

### **What drew me to the stories of Ancient Egypt?**

I wanted to explore our human origins. Where did we come from? How did we get to where we are today? Why are things as they are? I wanted to conceive a story that offered the discerning reader a different entry point to these age-old questions. Inevitably, it led me to Ancient Egypt, the world's earliest recorded historical culture.

As the oldest, Egypt civilisation influenced everything that followed: the first in any field always does. That's why Egypt is known as the 'Mother and Father of all things'.

The Ancient Egyptians imagined their origins through creation myths, such as the myth of Isis. In it, Osiris, her husband, is murdered and has his dismembered body parts distributed all over Egypt. Isis gathers them together and miraculously brings him back to life. This is a story of life and death, procreation, rebirth and the struggle for power, all archetypal themes. It's about genesis, because that's what genes of Isis means.

### **Where did the Biblical flood fit into the story?**

In the Book of Genesis, the flood lasted 40 days and nights. If so, how did all that water get up there in the first place? Here's an utterance from the Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts:

*'I shall cross the great lake in the sky and return home to my double on the sun.'*

Not only does this moot a 'lake in the sky' but it suggests the Ancient Egyptians were beings from the sun or sun-folk.

More recently, Old Mother Shipton, a Yorkshire prophetess, coined her answer:

*'Beneath the water, men shall walk. Shall ride, shall sleep, shall even talk.'*

What if the waters were already up there in the sky, causing the earth to shrink like a dried prune, leaving the remaining oceans on shallow sea beds?

This gave me the idea for the sky waters, an important element of the world of *The Genes of Isis*.

### **What drove you to expand these initial ideas into a full novel?**

Legends from other ancient cultures mentioned cross-breeding between species, mixed genetics and hybrids. The apocryphal *The Book of Enoch* spoke of the Grigori or fallen angels who came to Earth and mated with 'the daughters of men,' spawning the Nephilim, an antediluvian race of giants. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* talked of strange beings such as fish-men who came ashore for the day and returned to the sea at night.

What if these fallen angels were sun-folk who manifested in human form and settled in Ancient Egypt, as suggested by the Pyramid Texts? What if antediluvian genetics were unstable, in that the bindings that prevented successful inter-species crossbreeding had become loosened, spawning mixed genetic creatures and humans with animal heads?

This was the germ of the idea for the novel: an alternative genesis of the human race.

Interwoven with these ideas were esoteric concepts such as the akashic record and the astral body. The akashic record is conceived of as a compendium of thoughts, events and emotions encoded in a numinous plane of existence. From this, I derived the name of the novel's heroine, Akasha, a Sanskrit word meaning aether or atmosphere. The astral body is a personal spirit entity which can leave a person during sleep, travel through the vast numinous corridors of the akashic record and in so doing re-connect to the history of any person or event from any previous epoch. This is what Edgar Cayce, an American mystic, claimed to have done.

Other sources included Doris Lessing's *Shikasta* which speculated on how humans may have lived in the time before recorded history. The name Samlios, where the initial action of the novel unfolds, is taken from Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*.

All this nourished my fascination for the supernatural and ancient times.

**How did you build a narrative and characters around the ingredients gathered from your knowledge of Ancient Egypt?**

With two sources, one Biblical and one Ancient Egyptian, I needed two protagonists, one human, the other angelic or sun-folk, whom I called the Solarii. I envisaged the embryonic human race as blue-blooded, gentle folk whereas the Solarii were drawn as red-blooded and severe. A comparison of opposites yielded a girl and boy, young and old, Akasha and Horque. Thus the main characters took shape.

When I started work on the novel, I began with the idea and a storyline. The characters emerged from the plot. Sometimes my imagination revealed things about them, like what they carried in their pockets, their physical characteristics, their character. I found them crouching behind the plot lines, emerging out of the shadows of the narrative and in the great halls of the unconscious (in dreams).

### **What haunted you throughout the process?**

Looking into pre-history, there was a sense that I was peering into a dark timeless abyss, where sometimes, as Nietzsche predicted, the abyss stared back. That was unnerving, especially as most of what I was researching had no solid facts on which anyone agreed. But it did leave plenty of room for the imagination to roam.

The final word is the haunting saying: *Egypt knows you, but do you know the Egypt in you?*

If you want to know more, you know where to look.