

THE SOUL OF INDIA

A PILGRIMAGE TO THE LAND OF THE HOLY RISHIS

This pilgrimage took place from
Saturday, February 16 to Wednesday, March 12, 2008

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN FOR THE PILGRIMAGE

by
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(1) General background reading on India is given in many travel books – for example, Fodor’s *Exploring India* (New York: Fodor’s Travel/Random House, 1998).

(2) A good background to Indian spiritual culture is given by Rudolf Steiner in his lectures *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1971), available online: <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA/GA0142/19130101p01.html> These lectures are particularly important in terms of grasping Krishna as the Lord of Yoga and synthesizer of the wisdom of the Vedas and the Sankhya tradition that reappeared later in metamorphosed form in the Gospels:

Krishna becomes the Lord of Yoga, who leads back to the primal wisdom of humanity...The sister soul of Adam was embodied in Krishna [and this was] the only time when it had become physically visible, and then again it was embodied in the Luke Jesus boy. So now we understand why Krishna spoke in such a superhuman way: why he is the best teacher for the human “I”...As Paul journeyed to Damascus it was the Christ who appeared to him. The flood of light that enveloped him was Krishna. Because Christ took Krishna as his own soul sheath, through which he then continued to work, everything that was once the content of the sublime Gita streamed from him. So much in the revelations of the Testaments, even if in scattered fragments, comes from the ancient teaching of Krishna.

(3) Also important are the lectures by Rudolf Steiner entitled *The Occult Significance of the Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1968), available online: <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA/GA0146/19130528p01.html>

These lectures are to help us gain knowledge of Krishna – that is to say, of the very essence of the Bhagavad Gita. Also the esoteric principles of this wonderful Song are to give you something which, if you really make use of it, can enable you to find the way into the higher worlds because the way is open to every human being.

(4) Clearly, the *Bhagavad Gita*, available in various translations, is an important source as background reading for our pilgrimage. There are several English translations available online – for example, <http://www.bhagavad-gita.org/index-english.html> and <http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/gita.htm>. Without Rudolf Steiner’s indications in the above-mentioned works, however, the deeper significance of this treasure trove of spiritual wisdom might not be fully grasped. Here is what the online encyclopedia Wikipedia says about this work: *The Bhagavad Gita (“Song of God”) is a Sanskrit text from the Bhisma Parva of the Mahabharata epic. Due to differences in recensions they may be numbered in the full text of the Mahabharata as chapters 6:25-42 or as chapters 6:23-40. According to the recension of the Gita commented on by Shankaracharya, the number of verses is*

700, but there is evidence to show that some old manuscripts had 745 verses. Krishna, as the speaker of the **Bhagavad Gita**, is referred to within as Bhagavan (the divine one), and the verses themselves, using the range and style of Sanskrit meter with similes and metaphors, are written in a poetic form that is traditionally chanted; hence the title, which translates to “the Song of the Divine One”. The **Bhagavad Gita** is revered as sacred by the majority of Hindu traditions, and especially so by followers of Krishna. It is commonly referred to as **The Gita**.

The content of the text is a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna taking place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra just prior to the start of a climactic war. Responding to Arjuna’s confusion and moral dilemma, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and Prince and elaborates on a number of different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies, with examples and analogies. This has led to the **Gita** often being described as a concise guide to Hindu philosophy and also as a practical, self-contained guide to life. During the discourse, Krishna reveals his identity as the Supreme Being Himself (Bhagavan), blessing Arjuna with an awe-inspiring glimpse of His divine absolute form.

(5) Throughout Rudolf Steiner’s works there are numerous references to the ancient Indian culture and to Buddha and Buddhism, especially during the period of his lecturing activity up to the year 1913, when he was still General Secretary of the German Branch of the Theosophical Society. For example, in an early lecture (Berlin, October 19, 1905) he says: “*The Vedanta philosophy is truly philosophical in the highest sense of the word, and there is no other philosophy in which human matters are spoken of so objectively in purity of mathematical formulation.*” Apart from the above two **Bhagavad Gita** titles, there is no other book or lecture cycle of Rudolf Steiner that deals exclusively with the theme of our pilgrimage.

(6) However, there is another lecture cycle that has much to say about the relationship of Indian spirituality to that of the West: **The East in the Light of the West** (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing, 1940), which has been long out of print. Fortunately the book can be consulted online: http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/EastWest/EasWes_index.html Since it may not be accessible to everyone, here with some of the relevant passages from this work:

What was written down in the Vedas was the teaching of the great teachers of ancient India, the holy Rishis, and when we state that the holy Rishis were inspired by the high individuality who guided the peoples of old Atlantis through the Europe of today over into Asia, we are only recording a fact. In a certain way the holy Rishis were the pupils of this high individuality, of Manu. And what did Manu communicate to them? Manu communicated to them the way in which they had at that time attained to the first post-Atlantean wisdom, knowledge and cognition... Deeply immersed in spiritual life, the Indian knew nothing about what we today call thought, fabricated as it is by the instrument of the brain. He never thought things out intellectually, or reasoned about them; he rose out of his physical body into his etheric body, and from there he looked all around him at the cosmic totality of the thought of the gods, whence the world sprang forth. He saw in a flash the gift proceeding from the divine world. With his etheric organs he saw the thoughts of the gods depicted in the design of all things. He had no need of logical thinking. Why must we think logically? For the reason that we must find truth through logical thinking, because we might otherwise make mistakes in linking up chains of thought. If we were so organised that right thoughts coalesced of themselves, we should not require logic. The old Indian did not require logic for he looked at the thoughts of the gods, which were right of themselves. He wove around himself an etheric, cosmic net, wove it out of the thoughts of the gods. He looked into this web of thought, which appeared to him like a soul-light pervading the world, and in it saw the primordial, eternal wisdom. This highest stage of perfection, which I have just described to you, was of course only possible for the holy Rishis, and with this vision they could proclaim great world realities. What kind of feeling did their visions arouse? They felt that into this world-web of wisdom, in which everything was written in living prototype and which was entirely woven of and irradiated by the soul of the light, truth and knowledge poured. Just as man of a later time feels something stream into him when he draws a breath, so the old Indian felt that the gods sent out wisdom to him and that he drew it in, even as the air is sent out to us in the breath that we draw in. Soul-light, and moreover soul-light pervaded by spiritual wisdom, was what the ancient holy Rishis drew in, and this they were able to teach to their

disciples. They were justified in saying that everything which they proclaimed was breathed out by Brahma himself. That is the meaning of the deep expression, an expression which is verbally correct: "It is breathed out by Brahma and breathed in by men." That was the position of the holy Rishis as regards the wisdom of the world, as regards the things which they made known. These were then written down in the different portions of the Vedas, in pictorial form, if the expression may be permitted; yet these forms were but feeble reproductions of the original visions. We must always bear that truth in mind when reading the Vedas today, and not imagine that we are contemplating in its fullness the original sacred wisdom beheld by the ancient Rishis.

In these lectures Rudolf Steiner draws attention to the essential Source of Indian spirituality:

Those lofty individualities who were the leaders of mankind in ancient times, had of necessity first to contact the inner life of a man if they wanted to give instruction upon that which belongs to the highest in humanity. The Holy Rishis had to contact the soul-life of man, his inner being, that is, as did all the great teachers of humanity in older civilisations. But the soul life of man belongs to time; it runs its course in time. That which surrounds us externally groups itself in space; that which runs its course inwardly, groups itself in time. Hence everything which is to speak to the inner being of man must use the clue of the number seven. How can we best understand a being with a message for the inner life of man? How, for instance, can we best understand those beings with their fundamentally individual characteristics whom we call the Holy Rishis?

... We must turn to esoteric science and ask what is that which is to be discovered in the spiritual world, and which moves more or less as a continuous spiritual stream through all these seven civilisations. In the wisdom of the East a word has been formed for that which runs through all these civilisations; it is — if one considers its real nature — not an abstraction, but something concrete — it is a Being. And if we wish to describe this Being, more intimately, of whom in reality all other beings — whether the seven holy Rishis or even higher beings who do not descend into physical incarnation — are the messengers, we may designate it by a name which has rightly been used by the East. Every revelation and all the wisdom in the world can be traced back finally to this one source, the source of primeval wisdom, under the dominion of a Being who evolves on through each and all the seven civilisations of the post-Atlantean era, who appears in each epoch in one form or another, but who is always One Being, the bearer of the wisdom which has appeared in the most varied guise. When I described how the holy Rishis breathed in this wisdom and took it in concretely, this soul of the light which was spread abroad externally and was breathed in as light-wisdom by the holy Rishis, was the out-flowing of that sublime — I cannot go into this fully here — we must understand that what only belongs in minor degree to the sphere of goodness, must also be called good. As soon as that which in the spiritual world (which as I have said is permanent, eternal, having nothing to do with time) passes into time, it divides itself into good and evil. Of the twelve points of permanence there remain belonging to the good, the five actually within the sphere of good and the two on the border, making seven. Therefore we speak of seven as remaining over from the twelve. When we wish to speak of that which is good and which acts as our guide in time, we must speak of seven wise men, of seven Rishis, for this corresponds to reality

... And what we then described as their wisdom had poured down in other ages (for instance, in that quite different conception which was expressed in the old Persian epoch) from the same one Being, who is the Great Teacher of all civilisations. The Being who was the Teacher of the holy Rishis, of Zarathustra, of Hermes — the Being whom we may designate as the Great Teacher, who in the different ages manifests Himself in the most various ways — the Being who as is natural, at first remains entirely concealed from external vision — is designated, by means of an expression borrowed from the East, as the totality of the Bodhisattvas. The Christian conception would designate it the Holy Spirit. The Bodhisattva is a Being who passes through all civilisations, who can manifest Himself to mankind in various ways. Such is the Spirit of the Bodhisattvas. All the ages have looked up to the Bodhisattvas. The holy Rishis, Zarathustra, Hermes and Moses looked up to them — it matters not how they named the Being in whom they perceived the embodiment of the Bodhisattva principle. The Bodhisattva can be given this one name, the Great Teacher, and to him those individuals looked who wished to receive and could receive the teachings of the post-Atlantean era. This Bodhisattva spirit of the post-Atlantean era has taken human form many times, but one such interests us in

particular. A Bodhisattva took on that radiant human form of the Being of Gautama Buddha — it does not for the moment concern us in what other fashion he was also manifest. And it signified an advance of this Bodhisattva when it was no longer necessary for him to remain in the upper spiritual realms, when his development in the spiritual worlds was such that he could master his physical corporeality to the extent of becoming man as Buddha. A Bodhisattva advancing in human existence is Buddha. The Buddha is one of the human incarnations of the all-embracing Wisdom figures underlying the evolution of the earth. In the Buddha we have the incarnation of that Great Teacher who may be called the essence of wisdom itself. The Buddha is the Bodhisattva who has become an earth being. And it is unnecessary to believe that a Bodhisattva incarnated in only the Buddha; for one of the Bodhisattvas has incarnated either wholly or in part in other human personalities. Such incarnations are not all similar; it must be quite clear that just as a Bodhisattva lived in the etheric body of Gautama Buddha, so such a one also lived in the members of other human individuals; and because the being of that Bodhisattva who inherited the astral body of Zarathustra streamed into the members of other individualities, for instance, Hermes, we may — but only if we understand the matter in this sense — call other individualities who also are great teachers an incarnation of a Bodhisattva. It is permissible to speak of ever-recurring incarnations of the Bodhisattva, but we must understand that behind all those in whom the incarnation took place the Bodhisattva stood as a part of that Being who is the personified All-Wisdom of our world.

What is expressed here is that the Bodhisattva/Buddha principle is ultimately the Source of all wisdom, not only in the East but also in the West. However, in the lectures *The East in the Light of the West* Rudolf Steiner points to the Holy Grail as the guiding principle of the West. On our pilgrimage, coming from the West, where the Grail is the guiding principle, we can conceive of a meeting between East and West. In this sense our pilgrimage *The Soul of India* could also be called *The Grail goes East* – as will be elaborated in more detail on the pilgrimage itself. And the timing of our pilgrimage is very significant in terms of cosmic events taking place when we are in India – events having to do with the Mystery of the Holy Grail. For now it suffices to take note of Rudolf Steiner's words in the opening lecture to the cycle *The East in the Light of the West*:

A wonderfully beautiful legend tells us that when Lucifer fell from heaven to earth a precious stone fell from his crown. This precious stone — so the legend proceeds — became the vessel from which Christ Jesus took the holy Supper with His disciples; the same vessel received the Christ's blood when it flowed on the Cross, and was brought by angels to the western world, where it is received by those who wish to come to a true understanding of the Christ principle. Out of the stone, which fell from Lucifer's crown, was made the Holy Grail. This precious stone is in a certain respect nothing else...than the full power of the "I"...Therefore we must clearly recognise that we have not only the task of understanding the star of Lucifer, as it shone throughout human evolution till the precious stone fell out of Lucifer's crown, but that we have to receive this precious stone in its transformed character as the Holy Grail, that we must understand the Cross in the star; we must know that we have to understand the luminous wisdom which shone in the world during primeval ages, and which we deeply revere as the wisdom of pre-Christian times. To this we must indeed look up in full devotion, and add to it that which could be given to the world through the mission of the Cross. Not the least fraction of pre-Christian wisdom, of the light of the East, must be lost to us...And we shall further recognise that there is a light of the West that shines in order to make that which originates in the East more luminous than it is through its own power. A thing becomes luminous through the light by which it is illuminated. Therefore let no one say that any falsification whatever of Eastern wisdom takes place when the light of the West shines on it. It will appear that what is beautiful and sublime seems most beautiful and sublime when illuminated by the noblest light.

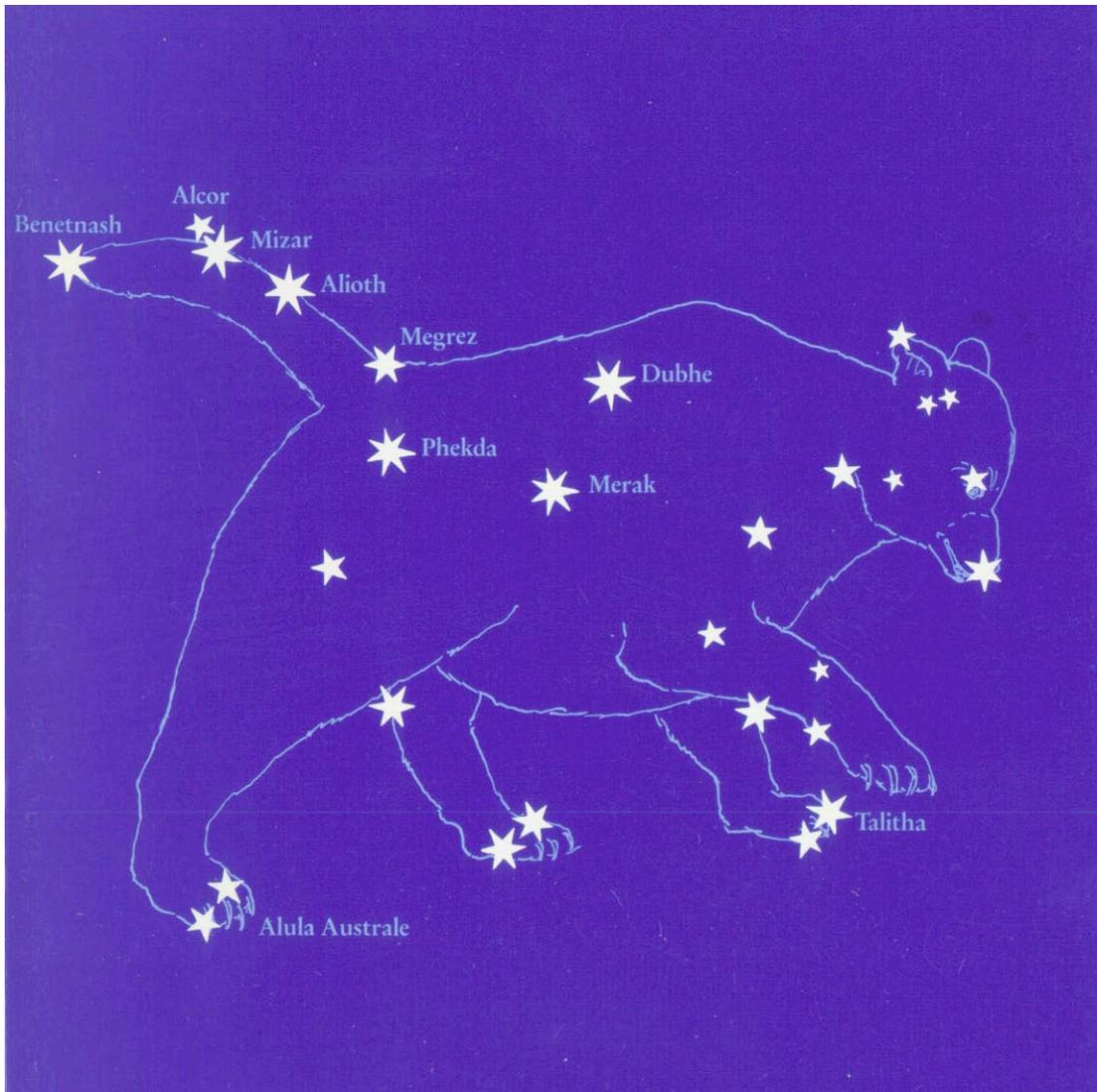
The above words express the essence of *The Grail goes East* to meet *The Soul of India*, and thereby a great fructification can take place. And in the last lecture of the cycle *The East in the Light of the West* Rudolf Steiner indicates that it is above all the Rosicrucian impulse which is the bearer of the light of the Grail as the Bodhisattva stream in the West, the stream which has the potential to create a synthesis of all of humankind's religions and spiritual streams. It is toward such

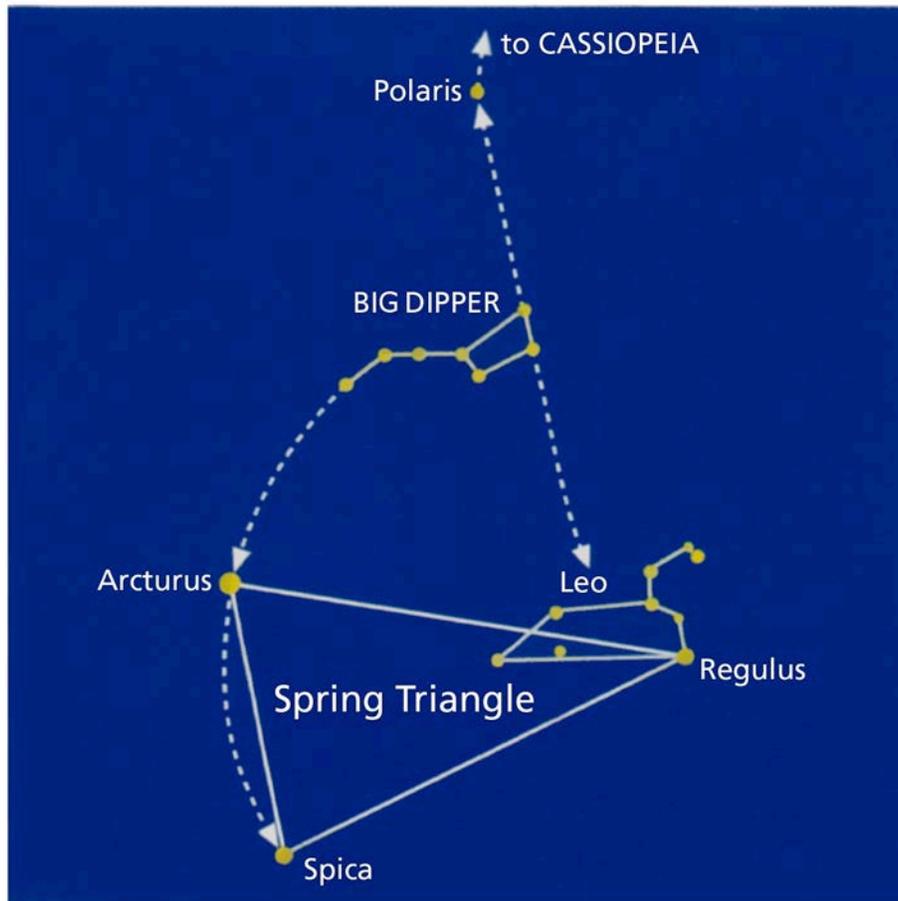
a synthesis that our pilgrimage strives: the Grail stream from the West meeting *The Soul of India*. It is against this background that the pilgrimage meditation (see below) can be understood, which interweaves the three Rosicrucian mantra (EDN, ICM, PSSR) with the Sanscrit mantram *Aum Mani Padme Aum*. But before coming to the meditation, here with some study material concerning the Seven Holy Rishis.

In Hinduism, a Rishi is a sage and/or seer who “heard” the hymns of the Vedas from the Supreme Being Brahma while in deep meditation. A Rishi can be regarded as a combination of a patriarch, a priest, a preceptor, an author of Vedic hymns, a sage, a saint, an ascetic, a prophet, and a hermit. In the Vedas, the word denotes a singer of sacred hymns, an inspired poet or sage, or any person who alone or with others invokes the deities in rhythmical speech or song of a sacred character. In particular, it refers to the authors of the hymns of the *Rigveda*, such as Kutsa, Atri, Rebha, Agastya, Kushika, Vasishtha, and Vyashva. Later generations regarded the Rishis as patriarchal sages or saints, occupying the same position in India’s history as the heroes and patriarchs of other countries, constituting a peculiar class of beings in the early mythical system.

According to Hindu mythology, at the beginning of the process of creation, Brahma created the Seven Holy Rishis (*Saptarishi*), who are the fathers of all other created beings. They are extolled at many places in the Vedas and other Hindu texts. The Vedas never actually enumerate the Seven Holy Rishis by name, though later texts do. They are regarded in the Vedas as the patriarchs of the Vedic religion. The Seven Holy Rishis are said to still guide humankind from the inner worlds. All these sons of Brahma were born out of his mind and thus they are called mind-sons (*Manas Putras*).

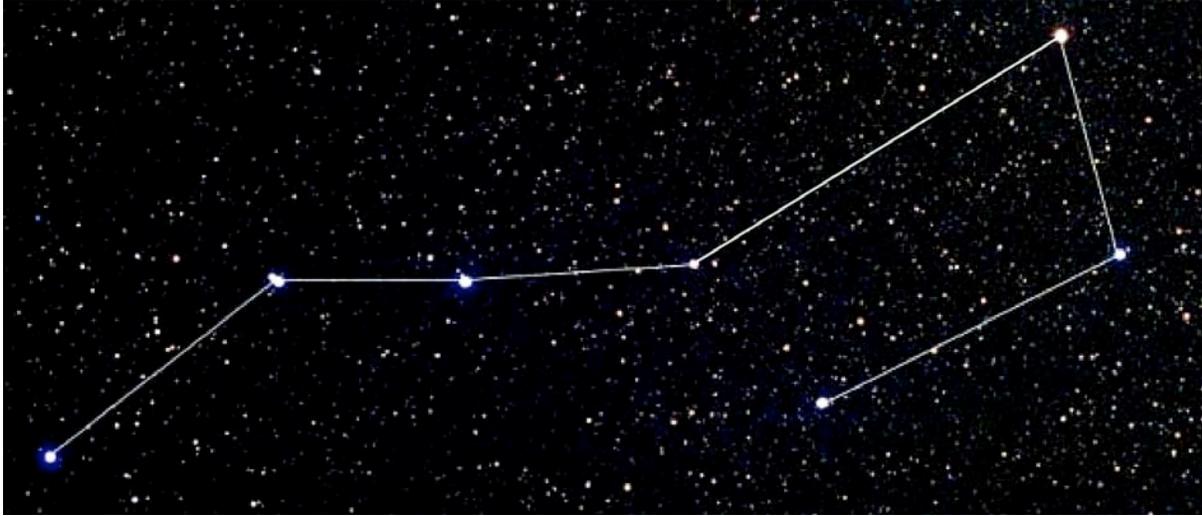
The Seven Holy Rishis (Sanskrit: the *Saptarishi* – *Sapta* means seven in Sanskrit) are often mentioned in Sanskrit religious texts as typical representatives of the character and spirit of the pre-historic or mythical period of ancient India. There are many contradictory lists of the names of the *Saptarishi*. These usually include Atri, Kashyapa and Vasishtha, but the other four are varying. One such list is used in the *Sandya Vandanam*: Atri, Brighu, Kutsya, Vasishtha, Gautama, Kashyapa, and Angirasa. Other lists include Vishvamitra and Jamadagni. In the *Shatapatha Brahmana* the names of the Seven Holy Rishis are given as Gautama, Bharadvaja, Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Vasishtha, Kashyapa, and Atri. In the *Mahabharata*, on the other hand, the names are listed as Marishi, Atri, Angirasa, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vasishtha. In Vedic astronomy, the *Saptarishi* form the Big Dipper, comprising the seven brightest stars in the constellation of Ursa Major, the Great Bear.





In the constellation of Ursa Major, the Great Bear, are the seven stars comprising the Big Dipper, which are forever present in the northern sky. They are conceived of as seven astral eyes, radiant through self-reflection. Their path about the Pole star, Polaris, marks the celestial division of heaven and earth. According to the *Shatapatha Brahmana*, the *Saptarishi* are named as in the following list in connection with the seven stars of the Big Dipper, beginning in the figure below with the left-hand lowest star:

*The Seven Holy Rishis in relation to the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper
as indicated in the Shatapatha Brahmana*



Below is a list of the seven holy Rishis in relation to the seven stars of the Big Dipper, beginning with the left-hand lowest star, (1) Alkaid, the star of Kashyapa, and proceeding in the figure according to the lines indicated from star to star. Initially – for the first five stars – the general direction is from left to right and then, after reaching the uppermost star (5) Dubhe, the star of Vishvamitra, descending down to (6) Merak, the star of Jamadagni, and finally moving down from right to left to (7) Phad, the star of Bharadvaja. This is just one of many lists relating seven holy Rishis to the seven stars of the Big Dipper, and therefore this indication of **the correlation of Rishis with stars is not to be taken as definitive**. Moreover, there are many lists of the seven holy Rishis with names other than those given in this list, and thus also on this account the correlation of Rishis with stars indicated here is certainly not definitive. Alternative names for the stars are given in parentheses, and the Greek letter star catalog designation is italicized.

1. *Kashyapa*

Alkaid (Benetnash, Benetnasch, Elkeid): Chief Daughter of the Bier, *Eta Ursæ Majoris*.

2. *Vasishtha*

Mizar (Mizat; Mirza): Wrapping (Loincloth), *Zeta Ursæ Majoris*.

3. *Atri*

Alioth (Aliath): Goat, *Epsilon Ursæ Majoris*.

4. *Gautama*

Megrez (Kaffa): Insertion-point (of the bear's tail), *Delta Ursæ Majoris*.

5. *Vishvamitra*

Dubhe (Dubh, Ak): Bear, *Alpha Ursæ Majoris*.

6. *Jamadagni*

Merak (Mirak): Loins, *Beta Ursæ Majoris*.

7. *Bharadvaja*

Phad (Phecda; Phekda; Phegda; Phekha; Phacd): Thigh, *Gamma Ursæ Majoris*.

Across the other side of the Galactic Equator, which runs through the center of the beautiful band of stars known as the Milky Way, there is a cluster of six stars called the Pleiades in the constellation of Taurus, marking the neck of the Bull. The Pleiades also mark the first constellation of the ancient Sanscrit list of 28 nakshatras or lunar mansions. Known as the Seven Sisters, they are remembered as the wives of the *Saptarishi*.

The seven stars of the Big Dipper are Seven Doors of Light; they are Seven Divine Emanations in the constellation of the Great Bear (Ursa Major); and they are the seven stars of the Seven Holy Rishis, as listed above.

It is interesting that in 1869 the British astronomer Richard Proctor discovered celestial moving groups: “*I find that in parts of the heavens the stars exhibit a well-marked tendency to drift in a definite direction.*” In particular, he noticed that the Big Dipper’s five central stars share the same proper motion, or apparent movement across the sky from year to year. This “*community of motion,*” as he called it, suggested that the five stars are related. Modern data provided by the Hipparcos satellite reveals that the five central stars all lie about 80 light-years from Earth, thus indicating that they are a definite group, whereas the two end stars in the above figure – Dubhe and Alkaid – lie 124 and 101 light years away. Dubhe and Alkaid are not part of the central group of five in the sense of “*celestial moving groups*”, since they are moving slowly in the opposite direction to the five central stars.

On the pilgrimage we shall further explore the connection of the Seven Holy Rishis to the seven stars of the Big Dipper, learning how to come into an inner relationship with the Seven Holy Rishis who are said to still guide humankind from the inner worlds. We shall also explore the relationship of the seven stars of the Big Dipper to the seven main stars of the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters, as the “*wives*” of the Seven Holy Rishis. For ease of reference, here are some relevant passages concerning the Seven Holy Rishis from our pilgrimage brochure.

If we go back to the civilization of ancient India, then we find that the Seven Holy Rishis spoke of that which each one of them had to give to humanity from their occult foundations. They were conscious of having preserved that which, through seven long periods of civilization, had been directed by the Spirits of Motion. It was just as though seven successive periods of time were all at once to unite in the evolution of the earth, and were so to work that they represented a College of great Individualities. So it came about that these several successive activities of the Spirits of the Planets came to light in that which the Seven Holy Rishis had to say to humanity; each one speaking what he himself knew... For the exalted wisdom which the Holy Rishis gave to humanity was the great recollection of the ancient Atlantean civilizations, only in a new form. At the same time, these Seven Holy Rishis said: “Above that which we have to give as the civilizations of the seven successive periods of time, lies something else which exists beyond our sphere.” That which lay above their sphere, the Holy Rishis called Vishvakarma. Thus they alluded to something which lay beyond their sphere, and which comprised a greater Earth-sphere... — Rudolf Steiner. THE SPIRITUAL BEINGS IN THE HEAVENLY BODIES AND IN THE KINGDOMS OF NATURE. Lecture 9.

Those seven, who were sent down by the Great Leader, to lay the foundation of the first post-Atlantean civilisation, were the Seven Holy Rishis of ancient India; they bore within their etheric garment, the etheric bodies of the great Atlantean Leaders... Thus the past, the present, and the future acted in harmony. — Rudolf Steiner. THE SPIRITUAL HIERARCHIES. Lecture 7.

The symbol of the Initiation into the Sun-Mysteries is the picture of the Sun in Taurus. When the Sun stands in the sign of Taurus the vista in the heavenly firmament reveals the mystery of the particular Initiation of the Rishis. This Initiation took effect through the seven personalities who were the Seven Holy Rishis. This is also expressed in the fact that the Pleiades, a cluster of seven stars, shine from the same region of the heavens. That is the region where the whole

solar system entered into the Universe to which we belong. — Rudolf Steiner. *BACKGROUND TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK.* Lecture 12.

The longing that lives in the depths of human souls as an echo of the Rishi culture involves, above all, the efforts toward a comprehensive synthesis of spiritual wisdom that is valid for everyone – wisdom that could harmonize one-sided tendencies, just as the revealed wisdom of the Rishis during the ancient Indian epoch represented the harmonizing of the Seven Atlantean Oracles. This longing that lives in human souls corresponds to the light of the “seven stars” in heaven which became the light of the “seven candlesticks” on earth. This longing lives in them because the light that shines in the seven stars of the constellation of the Great Bear once shone also in the Seven Holy Rishis...in one community – just as the seven candlesticks were joined in one light of wisdom. — Valentin Tomberg. *CHRIST AND SOPHIA: MEDITATIONS ON THE APOCALYPSE.* Chapter 1.

Now let us try to imagine our way back to the end of the Age of Leo, shortly before the beginning of the Age of Cancer, around the middle of the ninth millennium BC. This was the tail end of the last great Ice Age. We can understand that after the end of the Ice Age the sea level was progressively rising and that, owing to the progressive melting of the ice-caps, this led to the great Flood that caused the destruction of Atlantis.

The ancient Indian texts known as the *Puranas* describe Manu as the leader of humankind after the Flood, and if we apply a realistic average length to the rulerships of the kings mentioned in the Puranic dynastic lists, Manu may have lived in the late eighth or early seventh millennium BC, around the time of the beginning of the ancient Indian cultural epoch in 7227 BC. Evidently it was a time of rising waters, warranting the supposition that the Flood story is related to historical events at the end of the Ice Age. In the Bible Manu is referred to as Noah, who led his people away from the destruction caused by the Flood. Among his disciples were those known as the Seven Holy Rishis, whom he sent to India to start a new culture there, the first culture after the destruction of Atlantis.

That catastrophe did not affect all the inhabitants of the Atlantean continent. There were those who escaped, and this was no accident. A community gathered around an exalted leader who, at the right moment, led them to another area...These people became the community that, under the leadership of Manu, abandoned Atlantis and moved to Central Asia...There in Central Asia the first colony of the Ancient Indian civilization was planted, the root of all later post-Atlantean civilizations. — Valentin Tomberg. *CHRIST AND SOPHIA: MEDITATIONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT.* Chapter 1.

The basic mood of Indian spiritual life could be expressed in the following words: The highest wisdom of the Primal Being of the world has been revealed to us and has been ever and again newly proclaimed. This wisdom is the highest. There is enough room under the heavenly vault of this wisdom for all insights, all cults, all rituals, and all arts. For whether you think or pray, whether you act or meditate, in the end what is essential is that the core of the human being be united with the Divine...This characteristic of Indian spiritual life is the after effect of the primal impulse of the Indian culture: the cooperation of the seven-rayed wisdom of the Seven Holy Rishis. — Valentin Tomberg. “The Spiritual Life of Asia,” *EARLY ARTICLES.*

The relationship of Manu, the teacher of the Seven Holy Rishis, to Titurel, the leader of the Grail stream, is indicated – not explicitly, but implicitly – by Rudolf Steiner, bearing in mind that Manu was the great initiate of the Sun oracle on ancient Atlantis:

The old mysterious abodes of the Sun oracle exerted their influence in Atlantean lands. Their wisdom was transplanted into the post-Atlantean cultures...There was a great spiritual individuality working from the spiritual world into Europe and its mystery centers. He was called Titurel. For his instruments Titurel used the spiritual or

secular leaders of humanity, and we can understand their work only in this light. These facts are indicated in sagas and myths. The saga of the Holy Grail says that the cup with the collected blood of Golgotha was brought by angels to Europe. Titurel received this cup. He kept it hovering above the countries of Europe, and only after centuries did Titurel descend with it from spiritual heights down to the Earth and found the Mystery Center of the Holy Grail on the mountain of salvation, Montsalvat. He could only do that after several people were mature enough to receive the secret of the Grail. Everyone mature enough for this initiation was called Parzival. Charlemagne, who came from the East – he was the reincarnation of a lofty Indian adept – was an instrument of the spiritual individuality symbolized by the name Titurel...The story of one such Parzival shall be told...He...stood pure and pious before his master Titurel...And he heard a voice that said to him, "This is the light of the Father, out of which you are born." And he came to know that in order to become worthy of this birth...he must lift himself onto the World Cross just as Christ went through death on the Cross, and that in this way the hope could blossom for him to resurrect in the Holy Grail. He experienced the truth of the Rosicrucian mantra EDN, ICM, PSSR. — Rudolf Steiner. ESOTERIC LESSONS. Lecture of August 27, 1909.

EDN – *Ex Deo nascimur* – “From God we are born”

ICM – *In Christo morimur* – “In Christ we die”

PSSR – *Per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus* – “Through the Holy Spirit we resurrect”

In the meditation below, these three Rosicrucian mantra from the Western Grail stream are brought into association with the Indian mantram *Aum mani padme aum* – and it is interesting in terms of the word *mani* to note that the great initiate Mani, spoken of by Rudolf Steiner as the leader of the Grail stream in the West, reincarnated as Parzival who, in turn, was the disciple of Titurel, the reincarnated Manu.

The above study material has been compiled so that in and of itself it serves as reading material relevant to the Sophia Foundation pilgrimage to India. By immersing oneself in the various quotes above, one will find that it will gradually serve to orientate one to India and the spirituality of the Ancient Indian culture. The following offers some indications concerning how to prepare oneself in terms of cultivating the appropriate inner attitude with which one can approach a sacred site.

Approaching Sacred Places

There are many aspects to this. Three main guidelines are indicated here, when approaching the pilgrimage sites such as those in India.

First: one shows respect by inwardly asking permission to enter the place. In so doing, one directs oneself to the guardian spirits who were (and often still are) connected with the sacred site.

Second: having once gained inner permission to enter, one then asks inwardly for indications concerning the spiritual practices of the place. Inner guidance regarding these practices may be received from departed souls who were engaged in the practices of that sacred site or from the higher beings who directed those practices. Often a response to one's questions will come into one's imagination, or otherwise as a sense of inspiration, and sometimes as a direct knowing – especially if one has been connected with a sacred site in a previous incarnation.

Third: one expresses one's thanks for any insights or inner experiences that are given to one at a sacred site. As a group we shall join in giving thanks by way of sacred song and sacred dance (devotional eurythmy). This will be our gift and expression of gratitude as a group to the great spirits connected with the sacred sites. It is especially important to give thanks to the guardian spirits of sacred places, who hold the memory of the glorious mysteries of the past and await the resurrection

of these mysteries through Christ and Sophia working in conjunction with human beings in the future. By giving thanks we encourage the guardian spirits in their sense of hope toward humanity with regard to the future of the mysteries and help to release something of the treasures they are spiritually holding.

This study material was sent out to all participants in the pilgrimage *The Soul of India*, and each participant knows of the vastness and profundity of all that is connected with the sacred sites we visited.

In the unity of Christ and Sophia
Robert

Meditations for the Pilgrimage

The text below I have translated from Rudolf Steiner's *Esoteric Lessons*, volume 3 (as yet only available in German).

Meditation on the three Rosicrucian mantra:

I entered into this world of the senses
With the inheritance of thinking.
God's strength has led me here.
EDN

Death stands at the end of the way.
I want to feel the Being of Christ
Who awakens spirit birth in physical dying.
ICM

Thus in spirit I find the world
And recognize myself in world becoming.
PSSR

Meditation on the three Rosicrucian mantra together with the Indian mantram

AUM MANI PADME AUM

also given as

AUM MANI PADME HUM

and as

AOUM MANI PADME AOUM

If one spiritually deepens into heaviness [gravity], one is led back to the cosmic past of the Earth and thereby to experience the moment in which the Earth was born out of the divine Father forces. In this way one is led to the encounter with the divine Father forces themselves. Thus the mantric saying

*My own being is interwoven with the Earth's heaviness
leads to the experience of
Ex Deo nascimur*

Every time that one falls asleep, one comes into the world in which the lightness [levity] of light holds sway. It is the same world which one enters through the gate of death. It is the kingdom in which Christ lives today. One attains to him through dying from the physical. Thus the mantric saying

*My own being is interwoven with the light's lightness
leads to the experience of
In Christo morimur*

Darkness and light, heaviness [gravity] and lightness [levity], work in the plant in opposite directions. Both are connected to one another through the element of air. One experiences this most clearly in the appearance of dawn and dusk. Yet what the normal gaze toward the East and the West beholds is perceived by a refined spiritual gaze also in the North and the South and actually all around the horizontal – in all directions. The element of air embraces the whole Earth. In this sphere the human being belongs also to the whole Earth. The mantric words *My own being is interwoven with the*

Earth's heaviness connects one with the physical [aspect] of the world. In the lightness [levity] of light lives the force of the etheric. Through the breath we connect ourselves with the astral, which bestows on us the free movement of the limbs, [and] strength of will. Breathing-in is connected with being born, awakening. Breathing-out [is connected] with dying, falling asleep. We breathe in living air and [we breathe] out dead air. In the air that is breathed out we form speech. This is a spiritual act of will through which the dead air is rejuvenated again. Thus, deepening into the mantric saying

My own being is interwoven with the breath's strength
leads to the experience of
Per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus

The “I” of the human being is surrounded by three sheaths. The “I” itself is not egotistical. It is only the sheaths that are egotistical. Once the “I” is freed from its sheaths, it wants to expand out into the whole cosmos. However, it is enclosed in its three sheaths. In the Orient the image of the lotus flower stands for this “being enclosed”. Also in this [image] the innermost core is surrounded by three circles of blossoming petals. In India this is expressed with the words:

*Aoum mani padme aoum **
My “I” is enclosed in the lotus blossom

If one wants to come to the true “I”, one has to penetrate through all three sheaths. This yields three stages leading to the “I”.

One enters the first stage and experiences:
My own being is interwoven with the Earth's heaviness

Ex Deo nascimur

The first sheath falls away

One enters the second stage and experiences:

My own being is interwoven with the light's lightness

In Christo morimur

The second sheath falls away

One enters the third stage and experiences:

My own being is interwoven with the breath's strength

Per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus

The third sheath falls away

*Aoum mani padme aoum**

*The Sanscrit words *Aoum mani padme hum* were translated by Rudolf Steiner in another context as, “*I am the jewel in the lotus flower. Aoum mani padme hum.*”

Aoum: the innermost, the real force of life in the human being, which he only taps into with tone [sound].

Mani: become stone, the jewel, *manas*.

Padme: the astral.

Hum [aoum]: once again, I AM

(Notes by Marie Steiner of Rudolf Steiner's lecture held in Berlin on August 17, 1904).

Concerning *Aoum*, he said in another connection: This is how it sounded originally, insofar as one is able to reproduce this nowadays. Thereby “A” is the sound of wonder; “O” the sound of reverence, awe; “U” the sound of fear. All three sound together as the sound of holy awe [fear of God]. *Mani* is

the sound expressing the purest, innermost essence, and thus in the mineral kingdom the pure crystal, especially the rock-crystal; in the plant, especially the lotus flower, the innermost blossom, where the scent arises; in the human being, the “I”. *Padme* means “in the lotus flower”.

Eurythmy Meditation on AUM

The following text is by Rudolf Steiner –
eurythmy indications in [] added by Robert

AUM is a sound that drives out evil influences. Spoken properly, AUM connects the human being with the Creative Godhead, the three Logoi, and no evil being – seeking to draw the human being away from the Godhead – can stand up to it. AUM must be spoken in consciousness of:

<i>O Self, from whom all originates,</i>	<i>[stepping back, A with arms raised]</i>
<i>O Self, dwelling in me,</i>	<i>[stepping forward, U from above below, drawing feet together]</i>
<i>O Self, to whom all returns,</i>	<i>[stepping forward then back, with M forward then back– hands parallel]</i>
<i>Toward You I strive,</i>	<i>[I with left arm raised and right arm lowered]</i>
<i>Peace – Peace – Peace = AUM.</i>	<i>[Peace gesture: the cross of universal love with arms extended horizontally at the sides and palms facing forward, speaking the word “Peace” (Shanti in Sanscrit) three times. Then close with the AUM gesture done in this way: A extending open arms forward horizontally, U with parallel arms extended forward horizontally, M bringing hands toward heart chakra with M gesture and then cupping one hand over the other lightly folded in AU gesture at heart chakra]</i>
<i>Shanti – Shanti – Shanti</i>	

Manas is spiritual consciousness as such, and becomes divine consciousness when the human being unites it with Buddhi. This is possible only for the human being who has given birth to the Higher Self, which lies hidden in AUM:

A = Atma
U = Buddhi
M = Manas – the Wisdom that leads the Higher Self to AUM.

Further comments by Robert:

“*AUM connects the human being with the Creative Godhead*” –

A = Atma	oneness with the Father	<i>[eurythmy gesture A → F<u>a</u>ther]</i>
U = Buddhi	oneness with the Son	<i>[eurythmy gesture U → Son/S<u>u</u>n]</i>
M = Manas	oneness with the Holy Spirit	<i>[eurythmy gesture M done with the hands moving parallel to one another forward then back: “The Spirit of God <u>m</u>oves over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2)]</i>

AUM connects the human being with the Central Sun, the Heart of the Creative Godhead in the galaxy. The Creative Godhead working from the Central Sun is invoked through AUM. This is indicated in the opening of the *Gospel According to John*:

“*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*”

AUM or AOUM is the Primal Word that sounded at the beginning of the creation.

Additional study material on St. Thomas' apostolic mission to India:

The following is excerpted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_the_Apostle

Thomas is better known as the missionary to India through the *Acts of Thomas*, written *ca* 200. A long public tradition in the church at Edessa honoring Thomas as the Apostle of India resulted in several surviving hymns that are attributed to Ephrem the Syrian (died 373), copied in codices of the 8th and 9th centuries. References in the hymns preserve the tradition that Thomas' bones were brought from India to Edessa by a merchant, and that the relics worked miracles both in India and at Edessa. A pontiff assigned his feast day and a king erected his shrine. The Thomas traditions became embodied in Syriac liturgy, thus they were universally credited by the Christian community there. There is also a legend that Thomas had met the Biblical Magi on his way to India.

It is believed that St Thomas had come to Kerala, India, to spread Christianity. Even today people flock to the church at Malayattoor. The various denominations of modern Saint Thomas Christians ascribe their unwritten tradition to the end of the 2nd century and believe that Thomas landed at *Maliankara* also known as *Malankara* near Moothakunnam village in Paravoor Thaluk in AD 52. This village is located 5 kilometers from Kodungallur in the state of Kerala. There St Thomas founded the churches popularly known as *Ezharappallikal*, meaning Seven and Half churches. These churches are at Kodungallur, Kollam, Niranam, Nilackal (Chayal), Kokkamangalam, Kottakkayal (Paravoor), Palayoor (Chattukulangara) and *Thiruvithamkode* (Travancore) — the half church.

In 232 the relics of the Apostle Thomas are said to have been returned by an Indian king and brought back from India to the city of Edessa, Mesopotamia, on which occasion the Syriac *Acts of Thomas* were written. Subsequently transferred from Edessa to the Greek island of Chios, after a short stay there, on September 6, 1258, the relics were taken and then transported to the West, and now rest in Ortona, Italy.

According to tradition, St Thomas landed in Kodungallur in AD 52, in the company of a Jewish merchant Hebban. There were Jewish colonies in Kodungallur since ancient times and Jews continue to reside in Kerala, tracing their ancient history. The Jewish Christians (or Nazareens) were supported from Mesopotamia and Persia, since ancient times.

In the 13th century Marco Polo visited the South Indian cities of Kayal on the East Coast and Kollam in the state of Kerala on the West Coast. (Kollam is present-day Quilon.) Kollam is mentioned in Marco Polo's writings about the Syrian Christians and he also refers to the tomb of St Thomas on the East Coast, near Kayal. The writings of Marco Polo thus confirm the tradition that St Thomas died in South India.

While exploring the Malabar coast of Kerala, South India, after Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut (now Kozhikode) in 1498, the Portuguese encountered Christians in South Western India, who traced their foundations to Thomas. However, the Catholic Portuguese did not accept the legitimacy of local Malabar traditions and they began to impose Roman Catholic practices upon the Saint Thomas Christians.

Though the mortal remains of Thomas were removed to Edessa in the 3rd century from India, and – after being transferred from Edessa to Chios – were then removed from Chios and taken to Ortona, Italy in the 13th century, an attempt was made by the Portuguese in the 16th century to trace the location of the original tomb of Thomas. Finally they settled on Mylapore near Madras (Chennai) as the site where Thomas was martyred. Near Chennai (formerly Madras) in India stands a

small hillock called St Thomas Mount, where the Apostle is said to have been killed in AD 72 (exact year not established). Also to be found in Chennai is the San Thome Cathedral Basilica to which his mortal remains were supposedly transferred. In the Syriac tradition St Thomas is referred to as *Mar Thoma Sleeba*, which translates roughly as “Lord/Saint Thomas the Apostle”.

Saint Thomas Christians had a unique identity until the arrival of the Portuguese in India, who forcefully converted Saint Thomas Christians to the Catholic Church. As a result of this foreign invention into their culture there are several present-day Saint Thomas Christian denominations, primarily in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. The largest church in terms of membership is the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, a major archepiscopal church in communion with the Bishop of Rome, with a membership approaching four million adherents. Another important church in Malankara is the Mar Thoma Church (full name is the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church). This church claims a membership of 900,000. The Mar Thoma Church is unique since it is an Eastern Church with reformed doctrines. The Mar Thoma Church continues to honor the ancient traditions of the Saint Thomas Christians and upholds the indigenous status of the church.

The following is excerpted from: <http://nasrani.net/faq> (Note: the different groups and denominations within the Saint Thomas Christians together form the Nasrani people. The name *Nasrani* is possibly derived from *Nazareens*, as the Jewish Christians were called.)

Church fathers state that Thomas preached the Gospel in India and was martyred there. Later inscriptions in India, in Syriac and Pahlavi, also testify to the antiquity of the Mar Thoma Church and the tradition of its establishment by Thomas.

The widely accepted belief is that St Thomas visited various places and baptized many Jews and Hindus and thus began the process of establishing the Church. Later during his mission he was killed by fanatics and was buried at Mylapore in the state of present Chennai (Madras), South India. In the 3rd century, the Apostle’s relics were taken to Edessa at the instance of the then Patriarch of Antioch and established in the Church there.

Kerala forms a narrow fertile strip on the southwest coast of India between the Lakshadweep Sea and the Western Ghats Mountains. *The Periplus Of The Erythraean Sea* gives a good deal of detailed information about the trading centers of Malabar. Evidence of trade is seen in this work, which means *The Voyage of the Indian Ocean*. This was a navigational guide written in Greek in the great Egyptian trading port of Alexandria around AD 100. It described ports and trading centers from southern India to the region around modern Dar es Salaam. It was intended as a guide for Greek trading ships to the known ports of the Indian Ocean. Some 120 ships a year traveled from Egypt through the Red Sea to the Malabar Coast of India, a voyage that could be done in about 40 days. One of these ships may have taken St Thomas to India. The early Aramaic-speaking Syriac Christians who came to Kerala from Syria (which already had a Jewish settlement in Kodungallur) were ethnically largely of Jewish origin. From the year AD 66 the persecution of Jews by Nero and Titus began. During this period many Jews migrated to Kodungallur near Cochin, where there were already Jews settled for trade even from the time of King Solomon (1000 BC). The Judakunnu (Jewish Hill) in Palayur bears testimony to the Jews who lived there from 600 BC or even earlier. There is a general agreement among historians that St Thomas, a Jew himself by birth, visited India in search of Jews settled here. There exists a strong tradition supported by historical inscriptions, numismatics, archaeology, and literary references about the arrival of St Thomas, his mission, death, burial and also about the relics of his mortal body. The initial visit of St Thomas to Kerala is said to have lasted only eight days. During this period his converts were Jews who had settled in Malabar in

the vicinity of Cochin. Later St Thomas returned to Kerala and on this second visit it is said that over three thousand Brahmins became Christians. Among those who became Christians – in addition to the Brahmins – were Jews of the pre-Christian era Jewish Diaspora, Egyptians, Phoenecians, Greeks, and Romans. More Jewish converts were made – notably a Jewish prince named Kepha (Syriac for Peter), who was ordained as a bishop when Thomas left to continue his work throughout India.

From: <http://konknicatholics.blogspot.com/2006/07/feast-of-st-thomas-apostle-to-india.html>

One of the Fathers of the Church, St. Hippolytus, in his discourse on the end of the world mentions that, “*Thomas preached to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Hyrcanians, Bactrians, and Margians, and was thrust through in the four members of his body with a pine spear at Calamene, the city of India, and was buried there.*” In Madras, at Mylapore (now San Thome), St Thomas is believed to have met his death by the spear, and there the miraculous cross of St Thomas is venerated. In the days of St John Chrysostom his tomb was at Edessa in Syria and in later years his relics were transferred to Italy.

In the Apocryphal work *The Assumption of Mary* (from around AD 400) is found an account which tells how Thomas, who was in India, miraculously found himself along with the other Apostles beside the Virgin Mary at her bodily assumption:

“And Thomas also answered and said: And I, traversing the country of the Indians, when the preaching was prevailing by the grace of Christ, and the king’s sister’s son Labdanus by name, was about to be sealed by me in the palace, on a sudden the Holy Spirit said to me, Do thou also, Thomas, go to Bethlehem to salute the mother of thy Lord, because she is taking her departure to the heavens. And a cloud of light having snatched me up, set me down beside you!” (from the Greek).

The lengthier account from the Latin form of the same writing relates the favor the Apostle found with the Holy Mother and how the Apostle in his humility, undid as it were, through Mary, his obduracy and unbelief in Christ's resurrection:

“Then the most blessed Thomas saw the most blessed body going up to heaven, and began to cry out and say: O holy mother, blessed mother, spotless mother, if I have now found grace because I see thee, make thy servant joyful through thy compassion, because thou art going to heaven. Then the girdle with which the apostles had encircled the most holy body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and kissing it, and giving thanks to God, he came and found all the apostles and another great crowd there beating their breasts on account of the brightness which they had seen. And seeing and kissing each other, the blessed Peter said to him: Truly thou hast always been obdurate and unbelieving, because for thine unbelief it was not pleasing to God that thou shouldst be along with us at the burial of the mother of the Saviour. And he, beating his breast, said: I know and firmly believe that I have always been a bad and an unbelieving man; therefore I ask pardon of all of you for my obduracy and unbelief. And they all prayed for him. Then the blessed Thomas said: Where have you laid her body? And they pointed out the sepulchre with their finger. And he said: The body which is called most holy is not there. Then the blessed Peter said to him: Already on another occasion thou wouldst not believe the resurrection of our Master and Lord at our word, unless thou went to touch Him with thy fingers, and see Him; how wilt thou believe us that the holy body is here? Still he persisted saying: It is not here. Then, as it were in a rage, they went to the sepulchre, which was a new one hollowed out in the rock, and took up the stone; but they did not find the body, not knowing what to say, because they had been convicted by the words of Thomas. Then the blessed Thomas told them how he was singing mass in India – he still had on his sacerdotal robes. He, not knowing the word of God, saw the most holy body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him her girdle which she had about her. And the apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorifying God, all asked pardon of the blessed Thomas, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen the most holy body going up into heaven. And the blessed Thomas gave them his benediction, and said: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”