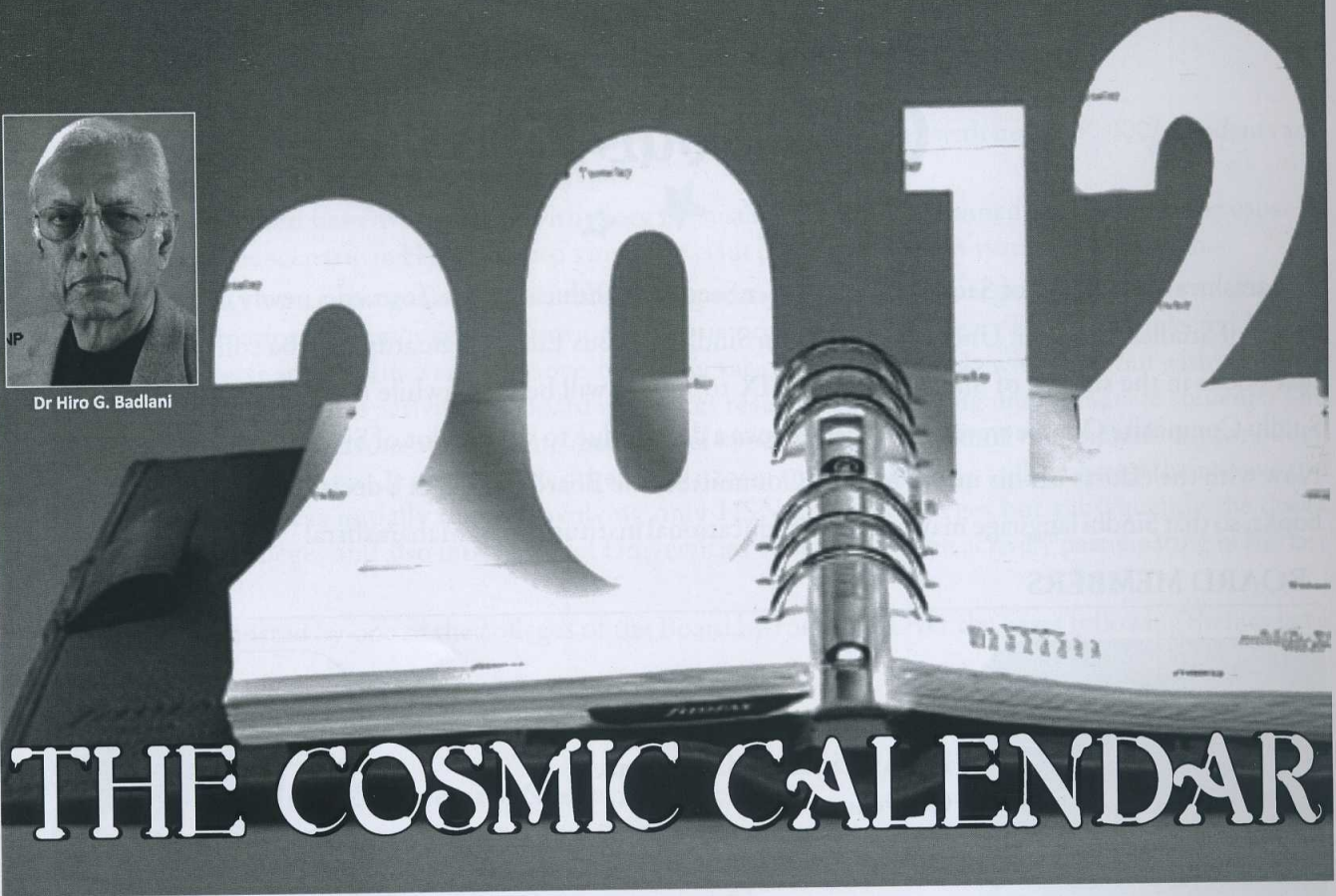


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It is said that “truth is often stranger than fiction”. The fascinating tale of our 'Cosmos' too is such that you can hardly believe to be true!

Modern scientific opinion suggests that the cosmos was created by a 'big bang' about 18 billion years ago. Our solar system was created 4.5 billion years ago. The solar system is part of a larger galaxy of stars, the Milky Way. If we were seated in a spaceship zooming at the speed of light—186,000 miles per second—it would take 100,000 years to traverse from one end of the Milky Way galaxy to the other. And there are billions of other galaxies like this one!

Of all the ancient cultures of the world, Hindu scriptures have given stunning descriptions of these infinite, countless solar systems (*brahmands*) in the cosmos. Unlike the Western concept of linear time however, the Hindus accept time as cyclical, with neither beginning nor end. Many modern scientists including the famous physicist Stephen Hawking now tend to discredit the theory of 'big bang' in favor of the Hindu concept of cosmos being eternal, without any beginning. Ancient Hindu seers, or *Rishis*, who are credited with having invented the zero and the decimal, seem to have had a deep insight of cosmic events, based on the fundamental principle of

harmony. But the most surprising thing is that all these stars, their satellites, comets, and other phenomena are positioned with a faultless precision. Just by the direction and size of the shadows, we can calculate the time of day up to a fraction of a second. The ancient Hindu Rishis studied these complex astronomical structures minutely, giving the world authentic and deep knowledge of astronomy and astrology.

The Hindu Vedas mention the time periods as *kalpas*, as per Hindu Cosmic Calendar. One large time-period kalpa consists of 1000 smaller units, known as *mahayugas*. The current mahayuga is further subdivided into four parts:

<i>Satyuga</i> period	: 1,728,000 years
<i>Tretayuga</i> period	: 1,296,000 years
<i>Dwaparyug</i> period	: 864,000 years
<i>Kaliyuga</i> period	: 432,000 years

The total age of the current mahayuga (by adding the above) is calculated as 4,320,000 years. The time period of the kalpa, which consists of 1000 mahayugas, thus turns out to be 4.32 billion years. It is not clear how these figures of the Hindu Cosmic Calendar were originally calculated. Although these

appear to be mythological figures, the total age of the current kalpa (4.32 billion years) by a strange coincidence nearly matches with the scientific age of the Earth and the Solar system.

There is also another historical version of the Hindu Cosmic event: According to R.C. Majumdar, as described 'Vedic Age' in the book, 'The History and Culture of the Indian People', the four Yugas or periods of the Indian history are as follows:

Kritayuga-----Manu-----3100 B.C.

Tretayuga-----Rama-----1950 B.C.

Dvaparayuga---Krishna---1400 B.C.

Kaliyuga----- (after Mahabharata war)

There is obviously a large difference between the mythological and the historical figures. Hindu mythology is fascinating, but it is also intricate and difficult to comprehend. It is basically like an abstract art form through which various aspects of religion are expressed. By its very definition, it is not a factual presentation; it is in the design and arrangement of allegories and symbols. The myths act as a bridge between which we perceive and what we cannot know. To the believer, however, a myth is as real as it can be! The Indian subcontinent was formed from glaciers about forty million years ago. Where there are now the mighty Himalayas, there once were oceans—there is evidence of fish fossils on the rocks of the Himalayas.

Man descended from apes around six million years ago. This is the time the earliest proto form of mankind started to walk on his two hind limbs; that is, he became a biped. Man is superior to other beings because of his highly developed brain. This organ has billions of specialized neurons and neurological pathways with which we think and can use our free will. Before this development, beings functioned only through instinct. The human brain, however, did not develop in one single step. The modern brain came into existence only fifty thousand years ago. The main feature that differentiates our brain from that of our early ancestors is its capacity to restrain our instinctive behavior—the activity of the lower brain—by its voluminous gray matter, which is much less developed in lower animals. The human brain has

over fifteen billion nerve cells, called neurons. It is believed that only 10 to 20 percent of these are ever actively used. This in itself offers a great potential for further human development. Recently, Time magazine USA, published a cover story how by extended meditations, Buddhist monks stimulated and activated the dormant cells as demonstrated by thickening of certain cortical sections of the brain, as measured by the MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging).

The first appearance of man was in the Sahara region of the African continent. From there, man moved to the east, west, north, and south. Four important ancient tribal groups arrived in India: Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan. The earliest was the Austro-Asian, which group passed by the Indian subcontinent from Africa on its way to Australia about fifty thousand years ago.

Evidence suggests that the Saraswati and Sindhu (also known as the Indus) rivers originated at the end of the great Ice Age, about ten thousand years ago. It is believed that the colossal civilization along this verdant belt was more widely spread than the civilizations of Egypt or Greece. The Saraswati River ran parallel to the Sindhu River, about two hundred miles east of it. The huge mass of land between the two great rivers developed as the Saraswati-Sindhu civilization (Mohan-jo-Daro). Names of these two rivers are mentioned repeatedly—perhaps more frequently than other rivers—in the most ancient Hindu scripture, the *Rig Veda*, which is also believed to be the earliest piece of literature in the history of mankind. It is now believed that the Vedas too were created more on the banks of Sindhu; name of River Sindhu is mentioned no less than 176 times in the Vedas. No other river has been enumerated close to this!

The journey of the cosmos and mankind is indeed most captivating; the role of our ancient Sindhi great grand-fathers is a matter of distinctive heritage!

(Dr Hiro Badlani is the author of *Hinduism: Path of the Ancient Wisdom*. All 65 chapters of the book are also uploaded on the web site www.hinduismpath.com. He may be contacted at hgbadlani@aol.com).