

India and the Biblical Old Testament

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Little attention has been devoted to the interconnection between the Judeo-Christian religion as presented in the Pentateuch and the ancient religion of India. One example of their congruence is the remarkable correspondence between the Hebrew and Indian flood story, as described in the book of Genesis (Gen. 6:5 to 9:29), the *Satapatha Brahmana* (SB 1:8.1.1-6) and later in the *Mahabharata* (MB 3:186).¹ The following thirteen affinities between Noah and the Indian flood hero Manu, indicate that the two stories are regional variations of the same legend. Quite likely two independent versions of the flood were combined into a single Biblical narrative. They are the Priestly code (P) and the Jahwistic document (J). While the Indian story tends to be more in line with the Priestly code, it parallels the Jahwistic documents for items six and the last part of seven and eleven given below.²

- 1) The flood heroes were virtuous men- Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation" (Gen. 6:9 P). Manu: "There was a powerful and great Rishi (sage) of the name of Manu" (MB 3:186).
- 2) God tells them to build a ship- Noah: "And God said to Noah ... 'Make yourself an ark'" (Gen. 6:13-14 P). Manu: "Thou shalt then attend to my advice by preparing a ship" (SB 1:8.1.4). "Thou shalt build a strong and massive ark" (MB 3:186).
- 3) God warns them of an immanent deluge- Noah: "I will bring a flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh ... Everything on the earth shall die" (Gen. 6:17 P). Manu: "A flood will carry away all these creatures ... In such and such a year the flood will come" (SB 1:8.1.2, 4). "The dissolution of this mobile and immobile world is nigh at hand. The time for the purging of this

world is now ripe ... that fearful flood” (MB 3:186).

- 4) They are told to save organic life- Noah: “And of everything of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark” (Gen. 6:19 P). Manu: “Take with thee all the different seeds ... and separately and carefully must thou preserve them therein” (MB 3:186).
- 5) They construct the vessel- Noah: “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22 P). Manu: “He attended to the advice by preparing a ship” (SB 1:8.1. 5).
- 6) They enter the ship and set sail- Noah: “And Noah ... went into the ark, to escape the waters of the flood” (Gen. 7:7 J). Manu: “when the flood had risen, he entered the ship” (SB 1:8.1.5). “Manu ... set sail in an excellent vessel on the surging sea” (MB 3:186).
- 7) All other living creatures are destroyed- Noah: “And all flesh died that moved upon the earth ... Only Noah was left, and those with him on the ark” (Gen. 7:21 P, 23 J). Manu: “The flood then swept away all these creatures and Manu alone remained here” (SB 1:8.1.6). “When the world was thus flooded, none but Manu, the seven Rishis, and the fish could be seen” (MB 3:186).
- 8) The deluge is long lasting- Noah: “And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days” (Gen. 7:24 P). Manu: “the flood for many a long year” (MB 3:186).
- 9) The ship eventually lands on a mountain- Noah: “the ark came to rest on the mountain of Ararat” (Gen. 8:4 P). Manu: “he passed swiftly up to yonder northern mountain.... that slope of the northern mountain is called ‘Manu’s descent’” (SB 1:8.1.5-6). He “tied the boat on that peak of the mountain” (MB 3:186).

- 10) The flood subsides- Noah: “the waters were dried off the earth” (Gen. 8:13 P). Manu: “As the waters subside, thou mayest gradually descend” (SB 8:1.1.6)!
- 11) They offer a religious sacrifice- Noah: “Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20 J). Manu: “he engaged in worshiping and austerities. During this time he also performed a paka-sacrifice: he offered up in the waters clarified butter, sour milk, whey and curds” (SB 1:8.1.7). “By practicing severe austerities ... therefore practiced great asceticism. And endowed with ascetic merit” (MB 3:186).
- 12) They repopulate the world as the father of the human race- Noah: “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” (Gen. 9:1 P). Manu: “Through her he generated this race, which is the race of Manu” (SB 1:8.1.10). ‘Manu will create all beings’ ... Manu himself became desirous of creating the world ... set about his work of creating all beings in proper and exact order” (MB 3:186).
- 13) Long genealogies of their descendants are provided- Noah: The list begins with Noah through his son Shem tracing their lineage down to the patriarch Abraham (Gen. 10:1, 21-31; 11:10-32). Manu: Genealogies trace the descendants of Manu through his son Ikshwaku over many generations down to the Divine Incarnation Sri Rama and beyond (VP 4:1, 5, 22).

Noah's Ark landed on Mount Ararat (Urartu in Assyrian) in the country of Armenia near the Iranian border. The word Ararat may be related to the ancient name for India, Aryavarta (i.e., land of the Aryan). At one time, India, Iran, and possibly Armenia were a single culture with a common language. Manu had a son named Nabha-Nedishtha whose name corresponds to Uta-Napishtim the Babylonian flood hero

and the Hebrew Noah.³ After studying Biblical records, 120 experts estimated that the creation of the world occurred in 5411 B.C. and the flood in 3154 B.C. Analyzing data given in the Septuagint, another study specified that the creation took place in 5328 B.C. and the flood in 3066 B.C. According to chronological reckonings derived from astronomical calculations and genealogical lists of kings, the Babylonian flood has been estimated to have occurred in 3189 B.C.⁴ Using similar Indian data, another independent source gauged that the flood hero Manu lived in 3167 B.C. and his son Nabha-Nedishtha in 3149 B.C. Traditional Indian sources state that the present age (the Kali Yuga) began in 3102 B.C.⁵

Some scholars might assert that the Indian versions of the flood and creation story originated with the Sumerians or Babylonians. A problem with this hypothesis is that there are some fundamental affinities between the Indian and Biblical accounts that are missing in the Babylonian narrative. Themes not found in the Babylonian version include: after the flood terminates, Manu and Noah repopulate the world; long genealogies of their descendants are provided which include cultural heroes; God creates the world by speech or thought; the creation of animals and the superiority of man over other life forms.

Moses and Manu's depiction of the creation of the world bear a resemblance, as shown in the following ten commonalities taken primarily from the book of Genesis (Gen. 1:1-27) and the *Laws of Manu* (LM 1:5-46).⁶

- 1) A formless universe is immersed in darkness- Hebrew: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2). Indian: "This universe existed in the shape of darkness, unperceived, destitute of distinctive marks" (LM 1:5). An older Vedic account of creation in the *Rig Veda* (RV) states that, "Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness this All was indiscriminate chaos. All that existed was void and formless" (RV 10:129.3). The Hebrew word for "the face of the deep" (tehom), the primeval chaos, bears some resemblance to the Sanskrit term

for the primeval darkness (tamas), the Babylonian primeval chaos (tiamat) and the Egyptian abyss (tehem, tahamu).⁷ An alternative translation of the passage at the beginning of Genesis is, “When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void” (Gen. 1:1-2). Some scholars such as the leading Christian theologian Hans Kung assert that, the world was formed out of a primordial pre-existent matter and that creation ex nihilo is a relatively late Biblical concept.⁸ This concurs with the Indian idea of the eternity of matter.

- 2) God acted on the primordial world composed of water- Hebrew: “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). Indian: “He ... created the waters, and placed his seed in them.... The waters are called narah ... they were his first residence” (LM 1:8, 10). The older narrative describes it as, “What covered in, and where and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water” (RV 10:129.1)? In a later version it is stated: “Verily, in the beginning this universe was water, nothing but a sea of water” (SB 11:1.6.1).
- 3) The world was created by Gods word or thought- Hebrew: “And God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). Indian: “He, desiring to produce beings of many kinds ... first with a thought created the waters, and placed his seed in them” (LM 1:8). An older version declared, “He (Prajapati) said ‘bhuh’: this word became the earth; ‘bhuvah’: this became the air; ‘svah’: this became yonder sky” (SB 11:1.6.3). In the *Aitareya Upanishad* (AU) it is stated, “Verily, in the beginning all this was Self, one only; there was nothing else blinking whatsoever. He thought: ‘Shall I send forth worlds?’ He sent forth these worlds” (AU 2:4.1.1-2).⁹
- 4) God severed the darkness- Hebrew: “God separated the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4). Indian: “Then the Divine Self-existent ... appeared with irresistible creative power, dispelling the darkness” (LM 1:6).

- 5) God created Heaven and earth- Hebrew: "God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.... And God called the firmament Heaven ... And God said, 'Let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth" (Gen. 1:7-10). Indian: "The Divine one resided in that egg during the whole year, then he himself by his thought divided it into two halves; and out of those two halves he formed the Heaven and the earth" (LM 1:12-13). In the *Atharva Veda* (4:16.3) it is stated that, "The loins of Varuna are both the oceans" which the editor of the book interprets as the waters above and under the firmament.¹⁰
- 6) God created vegetation- Hebrew: "And God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind upon the earth.' And it was so" (Gen. 1:11). Indian: "I will truly declare to you, as well as their order in respect to birth.... All plants propagated by seed or slips; grow from shoots" (LM 1:42, 46).
- 7) God created the heavenly bodies- Hebrew: "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth' And it was so ... he made the stars also" (Gen. 1:14-16; cf. Psa. 74:16-17). Indian: "Time and the divisions of time, the lunar mansions and the planets.... this whole creation he likewise produced.... Lightnings, thunderbolts and clouds, imperfect and perfect rainbows, falling meteors, supernatural noises, comets, and heavenly lights of many kinds" (LM 1:24-25, 38). In an older verse it is stated that, "They (Mitra and Varuna) who have established year and month and then the day, night" (RV 7:66.11).
- 8) Animals are created- Hebrew: "And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth

swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.' So God created the great sea monsters (Heb. tannin: Sk. timi, timim-gila) and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds' ... And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind" (Gen. 1:20-21, 25). Indian: "They created ... monkeys, fishes, birds of many kinds, cattle, deer, men and carnivorous beasts ... worms and beetles" (LM 1:36, 39-40).

9) God created human beings- Hebrew: "So God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27). Indian: "joining minute particles ... With particles of himself, he created all beings (LM 1:16).

10) The superiority of mankind- Hebrew: "Let us make man ... let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26). Indian: "Of created beings the most excellent are said to be those which are animated; of the animated, those which subsist by intelligence; of the intelligent, mankind" (LM 1:96).

According to the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (2:1) "From the Self (Brahman) sprang ether; from ether air; from air fire (that through which we see); from fire water, from water earth. From earth herbs, from herbs food, from food seed, from seed man"¹¹ This causal sequence of the creative process is paralleled in Genesis by the statements, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2) (ether); "the Spirit (or wind) of God was moving" (Gen. 1:2) (air); "God said, 'Let there be light and there was light'" (Gen. 1:3) (fire); "in the midst of the waters" (Gen. 1:6) (water); and "God called the dry land Earth" (Gen. 1:10) (earth); "Let the earth put forth vegetation" (Gen. 1:11) (herbs, plants); (Gen. 1:11) (food); "yielding seed" (Gen. 1:11) (seed); and "God created man" (Gen. 1:27) (man).¹²

Some scholars have ascertained that the Garden of Eden was located in India or in Ceylon. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) the renowned Jewish religious philosopher whose brother died on a trade voyage to India, wrote that the Sabians taught that Adam came to Babylon from a place near India. Many Muslims believe that after Adam was cast out of paradise he went to Ceylon (Serandib). After 200 years he found Eve at Mount Arafat, and they retired to Ceylon where they propagated the human race. Amir Khusraw (1253-1325) an Indo-Persian poet referred repeatedly to Adam's descent to Ceylon.¹³ Adam's Peak, a 7420-foot mountain on the Island of Ceylon was considered by many Muslims to be, the first place on earth that Adam touched after he was driven out of Paradise. The spices cultivated there are supposed to have sprung from the leaves of branches that Adam brought from Paradise.¹⁴ According to one legend Noah's Ark rests on Mount Ararat in Ceylon.¹⁵ Johann Adelung (1768-1843) identified Eastern Kashmir as the Asian paradise akin to the Garden of Eden, where the first couple lived.

Biblical authorities have asserted that the Sumerian literature provided the original sources for the Garden of Eden narrative. The Sumerians referred to paradise as Dilmun, which some scholars believe was located in Bahrein on the Persian Gulf, despite the fact that it was described as "the place where the sun rises." Noah Kramer an authority on the ancient Near East identified Dilmun with the Indus Valley in Northwest India. Dilmun was situated east of Sumer and was a land of ivory (Heb. shen habbin; Sk. ibha danta; Tam. thanhtham), gold (Heb. charuts; Sk. harita), copper (Asy. eru; Sk. ara, brass), timber, and lapis lazuli, all products of India.¹⁶ Just as four rivers flow out of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10-14), so also four streams issue from the Indian paradise on Mt. Meru in the Himalaya's, whose gardens are filled with flowers and fruits. According to Sir Walter Raleigh (1544-1618) the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Genesis was the Ficus Indica, the Indian Fig tree that is found on a tributary river that flows into the Indus in Northwest India. It is a large attractive tree that Adam and Eve hid under and clothed themselves with fig leaves.¹⁷

The first man who became the father of the human race and later died was

called Adamah by the Hebrews and Yama by the Indians. The idea of man being created out of clay is found in Genesis (2:7) and in the *Satapatha Brahmana* (7:4.2.17). In Genesis (2:7) man is animated by “the breath of life,” and in the *Maitrayani Upanishad* (2:6) the creator God Prajapati brings life to creatures by infusing breath in them. From an Indian standpoint the Garden of Eden corresponds with the golden age (Sk. Krita Yuga) the first of the four eras, a period of righteousness when the fruits of the earth were procured by mere wish and there was no malice or unhappiness. Abel could be interpreted as a symbol of the Treta Yuga when righteous decreased and Cain as the Dwapara Yuga when goodness diminished even more and there was an increase in untruthfulness and calamities. The age of Noah that was characterized by wickedness and violence (Gen. 6:5, 11) corresponds with the Indian Kali Yuga when unrighteousness prevails (MB 3:187-90).¹⁸

Three geographical locations, Havilah, Ophir, and Put, mentioned in the table of seventy nations (Gen. 10) that inhabit the world, have been associated with India. Included on the list are the names of individual people (Shem), cities (Sidon), Kingdoms (Assyria), geographical regions (Canaan), and ethnic groups (Ionian Greeks; Heb. Javan; Sk. Yavana). There are many hypotheses regarding the location of Havilah and the Pishon River (Gen. 2:11-12; 10:7, 29; 25:18; 1 Chron. 1:9, 23). Flavius Josephus (c. 37-100) the Jewish writer and Christian Church fathers like Saint Jerome (c. 340-420), identified the land of Havilah with the Ganges Valley in India. The Pishon River which winds through the land of Havilah has been equated with both the Indus and Ganges Rivers. The word Havilah may be a cognate of Aryavarta, the ancient name of India.¹⁹

Ophir is listed next to Havilah in the list of nations (Gen. 10:29; 1 Kings 9:27-28; 10:11; 22:48; 1 Chron. 1:23; 2 Chron. 8:18; 9:10; Job 22:24; 28:16; Psa. 45:9; Isa. 13:12). Both Flavius Josephus and the Christian historian Eusebius (c. 263-340) located Ophir in India, as the region between a tributary of the Indus River and China. Ophir has also been identified with Supara an ancient seaport on the west coast of India near modern day Bombay. Early Arab trade was conducted directly with this West Indian port. Flavius Josephus and the Septuagint allude to Supara as Sopheir and in the

Egyptian Coptic language Sophir denotes South India.²⁰

The trade with Ophir goes back to the time of King David (reigned c. 1010- 970 B.C.), lasting down to the time of the prophet Isaiah (8th century B.C.). Ophir supplied gold (Heb. charuts; Sk. harita), precious stones and the almug tree (Heb. algummim; Sk. valguka=sandalwood; Tam. valgu=sandalwood) (1 Kings 10:11) and precious onyx, sapphire (Heb. sappir; Sk. sanipriya) and glass (Job 28:16-17). During the reign of King Solomon (c. 974-32 B.C.) a navy equipped by King Hiram of Tyre made a voyage every three years probably to Ophir, bringing back the Indian products of gold, silver, ivory (Heb. shen habbin; Sk. ibha danta; Tam. thanhtham), apes (Heb. qoph; Sk. kopi) and peacocks (Heb. tukkiyyim; Sk. sikhi; Tam. tokai) (1 Kings 10:22). The Hebrew names of these products and many others were derived from Indian (Sanskrit and Tamilian) terms. Ophir was located either in Western India or was a trading center that transported Indian products to the Middle East.²¹

Some Bible historians consider the land of Put (Gen. 10:6; 1 Chron. 1:8; Eze. 27.10; Nah. 3:9) to be the country that the Egyptians referred to as Punt. The inhabitants of Punt as portrayed by Queen Hatshepsut's (c. 1500 B.C.) artists appear to be Asians and not African. Punt has been identified with Yemen, a frankincense producing country in South Arabia that conducted sea trade with India. Other scholars consider Punt to be Pankth; an area in Northwest India and Afghanistan alluded to in the Rig Veda. Egyptian tradition maintains that the sun god Hor (Horus in Greek) rose from the Land of Punt in the east, which could have been the Indus Valley of Northwest India (now Pakistan) that is located on the same latitude as Egypt.²² James Hornell, A. C. Das and others equated Punt with the Kingdom of Pandya region of South India, which established maritime trade relations with many foreign countries.²³

According to the earliest known records on the subject, the Egyptian Pharaoh Sahure sent a naval expedition to Punt in 2750 B.C. Queen Hatshepsut (c. 1500 B.C.) imported foreign shipments of gold, ivory, myrrh resin, fragrant wood (sandalwood?), trees, cosmetics for the eyes, cinnamon, apes, cattle and dogs from Punt, all of which

existed in ancient India. Egyptian cattle resemble the variety found in the Guzrat area of India. Pharaoh Rameses III (12th century B.C.) received precious stones, royal linen, and cinnamon from Punt.²⁴ Egyptians alluded to India as Hentui which is a cognate of the Hebrew word Hoddu (Esth. 1:1; 8:9) and the Persian term Hindu. Egyptians alluded to the Ionian Greeks as Auna and the Persians as Persa or Persu, which equates with the Indian Sanskrit Yavana and Parasa and the Hebrew Javan (Gen. 10:2) and Paras (2 Chron. 36:20).²⁵

In the Indian version of the Tower of Babel legend (Gen. 11.1-9), a gigantic celestial tree of knowledge grew in the center of the earth with its branches spread throughout the planet. The God Brahma cut off the branches of the tree that eventually sprang up as localized trees, causing different language beliefs and customs to prevail in on the earth.²⁶

Abraham and Moses

The patriarch Abraham hailed from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:28, 31). Seals from the Indus Valley are in frequent occurrence at Ur and Kish datable before 2350 B.C., while few Sumerian seals have been found in India. Both the Sumerian and the Indus Valley cultures had a copper bearing chalcolithic technology employing both tin and bronze and had similar homes built with kiln-burnt clay and mud bricks, household items, clothing styles, hair and beard fashions, beads, implements, weapons, seals, boats and games.²⁷ Abraham associated with the Hittites, purchasing a field from them (Gen. 23; 25:9-10). The Hittite language is akin to Sanskrit with analogous names for some of the numbers.

Abraham's wife Sarah was abducted by King Abimelech. Later she was restored after God spoke to the king in a dream (Gen. 20). Similarly in the *Vishnu Purana* (4:6), Tara the wife of Vrhaspati was abducted by the celestial King Soma. He was later compelled by the God Brahma to restore Tara to her husband. Abraham's offering of his son Isaac to God (Gen. 22:1-19) is paralleled by the legend of King Ambarisha of

Ayodhya who sacrificed Sunahsephas, the son of a Brahmin rishi (Ramayana). Isaac was saved by an angel of the Lord and Sunahsephas by reciting religious verses in honor of the deities Indra and Varuna, when he was bound at the stake. Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt, was successful in interpreting dreams, and was appointed a governor of Egypt (Gen. 37:27-28; 40-41 41:37-45). This story is approximated by Gunasarman in India who was falsely accused by a woman he scorned, was sent to prison where he demonstrated skill in interpreting dreams, and eventually attained the position of minister to Mahasena.²⁸

Moses mother realizing he was a godly child put him in a basket and placed it at the riverbank. The event was witnessed by Moses sister. Later, the daughter of the Pharaoh drew the basket out of the water and the child eventually became her adopted son (Exod. 2:1-11). In a parallel legend in the Mahabharata, Kunti or Pritha the king's daughter bore a beautiful celestial son. Ashamed of her frailty, in conjunction with her nurse, she placed her child in a waterproof basket and positioned it in the waters of the Asva River. The basket containing the baby boy floated down the river until it was washed ashore. A man and a wife found the basket, drew it from the waters and adopted the child.²⁹ As an adult, "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And he said 'Say thus to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you' "(Exod. 3:13-14). In Indian literature God is also referred to as "I am what I am" (Satapatha Brahmana) and "I am He" (Brihad. Up. 1:4.1).³⁰ When Moses and the people of Israel were at the Red Sea, "The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided" (Exod. 14:21). Similarly in the *Rig Veda* (4:19.6) in order to let Vayya and Turviti pass over the river, the deity Indra "Didst stay the great steam, flowing, all-sustaining; Yea, at their prayer didst check the rushing river and make the floods easy to cross." The idea of hereditary sin is expressed in Biblical passages like, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exod. 20:5), and "The Lord ... will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generation" (Num. 14:18). While the modern Indian view of karma rejects hereditary sin and the old Brahmanic rule declared, "There

is no sin in a new born babe,” we find in the ancient *Rig Veda* (7:86.5) the statement, “Free us from sins committed by our fathers, from those wherein we have ourselves offended.”³¹

The ancient lawgivers, the Hebrew Moses (Mosheh), the Indian Manu (Manush), the Cretan Minos and the Egyptian Menes (Mena) have similar sounding names. Though they vary in many ways, the *Pentateuch* and the *Laws of Manu* (Dharma Shastras) are books of the law (Heb. Torah; Sk. Dharma) based on a divine sanction. Both accounts open with a description of the creation of the world which exhibit several points of agreement. They teach a moral fall of humanity from an earlier state of perfection, due to a selfish will. God is the ultimate source and ground of morality and of the laws of human society. Moral codes are authoritative commands of a supreme and omnipotent God. Both traditions are concerned with the welfare of society and the individual who is endowed with the spirit of God within; stress righteousness and the harmonious fulfillment of duties; consider freedom of individual responsibility as underlying all ethical action; emphasize the sanctity of marriage and the family; consider sin to be a violation of the moral order, justice to be retributive (lex talionis) and emphasize purification. In both cultures, sinful acts are expiated by confession and repentance (Lev. 5:5-6; LM 11.227-31). Acts of repentance involve a sense of sorrow for committing the immoral deed and a strong resolution not to repeat the act. Sin is removed by ritualistic expiatory rites of purification (Lev. 16; LM 11.242-64).³²

The first four of the Ten Commandments apply to God and the last six to humanity. The last five commandments of the Decalogue correspond to the five yamas (abstentions) given in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, which are identical with the five great vows (mahavratas) of Jainism; and with the moral precepts (panca sila) of the Buddha. Hindus consider these moral obligations to be universal duties (sadharana-dharma) since they apply to all people at all times. The same moral virtues that are expressed in a concrete particularized form by the Hebrews were asserted more broadly by the Hindus, Jains, and Indian Buddhists.

You shall not; kill; commit adultery; steal; bear false witness against your neighbor; or covet your neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything that is your neighbor's, are the last five commandments of Moses (Exod. 20:13-17). Corresponding to these moral imperatives are the five yamas of Patanjali's yoga and the Jain mahavratas which are: non-injury and non-violence (ahimsa); continence (brahmacharya); non-stealing (asteya); non-lying, abstaining from uttering falsehoods (satya); and non-greed and non-attachment (aparigraha) (Yoga Sutras, 2:29-30).³³

Lord Buddha's five moral injunctions (panca sila) which the Indian Buddhist monastic and lay disciples' vow to observe, are analogous to four of the five commandments of Moses. They are abstinence from: injuring or killing any living being (pranatapata); incontinence or committing adultery (abrahmacarya); stealing (adattanadana); speaking falsehoods and lying (mrsavada); and intemperance or imbibing intoxicating drinks (sura-maireya-pramada-sthana). When Buddha was asked "What is evil?" he replied: "the evils of the body are killing, adultery and stealing; of the mind are hatred, ignorance, and covetness; and of the tongue are lying, slander, hypercriticism and gossip." From the Buddha's perspective, the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments of Moses are primarily bodily, the ninth verbal and the tenth mental.³⁴

There are many similarities between the Vedic religious sacrifice and that of Leviticus. In both cases the sacrifice involves the use of a fire altar; external gifts like animals (Lev. 22: 17-30), holy days (Lev. 23:3) and a sacrificial meal (Lev. 7: 15-20; 23: 1-2). Emphasis is placed on priestly sanctity (Lev. 21: 1-24) and physical purity (Lev. 22:1-9). The sacrifice is performed for the purpose of atonement for sins (Lev. 4; 6: 24-30; 16; 23: 26-32; RV 1.24.9, 14; 2.28.5; 5.85.7-8) and for receiving material benefits (RV 1.54.9; 7.32.5; 9.49.1).³⁵

Arumuga Navalar (1822-79) a Hindu Shaivite of Northern Sri Lanka wrote a book in 1854, to counter the criticisms of the missionaries.³⁶ After studying the Bible

with the Methodist missionaries from Great Britain, he cited numerous passages demonstrating that scriptures sanctioned many contemporary Hindu religious practices. In the *Pentateuch*, the Lord Jehovah often commanded Moses to initiate many of these practices and repeatedly said they should be followed by all future generations. Arumuga Navalar pointed out similarities between the Indian Shaivite and Jewish religious practices that include: the use of anointing oil, food offerings, incense, lamps, musical instruments, holy days, prostration, religious images and sacred places to worship the Lord. For example, the Lord gave Moses instructions in the preparation of a sacred holy anointing oil (Exod. 30:22-33) that is used for: the tabernacle, altar of burnt offerings, the laver, and the priesthood (Exod. 40:9-15). Food offerings to the Lord include the use of bread, cake, cereal, and liquids (Lev. 23:37; Num. 6:14-17; Exod. 25:30). Aaron and his sons ate the bread in a holy place and a portion was offered by fire to the Lord (Lev. 24:5-9). Jehovah told Moses to: construct an altar and have Aaron burn incense on it every morning and evening (Exod. 30:7-8); have incense placed before the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle (Exod. 30:27, 34-36); and to burn incense in the fire before the Lord (Lev. 16:12-13) and the altar (Num. 16:46). Aaron and his sons were to light a lamp to burn continually in the tabernacle (Exod. 27:20-21; Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1-4). At religious assemblies and feasts the priests blew trumpets over the burnt and peace offerings (Num. 10:7-10). Ancient Hebrews considered the Sabbath and many feasts of the Lord days as auspicious for holding religious celebrations (Lev. 23). An example of prostration occurred when the fire consumed the burnt offerings, and the people fell on their faces (Lev. 9:24).

Navalar mentioned that just as the Shaivites worship religious images, so also in the *Pentateuch* the Ark of the Covenant was venerated. The Lord command Moses to: build an ark (chest) covered with pure gold, place a record of the covenant within it and an image of a two golden cherubs' at each end and to conduct ritualistic worship there (Exod. 25: 10-40). Moses had a tabernacle built for the ark where ritualistic services were performed by the priests (Exod. 35-37, 40). The Lord met with Moses between the two cherubim on the ark, above the mercy seat and revealed the commandments to him (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89). When Aaron waved incense before the ark and performed

ritualistic worship a plague was terminated (Num. 16:46-48). Both religions consider certain locations as sacred, like Horeb the mountain of God, where the Lord commanded Moses to take off his shoes since he was standing on holy ground (Exod. 3:1, 5). At one time the Lord said, whoever touches Mount Sinai will die because of his presence there (Exod. 19:2, 12).

Discussing similarities concerning the clergy, Navalar mentioned that the Lord prescribed how Aaron and his sons could become anointed and consecrated priests (Exod. 29:1-9; 40: 9-15). Their qualified descendants have the right to become hereditary priests (Lev. 21). Teachings of the Levite priests should be followed (Deut. 12, 17) and offerings of money and valuable property should be dedicated to God (Exod. 25: 1-7; 35: 4-9, 22; 30:15; Num. 7:3, 13-17). Similar to the Indians, various forms of bodily purity to avoid pollution were practiced. Aaron and his sons were washed with water and dressed in clean clothes, before being anointed as priests (Exod. 40:12-13, 16, 31-32). They washed their hands and feet when entering the tabernacle and when approaching the altar to burn offerings for the Lord (Exod. 30:17-21). Before the Lord appeared to them on Mt. Sinai, the people washed their clothes (Exod. 19:10-11). Priests avoided the defilement of the dead with the exception of their nearest of kin (Lev. 21:1-3). A person who touches the carcass of a dead animal that is to be eaten is considered to be unclean until the evening (Lev. 11:39). Certain items are auspicious in religious practices like tassels that are placed on the corner of a garment as a reminder of the commandments (Num. 15:37-40). Ashes of a burnt heifer are used for the removal of the impurities of sin (Num. 19: 5, 9). The blood of the Passover lamb placed on the lintel and doorpost of homes protected the people from the destroyer (Exod. 12:22-23). Ascetic practices are recommended like not cutting one's hair during the days of the vow (Num. 6.5). In opposition to the idea of eternal damnation, Navalar pointed out that Divine justice requires the reward and punishment to be equivalent to the act, which is brought out in the passage, an "eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand and foot for foot" (Deut. 19:21).

Some common themes are found in the *Pentateuch* and Indian *Vedas*.

Restraining the river: “Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided” (Exod. 14:21). “He divided the sea and let then pass through it” (Psa. 78:13). “Who divided the waters before them” (Isa. 63:12)? Indian: “Thou (Indra) for Turviti heldest still the flowing floods, the river-stream for Vayya easily to pass” (RV 2:13.12). “Didst stay the great steam, flowing, all-sustaining; Yea, at their prayer didst check the rushing river and make the floods easy to cross, O Indra” (RV 4:19.6). “Through his resplendent power still stood the rivers, when with his bolt on every side he stayed them. With lordly might favouring him who worshipped, he made a ford, victorious, for Turviti” (AV 20:35.11; cf. RV 1:61.11).

Sins of the forefathers: “I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me” (Exod. 20:5). “He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation” (Num. 14:18; cf. Psa. 79:8; Jer. 32:18). Indian: “Free us from sins committed by our fathers, from those wherein we have ourselves offended” (RV 7.86.5).

The sinlessness of God: “For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44). Indian: “Our sin that sinless Varuna discovered, the Wondrous-Wisest long forgiven” (RV 7:28.4).

Heavens and earth belong to the Lord: “To the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it” (Deut.10:14). “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1). Indian: “This earth too is King Varuna’s possession, and the high heaven whose ends are far asunder” (AV 4:16.3).

Trade items with Indian sounding names mentioned in the *Pentateuch* include: sapphire (Exod. 24:10; Heb. sappir; Sk. shanipriya), topaz (Exod. 28:17; Heb. pitedah;

Sk. piita; Tam. pushparaakam) and the aloes tree (Num. 24:6; Heb. ahalim; Sk. aguru; Tam. ahil).

The correspondence between Hebrew and Sanskrit words appears to exceed chance expectations. For example, in the *Pentateuch* we find the following animals: Heb. ari; Sk. hari, lion/ Heb. chamor; Sk. khara, ass/ Heb. chazir; Sk. shukara, boar, swine/ Heb. cheva; Sk. shvpad, beast/ Heb. ez, wild goat; Sk. aja, goat/ Heb. gamal; Sk. kala-bha, camel/ Heb. kaleb; Sk. kur-kura, dog/ Heb. kar; Sk. ura, ewe lamb/ Heb. pethen, asp; Sk. phani, snake/ Heb. saraph; Sk. sarpa, serpent/ Heb. sus; Sk. asva, horse/ Heb. tsirah, hornet; Sk. saragh, bee.

In spite of the affinities between the two religions, there are also many important differences. The Indian religion places more emphasize on the first component and the Hebrew religion on the second element of each of the following religious dichotomies: Transpersonal Absolute-Personal God, Divine immanence-Divine transcendence, monism-monotheism, emanation-creation, personal intuition-Divine revelation, religious experience-altruistic activity, other worldliness-God in history, eternity of the world-temporary world, world cycles-linear history, reincarnation-one human life, ignorance-sin, universal liberation-selective salvation and inclusiveness-exclusiveness.³⁷

In conclusion, though there are significant differences in the presentation; the general outline and details of the flood story, creation narrative and the other religious affinities are too marked and numerous to be the result of a random process. The greatest correspondence occurs in the first ten chapters of the book of Genesis indicating a common origin of these stories that predates the composition of the *Pentateuch*. Because of a lack of historical records the original dates of the Indian religious narratives are unknown, and therefore, it is difficult to determine in what locality these ideas originated. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and the Spanish Jesuit priest Henry Heras (1888-1955), maintained that flood and some other stories in the Book of Genesis, originated with the Tamilian Dravidians of South India. The Swami taught that one group of the Tamilian Dravidians gave rise to the Egyptian and another to the

Sumerian civilization, which provided the foundation for the Babylonian culture. Heras concluded that around 5000 B.C. the South Indians traveled by sea to the Indus Valley initiating the Harappan culture. At a later date this civilization spread from the Indus Valley, to the Euphrates River in the Middle East.³⁸

Endnotes

¹ All Biblical quotations cited in this article are from *The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952); *Sacred Books of the East, Satapatha Brahmana* (hereafter SB), tr. Julius Eggeling (50 vols.; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1882, 1978), XII, pp. 216-18; *Mahabharata* (hereafter MB), tr. Pratap Roy (12 vols.; Calcutta: Oriental Publishing Co., 1962), III, pp. 393-96; *Vishnu Purana* (hereafter VP) tr. H. H. Wilson (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1840, 1961), pp. 277-78, 310-17, 369-71.

² John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910, 1963), pp. 147-48.

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⁴ S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1905), p. xxviii; Duncan MacNaughton, *A Scheme of Babylonian Chronology* (London: Luzac & Co., 1930), pp. 1, 12, 20.

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⁹ Mueller, *Upanishads*, I, p. 237.

¹⁰ *Atharva Veda* tr. Ralph Griffith (2 vols.; Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1894, 1968), I, p. 153.

¹¹ Mueller, *Upanishads*, II, p. 54.

¹² *Summa Theologica* ed. Daniel Sullivan (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannic, 1952), Section 1:68.3.

¹³ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* tr. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 516; Thomas Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1895), pp. 10, 50; Carl Ernst, *Eternal Garden* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), pp. 28-29. Swami Abhedananda, *Philosophy and Religion* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1951), p. 147, advances the idea that Adam is the divine spirit, the perfect image of God (Sk. Atman), Eve is the limited intellect (Sk. buddhi) and ego, and the serpent is ignorance and delusion (Sk. advidya) that brings about the fall from Divinity.

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¹⁵ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Cecil Roth (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1972), V, p. 315.

¹⁶ Samuel Kramer, "The Indus Civilization and Dilmun, the Sumerian Paradise Land," *Expedition* 6 (1964), pp. 44-52.

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³⁷ Manickam, *Dharma*, p. 100.

³⁸ Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (9 vols.; Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1962), IV, pp. 301-02; VII, pp. 52, 331, 365-67; Henry Heras, *Studies in Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture* (Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, 1953), pp. 125, 181-201, 301-02, 412-13, 421, 437.

