

INSTINCTIVE INQUIRIES INTO INDIAN ANTIQUITY AND ITS DISORIENTATED CHRONICLES (FROM INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION TILL THE RISE OF JAINISM)

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Received: 14 Jan 2021

Accepted: 23 Jan 2021

Published: 30 Jan 2021

ABSTRACT

History as we know has been through a lot, it has been modified changed and reshaped to fit the personal versions of perfections that suit the best interests of people of each era. It's a long pain striking process to dissect the already brutally mutilated versions of history to find an ounce of reality in each of the accounts. This paper is the first of a series of ten short research papers which would in a very brief manner deal with all the neglected grey areas of Indian history.

KEYWORDS: *Instinctive, Inquires, Indian, History, Rewrite, Protagonist, Antiquity, Chronicles, Disoriented, Indus Valley, Ashoka, Alexandra, Jainism, Buddhism, Chanakya*

INTRODUCTION

History for me has always been a reality that happened long ago, fantasizing the entire event into a surreal version of it makes history a zone from which most people draw influence from. But the historians have changed history so much that almost all the protagonist's characters have been made into these either flawless human beings or down right transformed into wicked witch of the west.

This is an article where I have tried to re-humanize the polar opposite characters of history, who seem right out of a fantasy novel meant for kids. History should be rational, practical and real.

'Civilizations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient and modern times, wonderful ideas have been carried forward from one race to another...But mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood..... Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This, many other nations have taught; but India for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist... Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it. We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live!' - Swami Vivekananda

Unfortunately, the splendid and celebrated history of India is not inscribed in its original form because of many historical and political reasons. In the veil of secularism, objectivity and fairness, in many cases, the real antiquity and historical legacy of this prodigious realm was very diplomatically omitted from the folios and was calculatingly replaced by ambiguous schools of thought, suppositions and speculations. Most history across the world without any doubt, has been written with a strong bias towards the victor and those in power. But due to disintegration and prolonged subjugation,

the real glory of the Golden sparrow was blown into thin air by some imprudent, impolitic and injudicious academicians, antiquarians and chroniclers, who in most of the cases received patronage from the potentates of their times. In the esteemed words of Max Muller who said, '*If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth, I should point to India*', one can treasure the tangible approximation of Indian antecedents.

Astonishingly Sanskrit which has been the source for many languages and literature in succession like Pali and Prakrit lost its place in the pages of Indian history. Pali was taken as means for exposition of Buddhist ideas and Prakrit was used for the spread of Jain doctrines but Sanskrit the mother of many languages bewilderingly dematerialized whose whys and wherefores need to be probed. This kick off may exasperate a self-proclaimed Brainiac who contemplates Sanskrit to be a sacred philological and consequently should not be taken into consideration during historical elucidation or oeuvre. Sanskrit in fact is the incomparable treasure which India has to its name and what is her monumental inheritance. Rather unfortunate fate of this once great civilization is that, the language of the ancients is all but lost and with the lost language vanished the ginormous treasure of infinite knowledge and progressive science. Pity on us and our fate one must say, while chasing for the fool's gold we lost the gems we actually have.

It may be time to rewrite history textbooks as Scientists from IIT-Kharagpur and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have uncovered evidence that the Indus Valley Civilization is at least 8,000 years old, and not 5,500 years old, taking root well before the Egyptian (7000BC to 3000BC) and Mesopotamian (6500BC to 3100BC) civilizations. What's more, the researchers have found evidence of a pre-Harappan civilization that existed for at least 1,000 years before this.¹

K.N. Dikshit and BR Mani of ASI, believes that manufactured controversies belonging to different realms of politics, not archaeology occupied volumes in the pages of historical narratives. '*These things should not be raked up*,' said Mr. Dikshit. '*I just don't want to give any statement on this. People are talking. There was an Aryan invasion, then Aryan immigration, then horse theory — this theory, that theory. They are simply wasting their time.*'² Bookmen, as was believed by Stephen Hawking, Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change. So, we have to focus all our energies on building the new and not on fighting the old.

New investigation of DNA samples hauled out from the skeleton of a woman buried in Rakhigarhi four to five millennia ago, challenges Aryan invasion theory. New investigation of DNA, a new scientific evidence was presented by Indo-US team of researchers who claim that such a large-scale migration from central Asia to India never happened.³ This is a major finding that could impact the understanding of Indian ancestry, the DNA study of a 4500-year-old skeleton found in Rakhigarhi, in Haryana, suggests that modern people in India are likely to have descended from the same population.⁴ Prof Vasant Shinde, director of the Rakhigarhi project, said, '*The Aryan invasion theory is based on very flimsy ground, the history being taught to us in text books should now be changed*'.

More empirical evidences were presented in the research paper authored by 42 researchers that answers this impending question. This paper was in print, in April 2016, titled: 'Punctuated bursts in human male demography inferred

¹<https://yourstory.com/2016/05/indus-valley-civilization>

² <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-11-28/archaeologists-confirm-indian-civilization-2000-years-older-previously-believed>

³ Brown, Judith M. (1994), *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy* (2nd ed.), ISBN 978-0-19-873113-9

⁴ Pratul Sharma, New DNA study debunks Aryan invasion theory, THE WEEK, September 06, 2019

from 1,244 worldwide Y-chromosome sequences.’ One of the authors Dr. Underhill contend against Bronze Age migrations by Indo-European language speakers into India. David Reich, geneticist and professor in the Department of Genetics at the Harvard Medical School, is another one who held similar views. According to Harsh Mahajan, ‘*This peaceful arrival in India of a highly accomplished group of people has been portrayed in history as an invasion by hordes of semi-literate, bloodthirsty tribes on horseback with iron weapons, who considered cities to be the creation of demons and so destroyed them, while the civilized people of the Sapt Sindhu were too perplexed at the very sight of such uncivilized behavior that they not only got beaten but left the place and moved away*’. Thus, Aryan invasion theory which was questioned by Rakhigarhi DNA study needs to be probed into.

Alexander’s invasion of India is looked upon as a massive Western triumph against the unsystematic East. But the largely Macedonian army may have agonized a fortune worse than Napoleon in Russia. V.A. Smith writes, “The triumphant progress of Alexander from the Himalayas to the sea demonstrated the inherent weakness of the greatest Asiatic armies when confronted with European skill and discipline.” But this view is not accepted by the majority of historians. In Russian general Georgy Zhukov’s view, Alexander had suffered a greater setback in India than Napoleon in Russia.⁵ There was another narrative about why Alexander decided to return? It says it was because his men were ‘tired’ of fighting and homesick and on the verge of mutiny.⁶ Plutarch the Greek historian, does add that one of the reasons for Alexander’s decision to turn back was because of information given to him that further East, beyond the Beas, the kingdom of the Nandas ‘*were awaiting them with 200,000 infantry, 80,000 cavalry, 8000 war chariots, and 6000 fighting elephants*’. This is what is chronicled in history and does it match with what we know about Alexander.⁷

Another school of thought believes, Indian historians could be held responsible for having antagonistic attitude towards the Nandas whose might perhaps compelled Alexander’s retreat. They argue, though Nandas established the first ever empire, covering almost area of present India, they were never recognized for the same. Almost Indian historians neglected their achievements and have tried to reduce the span of their rule.⁸ Nanda kings were slandered by another opinion. It is stated that the first Nanda has illegal affair with the queen. It is stated that last Shishunaga kings’ wife has criminal affection towards the first Nanda. The first Nanda took advantage of it. He killed the king and usurped the legitimate right of the princes.⁹ Additionally, another school of thought argues, there can be a number of reasons, historians devaluated the Nandas. They, in order to keep the era without Brahmin influence short, tried to shorten the ruling period of Nandas.¹⁰ Only an honest-to-goodness fact-finding may unravel this misperception.

Omphis Taxiles or Prince Ambhi is known to history as a traitor since Alexander the Great called him so. We studied in our school days that he requested Alexander to even the score with King Puru or Porus. Ambhi and his son are known to India as erudite patronizers of the famous Taxila university. If he is truly a traitor then why did Alexander

⁵ Antonova, K.A.; Bongard-Levin, G.; Kotovsky, G. (1979). A History of India Volume I. Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers.

⁶ Rakesh Krishnan Simha, Alexander Versus Porus Beyond the Fog of War.

⁷ Bosworth B. (2002). The Legacy of Alexander. Politics, Warfare and Propaganda under the Successors. Oxford University Press.

⁸ Sanjay Chaudhari, ‘Devaluating the Nandas -A Big Loss to The History of India’; IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 21, Issue 9, Ver. 8 (Sep. 2016) PP 17-20

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Roy Chowdhury H.C., Political History of Ancient India, Calcutta, 1973, p:208; Goyal S.R., Maurya Samrajya, Jodhpur, 1993, p:229.

initially called him a trustworthy friend in February and a conspirator same year in July 326 BC? And what deceitfulness did Prince Ambhi do with Alexander? That itself is a Chinese puzzle, a mystery since no Greek ever proved it. Nowhere has Arya Chanakya said anything against Ambhi. So why is he called a traitor? Plutarch was the one who says Ambhi was a traitor, by saying so he might have meant traitor to Indians not Greeks. If this is true then what about the narrations of some historians who believe Ambhi very diplomatically protracted Alexander's stay from one month till June, for five months. As July is a month of heavy downpour and gusty winds which play havoc. Then what is the precise role of Ambhi in the history of India.¹¹

When speaking of Alexander and his invasion, one cannot help but recall the Indian emperor of Magadha Chandra Gupta Maurya and his mentor Kautilya. There are historians who make a comparison between Machiavelli and Chanakya between whom lies 1,500 years. According to some historians Niccolò Machiavelli is to Europe what Chanakya is to India. He stripped governance of morality and looked at it purely from the point of view of strategy. Victory in politics and warfare was not about good and evil, not even about right and wrong. It was about how to win, and if winning means backstabbing and deceit, well, that's just the way the world is.¹² The question is why India was fertile ground for such an unemotional theory so long before Machiavelli, who was writing close to the modern age.¹³ This comparison should be explained or should be negated.

According to some historians Maurya Empire, which was originated before long, after Alexander's foray, was seen as a patriotic reaction to the foreign oppressor by few Nationalistic Indian historians. According to Justin, the Indian regions which Alexander had occupied were 'liberated' by Chandragupta, after a divine omen had inspired him to become king. It is interesting to note the similarities of word use between this fragment and the story of the subjugation of Greece by Philip II.¹⁴ There we read that the Nanda dynasty of Magadha was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya with the help of the Brahmin Kautilya: *The Brahmin Kautilya will root out the nine Nandas. Upon the cessation of the race of Nanda, the Maurya will possess the earth, for Kautilya will place Chandragupta on the throne.*¹⁵ The second Brahmanical testimony is the famous play *Mudrarakṣasa* ('the signet ring of Rakshasa) by Viśkhadatta.¹⁶ On the rise of Chandragupta, despite some occasional borrowing between the two, bewilderingly the Western and the Indian sources epitomize two different traditions. In the fifth and ninth volumes of the *Asiatic Researches*, Francis Wilford continued along these lines and wrote the first analyses of the story of Chandragupta by combining both Western and Indian sources.¹⁷ The factual history can be exhumed only by making a thorough fact finding on such narratives.

The Mauryan chronicles were taken in hand by John Keay in his Book "India Discovered".¹⁸ The same was even more comprehensively covered in the recent book "Ashoka—The Search for the India's Lost Emperor" by Charles

¹¹ Taxila and the Western World, Dr Saifur Rahaman Dar.

¹² Aakar Patel, The Chanakya of Florence: Machiavelli and 'The Prince', The Hindu, JUNE 26, 2020.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Libertas: Just. 8.1.3, 8.2.8, 9.1.4, 9.3.11, 12.1.6. Iugum servitutis: Just. 6.9.7. Another possibility is that Troguus, writing in the first century BC, was influenced by the acts of Julius Caesar, who claimed to defend the Republic's liberty but subdued it to his authority instead. For libertas and Caesar, see Wirszubiski (1968) 87–91.

¹⁵ Viṣṇu Purāṇa 4.24 (trans. Wilson). See also Winternitz (1909) 462.

¹⁶ Visakhadeva in some manuscripts of the play. Winternitz (1920) 210 n. 2.

¹⁷ Basham (1961) 266–7; Arnold (1989) 366.

¹⁸ John K. England: Windward An imprint of W.H. Smith and Sons; 1981. India Discovered.

Allen.¹⁹ These inquiries have unfolded a magnificent epoch in the indigenous history of our country. But, history is never black and white. There are always zones that overlap. Historians for reasons unknown stick to either the black or white zones and skirts through the borders of the grey. But its only when the dark, light and grey sections of history meet then we get reality. History as every other story has multiple sides, Ashoka is no exception, there is the one side that has been glorified and portrayed, the side of Ashoka that we all know today is that of Dhamma Ashoka but history very conveniently forgot the tale of Kala Ashoka or Chanda Ashoka. Why history needed to be changed? Why do certain people have to be portrayed in a certain manner? Why do occurrences that happened centuries ago be altered to fit into the pseudo-perfect boxes that are appealing to the society? A report in the 'Hindusthan Times' blazons Sanjeev Sanyal's interesting new book which looks at how the Indian Ocean shaped human history. In the process, he questions a number of long held notions including Emperor Ashoka's reputation as a pacifist. According to this narrative, *'as one can see, Ashoka does not look like such a great king on closer inspection but a cruel and unpopular usurper who presided over the disintegration of a large and well-functioning empire built by his father and grandfather. At the very least, it must be accepted that evidence of Ashoka's greatness is thin and he was some shade of grey at best. Perhaps like many politicians, he made grand high-minded proclamations but acted entirely differently. This fits with the fact that he is not remembered as a great monarch in the Indian tradition but in hagiographic Buddhist texts written in countries that did not experience his reign. He was 'rediscovered' in the nineteenth century by colonial era orientalist like James Prinsep. His elevation to being 'Ashoka the Great' is even more recent and is the result of political developments leading up to India's independence'*. It further states, *'this is not so different from how the medieval Ethiopians created a Biblical lineage for the Solomonic dynasty'*²⁰.

With the fall of Mauryan's raised a new religion. The root cause of the same can be traced back to the corrupt moralities and abhorring attitude of the highbrows of the sanatana dharma, the old religion in all its glory also had a major problem, the problem was of corruption and tyranny. At the cost of a moral conundrum one can't help but compare the times of the bygones with the modern-day politics. But instead of changing political affiliations like people of modern times do people changed religious affiliations. Buddhism is often seen as the acceptable face of religion, lacking a celestial dictator and full of Eastern wisdom. But Dale DeBakcsy, who worked for nine years in a Buddhist school, says its time to think again.²¹ The author writes, *'we can't let the darkness of Buddhist practice go by unremarked just because it works more subtly and its victims suffer more quietly'*. A recent report, 'The darker side of Buddhism' by Charles Haviland in BBC News, Colombo, reiterates similar views which states, *'principle of non-violence is central to Buddhist teachings, but in Sri Lanka some Buddhist monks are being accused of stirring up hostility towards other faiths and ethnic minorities. Their hard line is causing increasing concern'*.

Though still an old school soul who is addicted to paperbacks I could not help but cite this blog that was posted on reddit which explained the changing contemporary mindsets regarding Buddhism.

'This isn't an attack on Buddhism or its followers. It's just me trying to understand. I might not. I might have it all wrong. It just seems to me that Buddhism is a nice "comfort" once in a while, a reminder to let go and relax, but once it

¹⁹ Allen C. London: Abacus, An imprint of Little, Brown Book Group; 2013. Ashoka – The search for India's Lost Emperor.

²⁰ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/books/this-excerpt-from-a-new-book-demolishes-emperor-ashoka-reputation-as-a-pacifist/story-puxXlUpPsDy4TqELZ3UonN.html>.

²¹ Dale DeBakcsy, New Humanist, Blog, Faith & Religion, Wednesday, 23rd January 2013.

gets into serious devotion, it seems to become contradictory if not outright detrimental. Buddhism also seems way too pessimistic. It seems to imply that happiness can be reached after you give up your humanity, your personality, your soul, the very qualities that make you human. If you just meditate constantly and become a drone, you can be happy. Daoism, which I have been looking into recently, seems more reasonable. Suffering is inevitable, but so is happiness. You do not sacrifice one for the other. They complement each other.²²

There are other thoughts like, 'the *Madhyamaka* school, for instance, the point of the paradoxical-sounding statements is just to get us to stop engaging in metaphysical theorizing'.²³ According to John Horgan, '*One of Buddhism's biggest selling points for lapsed Catholics like me is that it supposedly dispenses with God and other supernatural claptrap. This claim is disingenuous. Buddhism, at least in its traditional forms, is functionally theistic, even if it doesn't invoke a supreme deity. The doctrines of karma and reincarnation imply the existence of some sort of cosmic moral judge who, like Santa Claus, tallies up our naughtiness and niceness before rewarding us with nirvana or rebirth as a cockroach*'.²⁴

There is a Buddhist exhaustiveness claim which sums to avowing that every element or aspect of a person is accounted for by the five *skandhas*. Objectors to the exhaustiveness claim often argue that for discovering the self the Buddhist commitment to empirical means is mistaken. True, we cannot discover the self in the five *skandhas*, precisely because the self is that which is beyond or distinct from the five *skandhas*.²⁵ Besides according to Buddhism, Nirvana is blissful in the sense that it is a state, free from all pain and suffering, but it is or else not to some degree about which we can speak evocatively from this side of liberation. Conceivably we may have foretastes in our lifetime of what Nirvana is like, but whenever we attempt to capture what it is, we immediately lose sight of it: Nirvana is by nature indescribable, and therefore we cannot make the final pronouncement on whether 'no-self' is compatible with it.²⁶ Thus, though with utmost respect to the light of Asia and his Ism, an inquisitive mind can not stop from seeking answers to such qualms.

As Buddhism rose into fame in the eastern half of the subcontinent, from the western half budded another religion counter acting Hinduism, this religion went down in history as Jainism. There are certain practices in Jainism like Sentara which are widely criticized needs to be verified in the light of reason before propagating this Ism through academics. The religious literature is called Prakirma sutras. Sanstaraka (later on known as Santhara) is found in one of the Agam by name 'Prakrina Agam'. This happens to be the religious recording of the concept and practice of Santhara amongst early Jains. It pronounces starvation or fasting from a particular point of time unto death. This according to the religious is a known method in Jainism to attain salvation ('moksha').²⁷ The punishment for suicide and Section 306 IPC may be applicable to the practice of Santhara or Sallekhana in the Jain religion if this practice is an essential religious practice of the Jain religion but it may be exempted from such punishment if is not established. Naturally as Sati is banned does there any need to ban Santhara or Sallekhana needs to be substantiated in the light of law. Another difficult concept to grasp in Jainism is Ahimsa, or nonviolence, because it does not just denote to nonviolence in the physical or social sense, but also to a number

²²https://www.reddit.com/r/Buddhism/comments/k0gd2/buddhism_seems_irrational_and_contradictory/

²³ Mark Siderits, *Is Buddhism paradoxical?* Oxford University Press'

²⁴ John Horgan, *Why I Don't Dig Buddhism*, Scientific American, December 2, 2011.

²⁵ W.S. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, p58.

²⁶ B.A. Elman, 'Nietzsche and Buddhism'; *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol.44, 1983, p.683.

²⁷ Joseph Mandumpal, Chennai Law Associates, 'India: 'Santhara' – Conflicts Between Religious Choice of a Jain And Prescription of Law Through Judgments in The Absence of Statutes', Mondaq, 17 December 2019.

of spiritual and mental progressions which tie into the exclusion of karma, breaking out of samsara, and entering moksha. The rudimentary structure of ahimsa is shaped around the inkling that every living thing has a soul that is wedged in a state of samsara, which refers to the cycle of death and rebirth through reincarnation.

James Laidlow, the author of *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy, and Society*, referred to this traditional sense of ahimsa as the “ethic of quarantine.” He has said that “one cannot stop the constant cycle of death and rebirth. All one can do is temporarily keep it at bay... These practices, which are central pillars of non-violence in Jainism, function neither to minimize deaths, nor, in the normal sense, to save life”²⁸ Due to the resulting vacillating (schwankenden) status of the Jain laity, who find themselves sandwiched between society at large and individual Jain mendicant traditions to whom they are closely connected while simultaneously being strictly separated, Jain culture has no clearly identifiable shape.²⁹ Jainism as a religion, has doctrines spread far and wide, and has many devote followers but to understand the reality on the core values and principals we need to go back in time and reconsider or re-evaluate the reasons behind the raise of a new religion and its contemporary relevance not counting only on socio, economic and political aspects but also by inspecting its mystical lateral.

CONCLUSIONS

After extensive research in each and every era of historic significance right from the Indus Valley Civilization till the rise of Jainism one can't help but fall in a deep never-ending maze of historic tomes each speaking of a different account, a different version of history and claiming that their version is exactly how history had happened. History and it being salvaged from the scrapes of all these multi faced accounts is a task that is so herculean that the tasks of Hercules himself seem rather easy going compared to this and its not a one mans job. Its high time that all the historians out there try and write history in exact terms of how it happened, it's the past and cannot be changed.

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²⁸cited in Evans, 1994, p. 207.

²⁹ Cort's (1990: 62) triad of 'ideology, intention, and practice' echoes both Parsons and Shils' (1951/2001: 6 ff.)

