

ALIEN CONTACT

Ever since primitive man first drew himself upright and stared up at the heavens, he has pondered the eternal question: Is there life out there? For thousands of years we have been enthralled by the awesome prospect of creatures, or beings existing out there in other galaxies, living in civilizations far more technologically advanced than our own. The monsters of science fiction may have been the product of writers imaginations, but to millions of readers such creatures are glimpses into the future.

In our galaxy alone, there are more than a billion stars, and according to eminent astronomer Professor Archibald Roy, of Glasgow University, and also believes that at least one-fifth are stable and cool like our own Sun. About half of those billion stars, also have planets-the most important single requirement for developing life, Professor Archibald Roy thinks so. Astronomers hope that many of these planets will be surrounded by organic 'fog' containing DNA-like molecules which could be the key to life itself.

In the late fifties, the Chinese-born astrophysicist Su-Shu Huang of Northwestern University, Illinois, described the types of conditions in which life could exist beyond our galaxy. It should be neither too hot, so that water would evaporate, nor too cold, so that it would be permanently frozen. With a combination like this, there is no logical reason why extraterrestrial life should not take root and flourish.

The dream of sending or receiving messages from aliens in outer space has been as old as man himself. The Morse code had been one of the first steps to contacting aliens, as the Morse code works with using flashes of light. It was this which gave the French inventor Charles Cros the idea to make a giant mirror. He would use it to flash light from the sun which would be reflected from Earth to Mars, in hope of making contact with aliens. The mirror would be tilted back and forth so that the flashes of light could be flashed on and off. The problem was the mirror had to be so big that it would be impossible to tilt, and also how would Cros know that aliens would even respond to flashes of light.

Later on Thomas Edison, had come up with a more practical idea which was to line up electrical bulbs on a giant raft on Lake Michigan, USA, with arms ten miles long. These would be switched on for ten minutes and then switched off for ten minutes, giving a clear indication in space that there is intelligent life forms on earth as well. Thomas Edison could not continue his idea due to pressure from the government to help out on projects somewhere else in the USA.

Nevertheless, one Paris newspaper publisher of the time was ready to offer a prize of hundred thousand francs to anyone who could make contact with alien life in our own galaxy, or even further in space. There was an exception in the competition, which was that if any one would have contact with alien life and it was from Mars, that person would not get the prize money. The publisher explained that since everyone was pretty certain there was probably intelligent life on Mars anyway, communicating with aliens would be too easy, and therefore it would be risking the publishers money. No one claimed the prize.