## Milky Way Mythologies and Ancient Heaven Gates

Research paper on myths related to Solstices and Constellations along with comparative analysis with other cultures

### **By: Arvind Bhagwath**



### Introduction:

Festivals in Hinduism like <u>Vaikunta Ekadashi</u> during winter solstice (Dec-Jan) haunted me to find the connection between human and God via Heaven Gate. The <u>Vaishnava</u> (Worshipers/Followers of <u>Vishnu</u>) sect believes that 'Vaikunta Dwaram' or 'the gate' to the 'Lord's Inner Sanctum' is opened on this day.

We see chariot festivals in almost every major temples and millions visit their respective temples in India during this day. People believe that the **dwaram (passage)** is opened only on **Vaikuntha Ekadashi** and it is believed that any person who passes through this `**Vaikuntha Dwaram'** on this particular day attains <u>salvation</u>. The <u>Shaiva</u> sect observes the day as **Trikoti Ekadashi**, a religious observance where all the deities in the Hindu pantheon pay obeisance to Lord <u>Sri Shiva</u>. In same coincidence, we also have **Christmas** being celebrated at same time all over world and something made me feel that this coincidence is also related to Egyptian pyramids in which they believed that '**scared gate**' enabled the deceased and mummified pharaoh to be transformed to God at same time during **Winter Solstice**. The idea is basically **resurrection of God** and this made me to investigate all the ancient symbols of **Proto-Indo Europeans**, **Egyptians**, **Indus Valley**, **Sumerian cultures** etc. and was able to see almost similar myths in every culture. **Milky way or Solstice axis** was visualized as **path of Souls** and with **Orion belt star alignment**, for civilization in Northern hemisphere, it is found that the **summer solstice** is a time of soul's ascent via **Gate of Man** and **Winter Solstice** was **Avatar's decent** from **Gate of God**.

## Ancient Heaven near North Pole Star (Circumpolar Stars):

<u>Egyptologist</u> Toby Wilkinson explained the naming as apt metaphor in Egyptian ideology. "<u>Circumpolar</u> <u>stars</u> are a very good metaphor for the afterlife because when viewed, they never seem to set: they simply rotate around the pole star. They are the undying stars, or in Egyptian terminology, the **Indestructibles**, a perfect destination for the soul of the dead king".



Egyptian pyramids are precisely orientated to **North Pole star** (**Thuban** during 2800 till 2000 BCE) and the Pyramids were constructed in a way that aligned with the sun's rising at the exact point of **Summer and Winter Solstice**. **Milky Way** represented **Nile River (Cosmic River)** and the pyramid construction appears to be exact mimic of night sky. Deities of ancient Egyptian religion were constellations or as actual stars. This cosmology helped them to identify yearly flooding of the Nile coordinated with the summer solstice, carry out religious rituals associated with respective Gods (Constellations) and further

supported them as crucial event for growing crops.

Lion gate (2800 BC) acted as star gate to Heaven(the afterlife).Circumpolar stars near Draco acted as "indestructible" stars which were a constant reminder of eternity for ancient Egyptians, the afterlife location. Below is East - West view using Stellarium application that gives clear idea on reason behind construction of ancient Pyramids.



Ancient Hindu temples too follow exactly same logic. Due to earth's precession cycle, Gemini constellations are current star gate and are represented as Dwarapalakas/Temple Guards in ancient Hindu temples.

Greeks referred the location of **union** from **earth** to **Heaven(circumpolar constellation)** with structure of **omphalos**, "the navel" of the earth and they localized **Omphalos(Stone of Delphi)** as the central point from which terrestrial life originated in ancient Greek temples of **Delphi** and for **Hinduism**, it is referred as **Linga(Union between Purusha and Prakrati)**.

Almost every religion has the **same philosophical concept** and the ideas looks exactly identical. Below image shows very close similarities like milk offering rituals to Axis mundi/mandala stone structure in **ancient Greek** and **current Hindu religion**.

Reference: Axis mundi - Wikipedia



Pole star now is located at end of Ursa Minor as shown below.



Unlike **Hindu cosmology**, even **Jain** and **Buddhist** scriptures mention the **Mount Meru model** as shown above, but **Dhruvaloka** is particularly not mentioned. In **Norse mythology**, they talk about a World Tree

that connects Heaven, Earth and Hell just like **Meru**. For Egyptians, **Meru** was something like **Pyramid** that supported God re-birth Myth as the Egyptians believed that the **unmovable area the stars circled** was <u>heaven</u>, the <u>pyramids</u> were built to align north with a single, perfectly aligned vent.

In **Hindu rituals**, the symbol with **arms pointing clockwise (**卐**)** is called **swastika**. If you try to locate the **ancient Ramayana verse** on '**Dhruvam sarve Pradakshinam**' it refers **Dhruvam** as the **pole star** and these **seven sages** (**Saptarishis**) offer **Pradakshinam**. The word **swastika** is derived from the Sanskrit root **swasti**, which is composed of –



Su (सु) - good, well, auspicious

### Asti (अस्ति) - to be or there is

Most of **Hindu rituals** in which devotees doing **pradaskshina** around God, pradaskhina in temples, holy hills, **pradakshina** around **Agni God(Fire)** during Hindu marriage rituals have been associated with this cosmology. This complete **circumpolar planetary system** is also **Śiśumāra planetary system**, which is **technically** known as the **Kuṇḍalini-cakra.** We can these circumpolar constellations such as Big Dipper (**Swastika**) and **Draco** in several ancient cultures as shown below:



Northern Sky - Circumpolar constellations (Draco, Big Dipper) in Ancient World



Double Headed Mythical Bird - Divinity and Symbol of Royals for several cultures

In ancient <u>Indian astronomy</u>, the constellation of the <u>Big Dipper</u> (Ursa Major) is called **Saptarishi**, with the seven stars representing seven rishis, namely "Vashistha", "<u>Marichi</u>", "<u>Pulastya</u>", "<u>Pulaha</u>", "Atri", "<u>Angiras</u>" and "<u>Kratu</u>".



**NOTE:** Due to Earth's precession cycle, location of Pole star (**Dhruva**) appears to have changed from earlier **Puranic reference from tail of Shishumara (Draco)** to tail of **Ursa Minor (Current Polaris)**.

### (Vișhņu Purāņa, Part 2, Chapter 9)

The basis and support of this constellation of **Śhiśhumāra** is **Mahā Viṣhņu**, who is the support of all light and effulgence. **Dhruva**, son of **Uttānapāda** came to be installed at the **tail-end** of **Śhiśhumāra** as he had worshiped **Viṣhņu**. **Śhiśhumāra** is dependent upon **Viṣhņu**, the Lord of all, and **Dhruva** is dependent upon **Śhiśhumāra**. **Sūrya** is dependent on **Dhruva**.



Reference: https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/shishumara

Is **Tārāmaya**; the eternal deity; **Uttānapāda** is the upper jaw, **Yajña** is the lower lip, **Dharma** is the head, heart is **Nārāyaņa**, **Sādhya** and **Aśvins** front feet, **Varuņa** and **Aryama** is the hind feet, the **samvatsara**, child; **Mitra** is Apāna; tail is **Agni**, **Mahendra**, **Marīci** and **Kaśyapa** and **Dhruva**; all the planets are centered in **Dhruva**.

## शिशुमारेण सहिता ध्रुवेण च महात्मना । 52.10.4. Atharvana Veda

Even AtharvaVeda Parishishta also indicates that North Pole star was in the Draco (Shishumara) constellation as mentioned above.

To check accuracy of **Vishnu Purana**, I tried **Stellarium** application and moved the night sky date back to **2800 BCE** and I was perfectly able to locate **Thuban** at end of **14 star Draco constellation** (Shishumara). Thuban was **Pole star** during **3000 - 2500 BCE**.



Most of heavens, mythologies and deities in almost all religions/civilizations are associated with constellations in **Northern Sky** and some visible stars like **Orion**, **Lepus**, Taurus from Southern sky which were visible for civilization in Northern Hemisphere. **Heavens** in almost all religions lie near **North Star (Saptarishi Mandala).** This gives understanding that most of ancient Vedas and Puranas was primarily developed by civilization in Northern Hemisphere. However, we have story in Hindu mythology about **Sage Vishwamitra** supporting in creation of a **parallel heaven** in a portion of the **southern sky near South Pole** during a fight with **Lord Indra** when Vishwamitra's disciple **Trishanku** was not allowed

by Indra in Heaven (Indra Loka) located near North Pole. Trishanku corresponds to the collection of three crosses around Crux, also known as the Southern Cross. Canopus is named after the great seer Agastya.

### https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trishanku

In ancient Hindu epic **Ramayana**, **Maharishi Valmiki** has also referred to Trishanku and it mentions that Sage Vishvamitra has replicated **Southerly Ursa Major** in **southerly direction** and still remaining amidst of sages that highly reputed sage Vishvamitra further started to replicate the stars sequentially, resorting to the southern hemisphere, as he is convulsed in anger at **Indra**.



# Trishanku corresponds to the collection of three crosses around Crux

svargo astu sa shariirasya trisha.nkoH asya shaashvataH | nakSatraaNi ca sarvaaNi maamakaani dhruvaaNi atha || 1-60-28 yaavat lokaa dhariSyanti tiSThanti etaani sarvashaH | yat kRitaani suraaH sarve tat anuj~naatum arhatha || 1-60-29 - Valmiki Ramayana BalaKanda

For the fact, ancient puranas were composed was primarily based on looking **Northern Hemisphere** skies and we can never locate **Southern Cross/Trishanku** from ancients towns of **Northern Hemisphere**. **Trishanku heaven** is visible only from extreme southern parts of India and similarly **Sapta Rishi (Big Dipper) pradakshina** and **North Pole star** cannot be seen by people living in **Southern Hemisphere**. Then how did **Maharishi Valmiki** in **Ramayana**, composers of **Bhagavatha Purana** and other sacred scriptures mention **Trishanku** and the star system near **South Pole**. It is debatable and some people mention that these stories of **Trishanku** got added later in **Hindu mythology**.

Modern science answers this mystery and we get the truth to this topic when we try to stimulate ancient sky to 4000 years back by using few astronomical stimulation tools like Stellarium, we find out that Trishanku was visible for people from Northern Hemisphere during the time when Puranas or Vedas was composed and as the earth's precession is getting changed, it is only in the last 1000 years that these stars in Southern sky is not been visible. Now the constellation of Trishanku lies at the exact cardinal South which was not the case in Southern sky during 3000-2000 BCE.



Atharvaveda Parishishtha also mentions Brahmarishi as a circumpolar constellation. Cygnus constellation was referred to as Brahmarishi in Atharvaveda Parishishta. If you note Hindu cosmology model as shown above, Galactic center of Milky Way is location of Cygnus constellation that acts as vahana for Lord Brahma. Brahma's consort Goddess Saraswathi is associated with the Lyra (Veena) in her hands. Practicing Veena (musical instrument) in Indian school of arts during Brahma Muhurtham comes under the influence of Cygnus constellation.



The Cygnus constellation is also associated with the "Brahma Muhurta" ("Moment of the Universe")



#### SB 5.23.3: purport:-

Dhruvaloka (Pole Star), the abode of Lord Visnu within this universe, is situated 1,300,000 yojanas from the seven stars (Big Dipper). In the planetary system of Dhruvaloka are the planets of the fire-god(Agni), Indra, Prajāpati, Kaśyapa and Dharma, all of whom are very respectful to the great devotee Dhruva, who lives on the polestar. Like bulls yoked to a central pivot, all the planetary systems revolve around **Dhruvaloka**, impelled by eternal time. Those who worship the virāt-purusa, the universal form of the Lord, conceive of this entire rotating system of planets as an animal known as **śiśumāra**. This imaginary śiśumāra is another form of the Lord. The head of the śiśumāra form is downward, and its body appears like that of a coiled snake. On the end of its tail is Dhruvaloka, on the body of the tail are Prajāpati, Agni, Indra and Dharma, and on the root of the tail are Dhātā and Vidhātā. On its waist are the seven great sages. The entire body of the **śiśumāra** faces toward its right and appears like a coil of stars. On the right side of this coil are the fourteen prominent stars from Abhijit to Punarvasu, and on the left side are the fourteen prominent stars from Puşyā to Uttarāşādhā. The stars known as Punarvasu and Pusyā are on the right and left hips of the śiśumāra, and the stars known as Ārdrā and Aślesā are on the right and left feet of the śiśumāra. Other stars are also fixed on different sides of the **Śiśumāra** planetary system according to the calculations of Vedic astronomers. To concentrate their minds, yogīs worship the Śiśumāra planetary system, which is technically known as the kundalinicakra. The serpent is Draco constellation (Sisumara).

Below is the Symbolism of the Kundalini serpent (Channel to Root)



Serpent Symbolism and Heaven Vault The Padmanabhaswamy temple, Kerala, India

In ancient Hindu tantric texts, it is believed that **Shakti**, the feminine aspect called **Kundalini** lives in Human body and this energetic force rests at the base of the spine in the sacrum. The **Tantric practice** of **Kundalini** yoga is about igniting this powerful cosmic energy to ascend through the chakras that live along the axis of the spine where conscious thought is born(**The Moola**) and finally unite with Shiva, **pure consciousness**. The same symbol is even depicted in ancient Egyptians, Mayans, Sumerian tablets, Greek, Roman and several other mythologies. This symbolism also appears in Bible as Holy Spirit.

> Reference: Vibhuti Pada - The third chapter of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras ध्रुवे तद्गतिज्ञानम् ॥२८॥ dhruve tadgati-iñānam ॥28॥

Explanation: Meditating on the polestar (Dhruva) engenders knowledge (jnana) ||28||



The **Symbolism** similar to **Kundalini serpent** (**Channel to Moola – The Root or Avatar Point**) is present in almost every ancient mythology.





**NOTE: Sikha** was worn by ancient Egyptians, Hittites, Persians and now Buddhist and Hindu priest signifies one-pointed (**ekanta**) focus on a spiritual goal to **Sahasrara or Heaven Point** (devotion to God).

The **Dome structure** in some of ancient temples/religious places represents **Vault of Heaven** and in some ancient traditions, skull cap - **kippah** (**Hebrew**: כיפה) is worn. **Kippah** literally means "**dome**". **Kippah** is worn on the head like a dome to have **divine presence of heaven always over head**.



**Indus Valley Seal** 

Nataraja(Shiva)

Mesopotamian religion

## **Sun Solstices and Avatars:**

When earth revolves around the SUN, two solstices occur annually, on about **21 June** and **21 December** and along with this earth also have <u>axial precession</u> and the period of precession is 26,000 years. Solstices are opposite on either side of the equator, so the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere is the summer solstice in the Southern Hemisphere and vice versa.



We all know that the **seasons of the year** are directly connected to both the solstices and the equinoxes. During winter solstice, the sun rises to its lowest point in the norther hemisphere sky and stands still for three days which symbolizes death and then after midwinter, the sun is reborn from the darkness, symbolizing rebirth and the renewal of life. Ancient **Egyptians** believed that the **Sun (RA) dies** and is **reborn** in winter solstice and similar movement happens in every precession cycle at the very same place of **Galactic center of Milky Way** during **Solstice**. During precession cycle, Ra's identity was often combined with other gods similar to **Avatar concept** of **Hinduism**. This idea basically supported God rebirth myth (**Resurrection of Osiris during Winter Solstice**) and reason for constructing **Pyramid**.



<u>Ratha Saptami</u> is celebrated in Hindu temples as **Ravi** or **Surya Jayanti** (the Sun-god's birthday).Sun God Ravi or Surya turning his **Ratha** (**Chariot**) drawn by seven horses (representing seven colors) towards the northern hemisphere, in a north-easterly direction. **Rath yatras** are held at various temples to mark the movement of sun towards northern hemisphere



RA ( Sun God)RAVI ( Sun God)Sun God arriving in Chariot ( Rath)Egyptian MythHindu Myth

Ancient Egyptians also had Rath yatras(Deities processions in Chariot) similar to what we have currently in Indian Temples. Below is such example.



3000BCE Deities Procession(Ancient Egypt)

2015 AD Deities Procession(SVT Temple, Mangalore, India)

In few of Hindu <u>Puranic myths</u>, Lord <u>Yama</u> was also represented as **Orion constellation** who was lord of **Naraka(Underworld)** and his **vahana** was **Taurus**(represented as **Buffalo or Bull**) and his duty was to direct the soul to a <u>Swarga</u> (heaven) or return it to <u>Bhoomi</u> (earth) based on human deeds(God or Bad Karma). **Two dogs of Lord Yama** that are mentioned in Hindu Puranas are **Canis Minor** and **Canis Major** constellations that guard hell and heaven either side. In most of ancient myths, the **river** separating **hell** and **heaven** was **Milky Way** and Milky Way (**Tree of life**) was believed to be as **path of souls**.





If one's soul were to rise to heaven after death to the **Milky Way (path of soul**) it had to pass through a **gate (via constellations)** and again we should note that the position of this **gate** (constellation) changes based on earth's **axial precession**.

Distinctive pattern of constellations along with **zodiac path (Sun Transit**) have supported in development of mythological stories as per **astrological ages** and most of them can be found in Hindu <u>Puranas</u>.



	Age of Taurus(4500BCE-2000BCE)		Age of Aries(2000 BCE-100BCE)		Age of Pisces(100 BCE-2700 AD)	
Vernal Equinox	Taurus	March	Aries	March	Pisces	March
	Gemini	April	Taurus	April	Aries	April
N	Cancer	May	Gemini	May	Taurus	May
Summer Solstice	Leo	June	Cancer	June	Gemini	June
(Gate of Man)	Virgo	July	Leo	July	Cancer	July
	Libra	August	Virgo	August	Leo	August
	Scorpio	September	Libra	September	Virgo	September
Gate of God 🕎	Sagittarius	October	Scorpio	October	Libra	October
	Capricorn	November	Sagittarius	November	Scorpio	November
Satya Yuga = Closest to God	Aquarius	December	Capricorn	December	Sagittarius	December
	Pisces	January	Aquarius	January	Capricorn	January
	Aries	February	Pisces	February	Aquarius	February

During summer solstice, constellations like Leo, Taurus, Gemini (changes as per earth's axial precession) acted as Gate to humans in many ancient religious beliefs where they believed that the souls ascend after death during this time of Sun Transit. On other opposite zodiac side near Sagittarius/Capricorn (Makara) we can find other side of star-gate which is near the galactic center. Galactic center is located close to Sagittarius and hence they were referred as Gate of



When the Sun resides on the gates of the Sun at an equinox or solstice, it represents a Galactic Alignment and Great Celestial Conjunction. In Greek myth, the **Gate of Man** corresponds with the crossing of the Milky Way and ecliptic at 5° **Gemini/Taurus** (sidereal zodiac) while the **Gate of God** corresponds with the crossing of the Milky Way and ecliptic in 5° **Sagittarius/Capricorn(Makara)**. Constellations like **Gemini** or **Sagittarius** are often depicted as **Gate keepers** or **dwarapalakas** and you can see them in every Hindu temples. Temples or Pyramids were constructed next to river representing **Milky Way (Cosmic River)**. Based on changes in earth's precession cycle, gate keepers or **dwarapalakas** used to change like **Lion (Sphinx)**, **Gemini**, **Sagittarius** etc.



Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dvarapala

Currently in Hinduism, it is during same period of Winter Solstice, the <u>Vaishnava</u> (Worshipers/Followers of <u>Vishnu</u> of Hinduism) celebrate **Vaikuntha Ekadashi** and as per **Vaishnava** sect, they believe that '**Vaikunta Dwaram**' or 'the gate to the Lord's Inner Sanctum' is opened on this day. The <u>Shaiva</u> sect observes the day as **Trikoti Ekadashi**.

### Reference: https://en.wikipedia.orgis/wiki/Vaikuntha Ekadashi



Ancient Hindu astrology supported representation of animals as deities' **vehicle** (**vahanas**) as they saw these constellations of stars in cosmic sky near galactic center or on the path of **galactic** equator when Avatar's originate.

Below is August sky (<u>Aquila Constellation</u>) and can be easily identified as character with the half-eagle half-human form. In Hindu mythology, we have <u>Garuda</u> who is **vahana** of Lord <u>Hari</u> or **Vishnu** (**Sun God**)

in RigVeda). Ancient Egyptians referred this as Sun God HERU/HARU/Horus (Resurrection of Osiris) during Winter Solstice. They believed that the Sun dies and is reborn in the precession cycle at the very same place of Galactic center.



## AQUILA CONSTELLATION

HORUS Egyptian Myth

### HARI Hindu Myth

<u>Cygne constellation</u> can be identified as swan. In Hindu mythology we have Goddess <u>Saraswati</u> in Swan along with musical instrument (Lyre constellation).Goddess <u>Saraswati</u> represents goddess for music and wisdom in Hindu myth.



Below is Murugan/Skanda with peacock as his Vahana (Pavo)

## **References:**

Ancient Star Myths: https://ancientstarmyths.blogspot.com/