

ERICH VON DÄNIKEN CHARIOTS OF THE GODS ?

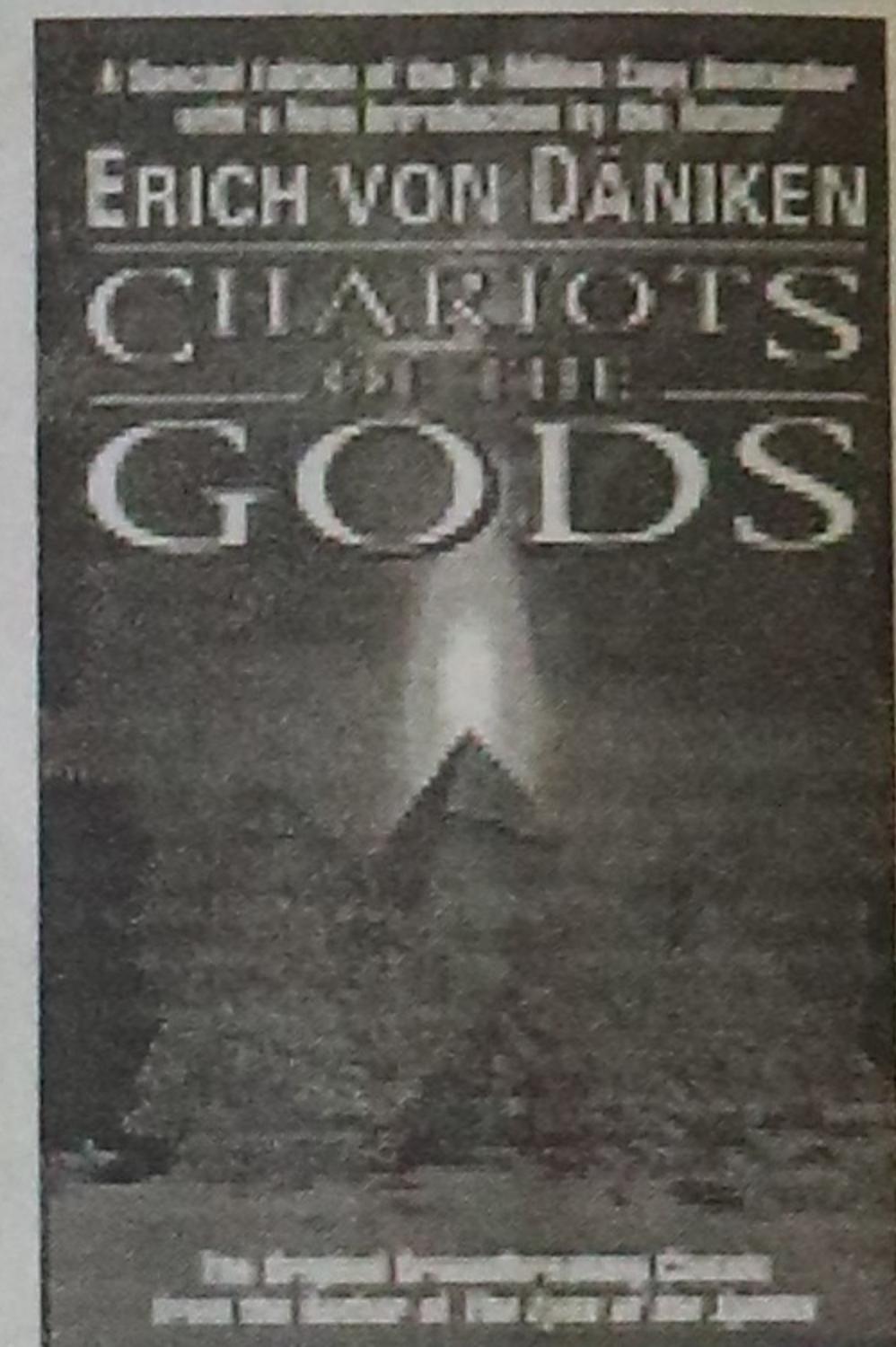
By Mahsud (mashuq@ accesstel.net)

[*Chariots of the Gods? Erich von Däniken (Translated by Michael Heron), Souvenir Press, 1997, p 10-11]*

The idea that mankind was the product of extraterrestrial visitations to Earth in ancient times and that these extraterrestrials were our 'gods', was not surprisingly attacked from all quarters. Yet, his books seemed to catch the attentions of the general public and there was a world wide out break of 'Dänikenitis', as the New York Times called it.

Born on April 14th, 1935, in Zofingen, Switzerland, Erich von Däniken was educated at the College St-Michel in Fribourg, where already as a student he occupied his time with the study of the ancient holy writings. While managing director of a Swiss 5-Star Hotel, he wrote his first book, *Chariots of the Gods*, which was an immediate bestseller in the United States, Germany, and later in 38 other countries. In the United States, Erich von Däniken won instant fame as a result of the television special "In Search of Ancient Astronauts," based upon his first book. In 1993, the German television station SAT-1 started a twenty-five part TV series with and by Erich von Däniken, entitled "Auf den Spuren der All-Mächtigen" (Pathways of the Gods). In 1996, the American TV company ABC/Kane produced a one-hour special, filmed all over the world, entitled *Chariots of the Gods - The Mysteries Continue*. This film was broadcast on the ABC network on September 26th 1996. In 1996/97 ABC/Kane produced another documentary with Erich von Däniken (seen on the Discovery Channel). In Germany, the biggest TV network, RTL, showed the film on November 26th, 1996. 7,7 million viewers in Germany alone watched the program. Today, Erich von Däniken continues his filming with ABC and

RTL. Erich von Däniken just finished the manuscript of his latest book, *Odyssey of the Gods*, a book about Greek mythology. The book is published in May 2000 by Element Books. Erich von Däniken's books have been translated into 28 languages, and have sold 60 million copies worldwide. From his books two full-length documentary films have been produced: *Chariots of the Gods* and *Messages of the Gods*. Of the more than 3,000 lectures which Erich von Däniken has given in 25 countries, over 500 were presented at universities. Fluent in four languages, Erich von Däniken is an avid researcher and a compulsive traveller, averaging 100'000 miles each year to remote spots of the Earth. This enables him to closely examine the phenomena about which he writes. Erich von Däniken is a member of the Swiss writers association, the German writers association, and the International PEN-Club. He was awarded with an Honorary Doctorate degree by the State University of Bolivia. He received the "Huesped Illustre" award from the cities of Ica and Nazca in Peru. In Brasil he received the "Lurencio Filho" award in Gold and Platin, and in Germany he was awarded with the "Order of Gordon Bleu du Saint Esprit" (together with the German astronaut Ulf Merbold). Today, Erich von Däniken lives in the small mountain-village of Beatenberg in Switzerland (40 miles from Berne, above the city of Interlaken). Together with two committees he is currently building a fantastic theme park "Mysteries of the World". Erich von Däniken is the founder of the committees and also the vice president of the joint-stock company. This park "Mysteries of the World" will be opened in April of 2002 in Interlaken/Switzerland. In 1998, Erich



Erich Von Däniken was once playing in the field when he was young. It was during the World War II. Suddenly he saw two German planes which landed on the field. The pilots wearing strange dresses (to them) came out and talked with the villagers. This memory placed a great footprint in the memory of young Däniken. He thought 'Is it the aeronauts of the outer space which the ancient people thought as gods?' Then he started writing books, giving proofs in this belief. From 1968-2000 he wrote 27 books starting with 'Chariots of the Gods?' (1968) and the latest is 'Odyssey of Gods' (2000). He wrote in his first book: "The gods of the dim past left countless traces which we can read and decipher today for the first time, because the problem of space travel, so topical today, was not a problem but a reality, to the men of thousands of years ago. For I claim that our forefathers received visits from the universe in the remote past... I nevertheless proclaim that these 'strangers' annihilated part of mankind existing at the time and produced a new, perhaps the first, homo sapiens."

By- Tuhin Zahur

For school-going people, school life spans from the day they get admitted in playgroup till the day they leave school after O-level Exams. But for me it is something different. My school life seemed to end from the day I stopped going to school. Yes, my school life ended from the year 1999. But the memories of those lovely days are stitched in my heart very tightly.

My first days at school were a bit awkward. Before getting admitted in school, I developed in myself a deep affection for schools. It was mainly because I used to see my sisters wake up early in the morning and get ready for school. I used to see them in uniforms, with bags and books, with pencils and rubbers and so on. Those things were a great wonder for me.

So I started to force my Mom to let me get admitted and my Mom agreed to it. But after getting admitted I hardly did any class because, instead of filling up my copies with alphabets, I used to drench them with my tears. I cried for my Mom in the school and the teachers, who could not send me to my Mom at that very moment, used to send me to one of my elder sister's class. And over there I used to take out the drawing book of my sister and scribble on it!

After one year, I was again admitted, but at that time I behaved properly and obediently. From that time onwards, my real school life started.

I don't remember much stories of my life when I was 6-7 years old. But I do remember a teacher who taught me how to read fluently without making out the spellings first, and for whom, I now understand, I hardly make any mistakes while reading or writing. She used to say out the rhymes with music and good tunes, and we used to recite them with great zest and enthusiasm.

She had a special feeling for me. After school she used to put me on her lap and do her work. One day there was a running competition held in our school and I was one of the competitors. My dear teacher came by my side and whispered, "Have courage. I know you are going to win it." Unfortunately, I did not win but the teacher told me not to worry and thanked me because I tried my best.

But there was always a complain about me. A monthly report was given on each and every student on his/her conduct. In my report I always found: Talks too much! But that never bothered me. I was known as a chatterbox all throughout the years.

Then in class-1 and it was a different school. In my first day in class-1, I found all the girls sitting opposite to me and the boys sitting with me. The girls did not even talk to me on that day. Later on, the teacher explained that the girls thought that I am a boy (since I was wearing shirt-pant and my face resembled a boy's). My name was also another factor to confuse them.

Their confusion was cleared up when they saw me the next

day in school uniform (which was, indeed, skirt-tops for girls in that school).

I still feel elated when I look back at those years and realize how much the teachers and my friends appreciated me. This kind of feelings really makes one feel inspired. I don't know whether it goes with others.... but it goes.... goes with me.

In my days in std-I, I went bit like a tomboy. I became pugnacious. But my behaviour in class and that outside it were totally different. I did not let my tomboyish nature get close to or affect my studies. Everyone was a bit afraid of me because whenever anyone did anything wrong to me, I used to go to the principal with complaints. One day something of this sort happened.

There was only one swing, one seesaw, and one slide in our compact playground. We were all fond of the swing, especially me. The slide always remained dirty (because, instead of slipping down, me and some of my friends used to climb the slope from the front with our dirty shoes), and I developed in myself a great hatred for seesaws. Why, I will tell a bit later.

So, there was only one swing and during the break, we used to rush towards it as soon as the bell rang because if we did not, then we used to see other kids dominating it. One day we were late and we saw a boy of class-V swinging. My temper went to the full and I started up a fight with him. He was claiming the swing as his own and I gave him a menacing look and said, "You will see what I can do to you."

By saying this I went to the principal with the complain that the boy is not letting us have a swing. The principal then permitted each of us to swing five times alternately.

I went to the boy and told him about it, but he informed pathetically that he was no more interested to have swings. He left and the swing was at my finger's ends. So that was how I reigned the whole playground.

The seesaw story is a bit funny. When I was in kg-II, I had a very fat friend. The contrast between us was too perfect; she was fat and I was as thin as a toothpick. One day she compelled me to play with her and I agreed. She took to the seesaw and we were moving up and down. Suddenly the girl went down and sat on the seat with so much of her weight that I could not get down and continue the usual way to play in a seesaw.

I told her, 'Get me down!' She gave me a sinister smile and answered promptly, 'Yes, I will!' Then she got up from her seat and thump! I fell down! My heart was beating with its highest speed because this sudden fall petrified me. I did not dare to complain about her because she was the daughter of a senior teacher!!!

In std-III... well, there was never a 'std-III' in my life because I got double-promotion in std-II and was promoted in std-IV. My days in std-IV, V, VI are not of that importance and if the memories of those days are washed away from my mind it really

won't bother me.

Then came the hardest part of my life- std-VII, in which there was always conspiracy, cheating and dishonesty. It was a new school and I don't want to mention the name... only those who were with me in that school and are reading this article will know very well which school I am talking about.

I had the worst classes of Bangla, English, Geography, History and Biology. Only Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics were OK with me.

My Bangla teacher was indeed, a very special one. She used to enter the class with a pouch and her chore was to fill our diaries with home-works. She explained us only one story throughout the whole year and used to take tests almost everyday.

Since I had the reputation as a good student in our class, it was her conviction that I could never make any mistakes. So on each and every word of my essays or letters, she used to put tick-marks and my whole copy would turn into a mess! And I never found a cross-tick on my copy. It was amazing!?

In 1998, in std. VIII (the last year of my school days), I was in the same school and the same teachers were there. Now, the Bangla teacher played a very special role that year. That year she did not take any class and took very few tests. She had the famous pouch with her and used to gossip with us. We called that period "free period".

Now, something about the English teacher. She was beautiful, young, gaudy and bit of strict. We never had the guts to ask her to explain us anything which we found difficult.

One day, she asked us something about Grammar, but we could not answer her. We were all flustered because we were ignorant of the question. She gave us a very cruel look and shouted at us with an acerbic voice, 'You don't know...' I was feeling piqued and waited for the time when she would explain us that thing.

But to my utmost surprise, that time never came. She left everything on us and never explained. There was, indeed, a very good point in those teachers, and it was that they let you depend too much on yourself!

Now that my school life has ended and a new life is going to start, and that I have come across 16 years of my life, I think my school life was and is the best part of my life, though there were many obstacles which I had to face. But that is what I called living in the real life where there are obstacles, struggles, happiness and satisfaction.

My school days were really exciting. Now whenever I see many kids going to school, with their bags hanging from their shoulders and their water-bottles swinging to and fro, I wish that I could turn back the time and go back to those days. With them I see the shadow of my little figure, overwhelmed with a heavy bag approaching with small but quick paces towards the school...