

## THE MATERIAL AND THE DIVINE: INDIA'S GLORIOUS HER-

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India is an ancient land and acknowledged down the ages as the spiritual capital of the world. People from around the world have visited (and continue to visit) India for answers to lofty questions beyond the ken of material understanding.

However, although still considered a spiritual and culturally rich land by many, India today is known more for its software programmers and call centers/BPOs. With a wave of westernization overtaking the country, not only Indians who live abroad, but even those who still live in India, are slowly forgetting their ancient heritage; heritage that is not only spiritual in nature but also scientific. The uniqueness of this heritage lies in the fact that—unlike in today's 'modern' society—science and spirituality in ancient India did not have a segmented, quarrelling existence, but rather was a beautiful, wondrous blend of the material and the divine.

In well over 8000 years of documented, continuous civilization, India has several modern contributions to its credit, although this credit often remains largely unacknowledged by western society. However that does not negate the validity of its contributions that have ample historical, literary, archeological and geological proof.

- Ancient Indians excelled in math, science and technology. Their accomplishments include—among numerous other achievements—introducing the concepts of “zero” and “infinity”, calculating complex series summations, building intricate and gigantic temple towers (that involved not only accomplished artistry but extremely precise scientific methods), forging non-corrodible iron pillars that were several feet long and constructing smart rainwater harvesting systems that work perfectly even today.
- Astronomy and astrology were the



bread and butter, so to speak, of ancient India. Ancient Indian texts, including the *Itihasas* and *Puranas* have detailed descriptions of stars, planets and constellations. Several episodes in these texts detail the time of the year through clear stellar positions using which the exact period and even day, month and year, can be determined in today's terms; and these tally exactly with other historical events that occurred around the same period. For example, Lord Balarama's pilgrimage just before the Mahabharata war, can be calculated to have started on Nov 1 3067 BCE, according to the astronomical description of the day. And the submergence of Dwaraka, 36 years later, in 3031 BCE coincides with huge floods and tidal waves occurring in different associated parts of the world.

- India's medical heritage is something that cannot be denied by anyone. Sushruta, a surgeon who lived around 600 BCE, performed and documented several surgical procedures, instruments, etc. Ayurveda, the indigenous system of medicine that is gaining popularity around the world today, is a holistic form of medicine that views “health”, not simply as an absence of disease, but in fact as a flourishing, not just of the physical body, but also of the mind and the senses – something that is emphasized by a growing number of western physicians and psychologists today.
- The Hindu belief of rebirth has now been ‘rediscovered’ and proved by western psychologists through past-life regression methods. Even though this fact is yet to obtain widespread acceptance in the West, there is no denying that regression techniques have been very useful in treating phobias and other psychological disorders, as discovered famously by Dr. Brian Weiss, author of the best-selling book, *Many Lives, Many*

*Masters.*

India has a glorious heritage that has had (and continues to have) an immense impact on life as we know it today. The areas touched upon here in no way constitute the whole of ancient India's contribution to modern science, which is even more vast and varied. But a common thread connected all of these, which was the essence of the ancient Indian way of life. What was it?

Today, the whole world is stressing on ecology and ‘going green’. Environmentalists are screaming from the roof-tops to save ‘Mother Earth’. It is slowly dawning on modern society that perhaps some of the modern inventions (plastic and other similar chemical compounds, for example) are not really great ideas in the long run.

In contrast, ancient Indians lived and ‘invented’ in harmony with nature – *not because they were limited by tools or intellect; but because they saw Divinity in everything around them.*

To them Mother Earth was really a Divine Mother, who was ever tolerant and showered them with love in the form of her bounty. The trees and rivers, mountains and seas were all themselves embodiments of the divine; so they could not envisage an invention that would cause large scale destruction or pollution, or invade nature by any means.

How wise, intelligent and farsighted were our ancestors! How devout, pious and reverential! We are truly humbled by their greatness.

Nisha Giri, Houston, TX

Based on “Traditional Treasures” program presentations by experts in each of these areas, held at Chennai, India in Jan 2012.

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## The Lord's Grace is for All!

In *Srimad Bhagavatam*

- \* In the 1<sup>st</sup> Canto, we see the story of how little son of a poor widow (Narada's earlier birth), who earned her living as a servant maid, attained God through mere association of holy men.
- \* Again in the 1<sup>st</sup> Canto, we find that the great Yogi Bheeshma, who was awaiting the auspicious time of 'uttharaayana', attained God.
- \* In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canto, we find that the earth was drowned in the 'pralaya' waters (the great deluge) and Lord Brahma was commanded to do tapas, in order to begin his work of creation. Thus, Lord Brahma did as he was told and attained the Lord's vision.
- \* In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canto, Kardama Prajapati, the creation of Lord Brahma did penance and attained the Lord's darshan.
- \* In the 4<sup>th</sup> Canto, the 5-year old child Dhruva, born of great parents, followed his Guru's advice, saw the Lord face to face and was blessed by Him.
- \* In the 5<sup>th</sup> Canto, Priyavrata, obedient to the counsel of Manu, worshipped the feet of holy men and gained Knowledge.
- \* Also in the 5<sup>th</sup> Canto, Rishabha Yogi and his son Jada Bharata attained to the highest state.
- \* In the 6<sup>th</sup> Canto, Ajamila, the worst sinner, attained God.
- \* In the 7<sup>th</sup> Canto, we come across Prahlada, the little son of an Asura, attaining God.
- \* In the 8<sup>th</sup> Canto an elephant, Gajendra, is seen attaining God.
- \* Again in the 8<sup>th</sup> Canto, the Devas pray to the Lord for *amruta* and are graced by Him.
- \* In the 9<sup>th</sup> Canto is the narration of the life of Ambareesha,

who was a great emperor enjoying all comforts in life. He too attained God due to his pure bhakti.

*Through the narrations of all these stories, Srimad Bhagavatam reveals that everyone is the same to God. God is not biased.*



The Lord graced the little child (Narada) who had nothing to boast of – no glorious family or high birth, no wealth, no education, no wisdom, no worldly experience.

The Lord also graced the child Dhruva, born of royal parents but literally thrown away by his father.

The Lord did not forsake even Ajamila who, caught in the mire of a prostitute's company, lived a lowly life.

The Lord did not forsake Prahlada, who was born of an Asura or even Vritrasura, who was an Asura himself!

The Lord recognized even the devotion of an elephant and blessed him.

The Devas prayed for the Lord's assistance in receiving *amruta* and He extended His Grace to them, too.

Bali, the great ruler, was very proud of his status and charitable nature. Destroying his ego, the Lord blessed him too.

Ambareesha, a great emperor, was virtuous. God blessed him, too.

Thus Srimad Bhagavatam shows that God pours His love and blessings on all – a child without a glorious family background, a demon's child, a little prince of royal parents, an Asura himself, a yogi, a sage, an animal, a sinner, a virtuous king, a proud king, the Devas, and everyone else!

*Excerpts from the discourses of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji.*

## Many Lives, Many Masters —by Dr. Brian Weiss

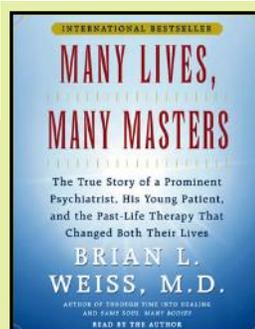
**Publisher: Simon & Schuster**

**First Edition: 1988**

This riveting book, a New York Times bestseller, by renowned and accomplished psychiatrist, Dr. Brian Weiss, details the true story of his stumbling upon evidence that every soul goes through numerous births.

By no means is Dr. Weiss' research in this field of 'reincarnation' the first in the western world, but the difference is that he had no intention of researching such phenomenon (and was even a skeptic), but he happened to 'chance' upon it.

The book reads like a fast-paced thriller and amazes the



reader as it unravels the story

**Pages of Inspiration**

of the doctor's patient, Catherine, who unexpectedly begins to relive past life experiences while under hypnosis. She speaks, over many months, about 10 or 12 different lives; and mentions that she has been through 86 lives. And interestingly, reliving those experiences helps her overcome several phobias and other psychological issues in her current birth.

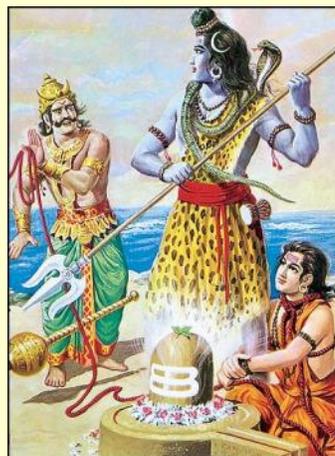
In her regressed state and in between lives, Catherine also transmits messages from the 'Masters', who speak of *karma* and different astral planes, etc.

Dr. Weiss has since written several books on this theme and successfully 'regressed' a number of patients. And his discoveries validate what has been said in Indian *shastras* thousands of years ago. This book is definitely a must-read!

## Faith and Love Can Bring Immortality

Once upon a time there lived a pious couple named Mrikandu and Marudvati. They were very devoted to Lord Shiva. They did not have any children and sincerely prayed to the Lord for one. Lord Shiva appeared in their dream and before granting them a boon, questioned them if they wanted a child with long life but little knowledge, or a brilliant child with a short life span. The couple asked for the latter and the Lord happily granted them the boon.

Soon they begot a child and named him Markandeya. He grew up to be a handsome and intelligent boy. He was not only intelligent, but also humble and very devoted to Lord Shiva, just like his parents. Everyone liked him. Rishi Mrikandu's fear grew along with Markandeya.



Markandeya was curious to know the reason for his parents' constant distress, and constantly asked them for the reason. The worried and helpless father finally told him about his short life span. Hearing this, Markandeya was not worried, but reminded his father about the Lord's compassion to His devotees and told him that he will pray to the Lord day and night and was sure that his Lord would save him.

Markandeya went to the sea shore and built a small Shiva Linga and started worshipping Him day and night. He sang and danced for the Lord. On the last day, Yama, the God of death appeared on a

buffalo and threw a noose on him. Markandeya held the Shiva Linga tight, as a child would hold his mother, and would not let go. The noose fell on him and the Linga. This act of Yama annoyed Lord Shiva, who appeared in rage and kicked Yama on his chest and said, "Yama! Get away from my devotee, never cast your eye on him. He is my beloved devotee, and he will live forever."

Markandeya prostrated to the Lord with tears in his eyes. Lord Shiva blessed him lovingly. Markandeya then happily went home and his parents were overjoyed.

Markandeya did not forget the Lord. He continued his devotional practices, and later became a great sage. Markandeya's strong faith and perseverance in Lord Shiva brought the Lord himself down to save him from the clutches of death.

*This month we celebrate Mahashivaratri. Let us reminisce the stories of Lord Shiva's devotees and please Him in the process.*

## Quiz Time — Chhatrapati Shivaji

C. Swami Samartha  
Ramadas

B. Vedas and Upanishads  
C. Mahabharata and Ramayana

February 19, 2012 is the jayanti of Chhatrapati Shivaji, a brave and pious Maratha king who lived in India during the 17th century. He fought against and reclaimed India from foreign invaders, establishing the Maratha empire, which he ruled in a just, dharmic and devoted manner. Shivaji is among the most well-known kings of India. Let's test your knowledge, and also learn more, about him:

1. The birth place of Shivaji:

- A. Tuljapur
- B. Shivneri
- C. Raigad

2. Name the title conferred on Shivaji:

- A. Chhatrapati
- B. Raja
- C. Sant

3. Who was Shivaji's Guru?

- A. Sant Namadev
- B. Sant Jnaneshwar

4. Name Shivaji's father:

- A. Rajaji Bhosle
- B. Shahaji Bhosle
- C. Tanaji Bhosle

5. Shivaji belonged to this clan:

- A. Mughals
- B. Marathas
- C. Sikhs

6. Shivaji established the

- A. Mughal Empire
- B. Maratha empire
- C. Mahendra empire

7. Shivaji learned moral and spiritual values by reading these two epics

- A. Illiad and Odyssey



8. Shivaji died on the eve of

- A. Diwali
- B. Hanuman Jayanthi
- C. Holi

9. Name Shivaji's mother:

- A. Jijabhai
- B. Lakshmidevi
- C. Janabhai

10. Shivaji lived for

- A. 50 years
- B. 80 years
- C. 70 years

11. Where is the fort of Shivaji's kingdom located?

- A. Surat
- B. Pune
- C. Raigad

Compiled by:

Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers:



## Sri Poornimaji's visit to the US

### News and Events

#### California Bay Area



Sri Poornimaji, disciple of H H Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji who is currently in the US, conducted several satsangs in the California Bay Area from Jan 12 through Jan 17. She spoke at the residence of Sri Shankar Ramanathan and Smt. Srividya Nagarajan on "Guru Karuna Vilasam", and at the residence of Sri Swaminathan and Smt. Nithya on "Greatness of Bhagavata Dharma". Nama sankitan will be conducted every week at the residence of Sri Shankar Ramanathan and Smt. Srividya.

#### World-wide Nama Relay

The "Hare Rama Hare Krishna" Mahamantra was chanted across the world in different regions for a continuous 24 hours, on Jan 7, 2012. The chanting started from New Zealand, crossed 19 countries, and ended in the west coast of USA in San Jose and Seattle. A unique Global effort for World Peace indeed!

#### Seattle - Jan 18 to Jan 30



Sri Poornimaji visited Seattle in the second half of January, where she participated in a series of events including home satsangs, spiritual discourses in temples, a kids' art contest and a puppet show. Several people attended the events and benefited from them.



#### Chicago - Gopa Kuteeram Shloka Contest



Chicago GOD chapter conducted its first Gopa Kuteeram Shloka Competition on Jan 21 2012. in Aurora, IL.

About 28 children of all ages chanted shlokas from Sri-

mad Bhagavatam with effortless ease.

Children of Chicago Gopa Kuteeram also enacted a short play on the greatness of Satsang.

The judges Sri. Srinivasan, Smt.



Jaya Srinivasan and Smt. Priya Tulasi presented the trophies and plaques to the winners and certificate of appreciation to all the kids who participated.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### Sri Poornimaji's satsangs:

**Connecticut - Feb 18** at Norwalk, CT

**New Jersey - Feb 18** at 5 PM at RadhaKrishna Temple, Lawrenceville, NJ

**New York - Feb 19, 10 AM** at Mohegan Lake, NY

**Massachusetts—Feb 25** at 5:30 PM Discourse at Dwarkamai, North Billerica, MA

##### Houston Namadwaar

**Anniversary celebration -Mar 9-11**  
**Traditional Treasures - Youth Spring Camp: Mar 12 & 13.** For more info [houston.god@godivinity.org](mailto:houston.god@godivinity.org)

##### Dallas - Swarna Jayanthi celebration & Madhura utsav

Mar 15-18—Discourses by Poornimaji at Karya Siddhi Hanuman Temple, Frisco, TX  
**Mass Prayer—Mar 24-25.**

#### Weekly satsangs are held regularly in the following regions:

**Atlanta, GA; Bay Area, CA; New England area; Chicago, IL; Cortlandt Manor, NY; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Saskatchewan, Canada**

**A Telecon satsang is held every Fri evening and Tele-Bhagavatam discourse is telecast every Tue evening, both at 8:30 PM CST. Anyone is welcome to attend. Ph: 605-475-4000, Passcode: 131581**

**Gopa Kuteeram (kids' programs) & Srimad Bhagavatam study circles are conducted in various cities. Email [newsletter@godivinity.org](mailto:newsletter@godivinity.org) for more info.**

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