

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky
On the Secret Cycles



Cycles and Avataras

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (CYCLES AND AVATARAS) XIV pp. 353-57.

We have already drawn attention to the facts that the record of the life of a World-Saviour is emblematical, and must be read by its mystic meaning, and that the figures 432 have a cosmic evolutionary significance. We find these two facts throwing light on the origin of the exoteric Christian religion, and clearing away much of the obscurity surrounding its beginnings. For is it not clear that the names and characters in the Synoptical Gospels and in that of St. John are not historical? Is it not evident that the compilers of the life of Christ, desirous to show that the birth of their Master was a cosmic, astronomical, and divinely-pre-ordained event, attempted to coordinate the same with the end of the secret cycle, 4,320? When facts are collated this answers to them as little as does the other cycle of "thirty-three solar years, seven months, and seven days," which has also been brought forward as supporting the same claim, the soli-lunar cycle in which the Sun gains on the Moon one solar year. The combination of the three figures, 4, 3, 2, with ciphers according to the cycle and Manvantara concerned, was, and is, pre-eminently Hindu. It will remain a secret even though several of its significant features are revealed. It relates, for instance, to the Pralaya of the races in their periodical dissolution, before which event a special Avatāra has always to descend and incarnate on earth. These figures were adopted by all the older nations, such as those of Egypt and Chaldæa, and before them were current among the Atlanteans. Evidently some of the more learned among the early Church Fathers who had dabbled, whilst Pagans, in temple secrets, knew them to relate to the Avatāric or Messianic Mystery, and tried to apply this cycle to the birth of their Messiah; they failed because the figures relate to the respective ends of the Root-Races and not to any individual. In their badly-directed efforts, moreover, an error of five years occurred. Is it possible, if their claims as to the importance and universality of the event were correct, that such a vital mistake should have been allowed to creep into a chronological computation pre-ordained and traced in the heavens by the finger of God? Again, what were the Pagan and even Jewish Initiates doing, if this claim as to Jesus be correct? Could they, the custodians of the key to the secret cycles and Avatāras, the heirs of all the Āryan, Egyptian, and Chaldæan wisdom, have failed to recognize their great "God-Incarnate," one with Jehovah,¹ their Saviour of the latter days, him whom all the nations of Asia still expect as their Kalki-Avatāra, Maitreya-Buddha, Saoshyant, Messiah, *etc.*?

The simple secret is this: There are cycles within greater cycles, which are all contained in the one Kalpa of 4,320,000 years. It is at the end of this cycle that the

¹ In the 1,326 places in the *New Testament*, where the word "God" is mentioned, nothing signifies that in God are included more beings than God. On the contrary in 17 places God is called the only God. The places where the Father is so called amount to 320. In 105 places God is addressed with high-sounding titles. In 90 places all prayers and thanks are addressed to the Father; 300 times in the *New Testament* is the Son declared to be inferior to the Father; 85 times is Jesus called the "Son of Man"; 70 times is he called a man. In not one single place in the Bible is it said that God holds within him three different Beings or Persons, and yet is one Being or Person. — Dr. Karl von Bergen's *Lectures in Sweden*.

Kalki-Avatāra is expected — the Avatāra whose name and characteristics are secret, who will come forth from Śambhala, the “City of Gods,” which is in the West for some nations, in the East for others, in the North or South for yet others. And this is the reason why, from the Indian Rishi to Virgil, and from Zoroaster down to the latest Sibyl, all have, since the beginning of the Fifth Race, prophesied, sung, and promised the cyclic return of the Virgin — Virgo, the constellation — and the birth of a divine child who should bring back to our earth the Golden Age.¹

No one, however fanatical, would have sufficient hardihood to maintain that the Christian era has ever been a return to the Golden Age — Virgo having actually entered into Libra since then. Let us trace as briefly as possible the Christian traditions to their true origin.

First of all, they discover in a few lines from Virgil a direct prophecy of the birth of Christ. Yet it is impossible to detect in this prophecy any feature of the present age. It is in the famous fourth *Eclogue* in which, half a century before our era, Pollio is made to ask the Muses of Sicily to sing to him about greater events.

The last era of Cumæan song is now arrived and the grand series of ages [that series which recurs again and again in the course of our mundane revolution] begins afresh. Now the Virgin Astræa returns, and the reign of Saturn recommences. Now a new progeny *descends from the celestial realms*. Do thou, chaste Lucina, smile propitious to the infant Boy who will bring to a close the present Age of Iron,² and introduce throughout the whole world the Age of Gold. . . . He shall share the life of Gods and shall see heroes mingled in society with Gods, himself to be seen by them and all the peaceful world. . . . Then shall the herds no longer dread the huge lion, the serpent also shall die, and the poison's deceptive plant shall perish. Come then, dear child of the Gods, great descendant of Jupiter! . . . The time is near. See, the world is shaken with its globe saluting thee: the earth, the regions of the sea, and the heavens sublime.³

It is in these few lines, called the “Sibylline prophecy about the coming of Christ,” that his followers now see a direct foretelling of the event. Now who will presume to maintain that either at the birth of Jesus or since the establishment of the so-called Christian religion, any portion of the above-quoted sentences can be shown as prophetic? Has the “last age” — the Age of Iron, or Kali-Yuga — closed since then? Quite the reverse, since it is shown to be in full sway just now, not only because the Hindus use the name, but by universal personal experience. Where is that “new race that has descended from the celestial realms”? Or is it our present race, with nations ever red-hot for fight, jealous and envious, ready to pounce upon each other, showing mutual hatred that would put to blush cats and dogs, ever lying and deceiving one another? Is it this age of ours that is the promised “Golden Age” — in which neither the venom of the serpent nor of any plant is any longer lethal, and in which we are all secure under the mild sway of God-chosen sovereigns? The wildest fancy of an

¹ [See “Kali-Yuga and the Kalki-Avatara,” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series.]

² Kali-Yuga, the Black or Iron Age.

³ Virgil, *Eclogue*, iv

opium-eater could hardly suggest a more inappropriate description, if it is to be applied to our age or to any age since the year one of our era. What of the mutual slaughter of sects, of Christians by Pagans, and of Pagans and Heretics by Christians; the horrors of the Middle Ages and of the Inquisition; Napoleon, and since his day, an “armed peace” at best — at the worst, torrents of blood, shed for supremacy over acres of land, and a handful of heathen: millions of soldiers under arms, ready for battle; a diplomatic body playing at Cains and Judases; and instead of the “mild sway of a divine sovereign” the universal, though unrecognised, sway of Caesarism, of “might” in lieu of “right,” and the breeding therefrom of anarchists, socialists, *pétroleuses*,¹ and destroyers of every description?

The Sibylline prophecy and Virgil’s inspirational poetry remain unfulfilled in every point, as we see.

The fields are yellow with soft ears of corn;

— but so they were before our era:

The blushing grapes shall hang from the rude brambles, and dewy honey shall [or may] distil from the rugged oak;

— but they have not thus done, so far. We must look for another interpretation. What is it? The Sibylline Prophetess spoke, as thousands of other Prophets and Seers have spoken, though even the few such records that have survived are rejected by Christian and infidel, and their interpretations are only allowed and accepted among the Initiated. The Sibyl alluded to cycles in general and to the great cycle especially. Let us remember how the *Purānas* corroborate the above, among others the *Vishnu-Purāna*.

When the practices taught by the Vedas, and the Institutes of Law shall have nearly ceased, and the close of the Kali-age [or yuga, the “Iron Age” of Virgil] shall be nigh, a portion of that divine Being who exists, of his own spiritual nature, in the character of Brahmā and who is the beginning and the end [*Alpha and Omega*] . . . shall descend upon earth: he will be born in the family of Vishnuyaśas — an eminent Brāhman of Śambhala. . . . endowed with the eight superhuman faculties. By his irresistible might he will destroy . . . all whose minds are devoted to iniquity. He will then re-establish righteousness upon earth; and the minds of those who live at the end of the [Kali] Age shall be awakened, and shall be as pellucid as crystal.² The men who are thus changed by virtue of that peculiar time shall be as the seeds of human beings [the Śishta, the survivors of the future cataclysm], and shall give birth to a race who shall follow the laws of the Krita [or Satya] Yuga [the age of purity, or the “Gold-

¹ [Pétroleuses were, according to popular rumours at the time, female supporters of the Paris Commune, accused of burning down much of Paris during the last days of the Commune in May 1871. During May, when Paris was being recaptured by loyalist Versaillais troops, rumours circulated that lower-class women were committing arson against private property and public buildings, using bottles full of petroleum or paraffin (similar to modern-day Molotov cocktails) which they threw into cellar windows, in a deliberate act of spite against the government.]

² At the close of our Race, people, it is said, through suffering and discontent, will become more spiritual. Clairvoyance will become a general faculty. We shall be approaching the spiritual state of the Third and Second Races.

en Age”]. As it is said: “When the sun and moon and Tishya [asterisms] and the planet Jupiter are in one mansion the Krita Age [the Golden] shall return.”¹

The astronomical cycles of the Hindus — those taught publicly — have been sufficiently well understood, but the esoteric meaning thereof, in its application to transcendental subjects connected with them, has ever remained a dead-letter. The number of cycles was enormous; it ranged from the Mahā-Yuga cycle of 4,320,000 years down to the small septenary and quinquennial cycles, the latter being composed of the five years called respectively the Samvatsara, Parivatsara, Idvatsara, Anuvatsara, and Udravatsara, each having secret attributes or qualities attached to them. Vriddhagarga gives these in a treatise, now the property of a Trans-Himālayan Matha (or temple); and describes the relation between this quinquennial and the Brihaspati cycle, based on the conjunction of the Sun and Moon every sixtieth year: a cycle as mysterious — for national events in general and those of the Āryan Hindu nation especially — as it is important.



¹ *Vishnu-Purāna*, IV, ch. xxiv., 228-29. Wilson's translation. [London: Trubner & Co., 1868.]

Secret Cycles

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (SECRET CYCLES) XIV pp. 358-68.

The former five-year cycle comprehends sixty solar-sidereal months or 1800 days, sixty-one solar months (or 1830 days); sixty-two lunar months (or 1860 lunations), and sixty-seven lunar-asterismal months (or 1809 such days).

In his *Kāla-Sankalita*, Col. Warren very properly regards these years as cycles; this they are, for each year has its own special importance as having some bearing upon, and connection with, specified events in individual horoscopes. He writes that in the cycle of sixty there

. . . are contained five cycles of twelve years, each supposed equal to one year of the planet (Brihaspati, or Jupiter) . . . I mention this cycle because I found it mentioned in some books, but I know of no nation or tribe that reckons time after that account.¹

The ignorance is very natural, since Col. Warren could know nothing of the secret cycles and their meanings. He adds:

The names of the five cycles or Yugas are: . . . Samvatsara, Parivatsara, Idvatsara, Anuvatsara, Udravatsara.

The learned Colonel might, however, have assured himself that there were “other nations” which had the same secret cycle, if he had but remembered that the Romans also had their *lustrum* of five years (from the Hindus undeniably) which represented the same period if multiplied by 12.² Near Benares there are still the relics of all these cycle-records, and of astronomical instruments cut out of solid rock, the everlasting records of Archaic Initiation, called by Sir W. Jones (as suggested by the prudent Brāhmans who surrounded him) old “back records” or reckonings. But in Stonehenge they exist to this day. Godfrey Higgins says that Waltire found the barrows of tumuli surrounding this giant-temple represented accurately the situation and magnitude of the fixed stars, forming a complete orrery or planisphere.³ As Colebrooke found out, it is the cycle of the *Vedas*, recorded in the *Jyotisha*, one of the *Vedāngas*, a treatise on Astronomy, which is the basis of calculation for all other cycles, larger or smaller;⁴ and the *Vedas* were written in characters, archaic though they be, long after those natural observations, made by the aid of their gigantic mathematical and astronomical instruments, had been recorded by the men of the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 212. [See also Col. Warren's *Collection of Memoirs on the Various Modes According to which the nations of the Southern Parts of India Divide Time, etc.*, printed at the College Press, Madras 1825.]

² At any rate, the temple secret meaning was the same.

³ [*The Celtic Druids, etc.*, London, Ridgway & Sons, 1829, p. xviii; offset by the Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, California 1977.]

⁴ “On the Sacred Writings of the Hindus,” by H.T. Colebrooke, in *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. viii, p. 489 *et seq.*

Third Race, who had received their instruction from the Dhyāni-Chohans. Thomas Maurice speaks truly when he observes that all such . . .

Circular stone monuments were intended as durable symbols of astronomical cycles by a race who, not having, or [for political reasons] forbidding the use of letters, had no other permanent method of instructing their disciples, or handing down their knowledge to posterity.¹

He errs only in the last idea. It was to conceal their knowledge from profane posterity, leaving it as an heirloom only to the Initiates, that such monuments, at once rock observatories and astronomical treatises, were cut out.

It is no news that as the Hindus divided the earth into seven zones, so the more western peoples — Chaldæans, Phœnicians, and even the Jews, who got their learning either directly or indirectly from the Brāhmans — made all their secret and sacred numerations by 6 and 12, though using the number 7 whenever this would not lend itself to handling. Thus the numerical base of 6, the exoteric figure given by Āryabhatta, was made good use of. From the first secret cycle of 600 — the Naros, transformed successively into 60,000 and 60 and 6, and, with other noughts added into other secret cycles — down to the smallest, an Archaeologist and Mathematician can easily find it repeated in every country, known to every nation. Hence the globe was divided into 60 degrees, which, multiplied by 60, became 3,600, the “great year.” Hence also the hour with its 60 minutes of 60 seconds each. The Asiatic people count a cycle of 60 years also, after which comes the lucky seventh decad, and the Chinese have their small cycle of 60 days, the Jews of 6 days, the Greeks of 6 centuries — the Naros again.

The Babylonians had a great year of 3,600, being the Naros multiplied by 6. The Tatar cycle called Van was 180 years, or three sixties; this multiplied by 12 times 12 = 144, makes 25,920 years, the exact period of revolution of the heavens.

India is the birthplace of arithmetic and mathematics; as “Our Figures,” in *Chips from a German Workshop*, Vol. II, by Prof. Max Müller, shows beyond a doubt. As well explained by Krishna Śāstri Godbole in *The Theosophist*:

The Jews . . . represented the units (1-9) by the first nine letters of their alphabet; the tens (10-90) by the next nine letters; the first four hundreds (100-400) by the last four letters, and the remaining ones (500-900) by the second forms of the letters *kāf* (11th), *mīm* (13th), *nūn* (13th), *pe* (17th), and *sād* (18th); and they represented other numbers by combining these letters according to their value. . . . The Jews of the present period still adhere to this practice of notation in their Hebrew books. The Greeks had a numerical system similar to that used by the Jews, but they carried it a little further by using letters of the alphabet with a dash or slant-line behind, to represent thousands (1000-9000), tens of thousands (10,000-90,000) and one hundred of thousands (100,000); the last, for instance, being represented by *rho* with a dash behind, while *rho* singly represented 100. The Romans represented all numerical values by the combination (additive when the second letter is of equal or less value) of six letters of

¹ [See Vol. VI, pt. i, p. 146 of *Indian Antiquities*, etc., London, W. Richardson, 1796.]

their alphabet: i (=1), v (=5), x (=10), c (for “centum” =100), d (=500), and m (=1000): thus 20=xx, 15=xv, and 9=ix. These are called the Roman numerals, and are adopted by all European nations when using the Roman alphabet. The Arabs at first followed their neighbours, the Jews, in their method of computation, so much so that they called it Abjād from the first four Hebrew letters — *ālif*, *beth*, *gimel* — or rather *jimel*, that is *jīm*. (Arabic being wanting in “g,” and *dāleth*, representing the first four units. But when in the early part of the Christian era, they came to India as traders, they found the country already using for computation the decimal scale of notation, which they forthwith borrowed literally; *viz.*, without altering its method of writing from left to right, at variance with their own mode of writing, which is from right to left. They introduced this system into Europe through Spain and other European countries lying along the coast of the Mediterranean and under their sway, during the dark ages of European history. It thus becomes evident that the Āryan knew well Mathematics or the science of computation at a time when all other nations knew but little, if anything, of it. It has also been admitted that the knowledge of Arithmetic and Algebra was first obtained from the Hindus by the Arabs, and then taught by them to the Western nations. This fact convincingly proves that the Āryan civilisation is older than that of any other nation in the world; and as the *Vedas* are avowedly proved the oldest work of that civilisation, a presumption is raised in favour of their great antiquity. . . .¹

But while the Jewish nation, for instance — regarded so long as the first and oldest in the order of creation — knew nothing of arithmetic and remained utterly ignorant of the decimal scale of notation — the latter existed for ages in India before the actual era.

To become certain of the immense antiquity of the Āryan Asiatic nations and of their astronomical records one has to study more than the *Vedas*. The secret meaning of the latter will never be understood by the present generation of Orientalists; and the astronomical works which give openly the real dates and prove the antiquity of both the nation and its science, elude the grasp of the collectors of ollas and old manuscripts in India, the reason being too obvious to need explanation. Yet there are Astronomers and Mathematicians to this day in India, humble Śāstrīs and Pandits, unknown and lost in the midst of that population of phenomenal memories and metaphysical brains, who have undertaken the task and have proved to the satisfaction of many that the *Vedas* are the oldest works in the world. One of such is the Śāstri just quoted, who published in *The Theosophist*² an able treatise proving astronomically and mathematically that:

If . . . the Post-Vaidika works alone, the *Upanishads*, the *Brāhmanas*, *etc.*, *etc.*, down to the *Purānas*, when examined critically carry us back to 20,000 BC, then the time of the composition of the *Vedas* themselves cannot be less than

¹ “Antiquity of the *Vedas*,” *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, August 1881, p. 239

² Vol. II, August & September, 1881; Vol. III, October, November, December, 1881; February, 1882

30,000 BC in round numbers, a date which we may take at present as the age of that Book of Books.¹

And what are his proofs?

Cycles and the evidence yielded by the asterisms. Here are a few extracts from his rather lengthy treatise, selected to give an idea of his demonstrations and bearing directly on the quinquennial cycle spoken of just now. Those who feel interested in the demonstrations and are advanced mathematicians can turn to the article itself, "Antiquity of the *Vedas*," and judge for themselves.

10. Somākara in his commentary on the *Śesha Jyotisha* quotes a passage from the *Śatapatha-Brāhmana* which contains an observation on the change of the tropics, and which is also found in the *Sākhāyana Brāhmana*, as has been noticed by Prof. Max Müller in his preface to *Rigveda Samhitā*. (Vol. IV, p. xx, fn.) The passage is this:

"The full-moon night in Phālgunī is the first night of Samvatsara, the first year of the quinquennial age."

This passage clearly shows that the quinquennial age which, according to the sixth verse of the *Jyotisha*, begins on the 1st of Māgha (January–February), once began on the 15th of Phālgunī (February–March). Now when the 15th of Phālgunī of the first year called Samvatsara of the quinquennial age begins, the moon, according to the *Jyotisha*, is in:

$$\frac{95}{124} \text{ th } \left(= \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{3 + \frac{8}{29}}} \right) \text{ or } \frac{3}{4} \text{ th of the Uttarā Phālgunī,}$$

and the sun in $\frac{33}{124} \text{ th } \left(= \frac{1}{3 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{8}{25}}} \right) \text{ or } \frac{1}{4} \text{ th of Pūrva Bhādrapādā.}$

Hence the position of the four principal points on the ecliptic was then as follows:

The winter solstice in 3° 22' of Pūrva Bhādrapādā.

The vernal equinox in the beginning of Mrigaśīrsha.

The summer solstice in 10° of Pūrva Phālgunī.

The autumnal equinox in the middle of Jyeshtha.

The vernal equinoctial point, we have seen, coincided with the beginning of Krittikā in 1421 BC; and from the beginning of Krittikā to that of Mrigaśīrsha, was, in consequence, $1421 + 26 - \frac{2}{3} \times 72 = 1421 + 1920 = 3341$ BC, suppos-

¹ *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, February 1882, p. 127

ing the rate of *precession* to be 50" a year. When we take the rate to be 3° 20' in 247 years, the time comes up to 1516 + 1960.7 = 3476.7 BC.

When the winter solstice by its retrograde motion coincided after that with the beginning of Pūrva Bhādrapādā, then the commencement of the quinquennial age was changed from the 15th to the 1st of Phālgunī (February–March). This change took place 240 years after the date of the above observation, that is, in 3101 BC. This date is most important, as from it an era was reckoned in after times. The commencement of the Kali or Kali-Yuga (derived from *Kal*, to reckon), though said by European scholars to be an imaginary date, becomes thus an astronomical fact.

Interchange of Krittika and Ashvini¹

11. We thus see that the asterisms, twenty-seven in number, were counted from the Mrigaśīrsha when the vernal equinox was in its beginning, and that the practice of thus counting was adhered to till the vernal equinox retrograded to the beginning of Krittikā, when it became the first of the asterisms. For then the winter solstice had changed, receding from Phālgunī (February–March) to Māgha (January–February), one complete lunar month. And, in like manner, the place of Krittikā was occupied by Aśvinī, that is, the latter became the first of the asterisms, heading all others, when its beginning coincided with the vernal equinoctial point, or, in other words, when the winter solstice was in Pansha (December–January). Now from the beginning of Krittikā to that Aśvinī there are two asterisms, or 26 2/3°, and the time the equinox takes to retrograde this distance at the rate of 1° in 72 years is 1920 years; and hence the date at which vernal equinox coincided with the commencement of Aśvinī or with the end of Revatī is 1920 - 1421 = 499 AD.

Bentley's Opinion

12. The next and equally important observation we have to record here, is one discussed by Mr. John Bentley in his researches into the Indian antiquities. "The first lunar asterism," he says, "in the division of twenty-eight was called Mūla, that is to say, the root or origin. In the division of twenty-seven the first lunar asterism was called Jyeshtha, that is to say, the eldest or first, and consequently of the same import as the former."² From this it becomes manifest

¹ The impartial study of Vaidic and Post-Vaidic works shows that the ancient Āryans knew well the precession of the equinoxes, and

" . . . that they changed their position from a certain asterism to two (occasionally three) asterisms back, whenever the precession amounted to two, properly speaking, to 2 11/61 asterisms or about 29°, being the motion of the sun in a lunar month, and so caused the seasons to fall back a complete lunar month. . . . It appears certain that at the date of *Sūrya Siddhānta*, *Brahmā Siddhānta*, and other ancient treatises on Astronomy, the vernal equinoctial point had not actually reached the beginning of Aśvinī, but was a few degrees east of it. . . . The astronomers of Europe change westward the beginning of Aries and of all other signs of the Zodiac every year by about 50.25", and thus make the names of the signs meaningless. But these signs are as much fixed as the asterisms themselves, and hence the Western astronomers of the present day appear to us in this respect less wary and scientific in their observations than their very ancient brethren — the Āryas." — *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, October 1881, p. 23.

² Vide his *Historical View of the Hindu Astronomy*, etc., p. 5; [in current reprint of the 1825 ed. by Biblio-Verlag, Osnabrück, 1970]

that the vernal equinox was once in the beginning of Mūla, and Mūla was reckoned the first of the asterisms when they were twenty-eight in number, including Abhijit. Now there are fourteen asterisms or 180° from the beginning of Mrigaśirsha to that of Mūla, and hence the date at which the vernal equinox coincided with the beginning of Mūla was at least $3341 + 180 \times 72 = 16,301$ BC. The position of the four principal points on the ecliptic was then as given below:

The winter solstice in the beginning of Uttarā-Phālgunī in the month of Śrāvana.

The vernal equinox in the beginning of Mūla in Kārttika.

The summer solstice in the beginning of Pūrva-Bhādrapādā in Māgha.

The autumnal equinox in the beginning of Mrigaśirsha in Vaishākha.

A proof from the Bhagavad Gita

13. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as well as the *Bhāgavata*, makes mention of an observation which points to a still more remote antiquity than the one discovered by Mr. Bentley. The passages are given in order below:

“I am the Mārgaśirsha [*viz.* the first] among the months and the spring [*viz.* the first] among the seasons.”

This shows that at one time the first month of spring was Mārgaśirsha. A season includes two months, and the mention of a month suggests the season.

“I am the Samvatsara among the years [which are five in number], and the spring among the seasons, and the Mārgaśirsha among the months, and the Abhijit among the asterisms [which are twenty-eight in number].”

This clearly points out that at one time in the first year called Samvatsara, of the quinquennial age, the Madhu, that is, the first month of spring, was Mārgaśirsha, and Abhijit was the first of the asterisms. It then coincided with the vernal equinoctial point, and hence from it the asterisms were counted. To find the date of this observation: There are three asterisms from the beginning of Mūla to the beginning of Abhijit, and hence the date in question is at least $16,335 + 3/7 \times 90 \times 72 = 19,112$ or about 20,000 BC. The Samvatsara at this time began in Bhādrapādā the winter solstitial month.¹

So far then 20,000 years are mathematically proven for the antiquity of the *Vedas*. And this is simply exoteric. Any mathematician, provided he be not blinded by pre-conception and prejudice, can see this, and an unknown but very clever amateur Astronomer, S.A. Mackey, has proved it some sixty years back.

His theory about the Hindu Yugas and their length is curious — as being so very near the correct doctrine.

It is said in volume ii, p. 103, of *Asiatic Researches*² that:

¹ *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, October 1881, pp. 22-23

² [Originally published 1788–1839, the entire series has been reprinted by Cosmo Pubs., New Delhi 1979.]

“The great ancestor of Yudhishtira reigned 27,000 years . . . at the close of the brazen age.”

In volume ix, p. 364, [and 86] we read:

“[In] the *commencement of the Kali Yuga*, in the reign of Yudhishtira.”

And Yudhishtira,

“ . . . began his reign immediately after the flood called Pralaya.”

Here we find three different statements concerning Yudhishtira . . . to explain these seeming differences we must have recourse to their books of science, where we find the heavens and the earth divided into *five parts* of unequal dimensions, by circles parallel to the equator. Attention to these divisions will be found to be of the utmost importance . . . as it will be found that from them arose the division of their Mahā-Yuga into its four component parts. Every astronomer knows that there is a point in the heavens called the pole, round which the whole seems to turn in twenty-four hours; and that at ninety degrees from it they imagine a *circle* called the *equator*, which divides the heavens and the earth into two equal parts, the north and the south. Between this circle and the pole there is another imaginary circle called the circle of *perpetual apparition*: between which and the equator there is a point in the heavens called the zenith, through which let another imaginary circle pass, parallel to the other two; and then there wants but the circle of perpetual occultation to complete the round. . . . No astronomer of Europe besides myself has ever applied them to the development of the Hindu mysterious numbers. We are told in the *Asiatic Researches* that Yudhishtira brought Vicramāditya to reign in Cassimer, which is in the latitude of 36 degrees. And in that latitude the circle of perpetual apparition would extend up to 72 degrees altitude, and from that to the zenith there are but 18 degrees, but from the zenith to the equator in that latitude there are 36 degrees, and from the equator to the circle of perpetual occultation there are 54 degrees. Here we find the semi-circle of 180 degrees divided into four parts, in the proportion of 1, 2, 3, 4, *i.e.*, 18, 36, 54, 72. Whether the Hindu astronomers were acquainted with the motion of the earth or not is of no consequence, since the appearances are the same; and if it will give those gentlemen of *tender consciences* any pleasure I am willing to admit that they imagined the heavens rolled round the earth, but they had observed the stars in the path of the sun to move *forward* through the equinoctial points, at the rate of fifty-four seconds of a degree in a year, which carried the whole zodiac round in 24,000 years; in which time they also observed that the angle of obliquity varied, so as to *extend* or *contract* the width of the tropics 4 degrees on each side, which rate of motion would carry the tropics from the equator to the poles in 540,000 years; in which time the Zodiac would have made twenty-two and a half revolutions, which are expressed by the parallel circles from the equator to the poles . . . or what amounts to the same thing, the north pole of the ecliptic would have moved from the north pole of the earth to the equator. . . . Thus the poles become inverted in 1,080,000 years, which is their Mahā-Yuga, and which they had divided into four unequal parts, in the proportions of 1, 2, 3, 4,

for the reasons mentioned above; which are 108,000, 216,000, 324,000, and 432,000. Here we have the most positive proofs that the above numbers originated in ancient *astronomical observations* and consequently are not deserving of those epithets which have been bestowed upon them by the Essayist, echoing the voice of Bentley, Wilford, Dupuis, *etc.*

I have now to show that the reign of Yudhishtira for 27,000 years is neither *absurd nor disgusting*, but perhaps the Essayist is not aware that there were several Yudhishtiras or Judhisters. In volume ii, p.103, *Asiatic Researches*:

“The great ancestor of Yudhishtira reigned 27,000 years. . . . at the end of the brazen or third age.”

Here I must again beg your attention to this projection. This is a plane of that machine which the second gentleman thought so very clumsy; it is that of a *prolong spheroid*, called by the ancients an *atroscope*. Let the longest axis represent the poles of the earth, making an angle of 28 degrees with the horizon; then will the seven divisions above the horizon to the North Pole, the temple of Buddha, and the seven from the North Pole to the circle of perpetual apparition represent the fourteen Manvantaras, or very long periods of time, each of which, according to the third volume of *Asiatic Researches*, p. 262g., was the reign of a Menu. But Capt. Wilford, in volume v, p. 244, gives us the following information:

“The Egyptians had fourteen dynasties, and the Hindus had fourteen dynasties, . . . the *rulers* of [which] are called Menus.” . . . [Manus?]

Who can here mistake the fourteen very long periods of time for those which constituted the Kali Yuga of Delhi, or any other place in the latitude of 28 degrees, where the blank space from the foot of Meru to the seventh circle from the equator, constitutes the part passed over by the tropic in the next age; which proportions differ considerably from those in the latitude of 36; and because the numbers in the Hindu books differ, Mr. Bentley asserts that: “This shows what little dependence is to be put in them.” But, on the contrary, it shows with what accuracy the Hindus had *observed* the motions of the heavens in different latitudes.

Some of the Hindus inform us that “the earth has *two spindles* which are surrounded by *seven tiers of heavens and hells* at the distance of *one Raju* each.” This needs but little explanation when it is understood that the seven divisions from the equator to their *zenith* are called *Rishis* or *Rashas*. But what is most to our present purpose to know is that they had given names to each of those divisions which the tropics passed over during each revolution of the Zodiac. In the latitude of 36 degrees where the Pole or Meru was nine steps high at Casimere, they were called *Shastras*; in latitude 28 degrees at Delhi, where the Pole or Meru was seven steps high, they were called Menus; but in 24 degrees, at Cacha, where the Pole or Meru was but six steps high, they were called Sacas. But in the ninth volume (*Asiatic Researches*, pp. 82-83) Yudhishtira, the son of Dharma, or *Justice*, was the first of the six Sacas; . . . the name implies the *end*, and as everything has two ends, Yudhishtira is as applicable to

the first as to the last. And as the division on the north of the circle of perpetual apparition is the first of the Kali Yuga, supposing the tropics to be ascending, it was called the division or reign of Yudhishtira. But the division which immediately precedes the circle of perpetual apparition is the last of the third or *brazen age*, and was therefore called Yudhishtira and as his reign preceded the reign of the other, as the tropic ascended to the Pole or Meru, he was called *the father of the other*,

“ . . . the great ancestor of Yudhishtira, who reigned *twenty-seven thousand years*, . . . *at the close of the brazen age.*” (Vol. ii, *Asiatic Researches*)

The ancient Hindus observed that the Zodiac went forward at about the rate of fifty-four seconds a year, and to avoid greater fractions, stated it at that, which would make a complete round in 24,000 years; and observing the angle of the poles to vary nearly 4 degrees each round, stated the three numbers as such, which would have given *forty-five rounds of the Zodiac* to half a revolution of the poles; but finding that forty-five rounds would not bring the northern tropic to coincide with the circle of perpetual apparition by thirty minutes of a degree, which required the Zodiac to move one sign and a half more, which we all know it could not do in less than 3,000 years, they were, in the case before us, added to the end of the *brazen age*, which lengthen the reign of *that* Yudhishtira to 27,000 years instead of 24,000, but, at another time they did not alter the regular order of 24,000 years to the reign of each of these long-winded monarchs, but rounded up the time by allowing a *regency* to continue three or four thousand years. In volume ii, p. 105, *Asiatic Researches*, we are told that:

“Paricshit, the great nephew and successor of Yudhishtira . . . is allowed without controversy to have reigned in the interval between the *brazen and earthen Ages*, and to have died at the setting-in of the *Kali Yug.*”

Here we find an *interregnum* at the *end* of the *brazen age*, and *before* the setting-in of the Kali Yug; and as there can be but one brazen or Tretā-Yug, *i.e.*, the third age, in a Mahā-Yuga, of 1,080,000 years: the reign of this Paricshit must have been in the second Mahā-Yuga, when the pole had returned to its original position, which must have taken 2,160,000 years: and this is what the Hindus call the Prajanatha Yuga. Analogous to this custom is that of some nations more modern, who, fond of even numbers, have made the common year to consist of twelve months of thirty days each, and the five days and odd measure have been represented as the reign of a little serpent biting his tail, and divided into five parts, *etc.*

But “Yudhishtira began his reign immediately *after the flood called Pralaya,*” *i.e.*, at the end of the Kali Yug (or age of heat), when the tropic had passed from the pole to the other side of the circle of perpetual apparition, which coincides with the northern horizon; here the tropics or summer solstice would be again in the same parallel of north declination, at the *commencement* of their first age, as he was at the end of their *third age*, or Tretā-Yug, called the brazen age. . . .

Enough has been said to prove that the Hindu books of science are not disgusting absurdities, originated in ignorance, vanity, and credulity; but books con-

taining the most profound knowledge of astronomy and geography. What, therefore, can induce those gentlemen of tender consciences to insist that Yudhishtira was a real mortal man I have no guess; unless it be that they fear for the fate of Jared and his grandfather, Methuselah?

