathes a sigh of relief while the meditators, yogis and sages of transcendence are elated to make friends with the new devotees from the physics and biology laboratories.

As it were, science and religion have for decades been at odds, especially since the publication of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin in 1858. Darwin's publication shook the very foundation of religious beliefs in Europe and North America, with thousands of prominent minds turning to science for answers about the mysteries of life.

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Initially people jumped at Darwin's theory of evolution as an indisputable fact. So much so that to think otherwise was to be marked among intellectuals as a heretic. Confidence was, and in some cases remains, so high in Darwinian Evolution that people blindly think that Darwin had explained the origin of life – when in fact he had only observed changes in species over time. He had not explained how life began.

From Darwin's day up to the present, science has encountered many stumbling blocks, little tidbits of discovery that unsettle established theory – and of late science seems to have arrived at a brick wall where just about everything they thought they knew isn't factually so (Darwin's Theory of Evolution included).

Now with renewed thinking many scientists are looking outside the paradigms of the past in what will become a struggle for consciousness, the attempt of science to understand and verify a non-physical subjective reality. In this new frontier scientists may soon discover that philosophy is a more useful tool for understanding reality than they have yet imagined.

There will no doubt be debate and the outcome will definitely be worth waiting for.

To date, Christian theologies have been at the forefront of the God debate, representing a Christian creator but such theologizes may not have much to contribute as the debate addresses the fundamental concepts of consciousness. At this time a third party is entering the dialogue, a party acquainted

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with the concepts of consciousness for many a millennium – enters eastern thought.

Eastern thought had made quite an impression on some early 20th Century scientists such as Oppenheimer and Einstein but it was *The Tao of Physics* (extensively exploring the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism) published by Fritjof Capra in 1975 that significantly helped to solidify those impressions on–mass. Capra's book was a best seller in the United States and has since seen 43 editions in 23 languages.

In his book Capra analysed the tenets of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism to show their striking parallels with the latest discoveries in physics. At the time Victor N. Mansfield, a professor of physics and astronomy at Colgate University wrote the following:

Fritjof Capra, in *The Tao of Physics*, seeks...an integration of the mathematical world view of modern physics and the mystical visions of Buddha and Krishna. Where others have failed miserably in trying to unite the seemingly different worldviews, Capra, a high–energy theorist, has succeeded admirably. I strongly recommend the book to both layman and scientist.

Capra was by no means writing nonsense, he even had the appreciation of renowned theoretical physicist Werner Karl Heisenberg. Capra recalls:

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I had several discussions with Heisenberg. I lived in England then (circa 1972), and I visited him several times in Munich and showed him the whole manuscript (The Tao of Physics) chapter by chapter. He was very interested and very open, and he told me something that I think is not known publicly because he never published it. He said that he was well aware of these parallels. While he was working on quantum theory he went to India to lecture and was a guest of Tagore. He talked a lot with Tagore about Indian philosophy. Heisenberg told me that these talks had helped him a lot with his work in physics, because they showed him that all these new ideas in quantum physics were in fact not all that crazy. He realised there was, in fact, a whole culture that subscribed to very similar ideas. Heisenberg said that this was a great help for him. Niels Bohr (the renowned Danish physicist) had a similar experience when he went to China. (Fritjof Capra, interviewed by Renee Weber in the book *The Holographic Paradigm*, pages 217–218)

Capra did have his critics and they were merciless, but all in all eastern thought found a toehold in science and that was soon to become a powerful influence if not a revolution in the making.

As eastern ideas became more popular in the west, thoughts of the Buddhist *nirvana* (nothingness) became a much sought after alternative and gave hope to the wishful thinking of some physicists that the universe could possibly have arisen from nothing. That influence however is now giving way to the more tangible thinking of the *Upanishads* – in which

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everything has arisen from Brahman, a transcendental plane of consciousness.

The *Upanishads* developed in ancient India during an age of deep thinking and we may very well be seeing the emergence of an Upanishadic period in contemporary science. Physicist, Mani Bhaumik certainly seems to think so:

The *Upanishads* and Quantum Physics both talk about reality. Scriptures tell us that the abstract Brahman is creator and the physical universe is creation, existing in an intertwined, inseparable manner... Consciousness is the window through which we perceive reality and reflect upon emotions and feelings. Because it is both an instrument of perception and a perceived entity itself, consciousness is qualitatively different from anything else we know. So it could be a fundamental feature of the universe.

It is inevitable that when science progresses in the manner of Upanishadic thought that they will first come to the conception of impersonal Brahman. After which we may begin to hear quotations in scientific papers from *Vedanta* and from Shankaracharya's commentary on the *Vedanta-sutras*. In time however science will face its greatest challenge and that will be to understand the supreme conscious source of everything – that everything exists within and emanates from a transcendental, omni-conscious personality, the Absolute. But whether or not modern science makes it that far remains to be seen.

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The first understanding should be that consciousness is not a product or by-product of matter and therefore attempts to understand the actual nature of consciousness through laboratory research or mental speculation will be severely hampered. The reason is simple. The scientific method of acquiring knowledge is to depend on the senses and the instruments of the senses through direct evidence, experiment, hypothesis and speculation. This process is called *aroha-pantha*, (the ascending process), but it has inherent limitations.

The mind, intelligence and senses are material and are always subject to the four material defects of *bhrama*, *pramada*, *vipralipsa* and *karanapatava* (mistakes, illusion, cheating and false perception). The instruments of research found in the laboratory are also limited and defective because they are nothing more than extensions of our limited senses. Therefore, the *aroha-pantha* process greatly limits one who wishes to understand consciousness.

One should realise that perfect knowledge must itself originate in an Absolute plane of existence, one that transcends the material defects of mistakes, illusion, cheating and false perception. In other words perfect knowledge is descending (*avaroha-pantha*), an extension of the Absolute into the relativity of the mundane world. This system of knowledge among transcendentalists is known as revealed truth and descends through the *parampara*, the guru-disciple succession and its literature.

To take knowledge from the descending process in *parampara* is the sure and effective way to acquire perfect knowledge of

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consciousness and what lies beyond. It is there for the taking and science has but to step forward and accept it.

*nigama—kalpa—taror galitam phalam s
huka—mukhad amrita—drava—samyutam
pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam
muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhavuka*

O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Goswami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarine juice was already relishable for all, including liberated persons. (*Bhagavatam* 1.1.3)

*sarva—vedanta—saram hi sri—bhagavatam isyate
tat—rasamrita—triptasya nanyatra syad ratih kvachit*

Srimad Bhagavatam is declared to be the essence of all Vedanta philosophy. One who has felt satisfaction from its nectarine mellow will never be attracted to any other literature. (*Bhagavatam* 12. 13.15)

Srimad Bhagavatam culminates in accepting and worshipping Sri Krishna as the Absolute Truth.

*nama—sankirtanam yasya sarva—papa pranashanam
pranamo dukkha—samanas tam namami harim param*

Let us bow down unto the Absolute Truth, Sri Krishna, the congregational chanting of whose holy names destroys

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all karmic reactions, and the offering of obeisances unto whom relieves all material suffering.

Statements in *Bhagavad-gita* and *Brahma-samhita* also support that the Absolute Truth is a person and that person is Krishna, the source of consciousness, the impersonal Brahman and the cause of all causes (*sarva-karana-karanam*).

*brahmano hi pratisthaham amritasyavyayasya cha
sasvatasya cha dharmasya sukhasyaikantikasya cha*

I (Sri Krishna) am the foundation of the immortal, imperishable Brahman, who is the basis of eternal dharma and supreme bliss. (*Gita* 14:27)

*ishvarah paramah krishnah sac-chid-ananda-vigraha
anadir adir govindah sarva-karana-karanam*

Ultimately Sri Krishna is the Supreme Controller. His form is made of bliss, knowledge and eternity (sat-chid-ananda). He is the origin of all. He is the Master of the cows and the senses. He has no other origin and He is the primeval cause of all causes. (*Brahma-samhita* 5.1)

Though Richard Dawkins and others may shake their heads in dismay at the way science is headed, some of the greatest minds in modern history such as Heisenberg, Bohr, Oppenheimer, Einstein and Tesla would certainly nod in approval – all of whom had a rich appreciation for the

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knowledge and wisdom of the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad-gita* and Indian philosophy in general.



About the Author

Swami Bhakti Gaurava Narasingha was born in 1946 in the USA and grew up in California, Florida and Hawaii. His first introduction to yoga was through Swami Vishnudevananda and his first contact with the *Bhagavad-gita* was through reading *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Swami Yogananda. In 1967, Swami Narasingha came in contact with the teachings of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and in 1970 he became his direct disciple. In 1976 Swami Narasingha became a *sannyasi* (monk) and traveled extensively for many years in India. In the period between 1986 and 1999, Swami Narasingha also studied under the renowned masters Swami B.R. Sridhara and Swami B.P. Puri. In 1994 Swami Narasingha established Sri Narasingha Chaitanya Ashrama (also known as Govindaji Gardens) and also the Kaliya-mardana Krishna Ashrama in South India. At both of these centres Swami Narasingha instructs students, disciples and followers in the methodology and philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Swami Narasingha has written many articles for such spiritual journals as *Clarion Call*, *Gaudiya Vedanta*, *Gaudiya Touchstone* and *KrsnaTalk*. He has also authored several books such as *Vaishnava India*, *Kumbha Mela*, *Evolution of Theism*, *The Authorized Sri Caitanya-Sarasvata Parampara*, *The Meaning of Sannyasa*, *Sri Damodara-katha*, *Sri Gayatri Mantrartha Dipika*, *Prakrita-rasa Aranya-chedini*, and a commentary to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura's *Prakrita-rasa Shata-dusini* as well as a commentary to *Bhagavad-gita*.

In addition to these literary contributions of his own, Swami Narasingha has edited and published *In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life* by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Words from the Guardian of Devotion*, *Follow the Angels*, *Encounters with Divinity*, and *Upadeshamrta* by Swami B.R. Shridhara as well as the book *Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakura*, describing the life and precepts of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura with many rare photos.

Swami Narasingha has also been the inspiration behind DevaVision Productions, producing documentaries such as *The Universal Teacher*, *Kumbha Mela*, *Gandaki* and *Himalayan Pilgrimage*. DevaVision Productions has also produced a series of lectures by Swami B.R. Shridhara such as *Gayatri*, *Absolute Harmony*, *Darshana*, *Ujjvala-nilamani*, *Fools Rush in Where Angels Fear to Tread* as well as *The Art of Sadhana* series by Swami B. P. Puri.

Swami Narasingha spends most of his time in India sharing his knowledge of the *Bhagavad-gita* as well as Mexico, where he also has an *ashrama*. Swami Narasingha also visits various countries in Europe where he has students in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy and Germany.

