

# A Discussion on Gems

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Text 358695: 04-Mar-94 Varnadi (das) HKS (NE-BBT Dutch)  
Comment on: Text 358549 by Shyamasundara.ACBSP@com-link.org  
Subject: Gems continued

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[He is referring to a series of articles on Gems which will be published as a formal article.]

According to "Planetary Gemmology" karketana refers to Hessonite, bhismamani or bhismaratna to Mountain Crystal and pulaka to the Red Garnet. However, especially the Sanskrit names given to the Yellow Sapphire do not correspond to the meaning given in Monier-Williams. Other names are not to be found there at all.

The story goes that the famous blue Hope diamond was stolen by the British from the forehead of a huge Siva deity in India, where it served as his third eye. The stone seems to have been recut several times to less than half the original size. The gruesome history it left behind could also originate from this feat. I used to have the original newspaper article about the death of the last owner (she was flattened by a truck). Now the stone rests at the Smithsonian Institute and doesn't seem to have caused more trouble since then.

One could wonder if the weight of gems has any connection with the different yugas. We know that everything is bigger the further you go back in time. In Satya or Treta yuga a stone of twenty tandulas (according to the weight of a nowadays' rice grain) would probably be considered a small timer. I have heard from different devotees (but never got a source) that Lord Krishna measured about 5 meters. Arjuna is said to have been taller than Lord Krishna, who was considered small for that time. A hint to these alleged body lengths I found recently in the Mahabharata. It is mentioned there that Satyaki in his fight with Karna drew his bow 6 cubits (up to his ear). A cubit is an ancient measurement for the distance from the fingertips to the elbow and determined to be 69 cm (already showing in itself that people used to be bigger). The distance between the fingertips of stretched arms is equal to the body length and can be roughly divided into 4 times the distance between finger tips and elbow. If Satyaki drew his bow a little over 4 meters, it would be logical that his corresponding body length was at least 5.5 meters. So the Kohinoor, if it really belonged to Karna, might be of impressive weight to modern man,

but if that were equally so to him remains a question. Other sources mention that also the Kohinoor was stolen from a temple in India, hence its reputation as a "killer."

From what you have written and from what I have read in other books about gemmology, it is clear that one should be very careful in purchasing or wearing gemstones. Especially nowadays, when one is cheated on the spot and there is a great lack of expertise in the trade. Also the standard of valuation nowadays is much different from former ages. I wonder in this regard if it should not be investigated if the selling of gemstones in ISKCON circles, like (Nava Ratna) necklaces or alike, should be regulated, allowed or not, or if there should be at least proper information.

Another thing is the validity of the Garuda Purana. I was told that none of the available versions of Garuda Purana contain what it according to another Purana should contain. Stories were added, left out and changed. At the moment a presentation is prepared for the GBC meetings in Mayapur as to what scriptures are eligible for future translation. Let's hope some information about the Garuda Purana is included.

Y.s.

Text 359432: 05-Mar-94 Shyamasundara.ACBS@com-link.org  
Subject: Comment on Varnadi

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I have serious doubts about the accuracy of equating Karketana with Hessonite Garnet which is already known in India as Gomed. Pushparaga as defined by MM Williams is Yellow Topaz, but a Yellow Topaz and Yellow Sapphire "look" the same. In Indian gem markets that I have visited, such as Zhaveri Bazaar in Bombay, primo Pushparaga means Yellow Sapphire and is substantially more expensive than Yellow Topaz.

I had also heard that Arjuna was about 18' tall, about 5.5m and that his arrows were 12 feet long. But it is described in Krsna Book that when Mucukunda woke up and came out of the cave he observed that the present inhabitants of the world were like diminutive pygmies! Imagine how big he was. He was from a Satya or Treta yuga. In 12th canto it is described that there are two kings waiting high in the Himalayas for Kali-yuga to end. When it is over they will repopulate the world. One is the elder brother of Santanu, the other is a suryavamsi king. They are supposed to be of gigantic proportions. Kumbhakarna's head was very large and his skull now is the basin of a lake in Tamil Nadu.

In my travels in S. India I once visited a temple of Hanuman. This is perhaps

the largest free-standing Hanuman temple in India (2 hours drive north of Srirangam), the deity is at least 5 m tall! The temple has no roof just 4 surrounding walls and the pujaris climb ladders to give Vajrangaji an abhiseka. The deity himself is facing one of those ever present stone hillocks that abound in Tamil Nadu. In fact the deity of Hanuman is there to mark the existence of this hillock. (The hillocks are incongruous because the land is a plain but strewn with these mini-mountains.) Anyway this big stone hill is famed as being a "tiny pebble" that fell off the hill-top covered with herbs that Hanuman carried to Lanka when Laksman was mortally wounded. This tiny pebble has a huge Nrsimha temple carved into it. It is cut out of the solid black granite into a cave temple. And further back on top of the "pebble" is a big fort that was erected by Tippu Sultan in the 18th century.

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There will be more said about this in the series (it has 9 parts, only 3 have been posted). But my only interest in this is from the point of view of ethics code for an astrologer, that he should not prescribe or sell gems. If others want to buy, that is a different matter. The whole fascination comes from the supposed astrological connection. It is difficult to regulate, better to educate.

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>Purana is included.

I had not really wanted to mention this as I didn't want to disturb anyone. But not only the Garuda Purana, this charge is laid at the feet of all the Puranas as well as Mahabharata and Ramayana. This is mostly done by the "squalors" who have an agenda.

I remember once reading in some Indological history book by Hazra (I think) that in the opinion of all the squalors the Puranas and epics (Mahabharata & Ramayana) as well as the Vedas are not the work of one author but the composition of many authors over many centuries. (Of course Ramayana was written by Valmiki, not Vyasadeva. But they claim it is a multiparty work.)

They claim that by philology and other literary methods they can date the texts and when the different parts were added etc. All by "internal evidence" of the text. But it all boils down to subjective opinion. The indologist even made the statement that the Bhagavatam is an amalgam of texts and authors. They are sure of it, but can't prove it because he said the text was "seamless."

I certainly would not want to take the word of these academomic squalors for the history of Sanskrit literature. That would be tantamount to accepting the history of Judaism as published by Goebbels, propaganda minister for the Nazis. Somehow I don't think I would get the correct slant.

Certainly there are different recensions of different texts, but that doesn't make them bogus. The Rig Veda had over 1000 different recensions (schools) which had different mantras and procedures, now there are fewer than a handful. A whole literature developed so that members of a shaka would know how to use their Rig Veda mantras. The Yajur Veda is in two parts, Sukla and Krsna. The Sukla Yajur Veda is composed of mantras not found in any other Veda, at least that is what is said in the 12th canto SB. But it is Yajur Veda.

As Krsna explains in BG chapter 4 knowledge gets lost over time. So it is possible that changes have occurred in texts. The only way to know for sure would be to collect all the basic texts i.e. Vedas, Itihasas, and Puranas in manuscript form and create critical editions with all scholarly apparatus. Most of the present published texts are hardly critical editions made by comparing different versions.

Often they have been put together by British and European scholars who have "emended the text" and "edited" as necessary. Mostly this was done in the parts that dealt with regnal dynasties. Pargiter was to the Puranas as Mahmood was to India. From such Sanskrit editions English translations have been made.

Does this mean our sastra is bogus? Well, certain parties have tried to do that to them for centuries. To destroy the people's faith in the sastra would mean domination of India and big numbers of Christian converts. So unlimited time, men and money was invested to do just that. Aside from the purposeful role of the British there were other forces at work to add unwanted variety to the texts. Jains and Buddhists have been known to forge texts. The Jain Ramayana has Ravana killed by Laksmana for instance. Then there has been animosity between Vaisnavas and Saivas. What to speak of the change in the story of the history of Nathaji in Nathdvara. In Caitanya-caritamrta we hear about Madhavendra Puri, etc. But if you listen to the Vallabhas you will get a totally different picture. They even say Vallabhacarya is Mahaprabhu! Thus there is problems between Vaisnavas.

Fortunately there have also been steps taken to preserve textual integrity. The Vedas have very regulated ways of chanting them which preserves the mantras (padapata). And simply because of their popularity certain texts could never be corrupted. You never hear of a Gita with more or less than 700 verses. And all schools have the same text. Similarly the Srimad Bhagavatam and Visnu Purana have enjoyed wide popularity and are kept in pristine condition. Their texts being protected by the Vaisnavas not the scholars.

Regarding the textual integrity of the Garuda Purana, I don't know. I have only seen the English translation. It is considered to be a sattvik Vaisnava Purana and I do know that especially among the Madhvas it is held in high esteem. Among brahmanas in India it is the tradition that after a person dies the Garuda Purana, Brahma khanda is read. So this may help in preserving it.

The Matsya Project of 10 or 12 years ago was supposed to save the Vedas. But the organizers of the project have come under fire for mismanagement. While it is important to collect the works of the Goswamis and 'rasa' literature it is astounding that no effort was made to collect original manuscripts of the foundational literature. That is, no sruti, smrti, Purana or Itihasa was collected. Maybe the project can get re-started and do the job right this time before it is too late.

Who is putting this list of books together? What is their criteria?