

# Vedic Flat-earth, Rahu, and the Eclipse

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This year's first solar eclipse occurs on Sunday 21 June 2020. According to modern astronomy, a solar eclipse occurs when the Sun, Moon, and Earth come in a straight line, and the Moon blocks the rays of the Sun from reaching the Earth. According to the ancient Vedic teachings, the darkness covering the light of the Sun and Moon is caused by the passing of a dark planet called Rahu who can only be perceived on the rare occasions of the solar and lunar eclipse. In this paper we shall argue that ISKCON's current explanation for the eclipse deviates from the original Vedic understanding since it works from the modern presumption that the Earth is a globe-shaped planet floating in space, rather than from the Vedic teaching that the Earth is a gigantic circular plane (Bhu-mandala).

This year's first solar eclipse occurs on Sunday 21 June 2020. According to modern astronomy, a solar eclipse occurs when the Sun, Moon, and Earth come in a straight line, and the Moon blocks the rays of the Sun from reaching the Earth. According to the ancient Vedic teachings, the darkness covering the light of the Sun and Moon is caused by the passing of a dark planet called Rahu who can only be perceived on the rare occasions of the solar and lunar eclipse. In this paper we shall argue that ISKCON's current explanation for the eclipse deviates from the original Vedic understanding since it works from the modern presumption that the Earth is a globe-shaped planet floating in space, rather than from the Vedic teaching that the Earth is a gigantic circular plane (Bhu-mandala).

In the context of the numerous topics related to *bhakti-yoga*, one may wonder what relevance the eclipse has to either one's material or spiritual life, and indeed of what relevance it has to one's service and devotion to Sri Krishna. At the heart of the matter is our attitude towards reality and illusion, and on what basis we discern one from the other.

"The wise have explained that one result is derived from the culture of knowledge (*vidya*) and that a different result (*anyat*) is obtained from the culture of nescience (*avidya*)." (*Sri Isopanishad, Mantra 10*)

The seemingly minor issue of the solar and lunar eclipse not only gets to the essence of where our Krishna conscious society is going wrong in its presentation of Vedic cosmology, it also gets to the essence of where members of the society may be going wrong in their spiritual direction. Though the cosmological description in *Srimad Bhagavatam's* fifth canto offers a momentous opportunity to create an extraordinary paradigm shift in our understanding of both the Earth and the universe (a shift that will certainly take everyone closer to Sri Krishna), the inaccurate presentation of the Earth at the Temple Of Vedic Planetarium will result in yet another form of illusion for oneself and others.

I apologize to the reader for the length of this paper. In the *Brahmanda Purana* it is said: "Even a great topic is understood easily if mentioned briefly." (Brahmanda Purana 1.1.1.168). The Vedic explanation for the eclipse is actually finished by Srila Vyasadeva in a few sentences, and for those who accept his word, the explanation does not require much commentary. The length of this paper is due to having to deconstruct the numerous convoluted and speculative arguments that have been presented by members of ISKCON in a misguided attempt to merge the modern Earth globe idea with the original Vedic teachings that otherwise describe the Earth as a gigantic circular plane

(Bhu-mandala). The difference in these two conceptions of the Earth results in radical opposing world-views regarding the nature of material and spiritual reality. Though the lengthy details of this paper may seem to be of more relevance to those responsible for presenting Vedic cosmology at the Temple of Vedic Planetarium at Mayapur, the nature of the Earth and the heavens is a source of endless fascination to us all, and I would encourage the reader to take the time to try and comprehend the subject matter as it is originally presented by the great sage Sukadeva Goswami in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. At the conclusion of his discourse on Vedic cosmology, Sukadeva Goswami bestows auspicious spiritual blessings on those who hear the description of the *virat-rupa* (universal form) of Sri Krishna (SB 5.16.38-39).

In Parts 1 and 2 of this paper we looked at the difference between the ancient Vedic and modern Western conceptions of the Earth, Sun, and Moon. We also showed how members of ISKCON whilst seemingly delivering presentations on 'Vedic cosmology', actually resort to the Western cosmological ideas regarding the size, distance, movements, etc., of the Earth, Sun, and Moon in order to explain cosmic phenomena events such as the eclipse, day and night, seasons, phases of the Moon, etc. As pointed out in the previous papers, the problem with this procedure is that the Western understanding of how the planets are described, arranged, and move, is in complete opposition to that described in *Srimad Bhagavatam* (which is the cosmological system meant to be presented at the Temple of Vedic Planetarium). Though members of the society claim to have 'reconciled' and 'harmonised' the two systems, a detailed review of the subject reveals that the original Vedic teachings regarding the nature and movements of the planets has been misconstrued, subtly undermined, and indeed supplanted by modern Western cosmological ideas. See [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) here.

Since the Vedic and modern Western description of the planets are completely different, one may wonder on what basis, or with what justification, can members of ISKCON simply switch back and forth from the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* idea of Earth, Sun, and Moon to the Western idea. In today's paper we shall look at Danavir Goswami's argument for the idea that the Vedic Puranas (histories) describe the Earth as a globe floating in space, and that it is the shadow of this supposed Earth-globe which causes the lunar eclipse. As we shall see, the argument presented by Danavir Goswami completely contradicts the Vedic teaching that 'the Earth' in question is measured at *pancasat-koti-yojana* (500 million *yojanas* or 4 billion miles in diameter), and thus can't possibly be the cause of creating a shadow on the Moon. It also contradicts the Vedic teaching that Rahu is an independent planet—and not the mere shadow of a supposed Earth globe.

We ask the reader to please bear in mind that the original Sanskrit verses of *Srimad Bhagavatam* do not contain any direct description of an 'Earth-globe' floating in space. The only 'Earth' described in the Puranas is the Bhu-mandala which is a massive 'Earth-circle', (not a small Earth globe). Our own local area of the Earth is called Bharata-varsha and is described as being located on the surface of the Earth-circle, specifically in the southern side of Jambudvipa (a 100,000 *yojana*/800,000 mile diameter landmass at the center of the Vedic Earth circle). Bharata-varsha is not described as an independent planet floating in space (the so-called Earth globe), but rather as a small area of a larger Earth plane. Since Bharata-varsha is described as part of a larger Earth plane, the Puranas never attempt to explain the eclipse as involving a line-up of a supposed Earth-globe with the Sun and the Moon. The eclipse is otherwise described as the passing of a dark planet called Rahu before the face of the Sun and Moon.

We should also note that the Vaishnava *acharyas* in their commentaries and explanations of the fifth canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam* never venture to explain the eclipse as a conjunction of an Earth globe, with the Sun and Moon. Even Srila Prabhupada, as we shall see later, rejected this idea in the most vehement way (see Srila Prabhupada's statements below). From whence then does an Earth globe appear in ISKCON's current explanation for the eclipse?

## DO THE PURANAS EXPLAIN THE ECLIPSE OF THE MOON AS THE SHADOW OF AN EARTH GLOBE?

Despite there being no reference in *Srimad Bhagavatam* for the eclipse involving a conjunction of an Earth globe lining up with the Sun and Moon as they supposedly orbit each other, and despite there being no historical precedence in the form of commentaries to the fifth canto by the *acharyas* that would explain the eclipse in this way, Danavir Goswami believes that his explanation (involving an Earth globe) is credible, and he justifies the entire innovation in the following way. In an article for the Sampradaya Sun called [Flat Earth or Spherical Earth?](#), Danavir Goswami made the following argument in support of the idea that 'the Earth' is a globe-shaped planet floating in space:

Dhanavir Goswami: There are also references to the planet Rahu as being the spherical shape made of the earth's shadow.

"Rahu controls the shadow of the earth which is circular in shape." (*Sridhara Swami on Canto 5, Chapter 57, texts 10-13*)

"Rahu has been created after taking out the shadow of the earth and has a spherical shape." (*Brahmanda Purana, Kurma Purana*)

With reference to the above verses, Danavir Goswami presents the argument that the Puranas are describing the Earth as a globe. The interpolation on the verse is based on the modern assumption that an Earth globe creates a shadow on the Moon during a lunar eclipse. We shall see presently how the argument results from a complete misrepresentation of what is meant by the Vedic Earth, as well as a complete misunderstanding of what is meant by 'Rahu'. The result is utter confusion regarding the original Vedic explanation for the eclipse. We would like to make clear that the following critique of Danavir Goswami's explanation for the eclipse is not meant to disrespect or diminish Danavir Goswami in any way; we are simply presenting our disagreement with his current presentation of Vedic cosmology.

We should first notice here that though the 'shadow of the Earth' is considered in Western astronomy to be the cause of the lunar eclipse, it is certainly not considered to be the cause of a *solar eclipse* which is supposedly caused by the passing of the Moon (not the Earth) in front of the Sun. This is a point that has been conveniently ignored by Danavir Goswami. If Danavir Goswami wishes to argue that Rahu is merely 'the shadow of the Earth' formed during a lunar eclipse, how does he explain the appearance of Rahu during a solar eclipse? Since the darkness on the Sun during a solar eclipse is not caused by 'the shadow of the Earth', the appearance of the darkness must be attributed to a second entity. Danavir Goswami takes one meaning of the above verse to justify the idea that the shadow of an Earth globe is involved in causing a lunar eclipse, but fails to see the contradiction involved when it comes to understanding how 'the shadow of the Earth' can create the solar eclipse.

As we shall see, Danavir Goswami's erroneous understanding of the above verse arises firstly due to not working consistently with the Sanskrit description of the Earth-circle (Bhu-mandala), and secondly because he makes no attempt to understand and explain the verse in the wider context of the Vedic description of Rahu as an independent planet (see section below, '*Rahu is a Dark Planet, Not the shadow of an Earth Globe*').

Danavir Goswami has also quoted Sridhar Swami here as saying: 'Rahu controls the shadow of the Earth which is circular in shape'. By quoting the great commentator Sridhara Swami out of context, Danavir Goswami attempts to lend the weight of a great spiritual authority in favour of the Earth globe idea, when, in fact, such a concept of the Earth is never once mentioned by Sridhara Swami. Sridhara Swami is the first of several great Vaishnava *acharyas* who have commented on the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Sridhara

Swami scrupulously follows the original description of the Earth given by Srila Vyasaveda to Sukadeva Goswami (the speaker of *Srimad Bhagavatam*), as well as to his other disciples who reveal the same description of the Earth via the various Puranas. Sridhara Swami only ever refers to the Earth as it is described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*—the Bhumandala or Earth-circle—and never once mentions a second entity known as the Earth globe supposedly floating in space. As we shall see later, the statement that Rahu is made from the 'shadow of the Earth' has an entirely different meaning, and certainly nothing to do with the idea that a supposed Earth globe casts a shadow on the Moon during a lunar eclipse.

### **RAHU IS A DARK PLANET, NOT THE SHADOW OF AN EARTH GLOBE**

The Puranas and *acharyas* consistently explain the eclipse as the passing of a dark planet called Rahu before the face of the Sun or the Moon. *When we see the dark shadow passing the Sun or Moon we are actually getting a glimpse of the Rahu planet which is otherwise invisible to our perception:*

"Krishna consciousness means constantly associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in such a mental state that the devotee can observe the cosmic manifestation exactly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead does. Such observation is not always possible, but **it becomes manifest exactly like the dark planet known as Rahu, which is observed in the presence of the full moon**". (SB 4.29.69)



Sukadeva Goswami explains Rahu in the following verses:

"Sri Sukadeva Gosvami said: My dear King, some historians, the speakers of the Puranas, say that 10,000 *yojanas* [80,000 miles] below the sun is the planet known as Rahu, which moves like one of the stars. The presiding deity of that planet, who is the son of Simhika, is the most abominable of all asuras, but although he is completely unfit to assume the position of a demigod or planetary deity, he has achieved that position by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Later I shall speak further about him...Formerly, when nectar was being distributed, Rahu tried to create dissension between the sun and moon by interposing himself between them. **Rahu is inimical toward both the sun and the moon, and therefore he always tries to cover the sunshine and moonshine on the dark-moon day and full-moon night.** After hearing from the sun and moon demigods about Rahu's attack, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu, engages His disc, known as the Sudarsana cakra, to protect them. The Sudarsana cakra is the Lord's most beloved devotee and is favored by the Lord. The intense heat of its effulgence, meant for killing non-Vaishnavas, is unbearable to Rahu, and he therefore flees in fear of it. During the time Rahu disturbs the sun or moon, there occurs what people commonly know as an eclipse." (SB 5.24.1-3)

Here it says, "10,000 *yojanas* [80,000 miles] below the Sun is the planet known as Rahu (*svarbhanuh*—the planet known as Rahu) which moves like one of the stars" Since Rahu is below (*adhastat*) the Sun (*savituh*) by 10,000 *yojanas*, and rotates (*carati*) like one of the stars (*naksatra-vat*), how can Rahu be considered the mere shadow of the supposed Earth globe? A shadow is attached to an entity, and moves in accordance with the entity in question.



If Rahu was the shadow of the a supposed Earth globe, the planet Rahu would remain attached to the Earth as a shadow is attached to a person, but *shastra* says that Rahu

and has its own independent rotation above the Earth plane—specifically Rahu is positioned 10,000 *yojanas* (80,000 miles) below the Sun.

### **RAHU CAN MOVE ANTI-CLOCKWISE**

It also appears Rahu can move both clockwise and anti-clockwise. The irregular movement of Rahu (clockwise/anticlockwise) is discussed by the *acharyas* as follows:

"Some *pauranikas* [scholars of the Puranas] say that Rahu goes around Meru in the clockwise direction like other stars, while some scholars say that he rises from the Earth beyond Manasottara and sets in the Earth on the western direction. Others say that he reaches the east through the middle part of Patala, then reaches the Earth in the east beyond Manasottara and sets in the Earth in the west. Still others say that he moves in the sky around Meru in the anti-clockwise direction". (*Commentary by Vijayadhvaja Tirtha to SB 5.24.1*)

"It is said, "some", because in the opinion of the author [i.e. Sukadeva Goswami], there is no *pravaha Vayu* there, and Rahu moves on his own". (*Commentary by Jiva Goswami SB 5.24.1*)

"The *pauranikas* [scholars of the Puranas] say that Rahu moves like the stars around Meru, propelled by the *pravaha Vayu* [wind]. However, **the personal opinion of the author is that Rahu moves on his own, because Rahu's orbit is outside the purview of the *pravaha Vayu*.**" (*Commentary by Sri Vamsidhara SB 5.24.1*)

Here the 'opinion of the author' seems to be referring to Sukadeva Goswami himself (the speaker of *Srimad Bhagavatam*). The *acharyas* state that Rahu does not move like the other planets that are controlled by *Vayu* (see SB 5.23.1-3) but appears to have some independence and can move on his own accord.

We should note that the dark circle appearing during a solar eclipse has been observed to move in an anti-clockwise fashion as it passes across the face of the Sun. This movement of the dark circle going from left to right across the Sun cannot be attributed to the Moon because the Moon always moves in the sky in a clockwise fashion (right to left). A video on Youtube called, [Is this Rahu? The Best Proof of the Fake Moon Eclipsing the Sun](#), (posted on by Roderick Horten, August 30, 2017), shows Rahu moving in the anti-clockwise fashion:

The anti-clockwise movement of the eclipse shadow has been observed on many occasions. The Western astronomers have their own way of explaining why the shadow of the eclipse is seen to move from right to left, but all such speculations fly in the face of our common observation that the Moon always moves east to west, that is from left to right. A shadow moving from right to left (west to east) across the face of the Sun cannot therefore be attributed to the Moon which always moves left to right (east to west).

### **RAHU DOES NOT 'SWALLOW' THE SUN AND MOON**

We should note that although it is sometimes said that Rahu 'swallows' the Sun and Moon during an eclipse, the *acharyas* mention that Rahu is always 10,000 *yojanas* (80,000 miles) below the height of the Sun, and thus does not ever touch these celestial planets. The Sun and Moon are protected from Rahu's attack by Sri Krishna's *chakra* weapon:

"The revolving Sudarshan chakra stays there and Rahu faces it for some time but is unable to bear it, thus he withdraws. This position is called an eclipse. The Sun and the Moon are wholly or partly covered according to the different positions of Rahu. Rahu does not devour either of them as they are in different orbits" (*Commentary by Sridhara Svami, 5.24.3*)

"The partial or total eclipse depends upon the position of Rahu, upright or slanted. He does not actually touch either of them as he is very far away from them". (*Commentary by Viraraghava SB 5.24.3*)

"Rahu covers the Sun's or Moon's disc as he rushes to fight with them. This phenomenon is called an eclipse. Rahu's position is far off; thus he will never touch either of them". (*Commentary by Sri Bhagavatprasadacarya, SB 5.24.3*)

"The partial or full coverage depends upon the position of Rahu. He does not come into physical contact with them as he is 10,000 *yojana* (80,000 miles) away". (*Commentary by Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura*)

Notice that the *acharyas* do not explain Rahu as the shadow of the Earth upon the Sun or Moon, or attempt to explain the eclipse as the conjunction of the Earth, Sun, and Moon. Instead Rahu is treated as an independent planet with his own movement below the height of the Sun. The appearance of Rahu devouring the Sun and Moon is simply due to the perspective of someone standing on the Earth. As Rahu crosses in the sky he blocks out the light of the Sun and the Moon to those standing on the Earth beneath.



Followers of Vedic culture consider the eclipse of the Sun and Moon to be inauspicious, and therefore do not look at the Sun and Moon as they are being covered by Rahu. Unfortunately in the modern world, most people consider it a great novelty to behold the Sun and Moon as they are being eclipsed by Rahu.



President Trump looking at the solar eclipse (2017)

## IMPERSONALISM IN ISKCON'S PRESENTATION OF RAHU

Danavir Goswami's argument for the Earth globe is based on the previously mentioned verse cited by Danavir Goswami from the *Brahmanda Purana*, "Rahu has been created after taking out the shadow of the Earth and has a spherical shape". We shall see later that the Sanskrit word *mandala* (circular) has been mistranslated here as 'spherical'. A circular shape is not the same as a spherical shape. A plate is circular whereas a ball is spherical. Aside from that, if Danavir Goswami wishes to use this verse as an argument for the existence of an Earth-globe in Vedic cosmology, the understanding of the verse goes against him when it comes to understanding Rahu as the cause for the eclipse. The idea that the eclipse is merely and literally the shadow of an Earth-globe cast onto the Moon, completely negates the Vedic teaching that Rahu is a separate planet. Though ISKCON's writers on Vedic cosmology are obliged to speak of Rahu as an actual planet, the above use of the verse as 'evidence' for a globe-shaped Earth, effectively renders the Vedic description of Rahu as an independent planet to be irrelevant and meaningless. If one wishes to make an argument for the Earth globe based on the idea that Rahu is the shadow of the Earth, then that is how one must continue to think of Rahu—literally as a shadow of an Earth globe, *and nothing else!* But let us first be clear that the Puranas describe Rahu as both a personality and a planet, not a mere lifeless shadow of another planet:

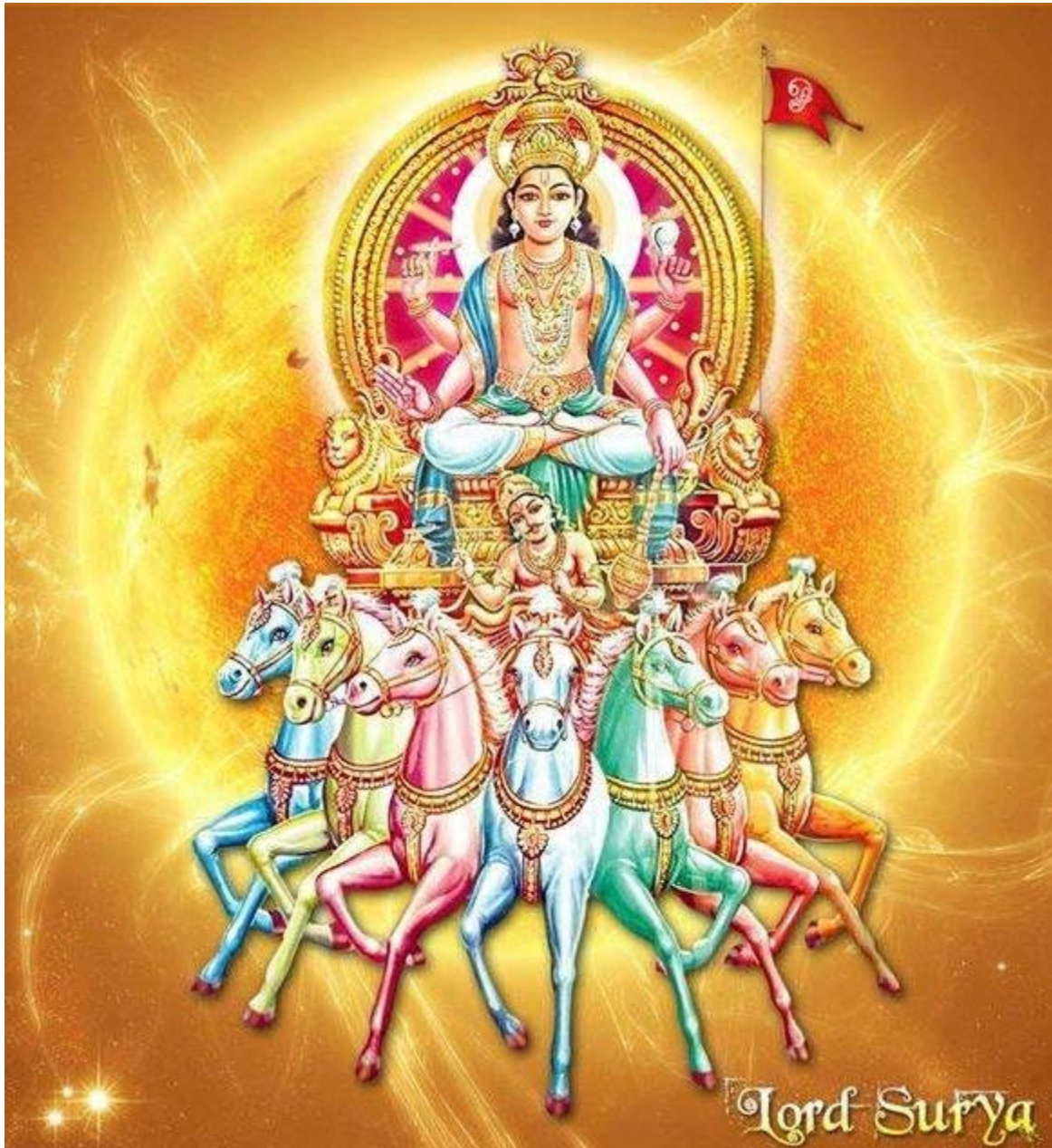


"The following are the nine planets, viz.—the Sun, the Moon, the Mars, the Mercury, the Jupiter, the Venus, the Saturn, the Rahu and the Katu. They always bring good to all creatures (to call some of them malignant, is a mere mode of speech)." (*Matsya Purana 93.11*)

In the passage below, the Linga Purana describes how a governing personality enters into each planet; the description includes Rahu who enters the planet called Svarbhanu. Svarbhanu means to dispel the brilliance of the heavenly light coming from the Sun and Moon. [As an aside, note that the disc of the Moon is described here as being made of dense water, *not rocks and dust*. We shall discuss the Puranas amazing description of the Moon in a later paper]. The following translation by JL Shastri is unclear in parts, but it nonetheless helps us understand the personal and individual nature of the planets and their presiding deities:

**"The disc of the Moon is made of the nature of dense water.** The disc of the sun is white and is of the nature of dense fire. **Devas reside in constellations, sun, and planets. They live everywhere in these abodes in all manvantaras.** Hence the planets abodes are named after their respective planets. The Sun entered the abode Saura. The Moon entered the abode Saumya. Venus entered the abode Shaukra. Jupiter, the valorous entered the abode Brhad (big). The Mars entered the abode Lohita pertaining to Mars. The Saturn entered the abode shanaiscara. The Mercury entered the abode Baudha. **The evil planet Rahu entered the abode Svarbhanu named after him. The deities of constellations entered all these abodes.** These luminaries are the abodes of meritorious souls. These abodes have been created by the self-born deity. They began to function at the beginning of the kalpa and they stay until all the living beings are dissolved. In all the Manvantaras they alone are the abodes of Devas. These deities who have identified themselves with the abodes occupy these divine abodes again and again. They occupy these abodes along with the devas of the past, present, and future. In the current manvantara, the planets are moving about in aerial chariots". (*Linga Purana chapter 61 verses 7-20*)

Just as the Surya enters the Sun planet and Chandra enters the Moon planet, etc., so the personality of Rahu enters the planet called Svarbhanu. In Vedic teachings there is a sense in which the presiding deity of a planet is both different and non-different from the planet itself. Chandra and Surya, for example, take the form of beautiful *devas*, whilst their planets take the form of mandalas (discs or circles). The image below shows the Sun manifesting as both a personality and a planet:



In the same way, Rahu takes the form of a demoniac decapitated head, whilst his planet takes the form of a black mandala (circle). As we shall see later, the shape of Rahu's planet is circular, not globular.



In the *Srimad Bhagavatam* it states that the ghostly decapitated head of the demon Rahu became the planet of that name:

*siras tv amaratam nitam ajo graham aciklpat sirah*—the head; *tu*—of course; *amaratam*—immortality; *nitam*—having obtained; *ajah*—Lord Brahma; *graham*—as one of the planets; *aciklpat*—recognized; *yah*—the same Rahu

"Rahu's head, however, having been touched by the nectar, became immortal. Thus Lord Brahma accepted Rahu's head as one of the planets. Since Rahu is an eternal enemy of the moon and the sun, he always tries to attack them on the nights of the full moon and the dark moon." (SB 8.9.26)

Though the verse appears to read that Rahu's head became the planet of the same name, the *various Puranas state that* Rahu's dark planet was actually created by Brahma from 'the shadow of the Earth'. This dark planet is the abode of Rahu. The Matsya Purana states:

"The size of Rahu is the same with the stars, He travels below them. His place is made up of the shadow of the Earth by Brahma, it is full of Tamas (darkness). Rahu enters into the Sun in the bright fortnight, in the dark fortnight it emerges from the Sun and enters into the Moon. It is named Svar-bhanu, because He urges forward by His own rays". (*Matsya Purana* 128. 60-62)

The reconciliation of these two ideas can be ascertained from Srila Prabhupada' purport to SB 8.9.26: "Since Rahu had become immortal, Lord Brahma accepted him as one of

the grahas, or planets, like the moon and the sun". In other words, because Rahu drank nectar, he was accepted by Brahma as one of the *grahas* (planets). As Chandra (the Moon) or Surya (the Sun) manifest both as personalities with demi-god forms as well as planets with a circular form, in the same way Rahu manifests in the form of a ghostly head as well as in the form of a black circular planet. As described in the *Matsya Purana*, this dark circular planet was made by Brahma from 'the shadow of the Earth'. This should not be taken to mean that Rahu is the shadow of an Earth globe being cast onto the Moon. As we shall see this idea runs counter to the description of the Vedic Earth as a great circular plane, as well as counter to the description of Rahu as an independent planet. Brahma's creation of the Svarbhanu planet from the shadow of the Earth has an entirely different meaning as we shall discuss later.

The *Linga Purana* describes Rahu as an independent planet in the following way:

"The abode Shani (Saturn) is black with eight rays. The abode of Svarbhanu (Rahu) is gloomy and is a place of great distress to all living beings." (*Linga Purana*, 61.25)

Again the *Linga Purana* states:

"Dark sphered Rahu who is full of Tamasic vigour is the planet that suppresses the Sun and the Moon." (*Linga Purana*, chapter 61, verse 48)

The *Vayu Purana* describes Rahu in the following way:

"The diameter of the Sun is nine thousand *yojanas*. The girth of the sun is three times its circumference. The width of the moon is twice that of the sun. Equal to them, Svarbhanu goes beneath. The planet is created in globular form out of the shadow of the Earth. [Note, the Sanskrit word used here is '*mandala*' which means circular not globular]. The dark abode of Svarbhanu is fashioned out of darkness. During full Moon days he comes out of the Sun and goes to the Moon. From the Moon he goes to the Sun (during the new moon days) and again he goes to the Moon. He dispels the brilliance of the heaven with his refulgence and is therefore called Svarbhanu." (*Vayu Purana* 53.61-65)

The *Vayu Purana* again states:

"Rahu's chariot is of Tamasic nature (dark-coloured). Eight black horses, as speedy as the mind are yoked to it. Leaving the Sun, Rahu rushes at the Moon during the lunar Pravan (i.e. the full-Moon). Leaving the Moon it rushes at the Sun during the solar Pravan (i.e. the New-Moon day)." (*Vayu Purana* 52.80-81)

The above verses clearly describe Rahu as an individual planet. The Puranas state the measurement of Rahu (see SB 5.24.2) as well as its dark terrifying atmosphere. It is drawn by a chariot like the other planets. Thus it is not that Rahu only manifests as a mere shadow of the so-called Earth globe on the brief occasions when Earth, Sun and Moon supposedly align in a certain way to cause an eclipse, rather, that Rahu is always present in the sky, but can only be seen on the occasion of an eclipse. The independent movements of Rahu are calculated by Vedic astrologers, and have nothing to do with the supposed movements of the Earth. Indeed, the Vedic Earth does not even move, since it is held in place by Ananta-sesha. The Vedic Earth is stationary and does not move around the Polestar (Druva) like all the other stars and planets described in chapter 23 of the fifth canto (See SB 5.23.1-3).

The idea that Rahu is a mere shadow of the supposed Earth globe actually depersonalizes the Vedic description of Rahu as a demoniac personality inhabiting his own separate dark planet. We have discussed the topic of Impersonalism and Globe Ideology in the following papers: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).

It is perhaps due to the influence of modern secular cosmology (which proffers an impersonal cosmos) that members of ISKCON subsequently present Rahu as a mere shadow of an Earth globe. Anyone who has understood that the Vedic Earth is a gigantic circular plane and that Rahu rotates above the Earth-circle as an independent planet, would not make the mistake of thinking the Earth is globe-shaped or that Rahu is the shadow of an Earth globe upon the Moon.

We should again bear in mind that no Earth globe floating in space is ever directly described in Vedic literature, and its existence is only inferred by extrapolating on verses such as 'Rahu is created out of the shadow of the Earth'. Such extrapolation completely ignores the context in which the Earth is first of all described as a 500 million *yojana* circular plane held by Ananta-sesha (not a small globe floating in space). Secondly, the extrapolation does not take into account the relative positions of the Sun and Moon above the Earth-circle, which makes it impossible for the Sun to throw a shadow of the Earth-circle up on the Moon.

### **WHY THE SUN CANNOT CREATE A SHADOW OF THE EARTH ON TO THE MOON**

In order to visualize the Sun and Moon rotating above the Vedic Earth (Bhu-mandala), as well as to explain what is going wrong in ISKCON's explanation of the eclipse, let us look at some images of the Sun as it rotates above the plane of Bh-mandala. I personally do not have the computer skills to be able to produce adequate images and animation of the Bhu-mandala, so for the moment we will have to work with the images provided by Sadaputa Prabhu, Danavir Goswami, and others. The images will suffice for the moment to illustrate the point. The images below by Sadaputa dasa shows the Sun as it rotates 100,000 *yojanas* (800,000 miles) above the plane of Bhu-mandala.





Though the above image looks rather abstract, please bear in mind that it is meant to depict the great circular landscape of the Earth. The concentric circular patterns represent the seven great islands (*sapta-dvipa*) and the seven great oceans (*sapta-arnavam*) of the Bhu-mandala which cover an area of 202,800,000 miles of the flat-Earth plane. Although the Earth plane has a complete diameter of fifty *crore yojanas* (4 billion miles), the seven islands and oceans form most of the inhabited area, and contain millions of smaller lands and civilizations such as the area of our known part of the Earth. The Vedic Earth-circle is described in *Srimad Bhagavatam* as a continuous solid landscape that comprises seven cosmic-sized islands and oceans that contain various countries, mountains, seas and oceans, lakes, trees, animals, and people. Our own area of the Earth is just a small speck on this vast landscape.

In the Purana's description of the planetary arrangement, the Earth (Bhu-mandala) is 'ground level', and the Sun rotates above the plane of the Earth at a height of 100,000 *yojanas* (800,000 miles). Above the Sun by a distance of a further 100,000 *yojana* (800,000 miles) is the Moon:

"The Sun's disc is situated one *lakh* [100,000] *yojanas* [800,000 miles] above the Earth, and 100,000 *yojanas* [800,000 miles] above it, is the Moon's disc." (*Vishnu Purana 2.7.4*)

In a letter to Svarupa Damodara, Srila Prabhupada wrote:

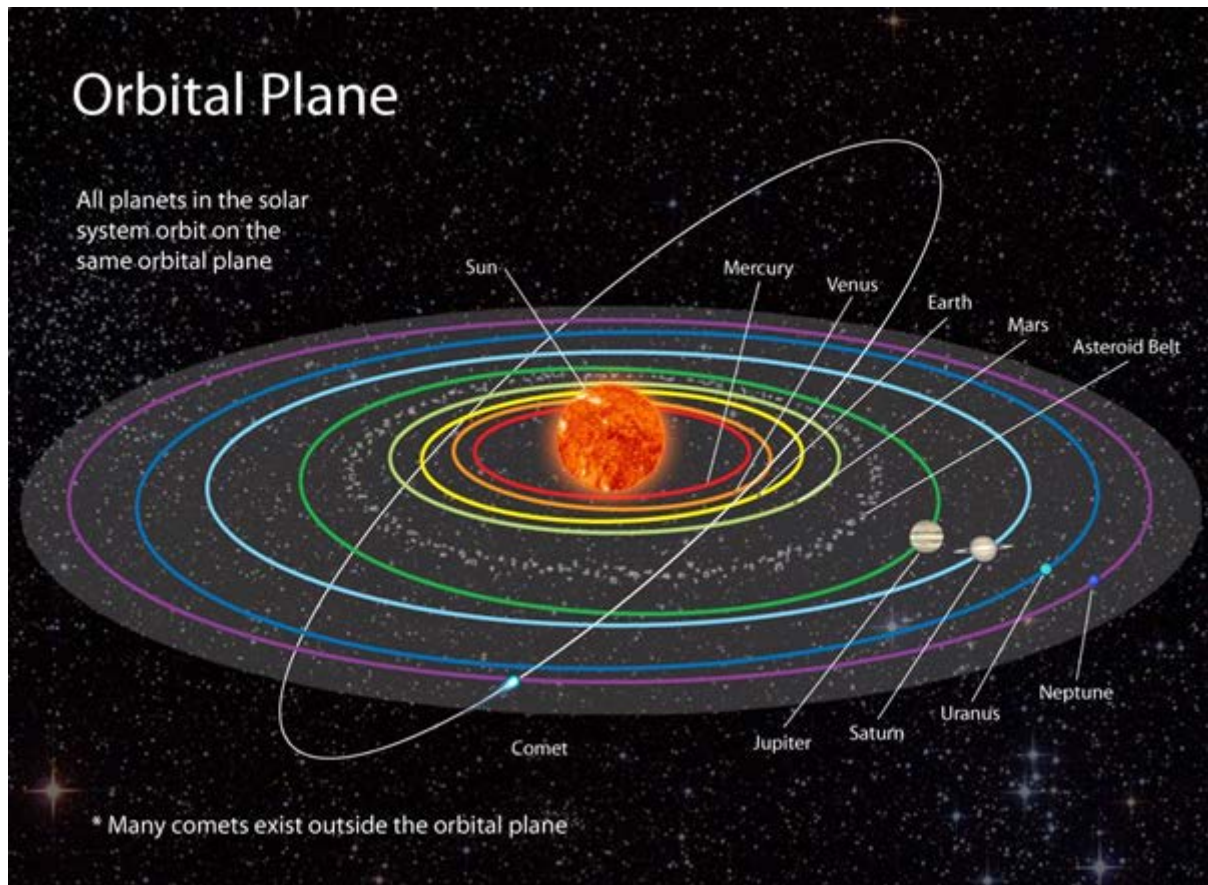
"According to our sastra, Sun is first, then Moon". (*Letter to Svarupa Damodara, Mauritius, 24 October, 1975*)

Again in discussion with a Vedic astronomer, Srila Prabhupada asked for confirmation:

Prabhupada: Now, where is the situation of the *grahas* in this planetary system? Whether Sun is first or Moon is first?

Indian Astronomer: Sun is first. Definitely Sun is first. (*Conversation with Vedic Astronomer, April 30th 1977, Bombay*)

Thus according to the Vedic calculation, the Moon is further in height from the Earth than the Sun. The Sun is first, and the Moon is second in order of the heights of planets above the Earth plane. The arrangement of the Sun and Moon one above the other has important implications when it comes to understanding the eclipse. What we have to carefully understand here is that Vedic and modern cosmology present very different conceptions of how the planets are arranged. The modern Western system obviously does not recognize the Vedic teaching that the Earth is a gigantic circular planets with the planets rotating above; instead the modern cosmology depicts the Earth as a small globe rotating with the other planets around a massive central Sun:



In the Western model the Sun is at the center of the 'solar system', and the Earth and other planets circle around the Sun forming a horizontal arrangement which we may refer to as the 'orbital plane'. By contrast the Vedic model situates the great circular Earth plane at 'ground level' so to speak, and the other planets rotate at respective heights above the plane of the Earth. Thus the Sun rotates above the great Earth circle at a height of 100,000 *yojanas*, the Moon is above the Sun by a further 100,000 *yojanas*, Venus is above the Moon, etc. In the Vedic cosmology the planets are vertically situated one above the other; whereas in Western cosmology the planets are horizontally placed on an orbital plane.

In his *Vedic Cosmos* video, Danavir Goswami depicts the horizontal arrangement of the stars and planets as they rotate above Bhū-maṇḍala, All the stars and planets rotate above the great Earth-circle and around the central Polestar (Druvaloka).



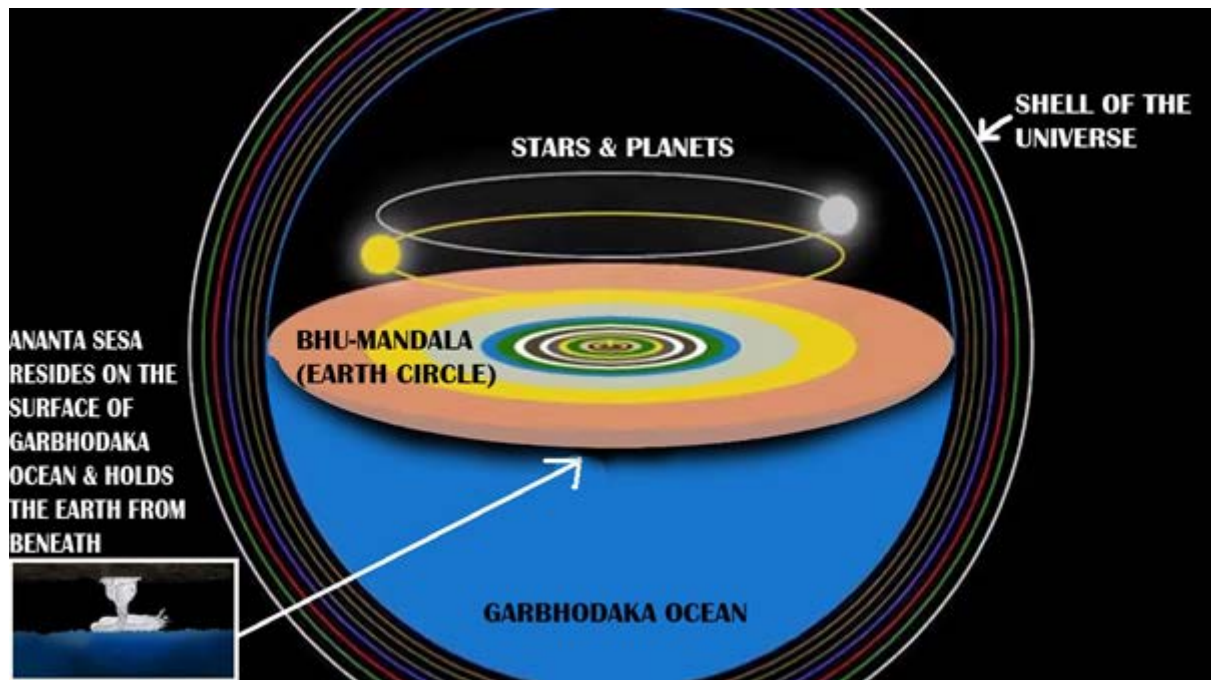
Note that at this point in Danavir Goswami's *Vedic Cosmos* video, 'the Earth' is correctly depicted as a great circular plane, *not a globe*. In the image below Danavir Goswami shows an aerial view of the Sun above the great circle creating day and night over the massive plane of the flat-Earth:



So keep this in mind—the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other Puranas describe the Sun as rotating above the Vedic Earth-circle; thus the Sun does not orbit around an Earth globe, nor does an Earth globe orbit around the Sun as depicted in the modern images of the



so-called solar system. The question then arises, since the Puranas describe that the Earth-circle is below the height of the Sun, and the Moon is above the height of the Sun, how could the Sun possibly throw a shadow of the great Earth-circle onto the Moon in order to create an eclipse? In order for the Earth to cast a shadow on the Moon, the Sun would have to be either aside or below the Earth. However, the Sun cannot move beneath or aside the great Earth circle which is 4 billion miles across and spans the entire center of the universe. The image below shows the Earth-circle spanning the entire center of the universe with the Sun and Moon rotating above:



Since the Sun can neither move below or aside the gigantic Earth circle, how could it possibly be the cause of creating a shadow of the Earth on the Moon? The Sun is above the Earth and can thus shine down and create shadows of people and objects that are standing on the surface; but since the Moon is above the height of the Sun, how can the Sun throw a shadow of the entire Earth (which is below it) onto the Moon (which is above it?) The Sun could only throw a shadow of the Earth onto the Moon if the Earth itself was between the Sun and the Moon. This idea, however, is completely contradictory to the vertical arrangement of the Earth, Sun, and Moon as being one above the other.

By way of illustrating the Vedic description of Earth, Sun and Moon, let us consider a round table sitting in the middle of a room, and above the table are various lamps hanging from the ceiling at different fixed heights.



In this very rough analogy, the round table represents Bhu-mandala, the stand of the table represents Ananta-sesha who holds the Bhu-mandala in place, and the lights hanging from the ceiling represent the many planets that rotate in circles above the Earth at various heights one above the other. In this example, one of the lights represents the Sun which is above the height of the Earth, and another light bulb represents the Moon which is above the height of both the Earth and the Sun.

According to Western cosmology the lunar eclipse is caused when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon, and the shadow of the Earth is then thrown onto the face of the Moon. In Vedic cosmology the Earth cannot come between the Sun and the Moon because the Earth-circle (Bhu-mandala) is always below the Sun and the Moon. Consider the situation of the round table and the lights above it: since the round table (representing the Bhu-mandala) is situated below the lights, how is it possible for the lower light (representing the Sun) to shine onto the table, and then throw a shadow of the round table onto the upper light (representing the Moon). Such an event cannot happen. The lower light (the Sun) could only throw a shadow of the round table (the Earth-circle) onto the upper light (the Moon) if the table somehow reduced to a fraction of its size, and then raised up to come between the lower and the upper light.

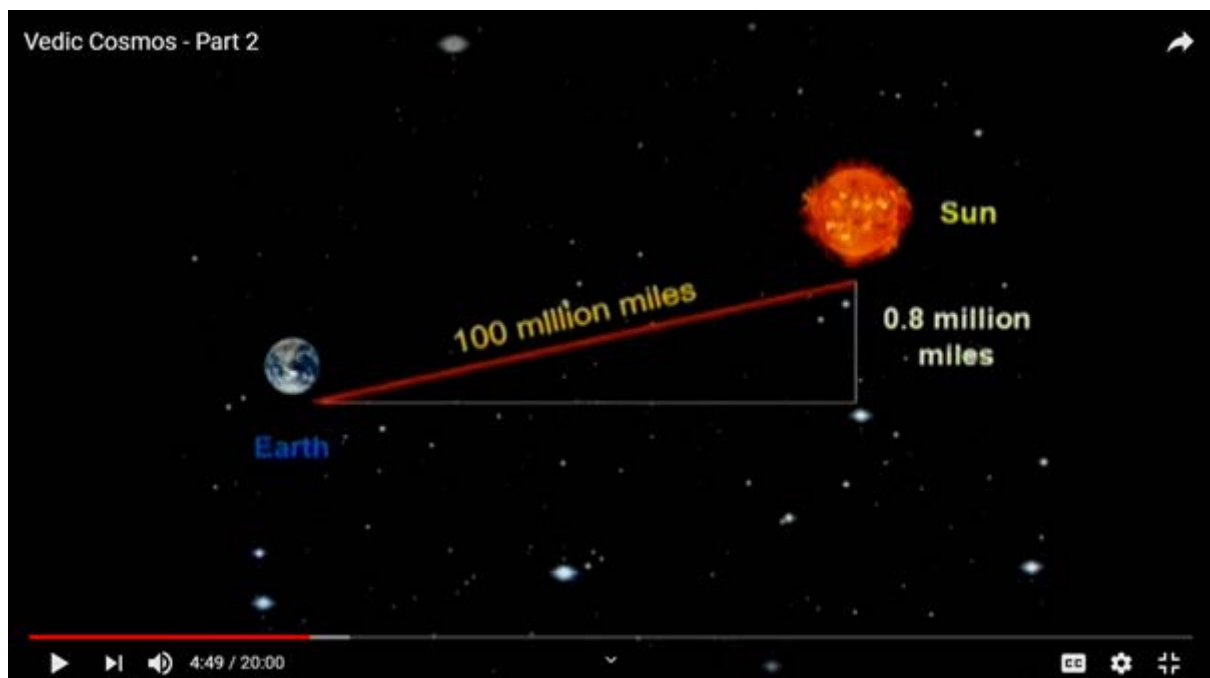
Unfortunately, for Danavir Goswami and others, that is not how furniture or Vedic planets move or operate.

If Danavir Goswami wishes to argue that the shadow of the Earth causes the darkness on the moon during an eclipse, he is obliged to explain how the Vedic Earth which is measured at *panchaset-koti yojana* (500 million *yojanas* or 4 billion miles in diameter) can possibly cast a small shadow on the Moon.

## HOW TO CREATE A PLANET OUT OF NOWHERE

Although Danavir Goswami, Sadaputa dasa, and others create illustrations such as those shown above depicting the Bhu-mandala with the Sun and Moon rotating above it, unfortunately they do not stick consistently with this description of the Earth when it comes to explaining cosmic phenomena such as eclipses, day and night, seasons, etc. Instead they switch to the modern idea of the Earth being a globe and then explain cosmic phenomena with reference to the Earth globe rather than to Bhu-mandala (earth circle).

If one were to stick consistently with the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description of the Earth-circle, and the Sun and Moon rotating above it, then the idea that 'the Earth' (the huge Bhu-mandala) could come between the Sun and Moon and cause a lunar eclipse is clearly impossible. To get around this, members of ISKCON simply 'disappear' the Bhu-mandala into 'another dimension' and leave a solitary Earth globe floating in space. In the above images from Danavir Goswami we saw a depiction of the Sun above the huge Bhu-mandala; in the image below by Danavir Goswami, the Bhu-mandala has just disappeared as if by magic, and the Vedic 'Earth' is now shown as an Earth globe floating in dark space:



But where did an Earth globe come from? Since the Vedic Earth is otherwise described as a massive circular plane, where did the Earth globe idea spring out of? And where did the rest of Bhu-mandala go? We have argued many times in previous papers that there

actually is no description of an Earth globe in the Puranas. In the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other Puranas, the Sun planet, the Moon planet, Mercury, Venus, etc., are all described in specific detail including their size and distance above the Bhu-mandala. There are coordinates for Bharata-varsha's location in Jambudvipa, but there are no coordinates for the supposed Earth globe floating in space. There are nine planets in Vedic cosmology and an Earth planet is not one of them. There is no second 'Earth-globe' mentioned as one of the planets either in Vedic astrology or Vedic cosmology. The Earth globe is simply a ghost planet that haunts the minds of those writing on Vedic cosmology.

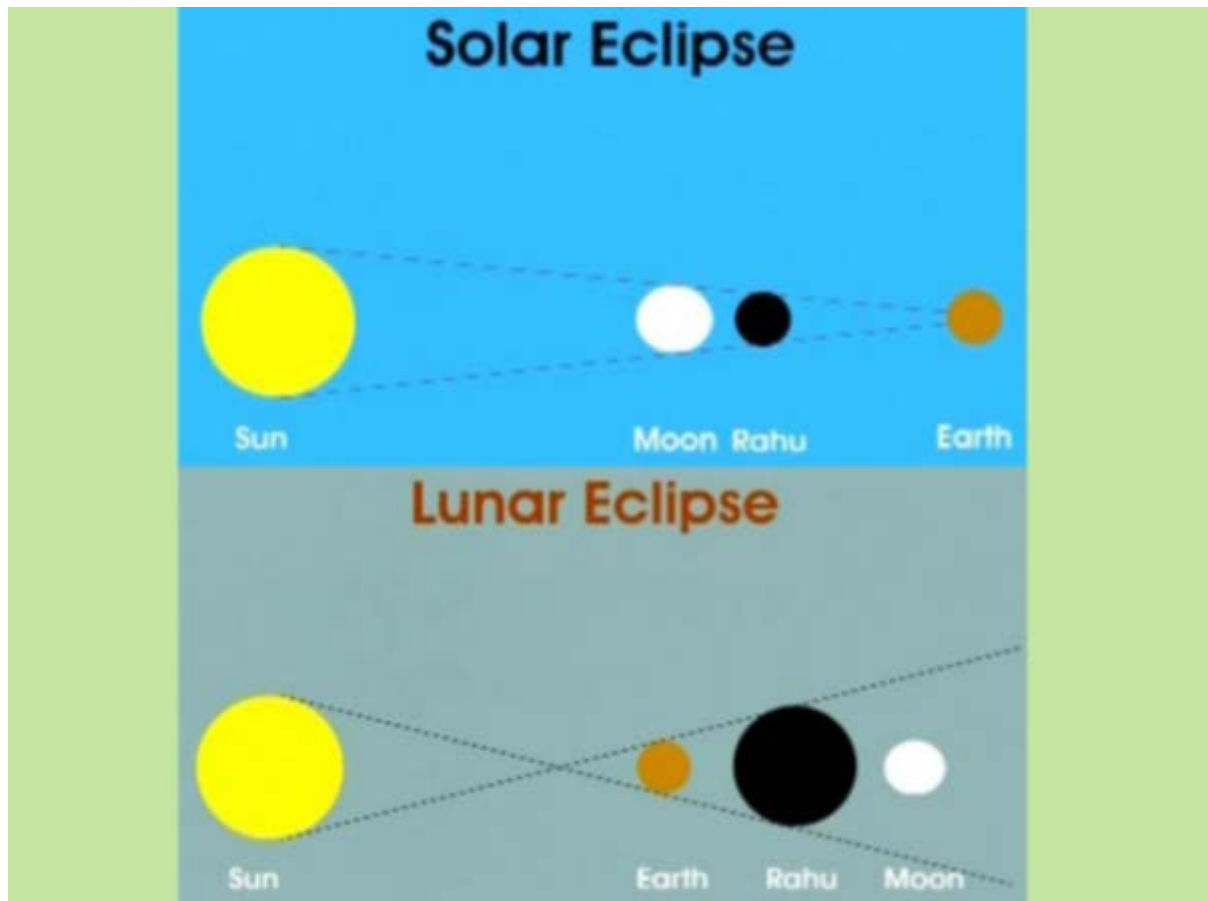
So where are these apparitions of an Earth globe conjured up from? The answer to that question is that the 'Earth globe' phantasmagoria is literally 'made up' (fabricated) out of interpolations on Sanskrit verses such as the one cited above by Danavir Goswami that 'Rahu is created out of the shadow of the Earth'. The initial assumption that the Earth in question is a globe, and not the Bhu-mandala as it is described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, leads Danavir Goswami and others to presume that the above verse is talking about the Western Earth globe rather than the Vedic Earth circle. By working from a false premise regarding what is meant by 'the Earth', they are obliged to conclude that the Earth is responsible for creating a shadow on the Moon. By interpolating the verse in this way, they feel justified in disappearing the Bhu-mandala, and presenting an Earth globe in its place. Despite there being no mention of an Earth globe in the Puranas, or by the Vaishnava acharyas in their commentaries to *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Danavir Goswami and others have simply imposed their own idea of the Earth onto the scene, and justified the move with reference to verses that are clearly interpolations on the original idea.

In a very informative article for the Sampradaya Sun entitled [Lord Varaha lifting an Earth Globe?](#), Jahnava-Nitai dasa shows how an ancient sculpture depicting Lord Varaha raising the Earth from the Garbhodaka Ocean, is falsely used as evidence for the existence of an Earth globe concept in ancient Vedic society. Jahnava-Nitai dasa's close-up image of the sculpture reveals that the supposed carving of an Earth globe, is simply a carving of a conch-shell in the hand of Lord Varaha. The Earth is otherwise depicted in the personified form of Goddess Bhumi, not as an Earth globe.

Jahnava-Nitai dasa's article graphically reveals how modern preconceived ideas about the nature of Earth are whimsically superimposed onto a scene which is describing an entirely different reality. Although the Vedic and modern descriptions of the Earth are in fact, two radically different concepts of reality, Jahnava-Nitai dasa's article reveals how easy it is to simply superimpose the modern idea of the Earth unto a scene which depicts a radically different idea of the Earth. In the same way Danavir Goswami simply works from the presumption that the Earth is indeed a globe, and then simply superimposes this conception onto Sanskrit texts which describe the Earth as a circular plane.

## **'VEDIC COSMOLOGY' OR A TRAVESTY OF VEDIC COSMOLOGY**

After 'disappearing' the Vedic description of the massive Bhu-mandala, and superimposing an Earth globe in its place, Danavir Goswami then switches from the Vedic teaching that the Sun and Moon rotate above the Earth circle, to the Western teaching which describes an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon orbiting around each other on the so-called 'orbital plane'. The image below depicts Danavir Goswami's illustration for the eclipse.



In Danavir Goswami's illustration, the planets are shown to line up following the modern Western understanding that Earth, Sun and Moon encircle one another on an 'orbital plane', and not as *Srimad Bhagavatam* describes that Sun and Moon rotate 'above' the circular plane of the Earth. The only addition to the modern Western explanation is the inclusion of Rahu, but in reality Rahu plays no necessary role here, and its introduction into the scenario is a completely superficial attempt to merge Vedic and modern cosmology. The placement of Rahu in the above diagram is completely superfluous as the above explanation involving a conjunction of Earth globe, Sun, and Moon theoretically works whether Rahu is present or not. The placement of Rahu here does not make it 'Vedic cosmology'; it simply makes a travesty of Vedic cosmology.

First of all let us take note that 'the Earth' in question (Bhu-mandala) has mysteriously transformed from a gigantic Earth circle into a small Earth globe. In the depiction of the Solar eclipse, Danavir Goswami has depicted the Earth as a globe, and then placed the Moon closer to the Earth than the Sun. However, in order for the Moon to come between the Earth and the Sun and cause a solar eclipse, the Moon would have to be closer to the Earth than the Sun itself. This presentation contradicts the Vedic teaching that the Moon is further in height than the Sun.

Guru krpa: How is the moon behind the sun?

Prabhupada: **Not behind, above...** Their calculation is that moon is nearer, is it not?

Guru krpa: . Yes.

Prabhupada: But **not moon is nearer; sun is nearer.** And above, in the proportion, 1,600,000 miles, above moon there is Mercury, Mars, in this way, Venus. It is not so easy.

**Srutakirti: The planets are not orbiting the sun.**

**Prabhupada: No, no. They have got their different orbits.**

Guru krpa: . This is real science, to know these facts.

Prabhupada: Yes.

(Morning Walk, May 27, 1975, Honolulu)

In the above conversation, Srila Prabhupada is teaching his disciples the Vedic understanding that the Sun is nearer to the Earth than the Moon. But in Danavir Goswami's explanation for the solar eclipse, he has the Moon between the Earth and the Sun, and thus nearer to the Earth than the Sun. This idea is contrary to the Vedic teaching.

The depiction of the lunar eclipse meanwhile again shows the Earth between the Moon and the Sun. But how could that be possible when the Vedic Earth is a massive circular plane crossing the center of the universe, and thus can never come between the Sun and Moon (since these two planets are always above the plane of the Earth itself). The above explanation only works by abandoning *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description of the Earth, and the relative position of the Sun and Moon. Danavir Goswami's idea that an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon align on an orbital plane to help form an eclipse obviously doesn't work if one sticks consistently with the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* original description of the Earth as a massive circular plane, as well as the description of the *horizontal arrangement* of the planets one above the other at fixed heights.

In the *Vedic Cosmos* video, Danavir Goswami presents his explanation for the eclipse in the following statement: Danavir Goswami:

"80,000 miles below the sun is a dark or invisible planet named Rahu. When this planet comes between Earth and the Sun on a new Moon day or amavasya, **while the Moon is in the same conjunction or straight line**, a solar eclipse takes place. The eclipse is full for those on Earth who are situated in line with the conjunction while others may see it partially. Similarly, when Rahu comes between the Earth and the Moon on the full Moon day or Purnima *while the Sun is in the same conjunction*, a lunar eclipse takes place. This is seen by anyone on earth who can see the Moon. The Moon is either fully or partially eclipsed depending on the movement of Rahu".

Notice here that although Danavir Goswami appears to be presenting Rahu as an explanation for the eclipse, he is not actually satisfied with stating that the eclipse is simply the passing of Rahu before either Sun or Moon (as the Puranas explain), instead he qualifies the whole thing by resorting back to the Western understanding of an eclipse being a particular conjunction of Earth globe, Sun, and Moon—with Rahu simply thrown in for good measure.

### **IS ISKCON'S 'VEDIC COSMOLOGY' USING VEDIC CALCULATIONS FOR THE SIZE AND DISTANCE OF PLANETS?**

In the above explanation for the eclipse which presents images of an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon orbiting around each other, Danavir Goswami follows the Western understanding regarding the arrangement of the planets. Without thinking about it, Danavir Goswami has tacitly accepted the modern idea that the Moon orbits around the supposed Earth globe at a distance of 238,900 miles. The problem with this presentation is that it completely contradicts the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description that the Moon rotates above the massive Earth circle, not around a small Earth globe, and that the distance above the Earth is 200,000 *yojanas* (1,600,000 miles), not 238,900 miles.

Another point to consider is that the Western explanation for the eclipse is based on the calculation that the Moon has a diameter of a mere 2159 miles, and despite its small size

relative to the Sun (which is calculated at 865,370 miles in diameter) it can still block the light of the Sun because of the vast distance between the two planets. An article on [earthsky.org](http://earthsky.org) states:

"...Although the Sun's diameter is about 400 times larger than that of the Moon – the Sun is also about 400 times farther away. So the Sun and Moon appear nearly the same size as seen from Earth. And that's why we on Earth can sometimes witness that most amazing of spectacles, a total eclipse of the Sun. ([EarthSky.org](http://EarthSky.org))

However these calculations are not confirmed by the Vedic teachings. According to modern scientists, the Moon's diameter is a mere 2159 miles across. According to the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the diameter of the Moon is actually larger than the Sun and is measured at *dvadasa-sahasram* (see SB 5.24.2). In the commentaries to the fifth canto, some *acharyas* state that *dvadasa-sahasram* means 12,000 *yojana* (96,000 miles) whilst according to other *acharyas* the term means 20,000 *yojanas* (160,000 miles) across. We shall discuss the disparity at a later date, but using either measurement, the size of the Vedic Moon is massive in comparison to the modern estimation that the Moon is a mere 2159 miles in diameter. Also the Sun is not 400 times farther away from the Moon. The vertical distance between the Sun and Moon is only 100,000 *yojanas* (800,000 miles) The point we wish to emphasize here is both the massive difference between the Vedic and modern calculation for the diameter of the Moon as well as the massive difference in calculation for the distance between the Earth and the Moon, and the Moon and the Sun.

Another incongruity arises in respect to the size and distance of the Sun. The Vedic Sun (see SB 5.24.2) is calculated to be 10,000 *yojanas* (80,000 miles in diameter), whilst the Sun in modern astronomy is calculated at a massive 865,370 miles in diameter. Since the modern explanation for the eclipse is calculated with the understanding that the Earth, Sun, and Moon have a particular size and relative distance from each other, members of ISKCON are not justified in using this modern idea of the planetary arrangement; the obvious reason for not using the Western model is that their measurements for the size and distance of the planets is in complete contradiction to the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* calculation. Again, the point we wish to emphasize is that an explanation for the eclipse must be consistent with the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description of the Size of Earth, Sun, and Moon and their relative distance and direction from one another. What has been presented so far is not consistent with the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* calculations! The present explanation for the eclipse does not 'reconcile' the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* cosmological teachings with the modern explanation; instead it effectively displaces the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* teaching. One may believe or not believe in what the *Srimad Bhagavatam* says, but the mandate of the Temple of Vedic Planetarium is to depict the description, arrangement, and movements of planets according to *Srimad Bhagavatam*, not according to modern astronomers.

## THE MOON LANDING?

We should also mention in passing that since the Moon is further in distance from the Sun, it also called into question the authenticity of the Moon Landing. On innumerable occasions, Srila Prabhupada famously dismissed the Moon landing as a hoax on the basis of *Srimad Bhagavatam's* calculation that the Moon is 1,600,000 miles above the Earth:

"Above the rays of the sunshine by a distance of 100,000 *yojanas* [800,000 miles] is the moon, which travels at a speed faster than that of the sun. In two lunar fortnights the moon travels through the equivalent of a samvatsara of the sun, in two and a quarter days it passes through a month of the sun, and in one day it passes through a fortnight of the sun." (SB 5.22.9)

PURPORT When we take into account that the moon is 100,000 *yojanas*, or 800,000 miles, above the rays of the sunshine, it is very surprising that the modern excursions to the moon could be possible. Since the moon is so distant, how space vehicles could go there is a doubtful mystery. Modern scientific calculations are subject to one change after another, and therefore they are uncertain. We have to accept the calculations of the Vedic literature. These Vedic calculations are steady; the astronomical calculations made long ago and recorded in the Vedic literature are correct even now. **Whether the Vedic calculations or modern ones are better may remain a mystery for others, but as far as we are concerned, we accept the Vedic calculations to be correct."**

Srila Prabhupada's statement that 'we accept the Vedic calculations to be correct' seems to be an instruction that is lost on many of his followers. For those who wish to depict and promote the modern idea of Earth globe, Sun, and Moon orbiting around each other, it must be pointed out that you are obliged to accept the sizes and distances of these planets in a manner that is consistent with how modern astronomers describe them. However, the acceptance of the modern calculations necessarily implies a rejection of the Vedic calculations. *Members of ISKCON carelessly and unthinkingly put out images of an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon orbiting around each other, but without considering that such a presentation of the planets is completely inconsistent with the size, shape, distance, and direction of the Earth, Sun, and Moon as they are described in the Puranas.*

It is really quite astonishing that within the space of fifty years since Srila Prabhupada's departure, the mood of many of his disciples and followers has turned reactionary to such an extent that ISKCON will be actively promoting the Western understanding of Earth, Sun, and Moon in the very place where it is meant to be promoting the Vedic understanding of Earth, Sun, and Moon.

Danavir Goswami wants to have cake and eat it by presenting the Vedic cosmological system on one hand, then switching to the Western cosmological system in order to explain the eclipse as an alignment involving an Earth globe with the Sun and the Moon. However, if Danavir Goswami wishes to switch back and forth to the Western system, he is obliged to work consistently with the size and distance of Earth, Sun and Moon as modern astronomers explain them. Since none of these figures actually correlate with the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* figures, Danavir Goswami must simply present his images of an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon orbiting around each other, whilst hoping that the equivalent of a Vedic accountant doesn't come to check the books—*for on close inspection it can be seen that the figures don't add up.*

As can be seen, members of the society have duped both themselves and others by professing faith in the Vedic description of the Earth, Sun and Moon on the one hand, whilst using a completely opposed understanding of Earth globe, Sun, and Moon in order to explain phenomena such as eclipses, seasons, etc.,. Thus everyone is led to believe that the Vedas teach that the Earth is a globe, whilst in fact no such entity is ever described in any of the Puranas; nor indeed is the presence of such an entity ever mentioned as a factor in the explanation for eclipses etc., in the commentaries to the Puranas by great acharyas dating back millennia.

## **FOLLOWING THE DISCIPLIC SUCCESSION**

One may or may not believe the Vedic version of events, but let us do justice to the Vedic texts by presenting them as they are described, and without the superimposition of modern Western cosmological ideas onto the original Vedic conception. If Srila Vyasadeva or Sukadeva Goswami or Sridhara Swami or any of the other Vaishnava *acharyas* had wanted us to know that the cause of the eclipse is due to a certain conjunction of an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon, as they supposedly orbit around



each other, then it would have been a simple matter of stating that, "a solar eclipse is caused by the passage of the Moon in front of the Sun, and a lunar eclipse is caused by the Earth coming between the Sun and the Moon, and casting a shadow onto the Moon's surface". Nowhere in the Puranas do we find such a statement. Srila Vyasadeva never stated that the eclipse is caused by a particular alignment of an Earth globe, Sun, and Moon as they supposedly orbit one another *for the simple reason that the nature and arrangement of Earth, Sun, and Moon are explained by Srila Vyasadeva in a radically different way*. Thus the eclipse is consistently explained as the appearance of the dark planet Rahu as it comes before both the Sun and Moon; it is never otherwise explained that Rahu is the shadow of an Earth globe falling upon the Moon. This idea is impossible according to the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description of how the Sun and Moon are related to the Earth (Bhu-mandala). The whole idea is a ridiculous departure from what is being described by Srila Vyasadeva. The above idea of Earth, Sun, and Moon orbiting around each other has absolutely nothing to do with how the planets are described in the fifth canto, and does not follow the explanation given in disciplic succession.

It is notable that in the commentaries by the Vaishnava *acharyas* to verses describing Rahu there is no attempt to explain the eclipse as being caused by the shadow of an Earth globe falling onto the Moon. Instead the *acharyas* explain the eclipse as the attack of Rahu who is an independent planet. For example, without mentioning the role of a supposed Earth globe, Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says:

"Rahu stays in front of the Sun and Moon for some time, but unable to bear the Sudarshana, he withdraws. While he stays there, he covers the Sun or Moon partly or wholly. This is what people call an eclipse". (*Commentary by Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura to SB 5.24.3*)

In their explanation for the eclipse, Danavir Goswami, Sadaputa dasa, and others writing on Vedic cosmology have fundamentally departed from the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* understanding of the planetary arrangement, and subsequently introduced an idea of the eclipse which is entirely non-Vedic in origin. The explanation for the eclipse involving the supposed Earth globe is continued by second generation devotees such as Pavaneshwar dasa as can be seen in part 28 of his *Bhagavata Cosmology* course on Youtube (See: *Bhagavata Cosmology Part 28 – Vedic Planetarium, the Science and Formation of Seasons and Eclipses*) Indeed the entire 40+ series by Pavaneshwar dasa explains cosmic phenomena with reference to the supposed Earth globe rather than to the actual Bhu-mandala. So much for 'Bhagavata Cosmology'.

Since the Vedic Earth is described as a circular plane (mandala) that is held in a stationary position by Ananta-sesha, and since the Sun and Moon are described as rotating at respective heights above this Earth plane, it cannot be argued that the Earth, Sun, and Moon orbit around each other as in the modern system. Why then do Danavir Goswami and others explain the eclipse using the Western idea that the Earth is a small globe floating in space rather than the Vedic understanding that the Earth is a great circle held by Ananta-sesha? The obvious answer appears to be that Danavir Goswami, Sadaputa dasa, Pavaneshwar dasa, Radha-Mohan dasa, Rajasekhara dasa, and all others making arguments in support of the globe—despite hearing from *Srimad Bhagavatam* that we live on a greater Earth plane—obviously 'believe' they are living on a globe floating in space, and have more faith in that idea. The understanding that we live on a bigger Earth (Bhu-mandala) appears to be at best theoretical knowledge (*jnana*), not realized knowledge (*vijnana*).

The explanation for the eclipse and other cosmic phenomena with reference to an Earth globe (rather than to Bhu-mandala) is typical of the completely erroneous, inconsistent and illogical presentations that are propagated by members of ISKCON in a misguided attempt to merge Earth globe ideology with the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* original flat-earth conception. It is an utter failure, and continues unchallenged simply because there is no senior figure with enough understanding of the subject, or enough authority to call out

the whole thing as a complete sham. I speak sharply not to diminish or disrespect the sincere service of these devotees in their attempt to present Vedic knowledge, but simply because the mistakes that have been made in the course of presenting this Vedic knowledge are soon to be set in stone at the Temple of Vedic Planetarium. If the mistakes are not immediately addressed and corrected, we face a universal disaster at the TOVP. The *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description of the universe *is what it is*; one may agree with it or not, but let the rest of the world at least hear what the ancient *rishis* believed, and not what we think they should believe.

## SRILA PRABHUPADA'S EXPLANATION FOR THE ECLIPSE

Following the explanation of the eclipse given by Sukadeva Goswami and the disciplic succession, Srila Prabhupada strongly rejected the modern explanation for the eclipse:

Brahmananda: Sometimes the moon comes in front of the sun.

Prabhupada: What is the front?

Brahmananda: Between the Sun and the Earth the Moon comes.

Jagannatha-suta: Lunar eclipse.

Prabhupada: **No, no. Eclipse is different, not according to their theory. That planet is called Rahu.**

Devotees: Ah yes.

Tamala Krishna: It's not the Moon. That's Rahu.

Revatinandana: So Rahu covers sometimes the sun and sometimes the Moon?

Prabhupada: Yes.

Bahulasva: This Rahu planet's invisible? We cannot see this with our eyes?

Prabhupada: Yes. Why you believe your eyes so much? (laughter)

Nonsense eyes.

*(Morning Walk, June 22, 1975, Los Angeles)*

In the above conversation, Srila Prabhupada rejects the idea that the lunar eclipse is caused by the Earth coming between the Sun and the Moon. Srila Prabhupada insists that the eclipse is caused by the passing of the dark planet Rahu, not that the Earth is coming between the Sun and the Moon.

In the following discussion with Dr Patel, Srila Prabhupada interjects on a number of occasions to insist that it is Rahu, not the shadow of the Earth that is causing the eclipse.

Prabhupada: Oh. [break]...modern, that the earth comes in front of the moon or the sun and then there is eclipse. Do they not?

Dr. Patel: They, all the scientists also say the same thing, sir. When it comes in the straight line the eclipse...

Prabhupada: **No, no, no.** I am saying, repeating their word. But why, then, eclipse takes place irregularly?

Dr. Patel: This is a question of simple harmonic motions according to the scientists here who explain it. The simple harmonic motion principle is that several motions are, I mean, going, gathered at a time. Then all of them come together. Then you see that thing occurs.

Prabhupada: **No...**

Dr. Patel: So that motions are different. The different timings come.

Prabhupada: But that means they do not know actually the motions.

Dr. Patel: And the old astrologers and scientists of India, they have planned it perfectly, when it comes out.

Prabhupada: **Our sastra says that it is Rahu's attack.** So attack does not come regularly.

Dr. Patel: That you may call allegorically.

Prabhupada: One... Suppose you have got enemy. You are not going to

attack regularly, but when there is some opportunity you go to attack.  
Harer nama [Cc. Adi 17.21]...

Dr. Patel: Some sort of cosmic disturbances must be occurring in the cosmos during this period of grihana(?) or eclipse. We do not know, the modern science. Some movement must be happening.

Prabhupada: Yes. Our sastra says it is attack by Rahu. Rahu...

Dr. Patel: Rahu means...The other side of the earth's shadow is Rahu, as we say. The modern scientists, the Rahu means other side of the shadow. When the sun shines on the earth, the other side of the earth is, I mean, the night and the shadow of the earth is long, drawn up in the cosmos. And in the view of that shadow, if moon comes, then it is caught by the shadow.

Prabhupada: **No, in the... Rahu, Rahu... Rahu comes in front...**

Dr. Patel: That is... The shadow is the Rahu. What else could be? That shadow of earth in the cosmos is the Rahu, most probably to me, because when the moon... Generally moon does not come so very often therein in the purview of that shadow. When it comes, it gets eclipsed.

Prabhupada: **No, no.** They give that the earth comes in front of the sun or the moon, therefore the shadow.

Dr. Patel: Earth comes in front of the sun. Then it becomes sun eclipse.

Prabhupada: Yes. So, but why, if the movement is regular, then the earth come regularly.

Dr. Patel: But there are several movements also. The movement of the earth, sun, and moon.

Prabhupada: That means again escaping.

Dr. Patel: All harmonic motions...

Devotee (5): Many shooting stars...

Dr. Patel: Things should be thought scientifically.

Prabhupada: What is the scientifically if you cannot say how many movements are there?

Dr. Patel: All the movements that the heavenly stars and other things are going on in a particular way.

Prabhupada: **No, you do not know what are the movements.** You therefore say there are several movements, but you do not know what are these movements. That is not scientific. To avoid the explanation, if the scientist says that there are several movements... But you explain what is that movement? According to our sastra there is no individual movement. The whole system is moving, making center the polestar. That we can see at night. They have... Star and planet, they have no separate movement. They are fixed up. Just like this tree. There are so many leaves. The tree is moving, so the leaves and twigs, they are moving, not that the leaf is moving.

Dr. Patel: This is a question of relativity, sir.

Prabhupada: Yes. But that we can see, this...

Dr. Patel: **Now, the earth moves round the sun and the moon moves round the earth...**

Prabhupada: **No, no...**

Dr. Patel: And the rate of movement is different on either side. And the axis or ground on which it moves also differs. So when all of them collide or sort of a thing, then eclipse comes. That is the modern understanding.

Prabhupada: And the... When Brahmananda was speaking that word yesterday, I refuted your argument?

Brahmananda: You were asking, "Why is it Sunday, Monday..." So I explained that the sun is the center of the universe; therefore the sun comes first.

Dr. Patel: No, various suns are there. All the stars are the suns of various universes.

Prabhupada: **No, we don't accept that.** No. Sun is one.

Dr. Patel: That is the fundamental difference of opinion that we don't go ahead of it, sir.

Prabhupada: **No, why shall I go according to the dictation of the rascals? We are not so rascal.**

Dr. Patel: And now we are define who is a rascal.

Prabhupada: **No**, rascal is meant, who has no authority. They are changing every day. They are changing. We don't change. These rascals are changing...

*(Morning Walk, November 17 1975, Bombay)*

In the above conversation Srila Prabhupada says 'no' at least ten times in response to Dr Patel's presentation of the modern scientific explanation of the eclipse. Dr Patel takes the attack of Rahu as 'allegorical', and argues that, 'The shadow is the Rahu. What else could be? That shadow of earth in the cosmos is the Rahu'. Like Danavir Goswami, Dr Patel does not stop to think that if Rahu is 'the shadow of the Earth' causing darkness on the Moon, then what causes the darkness during the solar eclipse. During the Solar eclipse, the darkness is supposedly created by the Moon passing between the Sun and the Earth; it is not considered to be the shadow of the Earth. Dr Patel's exclamation, "What else can it be?" is a typical example of the failure to understand Rahu as an actual planet acting in a conscious and personal way. Dr Patel's so-called 'scientific mind' thinks that the *rishis* description of Rahu is merely a metaphor for the more advanced 'scientific' understanding that Rahu is actually the shadow of the Earth on the Moon. That the universe may actually be as wonderful, and conscious, and personal, as it is described by Sukadeva Goswami and other Vedic *rishis*, is the next challenge in self-realization. As Srila Prabhupada challenged Dr Patel, so now Srila Prabhupada's International Society for Krishna Consciousness must challenge the rest of the world by fearlessly preaching the literal Bhagavata cosmology via the Temple of Vedic Planetarium.

Unlike Dr Patel who takes the idea of Rahu as 'allegorical', Srila Prabhupada takes the existence of Rahu in the literal sense. Srila Prabhupada thus rejects the idea that the darkness on the Moon during an eclipse is caused by the Earth's shadow as it comes between the Sun and Moon. Srila Prabhupada maintains that it is Rahu causing the darkness, not the Earth's shadow, indeed Srila Prabhupada does not even agree with the idea that Earth, Sun and Moon are moving around each other:

Dr. Patel: **Now, the earth moves round the sun and the moon moves round the earth...**

Prabhupada: **No, no...**

*(Morning Walk, November 17 1975, Bombay)*

As we have already discussed, in Vedic cosmology the Sun and Moon rotate above the Earth-circle (Bhu-mandala), not that an Earth globe moves around the Sun, and the Moon orbits around the Earth. In the following discussion Srila Prabhupada challenges his disciples to question the modern explanation of the eclipse:

Radhavallabha: They have one argument, that during solar eclipse, the moon appears to pass in front of the sun, between the sun and the earth.

Hridayananda: Prabhupada explains that. It is the Rahu planet.

Radhavallabha: **But they are viewing the Moon. The Moon is right there, they can see it. And all of a sudden it goes in front of the sun.**

**Prabhupada: Huh? What is that? Moon is there, Sun is there. Now which first? That is the question.**

Radhavallabha: They will say that they've observed in their telescopes...

Prabhupada: They'll say..., whatever they'll say it is all right. First of all, say why Sunday first. Then talk all nonsense. First of all, answer this. You cannot say "We believe that Sunday first." What is the fact? Why do you bring moon, Monday? Why not bring...?

Radhavallabha: They will say it is arbitrary order.

Prabhupada: Huh?

Radhavallabha: Then they will get back to their argument.

Prabhupada: Hare Krishna. Arbitrary order is not science. That you cannot.

Candanacarya: How can it be arbitrary if every culture in the history of the planet has accepted that order? How can it be arbitrary?

*(Morning Walk, June 4, 1976, Los Angeles)*

This is an important conversation as Srila Prabhupada is training his disciples to accept the Vedic version that the Moon is higher than the Sun. When Radhavallabha dasa says that they can see the Moon going in front of the Sun, Srila Prabhupada challenges, "Moon is there, Sun is there. Now, which first?" Srila Prabhupada's point is that if the Moon is higher than the Sun, then it won't ever come in front of the Sun itself as it is believed to do during an eclipse. And since the *Srimad Bhagavatam* teaches that the Moon is indeed 100,000 *yojana* (800,000 miles) above the height of the Sun, then there is no possibility for members of ISKCON to work with the modern assumption that the Moon comes between the Earth and the Sun in order to cause a solar eclipse.

Despite what Radhavallabha dasa says in the above conversation, the Moon is not visible on the occasion of a solar eclipse as this occurs on a New moon when the Moon is completely invisible and has zero illumination. [In a later paper we shall discuss why the Moon is invisible at this time as the explanation involves an incredible teaching by Srila Vyasadeva that will require a whole paper in itself to explain]. The astronomers simply assume that it is the Moon they are seeing when a shadow crosses the sun, when in fact it is Rahu. Rahu is an actual planet, but being dark in nature, it is only visible on the occasion of the eclipse. *When we see the dark shadow passing the Sun or Moon we are actually getting a glimpse of the Rahu planet which is otherwise invisible to our perception.*

"Krishna consciousness means constantly associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in such a mental state that the devotee can observe the cosmic manifestation exactly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead does. Such observation is not always possible, but **it becomes manifest exactly like the dark planet known as Rahu, which is observed in the presence of the full moon.**" *(SB 4.29.69)*

Srila Prabhupada's argument (based on *Srimad Bhagavatam*) that the Moon is above the Sun and thus cannot be the cause of the eclipse is confirmed by observations that show the shadow of the eclipse sometimes moving right to left (anti-clockwise) instead of left to right (clockwise). Since the Moon always rotates clockwise in the sky, we will always observe the Moon traveling from left to right (east to west). The Moon will never move anti-clockwise or right to left across the sky. Thus the dark entity that is seen to move from right to left across the Sun during an eclipse cannot be the Moon.

Neither Sadaputa dasa nor Danavir Goswami nor those following their presentation actually follow Srila Prabhupada's endeavour to refute the Western explanation of the eclipse. Instead, by attempting to merge the Earth globe idea into Vedic cosmology, Danavir Goswami *et al* have effectively displaced the original Vedic understanding of how the eclipse works with reference to the Bhu-mandala. Thus one remains with a false teaching that we live on an Earth globe floating in space, rather than on a larger Earth plane that is held by Ananta-sesha.

## WHAT IS THE SHADOW OF THE EARTH?

As we have seen, Danavir Goswami does not explain the eclipse with reference to the Vedic understanding that the Sun and Moon rotate at respective heights above Bhu-mandala; instead Danavir Goswami simply assumes that the Earth is a globe and then

proceeds to explain the eclipse using the Western idea of how the Earth, Sun, and Moon orbit around each other. The justification for 'jumping over' to the Western idea of how the Earth, Sun and Moon are arranged and move is simply an interpolation of the above cited verse from *Brahmanda* and *Kurma Purana*: '*Rahu has been created after taking out the shadow of the earth and has a spherical shape.*' There is no attempt by Danavir Goswami to explain this verse in context of the Vedic description of Earth and Rahu; instead Danavir Goswami superimposes his own idea of the Earth onto the text, and then falsely concludes that the Earth is a globe-shaped (spherical) planet, and is responsible for creating the shadow on the Moon during a lunar eclipse.

However, anyone who actually understood the Vedic teaching that Earth is a circular plane (bhu-mandala), and that the Sun and Moon rotate above the plane of the Earth, would never fall into the trap of thinking the Earth can be anything else than that found in the original description, and thus would not be thrown by a superficial reading of the above cited verse. The Sanskrit word *mandala* which has been translated in the above verse as 'spherical' actually means circular like a wheel, not spherical like a ball or globe. Ironically in Danavir Goswami's own translation to an identical verse from the *Vayu Purana*, the word *mandala* has been correctly translated as circle not spherical.

"It is said earlier that the Sun's disc is 9,000 *yojanas* [72,000 miles] wide. The circumference is thrice the diameter. The Moon's disc is twice that of the Sun. Rahu's dimensions are equal to that of the Sun and the Moon. He moves below them. **He is also circular and is made of the Earth's shadow.** His vast residence is a place of darkness. This darkness comes out of the Sun and reaches the Moon during lunar epochs. It again leaves the Moon and reaches the Sun during solar epochs. He is called Svarbhanu. There are three words in this compound word: "*Svar*" = heaven, "*bha*" = luster and "*nu*" = torment. Because he torments the luster of heavenly bodies he is called Svarbhanu".  
(Danavir Goswami translation to *Vayu Purana*, chapter 53, verse 61-63)

The following is from Dr Sharma's English translation of the same verse from the *Vayu Purana*:

is the breadth of the Moon, known as such.

तुल्यस्तयोस्तु स्वर्भानुर्भूत्वाऽऽधस्तात्प्रसर्पति।  
उद्धृत्य पार्थिवच्छायां निर्मितो मण्डलाकृतिः॥ ६३॥

Similar in extent of the two having assumed the form of Svarbhānu (i.e. Rāhu), creeps in at the bottom. Having extricated the terrestrial shadow, it stands created as having shape of a circle.

प्रायश्च  
तारान्  
शतानि  
पूर्वाप  
योजन  
A k  
the sta  
the Me  
from

The Sanskrit word used here is "*mandalākṛtiḥ*" (मण्डलाकृत). Whatever way one wishes to translate the verse, the Sanskrit clearly indicates that Rahu has a circular shape as does the Earth itself. Danavir Goswami has taken the above verses from the Brahmanda and Kurma Purana entirely out of context of the Puranas description of the Earth as an 'Earth circle', not an 'Earth globe'. Instead of understanding the above verses in a way that is consistent with the original understanding of what the *rishis* meant by 'the Earth', Danavir Goswami simply juxtaposes the Western idea of 'the Earth' onto the verse and comes to a completely false conclusion. Similar translations are found in the other Puranas:

"Svarbhanu (i.e. the evil planet Rahu) assumes a size equal to them and approaches them. He is created with a spherical shape after extracting the shadow of the Earth. The extensive third abode of Rahu is full of darkness". (*Kurma Purana*, 41.14-15)

We would very much appreciate if any devotee would like to volunteer for translating key Puranic verses from the original *devanagari* into English with transliteration, synonyms etc. It will help very much in our attempt to present the Vedic cosmology without the Western bias that unfortunately changes the entire meaning of particular verses. We see for example that the Sanskrit word for circular (*mandala*) has been translated as spherical (globular). The difference in shape is fundamental. The wheel on a bike is circular not globular. All of the Vedic planets are described as *mandalas* (circular), not globular. Since the Earth, the Sun, the Moon and Rahu are all described as *mandalas* (circular), we have to consider if there is a difference in the shadows caused by one spherical object (such as a globe) onto another spherical object, and the shadow caused by a flat circular object onto another flat circular object. The shadow of one sphere onto another appears to create an elongated shadow, rather than a completely circular one. By contrast the shadow of a flat disc onto another flat disc creates the crisp circular shape that characterizes the eclipse. In any case, the Puranas describe Rahu as the dark mandala that crosses the Chandra mandala (Moon) during a lunar eclipse. Rahu is not otherwise described as the shadow of a globe-shaped Earth onto a globe-shaped Moon. Likewise the dark mandala crossing the Sun during a solar eclipse is again Rahu, not the Moon. The Moon in Vedic cosmology cannot come before the Sun because the Moon is always behind or higher than the Sun. If it is the case that the New Moon also lines up with the Sun and Rahu on the occasion of a solar eclipse, the Moon must be understood to be in line above the Sun, not *before* it. The entity that comes between the Earth and the Sun during a solar eclipse is Rahu, not the Moon.



The statement from the Puranas that, 'Rahu is made out of the shadow of the Earth', cannot possibly be referring to the modern idea that eclipse is caused by the shadow of a so-called Earth-globe onto the Moon. This is clearly ridiculous from the Vedic perspective since the Earth in question is a 4 billion diameter circular plane. Moreover since the Sun and Moon are both above the Earth-circle, the Earth never comes between the Sun and Moon in order to cast a shadow. Srila Prabhupada stuck adamantly to this description of the moon being 800,000 miles above the Sun (1,600,000 miles above the Earth), and on the basis of the Vedic version, he outright rejected the modern explanation for the eclipse which involves the idea that the Earth comes between the Sun and Moon. Unfortunately Srila Prabhupada's disciples writing on the subject of Vedic cosmology have not followed his adherence to the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* explanation.

So if Rahu is NOT the shadow of an Earth globe, what do the Puranas mean when they say that Rahu's planet is made out of the shadow of the Earth? We suggest that the statement 'Rahu is made out of the shadow of the Earth' is to be understood in a similar way to the creation of the five coverings of ignorance from the shadow of Brahma. *Srimad Bhagavatam* states:

"First of all, Brahma created from his shadow the coverings of ignorance of the conditioned souls. They are five in number and are called tamisra, andha-tamisra, tamas, moha and maha-moha". (*SB 3.20.18*)

Just as Lord Brahma can create different living entities as well as phenomena such as ignorance from different parts of his body (including his thoughts or shadow), we suggest that the dark planet Rahu is made from the shadow of the Earth.

"The size of Rahu is the same with the stars, He travels below them. **His place is made up of the shadow of the Earth by Brahma**, it is full of Tamas (darkness)." (*Matsya Purana, 128. 60-62*)

I could not find any more information regarding Brahma's creation of Rahu's planet from the shadow of the Earth, but the above suggestion is certainly more reasonable than the idea that the Vedas are describing an Earth globe throwing a shadow on the Moon. There is zero information, description, or discussion in any Purana of the supposed Earth globe



throwing a shadow onto the Moon. The idea that the Vedas describe such an Earth globe has simply grown out of various people superimposing a modern Earth globe concept onto the original Vedic cosmology. We have seen above, for example, how when one ignores or misunderstands the Purana's own description of the Earth, one can take the statement 'Rahu is created out of the shadow of the Earth' to assume that the Vedas are describing an Earth globe as being involved in the creation of an eclipse. Thus the existence of an Earth globe in Vedic cosmology can be conjured up as if by magic.

## **NOTHING IS LEFT OUT**

In the *Bramanda Purana* it is said:

"The movement, extent, etc., of the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth are succinctly yet completely stated (without leaving out anything of importance". (*Brahmanda Purana* 1.1.1.75)

"Thus, O Brahmanas, the real situation comprising of the seven continents, oceans etc. has been recounted by me topic by topic as it exists— (realistically)...Only this much of the situation (of the universe) can be recounted by me. Only this much has to be heard (i.e. listened to and understood) in regard to the situation of the Earth and things connected with it." (*Brahmanda Purana, chapter 1.2.19.191; 194*)

These two verses establish that the Puranas do not leave out any mysterious or hidden idea of an Earth globe. The Puranas describe that Bharata-varsha is located in Jambudvipa which is a 100,000 *yojana* (800,000 mile) landmass at the center of the Earth-circle. If Srila Vyasadeva had wished us to understand that Bharata-varsha is an Earth planet floating in space, and that the shadow of this Earth globe causes a lunar eclipse, he would have informed us directly and not left anything to speculation. The idea that Bharata-varsha is an Earth globe floating in space, and that its shadow causes an eclipse has arisen simply due to the innumerable speculations on the part of members of ISKCON to somehow make the ancient Vedic cosmology fit in with the modern idea of the Earth.

In the *Brahmanda Purana* it is said: "Even a great topic is understood easily if mentioned briefly." (*Brahmanda Purana* 1.1.1.168) Srila Vyasadeva has plainly explained the nature of the Earth-circle, as well as the relation of the Sun and Moon to said Earth. He has also succinctly explained phenomena such as the eclipse as it occurs with reference to The Bhu-mandala. It behooves members of ISKCON to simply repeat what has been stated by the greatest Vedic authority, and not contaminate the whole thing with the introduction of Western cosmological ideas.

ISKCON's current *explanation for the eclipse not only contradicts that given in the Puranas, it also spectacularly fails to explain the eclipse as it is meant to be explained with reference to the Earth-circle as it described in Srimad Bhagavatam*. Ignoring the most fundamental description of the nature and arrangement of the Vedic planets, members of ISKCON who are living in the 21st century simply work from the presupposition that the Earth is a globe; they then superimpose their own modern concept of the Earth onto verses such as those describing Rahu above. *The above explanation then effectively conceals the revolutionary description of the Vedic Earth-circle from an unwitting audience.*

During ISKCON's presentations on Vedic cosmology, one does not get a factual account of how day and night, seasons, eclipses etc. would actually occur when working from the original description of the Vedic 'Earth-circle'. In fact, when listening to any presentation of Vedic cosmology by members of ISKCON, one does not come away with any idea that the Puranas even describe our Earth as simply a small part of a much larger Earth

plane. Thus ISKCON's members are continually brought back to the same idea that we live on a globe floating in dark space, and the relevance of the Srimad Bhagavatam's teaching about a larger Earth plane is largely ignored, forgotten, misunderstood, or disbelieved.

One may accept the Vedic version or not, but if any member of ISKCON cannot accept it, there is no justification in merging Western and Vedic cosmology in an attempt to get around the disparity caused by the Vedic and so-called scientific world-views. The Vedic description of a larger Earth plane, along with the Vedic teaching that the eclipse is caused by the dark planet called Rahu is a radical spiritual challenge to the modern scientific and atheistic world-view. The question is whether ISKCON is up to the challenge in presenting the original Vedic teachings in an unadulterated manner.

All glories to Sri Sri Radha-Krishna!

