

Did Krishna exist?

Most certainly, says Dr Manish Pandit, a nuclear medicine physician who teaches in the United Kingdom, proffering astronomical, archaeological, linguistic and oral evidences to make his case.

"I used to think of Krishna is a part of Hindu myth and mythology. Imagine my surprise when I came across Dr Narhari Achar (a professor of physics at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, in the US) and his research in 2004 and 2005. He had done the dating of the Mahabharata war using astronomy. I immediately tried to corroborate all his research using the regular Planetarium software and I came to the same conclusions [as him]," Pandit says.

Which meant, he says, that what is taught in schools about Indian history is not correct?

The Great War between the Pandavas and the Kauravas took place in 3067 BC, the Pune-born Pandit, who did his MBBS from BJ Medical College there, says in his first documentary, Krishna: History or Myth?.

Pandit's calculations say Krishna was born in 3112 BC, so must have been 54-55 years old at the time of the battle of Kurukshetra.

Pandit is also a distinguished astrologer, having written several books on the subject, and claims to have predicted that Sonia Gandhi would reject prime ministership, the exact time at which Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati would be released on bail and also the Kargil war.

Pandit, as the sutradhar of the documentary Krishna: History or Myth?, uses four pillars -- archaeology, linguistics, what he calls the living tradition of India and astronomy to arrive at the circumstantial verdict that Krishna was indeed a living being, because Mahabharata and the battle of Kurukshetra indeed happened, and since Krishna was the pivot of the Armageddon, it is all true.

You are a specialist in nuclear medicine. What persuaded you to do a film on the history/myth of Krishna? You think there are too many who doubt? Is this a politico-religious message or a purely religious one?

We are always taught that Krishna is a part of Hindu myth and mythology. And this is exactly what I thought as well. But imagine my surprise when I came across Dr Narhari Achar (of the Department of Physics at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, in the US) and his research somewhere in 2004 and 2005. He had done the dating of the Mahabharata war using astronomy. I immediately tried to corroborate all his research using the regular Planetarium software and I came to the same conclusions. This meant that what we are taught in schools about Indian history is not correct.

I also started wondering about why this should be so. I think that a mixture of the post-colonial need to conform to western ideas of Indian civilisation and an inability to stand up firmly to bizarre western ideas are to blame. Also, any attempt at a more impartial look at Indian history is given a saffron hue.

I decided that I could take this nonsense no more, and decided to make films to show educated Indians what their true heritage was. The pen is mightier than the sword is an old phrase but I thought of new one: Film is the new pen.

Any ideas I have will receive wide dissemination through this medium.

I wanted to present a true idea of Indian history unfettered by perception, which was truly scientific, not just somebody's hypothesis coloured by their perceptions and prejudices.

Why not a documentary on Rama, who is more controversial in India today? Proof of his existence would certainly be more than welcome today...

A documentary on Rama is forthcoming in the future. But the immediate reason I deferred that project is the immense cost it would entail. Whereas research on Krishna and Mahabharata was present and ready to go.

Further more, Rama according to Indian thought, existed in the long hoary ancient past of Treta Yuga, where science finds it difficult to go.

There is a controversial point in your documentary where someone Isckon monk alludes to Krishna as being the father of Jesus. How can you say that since there is an age gap of roughly 3000 years between the two spiritual giants?

Is Krishna the spiritual father of Jesus? That is what the person who was training to be a Roman Catholic priest, and who now worships Krishna, asks. The answer comes within the field of comparative religion and theology.

The Biblical scriptures qualify Jesus as the son of God. Most Indians have no problems accepting this as Hindus are a naturally secular people. However, then the question that arises is, if Jesus is the son, then who is the Father or God Himself?

Now, Biblical scriptures do not really give the answer except to say that the Father is all-powerful and omnipresent. Now, of course, we know that Jesus does not say that he is omnipresent or omnipotent.

Now, no scripture can live as an island, all by itself, and the Srimad Bhagavatam and other scriptures such as the Bramha Samhita all call Krishna as an all powerful, omnipresent being.

So, if we use these words of Bhagavatam, there can be no other truth, which means that Krishna is the father of all living creation.

But it does not mean that Jesus is not divine. Jesus is indeed divine. What I liked about the monks in my documentary is that they do not denigrate Jesus although they worship Krishna as God. They keep Jesus in their hearts, while worshipping Krishna. What could be more secular or more Christian?

3067 BC is when the Mahabharata war took place, says Dr Achar. How did he arrive at this?

There are more than 140 astronomy references in the Mahabharata. Dr Achar used simulations of the night sky to arrive at November 22, 3067 BC, as the day the Mahabharata war began.

He used the references common to Udyoga and Bhisma Parvan initially, and so Saturn at Rohini, Mars at Jyestha with initially only the two eclipses, Lunar at Kartika and Solar at Jyestha.

Let me tell you how rare this set of astronomical conjunctions is.

The Saros cycle of eclipses is periodic at 19 years and so is the Metonic cycle of lunar phases.

So if I say that Amavasya has occurred at Jyestha, then this will occur again in 19 years, but if I say that a solar eclipse has occurred at Jyestha, then this occurs again at Jyestha only after 340 years. Add Saturn at Rohini and we take this to 1 in 7,000 years. This set of conjunctions takes all of these into consideration, but also takes all the other data into consideration.

So now, we know about Balarama's pilgrimage tithis and nakshatras, and believe it or not, all that fits the 3067 BC date perfectly.

And to top it all, so does the repetition of the three eclipses described at the destruction of Dwarka 36 years later.

This would explain why so many other researchers tried and failed to find the date of the Mahabharata war as it is based on such a unique set of astronomy that it occurred only once in the last 10,000 years.

So essentially, your thesis is that since the Mahabharata war actually happened, as confirmed by astronomical deduction, Krishna was also a living entity since he's the fulcrum of the Great War?

Not just that, but the fact that archaeology, oral and living traditions point to the same. And yes, we cannot separate the Mahabharata war from Krishna. If one is shown to have happened, then the other must be true as well.

What's your next project?

The next project is called Indian Jesus. It is already 80% complete. It is very controversial but needed to be done. Living in India convinced me that there are definitely many paths to God. Anybody who lives in India and does not subscribe to that concept should be termed intolerant, but instead the opposite is happening. There are some people today who call their God as God and mine as the devil, this is unacceptable, and I will see to it that those intolerant concepts are demolished. I long to see a one borderless world where we live in mutual respect. I cannot say much on the project but to say that I will prove that the underlying basis of religions is the same.

There is talk of a banyan tree which the documentary says was a witness to the Battle of Kurukshetra, where 4 million people are said to have died in 14 days. Where exactly does this exist? Has the tree been carbon-dated to confirm its age?

There is indeed a banyan tree at Jyotisaar in Kurukshetra which is worshipped as such. This concept is similar to the tree in Jerusalem, which is thought to have witnessed Jesus's arrival. Carbon-dating of this banyan tree is unlikely to give any concrete answers. I have included it in the documentary to show the living tradition of India --- like worship of the Ganges cannot be carbon-dated to give any answers.

There is a gentleman named Ram Prasad Birbal, who said he has found many bones which are said to belong to the Kurukshetra battle. Has this been scientifically proved?

Ram Prasad Birbal is a resident of Kurukshetra. I am not aware of carbon dating of those bones. But I am informed that thermo-luminescent dating of other relics as well as carbon-dating at other sites in Kurukshetra have given dates far older than the Indus valley civilisation. Further, Euan Mackie, an eminent archaeologist, had found a clay tablet of Krishna's Yamalaarjuna episode at Mohenjodaro, a site of the Indus Valley civilisation proving that even in 2200 BC, there was a culture of worshipping Krishna.

You said Hinduism spread across South East Asia in those times ... how big was this religious empire?

The Hindu religious empire extended across the whole of the Asian sub-continent to South East Asia, from Afghanistan to Thailand (where Ramayana and Krishna are still shown through dances), Burma, Cambodia (Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, Bayon, etc), Vietnam, Laos (little Kurukshetra and temples), Malaysia (which was Hindu until recent) up to Java (more temples), Bali (where Hinduism is still the religion) and Indonesia, where Bhima's grandson is said to have performed a thousand fire rituals at Yogyakarta. Afghanistan was of course home to both the Yadu race and Shakuni (Kandahar or Gandhar).

Dr Achar said the Kurukshetra war must not have happened on a full moon day.

The Mahabharata war did not start on an Amavasya. That is straight forward. Krishna tells Karna "Saptama chappi divasat Amavasya Bhivasyati" and says that Karna should tell Drona and Bhishma to do the ayudha (weapons) pooja on that date. But not start fighting the war on that date.

The documentary is quiet crisp. I am told this is the first time you held a camera, and learnt how to shoot. How many days did this take and what was your budget?

I learnt film editing first using a variety of software such as Final Cut 6 as I realised that a film director must be able to do decent basic editing to realise what to shoot, from what angles and for what duration.

I bought a professional grade HD movie camcorder initially and then learnt to shoot before we went filming in 8 major Indian cities, the US, UK and Cambodia.

However, nothing prepares you as thoroughly as filming on your own. Most of this was done with a skeleton crew, mostly handling audio.

I later was funded to buy the latest Cinealta tru HD movie cameras, which are not available in India, and which I am now proficient in using. I also taught a few crew members how to shoot.

Then came the task of assembling a team of professionals to do editing, graphics, voice over and all else, so that I had a team of people for my next set of documentaries.

It was a steep learning curve, as I never went to film school, but it has worked out well, with people within the industry who are veterans complimenting my work. I personally think that it was all God's grace.

The budget was 15,000 pounds or approximately Rs 12 lakh. It took me 18 months to complete.

Your documentary says India did not have a tradition of putting down everything in writing till 325 BC, when Alexander the Great arrived. How did you come to this conclusion?

This is what the current scientific belief is. Although people have talked about deciphering the Indus Valley "script", there is no straightforward conclusion about the same, so we stuck to the "official line" there. We will deal with these issues in a future documentary.

S R Rao, the marine archaeologist from the National Institute of Oceanography, found a 9th century building, and an entire city. Where was this and when did he find it?.

S R Rao found the sunken city of Dwarka a few years ago at Beyt Dwarka in the early 1990s.

Apparently, this city near Dwarka was set up 36 years after the Mahabharata war. Is this the summation of Rao?

It is believed that due to damage and destruction by the sea, Dwaraka has submerged six times and the modern-day Dwarka is the 7th such city to be built in the area. Scientifically speaking, we see that 36 years after the war there were the same repetitions of an eclipse triad as we have shown in the documentary.

From Dwarka to Kurukshetra is more than 1,000 km. How do you think Krishna travelled to help the Pandavas?

As a scientist, I believe that they travelled on horses which would enable them to reach pretty quickly. If you consider 1,000 km, that should take him 7 days if he had a string of horses. Of course if you take faith into account, then it could happen in a twinkling of an eye.

What's the link between the two comets that Sage Vyasa talked about, the retrograde motion of Mars (Mangal or Kuja) at Antares (Jyestha) to all this

The idea that comets are harbingers of doom is well-documented. The thing is that there is a set of statements describing comets and their positions. Only Dr Achar has arrived at the correct deduction, that those sentences in Bhishma Parvan relate to comets, not planets --- which is where previous researchers found it difficult.

We know that Halley's comet was seen in that year as well.

Dr Achar interpreted verses from the Bhism Parvan and Udyog Parvan to arrive at various conclusions. One of them is that when Saturn in at Aldebaran (Rohini) it brings great bad tidings. The last time this happened was in September 2001, when 9/11 happened. When does this happen next?

Actually Saturn at Rohini is long known to be a bad omen by astrologers. Rohinim Pidyannasha Stitho Rajan Shanischarah. This transit happened in 1971 where a million or so were killed, and again in 2001 September, when 9/11 happened. The next time is in 2030/2031 AD approximately.

When is the next time Mars will be in Antares?

Mars at Jyestha has to be taken in conjunction with the other things mentioned by Karna when he talks to Krishna, as it occurs every year. In any case, those people were great astronomers and not just warriors, so we don't know what the extent of their knowledge was regarding these events, In my personal humble opinion it was perhaps even better than that which we have today.

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