

Spiritual Science Applied to the Question of the Earth's Shape and Location, Part 3

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Introduction

Continuing this series on the Earth, we would like to address three fundamental issues regarding the question of the Earth in Vedic cosmology and what ramifications this has for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

- (1) What is the size of the Earth in *Srimad Bhagavatam*?
- (2) Why did Srila Prabhupada, the Founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, refer to the Earth as a globe?
- (3) How should the spiritual leadership of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness respond to the growing awareness among its members, that *Srimad Bhagavatam* describes Earth (Bhu-mandala) as a circular Earth plane, and not a round Earth planet? The corollary question can also be justifiably raised: how can the spiritual leadership of ISKCON legitimately sanction the proposal to place an globe Earth in the TOVP cosmological exhibitions, when no such description or conception of Earth as a planet is presented in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* itself?

We will look at these questions in the following three sections:

In Section 1.1 we will show that the Earth (Bhu-mandala) in *Srimad Bhagavatam* is described as one vast circular plane with a diameter of 4 billion miles. There is, in fact, no mention of a separate globe-shaped Earth floating in space within *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmological description. Our own Earth area in Bharata-varsha is clearly described as located at the southern end of Jambudwipa, the central island of Bhu-mandala which is measured at 800,000 miles. The oceans of our own Earth area are just a small part of the 800,000 mile salt-water ocean surrounding Jambudwipa. The natural conclusion is that the Earth is not what we have been told, and far from being a globe in space, it is actually just a small part of a landscape that continues into other parts of a greater Earth area.

Section 1.2 of this paper is an attempt to explain why Srila Prabhupada spoke of the Earth as a globe/planet when *Srimad Bhagavatam* describes the Earth (Bhu-mandala) and our place upon it, as something very different from the modern globe/planet conception. By understanding the context in which Srila Prabhupada's statements about the Earth were made, we hope the reader will gain greater faith in the original description of Earth as a vast circular plane (Bhu-mandala).

In section 1.3 we would like to discuss the issue of decisions that may or may not be made on the question of the globe by the Governing Body Committee (GBC) of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. We would also like to offer some suggestions how this issue of the Earth can be presented in a philosophical manner, thus avoiding needless dogmatic edicts on the question.

Sections 1.1 and 1.2 will be presented in this paper, and section 1.3 will be continued in the next paper. My apologies to the reader for the length of these presentations. There are many details to this argument that (despite the length of this paper), we have only begun to touch on. Indeed to argue against the globe is to battle with five hundred years

of so-called science from which our present construct of reality has been formed. We hope, at least, that the citations from *Srimad Bhagavatam* and Srila Prabhupada can serve as a reference for further discussion and debate. My apologies also for a certain repetition in the presentation, as the same subject matter has to be defended from various angles.

The topic of the Earth should be of interest not just to those studying Vedic cosmology, but to everyone of us who live here upon the Earth. What does *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of a greater Earth plane mean for us in the apparent 'real world' of the so-called Earth globe? Just maybe, *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of a greater Earth plane means that the world we thought was real, is *not*, and that Krishna through the medium of *Srimad Bhagavatam* is actually trying to wake us up out of our ignorance and illusion regarding *who we are*, and *where we are* in the vast creation.

"This Bhagavata Purana is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Krishna to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this Purana." (SB 1.1.3)

It is really quite alarming, that in spite of *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s clear description of Bharata-varsha's position on a vast circular Earth plane, the present management of the Mayapur Temple of Vedic Planetarium (*who are supposed to be presenting Srimad Bhagavatam as a factual description of the universe*), flatly refuse to acknowledge even the possibility that this may be a true account of our Earth. There are powerful ramifications to *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of Bharata-varsha's location to Jambudwipa that the present TOVP management simply do not want to deduce: if our own area of Bharata-varsha is surrounded by vast lands and oceans calculated at hundreds of millions of miles, then Earth is not a globe, and our life on Earth must be a very different one from this day on. The shocking discovery that one's beloved Earth is not a globe floating in space, is like the foul discovery that one's beloved partner is having sex with another person. At first one cannot believe such a thing to be true, or why and how their partner could cheat them in such a way; but as the truth is gradually revealed, one realizes that one's world will never be the same again. Likewise the discovery that the Earth is not a globe in space, spells the end of the world as we know it. The discovery of the truth about the Earth begins with a description of a very different Earth spoken five thousand years ago...

(Section 1.1) WHAT IS THE SIZE OF THE EARTH IN SRIMAD BHAGAVTAM?

In part two of this paper, which can be [found here](#), we raised the subject of King Pariksit inquiring from his guru Sukadeva Goswami about the measurement and characteristics of the Earth. The context of this inquiry is significant. King Pariksit had only seven days to live and wanted to know 'the way of perfection' before his time of death came. This raises the interesting question of why a dying king would want to know about the size of the Earth. Is the size of the Earth a pressing question on the minds of most people about to die, and especially for the devotees of Krishna who are taught to concentrate their minds on the personal form of Krishna as they prepare for leaving their material body? The question, in fact, is only one of many subjects that King Pariksit inquired about in regards to the satyam param or absolute truth. This particular question, however, is one of the essential items that one should know about the world, its creator, and our relationship to both.

In part two, we looked at how this question led to a description of the *virta-rupa*. The *virat-rupa* refers to the concept of Krishna's manifestation as the universe itself. Sukadeva Goswami taught his disciple King Pariksit how to see the universe with spiritual eyes, and particularly how to perceive the universe as an expansion of Krishna that is simultaneously one and different from the Lord Himself. The *virta-rupa* concept leads to an appreciation of all things within the material world as part and parcel of Krishna, and therefore sacred and worthy of love and respect. This is a truly edifying

area of spiritual science which unfortunately we could only touch on briefly in part two. In this paper, we will look at the specific details of the question relating to the size and characteristics of the Earth. The question is relevant to our inquiry about the truth of the globe concept of the Earth because as it turns out, the Earth described in *Srimad Bhagavatam* is actually the biggest feature in the universe, and not a small globe in space as we are meant to believe.

We shall see presently that Sukadeva Goswami presents very exact numerical distances, precise geometrical shapes, and specific names in his description of the Bhu-mandala (the Earth circle). The description is in every way 'scientific.' Science allows us to 'know' something of the thing being studied. If one receives a description of a certain object, one can know it to some degree. Sometimes we are asked to fetch something unfamiliar and a brief description is all we need to help us identify the thing. For some unacquainted with a harmonium, a brief description of a small piano-like instrument is all that is required to enable the person to distinguish the desired instrument from other instruments such as a mridanga drum or a stringed instrument like a sitar. Likewise, a study of Sukadeva Goswami's description of the Earth allows us to 'see' and 'know' the real feature of the world, even if we can't see the full extent of the Earth plane with our own eyes. The description of the Earth in *Srimad Bhagavatam* also provides an alternative model by which we can question if the image and description of the Earth presented by NASA is actually real, or indeed, merely part of a crude and farcical conspiracy that hides the real feature of the Earth.

It may seem a strange proposition that an ancient scripture from India can be employed to question the truth of the modern Earth globe. Generally, people have an almost unquestioned faith that modern technological advances have put men and satellites in space, proving once and for all, that the true shape and nature of the Earth is that of a globe floating in dark space. Can this presentation of the Earth as a globe in space be questioned by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness? The answer to that question depends on how much faith the members of the society have in either the version of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, or the version of modern science and so-called space agencies such as NASA and ESA. For one who accepts Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, (and thus accepts Krishna as the original creator of the Earth), Krishna's description of the Earth is the one that should obviously be accepted by a devotee. However, since the description of Earth in *Srimad Bhagavatam* has nothing whatsoever in common with the modern Earth globe, the disparity in world-views may obviously create difficulties for those devotees with a strong faith in science and the present world paradigm, but a weak faith in shabda brahman (spiritual knowledge). In the *Srimad Bhagavatam* it is stated:

I meditate upon that pure and spotless Supreme Absolute Truth, who is free from suffering and death, and who in the beginning personally revealed this incomparable torchlight of knowledge to Brahma. Brahma then spoke it to the sage Narada, who narrated it to Krishna-dvaipayana Vyasa. Srila Vyasa revealed this Bhagavatam to the greatest of sages, Sukadeva Gosvami, and Sukadeva mercifully spoke it to Maharaja Pariksit. (SB 12.13.19)

Here it says that the knowledge spoken in *Srimad Bhagavatam* was originally spoken by Krishna to Brahma. Brahma spoke *Srimad Bhagavatam* to Narada Muni, who then presented it to his disciple Vyasadeva. Vyasadeva taught *Srimad Bhagavatam* to his son Sukadeva Goswami, who in turn relayed the message to King Pariksit. The transcendental knowledge contained in *Srimad Bhagavatam* has thus been passed down from Sri Krishna Himself, through a disciplic succession that continues to the present day. How do the present members of the disciplic succession understand the description of the Earth that was originally spoken by Krishna? Have we got the right understanding? In the above verse, Sukadeva Goswami states: "I meditate upon the pure and spotless Supreme Absolute Truth" (*satyam param demahi*). For atheists, this meditation on the absolute truth means absolutely nothing; but at least for followers of *Srimad Bhagavatam* (who accept Krishna as the absolute truth) why should they doubt the version of the Earth presented in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, over the version of Earth

constructed by a combination of modern speculative scientists, and notoriously deceptive 'space' agencies like NASA?

To repeat a few points made in previous papers: if we accept that Sukadeva Goswami is relaying accurate information about the Earth from the creator of the Earth Himself (Sri Krishna), then it is the photographs and videos of a *very different looking* Earth from the one described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, that should be investigated as fabrications of deceptive agencies such as NASA. It is the quasi-science of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton which supports this heliocentric version of the universe that should be regarded as speculative and make-believe, not the version of Sukadeva Goswami. This would mean having to consider the possibility that our perception of the Earth as a globe in space has been fabricated, and the so-called Earth 'planet' we thought was real, is not.

Finding no immediate reason to doubt the authenticity of such images provided by NASA and other space agencies, we assume that the version of *Srimad Bhagavatam* must be either wrong, or describing something beyond our comprehension or dimension. The inclination of the mind, intelligence, and false ego conditioned by the present 'scientific' paradigm of the Earth, is to immediately doubt the fantastic description of the great Earth circle by the Vedic Rishis. One may favour NASA's images of the Earth globe over some ancient yogi's description, simply because it is assumed that people in the past had no accessibility to modern technology such as spacecraft and satellites that can photograph and measure the Earth in its true feature. It does not enter a person's mind to question if such craft and satellites can actually make it into outer-space. The spectacular images of astronauts hovering above the globe-shaped Earth as they fix their International Space Station are so frequent, brilliant, and realistic, that to question their reality is to have one's sanity questioned.

What is real? For devotees of Krishna, the starting point to distinguish reality from illusion is not the version of secular science, government, and media. The starting point to distinguish reality from illusion is *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

This Bhagavata Purana propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. (SB 1.1.2)

It is not that because history, science, and government, teaches that the Earth is a globe in space, that this must be accepted as our unquestioned reality and a reason to doubt the version of Srimad Bhagavatam. Rather, the description of the Earth in Srimad Bhagavatam is a reason to question the version of the Earth presented by science and government. The question is this: is the science that has led us to believe that we live on a globe-shaped planet actually true? Does empirical science actually prove the round globe as a factual description of reality, or does empirical science prove the opposite – that the Earth can be observed and measured as a continual horizontal plane? Can we apply a spiritual science to test the claims of materialistic science?

Srila Prabhupada set a spiritual revolution in motion with his rejection of the chemical evolution of life theory, proving that it was not scientific at all, but simply the prejudice idea of the atheistic disposition. Srila Prabhupada founded the Bhaktivedanta Institute with the intention of using true science to prove the spiritual basis of life and the universe. The world-view of *Srimad Bhagavatam* is thus not a rejection of science in its true sense of the word, but rather a way to expose the speculative theories and outright deception of atheistic materialism that goes on in the name of 'science.' The cosmology section in *Srimad Bhagavatam* is another area in which spiritual science disproves the claims of modern atheistic science. Most spectacularly, *Srimad Bhagavatam* exposes the greatest lie of all time - *the Earth globe!*

The first and most important point for followers of *Srimad Bhagavatam* to consider is that King Pariksit specifically asked for the 'names,' 'measurements,' and 'characteristics' of the various features on the Bhu-mandala or Earth circle. This series of verses from *Srimad Bhagavatam* should put to rest any further contentions that the Sanskrit

name Bhu-gola (round Earth/Earth circle) is describing the so-called Earth globe with a circumference of 24,900 miles. In Canto 5, Chapter 16, verses 1-2, Maharaja Pariksit requests his guru Sukadeva Goswami, to describe the measurements and qualities of the seven islands and oceans of Bhu-mandala:

"King Pariksit said to Sukadeva Gosvami: O brahmana, you have already informed me that the radius of Bhu-mandala extends as far as the sun spreads its light and heat and as far as the moon and all the stars can be seen.

My dear Lord, the rolling wheels of Maharaja Priyavrata's chariot created seven ditches, in which the seven oceans came into existence. Because of these seven oceans, Bhu-mandala is divided into seven islands. You have given a very general description of their measurement, names, and characteristics. Now I wish to know of them in detail. Kindly fulfil my desire." (SB 5.16.1-2)

This is a very specific question requesting 'measurements' and 'characteristics', and the name Bhu-mandala is particularly invoked, along with its characteristic central feature of seven islands (*sapta-dwipa*) and seven oceans (*sapta-sindava*). In reply to this question, Sukadeva Goswami states that there is no end to the Lord's material energy, but that he will try to explain the principle regions of Bhu-gola. Here the name Bhu-gola is used synonymously with Bhu-mandala:

"The great Rsi Sukadeva Gosvami said: My dear King, there is no limit to the expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead's material energy. This material world is a transformation of the material qualities [sattva-guna, rajo-guna and tamo-guna], yet no one could possibly explain it perfectly, even in a lifetime as long as that of Brahma. No one in the material world is perfect, and an imperfect person could not describe this material universe accurately, even after continued speculation. O King, I shall nevertheless try to explain to you the principal regions, such as Bhu-goloka [Bhuloka], with their **names, forms, measurements and various symptoms**. (SB 5.16.4)

bhu-golaka-visesam—the particular description of Bhuloka; *nama-rupa*—names and forms; *mana*—measurements; *laksanatah*—according to symptoms; *vyakhyasyamah*—I shall try to explain."

Note carefully that Pariksit Maharaja has asked for the 'names,' 'measurements' (*manataha*) and 'characteristics' (*lakshanataha*) of the Bhu-mandala (Earth circle). Sukadeva Goswami in reply gives him a very specific answer: *bhu-golaka-visenam nama-rupa-mana-laksanato vyakhyasyamah*: O King, I shall nevertheless try to explain to you the principal regions, such as Bhu-goloka [Bhuloka], with their names, forms, measurements and various symptoms (SB 5.16.4). Again, the Sanskrit words and English synonyms for this verse are: *nama-rupa*—names and forms; *mana*—measurements; *laksanatah*—according to symptoms; *vyakhyasyamah*—I shall try to explain.

In the above two verses, the name Bhu-gola is used interchangeable with the name Bhu-mandala to refer to the same place – the Earth circle. We know the name Bhu-gola is used synonymously with Bhu-mandala because, as requested, Sukadeva Goswami then goes on to explain the measurements and characteristics of the seven islands of Bhu-mandala up to the point of Lokaloka Mountain. The very name *Bhu*-gola indicates the Earth, and not the universe itself which is referred to using a whole different set of names such as *anda*, *vishva*, *jagat*, etc.

Now why are these Sanskrit words and names significant? The Sanskrit words used here are very significant because descriptions of 'names,' 'forms,' 'measurements,' and 'characteristics' provide means by which we can identify a certain thing. The word science means 'to know,' meaning originally to separate or distinguish one thing from another. A description thus enables one to identify a certain place, object, or person, as well as to distinguish it from something else. By following a description, we can avoid confusion by misidentifying one thing with another. By following Sukadeva Goswami's description of

the 'names,' 'form,' 'measurements,' and 'various symptoms' of the Bhu-gola or Earth circle, we see that they do not match in any way, to the names, forms, measurements, and general characteristics of the assumed Earth globe in space. This is a most important consideration because part of the argument in favour of depicting the Earth as a globe within the Temple Of Vedic Planetarium is to say that the name Bhu-gola is referring to the Earth globe. The Sanskrit word *gola*, however, can refer to anything round and does not necessarily imply a globe or ball shape. It can also mean a circular shape like a roundabout or Frisbee. By following the actual description of Bhu-gola, we can see clearly that Sukadeva Goswami is not describing the Earth or Bhu-gola as a globe in space, but rather, he is describing the Earth as a vast circular plane of 4 billion miles diameter. The size, location, and importance of the Earth or Bhu-gola is not an insignificant detail. The Bhu-gola is, in fact, the largest feature in the universe.

In reply to King Pariksit's inquiry about the measurements and characteristics of the Earth circle, Sukadeva Goswami describes the seven islands and other features of Bhu-mandala up to the point of Lokaloka mountain. At this point Sukadeva Goswami summarizes his description in SB 5.20.38. Therein he states:

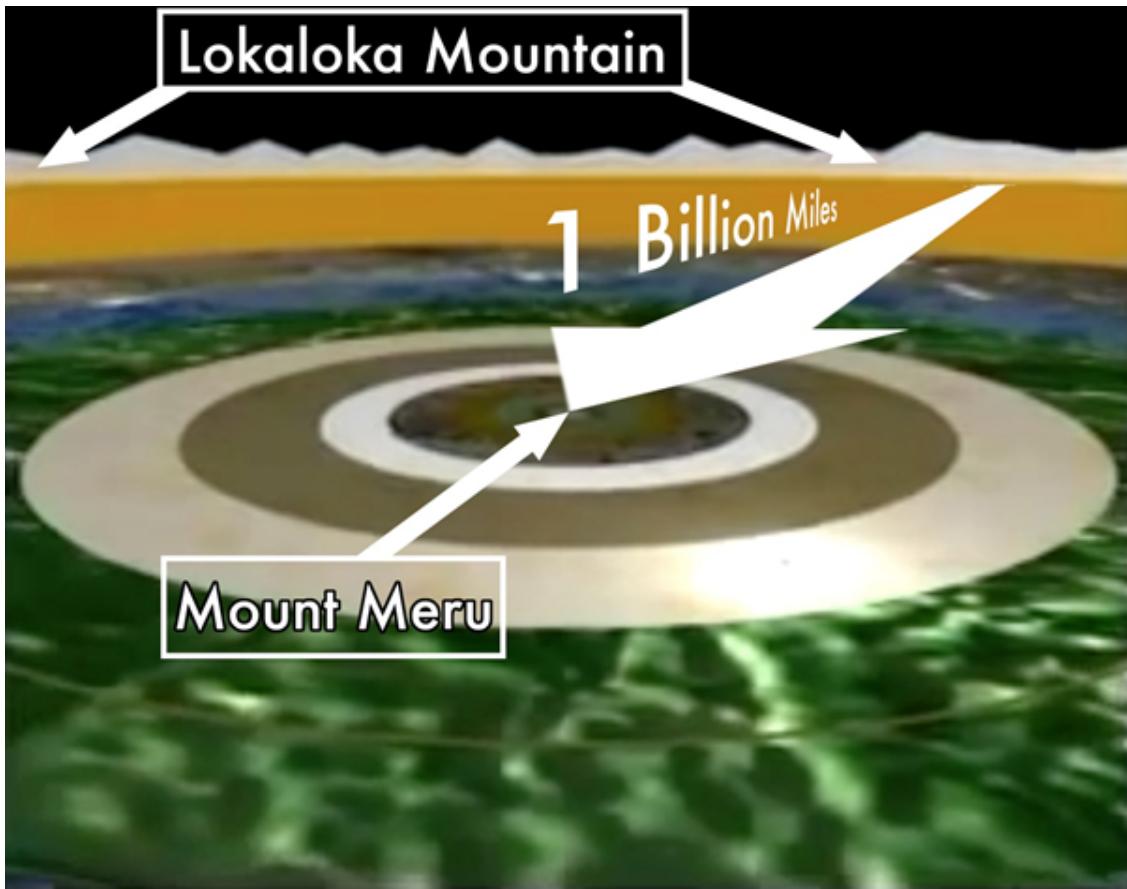
"Learned scholars who are free from mistakes, illusions and propensities to cheat have thus described the planetary systems and their particular symptoms, measurements and locations. With great deliberation, they have established the truth that the distance between Sumeru and the mountain known as Lokaloka is one fourth of the diameter of the universe—or, in other words, 125,000,000 yojanas [1 billion miles]." (SB 5.20.38)

Thus, the distance from Mount Meru (center of the universe) to Lokaloka Mountain is 125,000,000 yojanas (1 billion miles), which is a quarter of the overall size of **Bhu-gola**. Here again the word **Bhu-gola** is used synonymously with Bhu-mandala. The Sanskrit and English synonyms for this part of the verse are: panca-shat-koti—500,000,000 yojanas; gainitasya—which is measured at; **bhu-golasya**—of the planetary system known as Bhugolaka; turiya-bhagah—one-fourth; ayam—this; lokaloka-acalah—the mountain known as Lokaloka (SB 5.20.38).

In the verse quoted above (SB 16.20.38), Sukadeva Goswami clearly invokes the name Bhu-gola to mean the plane of Bhu-mandala. The acharyas in their commentaries attest to this synonymous usage:

"The extent of the entire earth is known to be 500,000 yojanas [4 billion miles] by great people. A fourth of it will be 125,000,000 yojanas [1 billion miles]." (Commentary to SB 5.20.38 by Sri Bhagavatprasadacharya)

Sukadeva Goswami gives the measurement from Mount Meru (the center of Bhu-gola or Bhu-mandala) to Lokaloka mountain as 1 billion miles (or a quarter of the overall diameter of the universe). The illustration below shows a depiction of the flat circular plane of Bhu-gola with the seven islands and oceans represented by a series of concentric circles. In the distance is the Lokaloka Mountain range. This distance covers an area of 1 billion miles which is a quarter of the overall size of Bhu-gola:



Now since this one area of Bhu-gola is 1 billion miles which is a quarter of the overall diameter of the universe, the Bhu-gola cannot possibly be referring to a so-called Earth globe floating in space with an alleged circumference of only 24,900 miles. In addition, since the seven islands and their surrounding oceans stretch for hundreds of millions of miles across the vast horizontal plane of the Bhu-mandala, they cannot possibly be referring to the continents of our Earth. In both of these usages of the name Bhu-gola, Sukadeva Goswami uses it interchangeably with the name Bhu-mandala and gives its measurements in billions of miles. In other words, it is simply wrong to think that the name and description of the Bhu-gola is referring to, or describing, a small round globe in space such as that presented by NASA in their photos of Earth from so-called outer space. No description of a small Earth globe, supposedly representing Bharata-varsha and its surrounding area, is actually given in any of the 18,000 verses of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, or in any other Purana. Such a description of Earth simply does not exist in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, and as we have argued in previous papers, does not exist at all. The globe is a fabrication!

Despite pointing out these verses to Antardwipa dasa (present head of the cosmology department at the TOVP as of January 2017), he continues to present the erroneous idea that the name Bhu-gola is referring to the assumed Earth globe. The mis-identification of the name Bhu-gola with the assumed Earth globe, means that verses from secondary texts such as *Surya Siddhanta* (a text on astronomy) which also features the name Bhu-gola, can be interpolated to make out that *Surya Siddhanta* is describing Earth as a globe. References gleaned from *Surya Siddhanta* are an essential part of the argument for a globe because, of course, there is no mention of an Earth globe in *Srimad Bhagavatam* itself. *One must find an Earth globe somewhere*, and erroneously the TOVP cosmologists believe they have found one in *Surya Siddhanta*. However, when we refer back to the description of Bhu-gola given in *Srimad Bhagavatam* (the essence of all Vedic literature), such an interpolation on the *Surya Siddhanta* cannot legitimately stand.

Why continue to equate the Bhu-gola with the assumed Earth globe when it is clearly pointed out that the measurement of Bhu-gola is 4 billion miles? Simply to quote statements by Srila Prabhupada wherein he also equates Bhu-gola with the Earth globe is not a justification to continue this malpractice. If the relevant verses describing the

measurement of Bhu-gola had been brought to Srila Prabhupada's attention, he would certainly not go against the authority of Sukadeva Goswami, but would have adjusted his understanding of Bhu-gola accordingly. We have discussed these statements of Srila Prabhupada on the Bhu-gola elaborately in section 1.2 below, and have provided a very simple and reasonable explanation as to why Srila Prabhupada imprecisely equates Bhu-gola with the Earth globe. One can only question the motive of the TOVP representatives to continue this false understanding of Bhu-gola when the measurement and characteristics of Bhu-gola are there in black and white for all to see. So please mark again Sukadeva Goswami's words:

"Learned scholars who are free from mistakes, illusions and propensities to cheat have thus described the planetary systems and their particular symptoms, measurements and locations. With great deliberation, they have established the truth that the distance between Sumeru and the mountain known as Lokaloka is one fourth of the diameter of the universe [**bhu-golasya**]—or, in other words, 125,000,000 yojanas [1 billion miles]." (SB 5.20.38)

Although in the translation, the name Bhu-gola has been identified here as the universe itself, Bhu-gola is actually referring to the great Earth plane. This can be ascertained both from the context, and its usage in other contexts through-out the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, as well as by the commentaries of the acharyas. We have collected all the verses in *Srimad Bhagavatam* in which the name Bhu-gola is invoked, and it undoubtedly refers to the same Bhu-mandala (see: *Earth is Not a Globe: Section 1.2 — Defining Our Terms: Definition and Description of Bhu-gola*. This section includes the part: *Three Further References to Bhu-gola in Srimad Bhagavatam*). The link can be [found here](#).

The very name Bhu-gola tells us that it is a reference to the Earth, and not the universe. *BHU* means Earth, not universe, which has other Sanskrit names such as anda, vishva, jagat, etc. Some say that Bhu-gola is sometimes considered to be the universe because the first covering of the universe is made of the Earth substance. In any case, whether one believes Bhu-gola refers to the Universe, or to the circular Earth plane within the universal egg, it most certainly *does not refer* to the assumed Earth globe. Since a quarter of the Bhu-gola measures at 1 billion miles, it is obviously, clearly, and unequivocally, not a reference to the assumed Earth globe. So if anyone continues to argue that the Bhu-gola is a 24,900 mile globe floating in space when the description provided by Sukadeva Goswami clearly measures it at 4 billion miles, then one of three things must be happening: the person is either innocently or deliberately perpetrating a mistake, they are in illusion, or they are cheating. Otherwise, it is plainly stated that "Learned scholars who are free from mistakes, illusions and propensities to cheat have measured one fourth of the Bhu-gola as 125,000,000 yojanas [1 billion miles]" (Sb 5.20.38).

We can't accuse Srila Prabhupada of any of these conditions in his identification of Bhu-gola with the Earth globe because no one ever pointed out the relevant verses which disprove the conflation of one conception with the other. If the relevant verses had been brought to Srila Prabhupada's attention, he would have certainly adjusted his understanding in line with *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description. Unfortunately, that procedure of aligning with shastra, is not being applied by the management at the Temple Of Vedic Planetarium who continue to push this false idea that the description of the 'names,' 'measurements,' and 'characteristics' of the Bhu-gola are references to the so-called Earth globe.

Since, Sukadeva Goswami provides a very specific measurement of the Earth, this must surely serve as the primary basis for assessing whether the Bhu-gola (round Earth) in question is the same as the assumed Earth globe of 24,900-mile circumference. A measurement is not something that one can just brush aside as irrelevant. A measurement gives us one of the best pieces of information about the thing being described. For example, if we measure the length of Great Britain from Land's End to John o' Groats, it comes to a distance of 847 miles (give or take a few miles). Measuring Great Britain at 847 miles long means that the place name 'Great Britain' cannot be identified as some other area of land with a much smaller or much larger area. Likewise,

when Sukadeva Goswami describes the Earth of *Srimad Bhagavatam* (Bhu-mandala or its equivalent term Bhu-gola) as 4 billion miles in diameter, we are obviously not talking about the same thing as the assumed Earth globe of 24,900 miles. There actually is no description of such an entity in the original texts of *Srimad Bhagavatam*. The specific measurements provided by Sukadeva Goswami thus prevent one from whimsically conflating the description of the Earth in *Srimad Bhagavatam* with the assumed Earth globe.

By presenting names, measurements, and characteristics Sukadeva Goswami provides specific data that can't be argued over (unlike other certain philosophical and theological concepts within the Krishna consciousness philosophy that may be open to interpretation). For example, the size of Bharata-varsha is measured at 72,000 miles:

"In Jambudvipa there are nine divisions of land, each with a length of 9,000 yojanas [72,000 miles]. There are eight mountains that mark the boundaries of these divisions and separate them nicely". (*SB 5.16.6*)

This measurement refers only to the distance between each varsha, thus going north to south, Bharata-varsha is 72,000 miles which is nine times the diameter of the assumed Earth globe. Going east to west, along the great Himavat Mountain (which forms the northern border of Bharata and separates Bharata-varsha from Kimpurusha-varsha), the distance of Bharata-varsha is much greater and measures at hundreds of thousands of miles. We must also consider that Bharata-varsha's location is at the southern side of Jambudwipa, an island 800,000 miles in length and breadth. Jambudwipa itself is just a small part of Bhu-gola, the great circular Earth plane measuring 4 billion miles. Unlike a philosophical concept, one can't debate over these measurements. There may be some debate over the precise size of the measuring unit known as yojana, but this would only slightly affect the scale of the thing and not the form itself. So if Bharata-varsha is described as having a width of 72,000 miles in size, and a length of hundreds of thousands of miles, as well as being situated at the southern end of an 800,000 mile island, what has this description got in common with the idea the idea that Bharata-varsha refers only to India which is on the eastern part of 24,900 mile circumference globe spinning in space?

For comparison, let us think of a description of Italy. A description of Italy contains a name, shape, measurement, location, and various geographical information that enables us to identify Italy as Italy, and not a different country in some other location. Italy, for example, is at the southern side of the European continent. The Alpine Mountain range separates it from its northern neighbours. Its coastline is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea. The description is simple and straightforward. Similarly, Sukadeva Goswami describes Bharata-varsha as the southern district of an 800,000 mile island called Jambudwipa. The coastline of Bharata-varsha is surrounded by part of the 800,000 mile salt water ocean. At the northern border of Bharata-varsha is an 80,000 mile high mountain called Himavata, which separates it from its neighbours. From this description there are no grounds for equating Bharata-varsha as the so-called 24,900 mile circumference Earth planet floating in space. That is not what is being described. One may not believe in the description of a such a fantastic landscape, but that is only due to the limitations of the mundane mind in conceiving the awesome features in Krishna's creation. Sila Prabhupada writes:

"There are so many mountains, even on this planet earth. We do not think that the measurements of all of them have actually been calculated. While passing over the mountainous region from Mexico to Caracas, we actually saw so many mountains that we doubt whether their height, length and breadth have been properly measured. Therefore, as indicated in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* by Sukadeva Gosvami, we should not try to comprehend the greater mountainous areas of the universe merely by our calculations. Sukadeva Gosvami has already stated that such calculations would be very difficult even if one had a duration of life like that of Brahma. We should simply be satisfied with the statements of authorities like Sukadeva Gosvami and appreciate how the entire cosmic manifestation has been made possible by the external energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The

measurements given herein, such as 10,000 *yojanas* [80,000 miles] or 100,000 *yojanas* [800,000 miles] should be considered correct because they have been given by Sukadeva Gosvami. Our experimental knowledge can neither verify nor disprove the statements of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. We should simply hear these statements from the authorities. If we can appreciate the extensive energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that will benefit us."

By strictly following Sukadeva Goswami's description of the name, form, measurements, and characteristics of the Bhu-gola, one can't possibly misidentify Bhu-gola (round earth) with the assumed Earth globe of 24,900 miles supposedly floating in space. Thus, there are no legitimate arguments for claiming that Bhu-gola refers to the assumed Earth globe; hence, no excuse to present the Earth as a globe in the Temple of Vedic Planetarium when no such description actually exists in the original texts of *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Our own Earth area is clearly described as just a part of the Bhu-gola; not that it is the Bhu-gola.

The nature of the Bhu-gola has become a point of controversy, not because the original description is vague and ambiguous, but because most of the devotees writing on the subject simply cannot accept that our own Earth area of Bharata-varsha continues on a plane into a greater Earth area as described by Sukadeva Goswami. We have been duped into believing that the Earth is a globe in space, and find it difficult to conceive of the Earth otherwise.

To settle this dispute we need independent adjudication from senior Vaishnavas and brahmanas within the International Society for Krishna consciousness who are not directly connected with the TOVP project. The dispute regarding Bhu-gola has to be settled on the basis of shastra. If the shastra says that Bhu-gola has a diameter of 4 billion miles then our senior devotees must insist that any understanding of the Earth must be made in regard to this description. Truthfulness is a quality of a brahma:

"Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, cleanliness, satisfaction, tolerance, simple straightforwardness, devotion to Me, mercy and **truthfulness (satyam)** are the natural qualities of the brahmanas." (SB 11.17.16)

If the shastra establishes that Bhu-gola is 4 billion miles, then that measurement is *the truth of the Bhu-gola*. A truthful brahma will therefore insist on this measurement.

Modern scientific calculations are subject to one change after another, and therefore they are uncertain. We have to accept the calculations of the Vedic literature. These Vedic calculations are steady; the astronomical calculations made long ago and recorded in the Vedic literature are correct even now. Whether the Vedic calculations or modern ones are better may remain a mystery for others, but as far as we are concerned, we accept the Vedic calculations to be correct. (SB 5.22.8)

Followers of *Srimad Bhagavatam* have faith in the measurements of the Earth provided by Sukadeva Goswami, not in the measurements of the Earth provided by Eratosthenes who apparently calculated the circumference of the so-called globe. Krishna says one's faith should be in the shastra:

shraddham bhagavate shastre (11.3.26)

Indeed, the mark of an empowered servant of God is that he is able to counter speculative knowledge by instilling faith in the original Vedic literature:

"Therefore any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. **The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions.** Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving

aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual masters." (SB 11.3.21)

If anyone insists on applying the name Bhu-gola to the assumed Earth globe of 24,900 miles, then knowingly or unknowingly, one is not being truthful to the authoritative statements of shastra that clearly measures the diameter of Bhu-gola at 4 billion miles. By conflating the terms Bhu-gola and Earth globe, one deviates from the truth:

"Bhagavad-gita also said, yah shastra-vidhim utsrjya vartate-kama-karatah: [Bg. 16.23] "If you do not follow the description of the shastra and if you manufacture something," then na siddhim sa avapnoti, "then you'll never get perfection." (Cc Adi-lila 1.7, Mayapur, March 31, 1975)

Again, the truth of the thing must be established with reference to the shastra itself. One can find references to Bhu-gola that measure its diameter at 4 billion miles, but one cannot find references to Bhu-gola that measure its diameter at 8,000 miles:

"So therefore we accept the Vedic injunction as truth. We haven't got to make research. We save time. So according to Vedic civilization, whatever is stated in the Vedas, we take it-fact. That's all. Shruti. Shruti-pramanam. Shruti means Vedas. Pramanam means evidence. According to Indian system... There are two persons talking, arguing, but the person who can give Vedic evidence, he is victorious. That's all. That is the system. Just like in law court two lawyers are fighting, but the lawyer who is giving evidences from the lawbook, he is accepted by the judge. And therefore, generally you will find, whenever we speak something, we give evidence from the Shastra in Sanskrit, in all our books. That is the way of proving that whatever I am speaking, it is fact." (*Room Conversation with Maharishi Impersonalists, April 7, 1972, Melbourne*)

Again, Srila Prabhupada cannot be regarded as being untruthful in his conflation of the Earth globe with the name Bhu-gola because the relevant verses describing the measurements of Bhu-gola were never brought to his attention for discussion. Although Srila Prabhupada personally translated the measurement of Bhu-gola, the ramifications of this were never brought to Srila Prabhupada for his consideration. This is a very different situation from the present insistence of the TOVP that Bhu-gola refers to the assumed Earth globe despite it being pointed out that the *Srimad Bhagavatam* describes Bhu-gola as something entirely different.

So in regards to Sukadeva Goswami's description of the 'names,' 'measurements,' and 'characteristics' of Bhu-gola, the name, Bhu-gola, is not applicable to the assumed Earth globe; the measurement of Bhu-gola is not the same as the measurement of the assumed Earth globe; and the *characteristic features* of Bhu-gola are not the same as the assumed Earth globe. We have presented an argument here that establishes how the measurement of Bhu-gola and Bharata-varsha cannot be equated with the so-called Earth globe. To understand how the 'names' and 'characteristic features' of the Bhu-gola/Bhu-mandala differ from the name and characteristic features of the so-called globe, we refer the reader to a more in-depth study presented in the paper, "[Earth is Not a Globe, Part Three](#).

To conflate the name Bhu-gola with the assumed Earth globe is clearly a mistake. The simple conflation of these two names has created a planet Earth out of thin air. The reader is advised to individually research the topic, otherwise one may be easily subject to someone else's mistakes, illusions, and cheating propensity:

"The whole so-called human society means a bunch of cheaters and cheated. That's all... **So don't be cheater; don't be cheated. That is intelligence.**" (*Morning Walk, March 14 1976, Mayapur*)

So you make your society so strong that you be not cheated, and others may not cheat. Then it will be first-class. **And if you make another society of cheaters**

and cheated, there is no profit. Therefore you have to follow the rules and regulations very strictly and become serious. Then you'll be ideal." (*Morning Walk, June 14 1974, Paris*)

"So don't be cheater; don't be cheated. That is intelligence. Please note Srila Prabhupada's warning: "if you make another society of cheaters and cheated, there is no profit." Will the Earth globe exhibition within the Temple Of Vedic Planetarium prove to be another example of the cheaters and cheated. This is the world of maya after all, and we like our illusions. *Srimad Bhagavatam* informs us that we (in Bharata-varsha) live on an Earth plane that is surrounded by vast areas of land and ocean that continues for hundreds of millions of miles. The TOVP management want to convince us that we live on a small isolated globe floating in space. The reality of this vast landscape of Bhu-mandala surrounding the continents of our own Earth area is simply dismissed. Again, to repeat the point made earlier: it is really quite astonishing, that in spite of *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s clear description of Bharata-varsha's position on a continual Earth plane, the present TOVP management (*who are supposed to be presenting Srimad Bhagavatam as a factual description of the universe*), flatly refuse to acknowledge even the possibility that this may be a true account of our Earth.

The extent of the Bhu-mandala, and Bharata-varsha's place upon it, will certainly be there for all to see in the main dome exhibition at the Mayapur Temple of Vedic Planetarium, but who will be able to catch the truth of it? The truth of Bharata-varsha's location on the Bhu-mandala will be obscured and hidden by a secondary exhibition presenting the Earth as a globe in space to be the 'real truth' or 'fact of the matter.' So isn't it ironic that the TOVP which is meant to explain the truth of Krishna's creation as described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, will end up doing just the opposite – perpetrating the same Earth globe idea which upon investigation proves to be nothing but a fantastic combination of speculative science (Copernicus, Galileo etc), and deliberate deception (NASA).

In the citations above regarding the society of cheaters and cheated, Srila Prabhupada's instructs how to avoid the cheating propensity by following the regulative principles (chanting 16 rounds daily of the Hare Krishna mantra and following the four regulative principles (see SB 1.1.7 and purport). If we sincerely do this as a regular practice, how will the Earth look when we come to look at it through the eyes of shastra? Are our eyes cleansed by strict daily sadhana so that we can see and understand the thing as it is? Are those perpetrating the globe concept, strictly following the daily sadhana of chanting sixteen rounds of Hare Krishna maha-manta, etc?

For the benefit of anyone else who doesn't want to be 'mistaken,' 'illusioned,' or 'cheated' into thinking that the Earth of *Srimad Bhagavatam* is a globe, let us first focus for a moment on the word 'description.' Everything that exists has a description. The Temple Of Vedic Planetarium, for example, has a description. It has a name, it has a location, it has a shape, it has a direction, and it has certain measurements. It has also a specific function and purpose that differentiates it from other types of buildings. The description enables us to distinguish the TOVP from other notable buildings in India such as Taj Mahal, or from other religious buildings in the world such as Saint Paul's Cathedral. Everything that exists has a description which enables us to distinguish one thing from another. Each person has a description that distinguishes him or her from someone else. Descriptions inform us of the existence, and nature, of things, places, and people; and they enable us to distinguish one thing from another. Do we all agree that a description is important, and that we should present a thing as it is described? Certainly, it is the stated instruction of Srila Prabhupada that the cosmology of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* is to be depicted in the TOVP according to the description of Sukadeva Goswami. The shape and location of our own area on the Earth circle is revealed in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s Fifth Canto, chapter 16, entitled a *Description of Jambudwipa*. Regarding the depiction of the Vedic universe in the MayapurPlanetarium, Srila Prabhupada stated:

"We have to describe according to our book. That's all. If they can understand, let them understand. Otherwise... It is not our business to satisfy the

so-called scientists. **We are giving the real description.**" (*Room Conversation, June 18, 1977, Vrindavana*)

Again, in the letter below to Mr. S.L Dhani, Srila Prabhupada wrote:

"Now here in India, we are planning construction of a very large "Vedic Planetarium" or "Temple of Understanding". Within the planetarium we will construct a huge, detailed model of the universe **as described** in the text of the fifth canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*...The plans for this very large project are being taken solely from the references found in fifth canto *Srimad Bhagavatam* and its authoritative commentaries by important acharyas, along with other Puranas and Samhitas like Brahma-samhita etc." (*Letter to S.L. Dhani, November 14, 1976*)

Again:

"Prabhupada: ...that "We are intending to make a huge planetarium. If you can help us?"

Tamala Krishna: Mentioning the Fifth Canto, Bhagavatam?

Prabhupada: **Exactly to the description of Fifth Canto, we want.** (*Room Conversation, May 8 1977, Hrishikesh*)

On multiple occasions, when discussing this project and its relation to modern so-called scientific conceptions of the universe, Srila Prabhupada insisted that his disciples take the version of *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Srila Prabhupada's wish to present *Srimad Bhagavatam* as it is, was certainly respected by his disciples at the time who were working on the project:

We are working very diligently on the Fifth Canto, making elaborate drawings of the universe according to the descriptions given. (Tamala Krishna Goswami to Harikesha Swami Vrindavana, July 7, 1977)

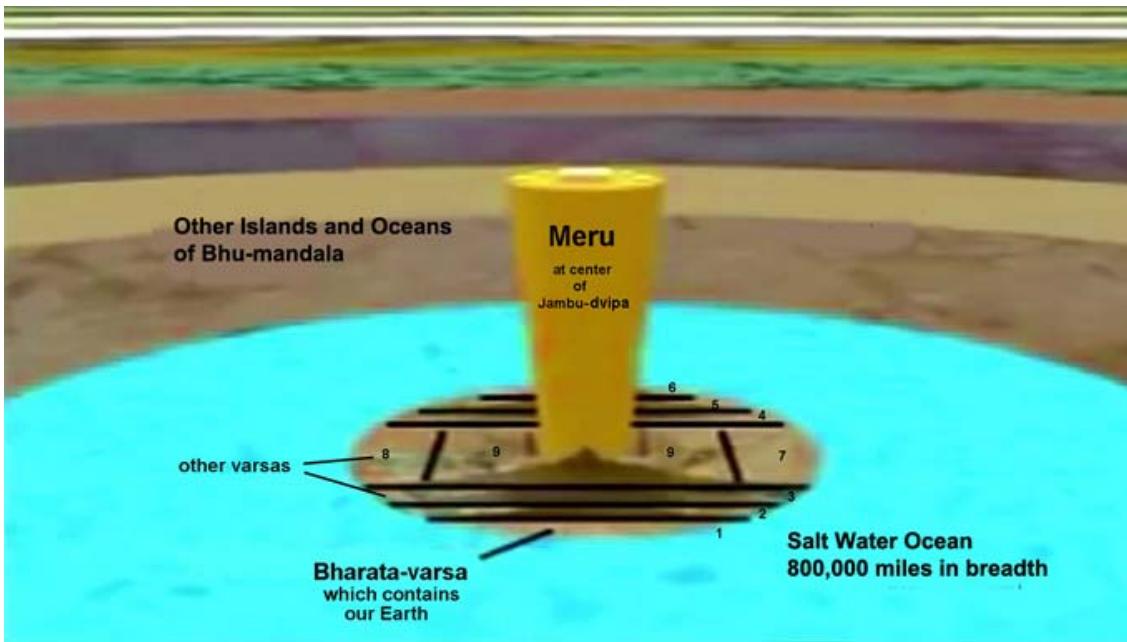
The present failure of the present TOVP management to understand and present the Earth of *Srimad Bhagavatam* comes from a strange inability/reluctance to follow the simple description.

TAKE THE STRAIGHT-FORWARD MEANING

Let us go back again to our consideration of the word 'description,' and Srila Prabhupada's directive to depict and explain 'the description' of *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology within the TOVP. The procedure is plainly explained by Bhaktivinoda Thakura in the following words

"One should understand and explain the straight forward, direct meaning of a text – too much analysis and extrapolation only lead to misconception." (*Jaiva Dharma translated by Sarvabhadra dasa, Brhat Mrdanga Press, 2004, p328*)

Although Bhaktivinoda Takura is making a general point here about reading Vedic literature, it is a very important statement, particularly in regard to understanding the cosmological section of *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Sukadeva Goswami gives a brief but substantial description of Bharata-varsha's shape, measurement, and location on the plane of Bhu-mandala. He describes Bharata-varsha as being at the southern end of Jambudwipa which is an island 800,000 miles in length and breadth. Jambudwipa itself is the central and smallest island on this vast Earth plane:



How are we to understand Sukadeva Goswami's description of this Earth plane in the light of our current understanding that the Earth is a globe in space? Should we take the straightforward description, or should we 'extrapolate' in order to make Sukadeva Goswami's description 'fit' with the modern conception?

The Oxford English dictionary defines the word extrapolation as follows:

"To apply (a theory, etc.) to unknown situations on the basis of its relevance to known situations: to infer (conclusions) from known facts or observed tendencies."

The Collins English Dictionary likewise defines:

"To infer (something not known) by deducing from known facts."

Examples of extrapolation on the *Srimad Bhagavatam* would be inferring that the name Bhu-gola (round Earth) must refer to the assumed Earth globe. The reasoning is as follows: since we 'know' the Earth is a round globe, we can deduce from the *known fact* that the Bhu-gola (round Earth) of *Srimad Bhagavatam* must be referring to the same thing. In fact, it is not referring to the same thing at all. The descriptions don't match in the slightest. A philosopher would therefore go back to the original premise to check if it is correct or not. In this case, the original premise is the assumption that the Earth is a globe. But has anyone double-checked to see if its true or not, or will we all just continue assuming it to be true? What about a devils advocate against the globe? Is that too much to ask?

Incredibly, the placement of a globe within the TOVP is being pushed ahead despite the glaring fact no such entity actually appears in the description of Earth provided by Sukadeva Goswami. *Placing a globe Earth into the Vedic cosmology exhibition, is the equivalent of someone going into an art gallery with a paint set, and painting their own additions onto one of the great art works.* Such a mentality is criminal.

The idea of an Earth globe rotating in space is a foreign concept born of the speculations of western so-called scientists. It is not a Vedic concept. The idea that the Earth globe is an original Vedic idea, is in reality, nothing but the super-imposition of the modern globe concept unto the Bhu-mandala description. The original verses that describe Bhu-mandala contain no mention of any Earth globe floating in space. A dictionary definition of superimposition reads as follows:

- "1. To lay or place (something) on or over something else.
2. To add as a distinct feature, element, or quality: *superimposed her own interpretation when she retold the story.*"

This in a nutshell explains the addition of a globe into the description of the Vedic cosmology provided by Sukadeva Goswami. The TOVP have taken the undue liberty of placing an Earth globe into Sukadeva Goswami's original description of an Earth circle, and thus *superimposed their own interpretation of the Earth into their presentation of the fifth canto cosmology*. The Wiki definition of superimposition reads as follows:

"In graphics, superimposition is the placement of an image or video on top of an already-existing image or video, usually to add to the overall image effect, but also sometimes to conceal something (such as when a different face is superimposed over the original face in a photograph)."

This is an interesting definition, that basically explains how the original understanding of Bhu-mandala is concealed by the superimposition of the globe concept. The description of Bhu-mandala informs us that our own Earth area is situated on the same plane as the greater Earth area. The globe model, however, situates us in outer space which means the rest of Bhu-mandala must be made to vanish into another dimension. This conceals the important message that Sukadeva Goswami is trying to convey, namely that our own Earth area is surrounded by the vast landscape of the greater Earth area, and that the oceans of our known Earth area are just a small part of the greater salt-water ocean measured at 800,000 miles in breadth. According to *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we (in Bharata-varsha) are part of a vast Earth plane; we are not on a globe-shaped Earth planet. The description of the Bhu-mandala in *Srimad Bhagavatam* is sufficient in itself to understand the situation of the Earth. It is not required to bring in the sorry speculations of Copernicus, Galileo, and company who simply created a false construct of reality with their version of an Earth ball flying around in space. Let globe advocates build their own planetarium.

When we actually follow the description of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we see that Sukadeva Goswami is not describing the Bhu-gola as a small planet floating in space, but rather as a vast circular plane crossing the center of the universe. We should, therefore, take the actual description which is straightforward, not the extrapolation, which ends up completely departing from the original description. Unfortunately, rather than take the straightforward description of Bharata varsha's shape and location on the great Earth plane, our TOVP cosmologists feel the need to defend the idea that Bharata-varsha is actually part of the assumed globe in space. All sorts of jugglery then takes place to present a globe-shaped Earth in the *Srimad Bhagvatam* when no such entity actually exists.

The tendency to extrapolate on Sukadeva Goswami's straightforward description arises from the unquestioned assumption that the Earth really is a globe in space as presented by NASA. In other words, one begins with the premise that one 'factually' knows that the Earth is a globe. Rather than taking Sukadeva Gowsami's description of the Earth as a basis for disproving – or at least questioning - the authenticity of the globe conception, our present TOVP cosmologists insist on doing the very opposite. They presuppose the authenticity of the Earth globe in space, and really don't know what to make of Sukadeva's description of Bharata-varsha's shape and location on the plane of Bhu-mandala. The easiest way to dispose of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of a vast Earth plane surrounding Bharata-varsha is to consign Bhu-mandala to another dimension. Thus, despite reproducing images and videos that accurately depict Bharata-varsha's shape and location on the Bhu-mandala as described by Sukadeva Goswami, the lack of realization of this cosmic landscape is evident when we hear the same people insist that the Earth is, in fact, a globe in space.

However, if one truly accepts the reality of Sukadeva Goswami's description of the great Earth plane, why would one be involved in self-contradiction by vehemently denying that

our known Earth area continues on a plane into the rest of the greater Bhu-mandala area? Despite all shastric evidence to the contrary, our present head of cosmology at the TOVP insists that the Bhu-gola which is measured at 4 billion miles in diameter refers to the assumed Earth globe of 24,900 miles. Antardwipa dasa also insists that despite Bharata-varsha's location at the southern end of Jambudwipa, our Earth does not continue into the greater Earth area of Jambudwipa because the facts dictate that we are a planet in space. Go figure! By neglecting to accept and defend the straightforward meaning, one becomes entangled in mis-conceptions and contradictions. This is the point made by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura:

"One should understand and explain the straight forward, direct meaning of a text - **too much analysis and extrapolation only lead to misconception.**" (*Jaiva Dharma* p328)

There are many misconceptions arising from this false conflation of Bhu-gola with the so-called Earth globe and as these misconceptions become exposed, the supporters of this model will only find themselves increasingly embarrassed at such a ridiculous attempt to merge the globe conception of reality with the Bhu-mandala. The present claim on behalf of the TOVP management that the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology supports a globe-Earth conception is a clear deviation from the facts as we can demonstrate. Rather than sheepishly and unquestioningly supporting this reactionary position, the responsible leaders of the Hare Krishna movement must begin to seriously consider that our perception of the Earth as a globe in space has been fabricated, and the so-called world we thought was real, is not. Again on what basis does one establish what is real? Surely the starting point for discerning reality from illusion must be *Srimad Bhagavatam* itself.

Since the Mayapur Temple of Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) is required to present the cosmology of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the Bhagavatam's revolutionary description of Earth must obviously and inevitably bring the International Society for Krishna Consciousness into dispute with the prevailing science that supports the modern globe conception. Sukadeva Goswami's description of a vast Earth circle must also certainly bring the Society into dispute with world space agencies like NASA and ESA who claim to be photographing and filming a globe-shaped Earth from outer space. Rather than fear such a disputation, those who follow the revolutionary spirit of Srila Prabhupada welcome the battle of world-views:

"On the other hand, that literature which is full of descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms, pastimes, etc., of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words directed toward bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world's misdirected civilization. Such transcendental literatures, even though imperfectly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest." (*SB* 1.5.11)

(Section 1.2) WHY DID SRILA PRABHUPADA REFER TO THE EARTH IS A GLOBE?

Since the mandate of the Mayapur Temple of Vedic Planetarium is to present the cosmology of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, it cannot legitimately present Earth as a globe in space when no such description of an Earth globe in space actually occurs in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* itself. The issue is complicated, of course, because there are many statements from Srila Prabhupada in which he apparently supports the Earth globe concept. Many citations could be provided by globe advocates in which Srila Prabhupada translates Sanskrit words and names as Earth 'globe' or 'planet.' Rather than dealing with each specific quotation, we hope a general explanation can be made by placing all of these citations in a general context, that explains why Srila Prabhupada spoke of the Earth as a globe planet, and not as the vast circular disc (Bhu-mandala) described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

The reason Srila Prabhupada spoke of the Earth as a globe, and not as the great circular plane described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, is actually quite simple and straightforward when we consider the context. In the mid 1970's when Srila Prabhupada began his translation and commentary on *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s fifth canto cosmology, *any understanding of the Vedic cosmology (and particularly of the Earth within it) had been practically obliterated, even within India*. To my knowledge there is not even a specific book within the main body of Gaudiya Vaishnava literature that deals with the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology. Aside from the commentaries by the Vaishnava acharyas on the fifth canto, none of the great writers in the Gaudiya-Vaishnava lineage seems to have written on the subject. Unlike Vedic astrology which remained a popular science in India, Vedic cosmology seemed to have been practically forgotten, having long been over-run by the Western so-called scientific understanding of the Earth globe, and it's supposed motions in the universe. Certainly, at the time when Srila Prabhupada initiated the Temple of Vedic Planetarium project in the 1970's, there were difficulties to locate anyone who actually knew, or could conceptualize, what the Bhu-mandala looked like. This is quite evident from the conversations we will look at presently. Even Srila Prabhupada's search for Vedic astronomers who could help with designing maps for the Planetarium ended in disappointment (see below).

Unlike the Jain religion where a tradition of passing down an accurate understanding of the complexities of traditional cosmology remained a very important part of their teachings, among the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, cosmology does not seem to have been a prominent point of discussion. It's not surprising, therefore, that Srila Prabhupada appeared unfamiliar with aspects of the Vedic cosmology, and simply spoke of the Earth in conventional terms as a globe and planet. The issue of Srila Prabhupada's usage of the words Earth planet and Earth globe, is easily resolved by understanding that although *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of the Earth had been *translated by Srila Prabhupada*, it had not yet been *deciphered*. This is very clear from the talks entitled *Discussions on Bhu-mandala* in July 1977, between Srila Prabhupada and a number of his disciples who had been delegated to research and present the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology in the Temple of Vedic Planetarium. Interestingly, research into the fifth canto had really only begun in earnest in the spring and summer of 1977, and was certainly not concluded by the time of Srila Prabhupada's physical departure in November 1977. Thus, although it was Srila Prabhupada who initiated a grand plan to revive and re-establish the Vedic cosmology by presenting it in the Mayapur Temple of Vedic Planetarium, Srila Prabhupada always presented himself as a layman on the subject, and basically delegated his disciples with the task of figuring it out.

The topic of cosmology is unique in Srila Prabhupada's otherwise inviolable presentation of Vedic knowledge. The cosmology section of the fifth canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam* is one of the few areas that Srila Prabhupada expressed his own limited knowledge of this subject. Deciphering the fifth canto cosmology was also one of the few areas of transcendental knowledge that Srila Prabhupada entrusted to his disciples:

"So now you all Ph.D.'s must carefully study the details of the 5th Canto and make a working model of the universe. If we can explain the passing seasons, eclipses, phases of the moon, passing of day and night, etc. then it will be very powerful propaganda. I am sending this letter to you, and you can make photocopies of it and send to our other Ph.D.'s and begin serious research into the matter in detail." (Auckland, 27 April, 1976)

Notice here that Srila Prabhupada is requesting his disciples to make a working model of the universe according to the Vedic description. It is significant that Srila Prabhupada is not presenting *his own* model or explanation of how the universe works. The 'working model' in question is thus open for discussion and debate. It is not that Srila Prabhupada settled the question of the Earth simply because he referred to the Earth as a globe. Whether the Earth is a globe or not remains to be seen. We have yet to see all the results of the study into the fifth canto that Srila Prabhupada initiated in this letter dated 1976.

We should not assume that since Srila Prabhupada presented himself as a layman on the topic of Vedic cosmology that this was because he was unable to understand the subject. Srila Prabhupada knew that he had limited time to complete his epic mission of spreading Krishna consciousness through-out the world, and so he wisely delegated the task of studying the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s fifth canto cosmology to his disciples. Otherwise, Srila Prabhupada, stressed the importance of the topic by preaching on select points from the fifth canto cosmology. Indeed, by looking at the few areas of cosmology that Srila Prabhupada selected to preach upon, we can learn from Srila Prabhupada's example of how to understand the Vedic universe by faithfully adhering to the descriptions given in the original text.

As mentioned, most of the controversy surrounding the Earth comes not because the original description by Sukadeva Goswami is vague or ambiguous and therefore open to interpretation; controversy arises because of a failure to stick closely to the literal description, which consequently leads to wild speculation on the topic. On account of an initial assumption that the globe in space is the real situation of our Earth, very few writers on this subject can accept the possibility that Sukadeva Goswami's description of Bharata-varsha's place on Bhu-mandala is the factual situation of our Earth.

It should be carefully noted, that most of Srila Prabhupada's references to Earth globe or Earth planet are prior to some very important discussions about the Bhu-mandala that took place in June/July of 1977, just a few months before Srila Prabhupada's physical departure in November 1977. These discussions are referenced on the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase as *Showing of Planetary Sketches* (28 June, 1977, Vrindavana) and *Discussion on Bhu-mandala* (July 2-5, 1977, Vrindavana). These discussions are very significant because it was not until around April-July 1977, after Srila Prabhupada had instructed a number of disciples to prepare maps and drawings for the Planetarium, that any serious investigation of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology was forthcoming. Until then the fifth canto was an unfathomable mystery:

Tamala Krishna: So I think that Svarupa Damodara will be helped by these drawings when the men come. 'Cause he said that even though they are scientists, they could not understand this volume. It's been a mystery practically. These drawings, one by one, should be able to help in the creation of that planetarium.

Prabhupada: Thank you very much. Hare Krishna.
(*Bhu-mandala Diagram Discussion, July 2, 1977, Vrindavana*)

Although Srila Prabhupada consistently spoke of the round/globular Earth concept, and also rejected the flat Earth concept (on the few occasions when the topic came up), it was never in the context of any scholarly discussion of the original texts of the fifth canto such as the conversations mentioned entitled, *Showing of the Planetary Sketches* (June 28 1977, Vrindavana), and *Discussions on Bhu-mandala* (July 2-5, 1977, Vrindavana). Here the questions and answers were more academic, and as we shall see presently, once the glaring disparities between the Vedic and modern conceptions of the Earth were pointed out to Srila Prabhupada, his answers to questions about the shape of the Earth became rhetorical and cryptic, rather than a straightforward yes or no. We shall come back to these discussions presently as they are crucial in understanding Srila Prabhupada's many statements that seemingly support a globe concept.

In defense of the idea that the Sanskrit name for the Earth, *Bhu-gola* (literally 'round Earth') is referring to the assumed Earth globe, advocates of the globe model present the following statements from Srila Prabhupada:

Prabhupada: Jagad-anda means universe. Brahmanda or jagad-anda. Anda. Anda means it is egg-shaped, round, egg-shaped. Therefore it is called anda, brahmanda. Bhu-gola. Gola means round. I have heard that before the science, the people were under the impression that this world is square. Is it not?

Devotees: Flat.

Prabhupada: Flat. Flat, yes. But in the Vedic shastra, millions of years ago it is mentioned: bhu-gola. Gola means round. Just see. And these rascals say that formerly people were not so intelligent. They are intelligent because they are thinking that this world is flat. And those who have spoken millions of years ago, "It is round," they will have less intelligence. Just see. Bhu, gola. Gola means round. Bhu-gola. Similarly, jagad-anda. Anda means round, just like egg. Anda means egg. Jagad-anda. This universe is egg-shaped. And we can see also, the sky is round. This is the wall of this universe.

(*Bhagavad-Gita Lecture 1.43, London, July 30, 1973*)

Again:

Prajapati: One scientist, Galileo, he was making all kinds of inquiries into saying that the earth is round and so many things, and the church of that day, the rascal priests, they put him to death because he was saying things that were not in the scriptures. Since that time, especially the last hundred years, the scientists are...

Prabhupada: No, the thing is that it is the government's duty to see that nobody is rascal, either the scientist is rascal or the priest is rascal. There must be real understanding. That is government's duty. Otherwise, if the priest says, "The scientist speaking against religion; therefore he should be hanged," so that is not good government. Government must see that whether the scientist is speaking the truth. That sense must be there. Yes, world is round. That is fact. Goloka. In Vedic literature it is Bhu-gola, jagad-anda. These words are there. We can see also it is round, jagad-anda. The universe is round. And Goloka. Or Bhu-gola. Bhu-gola, the Earth is round. So in the Vedic literatures... Therefore their knowledge is also imperfect because they do not refer to the Vedic literatures. It is already there. Bhu-gola. Bhu means the Earth; gola means round. It is already there. And the geography's called, according to Sanskrit, it is called Bhu-gola. Long, long ago, before Galileo.

(*Morning Walk, December 9, 1973, Los Angeles*)

Although we see on these two occasions (cited above) that Srila Prabhupada associated the name Bhu-gola with the Earth globe, he never actually attaches a particular verse from *Srimad Bhagavatam* that would identify it as such. Srila Prabhupada procedure in establishing an argument was always to back his statements with reference to a particular verse from the Vedic literature, but in the two cases cited above, Srila Prabhupada simply conflates the concept of Bhu-gola (round earth) with the modern conception of the globe without citing evidence of a supporting verse from scripture. There actually is no verse in *Srimad Bhagavatam* that describes Earth (Bhu-gola) as the assumed Earth globe in space. Therefore, in order to ascertain the truth of the matter, we have to look at Srila Pabhpupa's more important instruction which is to follow the description of Bhu-gola provided by Sukadeva Goswami. There are numerous instances where Srila Prabhupada instructs his disciples to simply follow the description of the cosmos provided by Sukadeva Goswami in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

Prabhupada: Now you all together make this Vedic planetarium very nice, so that people will come and see. From the **description** of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, you prepare this Vedic planetarium. (*Room Conversation, June 16, 1976, Detroit*)

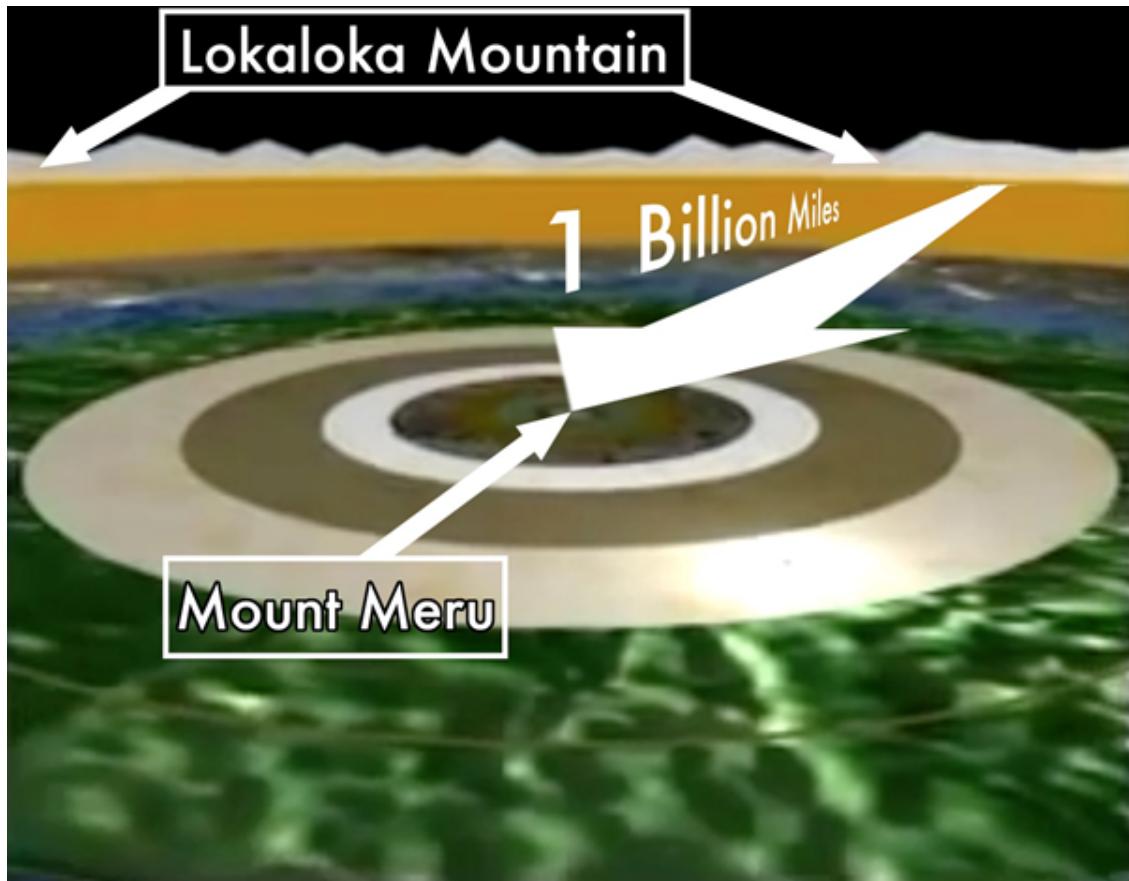
Prabhupada: **Exactly to the description of Fifth Canto, we want.** (*Room Conversation, May 8 1977, Hrishikesh*)

Taking this instruction of Srila Prabhupada, we obviously have to locate the particular verses that describe Bhu-gola, to see if they are indeed describing the assumed Earth globe. When we follow the description of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we find that the original verses describing the Bhu-gola, measure the Bhu-gola at 4 billion miles diameter - clearly not the so-called Earth globe! We have looked at this verse and image already in

section 1.1, but to just to repeat so that the reader is familiar with the argument. In SB 5.20.38, it is said:

Learned scholars who are free from mistakes, illusions and propensities to cheat have thus described the planetary systems and their particular symptoms, measurements and locations. With great deliberation, they have established the truth that the distance between Sumeru and the mountain known as Lokaloka is one fourth of the diameter of the universe [bhu-golasya]—or, in other words, 125,000,000 yojanas [1 billion miles]. (SB 5.20.38)

The image below shows the distance from Mount Meru which is in the center of the Earth circle, to Lokaloka Mountain which is 1 billion miles away:



So if a quarter of the Bhu-gola is 1 billion miles, then the total area of Bhu-gola is 4 billion miles. This is confirmed in other verses and by the acharyas that the Earth has a diameter of 4 billion miles. Our Earth area in Bharata-varsha is described as just a small part of the 4 billion mile diameter disc of Bhu-gola, *not that our Earth area is the Bhu-gola itself*. Srila Prabhupada simply conflates the concept of Bhu-gola (round earth) with the modern conception of the globe, but without reference to the original verse that would explain the situation differently. The result of this conflation is that a new planet Earth has appeared out of nowhere.

Clearly, if we are to fulfill Srila Prabhupada's stated desire of accurately depicting the fifth canto cosmology in the TOVP, then we have to adhere to the original description given in *Srimad Bhagavatam*. This requires the revolutionary act of changing our perception of the Earth from an Earth globe in space, back to that of the circular Earth plane (Bhu-mandala) described in *Srimad Bhagavatam*. By bringing Srila Prabhupada's statements back to the specific context of Sukadeva Goswami's description of the 'names,' 'measurements,' and 'characteristics' of the Bhu-gola (SB 5.16.4) we can see that the round Earth is indeed a Vedic concept, as Srila Prabhupada says in the above conversation, but it is the roundness of a vast circular disc, not that of a small globular planet.

The two citations above where Srila Prabhupada equates Bhu-gola with round Earth, are taken from a morning walk conversation and a lecture on the Bhagavad-gita. If we look at the larger context in which Srila Prabhupada made the above statements, it is apparent that, unlike the Bhu-mandala discussions in July 1977, this is not part of an in-depth discourse or discussion about Vedic cosmology. In the lecture and conversation cited above, Srila Prabhupada is presenting and discussing other topics and simply uses the example of the flat Earth to dismiss the idea that the Vedic literature is less intelligent. Srila Prabhupada's argument is that since the Vedic literature contained the name Bhu-gola (round Earth) long before Galileo, then the Vedic sages cannot be accused of being less intelligent.

In the above quotations, Srila Prabhupada's preaching point is more about asserting the superiority of the Vedic literature, rather than a treatise about the shape of the Earth itself. The mention of the name Bhu-gola supporting the idea of an Earth globe in the Vedas is just an example, and again is not based on any scriptural references that would support the argument. The shape, size, and characteristics of the Earth would take a number of verses to substantiate any argument in this regard; indeed Sukadeva Goswami's description of Bhu-mandala covers a number of chapters of the fifth canto. So Srila Prabhupada is just speaking of the Earth here in conventional terms without any reference to the 'names,' 'measurements,' and 'characteristics' of the Earth provided by Sukadeva Goswami. Sukadeva Goswami, speaks of the Earth very differently. By taking Srila Prabhupada's later instructions to follow this description of the Earth by Sukadeva Goswami, ironically we find that the great Vedic sage had indeed described a round Earth, but it is the roundness of a flat circular disc, not the roundness of a globe. If it had been presented to Srila Prabhupada that Sukadeva Goswami's description of the measurements and characteristics of Bhu-gola or 'round' Earth indicate the roundness of a flat circular disc, not that of a ball, perhaps we may have heard a very different statement regarding the Bhu-gola.

The *Srimad Bhagavatam*, like all of the world's ancient cosmologies, shared the idea that Earth is a flat stationary plane, and as we shall see in later papers this is certainly not 'a less intelligent' idea. Indeed all empirical observations and experiments prove that we are on a stationary plane, not a rotating planet. Many observations indicating the non-curvature of the Earth could also be presented to Srila Prabhupada, proving that the Earth is a continual horizontal plane, not a curved globe. The idea that Earth is a plane, not a planet, is not a 'less intelligent' idea. It is the idea that is supported by science in the truest sense of the word.

In any case, since the above statements by Srila Prabhupada are not made in the context of a formal question and answer session relating to fifth canto cosmology, and importantly, to the specific verses that describe the measurements and characteristics of the Bhu-gola itself, they cannot be regarded as more authoritative than Srila Prabhupada's consistent directive to follow Sukadeva Goswami's description of the cosmos which measures Bhu-gola at 4 billion miles. This is an important point to consider because we simply don't have examples of anyone questioning Srila Prabhupada how Bhu-gola can refer to the assumed globe Earth when Sukadeva Goswami measures Bhu-gola as 4 billion miles in diameter, and not 8,000 miles in diameter (the modern calculation for the diameter of the Earth). Nor do we have anyone inquiring about Bharata-varsha's location at the southern end of Jambudwipa (an 800,000 mile island), and what implications this has for the globe model of reality. These are relevant questions.

If we had the opportunity of being able to pose a hypothetical question to Srila Prabhupada regarding the possibility that Earth is not a globe, but rather just a small part of a greater Earth plane, what would he say? Unfortunately, such a question was never asked to Srila Prabhupada, so we can't assume what his answer may be. We do know, however, that any answer would be formulated on the basis of *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of the Earth, regardless of the present scientific understanding. We also know that during these discussions on the Bhu-mandala in June/July 1977, when a map of the vast landscape of Bhu-mandala was spread out for all to see, Srila Prabhupada made a very enigmatic and cryptic statement that we can indeed travel

further east and west than is presently known, but that we are bound by karma to go around in circles like a bull tied to a grinding mill and forced to move within a limited jurisdiction (*Discussion about Bhu-mandala, July 3, 1977, Vrindavana*).

Bear in mind also here, that since no description of an Earth globe appears in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, supporters of the globe concept within the management of the TOVP, have to present various sophisticated and convoluted arguments to justify the placement of an Earth globe within the Vedic cosmos exhibitions. Srila Prabhupada, however, never presented any such sophisticated arguments to explain the absence of a globe within the *Srimad Bhagavatam's* description. It seems Srila Prabhupada just assumed the Earth globe was there. Srila Prabhupada, in fact, did not present any treatise to defend or expound on an Earth globe conception; like all of us, Srila Prabhupada just assumed the Earth was a globe. The following example is often presented as evidence for Srila Prabhupada's belief in the Earth globe, when really it is just a common assumption that any of us would make before any investigation into the issue:

Prabhupada: Sun is a planet, but there is a controlling deity also.

Woman: Yes.

Prabhupada: There is a control... **Just like here, in this planet, when you go up, you see it is ball**, but in this ball there are so many controlling deities here also. President Johnson, prime minister of India, this and that and so many things. But when you go up you see just like a ball. So when you come here you find... Similarly, from the distance of ninety millions of miles you can see the sun just like a ball, but it is not ball. It is a, it is a far, far greater than this planet, and there are cities and there men and there are persons and there are everything. (*Bhagavad-gita 2.12, New York, March 9, 1966*)

In this discussion the *preaching point* is about life and civilization throughout the universe; *the preaching point is not about the shape of the Earth*. Srila Prabhupada is just using the idea of the shape of the Earth as a common example to illustrate a separate point. Srila Prabhupada is not presenting here any detailed exposition on the description of the Earth given in *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In the lecture cited, Srila Prabhupada is discoursing on an entirely different subject. Although Srila Prabhupada says here that when we go up, we see the Earth as a ball, the actual fact is that is only the disingenuous use of curved lens in the photos and videos of so-called space agencies that make the Earth appear curved to our perception. Images of the so-called curved surface of the Earth are created by the clever use of certain camera lens used on high altitude cameras. When the fish eye lens is corrected, the actual nature of the landscape is revealed:



When we fly in an airplane, we observe the Earth below us as a continual flat plane. As one flies from London to Sydney Australia the pilot makes no account for the so-called curvature of the Earth. One flies over a flat landscape for the whole duration of the flight. There is no curvature to be seen or measured anywhere. Even at the height of 120,000 feet, high altitude cameras show the Earth to be flat in all directions. Although it is our common perception that the Earth below us is flat in all directions; our senses have been duped into thinking we are flying around a ball-shaped Earth:



The citation above where Srila Prabhupada is speaking about the ball-shaped Earth, should not be taken as any great evidence of the Founder-Acharaya of ISKCON making definitive statements about the shape of the Earth. Srila Prabhupada is just speaking of Earth in the conventional manner. Whether it is a globe, or not, remained to be seen. For Srila Prabhupada, the truth of the matter was to be ascertained from *Srimad Bhagavatam*, not from the version of so-called scientists and so-called space agencies:

""We have to describe according to our book. That's all. If they can understand, let them understand. Otherwise... It is not our business to satisfy the so-called scientists. **We are giving the real description.**"
(Room Conversation, June 18, 1977, Vrindavana)

Again the deciphering of this description of the Earth was not concluded by the time of Srila Prabhupada's departure in November in 1977, and even to the present day, it is quite obvious that the present management of the TOVP have not yet grasped this concept. For example, the description of Bharata-varsha's size, shape, and location at the southern side of Jambudwipa (an 800,000 mile circular island) has implications that are just ignored. *Srimad Bhagavatam* informs us that our area of the Earth called Bharata-varsha is surrounded by vast inhabited lands, and a salt-water ocean that spreads out for 800,000 miles, connecting our Earth to other lands in the greater Earth area. The present TOVP simply refuse to acknowledge that this could be a realistic description of our world, preferring instead to propagate the globe conception of reality.

The default strategy for deflecting from the huge anomaly between the Vedic and modern world-views, is to simply quote various statements from Srila Prabhupada (such as the ones above) that the Earth is round and not flat. However, the idea that Srila Prabhupada settled the question of the Earth simply because he referred to it as a globe, is clearly unfounded. The devotees at the time who were charged with researching the fifth canto had hardly even begun to scratch the surface of Sukadeva Goswami's description of the Earth. Therefore it should be appreciated that whenever Srila Prabhupada talks about the Earth as a globe and a planet he is only speaking on the basis of the common

assumption, not on the basis of a thorough elucidation of Bhagavata cosmology. Srila Prabhupada never attempted any such presentation. The Earth globe was always merely assumed.

We must also bear in mind that Srila Prabhupada usage of the words Earth globe and Earth planet was never seriously questioned by any devotee who had specific knowledge of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology, so again we don't know how Srila Prabhupada would have responded to a more rigorous and punctilious questioning regarding specific details of the Earth's description and its ramifications for the globe concept. Since Srila Prabhupada first translated the fifth canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the section on cosmology had remained incomprehensible and mysterious. As mentioned, the study of *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology really only began in earnest with a handful of devotees who were charged with the task of preparing maps for the Planetarium around April-July 1977. At this time, some questions about the shape of the Earth were raised, but for the most part, the description of Bhu-mandala still appeared incomprehensible because the only version of the Earth that anyone knew, or could relate to, was of course, the globe. The possibility that our Earth is not a globe, but simply part of a greater Earth plane had not arisen in any one's minds. Arguments against the globe concept were also not current at this time in the 1970's (as they have been recently since the practical over-night Internet revolution against the globe theory beginning in 2015). It simply didn't occur to anyone in Srila Prabhupada's entourage to question the idea of the globe itself; at least not in any serious way that would include well-researched arguments against the science that supposedly supports the globe concept.

The members of ISKCON who staunchly defend the globe concept are at an undue advantage in their usage of citations from Srila Prabhupada wherein he seemingly favours a globe model of the Earth. In all of these citations, Srila Prabhupada is simply referring to the Earth in the conventional language and understanding of the day. It cannot be said that in any of these situations in which Srila Prabhupada refers to the Earth as a globe and a planet, that he is presenting a particular treatise on the Vedic Earth conception based on a definitive exposition of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology. As we shall see, even as late as July 1977, such conclusions about the nature of the Earth in *Srimad Bhagavatam* had not been reached yet. Thus we simply don't have any example of a context specific situation wherein Srila Prabhupada is questioned about the possibility of Earth continuing into a greater Earth area as described by Sukadeva Goswami. The point to be taken here is that although Srila Prabhupada consistently spoke of the round/globular Earth concept, and also rejected the flat earth concept (on the few occasions when the topic came up), it was never in the context of the discussions specifically based on a study of the original texts of *Srimad Bhagavatam* such as those conversations mentioned earlier entitled Showing of the Planetary Sketches (June 28 1977, Vrindavana), and Discussions on Bhu-mandala (July 2-5, 1977, Vrindavana). Here the questions and answers were more academic, and Srila Prabhupada's answers to questions about the shape of the Earth became more rhetorical and cryptic rather than a straightforward yes or no. We shall look at these conversations presently.

As mentioned in previous papers Srila Prabhupada had requested assistance from Vedic astronomers around India to prepare maps of the Universe as he himself was unsure of how the whole thing looked. It may be objected that Srila Prabhupada had himself translated the fifth canto and had consulted the commentaries of the previous acharyas, so obviously he was aware of what was being described, as well as being made aware of the understanding of the disciplic succession. In answer to this we have Srila Prabhupada's own words regarding his translation of the Fifth Canto:

Prabhupada: And it was not possible for me to digest. (laughs) Somebody else helped me to... **I am a layman. I do not know.**

Tamala Krishna: How did you write it?

Prabhupada: That somebody, Krishna, helped me. That He manufactured...When I was writing, I was praying Krishna that "**I do not actually accommodate all this knowledge.** Please help me."

(Room Conversation, June 18, 1977, Vrindavana)

Yes, we read here that Krishna helped Srila Prabhupada to dictate the 5th Canto, but listen to what Prabhupada himself is saying, "I do not actually accommodate all this knowledge. Please help me" Indeed when one reads the description of the cosmos in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the accompanying commentaries by the acharyas full of strange landscapes and endless measurements covering inconceivable distances, it is dizzying to say the least. Srila Prabhupada again mentioned to one astronomer:

Prabhupada: I have tried to translate it as far as possible, but I am not satisfied.
(*Conversation with India Astronomer, April 30, 1977, Bombay*)

Why was Srila Prabhupada not satisfied? Did Srila Prabhupada not say in the conversation above that he got Krishna's help to translate and comment on the fifth canto? It appears that although Srila Prabhupada managed to translate the fifth canto, a complete understanding or conceptualization of the Vedic cosmos remained elusive, otherwise why would Srila Prabhupada require help from outside to prepare the maps of Bhu-mandala and other features of the universe. This brings us back again to the name Bhu-gola; obviously if one does not have the visual conceptualization of the Bhu-gola, it would cause difficulty in translation and commentary. Trying to understand a complicated cosmological concept from a written description alone has its challenges. The location of Bharata-varsha on the Bhu-gola is a case in point. If one had a visual representation of Bharata-varsha's position at the southern end of Jambudwipa, it would be easier to place it as simply part of the circular plane of Jambudwipa, and not mistake it as a globe in space. We may take the images of Bhu-mandala for granted now, but prior to July 1977, Srila Prabhupada did not even have a map of the Bhu-mandala.

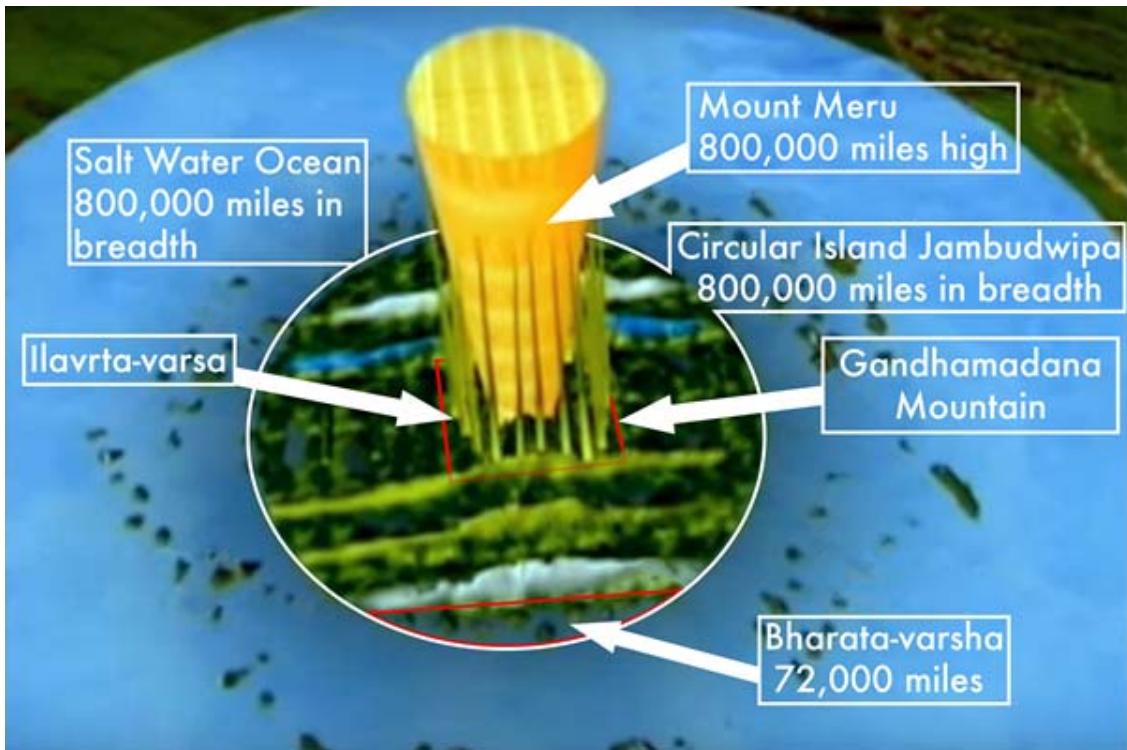
If we look, for example, at one of the first translations and purports to the fifth canto, Srila Prabhupada states that:

"Another significant point is that there is a planet covered mostly by great mountains, one of which is Gandhamadana Hill." (*Purport SB 5.1.8*)

Gandhamadana hill, however, is not on another planet. It is another part of this Earth. The Earth being described here, is not the globe, but rather the first island on the vast circular plane (Bhu-mandala). Gandhamadana Mountain is situated on the eastern side of Ilavrita-varsha on the mainland of Jambudwipa:

"In the same way, west and east of Ilavrita-varsha are two great mountains named Malyavan and Gandhamadana respectively. These two mountains, which are 2,000 yojanas [16,000 miles] high, extend as far as Nila Mountain in the north and Nishadha in the south. They indicate the borders of Ilavrita-varsha and also the varshas known as Ketumala and Bhadrshva." (*SB 5.16.10*)

The map below shows the location of Gandhamadana Mountain at the eastern side of Ilavrita-varsha. Bharata-varsha is further to the south:



It is easy for me to say this now because by the efforts of Srila Prabhupada's disciples we have maps and images of Bhu-mandala that make everything apparent. Srila Prabhupada, however, did not even see a map of Bhu-mandala until the end of June 1977, and so the conceptualization of what was being described as a vast Earth plane was an obvious difficulty. In all of his Bhagavatam translations and purports, Srila Prabhupada invariably translated the areas of Bhu-mandala as other planets, when they are, in fact, just part of one vast Earth area that is divided into seven dwipas (islands) and varshas (regions within the dwipas). It is not surprising therefore that Srila Prabhupada spoke of Bharata-varsha (where our Earth is situated) in the conventional language of globe and planet. However, on closer investigation, the concept of a globe cannot actually explain Sukadeva Goswami's description of Bharata-varsha location on the southern side of Jambudwipa (the central island of the great Earth circle). Srila Prabhupada was made aware of this to some degree, but the issue was never resolved. Srila Prabhupada entered samadhi in November 1977, and the question of the Earth remained unanswered.

It thus appears from Srila Prabhupada's own statements (see below) that there was some difficulty to visualize what Sukadeva Goswami was describing. Therefore, in early 1977, Srila Prabhupada sent some of his disciples to locate Vedic astronomers around India who could help with drawing a map for the Vedic planetarium:

Prabhupada: One very big pandita is coming. He'll help us about the Sanskrit language, how to form this...

Tamala Krishna: Planetarium.

Prabhupada: ...planetarium.

Tamala Krishna: One big pandita has been contacted, and he's very surrendered to

Prabhupada. He wants to help Prabhupada and our movement to understand the meaning of the shastras in regard to the layout of the universe, so that the planetary systems can be done in our planetarium."

(Room Conversation, March 2-3 1977, Mayapur)

The result, however, was disappointing as evident in the following conversation:

Prabhupada: So we are presenting this planetarium...

Indian Astronomer: Bhagavata, yes?

Prabhupada: From Bhagavatam.

Indian Astronomer: Yes, yes.
Prabhupada: In the Fifth Canto there is description of the planetary system.
Indian Astronomer: Yes, yes.
Prabhupada: So we want a diagram...
Prabhupada: Immediately we want the diagram how to fix it up so that people can see, "This is the situation." So you make this diagram.
Indian Astronomer: It is first attempt to give in picture the ideas of Bhagavatam.
Prabhupada: Yes. So we... We are... We have got very good scheme so that people from the world will come to see the Vedic idea of planetary system. This is the ambition. So you kindly help us...
Prabhupada: So that you can do immediately. You do. Can you make a rough sketch immediately?
Indian Astronomer: First (indistinct). Because after he came there I told him that we must prepare a diagram which is acceptable to all, acceptable to all.
Prabhupada: No, acceptable, the, I mean to say, Western astronomers, they...
Indian Astronomer: No, we... If you prefer Bhagavatam and if you give only Bhagavatam...
Prabhupada: Yes.
Indian Astronomer: ...whether Western accepts or not, that is not worthwhile.
Prabhupada: Eh?
Indian Astronomer: Whether Westerners or modern scientists accept or not, that is not worthwhile.
Prabhupada: No, we want do it according to Bhagavatam.
Indian Astronomer: That is what I mean...
...Prabhupada: What is the difficulty? The shastra is there. You have to make drawing according to shastra. That's all...
...Prabhupada: So how he'll make diagram? He has no idea.
Tamala Krishna: No, he doesn't. He never thought about it. No one reads the Bhagavatam as a scientific book, Srila Prabhupada. That's the point. Except for Your Divine Grace, they are thinking it's story, "It is stories."
Prabhupada: Yes, they do not believe.
Tamala Krishna: No. And therefore no one takes it seriously. Modern people don't take it seriously.
Prabhupada: There was a Gosai. He was reading Caitanya-caritamrta. So the description of the planetary system there is. He used to say to his audience, "Actually these things are not there. These are imaginary descriptions." He was such a fool. So the whole world has taken like that, "symbolic, imagination."
Tamala Krishna: And he was lecturing on Caitanya-caritamrta. I think you mentioned that one of your Godbrothers once said to you, "You really believe that there is such a place, Krishnaloka, Vaikunthaloka?" He was himself...
Prabhupada: Bon Maharaja did not believe. No... Nobody ever thought of it.
(Conversation with Vedic Astronomer, April 30, 1977, Bombay)

Srila Prabhupada again suggested to his disciples to advertise in newspapers for Vedic astronomers to help:

Prabhupada: "Astronomer knowing the planetary system," you can advertise. "Expert astronomer who knows the planetary systems as described..."
Tamala Krishna: "...in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*."
Prabhupada: Hm.
Tamala Krishna: Yeah, we can advertise. Instead of having somebody going all over India.
(Conversation with India Astronomer, April 30 1977, Bombay)

From these conversations it is obvious that Srila Prabhupada was requesting help in order prepare maps that depict the Vedic Universe. Srila Prabhupada then basically left it to his disciples to figure out the maps of the fifth canto cosmology by taking guidance from Krishna:

Prabhupada: Krishna will help.

Tamala Krishna: Hm?

Prabhupada: Krishna will help. He has no idea.

(Conversation with India Astronomer, April 30 1977, Bombay)

To their credit, Srila Prabhupada's disciples were able to independently prepare the map of the Bhu-mandala which was eventually presented to Srila Prabhupada in late June and early July 1977. Thus, it is only at this point in June/July 1977 that Srila Prabhupada in discussion with his disciples could look at a visual representation of the Bhu-mandala, and begin to compare the Vedic model of the Earth with the modern conception. It quickly became apparent that the Earth of *Srimad Bhagavatam* was not the same as the modern Earth globe conception. In these discussions, Srila Prabhupada would often welcome respectful questions, challenges, and input from his close disciples like Tamala Krishna Goswami and the other devotees involved, as all concerned tried to figure out what Bhu-mandala meant in relation to our current understanding of the Earth. As pointed out to Srila Prabhupada by Tamala Krishna Goswami, the Earth of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is not 'round' as depicted by NASA. In the following conversation, Tamala Krishna Goswami shows his clear comprehension of *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of Earth's position on the Bhu-mandala:

Prabhupada: So are you thinking on this?

Bhakti-prema: In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*... According to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, it is (indistinct).

Prabhupada: Find out from our side, according to Bhagavatam.

(Bhu-mandala Diagram Discussion, July 2 1977, Vrindavana)

In the above conversation Srila Prabhupada is attentively listening to what Tamala Krishna Goswami and the other devotees have ascertained to be the real fact of the matter. Tamala Krishna Goswami then goes on to explain the inconsistency which this creates with the globe conception. Srila Prabhupada is clearly understanding what the issue is, and then he asks Tamala Krishna Goswami, "Are you thinking on this?"

As mentioned in previous papers, this is a very important question/instruction from Srila Prabhupada: "Are you thinking on this?" Think on what? We have to think about the inconsistencies that arise between the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of the Earth as resting on the horizontal plane of Bhu-mandala, and the modern presentation of the Earth as a globe in space. And what is Srila Prabhupada's directive? He says, "Find out from our side according to Bhagavatam." The most recent acharya, therefore, gives a clear directive: "Find out from our side according to Bhagavatam." In other words, Srila Prabhupada is not giving the answer to questions regarding inconsistencies between the two world views of the Earth's shape and nature; rather, *he is requesting an investigation in order to find the answer*. The statement 'Find out from our side, according to Bhagavatam' would obviously include further research into the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (shastra), as well as the commentaries by previous acharyas (guru), and of course from other devotees of Krishna who may have knowledge in this field (sadhu). Therefore, presenting a case that the Earth of *Srimad Bhagavatam* is not a globe, but a great circular plane (based on the literal description), hardly puts one in the bracket of 'jumping over guru' or being an offender to Srila Prabhupada as some have accused.

During these discussions on the Bhu-mandala when it became apparent to all, that there were major differences between the Vedic and modern conceptions of the Earth, Srila Prabhupada encouraged his students in further studies to explain the contradictions between the two world views. Such a study should not rule out the possibility of discovering that the modern world-view of the globe is nothing more than a grand production of maya, involving awesome powers of speculation (Galileo, Newton, etc), and stupendous powers of deception (NASA, etc).

Just maybe, the globe conception contradicts the Vedic world view because it is the globe itself which is a false construct of reality; and not because the Vedic description of the

Earth is false, mythological, inconceivable, or other-dimensional. The description of Bhu-mandala is none of these things. The description of a continual Earth plane is straightforward. The subject of the Earth has become a point of controversy among followers of Srila Prabhupada, not because the original description of the Earth in *Srimad Bhagavatam* is ambiguous, but because of a lack of faith in what is being described. An unquestioned faith in the scientific propaganda that Earth is a globe, prevents one from developing faith in the Bhu-mandala.

The Bhu-mandala discussions are a series of very important later conversation when considering Srila Prabhupada's earlier statements about the globe-shape of the Earth. It shows Srila Prabhupada was now aware that the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description of the Earth was different from the globe version, and so we should note carefully his response here. He doesn't confirm, "Yes it is a globe." Rather he gives an instruction and says, "*Find out from our side according to Bhagavatam.*" So there you have it. We have to find out from our side according to Bhagavatam. That is Srila Prabhupada's instruction. Certainly Srila Prabhupada at the time was not presented with some of the intelligent arguments and presentations coming from those who dispute the globe model. A revolution in thinking about the globe began as a practical overnight Internet revolution in 2015, challenging everyone's complacent assumption about the nature of Earth. Many of these intelligent arguments against the globe model would confirm the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s description that Earth is indeed on a horizontal plane, and not a globe in space. The topic, unfortunately, wasn't current at the time, and so many of these intelligent arguments were not presented to Srila Prabhupada. Nor was the information available that we have now regarding NASA's skulduggery in faking images of the Earth from outer-space.

I believe if Srila Prabhupada was here now, a definitive argument could be presented to him that Bharata-varsha is not part of a globe in space, but is indeed part of the horizontal plane of Bhu-mandala as described in Srimad Bhagatavam. This presentation would be based on three main points:

- (1) The description of *Srimad Bhagavatam* itself, in which Sukadeva Goswami clearly describes Bharata-varsha as being surrounded, not by space (as in the globe model), but by vast areas of land and ocean that continue for hundreds of millions of miles along the plane of Bhu-mandala.
- (2) Evidence that NASA and other space agencies have been involved in cheating the public about the nature of the Earth by producing false photographic and video image of the the so-called Earth globe from outer space.
- (3) Scientific arguments that disprove the heliocentric ideas in support of the Earth model, as well as the many sound arguments that demonstrate the non-curvature of the Earth, and related speculations such as the theory of gravity. (Srila Prabhupada was already an avowed disbeliever in the gravity theory).

In any case, when the issue of the Earth's shape and location was presented to Srila Prabhupada in these conversations of July 1977, a direct answer to the question of whether Earth was round or flat remained unanswered. Certainly, Srila Prabhupada himself did not retain the same staunchness as in previous conversations where he spoke very definitively of the Earth as globe-shaped. In his replies to a series of questions by Tamala Krishna Goswami about the shape of the Earth, Srila Prabhupada did not give a definitive answer, but said that whether the Earth is round or flat should be decided by the version of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, not by the changing theories of Western astronomy.

Tamala Krishna: Do we accept the contour of the continents? Do we accept the general continents?

Prabhupada: We accept nothing of their theory. They are prejudiced and nonsense. Formerly they were speaking that the world is flat. Now they have

changed: "It is round." So what is the value of his estimate? And you'll find in that book, "probably."

Tamala Krishna: That was the most frequent word used.

Prabhupada: Yes. So what is the value of their knowledge? Besides that, they'll insist that life is combination of chemicals, and they cannot produce it. Simply useless. So it is, what is called, childish obstinacy. So why shall I believe them? Just like a child cries, "I want. I want," it is like that. There is no science. Still they will say it is science.

Tamala Krishna: It's nescience.

Prabhupada: Eh?

Tamala Krishna: Nescience.

(*Discussion about Bhu-mandala, July 3, 1977, Vrindavana*)

Here as in other places when the question was raised by Tamala Krishna about the shape of the Earth, Srila Prabhupada didn't give a decisive yes or no as to whether Earth is flat or round like a ball. He says, that the materialists sometimes say it is flat, then change their minds and say it is round. He concludes that we should reject their speculations and present the *Srimad-Bhagavatam's* version instead:

Yasoda-nandana: Prabhupada, what is the shape of this tiny portion of earth or whatever place we are on? What is the shape of this, whatever you call...

Prabhupada: Ask them. Why don't you ask them? Sometimes they say flat, sometimes they say it is round. Why don't you ask them, the scientists?

Yasoda-nandana: We don't accept what they say.

Prabhupada: No, no. Formerly they were under the impression the world is flat. And now they are saying round. So what they'll say after few years?

Yasoda-nandana: They are not consistent. That's a fact. They're very inconsistent in their theories.

Prabhupada: Ask them which is correct. "Probably" this is correct.

Bhakti-prema: When someone asks this question, first one would reply.

Prabhupada: I answered it. You people say like that, so which is correct? Flat or round?

Tamala Krishna: They will say "What does the Bhagavatam say?"

Prabhupada: Huh?

Tamala Krishna: They may reply to us, "All right, we are rascals. So please tell us what is the fact."

Prabhupada: That is, we are...

Tamala Krishna: That's what he's asking. What should be shown? Actually we're a little stumped by... I mean...

Prabhupada: Yes, you must have proper answer as far as possible.

Tamala Krishna: We just read... We got a version from South India, and we've even found that there are different conceptions of what the Bhagavata is saying. But the Puranas, they give some Puranic references.

Bhakti-prema: It is written the world... The earth is round and flat.

Prabhupada: Hm?

Bhakti-prema: Earth is round and flat both, together.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Bhakti-prema: First we should reply it is acintya. This should be the reply.

"Inconceivable."

Yasoda-nandana: If it is inconceivable, then they will say how we can conceive it?

Prabhupada: **Take the version of Bhagavatam.**

(Discussions about Bhu-mandala, July 5 1977, Vrindavana)

Antardwipa dasa (current head of cosmology at the TOVP as of January 2016) has tried to work this conversation to support the idea of a dual flat-Earth/round Earth conception. That, however, is not what is being conveyed. There is no elaborate philosophical discourse anywhere either from Srila Prabhupada or in the commentaries of the previous acharyas on the fifth canto to support the idea that the Earth manifests as both a round planet and a flat plane. It is an absurd conception. Srila Prabhupada's reply of 'yes' to Bhakti-prema's statement that the 'Earth is round and flat together' may simply be a figure of speech acknowledging the statement of the speaker without necessarily implying an agreement. Bhakti-prema himself is only presenting it as one of the different conceptions that he had come across, and even then without a proper understanding of what it meant. If anything, Srila Prabhupada's affirmation of Bhakti-Prema's statement that "Earth is round and flat both, together" supports the Vedic description that the circular Earth (Bhu-mandala) is lying flat and round like a roundabout, not round like a ball. Certainly that is the nature of Bhu-mandala of which our Earth is only one tiny part. Since, Srila Prabhupada never before or after, spoke of Earth as being simultaneously a round planet and a flat plane, any attempt to deduce a supporting argument from this conversation is simply a massive interpolation.

The important point in this discussion is Srila Prabhupada's directive to *take the version of Bhagavatam.*' In other words he is not offering his own understanding of the Earth as conclusive, but rather, directing his disciples to basically figure out what is being described by Sukadeva Goswami. Srila Prabhupada's reticence to give a clear and definitive answer to the question is telling. Again we must emphasize that it was only at this point in June/July of 1977 that Srila Prabhupada actually had a map of the Bhu-mandala to look at, and it certainly looked nothing like a globe. Srila Prabhupada, therefore, indirectly answers the question about the shape of the Earth by saying 'take the version of Bhagavatam.' This, of course, puzzled his disciples because they couldn't ascertain whether it was describing the Earth as flat or round.

Srila Prabhupada mood in the conversations of 1977 seemed to indicate a freedom to his disciples to intelligently figure it out. This mood certainly comes across in the various conversations in 1977 regarding the depictions for the Vedic planetarium, and such a mood is consistent with his previous letter to Svarupa Damodar Goswami (27 April 1976) requesting his disciples to make a study the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s cosmology. In the forty years since those discussions, a visual representation of the Bhu-mandala has gradually began to materialize. As daylight reveals the true form of things, so the light of *Srimad Bhagavatam* has illuminated the form of the great Earth circle and our place upon it. Simultaneously, the globe hoax is gradually being dismantled.

From these last available conversations on the topic in early July 1977 it appears Srila Prabhupada was not necessarily committed to the idea of accepting the Earth as a ball-shaped globe, otherwise he could have given a definitive answer when the question was directly put to him. In the above conversation, Srila Prabhupada states very decisively that we should 'take the version of Bhagavatam.' I believe this statement should be regarded as holding greater authority than some of his earlier statements and purports in which he speaks of the Earth as a round globe.

Again please bear in mind, we don't have examples of anyone inquiring from Srila Prabhupada (at the time of the Bhu-mandala discussions) what Sukadeva Goswami means when he describes Bharata-varshsa as being at the southern end of an 800,000 mile island, and what implications this has for the globe model of reality.

It is interesting that in order to support the presentation of a globe in the TOVP, the TOVP representatives continue to post Srila Prabhupada's quotations about Bhu-gola, despite being made aware that the Bhu-gola in question is described by Sukadeva Goswami as a whopping 4 billion miles in diameter. Why do they do this? If something is black, why insist that it is white? If the Bhu-gola is described as a vast circular plane with a diameter of 4 billion miles, why insist that it is referring to a round globe with a diameter of eight thousand miles? The answer: *because Srila Prabhupada said the Earth is round!* This reply, of course, is consistent and loyal to the procedure taught by Srila Prabhupada, namely to follow the instructions of guru coming in parampara (the succession of teachers that trace their spiritual lineage back to Krishna), but here we have a complication, because in matters about Vedic cosmology, the guru (Srila Prabhupada) presented himself as a layman and instructed his disciples to research and present the version of *Srimad Bhagavatam* (shastra). On this topic of cosmology, reference to shastra and sadhu is given precedence.

Srila Prabhupada is the glorious Founder-Acharya and guide of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, but the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON also taught his followers to follow three lines of authority: sadhu (saintly devotees of Krishna), guru (the self-realized preceptor), and shastra (Vedic scripture). On the question of the Universe (and this includes the Earth of course), Srila Prabhupada (representing the position of guru) directed his disciples (sadhus) to study the topic directly from the scripture (shastra), as he himself was unfamiliar with the topic, and had not the time for an in-depth study. In this area of cosmology, Srila Prabhupada gave precedence to shastra and sadhu. On the question of the Earth, we therefore have to look at all these three sources of knowledge. We do this not with the intention of contradicting or diminishing Srila Prabhupada, but to make sure that as followers of Srila Prabhupada, we have got the right understanding of Vedic cosmology, and thereby reveal the actual truth and glory of *Srimad Bhagavatam* to the world. This is really what Srila Prabhupada wants.

A philosopher will use their natural intelligence and innate love for the truth, to follow through with Srila Prabhupada's instruction to take the version of the Earth described in *Srimad Bhagavatam* (despite it seemingly going against Srila Prabhupada's earlier statements that Earth is a globe). A dogmatist, by contrast, will continue to quote statements from Srila Prabhupada saying that Bhu-gola refers to the Earth globe in complete disregard of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*'s actual description that the Bhu-gola measures 4 billion miles and has nothing of the characteristics and features of the so-called globe.

A dogmatic response is to insist that the Earth or Bhu-gola is a globe, 'because Srila Prabhupada says so,' despite Srila Prabhupada's own instruction to follow the description of *Srimad Bhagavatam* which clearly measures Bhu-gola at 4 billion miles. A philosophical response is to look at the original description of Bhu-gola and then try to ascertain reasons why Srila Prabhupada would associate the name Bhu-gola with the assumed Earth globe when the original verses describe something entirely different. The reason is patently obvious, and is explained by Srila Prabhupada in his own words regarding his translation of the fifth canto: "I do not accommodate all this knowledge."

How does this information affect the representation of Srila Prabhupada's views on this subject? Since Srila Prabhupada spoke of the Earth as a globe, is that to be considered a sacred teaching of the Hare Krishna movement? The issue of accurately representing knowledge coming in disciplic succession is paramount for the devotees of Krishna. Vedic knowledge is originally spoken by Krishna and is passed down through the ages by the guru/disciplic succession. To introduce speculations into these original and authentic Vedic teachings, or to go against the words of acharyas is considered a greatly sinful activity. Since Srila Prabhupada spoke of the Earth as a globe, a member of ISKCON could be deemed heretical for arguing that it is not a globe, and thus seemingly going

against the authority of Srila Prabhupada. The subject of the Earth, however, is in the category of cosmology and that brings us back to the point that Srila Prabhupada practically handed over the subject to his disciples to work out. Srila Prabhupada obviously did not have the time to study the subject in detail himself. By dint of Srila Prabhupada's transcendental intelligence he could have quickly processed whatever information his disciples presented to see if it was in line with the Vedic conclusion. Unfortunately, a full study of the cosmology was never presented to Srila Prabhupada for his consideration, and so the question of the Earth is still open for discussion and debate.

When the disciplic succession is broken, Krishna either comes personally or sends an empowered representative to re-establish the succession. Acharyas are empowered representatives of Krishna who take birth in the material world for varying purposes such as awakening devotion and faith in the hearts of materialistic people; preserving, clarifying, or refining the understanding of the existing Vedic knowledge; or sometimes re-establishing the whole understanding of Vedic knowledge if the essential message of the disciplic succession appears to be lost or broken. Srila Prabhupada is unquestionably an empowered representative of Krishna who came to re-establish the disciplic succession in the western world and to disseminate the culture of bhakti-yoga (devotion to Krishna) throughout the world. But what about certain aspects of knowledge within the disciplic succession that appeared lost, and which even an acharya of the stature of Srila Prabhupada seemed uncertain? Knowledge of the Vedic cosmology is a case in point. How then is knowledge of the Vedic cosmology to be re-established? In the *Srimad Bhagavatam* it is said:

"During the rainy season the roads, not being cleansed, became covered with grass and debris and were thus difficult to make out. These roads were like religious scriptures that brahmanas no longer study and that thus become corrupted and covered over with the passage of time." (*SB 10.20.16*)

The above verse from *Srimad Bhagavatam* (*SB 10.20.16*) makes an interesting analogy: just as village paths become unrecognizable due to being over-grown in the rainy season, so scriptural passages that are no longer studied by Brahmanas become corrupted with the passage of time, and their true meaning is 'covered over.' This is particularly true of those parts of the Vedic scripture dealing with cosmology. The scriptural meaning of Bhugola has been literally 'covered over,' and the Brahmanas who chant their daily gayatri manta beginning *om bhur bhuvah svaha*, no longer understand the actual nature of Bhu. Unfortunately, the brahmanas have been duped into accepting the version of western science regarding the shape of the Earth; and the actual description of Bhumi provided in the Vedas has been forsaken as belonging to a mythological past.

The initiative by Srila Prabhupada in the 1970's to build a Vedic planetarium and reintroduce the Vedic conception of the universe, has led to a renewed study of the Puranic texts dealing with cosmology. To keep with the above poetic metaphor from *Srimad Bhagavatam*, research into the topic has led to the clearing away of the grass and debris (corruption of text) that has covered the true feature of the Vedic cosmos. Once the relevant texts describing Bhugola have been pointed out, a qualified brahmana who sees through the eye of scripture (shastra cakshusha), should have no difficulty in immediately recognizing the true feature and extent of Bhumi.

Although Srila Prabhupada spoke of the Earth as a globe, his ultimate intention was to reintroduce knowledge of the Vedic cosmos as described by Sukadeva Goswami in *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Srila Prabhupada spoke the essential theology and philosophy of Krishna consciousness but expected his disciples to assist him by filling in the details, and this would obviously involve presenting the actual description of Earth as spoken by Sukadeva Goswami.

For the re-establishment of a correct understanding of the Vedic cosmology, we have to therefore look to the *Srimad Bhagavatam* itself. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* is the literary incarnation of Godhead and makes the truth of the thing self-evident, which is why Srila

Prabhupada time and time again referred us back to the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, rather than to his own understanding of the cosmology:

"This Srimad-Bhagavatam is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Srila Vyasa Deva, the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate good of all people, and it is all-successful, all-blissful and all-perfect." (*SB 1.3.40*)

"This Bhagavata Purana is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Krishna to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this Purana." (*SB 1.3.43*)

But if Srila Prabhupada found it difficult to conceptualize or understand the fifth canto, how are we to understand it? Srila Prabhupada had many tasks to accomplish and obviously didn't have time for an in-depth study of Vedic cosmology. Therefore he empowered his disciples to do the work of studying the fifth canto. By the blessings of guru, the understanding would eventually come:

Prabhupada: **Now you all together make this Vedic planetarium very nice**, so that people will come and see. From the description of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, you prepare this Vedic planetarium. How do you like this idea, Vedic planetarium?

Ambarisha: It seems like a very nice idea.

Prabhupada: You also like? So finance this project. (laughter) Vedic planetarium.

Ambarisha: Where will this be?

Prabhupada: Mayapura. My idea is to attract people of the whole world to Mayapura. So we are just trying to acquire three hundred fifty acres of land from the government...

Prabhupada: **So all of you now make a complete idea how to make Vedic planetary, planetarium.**

(*Room Conversation, June 15 1976 Detroit*)

Srila Prabhupada's emphasis is on togetherness. Through the combined effort of many devotees offering their understanding and realization, the truth of the thing will become apparent by the blessings of Srila Prabhupada and the grace of Krishna.

"The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me." (*Bg 10.9*)

"To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance." (*Bg 10.11*)

In the next paper we will present section 1.3 as mentioned earlier in the introduction. In section 1.3 we wish to present a philosophical approach to the question of the Earth, so that the Governing Body Committee (GBC) of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) can avoid making unnecessary decrees and resolutions on the issue which will tend only to dogmatism, and not to the truth of the matter.