

Origins

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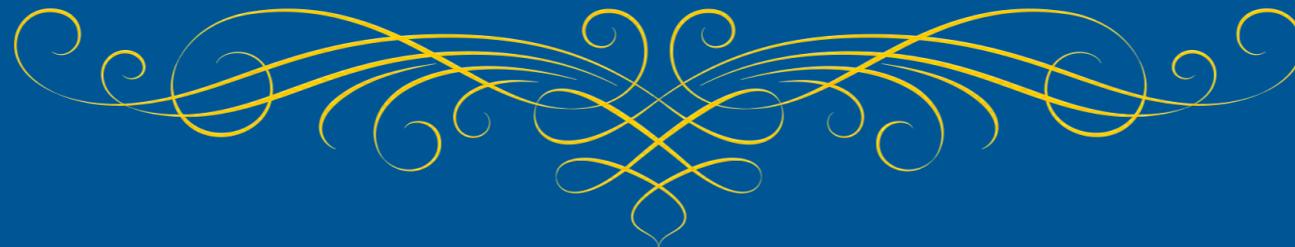
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महा इतिहास - भाग ०१

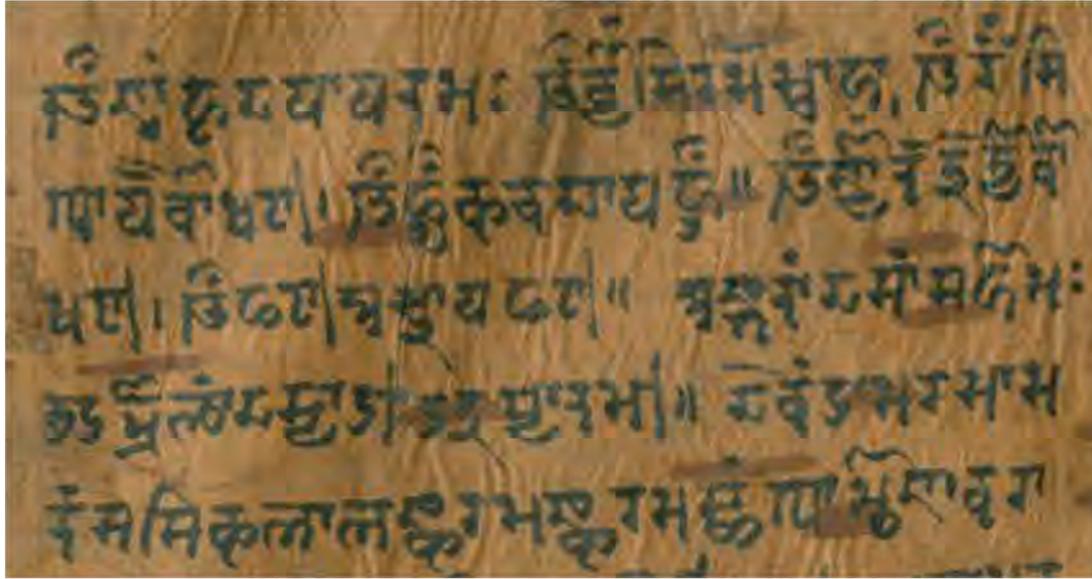
महा इतिहास म्हणजे काय व कशासाठी मांडायचा

लेखक – प्रियदर्शिनी कर्वे

भूतकाळाचा अभ्यास म्हणजे इतिहास अशी ढोबळ मानाने इतिहासाची व्याख्या करता येईल. पण भूतकाळ म्हणजे काय याची जाणीव आपण काळ कसा समजून घेतो याच्याशी जोडलेली आहे. माझा इतिहास म्हणजे माझ्या जन्मापासूनची कहाणी समजायची का? पण माझ्या आयुष्यात घडलेल्या काही घटनांची, मी केलेल्या काही कृतींची संगती लावायची असेल, तर माझ्या आई-वडिलांच्या इतिहासाकडेही दृष्टिक्षेप टाकावा लागेल, माझ्या आजुबाजूच्या व्यक्ती, संस्था, समाज यांचीही पूर्वपीठिका पहावी लागेल. कोणतीही व्यक्ती आज जिथे आहे, जशी आहे, त्याचा संबंध एवढ्याशीच नसतो, तर मागच्या काही पिढ्यांनी तोंड दिलेल्या परिस्थितींशी, घेतलेल्या निर्णयांशीही तो जोडलेला असू शकतो.

कदाचित मानवी समाज उत्क्रांत होऊ लागला तेव्हा संध्याकाळी शिळोप्याच्या गप्पांमध्ये वृद्ध लोकांनी तरूणांना सांगितलेल्या आठवणींमधून आपण इतिहासाची बांधणी करू लागलो. पण ही बांधणी प्रत्येक टोळीसाठी स्वतंत्र होती, आणि मौखिक स्वरूपात

एकाकडून दुसऱ्याकडे संक्रमित होताना प्रत्येक सांगणारा आपल्या कल्पनाशक्तीतून थोडेफार तिखटमीठही लावत असणार. माणूस एका जागी स्थिरावला, शेती करू लागला, पृथ्वीवर वेगवेगळ्या ठिकाणी हजारो-लाखो लोकांची एक सामाजिक उतरंड तयार झाली, प्रत्येक समाजाने स्वतःच्या इतिहासाची एक सामाईक ओळख बनवली, आणि या वेगवेगळ्या ऐतिहासिक कथनांच्या आधाराने वेगवेगळ्या संस्कृती उभ्या राहिल्या. पण तोवर इतिहास व दंतकथा यातली रेषाही पुसट झाली होती. त्यामुळे जेव्हा इतिहासाचा एक ज्ञानशाखा म्हणून अभ्यास सुरू झाला तेव्हा मौखिक परंपरेपेक्षा लिखित परंपरेला जास्त महत्त्व दिले गेले.



१७व्या शतकातील काश्मीरमधील भूर्जपत्रावरील हस्तलिखित
(<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3781329>)

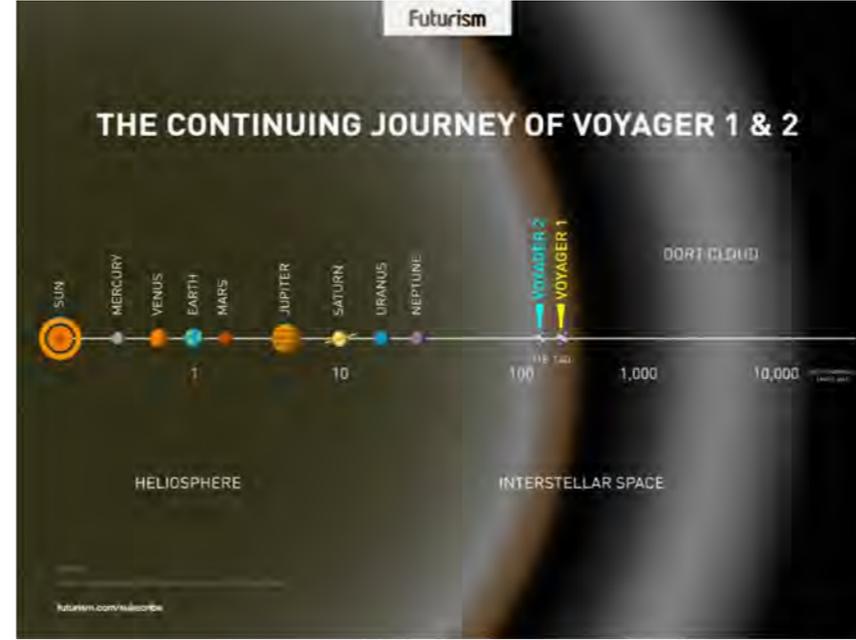
ज्या संस्कृतींमध्ये घडलेल्या महत्त्वाच्या घटनांचे, सामाजिक-राजकीय स्थित्यंतरांचे चित्रण समकालीनांनी शिलालेखांवर, भूर्जपत्रांवर, ग्रंथ स्वरूपात, काव्य स्वरूपात, इ. लिहून ठेवलेले सापडत होते, आणि त्या भाषा अभ्यासकांना वाचता येणे शक्य होते, त्याच संस्कृतींचा इतिहास ठळकपणे मांडला गेला. जरी त्याला जगाचा इतिहास म्हटले गेले, तरी खरंतर तो आजही वापरल्या जाणाऱ्या भाषांमध्ये लिहू शकणाऱ्या लोकांचा इतिहास इतका मर्यादित होता.

मात्र काही इतिहास अभ्यासकांनी याला छेद देणारे कामही केले आहे. आदिम जमातीतल्या लोककथा, महाभारतासारखी मौखिक काव्ये, यांच्याही अभ्यासातून काही संस्कृतींच्या इतिहासावर प्रकाश पडू शकतो, इतकेच काय तर शिल्पे, चित्रे, स्थापत्यकला, सांस्कृतिक प्रतिके व चालीरीती याही भूतकाळाची कहाणी सांगत असतात याची जाणीव झाली. पुरातत्त्वशास्त्राच्या अभ्यासातून मानववंशाचा इतिहास पुढे येऊ लागला, ज्यासाठी कोणत्याच मानवनिर्मित दस्तऐवजांची वा कलाकृतींची गरज नव्हती. वैज्ञानिक प्रगतीमुळे मानवनिर्मित विविध वस्तूंचा कालखंड ठरवणे शक्य झाले, आणि काळाच्या रेषेवर इतिहासाची मांडणी करता येऊ लागली. इतिहास हा जरी विज्ञानाचा विषय समजला जात नसला, तरी विज्ञानाचे इतिहासाच्या मांडणीत फार मोठे योगदान आहे, ही वस्तुस्थिती आहे.

पारंपरिकरित्या इतिहास म्हणजे फक्त मानवाचा इतिहास असे मानले जाते. आज विज्ञानाच्या प्रगतीमुळे मानवाच्या उत्पत्तीपूर्वीच्या गोष्टीही आपण जाणलेल्या आहेत, आणि आपली कालगणनाही आपण विश्वाच्या उत्पत्तीच्या क्षणापर्यंत मागे नेली आहे. त्यामुळे तत्त्वतः काळ जिथून सुरू झाला तिथपर्यंत आपण भूतकाळ मागे नेऊ शकतो. म्हणजेच इतिहासाची सुरुवात ही विश्वाच्या निर्मितीपासून करता येते, असे आपण म्हणू शकतो. हा विश्वाचा इतिहास म्हणजेच महा इतिहास.

भूतकाळाकडे पहाण्याचा हा वैश्विक दृष्टिकोन तीन दृष्टीने आज महत्त्वाचा ठरतो.

- या शतकात व्हॉयेजर अवकाशयानांच्या रूपाने मानवनिर्मित वस्तू प्रथमच सूर्यमालेच्या बाहेर गेली आहे. पृथ्वीबाहेर मानवी वस्ती निर्माण करण्याचा विचार आता अगदीच कल्पनेपलिकडचा राहिलेला नाही. त्यामुळे विश्वाच्या व्याप्तीत माणसाचे स्थान समजून घेण्याच्या दृष्टीने संपूर्ण विश्वाच्या इतिहासाच्या विशाल पटाकडे पहाणे आवश्यक ठरते.



व्हॉयेजर यानांची सद्यस्थिती

<https://futurism.com/nasa-voyager-spacecrafts-still-going-strong-40-years-later>

- एकीकडे खगोलशास्त्र व अवकाशीय तंत्रज्ञानामुळे आपल्याला महा इतिहासाचे ज्ञान झाले आहे, व एक पार्थिव (पृथ्वीवरील) सजीव या पायरीकडून एक वैश्विक सजीव या पायरीकडे आपण वाटचाल करू लागलो आहोत. त्याचवेळी आपल्या जनुकांबद्दलच्या आपल्या ज्ञानातही भर पडलेली आहे. त्यामुळे आपण अज्ञान व गैरसमजुतींमधून माणसा-माणसांमध्ये उभ्या केलेल्या वांशिक भेदांच्या भिंती कोसळून पडल्या आहेत. सर्व मनुष्यजात ही एकमेकांशी फार जवळच्या जनुकीय नात्याने बांधली गेलेली आहे, हे आता आनुवंशशास्त्राच्या अभ्यासातून सिध्द झाले आहे. त्याचबरोबर संदेशवहन व माहिती तंत्रज्ञानातील प्रगतीमुळे सर्व जगातील सर्व माणसे एकमेकांशी अधिक जवळकीच्या सामाजिक-आर्थिक-राजकीय बंधांनीही जोडली गेली आहेत. अशा वेळी वेगवेगळ्या

प्रादेशिक, वांशिक, राजकीय, सामाजिक इतिहासांच्या पल्याड सर्व मनुष्यजातीचा असा एक सर्वसमावेशक इतिहास लिहिणे आता गरजेचे बनले आहे, आणि महा इतिहास ती संधी आपल्याला उपलब्ध करून देतो.

- आपण एका बाजूला वैश्विक सजीव म्हणवण्याकडे वाटचाल करत असलो, तरी याच शतकात जागतिक हवामान बदल, जैवविविधतेचा ऱ्हास, महासागरांमधील वाढते प्रदूषण, इ. वेगवेगळ्या आघाड्यांवर आपण मानवी अस्तित्वाची लढाईही लढतो आहोत. पृथ्वीच्या परिसंस्थांची बलस्थाने आणि मर्यादा यांच्या अज्ञानातून आपण स्वतःवर ही वेळ ओढवून घेतली आहे. त्यातून बाहेर पडण्याचा मार्ग शोधण्यासाठी आपल्याला आपला हा ग्रह नीट समजून घ्यायला हवा. त्यासाठीही आपल्या ग्रहाचा इतिहास, भूगोल, व त्याचे जैवरसायनशास्त्र, पदार्थविज्ञान, इ. आपल्याला जाणून घेतले पाहिजे. ही जाण केवळ वैज्ञानिकांपुरती मर्यादित राहून चालणार नाही, तर ती सर्वसामान्यांपर्यंत पोहचायला हवी. इतिहास या दृष्टिकोनातून ही मांडणी केली तर ती अधिक लोकांपर्यंत पोहचू शकेल, याही दृष्टीने आजमितीला महा इतिहासाची मांडणी महत्त्वाची ठरते.

प्रा. डेव्हिड ख्रिश्चन या इतिहासाच्या प्राध्यापकानी १९८९ मध्ये महा इतिहास हा विषय ऑस्ट्रेलियातील एका विद्यापीठात शिकवायला सुरुवात केली, त्यानंतर पुलाखालून बरेच पाणी वाहून गेले आहे. आता अमेरिकन, युरोपियन तसेच वेगवेगळ्या अशियाई विद्यापीठांतही हा विषय शिकवला जातो. शालेय पातळीवरही महा इतिहास शिकवता यावा यासाठीची मांडणी व शिक्षणसाधने तयार करण्यासाठी गेट्स फाउंडेशनने अर्थसहाय्य दिले आहे, व यातून असा ऑनलाइन अभ्यासक्रम इंग्रजीतून राबवला जातो आहे. भारतात महा इतिहासाचा पहिला अभ्यासक्रम पुण्यातील सिंबायोसिस स्कूल फॉर लिबरल आर्ट्स या महाविद्यालयात सुरू करण्यात आला आहे. एक वैज्ञानिक (लेखक स्वतः) व एक इतिहास अभ्यासक (डॉ अफशां मजीद) अशा जोडीने एकत्र असा अभ्यासक्रम शिकवण्याचा हा जगातील

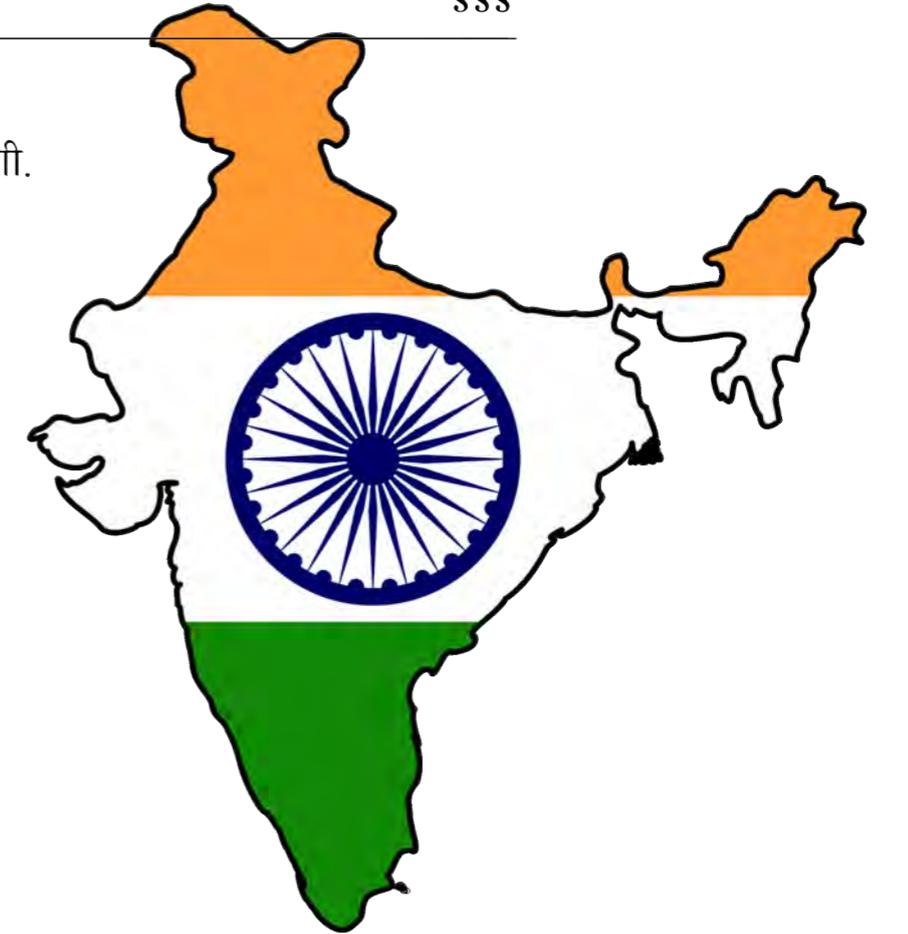
पहिलाच प्रयोग आहे. शालेय विद्यार्थी-शिक्षक-पालक यांच्यासाठी महा इतिहासाची मराठीतून मांडणी करण्याचा ही लेखमाला हा पहिलाच प्रयत्न आहे, त्यामुळे आपल्या प्रतिक्रिया व प्रतिसादाची अपेक्षा आहे.

या लेखमालेसाठी संदर्भ म्हणून डेव्हिड ख्रिश्चन व सहकाऱ्यांनी लिहिलेल्या “बिग हिस्टरी – बिट्विन नथिंग अँड एव्हरिथिंग” या पुस्तकाचा आधार घेण्यात आला आहे.

§§§

लेखक : प्रियदर्शिनी कर्वे, संचालक, समुचित एन्व्हायरो टेक, शैक्षणिक संदर्भ संपादक गटात सहभागी.

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Big History: What Is It and Why Should We Narrate It?

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Note: The first Marathi article on Big History was published in *Shaikshani Sandarbh*, issue 118, June 2019, p. 29. This journal started in 1999 as a bimonthly printed and subscribed magazine. Since 2018, it is a free of cost e-periodical, primarily targeted at high school teachers as well as students and their parents. Its readers are spread across Maharashtra and its neighbouring states in India. Website: <www.sandarbhociety.org>. This series on Big History in Marathi language will be loosely based on *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything* by David Christian, Craig Benjamin and Cynthia Brown, but with the addition of Indian and local contexts.

Synopsis:

History is the study of the past. Perhaps ‘history’ started emerging in each culture / community through the passing down of memories and anecdotes from one generation to another. However, when it became a formal branch of knowledge, it relied on the ‘written’ word, so the narrative of the world has been dominated by the history of the cultures that left behind written records in the languages that could be deciphered. Historians have been trying to rectify this limitation by studying folklore from tribal communities, oral literature like the Mahabharata from ancient cultures, and traditions and rituals followed by different communities, as well as non-literary evidences such as paintings, sculptures and monuments to fill the gaps in the history of modern humans. Parallel to this, new dating techniques have given insights into the evolution of not just humans but of all life on Earth. Advances in geology have traced the evolution of the Earth and advances in astronomy and astrophysics have led to an understanding of the evolution of the universe from its birth. However, the traditional study of history still focuses on the history of modern humans – even the understanding of human evolution is considered a topic of biology rather than history.

Big History on the other hand takes a much broader view and focuses on presenting a single narrative of the history of the universe – starting from its origin in the Big Bang, through the formation of our solar system, to evolution of life and humans, and the rise and fall of human civilisations – by synthesising scientific

understanding with the understanding of human history. This universal approach is important in today’s context for three reasons.

1. This century is seeing the first human-made objects – the voyager spaceships – leaving the solar system. The possibility of humans impacting space beyond the Earth has now come closer to reality. It therefore is important to have a proper understanding of our relationship with the universe.

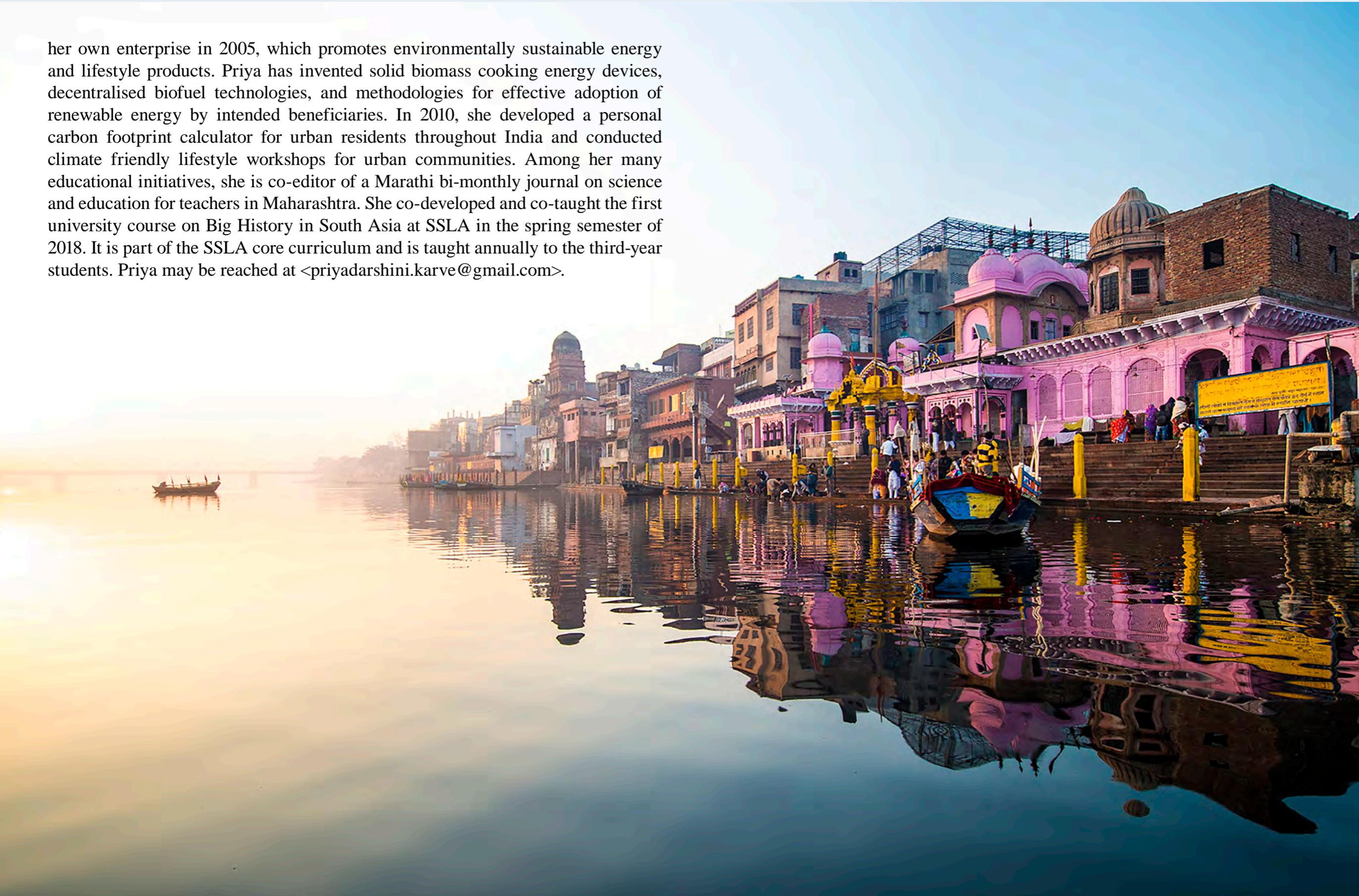
2. At the same time, a deeper understanding of our genetic roots has forcefully brought home our identity as a ‘closely knit single species’ going beyond the artificial walls of outward ‘racial’ differences. This understanding has evolved even as advances in communication and transportation technologies have strengthened the social, economic and political ties between different groups of humans.

3. While we identify ourselves as an ‘earthling species’ and gearing ourselves to become an interplanetary species, we are also fighting for our very survival on the Earth due to climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution of the oceans, etc. We have caused this catastrophe through our ignorance of our relationship as a species with our home planet.

If we are to embrace our potential future and overcome existential threats, an understanding of our place in the larger fabric of the universe must be part of every individual’s understanding of his or her identity, and that is the role that the Big History narrative can play. It therefore is essential for Big History curricula to be developed at different levels and rooted in various socio-cultural realities. The author is proud to be part of one such effort at the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts and wishes to take it further among the non-English speaking people through this series of articles in Marathi language.

Priyadarshini Karve, PhD (Physics), is Director of Samuchit Enviro Tech and Visiting Faculty at the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA) in Pune. After working for ten years in the academic, research and non-profit sectors, she started

her own enterprise in 2005, which promotes environmentally sustainable energy and lifestyle products. Priya has invented solid biomass cooking energy devices, decentralised biofuel technologies, and methodologies for effective adoption of renewable energy by intended beneficiaries. In 2010, she developed a personal carbon footprint calculator for urban residents throughout India and conducted climate friendly lifestyle workshops for urban communities. Among her many educational initiatives, she is co-editor of a Marathi bi-monthly journal on science and education for teachers in Maharashtra. She co-developed and co-taught the first university course on Big History in South Asia at SSLA in the spring semester of 2018. It is part of the SSLA core curriculum and is taught annually to the third-year students. Priya may be reached at <priyadarshini.karve@gmail.com>.



David Christian

CO-FOUNDER OF THE BIG HISTORY PROJECT

Origin Story



A Big History of Everything

From the Big Bang to the first stars, to our solar system, life on Earth, dinosaurs, homo sapiens, agriculture, an ice age, empires, fossil fuels, a Moon landing, and mass globalization. **And what happens next.**

Translated into 22 languages.

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'I have long been a fan of David Christian. In Origin Story, he elegantly weaves evidence and insights from many scientific and historical disciplines into a single, accessible historical narrative' Bill Gates

This is the epic story of the universe and our place in it, from 13.8 billion years ago to the remote future

How did we get from the Big Bang to today's staggering complexity, in which seven billion humans are connected into networks powerful enough to transform the planet? And why, in comparison, are our closest primate relatives reduced to near-extinction?

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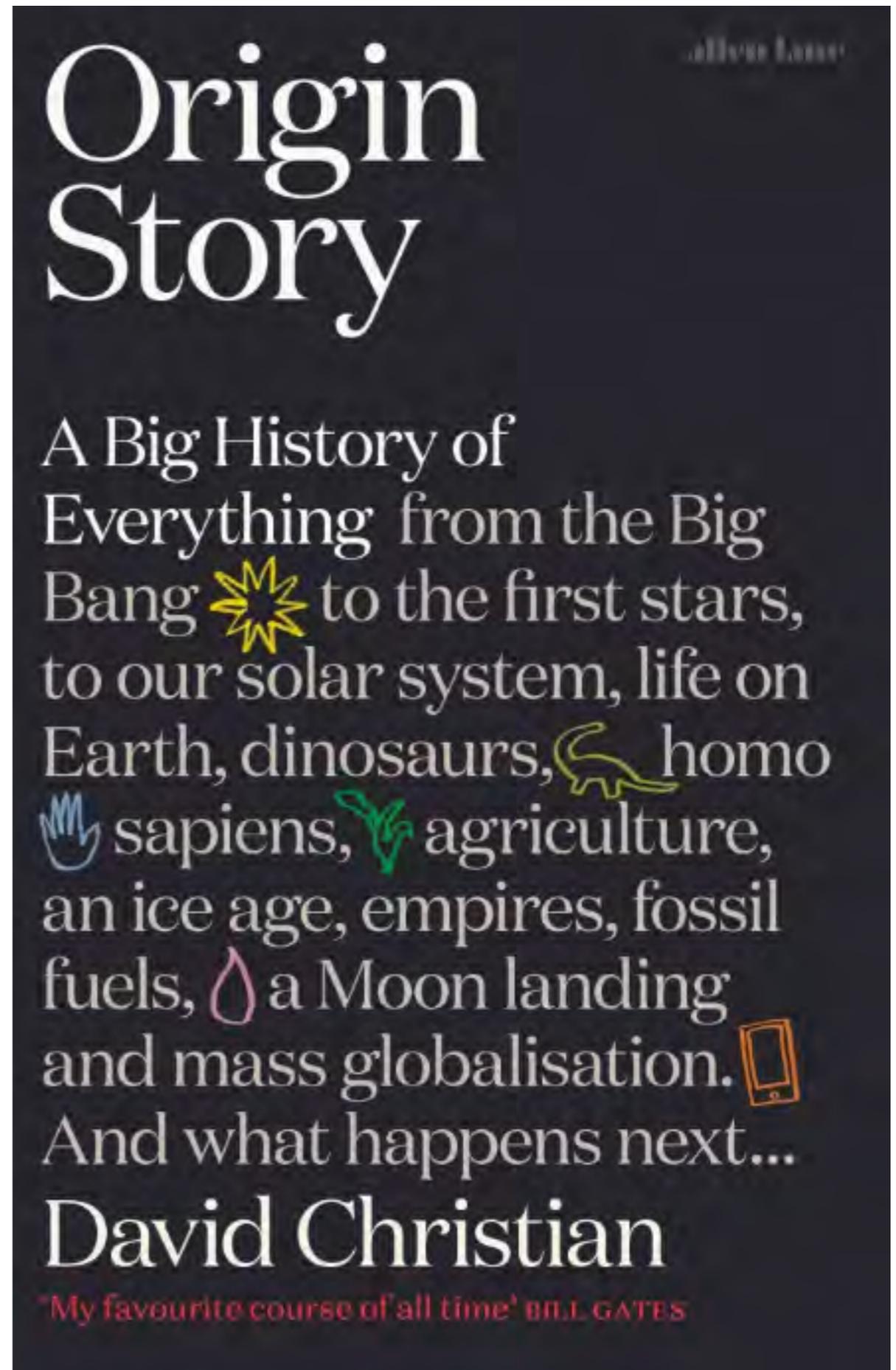
This global origin story is one that we could only begin to tell recently, thanks to the underlying unity of modern knowledge. Panoramic in scope and thrillingly told, Origin Story reveals what we learn about human existence when we consider it from a universal scale.

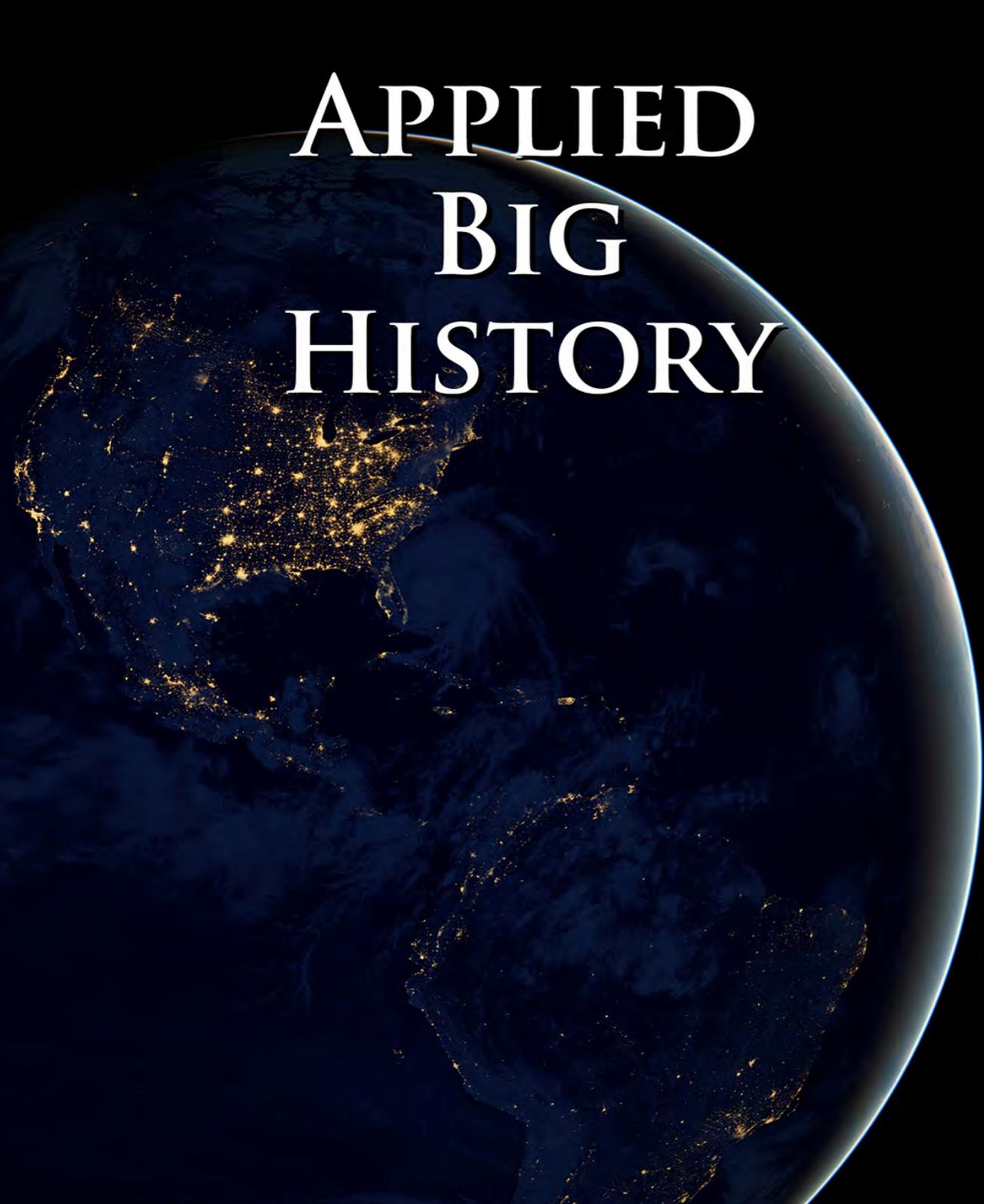
Read more at <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/293580/origin-story/#BziqPBgv2mR7ChQt.99>

David Christian is a distinguished professor in history at Macquarie University in Australia and the co-founder, with Bill Gates, of The Big History Project, which has built a free online syllabus on the history of the universe and is taught in schools all over the world. He is also co-creator of Macquarie University Big History School, which provides online courses in big history for primary and high school students. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Oxford. He has delivered keynotes at conferences around the world including at the Davos World Economic Forum, and his TED Talk on the history of the Universe has been viewed over 7 million times.

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APPLIED BIG HISTORY

A GUIDE FOR ENTREPRENEURS, INVESTORS,
AND OTHER LIVING THINGS

WILLIAM GRASSIE

Applied Big History: A Guide for Entrepreneurs, Investors, and Other Living Things by William Grassie is now available on Amazon Books. <https://amzn.to/2QLHIGS>

Applied Big History is a guidebook to doing good and well in a fast-changing world. With the help of numerous experts, author William Grassie builds a lattice work of diverse disciplines—physics, chemistry, geology, cell biology, energetics, informatics, evolution, anthropology, psychology, economics, and more. Grassie explores the significance of chaos and complexity, and the dynamics of discovery and innovation, in evolution and economics. He does so with a practical eye to how these new sciences can help better understand and better practice economics, business, and finance in the face of uncertainties. *Applied Big History* weaves many specializations together in a useful framework that you can use every day in your work and in your life.

The book includes a foreword by Mitch Julis, co-founder of Canyon Partners, a hedge fund with \$25 billion under management. Julis writes:

Applied Big History does macro and micro. It zooms elegantly in and out, between the two throughout this engaging book by applying the general principles of acquired scientific and historical knowledge available to us today. As a result, we learn that value and wealth represent not just the flow and accumulation of money, but also stand for the fundamentals of energy, matter, and ingenuity that flow in and out of the economy and the financial system... Grassie's exposition is careful, concise, informative, and engaging in telling and applying this origin story to the investment world.

Who should read this book? Pretty much everybody. Big History is our common story—an origins story that transcends ethnic, political, religious, and linguistic differences. It provides a framework for understanding, debating, and solving the great challenges of our time. It provides an ennobling perspective on our lives, generating wonder, awe, amazement, and gratitude. The applied part of Big History impacts how we conceive every career and industry, every academic discipline and vocation, every problem and opportunity. Grassie's book is unique in the field for exploring Big History as to its relevance to decision-making in business and finance.

William Grassie received his doctorate in religion from Temple University and his bachelor degree in political science from Middlebury College. Grassie's books include *The New Sciences of Religion: Exploring Spirituality from the Outside In and Bottom Up*; *Politics by Other Means: Science and Religion in the Twenty-First Century*; and *Transhumanism and Its Critics* (edited).

Applied Big History is available in paperback for \$12.99 and Kindle for \$4.99. <https://amzn.to/2QLHIGSkx>.

[For more information](#), interviews, and speaking engagements, contact [xgrassie \[at\] metanexus \[dot\] net](mailto:xgrassie@metanexus.net)

Life in the Universe

Big History, SETI and the Future of Humankind

IBHA & INAF-IASF MI Symposium

July 15-16, 2019

CNR, Via Alfonso Corti 12, Milan, Italy



International
Big History
Association

[Please click here for
the final program](#)

[Please click here for
videos of presentations](#)

SETI

Big History, SETI, and Our Children

James Michael Tierney
Social Worker, Retired

What is the mechanism through which evolution is emerging as we move into the twenty-first-century here on planet earth? First of all, it cannot be more than 2-3 million years in duration because our species was not a viable entity before that to be one of the drivers of the process. Prior to that, and up until recently, Natural Selection, as described by Darwin in the 19th century, and symbiosis as described by Lynn Margulis in the 20th century, were the primary drivers of the process. Before that Eric Chaisson best describes the broader perspective of Cosmic Evolution. Now, human culture, as described by Laland, Henrich, Christian, Dartnell, and Tomasello, have joined the team. This is an extraordinary event. Why should we be at the head of a long series of events and species that is now defining who we are becoming and what our habitat will be like? The two major components driving our piece of the process seem to be our extraordinary capacity to cooperate and our efficient use of collective learning. In the process, we, newcomers to the earth, define the habitats of all other life forms. All those we know of. There is an extraordinary balance here in spite of our tinkering with all sorts of systems and sub-systems that we only partially understand. Child Welfare is one of those systems and Child Protective Services is one of those sub-systems. Prior to the twentieth century, Child Protective Services did not exist. If you were concerned about your neighbor's children, or your grandchildren, you called the Animal Protection League.

For hundreds of thousands of generations, children were raised by their families, pretty exclusively. By 1980, there were forty thousand children waiting for "Permanency" in this country. Permanency is the status that children seek after they have been removed from the custody of their caretakers by the courts. They never get to see their birth parents again.

The point is that systems change and we don't always know what the change means. Certainly it is important for the children to know and it is important for each set of their parents to know but it is also important for society to know because passing information from one generation to another appears to be how we humans make evolution work. Those referenced above, like Henrich and Christian, call the process collective learning. And since we don't know exactly how that works in practice, and we don't know how much precision is necessary for the transaction to be functional, we don't know whether the outcomes are mostly good or not so good. My sense is that we do the child welfare part pretty well and most of the outcomes are good. On the other hand, many, if not all of these parents, should not have been parents in the first place. Not only is that not good for the parents and the children but it is not good for the system since it is part of the larger system that is defining who we are becoming and what the various habitats for life on this planet will be like.

We don't have any mechanism to screen who should be a parent. I can hear most of you saying thank God for that. The point is that deciding, after the fact, is not good for anyone and it may be especially bad for the system as a whole because we don't understand how so many sub-systems working collaboratively actually accomplish their stated goals. Furthermore, we don't really understand how the dynamics of such a fundamental function as parenting has

gotten so far off track or whether it will drive other functions off track as well. This is illustrated by the report of the Presidential Commission submitted to President Obama in October 2016 which found that three children die within the child protective service system each day and the Commissioners could not articulate the cause of the deaths adequately enough to prevent them. The reason that we don't have any mechanism to define who should not be a parent is because it is such a fundamental species wide right, nobody wants to deal with. But more importantly, we don't have any mechanism to define what is in the best interest of all people and therefore should only be defined in a certain way. For example, a quiet zone on the dark side of the moon, where no communication would be tracked, would probably be best for everyone on Earth but when push comes to shove, it probably won't happen. Our level of intra-species cooperation is fascinating to observe yet it is difficult to reach consensus on certain things like who should be allowed to have children?

Bringing diverse groups like SETI and IBHA together offers a forum for such issues to arise. Should we license parenting? Probably not, should we be talking about it? Yes!

We are an extraordinary species. In our short time on the planet we have risen to the top of a ladder from which the definition of life is being redefined. Some life forms, those that are conscious of what they are doing in the big picture, like humans, must have a special role in the cosmos. So far, we are the only species we know of who have such a role. Should there be others, and I, personally, can't imagine that there are not, then we will be the ones to talk to them when they reach Earth or when we reach where ever they are. This consciousness we have of who we are and what our role is in evolution is a good thing. It gives us license to go ahead and plan the future as best we can. To try to sustain our species long enough to connect with similar forms of consciousness so we can build the consciousness of what this universe is about. At least long enough to give our great, great, great, granddaughters a shot at it. We can do that, all it takes is focus.

We only have one real disability. We haven't figured out how to define "best interest" to include everyone. What is in the best interest of all of us? It may well be a quiet zone on the back side of the moon. As a social worker doing child welfare work you are faced with the question every day, What is in the best interest of the child? Almost always the answer is the same as the answer to what is in the best interest of the parent?

Resistance to change is probably one of our strong points. Failure to acknowledge or observe the societal changes around us is one of our worst.

So what do we do with the hundreds of thousands of children needing parents and the thousands of prospective adoptive parents wishing to parent? Bring em together.

Changing the World: Community, Science and Engagement with Big History

5th Global Conference of the International Big History Association & Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts

3-6 August, 2020



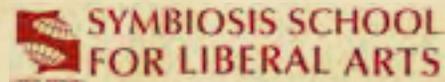
SSLA at Symbiosis International University, Viman Nagar New Campus, Autumn 2017

Big History seeks to understand the integrated history of the cosmos, Earth, life and humanity, using the best available empirical evidence and scholarly methods.



International Big History Association

The International Big History Association's Fifth Global Conference, in collaboration with Symbiosis International University, will be held in the summer of 2020 in India. Its theme focuses on *Changing the World: Community, Science and Engagement with Big History*. The IBHA has held conferences on meaning, teaching and research, and so now will address issues of community and change around our planet. In other words: How can big history help us in its application to world issues?



India is a powerhouse of innovative development, with cultural and intellectual traditions reaching back thousands of years. Symbiosis is an embodiment of this heritage and enterprise, a truly modern synthesis. Situated along the Mula-Mutha River, its six campuses in the city of Pune lie on the Deccan Plateau, 600 meters above the Arabian Sea.

Founded in 1971, Symbiosis was begun with the intent of providing a 'home away from home' for African and Asian students studying in India.



First Big History class at SSLA, Spring 2018

Its students come from more than 85 countries, so, appropriately, its Sanskrit motto is **वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्** - Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - 'The World is One Family'. A not-for-profit university, Symbiosis serves almost 30,000 students.

Our conference will be co-sponsored with the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA), one of the university's most innovative programmes.

Launched in 2011, SSLA was the first liberal arts school in an Indian university and remains the only four-year degree and honours programme. SSLA is home to the India Association for Big History, which formed in 2016. Two years later, the first course in Big History in South Asia began at SSLA, growing out of the Anthropology Department and its core course, 'History of Man: From Ape to Alexander.'

Today, the course is co-taught as 'Humanity and Big History: Our Challenge for Survival' by an historian and a physicist, and is required for all third-year students. In March 2018, SSLA sponsored the First Annual Conference of Interdisciplinarity and Big History in co-operation with the Asian Big History Association, J.F. Oberlin University (Tokyo), and the IBHA.

Our big history conference will take place in the first week of August 2020. We have reserved Symbiosis-approved guesthouses near the SSLA campus.

Acommodations

These accommodations will be available at reasonable rates. Double-occupancy rooms will run at ₹2000 (~\$30) a night, with three meals a day available at the Symbiosis dining hall for an

additional ₹2000 per day. Rickshaws as well as cabs are available, and Symbiosis will provide a bus at the start and end of each day.

Schedule

Attendees are invited to arrive during the weekend of August 1st and 2nd. The Pune International Airport is less than a kilometer from the campus. You can check into your room, then relax and socialize with friends and colleagues. On Sunday mid-day, we have arranged for a tour of the city for ₹1800 (~\$26), followed by tea and a presentation orienting you to India.

The conference panels will begin Monday morning and run to Wednesday afternoon, August 3rd through 5th. On Monday and Tuesday evenings, there will be interactive plenary panel presentations and dinner. On Wednesday afternoon and evening, there will be a festival on the theme of the engaged creativity of South Asia. On Thursday morning, August 6th, we will have an IBHA members assembly.

On Thursday, August 6th, we will break into groups that will fly to different parts of India for theme-based interactions. The three-day seminars that we have arranged thus far with host organizations are:

- **Mumbai, Maharashtra:** 'Science and Changing Society'. Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Tata Institute for Fundamental Research (www.hbcse.tifr.res.in)
- **Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat:** 'Landscape and Adapting Heritage'. Kachchh Heritage Arts Music Information Resources | Khamir (www.khamir.org)



Discussion at the Fireflies Intercultural Centre, Dinnepalya, Karnataka, June 2018



Indian big historians and community activists, Spring 2018

- **Patna, Bihar:** 'Agrarian Life and Renewal.' Tarumitra: Friends of Trees (www.tarumitra.org)
- **Guwahati, Assam:** 'Indigenous-Tribal Heritage and Innovation'. All-India Indigenous-Tribal Federation (<https://tinyurl.com/AITF-org>)
- **Bengaluru, Karnataka:** 'Eco-Spirituality and New Global Needs', Fireflies Intercultural Centre (www.pipaltree.org.in) / Ecumenical Christian Centre (www.eccbangalore.org)

The seminars will take place August 7th-9th. Each location can accommodate up to about 30 participants. Attendees will stay at a local organization that is active in local change-making and will learn about their activities, including visits to their field stations. There will also be visits to heritage sites and trekking in ecological areas, in addition to panel presentations by conference and community members.

The seminars are located near major cities, so participants can fly home from there on August 10th, or proceed to other destinations. Travel into and out of India as well as between Indian cities is reasonably priced, especially if reservations are made well in advance. We will provide links to experienced travel agents.

In addition to the IBHA and SSLA, co-sponsors of the conference include the Asian Big History Association, the India Association for Big History, and the Eurasian Centre for Megahistory and System Forecasting, as well as the seminar organizations. We will be providing a guidebook about India for conference attendees, sharing information on visas, inoculations, laundry, and other essential knowledge.

Even though we are well in advance of the event, we ask that people begin to write Barry Rodrigue, the principal conference organizer (e-mail below). We must begin reserving rooms, arranging transportation, and allocating slots for the seminars.

So, please drop Barry an e-mail with your paper's preliminary title and abstract, let us know if you would like SSLA arranged housing or meals, and indicate which seminar you might like to attend.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2020 Big History Conference in Maharashtra!

Warm wishes,

Barry & Sulakshana

Organizers of the 2020 Conference

Dr. Barry H. Rodrigue, PhD
Professor, Anthropology
Faculty-in-Charge, Collaborative
for Asian Anthropology
IBHA International Coordinator
rodrigue@archinets.org

Sulakshana Sen, Ph.D. (ABD)
Assistant Professor and Head,
International Relations,
Political Science, Public Policy
and Performing Arts
sulakshana@ssla.edu.in

Conveners:
Anita Patankar, Director
Shweta Sinha Deshpande, Dep. Director

Optional Post-Conference Seminars



AITF - Guwahati, Assam
*Indigenous-Tribal
Heritage and Innovation*
<https://tinyurl.com/AITF-org>



Tarumitra - Patna, Bihar
Agrarian Life and Renewal
www.tarumitra.org



Khamir - Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat
Landscape and Adapting Heritage
www.khamir.org



**Homi Bhabha Centre for
Science Education / TIFR -
Mumbai, Maharashtra**
Science & Changing Society
www.hbcse.tifr.res.in



Fireflies/ECC-Bengaluru, Karnataka
*Eco-Spirituality and New
Global Needs*
www.pipaltree.org.in
www.eccbengalure.org

*A Guide to India:
Attending the 2020 Big History Conference*

Pune, Maharashtra, India

August 2020

We are delighted that you will be with us in India for the 2020 Big History Conference! India is an exciting location for our important program. This guidebook is intended to help you plan for your time with us in South Asia.

The seasons in India are different than elsewhere because of the monsoons, which run from June to September in Pune. For the conference in August, it will be about 25°C / 75°F with light winds and rain - very pleasant. Bring light rain gear and an umbrella. We are in the Sahyadri Mountains on the Deccan Plateau, so it is not as muggy as on the coast.



Sahyadri Mountains from a trail between the Bhaje Caves to Fort Lohagad, 2018. Photo by Barry Rodrigue.

Although the region was long settled, as evidenced by megaliths and other prehistoric remains, the modern community of Pune began in the 9th century CE as a farm village at the confluence of the Mula-Mutha river system. Serving as a base of the Maratha Empire in the 18th century, it fell to British invasion in the next century. Pune then arose as a centre for India's independence and reform movements.



Pune from the north bank of the Mula-Mutha River, 2016. Photo by Barry Rodrigue.

Considered a verdant garden city, it had only about a million people in 1970, but expansion of engineering firms, IT companies and educational institutions have caused it to grow to over six million residents today, making it India’s ninth largest city.

Our conference will be held at one of these new facilities, the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA). The area in which the conference will take place is in Viman Nagar, in the north-east of the city. Only open to development in the last twenty years, Viman Nagar is undergoing especially rapid growth.

SSLA’s students will attend the conference. Sessions will be held in our classrooms, while the keynote panels, presentations, performances and special events will take place at the Viman Nagar campus auditorium.





Visas

India requires visas, and the process is complex, so follow these suggestions closely and start the process soon. First, go to the Indian government's webpages on visas: indianvisaonline.gov.in. You may apply for an e-visa, which is quicker and cheaper, but it will limit your visiting opportunities in India. If you file for a full tourist visa, you have it for ten years.

You should file for a tourist visa; other categories will mire you down in complexity. For the purposes of this conference, you will be engaging in cultural tourism. If, however, your visit is combined with other, personal reasons for being in India, such as work, then you should file for a visa based on those reasons.

Residents of each country have different requirements. The application process in the United States, for example, is done online in a two-part process that requires electronic shifting between

the government-approved travel agency and the Indian Consulate. Do not try to do this process through a different travel agency – only use the government-approved agency.

Mozilla Firefox or Internet Explorer need to be used to fill out the online forms. Other search engines, like Google, will crash your application (but not tell you what is wrong). The visa process can be frustrating. Treat it as a creative experience, be in the moment. Make a warm cup of tea or pour a glass of wine, and breathe deeply You will probably have to redo portions of the online form, but smile and relax. It is worth the effort!

Conference and Post-Conference Seminar Registration

Registration and enrolment for services and events will be done through the IBHA website <bighistory.org>. There are three separate forms that need to be filled out online.

- 1) Conference registration
- 2) Room-meals-tour-seminar
- 3) Topic abstract, if presenting a paper

It is imperative to fill these out as soon as possible, since this will be an action-packed event and we don't want folks to miss out on anything. Only those who have registered (and made the appropriate payment) will be scheduled in the program. There are only a limited number of rooms available on campus and limited space at the seminars – so make your reservations now!

Dining

Folks may eat at the university dining hall, which serves Indian-style breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner. The cost is about ₹2000 (\$30) a day for the four meals. Since the food services must plan meals in advance, you should reserve these soon as well. There is also a canteen and snack bar on campus, where you can get impromptu meals, tea, and juice. In addition, there are restaurants, stores and cafes in the neighbourhood.

Housing

We have reserved a university-approved guesthouse, the Hotel Silver Crest, near to the conference site. It can accommodate about sixty people in double-occupancy rooms at about ₹2000 (\$30) a day. The rooms are arranged in suites of three with a shared living space and bathroom. A restaurant is next to their lobby. As folks register for the conference, the Silver Crest rooms will fill up, hence the need to register as soon as possible to reserve a room.



Silver Crest accommodations in Viman Nagar, Pune, 2019. Photo by Barry Rodrigue.

If people prefer, they may book their own accommodations separate from the university-assisted housing. There are a full range of hotels available, both local and international, which can be accessed online. It is, however, recommended that rooms be taken near to the conference site, since getting around the growing city of Pune can be challenging, since there is always a lot of traffic and construction underway.



Camels, cars and motorcycles, 2018. Pune has the most two-wheelers per capita of any city in the world. Photo by Barry Rodrigue.

Seminars

The costs and fees for the seminars will be managed separately from those of the main conference. The host organizations will coordinate beds, food, local transportation to heritage and ecology sites, and guides, as well as their administrative fee. The cost will be different for each seminar, since they will entail different activities. We estimate the room and board will be similar to the cost at the conference, about ₹2000 (\$30) a day, based on double occupancy.

To get from the Pune conference to the seminar site of your choice on Thursday, August 6th, each person will book their own transportation, be it by air, sleeper bus or train. Since land transportation can be sometimes a long process, confusing and subject to change, it is recommended that it be done by air. If booked in advance, airline flights can be reasonably priced at under ₹4000 (\$100).

Alternatively, if enough people would like to take an overnight sleeper bus or train to Bangalore, Patna or Bhuj, we could arrange that, as these seminar sites are within a day's travel of Pune. Guwahati, however, would require air transportation. We provide contacts with two experienced travel agencies below.

Travel Agencies

These are many fine travel agents who you can consult for tickets. Two agents with whom we have successfully worked for years are shown below.

Cross Culture Travel

Christine Wei, Director
Cross Culture Travel
225 Franklin Street, 26th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts
02110 USA

Office: +01 617 426 3123
Mobile: +01 617 217 3300
<cct@cross-culture.net>

In operation since 1994, Cross Culture Travel is a long-term member of the U.S. Better Business Bureau. Besides managing the firm, their director, Christine Wei, personally leads tours to India, China and other locations around the world.

Black Swan Journeys

Shishir Nikam
Black Swan Journeys
Sun Grace Apartments, C-2
Anand Park, Aundh
Pune, Maharashtra
411007 India

Mobile: +91 98221 32092
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In South Asia, Black Swan Journeys is an experiential travel company that started over eight years ago with a vision to re-imagine travel. In journeying with local chefs, archaeologists, artists and musicians, they specialize in offering experiences that celebrate the stories of our shared cultural heritage. From tracing pre-historic rock-painting and burial sites in Anegundi to stepping into 300 year-old havelis at the heritage village of Garli to working with artisans on art forms that are endangered, we invite the traveller to encounter and embrace diverse traditions. We offer a range of itineraries that are customized and curated keeping in mind traveller interests around art, history, music, cuisine, and culture.

Inoculations and Health

Check with your national centre for disease control and your personal health centre's travel clinic. You can also see articles such as:

Ramesh Verma, Pardeep Khanna and Suraj Chawla, 'Recommended Vaccines for International Travelers to India', *Human Vaccines and Immunotherapies*, vol. 11, no. 10, October 2015, pp. 2455–2457, National Library of Medicine, <www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4635693/>.

Although the conference will be in an urban centre, you will arrive during the western monsoon, which opens up chances for mosquito-borne infection. If you sign up for one of the post-conference seminars, you may travel in rural areas, which might recommend a wider range of inoculation. Your physician will be your best informant.

The flora is much different here, so your body could react differently. Do not drink the tap water. The university has water purifiers and coolers from which you can fill your water bottles. You should bring an anti-diarrheal medication.

A flight surgeon's rule of thumb is that jet lag will last a day for each time zone crossed. Everyone has their own remedies: drink lots of water, restrict fluid intake, stay awake before you fly, sleep before you fly. No matter your recipes, you will feel tired. Arrive early and get rested!



Lowell Gustafson and Lucy Lafitte waiting for their restaurant lunch, after a twenty+ hour plane trip and a six hour bus ride, Lonar, Maharashtra, March 2018.

Money

Bring cash. Only larger vendors and hotels take credit cards. For a majority of transactions, most people only take rupees. So, change your currency at home or at the airport, since currency exchange on the street in India is time-consuming, due to the government's attempts to curtail illegal transactions. Since many overseas banks and currency exchanges do not stock Indian rupees, it is a good idea to make your exchange inside the airport in your city-of-entry in India.

Telephones

Having a mobile telephone connection in India is useful for transportation services and to stay in touch with people locally. Check to see if your cell phone service offers a plan in India that you could purchase during your stay. If your phone is unlocked, it is possible to purchase an Indian SIM card, but it can take between 5–10 days to get it activated. The WhatsApp mobile application can be used when Wi-Fi is available to make phone calls or video contacts with others in India or internationally who also have WhatsApp.

Electrical Adaptors

Some electrical sockets will accommodate a variety of international electrical plugs, but, by and large, you should have an Indian adaptor. The Indian sockets too will vary in round or block pronged outlets. There are numerous electrical shops that will fulfil your needs in India.