TIME DILATION AND DESCRIPTION OF HUMANS IN UTTARAKURU AND DEVAKURU

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Abstract

The universe has been a great subject of interest for philosophers, scientists and laymen alike, since time immemorial. We want to know all the secrets of the universe, how it works, which dimensions it encompasses, and ultimately, what is the ultimate purpose of life. In this exploratory journey, all of us admit that we have severe limitations and despite all the worthy equipment and development of space travel, we still know very little. However, in Indian wisdom we believe that there is surely someone who knows it all. When we dive deeper into this belief, we get to know that all the secrets can be known through the sole power of the soul. Those who achieve this knowledge are called the omniscient (*sarvajña*), and our books of wisdom, the scriptures, hold plenty of the knowledge explained by the omniscient. In the context of finding the solutions to such quests, scientists like Albert Einstein discovered the theory of relativity and predicted the phenomenon of time-dilation. This paper attempts to describe the lands with time dilation, specifically Uttarakuru and Devakuru, and the unique features of the humans who reside there, as described in two of the cosmographical texts of Jain philosophy: *Tiloyapaṇṇattī* and *Jambūdvīpa Prajñapti Sūtra*, and how they are situated near a structure with the strongest gravitational field.

Keywords: Gravity, Time-Dilation, Universe

Introduction

O human, look at that shining Star
The tip of the mountain
That is the hugest of all
The absolute center of the universe
Whose gravity causes the rotation
of the stars and the planets
The time around stays the same
Ha, why philosophy is so tame
And the universe so bizarre

~ author

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In their journey of seeking the truth, seekers have some interesting realizations about the abstract concept of time. We can look at a few:

- No matter if one travels in space or not, one always travels in time.
- Time is an inescapable continuum that only flows in the forward direction.
- Be it a common man or the greatest of men, none can escape the shackles of time.
- Time is relative; in one scenario, the time passes in the twinkling of an eye, and in the other, the same time seems to take ages to pass.
- Irrespective of its slow or fast passing, the consciousness can always choose to be free from the noose of time.

This understanding of time takes an even more fascinating turn when one learns the concept of time dilation. Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity predicts that where gravity is stronger, time passes more slowly. That's called time dilation (Redmond). When time is dilated, it affects everything around it, be it the vegetation or the life forms of that specific place. According to Jain philosophy, the habitable universe is referred to as the *loka*. It is defined as 'that beginningless and eternal part of the infinite space where all animate and inanimate substances reside. It is insignificant in size compared to the entire space. The habitable universe is divided into three parts: Adho Loka, which refers to the lower world (hell); Madhya Loka, which refers to the middle world; and Ūrdhva Loka, which refers to the upper world (heaven) ("Loka". *Jainendra Siddhant Kosh* Vol 3, 431).

Tiloyapaṇṇattī mentions: 'in the centre of the Madhya Loka or the middle world, there is the famous Jambūdvīpa, which is circular in shape and extends for one hundred thousand *yojana'*[2] where humans, animals, planets, galaxies, and solar systems exist. In the centre, there is a huge, eternal structure called Sudarśana Meru where '*sudarśana*' is its name and '*meru*' means a mountain. It is known by various different names, like Mandara, Vaiḍūrya, Vajramūla, Priyadarśana, etc.[3] The texts indicate that all planets, stars, galaxies, and solar systems rotate around this mountain. The lands closest to it on the north and south are where time stays dilated. In the texts, these places are named Uttarakuru and Devakuru, respectively.

In *Jambūdvīpaprajñaptisūtra,* when Gautama asked omniscient Mahāvīra about the location of *Mandara* mountain of *Jambūdvīpa*, Mahāvīra clarifies:

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[2] *māṇusa-jaga-bahumajjhe, vikkhādo hodi jaṃbudīo tti |*
ekka-jjoyaṇa-lakkhaṃ, vikkhaṃbha-judo sarisa-vaṭṭo || (Tiloya Paṇṇattī Vol 2, 11)

[3] *vajramūlaḥ savaiḍūryacūliko maṇibhiścitaḥ | vicitrāścaryasaṁkīrṇaḥ svarṇamadhyaḥ surālayaḥ | meruścaiva sumeruśca mahāmeruḥ sudarśanaḥ | saṇadaraḥ śailarājaśca vasantaḥ priyadarśanaḥ | ratnoccayo diśāmādilokanābhirmanoramaḥ | lokamadhyo diśāmantyo diśāmuttara eva ca | sūryācaraṇavikhyātiḥ sūryavartaḥ svayaṁprabhaḥ | itthaaṁ suragiriśceti labdhavarṇaiḥ sa varṇitaḥ ||*
(Harivaṁśa Purāṇa 5.373-376)

> In the south of Uttarakurū, in the north of Devakuru, in the west of Pūrvavideha, in the east of Paścimavideha and at the exact centre of Jambūdvīpa (Jambū continent), there is Mandara mountain.[4]

Devakurū is described in the *Tiloyapaṇṇattī* as:

> The extraordinary description given about the time of extreme happiness in the scripture, the exact same should be considered for the land of Deva Kuru, which is located beyond the Niṣadha mountain.[5]

In *Jambūdvīpaprajñaptisūtra,* on disciple Gautama's question about the location of the Devakuru region and the kind of people who live there, omniscient Mahāvīra replied:

> Devakuru region is located in the south of Mandara mountain, in the north of Niṣadha mountain, in the east of Vidyutprabha Mountain and in the west of Saumanasa mountain… This place is similar to Uttarakuru. Six types of continuous lineages of human beings reside there. They have fragranced bodies like lotus and musk. They are devoid of attachment. They are diligent, highly meritorious and move at a slow speed.[6]

Uttarakuru has been described in the *Tiloyapaṇṇattī* as:

> In the northern part of Mandara mountain, in the southern part of Nīla mountain, on both the banks of the Sītā River, in the western part of Mālavanta, in the east of the Gandhamādana mountain, the beautiful land of Uttarakuru, also known as *bhogabhūmi* or the land of extreme happiness, is located.[7]

In *Jambūdvīpaprajñaptisūtra*, as the answer to Gautama's query about the land of Uttarakuru, omniscient Mahāvīra replied:

> The land of Uttarakuru is levelled and attractive... The human beings of that region enjoy extreme happiness at all times. The humans are charming and have fragrant

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[4] "*uttarakurāe dakkhiṇeṇaṃ, devakurāe uttareṇaṃ, puvvavidehassa vāsassa paccatthimeṇaṁ, avaravidehassa vāsassa puratthimeṇaṁ, jaṃbuddivassa bahumajjhadesabhāe ettha ṇaṁ jambūddīve dive mandare ṇāmaṁ pavvae paṇṇatte.*" (Jambūdvīpaprajñaptisūtra 4.132)

[5] *susamasusamammi kāle, jā bhaṇidā vaṇṇaṇā vicittāyarā |*
sā hāṇīe vihīṇā, edassima ṇisaha-sele ya || (Tiloya-Paṇṇattī Vol 1 4.2145)

[6] "*mandarassa pavvayassa dāhiṇeṇaṁ, ṇisahassa vāsahara-pavvayassa uttareṇaṁ…, ettha ṇaṁ mahāvidehe vāse devakurā ṇāmaṁ kurā paṇṇattā … jahā uttarakurāe vattavvyā jāva aṇusajjamāṇā pamhagandhā, miagandhā, amamā, sahā, tetalī, saṇicārīt"i* (Jambūdvīpaprajñaptisūtra 4.126)

[7] *mandara-uttarabhāge dakkhiṇabhāgammi ṇīlaselassa |*
sīdāya dotaḍesuṁ pacchimabhagammi malavantassa ||
puvvāe gandhamādaṇaselāe disāe hodi ramaṇijjo |
ṇāmeṇa uttarakurū vikkhādo bhogabhūmi tti || (Tiloya-Paṇṇattī Vol 1 4.2191-2192)

> personas like lotus and the deer's *kastūrī*. They are devoid of attachments. They are highly meritorious and are capable of accomplishing their jobs tirelessly.[8]

The quality of the soil, the plants, reservoirs, homes, mountains, rivers, humans, the concept of time, the way children are born, the powers humans have, their bodies, the trees, and the way they die in that dimension has been described in detail mainly in these two texts mentioned above.

Based on *Tiloya-Paṇṇattī* and *Jambūdvīpaprajñapti*, Āryikā Vishuddhamati has given the following description of the flora, fauna, and humans of those lands (Āryikā Viśuddhamati in *Tiloyapaṇṇattī* Vol 2 Table 9, p.113):

1. The land is clean, devoid of worms, spotless, and transparent like a mirror.
2. The reservoirs are free from marine animals and capable of healing diseases.
3. The mountains beam with wish-fulfilling trees (*kalpavṛkṣa*), jewels, and gold, reflecting their beauty.
4. The rivers have staircases of jewels on both banks, and their water is as good as elixir.
5. The life forms are highly evolved. Humans are spiritual and free from the emotions of jealousy and anger; hence, they do not perform sins.
6. There is no differentiation between day and night; hence, no darkness exists. There is neither the feeling of cold nor heat.
7. Birth: The children are born as a couple, i.e., a male and a female. The moment a couple is born, the parents die. The reason for the death of men has been given a sneeze, and the women die due to yawning.
8. There is no concept of other family members, cities, villages, etc.
9. The humans are way taller than the humans on earth and have 256 bones in their spines. The rest of the bones do not have joints; hence, those humans are very strong.
10. All humans have fluid bodies and, hence, can mould their bodies into different shapes to enjoy luxuries.
11. All humans are equipped with the extraordinary sixty-four attributes of art and craft and are extremely intelligent. Hence, there is no differentiation of caste-creed, rich-poor, and employer-employee.
12. The bodies of humans are perfect and without any shortcomings.
13. There is no untimely death. Humans neither get old nor have diseases; hence, all humans complete their life spans and die painlessly.

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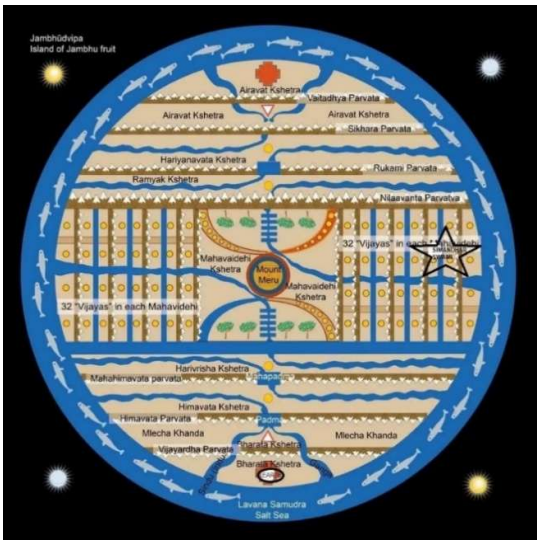
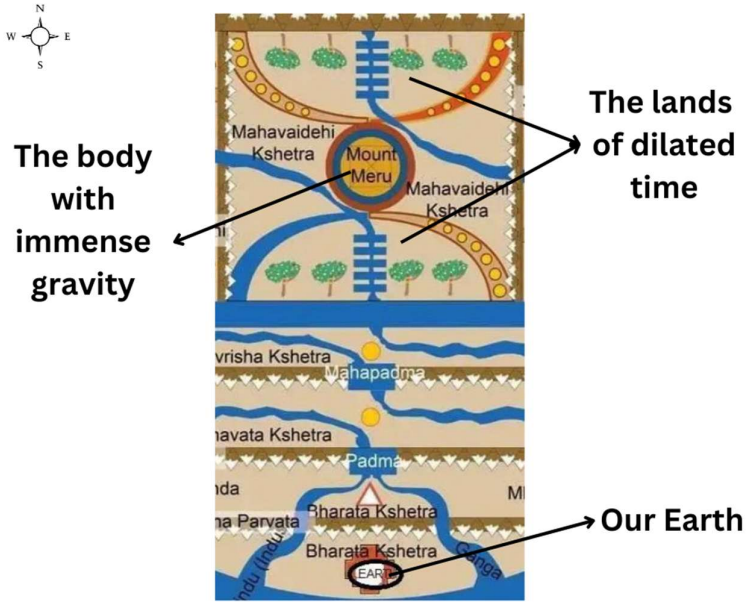
[8] '*bahusamaramaṇijje bhūmibhāge paṇṇatte, evaṁ puvvavaṇṇiā jā susamasusamāvāttavvayā sā ceva ṇeavvā jāva.* 1 *paumagaṃdhā,* 2 *miagandhā,* 3 *amamā,* 4 *sahā,* 5 *tetalī,* 6 *saninacārī*' (Jambūdvīpaprajñaptisūtra 4.104)



Representative arial view of Jambūdvīpa[9]

On noticing this image, we find that Meru and these lands of time dilation are located towards the North of our Earth, which is called Āryakhaṇḍa[10] in Jain terminology.



Zoomed-in image of the representative image given above

After studying the existence of these lands of time-dilation, we have a set of queries:

- When the time doesn't change, does that mean it doesn't pass or it passes but doesn't feel?
- Can we travel to such places?

[9] Not up to the scale. Image for reference purposes only. Credit: (Jain 12)

[10] Āryakhaṇḍa is a part of Bharatakṣetra and Bharatakṣetra is located in Jambūdvīpa.

- How far are these lands?

After analysing the gist of the concept of time and cosmography in the scriptures, the probable answers are:

i) Time does pass, but as there is no discrimination between day and night and young and old, it doesn't feel to pass.
ii) Humans on earth cannot travel to such places because—one—they are not yet equipped with vehicles that can travel such distances, and two—even if they develop such vehicles, their bodies won't be able to endure the intensity of the gravity of these lands. However, the texts mention the probability of spiritually evolved humans taking birth in future lifetimes in such lands.
iii) The units given in the texts are very different from the present-day units. Hence, it is not possible to know their distance from our earth. However, through the texts, we can undoubtedly conclude that these lands and the structure of immense gravity – Meru, are located towards the north of our earth.

Whatever we know and understand is relative. The absolute can only be known through self-realisation. There is undoubtedly someone who knows everything in its totality and envisions the entirety of the whole cosmos. According to the Indian wisdom this 'someone' is the soul – the only conscious substance in the entire cosmos. The map given in the scriptures is the two-dimensional imaginary illustration of a multidimensional area of the cosmos. We all know the limitations of human understanding and can only observe a very tiny fragment of reality through our senses and minds. Our abode, earth, the planets, the solar systems, and galaxies may have extensions in other dimensions unknown to mankind and undiscoverable by human rationale.

Conclusion

Let it be imaginary, my friend
For even imagination can be done of the real
~ author

The purpose of science and philosophy is the same, which is to find the secrets of the cosmos. The difference lies in their approaches; where science seeks everything within the boundaries of experiments, philosophy digs deeper through the best rationale, informed by observation and experience. However, both of these work under the restrictions of senses and mind. The unique thing about ancient Indian philosophers is that at some point of their search, they transcend these boundaries and restrictions and achieve a state where they are able to access the wisdom of the self, and hence, they are called the soul-scientists. True knowledge encompasses the complete understanding of both the physical and the non-physical. Since time immemorial the seekers are being taught by such soul-scientists and have trusted them and have lived their lives accordingly.

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