

[Is There Intelligent Life on Earth?](#)

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Is There Intelligent Life on Earth?

One thing I confess to have always loved about this well-worn path of ours is its poverty of preconception, its opulent open-mindedness. Hinduism, it seems, is ever ready to acknowledge the "what is" and to relinquish the "what should be." Thus it is that Hinduism never went through the trauma of an immovable scriptural premise colliding with an irresistible factual force. Such collisions are quite common outside the Orient - as when paleoethnologists' recent record of five-million-year-old human (hominid is more precise) remains contradicts a 6,000-year-old Biblical creation story.

What then does Hinduism have to say about anomalous experiences? Anomalous, you ask? What's that? It's the scientific community's pet term experiences such as déjà vu, extrasensory perception, out-of-the-body experiences (OBE's for the uninitiated), UFO sightings, etc. Webster offers this for the word anomalous: "1. deviating from the regular arrangement, general rule or usual method; abnormal 2. Being or seeming to be inconsistent, contradictory or improper."

What may pass as abnormal in Webster's decidedly occidental world is perceived as exceptional in the Orient. Case in point: Patanjali's Yoga Sutras methodically catalog such powers.

If you're a skeptic, that is good. The greatest of human minds possess a special chip tolerating paradox (the bugaboo of small minds), allowing for deep spiritual faith to coexist with keen critical faculties. Either one without the other is incomplete. A man named Einstein once observed, "Since without religion is lame; religion without science is blind."

Even if you are infidel when it comes to UFOs and the existence of extraterrestrial life, it is quite clear that the search is on in the scientific community. Not long ago,

a few years at most, it was heresy to really believe in life beyond our little Spaceship Earth. Today it is de rigueur to be searching for yesterday's myth. Myth, it seems, may be father to the child called knowledge.

From an observatory on the 14,000-foot peak of Mauna Kea in Hawaii, Canadian astronomers have found evidence of unseen planets: indirect evidence derived from the wobbling of stars. Planets, once though rare, may well be a dime a dozen on the intergalactic market. Don't you find it refreshing that mankind has come so far from the pre-16th century cosmological notion (the scientific dogma of the day) that the earth is the center of creation and the sun, moon and stars revolved around it? And don't you pity poor Copernicus as he first sought to deprive his peers of their dear delusions? Pity, too, those who have seen UFO's.

The search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SET) is no longer fringe science. Now the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) wants the US Congress to cough up \$100 million to establish the first contact. As soon as funds are approved, NASA will launch the most extensive probe ever conducted. The entire sky will be scanned and about a thousand nearby stars will be scrutinized for signs that intelligent life is out there trying to contact us. India will join 15 other nations in the search, using the Giant Meter Wave Radio Telescope now being set up near Pune. Some skeptics in the field quip that it's hard enough to find intelligent life here on earth!

The UFO phenomenon is less discussed among scientists than radio wave surveys, but it is growing at prodigious speed. The most obvious signs are seen in the media. Time-Life Books recently published a volume called The UFO Phenomenon, in which the US Air Force's famed "Project Blue Book" is assessed, along with dozens of stories, photos, denials and general shenanigans. The 1988 season has seen dozens of television specials aired. In late October Robert Stack hosted the premier show of Unsolved Mysteries, which featured dozens of Florida residents who swear they have recently seen and photographed a year-long series of UFO flights. On UFO Coverup Live a noted Navy optical physicist, Dr. Bruce Maccabee, authenticated the photos while others told strange stores of Air Force investigators waving warrants and demanding all photos be turned over to them.

Even hardened skeptics have difficulty with the credentials of some folks who claim to have had personal encounters. One fall evening in 1969, then Georgia governor Jimmy Carter (that's right, the nuclear physicist, peanut farmer and President of the

United States!) was outdoors preparing for a speech in the little town of Leary when he - and a dozen other witnesses - spotted a bright object in the western sky. Carter described it as self-luminous, moving forward and backward. He reported the sighting to the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena.

In 1986 Newsweek placidly carried the astonishing story of an entire Japan Air Lines crew who all claimed to have seen three giant UFO's following them for almost 90 minutes. Pilot Kenju Terauchi reported the Alaska sighting and made sketches of the bulbous craft which was nearly ten times longer than his 747. Radar records confirmed that something indeed was there.

Not just sciences is interested. Religion is looking into all this as well. The September 1988 Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion reported on a survey of anomalous experiences in China. Researchers wanted to know whether non-religion people had fewer encounters with "deja vu, night paralysis, ESP, communication with the dead, out-of-body experiences and believe in a sixth sense" than those involved with some faith. So they compared Chinese and Western college students (since "Chinese students engage in no formal religious practice"). They concluded, "These experiences have universal elements, allowing them to occur within non-religious populations. Anomalous experiences may be a source of, rather than totally caused by, religious faith."

In fact, the non-religious Chinese reported slightly higher incidents of deja vu (64%), ESP (71%) and communication with the dead (40%) than either the US or European samples.

As they little-studied frontiers are opened and the comic image of little green men is replaced in mainstream science by serious research, the human mind will slowly open to another great discovery. Perhaps, just perhaps, that fissure in our certain knowledge of things will widen, then crack, letting a greater reality flood into consciousness, the reality of profound cosmic experience - found in all cultures and in all times - which transcends the intellect. In this issue readers will find a few specimens of this inner universe of consciousness: in the weather-provoking exercises of the old Hawaiian mystics; in the Sant Mat disciples' practice of travelling astrally by following the inner sounds of mind; in the "crystal visions" of two Americans meditating upon the world's largest six-sided crystal; and in one Jewish man's experience of reincarnating Holocaust victims. Inquire within and enjoy.

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