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Proto-Science Fiction in Indian Literature: Multiverses and Alternate Cosmologies in the Yoga Vāsiṣṭha and Bhāgavata Purāṇa

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ABSTRACT

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* build complex multiverse frameworks that blur the lines between contemporary speculative fiction and classical Indian literature. This study argues that these works can be considered proto-science fiction because of their methodical exploration of parallel worlds that shifts the focus from mere conceptual comparison to a comprehensive narratological analysis. This study compares Indian texts with six important multiverse fiction criteria using a theoretical framework developed by Marie-Laure Ryan and Gabriele D'Amato. The analysis shows how narrative techniques such as the interference of counterparts in the *Brahma-Vimohana-Līlā* and the reader surrogate in the story of Queen Līlā function as sophisticated philosophical tools. These features are deliberate structural choices made to examine the fluidity of identity and the subjectivity of material reality. Ultimately, this study establishes Indian cosmological systems as foundational to the multiverse's evolutionary history. It also argues that the observer-centric idea of Vāsanās bears parallels with modern modal realism, resulting in a multiverse cosmology that predates and mirrors contemporary speculative fiction.

Keywords: Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, Ancient Indian Cosmology, Multiverse Narratology, Proto-Science Fiction.

Introduction:

While the "multiverse" is often celebrated as a defining feature of modern science fiction, its conceptual architecture was drafted long before the advent of the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics. The idea of infinite coexisting universes did not evolve solely from Western thought but also from Indian literary and philosophical works such as the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. From the infinite Brahmāṇḍas of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to Tegmark's "bubble universes," humanity has consistently sought to map a reality that transcends a single, linear existence (Torrecilla and De Adana 12). This intersection of ancient Indian metaphysics and modern narratological theory suggests that the multiverse is not merely a scientific hypothesis but a narrative framework for exploring human consciousness and identity in literature.

Historically, the evolutionary trajectory of multiverse theory moved from Greek atomism through medieval theological condemnations to theoretical physics and speculative fiction of the 20th century. However, Indian traditions—specifically the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*— develop sophisticated systems of parallel universes that predate and often mirror contemporary science fiction tropes. Despite these striking parallels, these texts are rarely analysed through the lens of modern narratology, leaving a gap in our understanding of how Indian proto-science fiction managed an intricate cosmology of infinite universes in the past.

This study seeks to bridge this gap, arguing that the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* function as sophisticated precursors to modern multiverse narratives by satisfying the essential narratological criteria of ontological pluralism. By applying the features of multiverse fiction identified by D'Amato and Diani based on Ryan's essay (596–601), this study demonstrates that these ancient Indian cosmologies utilize objective actuality, counterpart theory, and reader surrogates as pedagogical tools to interrogate the nature of self, identity, and material reality.

To substantiate this claim, the study first traces the evolution of multiverse theory from its philosophical origins to its use in contemporary science fiction, presenting the Indian perspective as a precursor to the modern multiverse. It then outlines the macro cosmological blueprint of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the

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subjective idealism of the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, while establishing their antiquity and relevance to this study.

Finally, using a structured framework derived from Marie-Laure Ryan and Gabriele D'Amato (D'Amato and Diani 596–601), this study evaluates these texts against six key metrics: the actuality of parallel worlds, equal ontological hierarchy, interference and counterparts, the principle of selection, narrative navigation, and philosophical motivation. These metrics establish the two texts as bearing analogous features to modern multiverse fiction, emphasizing their value as part of the philosophical corpus that predates contemporary speculative fiction.

Evolution of the Multiverse Theory

Before it was integrated into modern physics, the multiverse theory evolved primarily through the conceptions of philosophers. In the West, Greek atomists such as Leucippus and Democritus theorized about the nature of reality in a way that resembled the notion of a multiverse. They argued that the universe is composed of an infinite number of atoms, forming various independent worlds that may exist simultaneously (Furley 140–141). This theory contributed a cosmological model that inherently allowed for the existence of multiple, possibly infinite universes created through natural processes.

This view of the ancient Greek atomists was largely overshadowed by Aristotelian thought, which presented a geocentric universe characterized by a single, finite cosmos. It declared that the idea of multiple universes was logically inconceivable, remaining dominant in medieval philosophical spheres. But the Condemnation of 1277 by Bishop Étienne Tempier was a revolutionary movement that challenged key Aristotelian principles. It emphasized divine omnipotence over the rigid Aristotelian physics, permitting philosophical speculation on worlds beyond the physical cosmos known at the time (Siegfried 1–2). This theological freedom laid the foundation for many centuries of theorizing, moving the idea from philosophy into the realm of mathematics and physics. Eventually, it became a titular feature of science fiction literature. The works by Murray Leinster and Jack Williamson popularized the concept of parallel worlds within the spheres of speculative fiction. The English writer Michael Moorcock is credited with coining the term "multiverse" and has explored the same in his novels such as *The Eternal Champion* and *The Cornelius Quartet* (Wolfe 25). This concept evolved simultaneously in theoretical physics with Hugh Everett's Many-Worlds Interpretation of quantum mechanics, which introduced the idea of the universe "branching" every time a quantum event has two or more possible outcomes. This allowed the existence of multiple realities, where the other versions aren't visible to the ones "entangled" in their own branch (DeWitt 34).

However, the philosophical origins of the multiverse theory are not limited to the West. Certain Indian texts like the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* present narratives that resemble the modern concept of a multiverse. The former contains vivid descriptions of parallel worlds with their own environments and organisms.

> "I saw countless creations, though they did not know of one another's existence. Some were coming into being, others were perishing; all of them had different shielding atmospheres (from five to thirty-six atmospheres). There were different elements in each; they were inhabited by different types of beings in different stages of evolution with different natures and cultures; some had other universes within them; in some there were creatures you would not believe possible to exist; in some there was apparent natural order, and in others there was utter disorder; in some there was no light and hence no time sense." (Venkatesananda, *Vasiṣṭha's Yoga* 545)

Max Tegmark classifies multiverses into four distinct types, or levels. His Level II Multiverse is a collection of "bubble universes" that exhibit varying physical constants and dimensionality (Tegmark 5–8). This theory bears analogous features to the aforementioned excerpt found in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*. Though they have the same fundamental laws of physics, these universes are inherently diverse in nature (e.g., different elements, atmosphere layers, or number of dimensions).

However, the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* doesn't merely touch upon the topic of a multiverse. It expands it into a sophisticated cosmological system, structuring narratives of revelations and travel between universes, exploring the human psyche and its interaction with the nature of reality. In contrast, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* presents these topics through the lens of Vaiṣṇavism, primarily dealing with the creation of universes. Both texts offer an in-depth look at how parallel universes served as narrative frameworks in the Indian subcontinent.

Background on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*

The lack of clarity surrounding the age of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* stems from its development and refinement being conducted over centuries, along with its oral transmission from one generation to another. The final version of the manuscript is dated within the broad period of 500-1000 CE (Sheridan 6). However, some scholars suggest that the substantial portions of the text had evolved by the 4th-7th centuries CE, based on iconographic evidence (Hudson).

Also called *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was originally composed by Vedavyāsa. It has a multilevel dialogical framework, characteristic of Purāṇic

literature. It focuses on devotion, primarily centered on Mahāviṣṇu and his Avatāra, Kṛṣṇa. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava recension of the text outlines the physical structure of the multiverse, ascribing its creation to the supreme Mahāviṣṇu (Gupta 168).

While some scholars highlight similarities with Advaita Vedānta or non-dualism (Sheridan 40–41), the orthodox Advaita schools reject the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as an authentic source of higher knowledge due to the uncertainty associated with its oral transmission. However, it outlines a similar idea of reality and cosmology as found in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, serving as an important source of information on the devotional aspect of early multiverse narratives.

Advaita Vedānta is a non-dualistic school of Indian philosophy that asserts that the self is identical to Brahman (ultimate reality) and that the world is an illusion. Popularized by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, it teaches that Mokṣa (liberation) is achieved by recognizing this unity. One of the primary texts of Advaita is the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, which is structured as a conversation between the young Prince Rāma and Sage Vasiṣṭha.

Assigning a specific date to the text remains impossible due to its layered composition, but scholars provide a timeframe based on internal evidence and linguistic analysis. Key arguments examine its relationship to prominent works by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and Kālidāsa and suggest influences from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Sastri 33). The latest possible date is placed at the 9th century CE, due to the existence of a condensed version by Gauda Abhinanda. For an abridgement to exist, the original work must have been in wide circulation before that time. Hence, the evidence suggests that the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* reached its final form around 850 CE (36). However, traditional dating argues that the core text is much older, attributed to Sage Vālmīki, who also authored the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Nonetheless, the complex multiversal ideas of the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* had evolved in India well before the Condemnation of 1277 allowed Western philosophy to pursue the idea of parallel worlds. Their sophisticated conceptions of the multiverse structure are outlined in the next section.

Hindu Cosmological System

To understand how these texts functioned as a precursor to modern multiverse narratives, we must first examine the specific architecture of the cosmos they propose. While modern science fiction often relies on quantum mechanics or cosmological inflation to justify its alternate realities, ancient Indian literature built its multiverses on a foundation of profound philosophical idealism. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* provides the macro cosmological blueprint, a physically vast and infinitely multiplying cosmos.

> "The golden egg that is this universe is wrapped in seven sheaths: the earth and the other elements, each casing being ten times as great as the one it encases. There are millions upon millions of these in each universe. There are millions of such universes. Lord, all these together are like a single atom upon your head! So, we call you Ananta, Infinite One." (Menon 364)

These verses have been explored for their value as an antecedent to the modern idea of a multiverse. It serves as an explicit mention of an infinite number of parallel worlds, with cyclical conceptions of creation and destruction (Alonso-Serrano and Jannes 2; Torrecilla and De Adana 12). The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava interpretation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* presents the concept of a Causal (Kāraṇa) Ocean, from where the cosmic creator Mahāviṣṇu brings forth an endless number of universes. These worlds, called Hiraṇyagarbha or Brahmāṇḍa, pass through the pores of the deity's body and are ultimately dissolved in him (Prabhupada). In each of these Brahmāṇḍas, he manifests himself as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, acting as the impetus for all material creation (Gupta 168).

The description of Brahmāṇḍa as an egg-shaped universe bears similar features to the modern cosmological theory of cosmic inflation, where our universe is merely one expanding "bubble" among an infinite fractal of other bubble universes (Tegmark 6). In contrast, the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* presents a more complex and nested conception of the multiverse, centred on subjective idealism. It explains that space and time are not absolute containers but are relative to the observer's intent. The idea of Vāsanās (latent tendencies, impressions, or desires) projecting entire universes into existence is at the philosophical core of this work. The multiverse in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* is essentially a collection of overlapping, private "dream-worlds" that appear objective because of the intensity of the Vāsanās driving them (Venkatesananda, *Vasiṣṭha's Yoga* 109–10). Modern science fiction is also moving toward treating human perception as a force that shapes the physical world, blurring the line between the subjective mind and the objective reality (Platt 73–79).

The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* presents narratives inside other narratives, much like its cosmological structure. Prominent among the stories mentioned in this work is that of Queen Līlā and her husband Padma. Upon the death of King Padma, Līlā seeks to reunite with him by keeping his soul in the palace chambers. She seeks assistance from Goddess Sarasvatī, who guides her on the nature of reality. Sarasvatī explains that the universe she perceived was an illusion that arose from the *Vāsanā* (latent desire) of a hermit named Vasistha. In fact, the vast world Līlā perceived was merely a microscopic manifestation within the hermit's residence

(Venkatesananda, *The Supreme Yoga: Yoga Vasistha* 44–61).

This account introduces a complex multiverse system of nested worlds, in direct contrast with the "bubble universe" concept found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Such hypodiegetic universes function similarly to a set of Russian dolls or Chinese boxes, existing as layers within one another (Torrecilla and De Adana 18). The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* also proposes a multiverse of infinite probabilities, as every thought or desire could spawn a reality. Whatever can be conceived exists somewhere in the mind of the cosmic consciousness or Brahman. This maps directly onto the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics.

Therefore, Indian literature expounds a cosmological structure that can be considered an early form of a multiverse framework. The description of Mahāviṣṇu builds the theological reasoning behind the creation of "bubble universes," whereas the story of Queen Līlā serves as a method of exploring this cosmology of parallel worlds through questioning the nature of reality and the influence of latent human tendencies on the universe.

Features of Multiverse Narratives and the Indian Perspective

D'Amato and Diani identify five key features of multiverse fiction (596–601), building on Marie-Laure Ryan's model of ontological pluralism. However, an additional feature of philosophical motivation can be observed in Ryan's original work. These six criteria (see fig. 1) act as a metric to evaluate whether the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* can be considered proto-science fiction narratives in their use of parallel universes. This section serves as a comparative study of Indian literature and modern multiverse fiction based on the aforementioned criteria.



Fig. 1. Features of Multiverse Narratives in Science Fiction

1: Actuality of Parallel Worlds

A true multiverse narrative must emphasize the actualization of all possible worlds within the story's reality. The fictional ontology must acknowledge that an infinite number of parallel universes are physically real, not just a mental exercise or a hypothetical scenario (D'Amato and Diani 596). When Līlā travels to another universe in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, she experiences it as a tangible entity as concrete as her reality. It may be argued that it handles reality itself as an illusory dream; hence, it does not treat any world as actual. However, the text does not distinguish between Līlā's world and other worlds by describing them as hallucinations or dreams. On the contrary, it describes them to be equally actual in the corporeal sense. Similarly, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* treats all universes born from Mahāviṣṇu as physically genuine.

For a story to be a "multiverse," it must adopt modal realism, which is a philosophical concept outlined by David Lewis. This means the "actual world" is not a special status of being but merely a viewpoint (Bricker 1–2). Though a single work cannot represent the endless versions of reality, both of the texts in the scope of this study recognize the infinity of possible worlds as objectively real.

2: Equal Ontological Hierarchy

Ontological hierarchy can be defined as the structure of relationships connecting alternative worlds that develops during the story (Dannenberg 62). A realist narrative can declare only one version of events as real in the ontological hierarchy, but a true work of multiverse fiction must present an equal hierarchy in terms of realism. The concept of indexicality treats actuality as a relative notion, stating that no world is objectively more "real" than the other. Just as "here" refers to wherever the speaker is standing, "actual" refers to whichever world the character is currently occupying (Bricker 13–14). This theory builds on the previous point, adding that the infinite reality of parallel worlds must not only be physical but also equal in nature.

The Brahma-Vimohana-Līlā is a pivotal episode in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which describes how Kṛṣṇa dispelled the creator Brahmā's false pride by revealing the infinite versions of himself that inhabited different universes (Menon 779–85). This story is considered to be an early form of a multiverse narrative. Kṛṣṇa's assertion that Brahmā isn't the supreme power and that countless counterparts of him exist reflects the understanding of equal ontological hierarchy. Meanwhile, the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* presents a network of nested worlds born out of latent desires, and any sense of hierarchy is abstracted. However, it applies the concept of indexicality in Līlā's case, where the sense of reality is subjective. Sarasvatī explains how her experience of the parallel world of her reincarnated husband was not a figment of delusion but an equal reality. Thus, unlike hierarchical models of multiverses, both the works present a structure in which multiple worlds exist without any ontological subordination.

3: Interference and Counterparts

A multiverse narrative is defined not just by the existence of other worlds but by the permeability between them. Decoherence is a term used primarily in theoretical physics, which suggests that when reality branches off into possible outcomes, they never touch again (Ryan 640). Rigid decoherence in fictional cosmologies leads to a series of disconnected storylines. To avoid this, it must reject decoherence in favour of interference, allowing the branches to be "entangled" (Ryan 654–56; D'Amato and Diani 598–99). The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* contains a more limited exploration of interference, mainly dealing with the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's counterparts to curb Brahmā's ego. On the other hand, the concept is explored deeply in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, where Līlā visits parallel worlds in search of her husband. Under Sarasvatī's guidance and blessing, she influences the universe in which Padma is reincarnated and succeeds in retrieving him to her own world. Thus, it presents a unified multiverse narrative within the story, efficiently handling the concept of interaction and interference between worlds.

Multiverse fiction also has the freedom to incorporate encounters between the alternate versions of a particular character, also called counterparts. The most common form of counterpart encounter involves a character traveling to another world to meet a fully embodied version of their alternate self (Ryan 662). The existence of infinite versions of the creator, preserver, and destroyer in each universe is outlined in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The revelation of Kṛṣṇa's counterparts in the Brahma-Vimohana-Līlā and the descent of Mahāviṣṇu into each universe as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu are both considered evidence of counterparts in the text (Prabhupada). The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* presents a more human model of interaction between alter egos in the narrative of Līlā encountering an equally real doppelganger of herself during her journey to a parallel world. This counterpart, also called Līlā II, is wedded to the reincarnated manifestation of the original Līlā's husband. The plot culminates in a radical resolution as Padma is returned to Līlā I's universe and lives with both Līlā I and Līlā II (Venkatesananda, *The Supreme Yoga: Yoga Vasistha* 44–61). This work employs both interference and counterparts, crafting a narrative with entangled branches and permeability between parallel worlds.

4: The Principle of Selection

A crucial feature of multiverse narratives is the role of focalization in structuring the representation of reality. As an infinite number of parallel worlds cannot be represented within the limited scope of a textual work, it must therefore restrict itself to a finite number of realities (Ryan 668). Hence, the "starting world" is selected as the primary focus of a narrative. This does not reject the equal ontological hierarchy outlined in feature two by declaring that one world is more real than the other. On the contrary, all worlds possess the same level of reality, but the storyline stays limited to one or more worlds (D'Amato and Diani 599).

While the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* posits the existence of infinite Brahmāṇḍas, it also employs focalization by describing tales rooted in our own reality. Similarly, the universes Līlā visits are limited to the focal point of her narrative, which is her husband, Padma. The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* deals with three worlds: the reality of Līlā, where Padma dies at war; the universe where Līlā and Padma spent their previous life; and the world where Padma is reincarnated into. While it acknowledges the existence of endless realities, it selects only the worlds that are central to the plot. Both texts imply an infinite cosmological framework, yet only specific worlds are explored in detail, often determined by the perspective of the central character or narrative context.

5: Narrative Navigation in the Multiverse

Due to the complex cosmological structure of multiverses, they require guidance mechanisms to ensure the reader doesn't get disoriented in the narrative. One of those is an anchoring character who the readers follow through a finite set of worlds in the multiverse. As these "reader surrogates" learn about the story's cosmological framework, the audience inherits the mental framework that these characters construct, making it easier to understand the narrative (Kukkonen 42–43). The best surrogate must have a limited understanding of the multiverse and its workings. This allows the reader to comprehend the concepts along with the character (D'Amato and Diani 600).

Līlā serves as a reader surrogate in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, exploring worlds and learning gradually about the nature of reality. Sarasvatī embodies the archetype of a mentor, explaining cosmology and answering her questions. This teacher-disciple framework is observed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as well, with Kṛṣṇa instructing Brahmā. In fact, the text itself is structured as a dialogue between Śuka (mentor) and Parīkṣit (reader surrogate). The teacher-disciple system is intrinsic to Indian literature and serves as an explanatory strategy to guide the disciple and reader through complex philosophical ideas and cosmological frameworks.

6: Philosophical Motivations

While critics often dismiss the many-worlds theory as better suited for science fiction than serious inquiry, its profound impact on narratology suggests a deeper utility. For the scholar, the primary value of a multiversal cosmology lies not in its physical provability but in its capacity to serve as a philosophical tool. It provides a rigorous framework to dramatize the "what if" mode of cognition, forcing inquiry on identity, ethical responsibility,

and the nature of space and time (Ryan 668). Though this feature is not a part of D'Amato and Diani's classification, it is a central theme in Ryan's essay, which explores the intersectionality of narratology and philosophy in their use of parallel worlds.

Indian literature treats the multiverse as a pedagogical device to enable the reader surrogate to grasp complex philosophical ideas. Though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* differ in their schools of thought (Vaiṣṇavism and Advaita Vedānta, respectively), they employ the same narrative techniques to explore creation, consciousness, and the self through the cosmological framework of parallel worlds. Modern fiction often presents counterparts to interrogate the meaning of identity and how characters navigate these questions. Similarly, the story of Kṛṣṇa revealing infinite copies of himself to Brahmā illustrates the obsolescence of a finite physical form in defining human identity. He reveals the collective consciousness permeating through all organisms and counterparts, asserting that no singular version is superior to the others. Līlā's encounter with her alter ego in another universe also presents a similar dilemma of identity. She eventually realizes that her "self" is not tied to a material body and that the Brahman (the non-dual, infinite, and changeless consciousness) is the sole truth from which the universes are projected.

In the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, the goal of showing Līlā parallel realities wasn't to create wonder in the narrative but to introduce the concept of Vairāgya, or dispassion and detachment from the world (Venkatesananda, *The Supreme Yoga: Yoga Vasistha* 310). The existence of infinite counterparts each with their own realities (with some being a king or a beggar) puts the insignificance of personal miseries into perspective. It allows the character—and, in extension, the reader—to realize the futility of worldly attachment and seek the "trans-universal" truth.

The idea of infinite universes also brings forth the fundamental question of what reality means. As outlined in Feature One, modern philosophers like David Lewis argue that all worlds are concrete, but actuality is influenced by individual viewpoints (Bricker 2). The concept of Vāsanā from the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* presents a similar theory, declaring material creation as a mental projection. However, it refutes the absolute reality of the universe, expanding upon Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's notion of Anirvacanīya, which treated the world as neither real nor unreal (Panshikar). Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism propounds the concept of Acintya, where the relationship between God and his creation is of both difference and non-difference (Gupta 47–52). Ultimately, both viewpoints possess a complex and abstracted notion of reality, exploring it through the framework of multiverse narratives. They establish equal ontological hierarchy, utilizing narrative techniques like counterparts, entangled branches, reader surrogates, and focalization to efficiently navigate their philosophical cosmologies.

Conclusion

The structural and philosophical parallels between ancient Indian cosmologies and modern multiverse fiction demonstrate that the plurality of worlds is a foundational narrative framework rather than a recent scientific innovation. Through the application of D'Amato and Diani's narratological outline, this study has shown that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* satisfy the rigorous criteria of multiverse fiction. From the objective actuality of Lewis's modal realism to the reader surrogate models of Kukkonen, these texts employ advanced techniques to guide the reader through an infinite ontology. The combination of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa's macro cosmology and the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha's* subjective nested worlds provides a complete multiverse spectrum, covering both the physical and the psychological.

However, the true significance of these proto-science fiction narratives lies in their philosophical motivation. While contemporary speculative works often use the multiverse to interrogate the fragility of identity, the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* utilize it as a pedagogical instrument for transcendence. By dramatizing the encounter with counterparts and the dissolution of the ego across infinite realities, these works move the observer from a state of epistemological deficiency to one of cosmic realization.

Ultimately, the "multiverse" serves as a lens through which the human psyche explores its own nature. Whether through the observer-centric concept of Vāsanā or the quantum branching of the Many-Worlds Interpretation, the narrative impulse remains the same: to reconcile the finite observer with an infinite reality. In recognizing these texts as sophisticated precursors to modern multiverse fiction, we acknowledge that the "incessant birth of an infinity of new worlds" has been a titular feature of Indian narrative imagination for over a millennium.

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