

## Historical Contacts Between India and Egypt Before 300 A.D.

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Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) wrote, "The Madras Presidency is the habitat of that Tamil race whose civilization was the most ancient, and a branch of whom, called the Sumerians, spread a vast civilization on the banks of the Euphrates in very ancient times; whose astrology, religious lore, morals, rites, etc., furnished the foundation for the Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations; and whose mythology was the source of the Christian Bible. Another branch of these Tamils spread from the Malabar Coast and gave rise to the wonderful Egyptian civilization, and the Aryans also are indebted to this race in many respects."<sup>1</sup> "We would suggest, also, that the land of Punt of the Egyptians was not only Malabar, but that the Egyptians as a race bodily migrated from Malabar across the ocean and entered the delta along the course of the Nile from north to south, to which Punt they have been always fondly looking back as the home of the blessed."<sup>2</sup>

An Indian origin of the Egyptian and Sumerian civilization is also supported by the Spanish Jesuit Priest Henry Heras (1888-1955), Swami Sankarananda, and A. Kalyanaraman (b. 1903). Father Heras taught that the Dravidians of South India first colonized Yemen in South Arabia. Later around 4500 B.C. the new cultural bearers proceeded northward up the Red Sea and landing at the port of Koseir. They then crossed the Wadi Hammamat desert moving westward until they reached the city of Coptos (now Kupft) on the Nile River in Upper Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

According to the ancient tradition of the Egyptians, they hailed from the Land of Punt their original ancestral homeland in the east. Sir Wallis Budge (1857-1934) an eminent Egyptologist mentioned that probably during the pre-dynastic period, a group of people from the east migrated to the Nile Valley. They possessed an advanced civilization resembling the Sumerians. They brought new agricultural techniques, wheat and barley, brick-making skills, writing, metal objects, domestic animals, architecture and religion to Egypt. Instead of undergoing a slow drawn out developing process, the civilization quickly matured.<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars have identified the land of Punt with Somaliland on the East African coast, which is unlikely for many reasons. Cattle depicted in the carvings at Deir el-Bahari characterizing the natives of Punt, show humpless cattle unlike the humped cattle of Somalia and the incense trees depicted in the carvings differ from the variety found in Somaliland. The inhabitants of Punt as portrayed by Queen Hatshepsut's artists have the physical features of Asians and not African. Also, according to historical records, the round trip sea voyage from Egypt took nearly two and one half years to complete, indicating a country more distant than Somalia. Others researchers like Father Heras identify Punt with Yemen a frankincense producing country in South Arabia, which carried on maritime trade relations across the Arabian Sea with India. Their script might have developed from the Proto-Indian script of the Indus Valley, and it is possible that the inhabitants of Yemen originated in India.<sup>5</sup>

James Hornell and A. C. Das identified Punt with the Pandya region of South India, which was centered around its capital city Madura. The Kingdom of Pandya established trade relations by sea with many foreign countries. Hornell noted the affinities between the sea going vessel designs of South India and those of the ancient Nile and Mesopotamia, particularly the circular coracle and reed raft.<sup>6</sup> A. Kalyanaraman equated the Land of Punt with Pankth; a region in Northwest India and Afghanistan mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. According to Egyptian tradition the sun god Hor (Horus in Greek) rose from the Land of Punt in the east, which might be the Indus Valley since it is located on the same geographical latitude as Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

According to the earliest known Egyptian records the Pharaoh Sahure sent ships to Punt in 2750 B.C. Queen Hatshepsut (c. 1479-1458 B.C.) received foreign shipments of fragrant wood (possibly sandalwood), myrrh resin, trees, cosmetics for the eyes, gold, ivory (Sk. *ibha danta*; Eg. *ab*), cinnamon, apes (Sk. *kopi*; Eg. *kafu*), cheetahs, cattle and dogs from Punt, all of which existed in India. Egyptian cattle resemble the variety found in the Gujarat region of India. Pharaoh Ramesses III (ruled 1198-1167 B.C.) received royal linen, precious stones, and cinnamon from Punt. Also, cotton goods, ebony, birds, elephant teeth and cheetahs or hunting leopards were transported from India to Egypt in the twelfth century B.C. or earlier. A sketch of a barn door cock, which is a bird indigenous to India, was discovered in Egypt dating from the middle of the second millennium B.C. Flowers found in a wreath at Hawara are indigenous to the country of India. The Indian merchants who traded with the Egyptians used the cowrie shell as foreign currency as far back as 2800 B.C. In the second millennium B.C. some Indian traders sailed to Abyssinia, and the local traders transported their goods to Egypt.<sup>8</sup>

According to the hieroglyphic dictionary, ancient Egyptians referred to India as Hentui, which is a cognate of the Persian word Hindu and the Hebrew Hodu (Old Testament Book of Esther 1:1; 8:9). Egyptians alluded to the Ionian Greeks as Yevana, and the Persians as Persa, which equates with the Indian Sanskrit Yavanas and Parasa, and the Hebrew Yavan (Genesis 10:2) and Paras (2 Chron. 36:20).<sup>9</sup>

Excavations at the Indus Valley sites of Mohenjodaro and Harappa and at Lothal a metropolitan port center on the west coast of India, reveal many artifacts comparable to those of the Egyptian civilization. Similar paraphernalia discovered in both Egypt and the Indus Valley include: the parabolic saw, segmented beads, ear studs, ear rings, similar shaped terra cotta candle sticks, bull-legged stools, a small bed with a reclining female figure, and imitations shells which served as spoons. Long tubular carnelian beads of Indian origin, etched beads, tamarind, wood, and other Indian products have been discovered in the Egyptian burial tombs. Flattened gold and copper hemispherical terminals found at Mohenjodaro, resemble the faience from Byblos during the IV Dynasty. Cubical dice from Mohenjodaro have a similar shape to those from Tell Asmar and have their numbers arranged in an identical manner. A terra cotta mummy from Lothal vaguely bears a resemblance to an Egyptian mummy with only the face uncovered.<sup>10</sup>

A distinct ceramic known as blacktopped ware in Egypt and black and red ware in India is common to these two locations at a very early date. In Egypt and Nubia it existed in the Neolithic period around the fifth millennium B.C., while similar black and red ware pottery has been encountered at Lothal dating from the second half of the third millennium B.C. In India, mussel-shells were imitated from copper and pottery and in Egypt from slate and aragonite. Comparable patterns were painted on the pottery of the Pharaoh Nakada II in Egypt and in Mohenjodaro. A highly specialized and very complex endless knot occurs on two copper tablets from Mohenjodaro, while an identical motif engraved on Egyptian scarabs was in existence between the XIII and the XVII Dynasties (c. 1786-1575 B.C.). Analogous designs of looped and endless cords appear on two copper tablets from Mohenjodaro and on a pre-Dynastic jar. Burnt bricks were used in Mohenjodaro and in Egypt during the first Dynasty (c. 3200-2800 B.C.). Both Indians at Mohenjodaro and the Egyptians employed ships with reeds bound together. The Harappan measure of 13.2 inches was in use during the XII Dynasty (c. 1991-1786 B.C.) in Egypt. In the Indus Valley and in pre-dynastic Egypt the same species of barley was consumed by the local population. Also, a species of African wood has been uncovered at Lothal.<sup>11</sup>

Harappan writing of the Indus Valley like Egyptian hieroglyphics and early Sumerian ideographs is logo-syllabic, meaning that some signs represent words and others function only for their syllabic values or sounds. A letter of the Harappan script found on a seal from Mohenjodaro depicts a duck enclosed within a circle, which is identical to a cartouche of the Egyptian hieroglyphic script. A seal with a deity grasping a lion on either side has been discovered in both locations, and a Harappan seal of a buffalo attacking several people corresponds with a slate palette of the first Dynasty.<sup>12</sup> In opposition to the Indus Valley origin of the Egyptian civilization critics mention that: no religious temples, monumental tombs or Egyptian objects have been found in the Indus Valley; nor have any Harappan articles been discovered in Egypt; and also their hieroglyphic symbols do not correspond with the Egyptian variety.<sup>13</sup>

In the middle of the second millennium B.C., Egyptian mummies were wrapped in Indian muslin and their cloth was dyed with Indian indigo. There are numerous analogies between the pottery and ceramics of the tombs of ancient South India and Egypt. Black and red ware bowls, and red ware offerings from graves in the Nubian Desert of Egypt, from the first half of the second millennium B.C., correspond to the South Indian megalithic pottery. The structure of the tombs of pre-dynastic Egypt corresponds to those of South India. Stone linings and the capstone of one of the burials resemble South Indian examples. Skull measurements of the mummies are similar to that of the Indians, and the pre-dynastic Egyptians sometimes cremated their dead like the Indians.<sup>14</sup>

Common styles and motifs in architecture and art used by the Egyptians and Indians include: rock-cut temples, analogous types of columns, pillared halls, fire-baked instead of sunbaked bricks, palm and lotus designs on pottery, fresco paintings on a prepared surface of lime spread on a brick or stone wall, and the use of pyramid type buildings to lodge deified dead monarchs. The pagodas of Thanjavur and Madura

resemble the Egyptian pyramids. Head rests found at Karnataka in South India dated from the first half of the second millennium B.C., are strikingly similar to the Egyptian variety that span the period from pre-dynasty down to the time of the Romans. Ragi a coarse millet grain cultivated by South Indian farmers in the third millennium B.C., was also grown in Ethiopia which at that time was part of ancient Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

In the political and social realm the Indian Manu (Manush) was the first man and lawgiver, while the Egyptian Meni (Gr. Menes) (c. 3200-2850 B.C.) was the initial political and legal ruler of a united Egypt. Other lawgivers like the Cretan Minos (c. 1900 B.C.) and the Hebrew Mosheh (Moses) (13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) have similar sounding name. Many great kings and heroes in India were considered to be children of the sun (Sk. Suryavansa), including the avatar Sri Rama. Similarly, the pharaohs referred to themselves as “sons of Ra” the sun god. According to one account, the sun god descended to earth in the guise of the queen's husband and from this union were born some of the pharaohs. Excavations at El-Amarna in Egypt reveal that in the middle of the second millennium B.C. princes with Indo-Iranian names were ruling in Syria. Both societies had a social organization composed of four castes of priests, rulers and warriors, traders and artisans, and laborers.<sup>16</sup>

The religion of both India and Egypt had four deities (Sk. loka-palas) who protected and guarded each of the four cardinal directions of the universe. In India the seven sages (Sk. saptarshi) are the mind born sons of the creator God Brahma, while in Egypt there were seven divine sages (Tchaasu VII) who helped Thoth to plan the construction of the world, and who preside over writing and painting. In both societies the bull sacrifice was performed, and cows, snakes, rivers and the sun were venerated. They shared the common religious symbols of a bull, cobra, large birds (an eagle in India and a falcon in Egypt), lotus, triangles, and the crescent moon. In both cultures, the priests refrained from eating eggs that were considered to be sacred to the deities, and the first fruits of spring were dedicated to the gods. According to the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484-425 B.C.), the Egyptians (like the Indians) carried images of their deities on four-wheel carriages at special festivals. The Egyptian god Ptah is depicted as a mummy, has a bull named Apis and a lion-goddess consort. Similarly, Shiva in India who has a form as Shava the corpse, is sometimes accompanied by Nandi the bull, and has a consort who rides a lion.<sup>17</sup>

The Egyptian Sun god Ra and the Indian creator deity Prajapati, both shed the tears from which all creatures came into existence. Both Ra and Brahma emerged out of chaos from a golden egg. Horus and Brahma were both born from a lotus. In Egypt and India deities of good fortune were worshiped for the purpose of gaining health, happiness, wealth and fulfilling various desires. It was believed by the Egyptians that after dying, the soul is escorted to Osiris the god of Justice. In India the deceased person was taken to Chitragupta the scribe who read off a full account of their earthly deeds. According to both religions a balance is utilized that weighs the individuals good and bad deeds, determining whether the deceased person would receive future reward or punishment. In the Egyptian religion Ra the sun god marries the moon goddess, and so also in the *Rig Veda* Surya the sun is referred to as Savitri the wife of the moon.<sup>18</sup>

Though more research is required on this subject, there is a possibility of India and Egypt sharing some common religious deities. They include: the chief deities which are the Indian Ashura (I) and the Egyptian (E) Asar (Osiris in Greek), which relate to the Babylonian (B) Asari, Assyrian Asshur, Iranian (Ir) Ahura-Mazda, Armenian Ara-Mazd, Mongolian Hor-Musda, Turkish Esar, Nordic (N) Aesir, Chinese Buddhist Asolo and the Tibetan and Japanese (J) Asura; the sun deities Surya (I) and Hor (Horus) (E) relating to Shullat (B), Hvar (Ir), Hebrew Shemesh, Greek (G) Helios, Roman (R) Sol, Sunna (N), British (Br) Hoel, Java and Vietnam Surya and Hiruko (J); Mother goddesses Matri (I) and Mut (E) relating to the Sumerian (S), Mami, Mah (B), Slavic Mati, Mater Matuta (R), Gaulish Matres and Modron (Br); dawn goddesses Ushas-(tara) (I) and Aset (Isis) (E) relating to Eos (G), Ishtar (B), Phoenician Ashtarte, Abyssinian Ashdar, Lithuanian Ausera, Aurora (R), Teutonic Ostara, Celtic Uathach and the Anglo-Saxon Eostre; water deities or the primordial waters, being the Aptyas (I) and Hapi (E) relating to Aaba (S), Apsu (B) and Apo (Ir); and the primeval darkness or abyss, Tamas (I) and Tahamu or Tehem (E) relating to Tiamat (B) and Tehom (H).<sup>19</sup>

### **After the Sixth Century B.C.**

In the Pre-Christian era several political, trade and cultural contacts were established between India and Egypt. Herodotus (c. 484-425 B.C.) the Greek historian mentioned that Scylax of Caryanda began a two and one-half year sea voyage from the Indus River to Egypt beginning in 510 B.C. Inspired by the Persian King Darius I (ruled 521-486 B.C.) he sailed around Arabia north to Arsinoe (Suez) on the Red Sea. According to the 13th Rock Edict at Kalsi (c. 257 B.C.), Ashoka (ruled 270/269-232 B.C.) established diplomatic contact with five western monarchs. Based on what is inscribed on the Rock Edicts, it is implied that he sent Buddhist missionaries to these countries. One of the five rulers was Magas of Cyrene (now Eastern Libya) (ruled 300/285-258/250 B.C.), a country that borders Western Egypt. Another monarch was the enlightened Ptolemy II Philadelphus (ruled 285-247 B.C.), whose empire included Egypt, part of Syria and Palestine. His father Ptolemy I Soter (ruled 323-285 B.C.) was an astute general serving under Alexander the Great. He participated in military campaigns in an area that stretched from Bactria (now Northeastern Afghanistan) to the Indus River of India (327-325 B.C.). After Alexander's death Ptolemy I became the founder of the Macedonian Egyptian Empire, whose capital was situated at Alexandria, establishing the Museum that included the famous Alexandrian library.<sup>20</sup>

Among Ptolemy II Philadelphus' many achievements included: sending Dionysius as an ambassador to Ashoka until 247 B.C., in exchange for an Indian ambassador dispatched to the Egyptian court. Dionysius authored a book dealing with India (Pliny 6:58). Ptolemy II had Indian women, oxen, hunting dogs, cows, marble, and spices, exhibited in a jubilant procession at Alexandria in 271-270 B.C. In order to stimulate trade with India and the Middle East he had three large ports constructed, had a canal built that connected the Red Sea with the Nile River, and created a caravan road.<sup>21</sup> Under the influence of Aristotelian thought, Ptolemy II significantly increased the size of the Alexandrian library, aspiring to collect copies of all of the books from India and the rest of the known world. Employing large grants of public money, he collected at least

200,000 books and possibly many more. He wrote letters to many kings and governors outside of his empire, asking them to send a copy of all the books in their political domain to him. By the second century A.D. the library contained 700,000 books, the largest collection of books in the ancient world. The Alexandrian library was an institute of advanced learning attracting scholars from all over the western world. Epiphanius (c. 315-403) and Ibn al Kifti (1172-1248) mentioned that there were Indian books in the Alexandrian library.<sup>22</sup>

Sir Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) indicated that modeled heads of Indians were discovered at Memphis in North Egypt dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., and that as early as 340 B.C., there were ascetic communities in the Egyptian desert. Like their Buddhist counterparts, these monasteries emphasized a contemplative and solitary life style. Petrie connected this phenomenon historically to the Persian occupation of the Nile Valley occurring during the period 525-405 B.C., being that there were many Indian soldiers in the Persian army at that time; and to the Buddhist missions to the west dispatched by Ashoka around the year 260 B.C. Ascetic recluses of the Sarapaion lived near Memphis in the desert as early as 170 B.C. and were mentioned again in 211 A.D., prior to the origin of Christian monasticism in this area. Two religious symbols common to both the Indian Buddhist and the Hindus, a wheel with a trisula and a trident were discovered on a Ptolemaic gravestone in Egypt. Callixeinos a Greek author indicated that Ptolemy IV (ruled 221-205 B.C.) had a ship with “a sumptuous dining solon surrounded by a row of columns, which were built of Indian stones.” Eratosthenes who was in charge of the Alexandrian library from 234 until 196 B.C., authored a book entitled *Geographica*, which covered the geography of India. He described India as a peninsula, refers to the island of Taprobane (Sri Lanka), and mentions that the Ganges River flows eastward to the ocean. Indian figures and modeled terracotta heads of foreigners were discovered at Memphis, which could date back to 180 B.C. or earlier.<sup>23</sup>

Ptolemy VIII (ruled 116-108, 88-81 B.C.) sent Eudoxus of Cyzicus to India and he later returned with a large cargo of spices and precious stones. An inscription of the late Ptolemaic period (1st century B.C.) from the Thebaid was dedicated by Sophon an Indian. James Ferguson (1808-86) the Scottish writer believed that the large carved monolith columns at Axum constructed in the 1st century A.D. in Ethiopia, resembled “an Indian nine-storied pagoda,” similar to the Buddhist temples at Bodh-Gaya India.<sup>24</sup>

There was a considerable volume of Roman trade from Egypt to India around 90 B.C. Because of civil strife in the Roman Empire, a rapid decline in trade occurred between these two countries during the next sixty years. The Emperor Augustus Caesar brought peace to the empire around 30 B.C. and consequently, the level of trade was reestablished, maintaining a high peak until the time of Vespasian (ruled 70-79 A.D.). Commercial items from India, China, and Southeast Asia were exchanged at a port in Sri Lanka. Strabo (64/63 B.C.-24 A.D.) wrote that 120 vessels sailed yearly from one port on the Red Sea to India. There was a large demand for Asian imports at Alexandria in Egypt and at Antioch in Syria. Due to the rapid depletion of the Roman gold supply, the Emperor Vespasian banned the export of bullion around 70 A.D. Pliny wrote of a major financial drain of nearly a million pounds of gold per year due to the trade

deficiency. Fortunately, the trade volume was soon revitalized by the Emperor's Trajan (ruled 98-117) and Hadrian (ruled 117-38). South India supplied spices, pepper, precious stones, ebony, sandalwood, and some of the cloth and ivory. Perfumes came from North India, while some of the cotton cloth came from the Deccan and some of the ivory from Orissa. A hoard of gold bullion coins from the Kushan Empire (c. 30 to 220) of Northwest India were discovered in Northern Ethiopia in 1940. The Mediterranean trade with the Orient continued until the 10th century and was later revived after the Crusades.<sup>25</sup>

Augustus Caesar had a temple built in his honor at Cranganore in South India. There were several Roman colonies in India, particularly at the Madura area where many Roman coins have been unearthed. Around the year 150, Ptolemy (fl. 127-51) the Greek astronomer, mathematician and geographer at Alexandria learned of Indian geography from a westerner who had lived in India. Thousands of Roman coins extending from 10 B.C. to 547 A.D. have been discovered particularly in South India, some along the East coast and a few from the Northwestern region of India. A hoard of gold bullion coins from the Kushan Empire (ruled 48 to 220) of North India was discovered in Northern Ethiopia in 1940.<sup>26</sup>

A Buddhist book entitled *Milindapanha* describes a vigorous trade between India and the city of Alexandria in the first century A.D. Strabo recorded that Alexandrian merchants sailed annually to India from the Red Sea port of Myos-Hormos (*Geography* 2:5.12). Josephus the Jewish historian referred to Egypt as the "port for India" (*Jewish Wars* 2:385). *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* was written by an Alexandrian seafarer around the time of the Emperor Nero (ruled 54-68). This book goes into detail in describing the Roman trade with India.<sup>27</sup> A community of Indian merchants resided in Alexandria. Dion Chrysostom (c. 40-117) a Greek rhetorician and sophist made note of some Indians as being in his audience in Alexandria around 100 A.D. (*Oratio* 32:373). Yavaneshvara translated a Greek text from Alexandria into the Sanskrit language in 149/150. This material was incorporated into the *Yavanajataka* by Sphujidhvaja and has since been translated into the English language. Brahmans who lived in Alexandria visited the emperor Severus (ruled 193-211). Three fragments of inscriptions written in Indian languages and scripts were discovered at the Red Sea port of Quseir. One of these epigraphic remains is written in Prakrit and the other two in Old Tamil, indicating a South Indian origin of the merchants in Egypt. Probably between 65 and 70, Mark wrote the oldest synoptic Gospel, which was based on the words of his mentor the apostle Peter. According to tradition, Mark founded the Christian Church in Alexandria where he died.<sup>28</sup>

Swami Vivekananda believed the Jewish Therapeutae Order of Egypt was founded by Buddhist monastics from India. Buddhist missionaries taught religion, cured disease, and made monastic disciples. The Swami derived the word "Therapeutae" from "thera" which is a distinguished elder among the Buddhist monks and "putta" (Sk. putra) meaning "son" in the Pali language. Putta also designates "Sons of the Buddha." Thera is a commonly used term among the Buddhists, and Theravada is the "School of the Elders," the most ancient Buddhist order. In the Biblical *New Testament*, the Greek

“therapeuo” means to heal. The Indian Buddhist Emperor Ashoka sent the monks to foreign countries, and also built hospitals, and dispatched medicines and medical plants to neighboring kingdoms. Buddhist monks often served as doctors, furnishing medical treatment to the lay people.<sup>29</sup>

Members of the Therapeutae Order as described by Judaeus of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.-45/50 A.D.) lived near the city of Alexandria, and were more contemplative than the Essenes whom they resembled to a fair extent. Therapeutae men and women lived an ascetic life of prayer and study, dwelt in simple huts, and spent much of their time in solitude. Like the Buddhist monks they lived a cenobitic life sharing a community of goods, while engaged in religious study and contemplation, seeking divine illumination. Like the Essenes they practiced voluntary celibacy, silence, fasting, vegetarianism and abstained from drinking wine.<sup>30</sup>

Apollonius of Tyana (c. 4 B.C.-97 A.D.) a Greek Neo-Pythagorean mystic and philosopher, traveled to Taxila in Northwest India between the years 41 and 54 A.D. where he conversed with the Buddhists and Brahmins teachers. He also journeyed to Upper Egypt (now Ethiopia) near the Nile River where he met the religious ascetics (Gymnosophists). Apollonius said that their religious wisdom was originally derived from the Indian sages who surpassed them, and that the philosopher Pythagoras learned of this knowledge when he visited Egypt. During his lifetime Apollonius was considered to be a great Holy Man. After his death the emperor Hadrian built a temple and created a priesthood for his worship at Tyana, where he was worshiped for several centuries.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence has been presented to demonstrate the Indian influence on the Christian Gnostics of Alexandria. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan listed many common features of Gnostic, Indian Upanishadic, and Greek mystical thought. These three traditions teach that: God’s essence cannot be defined since It transcends all thought; evil is a lesser reality than the good and possibly unreal; the universe was created by a process of emanation; the cosmos is the result of the descent of spirit into matter; contemplation and asceticism should be practiced to free oneself from the bonds of the material world; salvation is the result of spiritual enlightenment; gnosis (Pali jhana; Sk. jnana) is basically illuminative spiritual wisdom and not intellectual knowledge; the soul reincarnates; and the ultimate purpose of life is to attain to the divine realm. Also, the Indians and Gnostics emphasize that the innermost self of a human being is identical in substance with God, and that God is revealed to humanity as both a divine Father and Mother.<sup>32</sup>

James Kennedy (b. 1842) a former Christian missionary in India singled out Basilides (fl. 120-40 A.D.) a Gnostic leader of Alexandria, as being under Indian Buddhist influence. Basilides and many Indians including the Hindus emphasize: God is without attributes, unknowable, transcending all predicates; God can be described only in negative terms (negative theology); the world was created out of cosmic seeds, or according to other Gnostics by a process of emanation; only the religious elect are freed from the law of reincarnation and karma; universal ignorance is the cause of worldly bondage; there is a divine spark in all people; salvation comes through knowledge and



asceticism; and a universal restoration will occur in the future when all people will be saved. In opposition to a Buddhist influence, some scholars think that Pythagorean and/or Platonic ideas influenced Basilides.<sup>33</sup>

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263-340) the greatest of the early Christian church historians wrote, "Pantaenus was one of these, and is said to have gone to India. It is reported that among persons there who knew of Christ, he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the apostles had preached to them, and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language, which they had preserved till that time" (Eccl. Hist. 5:10; c. 303). Pantaenus (c. d. 202) the head of the Alexandrian Christian school traveled to India as a missionary around the years 190. Some modern scholars think that Pantaenus traveled to Southern Arabia and not to India.<sup>34</sup>

Pantaenus (c. d. 202) was succeeded by Clement of Alexandria (c. 150/160-213/220) as the head of the Christian School in Alexandria. Clement was the first Christian to mention the Buddha by name and that he received divine honor. He also stated that the Greek philosophers particularly Pythagoras were influenced by the Brahmins of India. Alexander the Great's conversation with ten Indian philosophers was described by Clement, and he noted that there are two main Indian sects. First, was the Sarmanaes (Sramana=Buddhist) who were celibate ascetic monastics. Second, were the Brahmins (Hindus) who cultivated philosophy, practiced vegetarianism, sometimes fast for three days at a time, and believe in reincarnation (*Stromata* 1:15; 3:7; 6:4). Clement himself conversed with a wise man from India in Alexandria.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, the some of the common cultural, religious, and technological characteristics found between the Indians and Egyptians, might have been transmitted from one country to the other at an early period, or at a later date as a result of extensive trade relations and political interactions.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (9 vols.; Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1962), VII, p. 331, cf., pp. 52, 365, 367.

<sup>2</sup> Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, IV, pp. 301-02.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Heras, *Studies in Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture* (Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, 1953), pp. 22-23, 302-04, 325-39, 401, 440-43; Swami Sankarananda, *The Last Days of Mohenjo-Daro* (Calcutta: Abhedananda Academy of Culture, 1959), pp. 102-21; A. Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini, The Saga of the Indo-Aryans* (2 vols.; Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), I, pp. 29-32, 63-74.

<sup>4</sup> Kewal Motwani, *Manu Dharma Sastra* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1958), pp. 268-69; Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>5</sup> Heras, *Studies*, pp. 339-46, 353-60, 440-41; Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini*, p. 66; Margaret Murray, *The Splendour That Was Egypt* (London: Readers Union, 1951), p. xxi.

<sup>6</sup> Uliyar and Susheela Upadhyaya, *Dravidian and Negro-African* (Udupi, India:

Samshodhana Prakshana, 1983), p. 21; Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini*, p. 68; N. Lahovary, *Dravidian Origins and the West* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1963), pp. 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini*, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Sankarananda, *Last Days*, pp. 117-21; Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini*, pp. 66-68; Murray, *Splendor*, pp. 49, 318, 331; M. K. Dhavalikar, "Early Contacts," in Saryu Doshi, ed., *India and Egypt* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1993), p. 44; Kishore Saxena, "Indus-Euphrates-Nile," *Indo-Asian Culture* 14 (1965), p. 201; Shashi Asthana, *History and Archaeology of India's Contact With Other Countries* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1976), p. 165; Gopal Stavig, "India and the Pentateuch," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (India) 80 (1999), pp. 86-87; Margaret Murray, *The Splendor that was Egypt* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1966), p. 222.

<sup>9</sup> Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); E. A. Wallis Budge, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* (London: John Murray, 1960), pp. 960, 992, 1012; James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), Appendix, pp. 32, 48, 97; Stavig, "India," p. 87.

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