

## Antiquity of the *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* or *Bhâgavata-Purâna*, from the classic literature of India

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The Sanskrit texts from India have always occupied a distinguished place in philosophy and universal literature. Just in Mexico they inspired great scholars such as Jose Vasconcelos,<sup>1</sup> Francisco I. Madero<sup>2</sup> and the Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz.

There is a veritable catalog of writers, poets, linguists and philosophers of almost all nations and movements, who have greatly appreciated and praised this treatise.

Indian Sanskrit literature consists of three main sources, in Sanskrit *prasthanâ-traya*, that includes: *Sruti* (the Vedas like *Rig*, *Sama*, *Yajur*, *Atharva*, and their commentaries called *Brâhmanas* together with the *Upanisads*), *Nyâya* (logic, philosophical treatises based on *Vedânta-sutra*) and *Smriti* (*Itihâsas* or epic poems, such as *Râmâyana* and *Mahâbhârata*, the text of which *Bhagavad-gîta* is part, and the eighteen *Purânas*, the texts of traditional history and cosmogony).

*Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* or *Bhâgavata-Purâna* (“the beautiful history of the Supreme Personality of Godhead”) is the last of the *Mahâ-Purânas* attributed to the sage Vyasa. It is, according to its own author, “the mature fruit of Vedic literature”.<sup>3</sup> It contains twelve Cantos for a total of eighteen thousand verses. Its 10th Canto contains a detailed narration of Sri Krishna's life<sup>4</sup> and His highest teachings are found in the 11th Canto.

It is rich in all the literary resources aimed at the didactic purpose of transmitting its philosophical system, therefore it is honored by the other puranic text.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins affirmed: “One of the most impressive things about the *Bhâgavata-Purâna*, for example... is the rigor of its thought...

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1 Vasconcelos, José. *Estudios Indostánicos*. 1922, edit. Saturnino Calleja, Madrid pp. 120

2 Idem.

3 *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* 1.1.3 *nigama kalpa-taror galitam phalam*.

4 In Sanskrit *Kṛṣṇa*. From the historical point of view, he was a prince philosopher of the Yadu dynasty, who lived c. 3200-3075 B. C. He is considered in the religious tradition as the most important incarnation of Visnu; although some texts, especially *Bhâgavatam* 1.3.28, qualify him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

5 *Garuda-Purâna* states: "The *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* is the explanation of *Vedânta-sutra* and an exegesis of the *Mahâbhârata*, it contains the explanation of the *Gâyatrî* mantra and is the essence of the entire Vedic knowledge, it has eighteen thousand verses and it is known as the summary of all Vedic literature". Op. Cit. in Goswami, Jiva. *Sri Tatva-sandarbhâ*. The Kṛṣṇa Institute. Los Angeles, 1987 trans. Kusakratha das, pp.71. cfr. *artho'yam brahma sutranam bharatartha-vinirnayah/ gayatri bhasyopurupo 'sau vedartha-paribramhitah /grantho'stada-sahasrah srîmad-bhagavatabhidhah*.

it is conceived systematically, with great scholarship".<sup>6</sup> The eminent Bhaktivinoda of the 19th century states:

If the whole collection of Hindu theological works previous to the *Bhâgavata* were lost in fire like the Library of Alexandria and only the sacred *Bhâgavata* was preserved as it is, no part of the philosophy of the Hindus would be lost, except the conclusions of atheistic sects. For this reason, the *Bhâgavata (Purâna)* should be considered a religious work as well as a summary of the history and the Hindu philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

For this reason the sages from India have compiled several exegetic texts,<sup>8</sup> summarized in the English presentation called *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam of Krishna Dvaipâyana Vyâsa* by Bhaktivedanta Swami, also widely eulogized by experts from universities around the world.<sup>9</sup> The first translation of the *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* appeared in French, by Eugene Burnouf in 1840. Scholars differ on the composition date of *Bhâgavatam*. The *Bhâgavatam* itself and the traditional sages teach that it was compiled at the beginning of the age that Hindus call Kali-yuga, while the colonialist English critics believed that it was composed from various sources in the 13th century of the Christian era.

Later, other scholars have brought evidence that the text already existed in the 9th century, and this is the theory that has become more generally accepted. However, various researchers have found evidence that the text was known in the 5th century or even earlier. From there the query arises. In this article we will give a general presentation of the results arrived at in Master degree thesis at the IBCH.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Hopkins, Thomas J. et al., *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Five distinguished Scholars on the Krishna Movement in the West*. Grove Press, Inc., New York.1983. pp.137. N.b. T. J. Hopkins earned his PhD at the University of Yale. Among his works, now used as text books for courses, is *The Social Teachings of Bhâgavata-Purâna*. University of Chicago Press, 1966.

7 Thakura Bhaktivinoda. *El Bhâgavata, Su Filosofía, Su Ética y Su Teología*, edit. *El Guardián de la Devoción*. México, 1998 pp.23

8The oldest exegetical commentary presently known is *Tantra-Bhâgavata* from the *pancharatrika* school. From the modern age there is Sridhara Swami's *Bhavartha-dipika* written in 11th century CE, then later, Madhva (13th century CE) wrote the *Bhagavata tatparya*. Other commentaries are: *Hanumad-bhâsya*, *Vâsana-bhâsya*, *Sambandhokti*, *Vidvat-kâmadhenu*, *Tattva-dipika*, *Paramahansa-priya*, *Suka-hridaya*. Vopadeva wrote the *Mukta-phala* and the *Hari-lilamrita*. Vijayadhvaja composed the *Pada-ratnavali*. Viraraghava from Ramanuja's school also edited *The Bhâgavata-Candrika*. Other works are the *Suvodhini* by Vallabha (in the school of Rudra) and *Bhakti-ratnavali* by Visnupuri. Among the Gaudiya Vaisnava commentaries (Chaitanya school) we have Jiva Goswami's *Krama-sandarbha* (16th century CE), the *Sarartha Darsini* by Visvanatha Cakravarti (17th century), the *Dipikadipani* by Radharamana, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's *Gaudiya-bhasya* (20th century).

9 Hopkins et al, Op. cit p.140.

10 Instituto Bhaktivedanta de Ciencias y Humanidades A. C., México 's High Studies College in Philosophy and Classic Theology of India, in validation agreement with the Bhaktivedanta College

This research questions the dominant paradigm in this field; admittedly the research presented here may not be sufficient to satisfy the specialists, who will only be able to evaluate it, examining the complete investigation. We will appreciate any constructive criticism that contributes more evidence to solve the problem.<sup>11</sup> The general readers are also invited to accompany the scholars in this adventure in one of the most controversial discussions in history, not only of Indian, but of the entire human thought.

### 1. Epistemology principles

Scholars of history, philosophy and sociology of science consider as one of the basic principles in scientific investigation distinguishing it from belief systems or pseudo-sciences. As expressed by Thomas S. Kuhn:

All scientific work is characterized by some divergences, and in the heart of the most important episodes in the scientific development there are gigantic divergences... As these two ways of thinking (divergences and convergences) inevitably come in conflict, it is inferred that one of the primordial requirements for the scientific investigation of the best quality, is the capacity to support a tension that, occasionally, will become unbearable. On the other hand I am studying these points from a very historical perspective, emphasizing the importance of "revolutions" for the development of science.<sup>12</sup>

This refers to the elementary dynamics that allowed some significant advances in the fields of scientific knowledge, as the academic study of Hindu culture including language and literature – Indology – is a scientific field that needs to be subjected to a continuous critical review of its paradigms. If this process is not accepted, we would face the problem pointed out by Carl Sagan: “When one excludes the possibility of making critical observations and engaging in discussion, she/he is hiding the truth”.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, in order to take this step of cognitive progress, Sagan suggests: “If we want to determine the truth on an issue, we should approach it with the

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from Belgium.

11 I invite interested Indologists to utilize “The Antiquity of *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* or *Bhâgavata-Purâna* from Classic India Literature”. Master of Arts degree Thesis. Horacio Francisco Arganis Juárez B.A. Instituto Bhaktivedanta de Ciencias y Humanidades AC. Saltillo, Coah 2006. 254 pages. H.arganisjuarez@yahoo.com.mx.

12 Kuhn, Thomas S. 1. *La Tensión Esencial. Estudios selectos sobre la tradición y el cambio en el ámbito de la Ciencia*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. México 1982. p. 249. For a deeper study see Kuhn, Thomas S. 2, *La Estructura de las Revoluciones Científicas*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Col. de Brevarios No. 213. 1971.

13 Sagan, Carl. *El Cerebro De Broca. Reflexiones sobre el apasionante mundo de la Ciencia*. Editorial Grijalbo S. A. México, 3 edn., 1984, p. 96.

greatest mental openness possible, and in full consciousness of our limitations and biases.”<sup>14</sup>

Regarding this investigation it must be mentioned that some experts have found indications that although European scholars first started the field of Indology and made considerable steps in research, their system of assigning dates was influenced by sociological and political factors, more precisely by the influence of their Christian bias and the British colonialist regime in India.<sup>15</sup> One of such scholars was linguist Max Müller (1823-1900), who created the datation model that has been generalized among the Indologists and in text books. This scholar explained his motives as follows:

India cannot be preserved neither governed with some profit for us without a good disposition of the natives; and by all means we need that... The religion of Indians is a decrepit religion and it does not have many years of existence left; however our impatience to see it disappear cannot justify the use of violent and disloyal means to accelerate its fall.<sup>16</sup>

This much will suffice here to mention that due to such cultural confrontation:

A) The antiquity of the texts, as accepted by the traditional history of India, was rejected by the epistemic obstacle expressed in 1825 by the British scholar John Bentley:

To maintain the antiquity of the Hindu books against the (biblical) absolute truths... on one hand undermines the entire context and the very same foundations of the Christian religion, because if we believe in the antiquity of the Hindu books... the above mentioned context would be pure fable and fiction.<sup>17</sup>

B) The originality of the concepts of Vedic literature was challenged. In the period of Indology's father, Sir Williams Jones, it was propounded that the predominant theological doctrine of India, the vaisnavism or bhâgavataism, had derived from Christianity. Therefore, all the texts that contained such philosophy, such as the *Râmâyana* and especially the *Mahâbhârata* and the *Purânas* like the *Bhâgavatam*, were automatically considered as composed after the beginning of the Christian period.

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14 Ibid. p. 95

15 Dasa, Goswami Satsvarupa, *Readings in the Vedic Literature*, Bhaktivedanta Books Trust, 1990.

16 Müller, Max. *Mitología Comparada*. Edicomunicaciones, S. A. España, cap. 9, p. 231.

17 Bentley, John, (1825). *Historical View of the Hindu Astronomy*, Osnabruck; Biblio Verlag, etd. 1970 p. xxvii.

C) The credit of authorship of the texts was challenged. It is now known that the composition of the Judeo-Christian literature was the work of many authors along its history, while the nation of Israel was formed and developed from some semi-nomadic tribes that subsequently became governed by kings. Another theory (now outdated) of some Hellenistic critics of the 18 century stated that the Illiad and Odyssey had not been written by Homer but rather compiled from a collection of various authors. The same speculative line brought the idea that ancient Indian literature was not composed by Dvaipayana Vyasa around the period of the *Mahâbhârata* war, but it was gradually compiled over a longer period of time by various authors, from the Vedas to the *Purânas*.

D) The historicity of the events described in Vedic literature was rejected, and classified as mere mythology. Raymond Schwab shows the roots of this prejudice: “They (the Indians) cannot understand that our religion is the universal religion for Earth, and that they can only produce mere fables and fantasies.”<sup>th</sup>

E) This colonialist approach spread to the German and French scholars who did not have political interests. Even the development of natural history based on Darwinist theories and the archeological discoveries that disproved the Biblical version could only shift the entire system of datation somewhat earlier. The excavation of the ancient cities such as Mohenjo-daro proved that the ancient Indian culture was flourishing before the time of Moses, but this only brought more and diverse theories.

The mainstream theory says that *Rig-Veda* is the oldest text, introduced in India around 1500 BC by the Aryan invader tribes coming from the Caucasus (early scholars said they came from Europe or Iran) and the other texts had been gradually compiled in the course of centuries. This theory gives some historical recognition to the *Mahâbhârata* war and its protagonists such as Krishna, but as the later epic rendition of a primitive society around the 10th century BC. According to this theory sage Vyasa and his successors, the Vyasas, compiled the *Mahâbhârata* and related texts from the 5th century BC until the later compilation of the *Purânas* between the 5th and 13th centuries. This theory has been an useful instrument for scholars but unbiased scholars have recognized that it presents several difficulties that cannot be solved, and above all it is nothing more than a non-verifiable theory.<sup>18</sup>

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th Jarocka, Ludwika et al, *El Rig Veda*. Editorial Diana, 1974 p. 82-83.

Before a rigorous observation the discovery of a problem is noticed, which Francis Bacon called *idolus specus*, “cavern idols”<sup>19</sup>, any problem that has not been subjected to a rigorous observation, and is therefore seen through prejudices based on personal tendencies and temperament, as well as religious, social, political or racial bias that influence the perspective of study. In other words, a researcher that has fossilized mind patterns will have a distorted vision of the studied object, will fit the facts into the cage of his own paradigms and suppress anything that could contradict them.

This biased approach is often the result of racial and national prejudices and personal beliefs, and makes new discoveries and genuine research practically impossible. However, the first requirement of scientific investigation is precisely the objectivity afforded by the elimination or at least the temporary suspension of all prejudice, by which the researcher is able to examine the facts at their face value and thus understand the phenomenon in itself. That is to say the phenomenonic application of the *epojé*. The psychological studies on the perception of reality have demonstrated that stronger prejudice and stronger beliefs in a particular theory increase the inability to properly evaluate the evidence in an objective way and to recognize possible mistakes.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Datation

Another problem in establishing the antiquity of the *Bhâgavatam* is exemplified by the calculation offered by the English critics Colebrooke and Wilson. According to them the *Bhâgavatam* must have been compiled in the 13th century CE, because the 12th Canto gives a chronology from which it is evinced that king Pariksit, described in the beginning and in the end of the text, lived 1300 years before king Chandragupta Maurya. The chronology seems to mention also three Andhra kings, tentatively dated in the 2nd century CE, so it was concluded that the text had been compiled in a later period. The entire speculation is based on a reference from the Greek historian Megasthenes in 400 BC in his work *Indika*, where he mentions king *Sandrakutus*, identified by later scholars as king Chandragupta Maurya. These scholars believed this to be the equivalent of the Rosetta Inscriptions, and on this calculation all the chronology of Indian history was built. The theory

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18 Nb: "The chronology of the history of Indian literature is shrouded in truly terrifying darkness"....But every attempt of such a kind is bound to fail in the present state of knowledge, and the use of hypothetical dates would only be a delusion, which do more harm than good". Cfr. Winternitz, Moritz. *History of Indian Literature*, 2a. Edn. Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi, 1971, Vol. I p. 554.

19 Gutiérrez, Saenz Raul. *Historia de Doctrinas Filosóficas*, edit. Esfinge México 1986 p. 111.

20 Rubio, Alfonsa y Briones, Ma. Del Rosario, *Como Estudiar con Eficacia, metodología del aprendizaje*, Edición del ITEMS, 1990 p. 69-70

elaborated on Chandragupta Maurya's grandson, king Asoka Maurya, who converted to Buddhism financing its expansion and organizing its councils, and who was deemed to have lived in the 2nd century BC. Thus the battle of *Mahâbhârata* was deemed to have been fought in the 10th century BC.<sup>21</sup>

The weak point of this theory is that Megasthenes made no mention of Chanakya, the great minister of king Chandragupta Maurya, and neither did Chanakya ever mentioned in his works any Greek Alexander or Megasthenes who visited the court of *Sandrakutus*. Another problem is that the two kings mentioned by the Greek historian as preceding *Sandrakutus* were *Xandramas* and *Sandrocyptus*. Such names have no resemblance whatsoever with the names of Nanda or Bindusar and Asoka, the kings who lived before Chandragupta Maurya. The only phonetically acceptable resemblances are among the successors of king Chandragupta Gupta I:

*Chamdramas=Xandramas*, and *Samudragupta=Sandrocyptus*. This means that the datation system must be rethought. This theory, presented at the University of New Brunswick in Canada by Prasad Gokhale, suggest that Chanakya lived around 1534 BC and king Chandragupta I in 325 BC, when he entered diplomatic relationships with Alexander the Great.

Still another problem is that the Buddhist Asoka was a king of Kashmir and not the grandson of emperor Maurya's Asoka.<sup>22</sup> This is significant, because it justifies this investigation, since it coincides with the historical version in *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam*.

Furthermore, probably the weakest point in the theory is the evidence that the *Purânas* are mentioned in earlier works, as we will mention in this presentation.

The genealogy of kings in the present age, called Kali-yuga in Hindu texts, has been confirmed by James Prinsep's archaeological investigations.<sup>23</sup> Such lists are mentioned in several *Purânas* and written in the future tense as they are considered prophecies. This means that we may have alternative theories that allow us to place the compilation of the puranic texts in a much more ancient date. Nonetheless, the theory of the British scholars that placed the *Bhâgavatam* compilation in the 13th century CE remained universally accepted until the second half of the last century. Then a mention of the *Bhâgavata-Purâna* was found in *Tahqiq-i-Hind*, a text written by Alberuni, a Muslim scholar that studied India in the 10th century CE. This created serious doubts for the theory and the datation shifted to the 10th century CE.

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21 Majumdar, Bimanbehari. *Krishna in History and Legend*. University of Calcutta 1969, p. 7-9.

22 Vid. Gokhale, Prasad. Part 5, 12. *Chandragupta, the Sandracottus. Antiquity and Continuity of Indian History* URL <http://www.hknet.org.nz/aryaninvasion-page>. 1998.

23 Wilson, Horace H. *Visnu Purâna*, Nag Publishers. 1980 p. lxxvii.

Critics of the historical antiquity of the *Bhâgavatam* say that the text mentions the invasion of the Huns that happened between the 4th and 5th century CE. However, we see that the same people mentioned in *Bhâgavatam* are also found in earlier texts, such as the *Lalitavistara*, Buddhist work that is dated to the 3rd century CE at the latest<sup>24</sup> and also in the *Mahâbhârata*<sup>25</sup> that is recognized as more ancient.

This evidence indicates that such race (the Huns) were already known much before the invasion of the 4-5th century. Besides the *Bhâgavatam* does not mention any invasion, but simply mentions their existence.

Others argue that the *Bhâgavatam* was influenced by the philosopher Sankara because of the similarity of ideas and language,<sup>26</sup> and Sankara is deemed to have lived in the 8th century CE. The *Bhâgavatam* therefore had to be a later composition.

Such idea seems rather convincing, but it does not stand to the verification of facts, because Gaudapada, the teacher of Govinda, who was teacher of Sankara, mentions a verse of the *Bhâgavatam* in his *Uttaragita-bhasya*<sup>27</sup> as well as two other verses of *Bhâgavatam* in his *Sankhya-karika*.<sup>28</sup> There have been attempts to discredit this evidence, alleging that another later author with the same name of Gaudapada had mentioned the *Bhâgavatam* verses, or that it was the *Bhâgavatam* text that quoted Gaudapada's writing.<sup>29</sup> The problem in this controversy is that there is no evidence yet to support such critical approach; there is no historical reference to prove the existence of another Gaudapada who may have quoted the verses in exam. On the other hand, researchers such as M. T. Sahasrabuddha have verified that such text was actually composed by Gaudapada.<sup>30</sup> Besides, the *Sankhya karika-vritti* and the *Uttara-gita* do not merely quote the verses, but also directly mention the *Bhâgavata-purâna*.

Another confirmation is found in a separate work *Nandî-sutra*, a fundamental text from the Jain school containing a list of books that should not be studied by its scholars. Such list clearly mentions *Mahâbhârata*, *Râmâyana* and

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24 Majumdar, Op. Cit. p. 60

25 Vid. *Mahâbhârata* 6.251.23-24.

26 Majumdar, Op. cit. pp. 62

27 Ibid. p. 61: *Uttara-gita -bhâsya* 2. 46 and *Bhâgavatam* 10.14.4. Apud. Das, Dr. Sambidananda *The History Et Literature of the Gaudiya Vaisnavas and their relation to other medieval Vaisnava Schools*. Sri Gaudiya Math. 1991, p. 93.

28 Cfr. *Sankhyakarika vritti* 2 and 51 and *Bhâgavatam* 1.6.35 and 1.8.52.

29 Tagare, Ganesh Vasudeo. *The Bhâgavata-Purâna*. Motilal Banarsidass. Delhi India. 1986, p. xxxv-vi

30 Cfr. Sahasrabuddha, M. T. *A Survey of Pre-Sankara Advaitavedanta*. University of Poona, India 1968



*Purâna-Bhâgavatam*, *Mathara-vritti*, *Sankhya-karika*, etc.<sup>31</sup> The *Nandî-sutra* is considered a work of the 4th century CE as Vallabhi, its compiler, lived 980 years after the Jain teacher Mahavira, who is supposed to have lived in the 5th century BC.

Furthermore, the *Mathara-vritti*, quoted by Gaudapada as the inspiration for his work *Sankhya-karika-vritti*, also contains the same two verses from *Bhâgavatam*.<sup>32</sup>

An objection was raised by Sushila S. Desai based on an observation of Belvekar who suggested a later modification of the original manuscripts, stating that in the *Mathara-vritti* translated into Chinese by the Buddhist monk Paramartha in the 5th century CE the verses from *Bhâgavatam* mentioned in Gaudapada's commentary do not appear.<sup>33</sup> The major obstacle to this objection is that its validation requires a series of manuscript specimens called *Collatio Codicum*, showing that such verses are not present in the sources quoted.<sup>34</sup> Another problem is that the Chinese translation of Paramartha may just have dropped the specific verses, specifically because the Chinese monk belonged to a school that opposed the *Bhâgavata* school and therefore he might have chosen to remove them to avoid giving credit to a doctrine he opposed. Thus we require much stronger evidence before we can consider such objection as valid.

Another point is *Bhâgavatam* rejects the monistic theory of the non-differentiated unity of the souls with God<sup>35</sup> and the conception of God as ultimately impersonal and amorphous<sup>36</sup> that is the stone base of Sankara's philosophy. To this it can be added that Sankara also mentions a verse from *Bhâgavatam* in his poem *Meditations on the Gîta* and he makes a reference to the *Bhâgavata* school in his *Sariraka-bhasya*.<sup>37</sup> Besides, Prasad Gokhale found

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31 Tagere, Op Cit. p. xxxv : *purâna-bhâgavayam* .

32 See *Mathara-vritti*, Karika 2 and 31. *Bhâgavatam*, 1.8.52 and 1.6.35 in *Annals of the Bhâgavata Research Institute*. Vol. X17. p. tiii. Cit. by Sambidanda, Op. Cit. p. 93.

33 Desai, Sushila S. *The Bhâgavata Purâna: a critical study*. Ahmedabad: Parshva Prakashan, 1990, p. 10-11.

34 Blecua, Alberto. *Manual de Crítica Textual*. Editorial Castadia. España, 1983 p. 43.

35 *Bhagavatam* 10.87.30 *saman anujanatam yad mata-dustaya* — “Men of limited knowledge who defend monism are misled by a false conception.”

36 See Ibid. 1.2.11. and 9.9.49: *yat tad brahma param sûksman; asunyam sûnya-kalpitam; bhagavân vâsudeveti; yam grnanti hi sâtoatah*": The Personality of Godhead, Vâsudeva {Krishna} is the supreme spirit. Being so subtle, some consider Him impersonal or void; but he is not like that. His glories are sung by the *satvatas* {or *bhâgavatas*}. “

37 See *Meditaciones al Gîta*, verse 8, *Bhâgavatam* 12.13.31 and *Sariraka bhasya* 2.45.

evidence that Sankara lived in the 5th century BC and Mahavira lived at least in the 10th century BC.<sup>38</sup> This means that we need to revise the conventional datation and to recognize that objections to the antiquity of the *Bhâgavatam* are not satisfactory.

One of most approved bases: J. A. Van Buitenen writes that the *Bhâgavatam* lauds the southern part of India (called Dravida desa) and its rivers Tamraparni, Kritamala, Payasvini and Kaveri, where it is predicted that many devotees of Krishna would appear.<sup>39</sup> This theory was proposed by Hindu scholars towards the end of the 19th century<sup>40</sup> and was also supported by others as G. V. Tagare. Tagare argues that the topographical description begins with the Dravida or south India, making eight geographical references to this area.<sup>41</sup> Also Bhaktivinoda mentions references in 10th Canto to a pilgrimage place called the Vênkata Hill, postulating that such holy place was established in the 8th century CE.<sup>42</sup> In the same way Friedhelm Hardy suggests in *Viraha-bhakti* there are strong similarities among some passages of the *Bhâgavatam* and certain poems of the Alvar poets from South India,<sup>43</sup> where the Alvars lived between the 5th and 9th century CE. He concludes that such passages in the *Bhâgavatam* must have been influenced by the Alvars' poetry: this is one of the most accredited theories for a datation of the *Bhâgavatam* in the post-Christian period.

However, a more rigorous analysis shows series of weak points of this hypothesis. Dr. B. Majumdar writes:

This verse refers to the Alvars, the most prominent of whom lived in the 9th century CE. However the earliest of the Alvars, such as Poygi of Kanchipura, Pudana of Mamallapuram and Pey of Mylapore, became famous before the 6th century. Still, the inscriptions of Nanaghat from the 1st century BC and Chinna of Gotamiputra clearly prove the existence of devotees of Vâsudeva (Krishna) in the South in ancient times.<sup>44</sup>

This suggests that the golden period of the Alvars might have been much earlier than generally believed. But this is not the only problem. S. M. Srinivasa Chari pointed out:

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38 See Gokhale. Loc. Cit. Part 5 .14-15-16. Gautama, Mahaveer, Adi-Sankara

39 *Bhâgavatam* 11.5.39-40.

40 Thakura, Bhaktivinoda. *Sri Krishna-samhitâ (The main purport of Bhâgavata Purâna)*. Vrajara Press (1998) India, p. 43.

41 Tagare. Op Cit. p. XI. See *Bhâgavatam* 5.19, 11.5.38-40, 4.3.30, 4.28.29-30, 8.7, 10.61.12?

42 See *Bhâgavatam* 10.79.13, Thakura, Loc. Cit.

43 Hospital, Clifford et al. *Vaisnavism. Cotemporary Scholars Discuss the Gaudiya Tradition*, Ed. Rosen, Steven j. Folk Books, New York, 1992 p. 71. Hospital, from the Doctorate Thesis (trad) *Los Maravillosos Actos de Dios: Un estudio en El Bhâgavata Purâna*, Harvard University.

44 Majumdar, Loc. Cit. p. 60-61

“The period when the Alvars lived. I would not like to venture to date this period for two reasons: (1) the dates are under dispute between the traditional scholars and the contemporary researchers, (2) they are not relevant for the purpose of presenting the Philosophy and Religion of Vaisnavism.”<sup>45</sup>

The precise period of the Alvars has been an object of controversy; but we can also suspect that many of these mystic poets lived in different times. One of the bases for the datation between the 5th and 9th century CE is the theory proposed by Hultzch, according to which king Parameshvara Vinnagara, lauded by the Alvar Tirumangai in his poems, was actually king Parameshvara Varman. Based on this theory R. Chaudhuri surmised that Tirumangai was a contemporary of king Narasimha Varma who lived between 625 and 645 CE.<sup>46</sup> Another idea presented as evidence is the identification of the Alvar Kulashekhara with king Kulashekhara in 788 CE. However, scholar Sambidananda admitted that there are divergences and incompatibility with such an identification and that some experts, as Bhardarkar, rejected the idea that king Kulashekhara and the Alvar Kulashekhara are the same person.<sup>47</sup> For example, one of the two wrote in Sanskrit and the other in Tamil. Also, the identification of king Parameshvara Vinnagara with Parameshvara Varma is not completely justifiable. Because *vinnagara* and *varma* are very different names and Narasimha Varma is also a different name. In fact there is no satisfactory evidence to support the conclusions of Hultzch and Chaudhuri and the dates still remain uncertain.

If we turn to the traditional sources on the Alvars, such as *Upadesaratnamala*, *Upadesaratnamalai*, *Guruparampara-Prabandham*, *Divyasuri Charitam*, *Prapananmrta* and *Pravandasara*, etc, we see that they unanimously point to a much earlier age, from 4202 to 2706 BC.<sup>48</sup>

Regarding the geographical mention of the rivers in south India contained in the verses in question, it is not particularly relevant to a datation system because the *Bhâgavatam* also mentions rivers and areas of north India and with more frequency. In fact, the most important events described in the text take place in the north, in an area that corresponds to the present states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Saurashtra, Gujarat, etc., with their respective rivers and pilgrimage sites. Just in the first

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45 Srinivasa, S. M. Cari. *Vaisnavism, philosophy, theology and religious discipline*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. 1994, 1.3. p.21

46 Sambidananda. Op. cit p. 115.

47 Ibid. p. 50-51

48 Ibid. p. 115, in Srinivasa, p. 19.

Canto thirteen verses describe the geography from *Mahâbhârata* and mention the river Sarasvati as still flowing.<sup>49</sup> References also exist to Prayaga or *prayagah*<sup>50</sup>, the place of the Triveni, the confluence of the three rivers Yamuna, Ganges and Sarasvati. Studies supported by top level technology confirm that this Sarasvati river dried around 2000 BC.<sup>51</sup> It is mentioned that the Sarasvati had tributary branches reaching Prabhasa in Gujarat<sup>52</sup> and the western region of the Sindhu.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, if we consider the few verses on the geography of the south, we also have to consider all the other geographical indications in the text.

Regarding the datation of the Venkata pilgrimage place in the 8th century CE, there is no doubt that the present temple may have been rebuilt at that time, but that does not mean much. Inscriptions found in the temple state that Indian kings mentioned their visits to this worship place already in the 9th century CE, and there are also traces of earlier foundations of a previous temple that existed before the new building.<sup>54</sup>

Researchers in this field have found mentions of this holy place dating back to the 4th century BC and other records show that this same pilgrimage place existed in times before the beginning of the Kali-yuga.<sup>55</sup> Bhaktivinoda also pointed out the weakness of such recent datation: “We strongly differ from such a conclusion.”<sup>56</sup>

Regarding the comparison offered by Hardy, it is not very relevant, because it only relates to the common quotes in different texts and not necessarily to an exclusive origin. Such reasoning would be a faulty conclusion of the type *post hoc ergo propter hoc* – “if A is followed by B, then A is the cause of B”. The proof of A causing B is more unlikely to obtain than to prove that A and B coexist at the same time.<sup>57</sup> In fact Thomas Hopkins and others have suggested that the Alvars were rather inspired by the *Bhâgavatam*.<sup>58</sup> Considering all these factors, we can certainly say that the theory that the *Bhâgavatam*

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49 *Bhagavatam* 1.4.15, 1.4.32-33, 1.7.2

50 *Ibid.* 7.14.30

51 *Vid.* Gokhale, Prasad. *Loc. Cit.* Part 3. 9 *The Saraswati-Sindhu culture.*

52 *Bhâgavatam*, 3.4.3, 3.1.19. Jiva Goswami has indicated another place of the story (10.34.1-2-3-4), near the actual city of Sidhapura Gûjarata.

53 *Ibid.* 10.78.18.

54 *Vid.* *Tirupati. History and Legends.* URL. [www.tirumala.org/tt-his\\_p7.htm](http://www.tirumala.org/tt-his_p7.htm). 2002

55 *Sri Vênkata Mahâtmya* appears in several *Purânas*: *Varaha*, *Bhavishtyauktara*, *Garuda*, *Brahmattara*, *Aditya*, *Skanda*, etc. It records the story of the wedding of princess Padmavati, the daughter of king Aksarajan, with the image of Vênkata, at the beginning of Kali-yuga. *Tirupati. History and Legends.* *Ibid.*

56 Thakura, *cit.* note No. 2.

57 Rubio, Alfonsa y Briones, Ma. Del Rosario. *Op. Cit.* p. 74-75.

58 Hopkins, Thomas J. *Op. Cit.* p. 102

originated in south India after the Alvars in the 9th century CE is at least controversial, as recognized by Buitenen: “The exact date of *Bhâgavata Purâna* has not been established yet... neither would I insist on text having originated in the south.”<sup>59</sup>

Another theory on the datation of the *Bhâgavatam* has been presented by R. L. Thompson, who suggests that the stars of the constellation called Sisumara mentioned in *Bhâgavatam* were visible in the sky from 1000 BC to 1000 CE.<sup>60</sup> This suggests the possibility that the *Bhâgavatam* was compiled in that period. No matter how attractive this theory is, a closer examination will show that one of the references used by Thompson is supposed to indicate the location of the star Polaris in the center of the Polar Axis.<sup>61</sup> However, in *Bhâgavatam* it is mentioned that the Polar star called Dhruvaloka was the fixed star in the center of the Polar Axis,<sup>62</sup> and according to modern astronomical studies the Polar star was not in that position from 1000 BC to 1000 CE, but rather in a period before 2600 BC. Such Polar star was Thuban or Alpha Draconis.<sup>63</sup> That indicates that the constellation called Sisumara must have been in that alignment in much more remote times, when the Polar star was Dhruva or Thuban, which disproves such theory. Thompson admits that such astronomical observation at least gives evidence of the possibility of “...a relative astronomical date for the old manuscript”.<sup>64</sup> Another factor indicated by Thompson is the fact that the *Bhâgavatam* mentions the signs of the tropical zodiac that must have been adopted from the Greek astronomers who invented them around 100 BC, especially from Hipparchus. Thus Thompson concludes that such alignments can not be traced to more remote times due to the different positions of the signs and the constellations.<sup>65</sup> This hypothesis of the Hellenistic influence on the Hindu texts of astronomy has been amply accepted in the academic circles, but other researchers have found evidence of different possibilities, especially of an origin of Hindu texts as independent from Hellenic culture.

With reference to the zodiac signs Da Gemadeite explained:

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59 Buitenen, van, J. A. B., *On the Archaism of the Bhâgavata Purâna*, (1996) in *Krishna, Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer. Honolulu East-West Center, p. 225-226.

60 Thompson 1, Richard L. *Mysteries of the Sacred Universe. The Cosmology of the Bhâgavata Purâna*. Govardhan Hill Publishing. Alachua, Florida 2000 p. 209-212.

61 Idem. Figure 8.2 and 8.3.

62 *Bhâgavatam* 5.23.6.

63 Thompson R. 2. *Vedic Cosmography and Astronomy. The mysteries of the Fifth Canto of Srîmad-Bhâgavatam*. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. USA. 1991 p. 103

64 Thompson 1, Op. Cit. p. 211.

65 Ibid. p. 206-207.

There is not doubt that... the magic and astrological practices of Chaldea and Egypt influenced the Greek civilization... the Greeks eagerly assimilated the oriental beliefs and the mythological figures from the people they met... The Egyptian calendar was perfect; it was divided according to the twelve zodiacal constellations, which in turn were sub-divided each in three parts... forming the divisions of the zodiacal circle.<sup>66</sup>

G. A. Betti also states:

The Egyptians can be considered as the fathers of the Chaldeans in the astronomical field... and it is known that the first Greek philosophers moved to the land of Egypt to study astronomy.<sup>67</sup>

Another factor is that many of the great Greek mathematicians, such as Pythagoras in the 5th century BC and Apollonius of Tyana in the 1st century CE, went to study in India, as Flavius Philostratus records.<sup>68</sup> In this connection O. Neugebauer writes:

We find ourselves here in an entirely new situation, because the influences of a later period have modified everything and given a vague and confused report of pre-history. This situation, especially tracing back to Ptolemy, does not offer any historical references, almost nothing is known about the astronomical knowledge of Hipparchus or Apollonius.<sup>69</sup>

This means there is no hard evidence to prove that the Greeks had such an influence on Greek culture. Some have used the argument of the Trigonometry Table of Hipparchus proposed by G. J. Toomer.<sup>70</sup> But as Thompson suggests, even Toomer admits the uncertain nature of such a document:

“... there are no extant Greek documents that contain Hipparchus’s table, not even in a fragmentary form. In fact, there is no explicit evidence about the nature of this Hipparchus's table or that such work has ever existed.”<sup>71</sup>

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66 Da Gemadeite, Tácito. *Astrología. Ciencia magia o superstición*. Editorial Vida, Miami Florida, 1987 p. 25.

67 Betti. G. A. *La Historia de la Astronomía*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Col. de Brevarios No. 118. México 1996 p. 33.

68 Betti. G. A. *La Historia de la Astronomía*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Col. de Brevarios No. 118. México 1996 p. 33.

69 Phillimore, J. S., *Philostratus in Honor of Apollonius of Tyana*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1912. Cit. by Thompson 2, Loc. Cit. p. 16.

70 Ibid. p. 299, in B. L. van der Waerden, D. Pingree, Cit. por Thompson 2, *The Role of Greek influence in India*, 1991 p. 195.

In this regard Neugebauer writes:

“We know that from the Pahlavi translations of the astrological writings of the first and second century (in Persia) such as *Teucer* and *Vettius Valens*, and from the presence of Hindu texts as well as the Roman *Almagest* dated around 250 CE under king Shapur I. During the reign of Khosoro I..., it was revised around 550 CE as the famous *Zij ash-Shah*, which has been demonstrated as heavily influenced by Hindu sources.<sup>72</sup>

From the perspective of Indian history, the *Chanakya niti sâstra* mentions the science of astronomy<sup>73</sup> in a period that was not connected to the Greek invasion or to Hipparchus. Furthermore we see that the texts of Buddhist literature mention that when the Buddha was born, astrologers predicted his religious mission.<sup>74</sup> Among the possible sources that mention the zodiac signs, R. Santhanam proposes the *Brihat Parâsara Hora*, written by Vyasa's father Parâsara, the author of other texts like *Parâsara Smriti* and *Parâsara Samhitâ*. Although Parâsara lived in the period of the *Mahâbhârata*,<sup>75</sup> Santhanam states that he studied astronomy from Saunaka, the author of one of the *Rig Veda* poems. This is confirmed by the fact that *Rig Veda* mentions that the sun orbits through the twelve zodiacal signs, clearly naming Simha, Kanya, Maithuna and Vrisha (Leo, Virgo, Gemini and Taurus).<sup>76</sup> Considering the antiquity of such text we need to accept the possibility that the Hindus knew about the zodiac signs before the Hellenistic times, as suggested by F. W. Franz: “The Hindus and the Chinese also had their own complex astrology systems”.<sup>77</sup> Also, Betti suggests:

It seems that such a time can be traced back at least forty centuries before Christ, to a people from Asia... that reached a very high level of civilization compared to other people and whose knowledge spread through all Asia, Europe and Egypt and, very likely, also to Mesoamerica. From the astronomy of these people we go to the Egyptian and Indian science of astronomy, thirty centuries before Christ.<sup>78</sup>

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71 Neugebauer, O. *A History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1975 p. 781.

72 Neugebauer, Cit by *ibid.* p.8.

73 Vid. *Chanakya-rajniti-sastra* (224, 225) in Subramaniam V. K., *Maxims of Chanakya* 1990, Abhinav Publications. New Delhi p. 132.

74 See *Buddha Charita*, *Lalita Vistara*, etc.

75 See Santhanam R. *Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra of Maharshi Parasara*. Voli Rajan Publications. New Delhi 1992, p. 10.

76 *Rig Veda* 1.164.11; 5.83.3; 6.49.7; 3.39.3; 6.47.5.

77 Franz, F. W. *El hombre busca de Dios*. Grupo Editorial Ultramar. México. 1990 p. 86.

78 Betti. Op. Cit. p. 20

This theory was amply discussed because of this point. It was suggested that the Greeks were not the first people to use the zodiac signs, but they were preceded by the Egyptians, who had contact with India before Hipparchus. Dennis Hudson argues that at least a part of the material contained in the *Bhâgavatam* was known in the entire Indian territory in the 3rd century BC, and that the archaic language of the *Bhâgavata Purâna* could in fact constitute a genuine tradition that is much earlier, at least dated to 400 BC.<sup>79</sup> However, there are researchers whose investigation shows that this date is not the last one. R. N. Vyas insists on a period around 900 BC, on the basis of the work of G. D. Dey, and mentions that some stories from the *Bhâgavatam* can also be found in the Buddhist *Jataka* texts.<sup>80</sup> One of the main objections against this theory is offered by G. V. Tagare:

The similarity among the legends in the Bh. P. (*Bhâgavatam*) and the *Jatakas*, in spite of the detailed demonstration for Gokuldas Dey, can not be considered as irrefutable evidence to determine the date of the Bh. P., because both works could have independently tapped from ancient Indian folklore and other traditional stories.<sup>81</sup>

This objection tends to invalidate Dey's work, but an attentive examination reveals that there is no serious proof of such conclusion either. Where is the evidence that these common stories were acquired from another source? Without supporting this research with verifiable information a theory simply remains a possibility. We are therefore reminded of the logic of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* – if A (the folklore) is followed by B (the texts), A is the cause of B. As we have already mentioned, the proof of A causing B is more unlikely to obtain than to prove that A and B coexist at the same time.<sup>82</sup> This is not the only obstacle. Demanding irrefutable evidence, as Tagare does, is beyond the power of scientific investigation, as K. Popper had explained: "Believing that 'scientific' theories are the absolute that cannot be challenged is more faith than science".<sup>83</sup>

Trying to disprove the influence of Buddhist literature from the *Bhâgavata Purâna*, some Indologists argue that one of Chanakya's works mentions the history of Krishna, saying that Dvaipayana Vyasa had cursed the hero's dynasty:

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79 Hudson, Dennis. "The *Srîmad Bhâgavatam* in Stone: The Text as an Eight-Century Temple and its Implications." *Journal of Vaisnava Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1995. Cit by Thompson 1. Op Cit. p. 11.

80 See R. N. Vyas, *Synthetic Philosophy of Bhâgavata*, G. D. Dey apud *Significance and Importance of Jatakas* Cit. por Tagare Opus Cit. p. xxxvi.

81 Idem.

82 Rubio, Alfonso et. alt. Loc. Cit.

83 Cit by Ramírez Valdez, Juan José. *Hermenéutica y Fenomenología en Paul Ricoeur*. Consejo Editorial. Gobierno del Estado de Coahuila. 1995 p. 17.



The reference is quite clear, although the sage or sages named here may be different from the name in *Mahâbhârata* and *Purânas*. The coincidence of the name of Vyasa is remarkable and suggests that this is the oldest tradition. The *Mahâbhârata* and the *Purânas* could not insert Vyasa in this episode, since he is supposed to be the author of these texts and in this version of the history he dies. They had to use other sages for the incident.<sup>84</sup>

The problem of this interpretation is that no passage of the *Bhâgavatam* or the *Mahâbhârata* mentions that Vyasa died. Furthermore, he did not even belong to the Yadu dynasty, the family of Krishna. Thus we can see that there is a positive coincidence between the names of the sages in such treatises, because Kamba and Kanva are the same character who is also named Narada.<sup>85</sup> The *Bhâgavatam* mentions other sages too, because it is a detailed work about the life of Krishna as opposed to the *Mahâbhârata*, whose main characters are the Pandava heroes and Krishna is an important but technically secondary character. Thus it is logical to admit that it does not give full details about all the sages, as it is the case with the text under scrutiny. Another point is that the *Bhâgavatam* indirectly mentions Vyasa in this episode, as Dr. Howard J. Resnick remarks in the translation of the text: *nârada-adaya* – Narada and others.<sup>86</sup> The Sanskrit word *adayah* clearly indicates that there were others. Also, because the author of the text is Dvaipayana Vyasa, he is not mentioned directly; but only implicitly. It must also be noted that this Indologist builds his case by using a Buddhist work that presents Vyasa as the cause of the curse.<sup>87</sup> The difficulty with such definition is that in this Buddhist work, known as *Ghata-jataka*, there are several distortions of the names and even of parts of Krishna's life. This is because the Buddhist text was produced by a school that was opposed to the *Bhâgavata* school, and therefore can hardly be considered a trustworthy source. However, this theory proves that the Buddhists knew about a compiler of the *Bhâgavatam*, named by the text itself as Dvaipayana Vyasa, and mentioned the childhood of Krishna among the cowherd boys of Vrindavana – the main subject of the *Purâna* we are examining.

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84 Preciado, Solís, Benjamín. *Primeras evidencias históricas sobre Kṛṣṇa*. Printed by Estudios de Asia y Africa, vol. XV, n° 4. El Colegio de México, 1980 p. 806.

85 Vyasa. *Mahâbhârata, El mayor poema épico de la India*. Tomo 2, Décima parte, cap. XIII, trad. esp. Julio Padilla. Edicomunicación S. A. Barcelona, 1997 p. 896.

86 *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam, Eleventh Canto. The Great Work of HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*. Continued by Goswami, Hridayandanda dasa et. alt. With Original Sanskrit text, Roman Transliteration and Elaborate Purports. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. 1982, pp.27

87 Preciado, Locus Cit.

Another point in this regard is that since Buddha is mentioned in the *Bhâgavatam* it was concluded that its compilation must have been done after the times of Buddha himself.<sup>88</sup> There are indeed several prophetic passages about the Buddha *avatara* in the *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam*, but they are generally expressed in reference to the future, and the name of Buddha as an *avatara*, or incarnation of Vishnu or Krishna, is also found in the hymn *Visnu-sahasra-nama* from *Mahâbhârata*.

Furthermore, A. Schweitzer points out:

“Later Buddhism contemplated the belief that from immemorial time the truth that leads to redemption had been proclaimed by several Buddhas. Therefore Gautama Budha, of the race of Sakyas, is only one among many.”<sup>89</sup>

This leads to suspect that the title of Buddha already existed before its use for Siddharta Gautama. However, our presentation will examine how this and other sources suggest that there are likely more indications of the datation, for example about the dates suggested by S. D. Gyani as around 1200-100 BC.

Tagare objected:

“...it is unacceptable, since the language of the Bh. P. (*Bhâgavatam*) is much more modern than the Vedic language that is presumed to have been in use in the period between 1200 and 1000 BC. Nevertheless, if Parîksit, the person to whom the Bh P. was narrated, reigned around 900 B.C, as demonstrated by Ray Chaudhari, the Bh. P. cannot precede Parîksit.”<sup>90</sup>

In this statement Tagare builds on the assumption that re-wrote the chronology of Indian history, as we explained at the beginning of our presentation, with Chandragupta Maurya's identification with the *Sandracutus* mentioned by Megasthenes, to establish a date for king Parîksit. However, as we already mentioned, this assumption has several weak points. The archaic language used in the *Bhâgavatam* indicates a remote time of its compilation, as observed by F. Meier, Buitenen, Smith, M. Frederick, Hudson and L. Rocher, etc. This contradicts the argument that tries to pass off the language of the *Bhâgavatam* as modern Sanskrit.<sup>91</sup>

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88 See Wilkins, W. J. *Mitología Hindú Védica y Puránica*. Edicomunicaciones, S. A. 1987 p. 128.

89 Schweitzer, Albert. *El Pensamiento de la India*, Brevarios del Fondo de Cultura Económica, núm 63. 1952 p. 110.

90 Tagare, Loc. Cit.

91 More information about the archaic language of *Bhâgavatam*, see Rocher, Ludo, *The Purânas*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz. 1986 p. 98 Cit. By Thompson 1, Op Cit; Buitenen, Op Cit. Smith, Frederick M. *Purânaveda, in Authority, Anxiety and Canon*, ed. Laurie L. Petton. Albany State University, New York Press 1994.

Prasad Gokhale suggests a likely date of composition between 3100 and 3000 BC.<sup>92</sup>

However, although this researcher presented archaeological evidence and astronomical indications that suggest an early date for the time when king Pariksit heard the conclusion of the narration by sage Suka, as described in the text, he did not elaborate on the antiquity of the text itself.

Regarding the revision of dates, P. V. Vartak theorized 5000 BC for this *Purâna*, stating that “the exact date of the War of *Mahâbhârata* is October 16 of the year 5561 B.C.”<sup>93</sup> Certainly innovation is part of the process of scientific investigation, and it can create paths to approach the solution of these problems, but the astronomical analysis contradicts the theory of Vartak. This astronomical analysis has been verified by several scholars such as Count Bjornstierna, S. Balakrishna, Henry Lawrence, P. Stapp, etc.<sup>94</sup> This gives inspiration to further exploration such as the present analysis, but it seems that such theory is not satisfactory. In conclusion, “scholars have been unable to reach a clear agreement on the date of the *Bhâgavatam*.”<sup>95</sup>

#### Proposed dates for the Bhâgavatam

Date / Scholars	
13th century CE	H. H. Wilson and Colebrooke
11th century CE	Dasgupta
9th-10th century CE	Sharma, Buitenen, etc.
9th century CE	Ingalls, Hopkins
6th century CE	Pargiter
5th century CE	Eliade, Hazra, etc.

92 Gokhale, Loc. cit. Part 4. 10 *Mahâbhârata Era*.

93 Vid. [Dr.Vartak@mexnet01.mcsa.net.mx](mailto:Dr.Vartak@mexnet01.mcsa.net.mx). [world-vedic] Exact date of Kuruksetra War; [vediculture@yahogroups.com](mailto:vediculture@yahogroups.com); Sábado 7 de Abril de 2001 2:57 AM URL: <http://www.swordoftruth.com/swordoftruth/archives/miscarticles/tsdotmw.html>.

94 Gokhale. Op Cit. *Mahâbhârata Era*. While reporting the variables of the chronological finds, we will give information on the possible dates of this historical event, according to different researchers.

95 Ludo Rocher, Cit in Thompson 1, Opus Cit. p. 10.

4th-5th century CE	Tagore, Krisnamurti
3rd century CE	R. Dikshitar
5th-4th century BC to 7th century CE	D. Hudson
10th to 9th century BC	R.N. Vyas
13th to 12th century BC	S.D. Gyani
20 <sup>th</sup> century BC	Kedarnath Datta (Bhaktivinoda)
30th century BC	Gokhale
50th century BC	P.V. Vartak.

### 3. Methodology

In order to estimate the antiquity of a text like this, without original manuscript, philologists use a method based on triangulation, uniting the qualitative and the quantitative methods as the investigation axes, designated in philology as the internal evidence (EI) and the external evidence (EE). The EI is obtained from the contextual philology or *conformatio textus* by examining the correspondences. The application of this concept identifies in the work two categories of indications: the Evidence (geographical, chronological quotes, astronomical, intertextuality) and the Contexts (social, economic, philosophical, religious, political). The EE consists of documental, epigraphic, numismatic, sculptural evidence and other finds to determine any discrepancy. After having recorded all the information, the data are processed in descriptive statistical measures of frequencies (absolute, relative and accumulated) that afford an objective evaluation of the problem.

### 4. Summary of the results

At the beginning of our presentation we expressed the question of the antiquity of the *Srîmad-Bhâgavatam* or *Bhâgavata-Purâna* of the Classic Indian literature. As a conclusion, we are presenting a summary of the data on the issue.

## 4.1 Internal evidence

### 4.1.1

The geographical evidence suggest a correspondence through all the twelve Cantos, with the central and northern region and north-west of India, with brief mentions of China and Siberia up to the Pamir mountains, while the southern region or Dravida is mentioned only in the 4th, 5th, 8th, 10th and 11th Cantos, with a proportion between 0.7% and 1%.

The references to rivers are mostly to Ganges, Yamuna and Sarasvati, while the rivers in the south are also mentioned in a proportion between 0.7% and 1%. In particular, the text mentions places that disappeared around 2000 years BC, when the Sarasvati dried up. Besides, among the southern rivers, the text mentions Chandravasa, Vatodaka and other lost ones that are not mentioned in the texts of the *bhâgavata* school dated from the 16th century CE. Also, the rivers are called by their ancient names.

The same applies to the ethnographic study, with a prominence of the clans mentioned in the *Mahâbhârata*, especially the Yadus, Bharatas, Yayatis, etc., and other famous clans from Asia, and more specifically from the north-western and north-central regions of India.

The fauna tends to be similar to the specimen whose remains were discovered in the archeological sites of the Sindhu cultures. Some other species characteristic of the northern region are mentioned, such as the crow, the camel, the swan – the last two are only found in the north-west region of India – and the yak, that lives in China and Tibet. Also, the mountains mentioned indicate the northern region.

We may therefore conclude that the text was composed in the period of the culture of the Sindhu and the Ganges. It is also interesting to note that the text mentions a global Flood.

### 4.1.2

Regarding the chronological sequence, there is an oscillation between the 1st and the 11th Cantos to the spoken tradition of the *Bhâgavatam* at the beginning of the Vedic Era, to the *Mahâbhârata* age, with the battle of Kuruksetra, the beginning of Kali yuga, with over 50% of the percentage. On the other hand the 12th Canto, containing the largest prophetic section, is deemed at 56% at the beginning of the Kali yuga, leaping forward in time towards different periods of the future history of India: 2.3% for Chandragupta Maurya, 1.7% for the period of the Nandas, etc.

On these later references three theories should be thoroughly investigated:

- a) The first, and obviously less likely accepted within the mechanistic paradigm of mainstream history, according to which the prophecies are the product of the mystic precognitions of the sages that recited *Bhâgavatam*.
- b) A second possibility: the copyists could have modified the text to support a chronological order that would emphasize the historical importance of the kings.
- c) A third scenario is due to the influence of the socio-political factor. The ministers of the kings were *brâhmana* priests, so it is possible that while acting as consultants and officiating the naming ceremonies for the princes, they chose to fulfill the prophecies in which they believed by naming the kings of such dynasties according to the lists of the *Purânas*, already known to them.

This possibility is suggested by the discoveries of D. Sarasvati, who collected the royal chronicles on the succession of kingdoms in Delhi. A sample of the documents shows that the kings were known under many names, of which few coincided with those of the puranic lists. This suggests that if such prophecies were actually from an earlier time in comparison to the chronicles, the compilers had used the most familiar names that appear in the lists so that such prophecies would be confirmed as true.

Regarding the concept of the four ages or yugas described in the text, such concept is not only found in the cultures and cosmogonies of the ancient world, in books like the *Zend Avesta*, the *Chinese Annals* and Egyptian texts that approximately date from 2500 to 3000 BC. We also find that in America, the Sioux have preserved from their ancestral times an oral tradition about this concept of the four ages, expressed with a semiology similar to the *Bhâgavatam*.<sup>96</sup> This suggests that such concept comes from a time previous to the Ice Age, when it is believed that man migrated from Asia to the Americas.

4.1.3 Astronomical evidence. The percentages vary in each Canto although a proportional tendency is seen of 50 to 75% in some Cantos in favor of the cosmographic model called Bhumandala. Parallel models are found in other cultures both in Asia and in America, which suggests that it was widely accepted in a period before the Ice Age. Also, although in a lesser degree, there are mentions of the seven-planet system, the constellation called Sisumara, the constellation of the Seven Rishis (the Great Dipper), the astronomical model of the Jyotir Veda, the conjunction of the star Rohini or Aldebaran (Alpha Tauri) that is dated in 3162 BC, together with the concept of the Milky Way as a Heavenly River and the system of Nakshatras or lunar mansions, all of which found parallels in China and Egypt, around 3000-2000

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<sup>96</sup> De Santillana, Giorgio et von Dechend, Hertha, Cit in Thompson 2, Op. Cit. p. 63.

BC. The highest percentage is 97.5% in favor of Dhruvaloka as the Pole Star, known as Alpha Draconis up to 2600 BC, and absent from then on until the 14th century CE.

These references do not correspond to the period of the first millennium of the Christian Era, since the Hindu astronomers of the first millennium state that the puranic model contradicts their observations.<sup>97</sup> This means that the astronomical observations in the *Bhâgavata-Purâna* coincide with the age of the *Mahâbhârata* and other archaic cultures.<sup>98</sup>

4.1.4 Intertextuality. This applies to the conscious or unconscious influence of other books on the specific work studied. Scholars say that even one single line can give evidence of such influence. The results of this variable are different in each Canto, although there is a tendency oscillating from 80% to 27% in favor of *Mahâbhârata*, and also for different texts like the Vedas and *Upanisads*, and in smaller degree for the *Brâhmanas*, *Upavedas*, *Râmâyana*, *Manu-samhitâ*, and *Pancharâtras*. The percentages confirm a period that is at the end of the Vedic Era and that coincides with the *Mahâbhârata* war.

4.1.5 Social contexts. A variable that registers growing values is the prominent glorification of the priestly class or *brâhmanas*. In all the Cantos of the text we find up to the 60.4% about the description of the four social classes and the four spiritual orders – the *varnâsrama*, or qualified casteism that is not hereditary and has a minimum degree of brahminical corruption, etc. This social scenario is in accordance to the *Rig Veda*, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, etc. The same applies to other categories that were prevalent in the cultures of the Sindhu Valley; while the use of the silk and the *Cannabis indica* flourished in China around 2700 BC. This demonstrates an obvious difference in the first millennium CE, with a society divided in many castes determined by birth, and an estimation of the *bhâgavatas* of the south toward the brahminical class.<sup>99</sup>

4.1.6 Economic contexts. One of the general characteristics that define the percentage from 45 to 79% in the text is cattle raising. There are also indications of the use of elephants, horses, donkeys and mules, goats, buffaloes, sheep and camels, of the practice of hunting and consumption of

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97 Vid. Bhaskara XI and Paramesvara XVI, Cit in Thompson 2 Op. Cit. p. 2-3.

98 Eliade, Mircea: "The Pillar of the world (Mount Meru) symbolism is also common in great civilizations such as Egypt, India, China, Greece, Mesopotamia..." See *Chamanismo*. Fondo de Cultura Económica 2º edit. Cap. VIII. México D. F. 1982, p. 213-214.

99 Vid Buitenen Op. Cit. p. 227.

meat, of gold and mining, of agriculture, ships and sailing, iron, silver, ivory and pearls, stones like marble, coral, diamond, lapis lazuli, emerald, sapphire, ruby etc. This evidence points toward a parallelism with the cultures of Sindhu and in a certain measure with the period of the *Mahâbhârata*.

4.1.7 Philosophical context. The text shows a percentage between 61.4% and 31.6% in favor of the theistic Sankhya school, followed by the schools of Yoga and other schools like Vaisheshika atomism, Gautama's Nyaya logic, Karma mimamsa, ahimsa, proto-buddhism and other atheistic (pashanda) movements such as Jainism, Lokayata school, etc. But there are no mentions of the treatises or philosophers from the 6th to the 10th century CE, such as Ishvara Krishna, Gaudapada, etc. This is why the evidence of the philosophical context tends toward the times of the *Mahâbhârata*.

4.1.8 Religious context. Through all the Cantos there is a tendency in favor of the worship of Brahma and Siva varying between 39% to 19%, followed by the pantheon of the *Rig Veda*, as Indra stands out, together with the ceremonies connected to him. In the 10th Canto we see a tendency in favor of Krishna, who subdued the main gods of *Rig Veda* such as Indra, Varuna, Yama and even Siva and Brahma, the most universally worshiped. In the 12th Canto we see king Janamejaya, a *bhâgavata* devotee, who tries to stop the cult of Indra and the *brâhmanas* that strive to defend him. These indications suggest the end of the Vedic age and the *Mahâbhârata* period, as opposed to the predominant religious context in the first millennium CE, when the cult of Brahma was almost extinct.

4.1.9 Political context. The text shows a rivalry for political power between the Vedic monarchy and the anti-vedic kings. There is also a presence of kings that were corrupt but not opposed to the Vedic culture, as the chiefs of the cowherd villages. Vedic monarchy had a tendency shown through 11 Cantos of the text that varies between 100% to 46.4%, while in the 12th Canto we see the increase of corrupt regimes. In the 7th Canto we only see a predominance of 92.2% for the anti-vedic dictatorship. It is interesting to see how the *Bhâgavatam* uses the word *râjâ* to designate the king, just like in *Rig Veda* and other old texts, together with *nripa*, *naradeva*, *mahârâja* and *râjendra*. There is a serious difference with the centuries from 9th to 10th CE, when the kings were called by titles like *mahâsamanta*, *mahâmandalesvara*, etc. while the feudal chiefs of lower categories had titles such as *râja*, *samanta*, *ranaka*,



*thâkura*, *bhoga*, etc.<sup>100</sup> In the centuries from the 5th to the 10th CE in south India kings were called *mahâradhirâjam*, *dharma mahâraradhirâja*, *agnistoma-vajpey*, *asvamedhayaji*, *daivaputra*, *shahanushai*, that were used by the Kushans, Shakas and the Sri Lanka dynasties in the Gupta period.<sup>101</sup> So the data coincide with the period of *Mahâbhârata*.

4.1.10 Language type. The results of the language analysis indicate an archaic form of Sanskrit, because apart from the particular style (*modus escribendi*) we see a metric pattern with a prevalence (71.5%) of verses of type *anustubh*, followed by verses composed of four lines or *padas* of twelve syllables, the *tristubh* of four *padas*/eleven syllables, some paragraphs written in prose, the *sakvari* verses, the four *padas*/six syllables, the *anustubh* variants, the variants of *tristubh*, the type *prateanpankti* together with the type of two *padas* of 24-24 syllables. As we see from these results, the data suggest the period of the *Upanisads*, *Rig-Veda*, *Brâhmanas* and *Mahâbhârata*, and quite different from the Dravidian poets of the 9th to 11th century CE. King Kulashekara, for example, used brief *anustubh* and more often the metrics 14-15-14-14; 15-14-14-15; 19-19-19-19; 21-21-21-21 and longer. In his poems Yamuna Albandar used the metric of the *Rig-Veda sakvari* 14-14-14-14; but also a variant of 15-15-15-15.

## 4.2 External evidence

4.2.1 The records of documents indicate that the text left a strong mark through history. It is also noticed that until today the earliest direct mention of the title of the *Bhâgavatam* has been found in the *Uttara-gîta* of the 5th century BC, followed by the *Nandî-sutra* of the 1st century CE. However, the Buddhist literature and especially the works of Chanakya shift the period of the compilation to a much earlier date,<sup>102</sup> although the entire body of evidence shows a tendency of 19.2% in favor of the period of *Brâhmanas* and *samhitâs*, followed by the *Upanisads* 14.1%, that mention important characters such as Krishna, the gopis, Pariksit and Janamejaya, etc. While in the 8th and 10th centuries CE the relative frequency is of 2.6%, a smaller percentage of probability in favor of the theory of the origin in the first millennium. Besides, in all the data that are consistent with a possible compilation in the first

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100 Vid. Thapar, Romila. *El Feudalismo en los Estados Regionales* c. 800-1200 d. C. In *La Historia de la India* part I, Col. Brevarios núm 106. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México D- f- 1967 p. 218.

101 Vid. Conflictos de los Reinos Meridionales (c. 500-900 d. C.) en *Ibid.* p. 218.

102 Vid. Arganis Juárez, Horacio Francisco. *Rescatando El Srîmad-Bhâgavatam de las obras de Chanakya. Ensayo sobre la literatura de la India.* Fondo editorial del Estado de Coahuila, 2001.

millennium, there is no direct proof that shows a later origin of the *Bhâgavatam*, an idea that was created only in the 17th century under the influence of the British.<sup>103</sup>

4.2.2 Epigraphical evidence tends to confirm that the text and its contents had a profound influence from the 9th to 10th centuries CE, while the value of the higher index with 24% is related to the 1st century BC, with two epigraphical pieces of evidence that mention the title of the *Bhâgavatam*.<sup>104</sup> Another influence is observed in the concurrence of 13.8% with the epigraphy of the 5th, 7th, 8th and 9th CE, followed by that of the 4th century CE, with 10.3% and 3.4% for the 5th and 2nd centuries BC. The percentage of these finds suggests that there was a revival of the *Bhâgavatam* in the first millennium, but it does not indicate that the text was composed in such period.

4.2.3 The sculptural evidence shows the signs of the stories from this *Purâna*, from the 38th century BC until the 10th century CE, with a particularly high presence of 33.3% in the 7th and 6th centuries BC. Sculptures have an incidence of 13.3% between the 4th and the 10th centuries BC, especially with the figures of cows and bulls from the Sindhu Valley, including an image of child Krishna from Mohenjo-daro. Another 10% is found between the beginning of the Kali-yuga and the 4th and 5th centuries CE, which tends to confirm the ancient datation, as the index in the 9th to 10th centuries CE is 8.9%, reducing the probabilities of compilation during the first millennium.

4.2.4 The numismatic evidence shows (where the testimony of seal was included) that the impression of the stories and topics of the *Bhâgavatam* had index 57% in the time from the IV to II BC. Nevertheless that, the stamps of bovine cattle from Mohenjo-daro mark 21%, continued by the 1st century BC with 10.5%. Although that of the *Mahâbhârata* Age and the 3 century CE forms an ambivalence of 5.3%. This tends to corroborate the antiquity of the *Purâna* because until this investigation the numismatic result is 0% in favor of IX-X CE.

4.2.5 The variable on further discoveries tends to confirm the *Bhâgavatam* context, pointing out 13.9% in the discoveries between the 16th and 15th centuries BC and a 1.4% for the 17th century BC. The motif of the Great

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103 Vid. Wilson Op. Cit., p. xxxix.

104 The Mora inscription from Mathura UP said: *bhagavatâm vrisninam panchavîranam*. In Gomati inscriptions: *gomatî (...) putena bhâgavatena...*

Flood is also found in this *Purâna*; as we have already seen, this story is found in many ancient cultures from the Old World, in a period from the 30th to 14th centuries BC. The scholars have concluded that this story refers to a geologic cataclysm of 10,000 years ago.<sup>rd</sup> The cosmographic concept of *Bhumandala* is one of the common records of the Old World, a transcultural concept in a period from the 30th to 16th century BC, that is specifically different from the astronomical beliefs prevalent in India in the 1st millennium.

Among the most important indications in *Bhâgavatam* we find the river Sarasvati and the Polar star (Alpha Draconis), and as we have already demonstrated, these were observed before the 20th century BC only, the period when the river dried up, and 600 years before this Polar star ceased to shine in the Polar Axis: this contradicts the theory of the compilation of the *Bhâgavatam* in the first millennium.

Regarding this variable, the third place in the text is for the *Sarasvati* river and up to 90% to this Polar star. The studies indicate the *Mahâbhârata* age, which is in accord to what the *Bhâgavatam* itself says, and according to the archaeological and astronomical data this period corresponds to the 30th century BC.

As we have shown in this presentation from the examination of the various theories, many experts have confirmed the mathematical calculations of astronomy, establishing the beginning of Kali-yuga Era on February 18th 3102 BC. According to the Hindus this is when Krishna, the *Bhâgavatam*'s hero, disappeared from this world, a date that marks the beginning of their calendar, exactly like the Muslims calculate their years from the Hegira or the Christians from the birth of Jesus.

All these discoveries, the studies of various researchers, including the conservative scholars like Max Müller but the liberal ones as well, lead to the conclusion that the Vedic Age described in the Vedic texts, with a final phase described in the *Bhâgavatam*, went from the 8000 to the 2000 BC.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on all the records of the evidence we analyzed we can thus disprove the other theories on the datation of the *Bhâgavatam*. Klaus Klostermaier pointed out about the liberal objections in this field:

The new element that has entered the debate is scientific investigation. While the previous theory was based exclusively on philological arguments, the new theory

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<sup>rd</sup> Goodman, Robert. *Las fuentes del Diluvio universal. Seis Hipótesis para el gran Cataclismo*. In MA de la Ciencia S. A. España. 2001 p. 50-51.

includes astronomical, geological, mathematical and archaeological evidence. In all, this new theory seems to be built on better foundations.<sup>105</sup>

Thus the most recent established thesis demonstrates that the *Bhâgavatam* was compiled in a period that goes from the end of *Mahâbhârata* age, at the beginning of Kali-yuga (3102 BC) and at the latest around 2600 BC, when the star Alpha Draconis was still in the Polar Axis and the Sarasvati still flowed. However, in spite of all the scientifically rigorous analysis presented in this investigation, we find that mainstream scholars are still very much opposed to this demonstration, as Max Planck observed:

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing of its opponents, making them see the light, but rather with the death of such opponents and the rise of a new generation that is able to accept it.<sup>106</sup>

## 6. Discoveries in the Investigation

It is considered appropriate to present a brief report on the casual discoveries that appeared in the investigation: In 1992, Alf Hildebeitel established that *Mahâbhârata* shows the workmanship of a single author;<sup>107</sup> and V. G. Tagare confirmed the same about the *Bhâgavatam*. Burece Sillivan has examined the old texts, concluding that these support Dvaipayana Vyasa as the compiler of the canon in study.<sup>108</sup> S. Piggot reports that in the Hittite manuscript of Kikkuli there are mentions of *mariannu*, which suggests the name of the Maurya kings.<sup>109</sup> According to evidence, this dynasty ruled around 1534 BC, as confirmed by the *Bhâgavatam*. P. Gokhale verified that the kings mentioned on the pillar inscription attributed to Asoka are not Greeks, but other rulers that he identifies with the Hindu kings Jana-rajyas of 1475 B.C.<sup>110</sup> Dimock has confirmed that the word *yavana* only means “foreigner”; and not *yono* or *Ionic* as some have theorized in order to identify them with the Greeks.<sup>111</sup> The *Bhâgavatam* describes the Gomphotherium elephant, characterized by four tusks, which existed from 14 up to 2 million years ago in the Pliocene. In the

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105 Klostermaier, Klaus. *Questioning the Aryan Invasion Theory and Revising Ancient Indian History in ISKCON Communication Journal*. Vol. 1 June 1998.

106 Planck, Max. *Scientific Autobiography*. Cit. in Kuhn, Thomas 2. *La Estructura de las Revoluciones Científicas*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Col. de Brevarios No. 213, 1971, p. 235.

107 Hildebeitel Alf et al. in *Vaisnavism*, Op. Cit. p. 50.

108 *Taitiriyaranyaka* 1.9.2; *Samavidhana brâhmana* 3.9.8; *Gopatha brâhmana* 1.1.29, *Budacharita* 1.42.4.16; *Saundarananda* 7.29-30; etc.

109 Piggot, S. Op. Cit. p. 211.

110 Vid. VII rock Edict. See Gokhale 113 *Ashoka Priyadarshi* Loc. Cit. in Agarwal G. C., ed. *Age of Bharata War*. Delhi Motilal Barnasidass, 1979; etc.

20th century some geologists theorized that the desert of Rajasthan had developed recently, and later paleontologists discovered evidence that this desert was a fertile plain in Miocene. This data agrees with *Bhâgavatam* that this desert existed in old times.