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QUARTERLY

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Contents

Editorial Perspective	7
Intellectual mercenaries, the Post-Independence <i>Avataras</i> of the Hindu Munshis	
1. North-East Scan	
Assam Floods: Another Perspective	11
<i>Patricia Mukhim</i>	
Manipur: Maintaining Sanity in the Times of Chaos	14
<i>Pradip Phanjoubam</i>	
2. Pre-Paninian India Linguistic Awareness from Rig Veda to Mahabharata	17
<i>Dr. Damodar Thakur</i>	
3. The Preliminary Research of Hindu Sculptural Artifacts of Vijaya Period in Champa in Binh Đinh Province	28
<i>Phan Anh Tu</i>	
4. In Favour of Freedom of Expression	49
<i>Koenraad Elst</i>	
5. Is 'Dalit' Activism Just Propaganda by Other Means?	64
<i>Rajeev Srinivasan</i>	
6. Indian History and the Colonial Historiography	75
<i>Makkhan Lal</i>	
7. Colonial Imprint on Historiography in India	92
<i>Navaratna Rajaram</i>	
8. New Perspective on Ancient Indian History in the Context of Emerging Insights	100
<i>Come Carpentier de Gourdon</i>	

9. Stupidity in the Garb of Scholarship <i>B.B. Kumar</i>	108
10. Wendy Doniger's Vulgar Hindu History <i>Shankar Sharan</i>	124
11. Sati Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse <i>Meenakshi Jain</i>	145
12. Sub-regionalism in South Asia: Potentials and Prospects of BBIN <i>Mohammad Monirul Islam</i>	155
13. Energy Scarcity and Ambiguity making India Vulnerable against Non-Traditional Security Threats <i>Prabhavit Dobhal</i>	172

Editorial Perspective

Intellectual mercenaries, the Post-Independence *Avataras* of the Hindu Munshis

India is a vast country, and, as is expected, it also has its problems, as any country of its size and complexity is expected to have. Unfortunately, such problems are often aggravated by a section of our intellectuals and the media. Spoiled by the political patronage, they simply raise the issue at the high emotional pitch; create confusion, rather than suggesting remedies, whenever there is change of guard. Presently, two issues, rather two critical problems related to Kashmir and cow-protection, are being hotly debated in the Indian press. One finds a lot of empty perverted rhetorical discourse in the same. Many good Samaritans advise soft human approach in case of Kashmir. But how, when one confronts the cruel face of a terrorist?

Indian Express has published the papers of Harvansh Mukhia, Kancha Illaiyah, and many others. Most of the papers writers indulge in empty perverted rhetorical discourse. Mukhia, a retired Marxist professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, as usual, cannot free himself from colonial Marxist paradigm. According to his paper, *The pseudo alternative*, “The Sangh Parivar has furthered the colonial understanding of India’s past.” He further writes: “Even as it hopes to divide and rule by pitting gaurakshaks against the beef eaters, the Parivar’s agenda of rewriting history and bringing back the glories of ancient India remains a pipe dream. It’s not for nothing that there has not been a single book or even an article from its historians that has been under discussion on any platform, right wing or left wing over the past few decades.” Here, it needs mention that Mukhia is wrong on many counts. He is not only giving a political statement, rather indulging in sloganeering, but also lacks professional honesty. At least none can blame RSS of intra-Hindu social divide, and for the oppression of a section of the Hindus. And again only the Marxists accept the equation of caste and class; and it

is not RSS, but the Marxists, who are responsible for retention of colonial constructs, such as ‘Aryan Aggression Theory’ (now Aryan Migration Theory) in our curricula. Mukhia is dishonest that he brings to reference the names of Prime Minister Modi and Smriti Irani, rather than that of Dharmpal, Ram Swarup and others in a discourse of historical nature.

Persons like Kancha Illaiyah with the agenda of intra-Hindu divide, or those who are incapable of feeling the pain of those who revere the cow and equally feel the pain of our Dalit brothers have deep-rooted bias and agenda. Unfortunately, some newspapers and channels have become willing partners in such nefarious game. Anyway, what is going on is not an innocent phenomenon. Input of investigative journalism, may perhaps help in finding the reality.

Elliot and Dowson’s massive eight-volume *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, wrote about a strange Indic phenomenon related to Indian history writing. It was about the attitude, the mindset, of the Hindu Munshis writing about the Muslim rulers in India, who, as we know, mostly employed Muslim Munshis for recording the happenings/developments during their rule. The Muslim Munshis recorded with utmost joy the defeat of the Hindu rulers by the Muslim ones, massive Hindu massacre and their enslavement, and the destruction of their temples and settlements. The Hindus, killed in the war, were always dispatched to hell; this being so even in the case of one commanding a Muslim army. On the other hand, if a Muslim lost his life, he was a martyr, and has his place reserved in the heaven. Strangely, and to his extreme surprise, Sir H.M. Elliot found even the Hindu Munshis sharing the same attitude towards the Hindus. He labelled such Hindu Munshis as the “slavish crew;” Ram Swarup, a well-known scholar and thinker, just called them ‘Hindu Munshis.’

Sir H. M. Elliot found that some of the annalists, the chroniclers of events employed by foreign Muslim kings in India were Hindus also. But the results were no better. He observed that “from one of the nation we might have expected to have learnt what were their feelings, hopes, faiths, fears, and yearnings, of his subject race,” but this was not to be. He further wrote: “not one of this slavish crew who treats the history of his native country subjectively, or presents us with the thoughts, emotions, and raptures which is a long oppressed race might be supposed to give vent to.” Ram Swarup observes: “This tribe of Hindu Munshis or the ‘slavish crew’ of Elliot have a long life and show a remarkable continuity. Instead of diminishing, their number has

multiplied with time. Today they dominate the universities, the media and the country's political thinking." Thus, the Hindu Mythos of the *Saltanat* or Mughal period did not vanish from the Indian scene; their progeny, or better to say they themselves appeared in their *avatara*, as the intellectual mercenaries or the intellectual sepoys. We find all the myths, distortions and hypotheses of the colonial days, as well as present day Western and Marxist, or even Stalinist distortions in their writings.

Irfan Habib, in an earliest debate on History writing, declared that "Stalin's classic essay on dialectical and historical materialism" was nothing less than "undoubtedly an advance over Marx's own early ideas." For him the caste system of Indian society "so well bears out the Marxist conception of a class society." Habib glorified the Turkish invasion of India as it "freed the artisans from certain old restraints" and "laid a new basis for the growth of trade and commerce." Facts have secondary importance for Irfan Habib; as the fixed conclusions were already drawn when he was 31 years old. All he wanted was "to apply the Marxist method" for which he needed "particular kind of facts." (Irfan Habib, *Marxist interpretation*, in *Seminar*, New Delhi, Nov. 1962). Today, 85, Habib, along with other Stalinists like Romila Thapar *et al.*, has hardly changed his stance, except a necessary disguise of terminology, forced by the demise of Soviet imperialism.

Another difficulty with such scholars is their arrogance, which they share with some Western scholars. When confronted by some rival scholar, they simply refuse discourse. As for example, when Rajiv Malhotra, a well-known scholar, raised certain questions about the writings of Wendy Doniger about India; she refused to discuss the same with him and wanted to meet him as a scholar meeting a native informer. The same kind of arrogance was shown by Romila Thapar to Sita Ram Goel, who sent a questionnaire, given below to her along with his book in which he had pressed the Marxists to supply the relevant information about the destruction of the temples by the Hindus, claimed by the Marxists on the same line as the record of the destruction of Hindu temples by Muslims exists. So he requested the Marxist professors to produce the relevant information as per the following questionnaire:

- 1) A list of epigraphs which record the destruction of Buddhist and Jain monuments and Animist shrines by any Hindu, at any time;
- 2) Citations from Hindu literary sources describing destruction of Buddhist and Jain monuments and Animist shrines by any Hindu, at any time, at any place;

- 3) The Hindu theology which says or even suggests that non-Hindu places of worship should be destroyed or plundered, or which hails such acts as pious or meritorious;
- 4) A list of Hindu Kings or commanders whom Hindus have hailed as heroes for desecrating or destroying or converting into Hindu places of worship any Buddhist or Jain or monuments or Animist shrines;
- 5) A list of Buddhist and Jain monuments and Animist shrines which has been desecrated or destroyed or converted into Hindu places of worship in the remote or the recent past;
- 6) The names of places of Hindu monuments which stand on the sites occupied earlier by Buddhist or Jain monuments or Animist shrines, or which have materials from the latter embedded in their masonry;
- 7) Names of Buddhist, Jain and Animist leaders or organizations who have claimed that certain such and such Hindu monuments are usurpations, and demanded their restoration to the original occupants;
- 8) Names of Hindu leaders and organizations who have resisted any demand made by Buddhists or Jains or Animists for restoration of the latter's places of worship, or called for legislation which will maintain the status quo, or cried "Hinduism in danger," or staged street riots in support of their usurpations.

Sidestepping the concrete point raised by Shri Goyal in his letter dated 27 June 1991, Romila Thapar replied on August 10, 1991: "As regards the issues raised in the questionnaire included in your book, you are perhaps unaware of the scholarly work on the subject discussed by historians of various schools of thought. May I suggest that for a start, you might read my published lectures entitled 'Cultural Transaction in Early India.' [The detailed account in Sita Ram Goel, *Stalinist 'historians' spread the big lie* (Delhi, 1993) pp. 26-28]. It needs mention that Sita Ram Goel has his Master's degree in history from Delhi University in as early as 1944; he was also an accomplished scholar of history. Rather than confronting the questions with adequate facts the Marxists point towards the high chairs they occupy as rewards of political patronage. Before ending, it is necessary to mention a nefarious game in the arena of scholarship where attempts are made to silence one's adversaries by assigning the guilt by association. Some professors of the University of Ghent are facing similar accusation.

—**B.B. Kumar**

Assam Floods: Another Perspective

Patricia Mukhim*

There has been a glut of social media activism vis-à-vis the floods in Assam. But the ardour of online activism can have disastrous consequences because issues taken up on social media are transient. There was a lot of anger and bitterness that the “national” media failed to give due coverage to the Assam floods. This is a perpetual grouse and it is as predictable as the monsoons. After Home Minister Rajnath Singh’s visit and the media focus that the visit got, one gets to read less and less about the flood affected except from the good old newspapers which follow up the flood stories assiduously.

P. Sainath, the doyen of Indian journalism and Magsaysay award winner for his seminal book, “Everyone loves a good drought,” should be commissioned to come to Assam and do a similar essay called, “Who benefits from the annual floods?” That the Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) of Kaliabor culled a picture from the internet showing the Bangladesh floods of 2014, published in The Daily Mail, London, and put it up as part of the anecdotal evidence to be provided to the visiting Home Minister and even termed it as a disaster that hit Kaziranga, just shows that officers have learnt that the intensity of the floods are in direct proportion to the money that would come to the state coffers. Such dishonesty is appalling but not unknown in government circles.

The flood story of Assam follows a cycle of exposure, furore and a quiet demise, with a minor reshuffling of chairs. Corruption has pulverized the courage of conviction, resolve and integrity among those at the cutting edge of governance and politics. In fact both governance and politics reek of a plutocracy where the general style of governance has supported greed and smugness, irrespective of which party comes

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to power. Sadly, the articulate class supports this system entrenched in greed and apathy because of its own incestuous preoccupations and brazen immersion in exclusive well being. What has also been lacking is leadership. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great and How the Mighty Fall* speaks of a different sort of leader. In his research Collins found that reliably successful leaders combine extreme personal humility with intense professional will. Did Assam or Meghalaya or Nagaland or Mizoram throw up such a leader? Did we have a chief minister who is technically competent to shoot down the ideas of an intellectually dense bureaucracy and to tell them to “shut up” and do what he tells them to.

If Assam had such a chief minister the decadent Brahmaputra Board populated by lackeys who either worked to fill their pockets or did not have adequate knowledge of Potamology (study of river behaviour) or did not use their scientific wisdom to suggest ways and means to reduce the disaster from floods. It is not that advanced countries don't suffer floods. The US and Australia have floods that cost them several million dollars every year. But the damage to humans and animals are largely mitigated by putting in place a flood control protocol such as construction of levees etc. which are not compromised in order to pocket the money meant for them. Flood control in Assam is a source of revenue for some in the Government and to militant outfits like the ULFA. This is public knowledge and one of the prime reasons why Sanjoy Ghosh was killed when he tried to facilitate a participative and sustainable model of flood control measures in Majuli.

Year after year Assam is flooded so what are the measures taken to ensure that humans, their earthly possessions, their livestock and other creatures (animals) are not swallowed by the floods? Isn't there an early warning system in place? At this point we also need to know the reasons for the heavier than normal flooding. Is it to do with dams in Arunachal Pradesh and release of sluice gates? Is it because of the damming of the Brahmaputra in China and their release of excess water? Why are international water treaties not upheld and respected? Why can't China allow Hydromorphologists/Potamologists from India to gauge the extent of damage that the dams in China are likely to cause so that adequate measures are taken in the lower riparian areas. In a near borderless world where countries are working at bilateral and multilateral agreements on water use and water sharing, how can an upper riparian country like China not care about what happens in the lower riparian areas of India, Nepal, Bhutan etc.? This is an issue one hardly hears being discussed on national television. We are too gung-ho on Pakistan and its terror-mongering shenanigans.

That students in places like Dhemaji are unable to go to school for close to four or five months in a year due to floods is something we hardly read about. How do those students actually pass their exams and who is providing them extra classes post the floods? How many drop out because of this uncertain education system when their schools are under water and classes are suspended? Then there are those living in the char areas mainly for cultivation. They too suffer the most. It is true that this is a population comprising largely of migrants but does that reduce the onus of the Government in providing disaster relief? These migrants cultivate not just rice but a whole host of food products which sustains Assam and the neighbouring states.

It is time for the Central Government to conduct a meticulous study on the political economy of floods in Assam. It would be educative to know how much money has been injected for flood control for the last twenty years; where the money is invested and who are the main beneficiaries? Unless such a study exposes the rot in the flood economy, the Centre will be blamed year after year for not releasing funds while some people make a killing. Those who suffer the consequences and have lost everything will receive just one tenth of what they deserve to get.

It is a cruel system which treats a disaster as a money making opportunity. But it continues. Last year outgoing chief minister Tarun Gogoi made large hoardings telling people that the Centre has not released money meant for flood relief. I am sure those sitting in the PMO in Delhi know this yearly rigmarole of inflated figures (Rs 10,000 crore some say) for flood relief and they also know that the money when it is finally released would reach people much after the floods when they have themselves put their lives together.

This time all eyes are on the chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal. How is he going to manage the crises? Does he have the wherewithal to deal with the retinue of corrupt officials who will lead him up the garden path? Does he have the courage to either disband the monolith called the Brahmaputra Board and recast it with people from the private sector on a hire and fire basis? If they don't deliver tangible results on how to deal with the Brahmaputra and its tributaries to reduce the damage from floods they will be thrown out. You don't need a bureaucracy in the Board. You need experts to deliver results. We also hope Sonowal will not be hamstrung by those impediments that became the Sword of Damocles for his former colleague in the AASU – Prafulla Mahanta.

Manipur: Maintaining Sanity in the Times of Chaos

Pradip Phanjoubam*

In any discussion on Manipur at this juncture, be it development, culture, capital investment, ethnic tensions, education, trade and commerce, youth unrest and for that matter practically every area of activity in the state, including the fine art of statecraft, one overwhelming question remains the common denominator – the law and order situation. This question looms over every other issue and more often than not, its very presence freezes all other discussions, making them redundant. In contemplating Manipur, it is with sadness one is reminded of the rather cynical little parable from the kindergarten books, of the mice community making big plans about their future and suddenly realizing before any of their plans can be executed, the cat in the house will have to be belled. As in the case of the mice, discussants on lofty and weighty issues in Manipur today too invariably pass through similar trauma. All jaws drop, expressions go blank, and the overwhelming question that eliminates the relevance of all other questions is, who will bell the cat? The question itself then becomes the answer, and the awful realization is articulated eloquently in just one unspoken word – nobody. Such is the magnitude of the problem, and its effect can be felt and understood fully only by those who live in the state under the shadow of this awesome question.

Casual onlookers and armchair highbrows in distant metropolises, often misunderstand this general silence on the question, and misinterpret it variously, including as a public complicity in the tumult, or vested interest in perpetuating the problem etc.. No generalization can be farther from the truth. People here yearn more than ever for peace and

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normalcy, but these are qualities of life that have gone beyond their easy control for a long time now. Periodic spates of murderous mayhems, bomb threats, intimidations by anybody with any modicum of nuisance value, have made the matter worse, and it does seem a critical point has been reached.

And chaos it has been in Manipur for the last couple of decades. The fallouts of the political turbulence that we know as insurgency, apart from the problems it itself directly causes, are increasingly being demonstrated to be extremely far reaching. As for instance, the challenges it puts up against the establishment which is already weakened by poor leadership, institutionalized corruption, perpetual instability, and as a consequence of these a dangerous depletion of moral authority of the various apparatuses of governance, has over the decades resulted in an absolute vacuum of legitimacy of the establishment itself. The expected but feared consequence has been the mushrooming of numerous power centres outside the legitimate constitutional government, each contending for the power levers of the governance of the place, and the largesse that come with them.

Bizarre as it may seem, amongst these contestants for these power levers are students organizations often run by members whose interest have long drifted from academics. These organizations are now dictating even what the educational curriculum and the contents of textbooks should be, likening the vital and onerous agenda of education to something akin to placing an order in a restaurant frequented by rowdy juveniles. It is extremely frustrating for those in Manipur to watch the government remain a mute spectator even as many of these venerated institutions are falling apart right before their very eyes.

In these times, insiders will vow there is no dispute that the people of this beleaguered state in their hearts acknowledge that peace is a must for any rational discourse in the civil society, on the ways the society wants to define what it means for them to have a dignified life, and how this end should be pursued. The understanding that the purpose of a government, in an ideal democratic situation, must also be a reflection of these discourses in the public realm is never in doubt, but between the idea and the reality is where the dark shadows have always loomed. Nothing has been more frustrating for them than the shortfall this chasm represents. Media debates, as well as numerous periodic campaigns by womenfolk for peace and bloodless settlement to the problems of the place, are the evidence of this. The yearning now is for the rule of institutional law, in which by the provisions of the democratic

polity, the government to people relationship is symbiotic in nature with each shaping and moulding the other – a spirit which has come to be progressively distant in the midst of the current staple of authoritarian diktats and bans by myriad insurgent groups and self-proclaimed street politicians capable of resorting to and inflicting violence on others. A cultural Talibanisation process is what comes to mind while considering all these diktats, ranging from imposition of dress codes for girls, a ban on Hindi entertainment TV channels, liquor, besides bandhs, blockades and strikes forced on everybody in the name of public interest.

The insurgency movement in Manipur is moving into a new phase and it is tiring out the people. And this fatigue has come about because of a growing alienation of the new aspirations of the people, dictated by the changing times, from the causes that insurgency represents. Hastening the process is also the mushrooming of insurgent organizations, as well as the openly fascistic leanings of many of them. Authoritarianism may be able to ensure a regimented, military discipline, but when such discipline is allowed to spill outside the boundaries of military organizations, the casualty is the spirit of freedom which has been the fountainhead of human creativity in free societies through history. Authoritarian diktats, however well intended, also totally undermine the civil society's intelligence and ability to judge for themselves. While institutional law seeks to arbitrate between different and often overlapping guarantees of freedoms, a diktat is a straitjacket. In a curious backlash against those pushing vested agendas however, having been subjected routinely to these straitjackets, the consequent public fatigue with these parallel laws, is resulting in a new esteem for the values of democratic law here.

It cannot be denied that there was a time people identified with the causes of insurgency as rooted in their own anger at a dysfunctional establishment, and the frustration in searching for a foothold in a radically new historical predicament. Insurgency then was indeed to a very good extent as their own "mailed fist" to deliver their anger at the establishment. This is increasingly ceasing to be the case today, primarily caused by the numerous shifts that have occurred even in the very definitions of the most fundamental paradigms of identity, freedom and even nationhood. The writings on the walls in Imphal today tell of an unmistakable thirst for peace and reconciliation. Given a government with a will and vision, these wishes should have a very good chance of being fulfilled.

Pre-Paninian India Linguistic Awareness from Rig Veda to Mahabharata

Dr. Damodar Thakur*

Linguists all over the world agree that Panini is one of the greatest grammarians in the world so far. Leonard Bloomfield (1887 –1949), the American linguist who led the development of structural linguistics in the United States during the 1930s and the 1940s considers his grammar to be “one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence.” A . L. Basham (1914 – 1986), a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, famous for his book, *The Wonder That Was India*, considers Panini’s grammar to be “one of the greatest intellectual achievements of any ancient civilization.” Sir William Wilson Hunter (1840 – 1900), a famous Scottish historian, has praised Panini’s grammar as “supreme among the grammars of the world.” Sir Monier Williams (1819 – 1899), a Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, is of the view that Panini’s grammar reflects the wonderful capacity of the human brain, which till today no other country has been able to produce except India.

Isaac Newton, considered by many to be one of the greatest scientists in history, once said:

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.”

The metaphor of a dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants conveys that if a person achieves exceptionally great heights in the academic world, it is largely because of the earlier academicians who prepared the background and thereby made it possible for him to achieve

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that great height. If Panini was so great as a linguist, as a grammarian in particular, it is largely because of the long and rich tradition of sharp linguistic awareness behind him. This article is intended to highlight some of those significant attitudes, observations and convictions in ancient India that are likely to have acted as a catalyst in shaping Panini to be that great linguist.

Linguistic Awareness in the Vedas

Grandeur of Metrical Forms

Vedas are unanimously regarded by all scholars of the world as the most ancient spiritual classics of the world. Praising the importance of the Vedas, Robert Oppenheimer (1904 – 1967), a famous American theoretical physicist and professor of nuclear physics at the University of California, Berkeley, said:

“Access to the Vedas is the greatest privilege this century may claim over all previous centuries.”

Even Max Mueller, who was critical of the Vedas, said that some of the hymns in the Vedas are “so full of thought and speculation that at this early period no poet in any other nation could have conceived them.” But the fact that the Vedas, the Rig Veda in particular, shows a high level of linguistic awareness and linguistic inventiveness in designing a large number of metrical forms so early in the history of rhetoric in the world have remained more or less unnoticed. The metrical forms used in Vedic literature include the following:

- (i) Gayatri: 3 padas of 8 syllables containing 24 syllables in each stanza
- (ii) Ushnuk : 4 padas of 7 syllables containing 28 syllables in each stanza
- (iii) Anustubh: 4 padas of 8 syllables containing 32 syllables in each stanza. The typical shloka of classical Sanskrit poetry is in this category
- (iv) Brihati : 4 padas (8 + 8 + 12 + 8) containing 36 syllables in each stanza
- (v) Pankti : 4 padas (sometimes 5 padas) containing 40 syllables in each stanza
- (vi) Tristubh: 4 padas of 11 syllables containing 44 syllables in each stanza

(vii) Jagati: 4 padas of 12 syllables containing 48 syllables in each stanza

(viii) Virāj: 4 padas of 10 syllables

for comparison, it may be relevant to make a survey of the metrical forms used in Modern English poetry. The three metrical forms used in English during the last few centuries are:

(i) Heroic couplet

(ii) Free verse

(iii) Ballad metre (also known as common metre).

Each of these three metrical forms in English has its variations just as many of the metrical forms in Vedic literature have their variations. The fact remains, however, that the metrical forms in English do not have the enormity and the complexity of the metrical forms in Sanskrit. It was certainly a glorious achievement on the part of the sages and seers of ancient India to have invented such a large and complex system of metrical forms and to have used them with excellence. It is not surprising that about the metrical forms in Vedic literature E.V. Arnold, in his book *Vedic Metre in its Historical Development*, stated:

“It must be plain that as works of mechanical art the metres of the Rigveda stand high above those of modern Europe in variety of motive and in flexibility of form. They seem indeed to bear the same relation to them as the rich harmonies of classical music bear to the simple melodies of the peasant.”

Emphasis on the Choice of the Appropriate Word

The study of synonymy started in India much earlier than in any other part of the world. *Nighantu* and *Nirukta*, the two linguistic classics discussing the etymology and meaning of words, were written in India much earlier than the dictionary of etymology or synonymy anywhere else in the world. It was only natural, therefore, that the sages and seers of ancient India should put a great emphasis on the desirability of choosing with great care the most appropriate word for a certain context out of a large number of words of more or less the same meaning. Vedanga, a composite course including grammar, etymology, cosmology, rhetoric, phonetics and phonology, was considered to be an obligatory qualification of anyone considering himself to be elite. It was only natural, therefore, that the Rig Veda should glorify the right choice of words in one's expression. In a brilliant metaphor related to the day-to-day experience of a villager the Rig Veda said:

सक्तुमिव तित उना पुनन्तो यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचमकृत ।

saktumiva tita unā punanto yatra dhīrā manasā vācamakṛta

Just as people sift *sattu* in a sieve before eating it, wise people carefully consider their words before using them.

In discussions of stylistics in the West the choice of the appropriate word has been emphasized again and again. S. T. Coleridge described poetry as the *use of best words* in the best order. Jonathan Swift described good and great writing as *the use of proper words* in the proper order. In one of his poems, John Henry Newman (1801-1890), an evangelical Oxford University academic and priest in the Church of England, says:

Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
That ov'r thee sell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong.

Like Coleridge and Newman, Mark Twain also emphasized the necessity of the right word in the right context. He said:

“To get the right word in the right place is a rare achievement.”

Choosing the most appropriate word out of a large number of words of almost the same meaning has now become an uncontroversial guideline for writers of English and has been made an inevitable part of the syllabus designed for teaching advanced writing. We have reason to feel proud of the fact that this ability to choose the right word was highlighted and emphasized by our ancestors, by the sages and seers of India, more than three thousand years ago.

Experiments in Expansion and Condensation of Expression

The Vedic sages and seers made two unique kinds of experiments in the use of their language: (i) the experiment of vastly elaborating an idea and (ii) the experiment of condensing an idea as much as it could be done without the idea getting distorted. Elaboration and condensation have always been two common practices for language users. In every language community; careful users of language do it whenever it turns out to be a contextual necessity. In India, however, the sages and seers took these two processes far beyond the usual extent. Chandogya Upanishad had said that all entities of the universe, living and non-living, movable and immovable, were manifestations of the same cosmic consciousness. In the *Gita* this idea was elaborated in terms of profuse exemplification. When Krishna in the *Gita* said that among the

maharshis he was Bhrigu, among the *devarshis* he was Narada, among human beings he was the king, among animals he was the lion, among birds he was garuda, among reptiles he was the serpent Vasuki, among the trees he was the peepal tree, among the mountains he was the Himalaya and among the rivers he was the Ganges, he was only elaborating the idea that he was present everywhere, that the entire universe was a manifestation of the same divinity. The elaboration did not distort the idea; it made the idea clearer even to those for whom the Upanishadic idea might have been difficult to comprehend.

The process of condensation was a much greater challenge. In *Brahamsutras* the ideas have been expressed not in complete sentences but in sentence fragments. The following sutra is a typical example:

गति सामान्यात्
gatisāmānyāta (1.10)

If we make a literal translation of this sentence fragment out of its context, it will only mean “away from ordinary speed.” On the basis of the preceding and following sutras we have to mentally convert this sentence fragment into a complete meaningful sentence. It was perhaps for the first time in the history of spiritual classics in the world that this kind of text with only sentence fragments came into existence. But our ancestors were not satisfied with this extent of condensation. They wanted to take the process further; from sentence fragments they wanted to go down to the level of words. It was a linguistic journey of exploration. They knew that instead of making a fruitless journey of finding a word, they should better coin one. The word they coined was *brahman* derived from the verbal root *brih*, which meant to “expand,” “to grow.” So, etymologically speaking *Brahman* meant that which expanded, that which exploded into existence and created the universe from the reality of its own being. Jyotish (astronomy), one of the constituents of vedanga, was an essential part of their education those days and so this word turned out to be fully satisfactory from the point of view of their understanding of astronomy and cosmology. They had now coined a word that was expressive of their world view, their understanding of cosmology. But they took the process of condensation further to its extreme; they wanted a minimal alphabetical unit representing a seed sound, a subtle sound, a subtle vibration, the booming commotion of existence that rolls in the bosom of the beyond. They wanted a minimal trace that could summarize the meaning of

brahman in the same way in which a seed contains inside it the whole tree. And what they discovered was ॐ (pronounced as 'Om'). It was the end of that linguistic journey of condensation. It was for them a symbol of the cause that caused itself, a symbol of the cosmic consciousness that constitutes the essence of both form and emptiness, both fullness and void. It was a tremendous achievement in the history of the condensation of the meaning of their spiritual realization. There have been great spiritualists in different parts of the world, in different cultural communities. But no one is known to have attempted this kind of linguistic condensation.

Linguistic Awareness in the Upanishads

Speaking a language well, a language of the Indo-European family like English, Hindi and Sanskrit in particular, is the result of a dynamic togetherness of the following constituents:

- (i) the ability to articulate correctly the consonants of that language
- (ii) the ability to articulate correctly the vowels of that language
- (iii) the ability to give due importance to each syllable in the utterance.

The metrical form known as *gayatri* is defined as a pattern consisting of three parts and there has to be eight syllables in each part. *Gayatri*, as it is in the Rig Veda, has only seven syllables in the first part. So when pronouncing it we must not unnecessarily extend the pronunciation in such a way as to create the impression of it having eight syllables.

- (iv) the ability to use the correct intonation pattern. Statements, orders and commands, for example, are said in a falling intonation and questions, and yes/no questions intended to be said in a polite way have to be said in a rising intonation.
- (v) the ability to emphasize the appropriate syllable in the word. The Sanskrit word for आत्मा (*ātmā*), for example, has two syllables but the word stress has to be on the first syllable, the syllable at the beginning of the word. The word भुवः (*bhuvah*) in *Gayatri* has two syllables but the word stress has to be on the second syllable, the syllable at the end of the word.
- (vi) the analytical awareness of the rules of assimilation and the ability to implement those rules in actual speech. The way an

Indo-European language functions, the last sound of a preceding word and the first sound of the next word, when combined together, produce a third sound just as, metaphorically speaking, the father and the mother give birth to a third entity, the child. This happens in a rule – oriented manner. For example, शान्तिः (śāntiḥ) आपः (āpaḥ) becomes शान्तिरापः (śāntirāpaḥ). Similarly, शान्तिः (śāntiḥ) + एवं शान्तिः (śāntiḥ eva) becomes शान्तिरेव शान्तिः (śāntireva śāntiḥ).

All these six constituents of a good spoken form of an Indo-European language were clearly specified during the early days of the Upanishads and were declared to be part of *śikṣha* [pronunciation]. The extract of the Taittiriya Upanishad relevant in this connection is:

ॐ शीक्षांव्याख्यास्यामः ।
वर्णः स्वरः । मात्रा बलम् । साम सन्तानः ।
इत्युक्तः शीक्षाध्यायः
om śīkṣāṃvyakhyāsyāmaḥ ।
varṇaḥ svaraḥ । mātrā balaṃ । sāma santānaḥ ।
ityuktah śīkṣādhyāyah

We shall now discuss phonetics and phonology.

The things to be learnt are: (i) consonants, (ii) vowels, (iii) syllables, (iv) stress, (v) musicality (intonation patterns, i.e. the rise and fall in the voice as in music) and (vi) assimilation.

These six items are now well-known parts of modern phonetics and phonology. But Taittiriya Upanishad, an Upanishad of the Yajur Veda, discussed these things more than a thousand years ago when subjects like phonetics and phonology were not at all known in the West.

Linguistic Awareness in Valmiki's *Ramayana*

In the beginning of the *Ramayana*, the sage Narada describes to Valmiki, the author of this epic, the lofty personality of Sri Ram. Valmiki is in search of a sublime character who can be the most suitable central character of the epic he is planning to write. By way of convincing Valmiki that he would not find a personality better than Sri Ram for his epic, Narada mentions the lofty features of his personality. The other qualities of Sri Ram mentioned by Narada in this context are not relevant

to the discussion here. What needs to be mentioned here is that Narada describes Sri Ram as वाग्मी (vāgmī), a master of eloquence. A little later (1.14) he describes him as a वेद वेदाङ्ग-तत्त्वज्ञ (veda vedāṅgatatvaña), a master of grammar, phonetics and phonology, rhetoric and etymology. This gives us an insight into the linguistic ethos of that ancient period. A superb mastery of eloquence, a superb mastery of pronunciation, grammar, rhetoric and etymology was considered to be an inevitable quality of the hero of an epic.

But it is not only the hero of this epic who has an exceptional command of the mechanics of the language; nearly all great characters of this epic have an extraordinary proficiency in the use of language. Lakshman, for example, is वाक्य कोविद (vākya kovavida) an adept in the use of elegant sentences. Lava and Kusha, Sri Ram's two sons, have a great mastery over the use of the vowels (स्वरसम्पन्नः svarasampanna). Hanuman is highly proficient in the use of sentences (वाक्यकुशलः vākya kuśala) and he is a (वाक्यज्ञः vākya jña); he has an extraordinary mastery over what kinds of sentences to use in a certain situation. On the basis of Hanuman's conversation with him and his brother Lakshman, Sri Ram observes that Hanuman not only has a vast knowledge of grammar; he is also a great master of words. Sri Ram says:

नूनं व्याकरणं कृत्स्नमेन बहुदा श्रुतम बहु व्हातानेन न किञ्चिदपथब्दितम्
 nūnaṃ vyākaraṇaṃ kṛtsnāmanena bahudā śrutama
 bahu vyāharatānena na kiñcidapaśabditam

He [Hanuman] seems to have mastered grammar and in his long conversation he has not misused even a single word.

What needs to be pointed out here is that this observation about Hanuman tells us not only about the linguistic dexterity of Hanuman, by implication it also tells us about Sri Ram's perceptive attitude towards linguistic excellence. Had Sri Ram not been highly perceptive of linguistic excellence, he would not have made a mental note of Hanuman's linguistic excellence.

Linguistic Awareness in the *Mahabharata*

Linguistic awareness was at its extraordinary height during the Mahabharata period. Profuse evidence of it can be found in the lyric known as Vishnu Sahasranam. This lyric has no parallel in world

literature in the sense that it has no verbs, no prepositions, no conjunctions; it has only 1000 synonymous names of Lord Vishnu. Bhishma Pitamah was on the side of Duryodhan, Krishna's adversary in Mahabharata. He was famous for his frankness, honesty and integrity. Flattery was something alien to him. He was in the employment of Duryodhana but never flattered him. So, if a person like him said something about Krishna, it cannot but be taken as his honest assessment. Besides, Vishnu Sahasranam was in a sense his dying declaration, he said it all out just before dying. A dying declaration has a great validity because not even a thief, a rogue, a thug tells a lie if he knows that he is going to die the next moment. But if it is the dying declaration of a person of honesty and integrity like Bhishma Pitamah, it has only to be taken as a piece of very honest assessment of someone who was known also for his perceptivity and his developed sense of fact. He uses a large number of adjectives and nouns for Krishna for describing his eloquence and superb mastery of the mechanics of expression. When bursting in praise for him, he relates him to different levels of language. He describes him as a clearly written letter (स्पष्टाक्षरः spaṣṭākṣara), as the best and most useful word root (धातुरुत्तमः dhāturuttama) as opposed to prefixes and suffixes and as an elegant phrase (पदमनुत्तमः Padamanuttama). He praises him as a supreme lord of *vedāṅga* (वेदाङ्गः. विदः vedāṅghāvida) i.e. grammar, phonetics and phonology and etymology. He praises him for his elegantly articulated utterance (सुघोषः : sughoṣa). He praises him as a master of eloquence (वाग्मीः vāgmī), and as someone with a superb command over the mechanics of expression (वाचस्पतिः : vācaspati); and he praises him as the overlord of all great masters of expression (सर्ववागीश्वरेश्वरः sarvavāgīśvareśvara)

Linguistic Awareness in the *Gita*

This technique of glorifying great value of linguistic excellence and describing it as a characteristic feature of the divine can be found in the *Gita* as well. As has been pointed out earlier, in Chapter 10 of the *Gita*, Krishna identifies himself with different manifestations of divinity in the universe. He says that among the stars he is the sun, among the planets he is the moon, among the Vedas he is Sama Veda, among the sages he is Bhrigu, among the saints he is Kapila, among the seasons he is the spring season, among the trees he is the peepal tree [fīca religiosa]. He does not forget to give language the great importance

that was given to it by the sages and seers in ancient India. He says that among the significant alphabetic units, he is [a], among the vowels, the first vowel represented in the devanagiri alphabet, among metrical forms he is *Gayatri* and among the various types of compound formations he is *dvanda* compound. It was only in the ancient Indian tradition of great linguistic awareness that a personality who declares himself to be the incarnation of the cause that caused itself, the cosmic consciousness that pervades both form and emptiness, both fullness and void should identify himself with a vowel, with a form of compound formation in grammar and with a metrical form. This could happen only in the glorious tradition of ancient India where linguistic dexterity and communicative excellence were considered to be an inevitable corollary of divinity and one of the most proud achievements.

There is another very important aspect of linguistic awareness in the *Gita* which has remained unnoticed so far. This aspect can best be appreciated in the context of the important trends of linguistic studies in the West during the twentieth century. In the early twenties of this century Leonard Bloomfield and his associates started structural linguistics which was a study of the sentence and its parts. Linguistics for them was a study of how phonemes, the smallest unit of linguistic study were combined to form morphemes, how morphemes were combined to form words and how words were combined to form clauses and sentences. According to these linguists, every language was unique, cut out in its own unique way. With the publication of his book *Aspects of the Theory Syntax* in 1965, Noam Chomsky changed the direction of linguistic study. Linguistics for him and his associates was now basically a study of linguistic universals. In the sixties Michael Halliday and his associates started what they called systemic linguistics. According to this school of thought, linguistics should, among other things, be a study of language varieties. They encouraged the study of how the use of a language changed from one context to another. The language of scientific reports, the language of religious sermons, the language of legal documents, the language of commercial correspondence were all different from one another. Seminars were held and a number of books, articles and Ph. D. theses were written with the purpose of providing a description of many of these varieties of language, varieties of English in particular. But no one so far seems to have attempted a systematic study of the language of mysticism.

Naguib Mahfouz (1911 - 2006), a Nobel Prize winning novelist of Egypt, once said:

“You can tell a man is clever by his answers. You can tell a man is wise by his questions.”

In a similar vein, Claude Levi-Strauss (1908 - 2009), a French social anthropologist, said:

“The wise man doesn’t give the right answers, he poses the right questions.”

This is what Arjuna did in the *Gita* more than two thousand years ago. He asked a question, which has never been seriously asked so far in spite of the great academic interest in language varieties. His question was:

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव ।
स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत् ब्रजेत किम् ॥
Sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava ।

shtitadhīḥ kiṃ prabhāṣeta kimāsīta brajeta kime ॥

What are the unique linguistic characteristics of a man of steady wisdom absorbed in contemplation? How does a man of steady wisdom talk, how does he acquit himself?

This shows that the pre-Paninian India was a golden period of sharp linguistic awareness. During this period, not only did the sages and seers make valuable observations about how language functions in prose as well as in metrical forms but also because so early in history they had the linguistic perceptivity to ask questions which are yet to be answered satisfactorily.

In conclusion, therefore, we can legitimately feel proud of the profound linguistic awareness in pre-Paninian India. It is now high time for Indologists, historians, linguists and stylisticians to give this aspect of our tradition the attention that it deserves and for researches in related areas in greater detail.

The Preliminary Research of Hindu Sculptural Artifacts of Vijaya Period in Champa in Binh Định Province

Phan Anh Tu*

Abstract:

The French archaeologists carried excavations in Bình Định Province during early years of the twentieth century, and the Champa artifacts, discovered during the same period, have been preserved in some Museums in Vietnam and France, such as Museum of Vietnam History in Hochiminh City, the Museum of Chăm Sculptures in Đà Nẵng and Museum of Natural History in France. However, archaeological finds of Champa arts, discovered after 1975, are only exhibited in Bình Định Provincial Museum. But, finds of two excavations in An Nhòn and Tây Sơn Districts conducted in 2002, 2004 and the recent excavation in Phú Yên Province in 2008 haven't been still announced in any monographs. For this reason, my research paper is for the purpose of the studies of the latest archaeological achievements reflecting the progress of Champa art as well as art relationship of the Champa and contiguous kingdoms in Vijaya period. In the eleventh century. The Champa art has been deeply influenced by other arts such as the arts of India, Đại Việt (former Vietnam), Angkor and Java.

Keywords: Kingdom of Champa, Hinduism Sculpture, Trinity Divinities, Sacred animal, Vijaya, Bình Định, Tháp Mẫm style, Bình Định Provincial Museum.

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Introduction

The sculptural art of Champa as a whole was deeply imbued with the Hindu expression through the system of the Hindu Trinity, which found a place in Indian philosophy as of 500 BC; it abounded in divinities (humans and animals), Brahmans, dancers...but all those figures have been rendered in the indigenous culture frame by the Chẵm to be concordant with their mentality, giving thus, the Champa sculpture an original aspect quite wonderful.

French scholars were the first people who opened the research career of Champa art. In 1898, the French government established French School of Far East Studies (L'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, EFEO) in Hà Nội in order to orient Indo-China research targets totaling very comprehensively. Among the Champa art research works, researchers usually remind Henri Parmentier and his *Descriptive Inventory of Cham Monument in Annam* (whose publication, begun in 1912 and completed in 1918); but above all, Philippe Stern and his remarkable *The Art of Champa (former Annam) and its evolution* published in 1942 and Jean Boisselier (*Statuary of Champa*, 1963). Another well-known work, moreover, is *The Sculptural Art of Buddhism and Brahmanism in Indo-China* and its author is Louis Malleret. Four above mentioned monographs have profoundly analyzed art styles of Champa and cultural aspects influenced from India, among which, Binh Định art has played a major role in the process of Champa art evolution.

Vijaya State in Historical Context of Champa Kingdom

The ancient Kingdom of Champa is located at the Central Coast of Vietnam. According to the available historical sources, border and territory of Champa stretched from the Southern Ngang Pass (Đèo Ngang) Quảng Bình Province to the Northern land of Đồng Nai River currently belonging to Bình Thuận Province (Lê Đình Phụng 2002, 5). In the system of Champa Confederation; the Vijaya State occupied the region of contemporary provinces of Bình Định and Phú Yên. Basing on the field survey and the distributed system map of Champa towers, citadels shown in Bình Định Provincial Museum, we can suggest that the central area of the Vijaya State possibly occupied Quy Nhơn City and An Nhơn, Tuy Phú ởc, Tây Sơn Districts of our era.

To survey the contemporary geography of Bình Định Province, we notice that the Vijaya State was located at the terrain complex with the

sea in the East and the Trù ờng Sơn Mountain in the West where difficult terrains with 1,000 m high ranges such as the Ngọc Linh, An Lão etc. In addition, the Bình Định region has small mountainous rivers that are stretched from the west to east, leading to the sea. The rivers originate from the high mountains, which run down through sloping and rugged areas, bringing sediment to estuaries for forming lower valleys and narrow coastal plains before flowing into the sea. The typical geographical features played a crucial role to form the Mandala state type of Champa Confederation. According to Trần Kỳ Phương, each State in the Kingdom of Champa can be built basing on three main natural elements, which are the sacred mountain, the sacred river, and sacred estuary for creating its own territory¹



Figure 1 The map of ancient Champa Kingdom.
Source: www.thongluan.co



Figure 2: The map for distributing districts and towns in Bình Định Province.
Source: <http://cafeland.vn/tin-tuc/binh-dinh>

According to the Chăm legends, their nation was formed from different clans and tribes. In particular, there were two main clans, the Cau (Areca) and the Dừa (Coconut) that were the most mentioned, “Originally, Champa was probably composed of many semi-independent states and feudalities. Two tribes were recognized as influential forces that are “the Cau clan” and “the Dừa clan”.... “(Nguyễn Văn Luận

1974, 25). According to the locally available material, the Dừa clan dominated in the North of Champa Kingdom which consisted of the Indrapura (Quảng Nam Province), Amaravati (Thừa Thiên - Huế Province), Vijaya (Bình Định, Phú Yên Provinces) corresponding to the geographic area from Bình Định to Phú Yên Provinces of today; the Areca clan occupied the Southern kingdom, which included Kauthara and Panduranga, corresponding to geographic areas of Khánh Hòa, Ninh Thuận and Bình Thuận Provinces of today (Phan Anh Tú 2010, 15).

Thus, the Vijaya State belonging to the North of Champa Kingdom and the Coconut clan are the main owners of the Northern culture. Besides the explaining based on the theory of cosmological dualism which suggested by Trần Kỳ Phương, there are still some findings such as the coconut is a common trees in the Chăm's life in this region (for example the areas of Bồng Sơn, Tam Quan in Bình Định Province) the coconut is grown all over from the plain to the highland and the mountains, especially the Chăm has indigenous belief which symbolizes the tree for their clan name. Besides the Chăm, the main group, many other communities have still existed in Bình Định – Phú Yên region such as the Raglai, the H'Ré and the Bana³

The Archaeological Findings

All of Champa sculptural artifacts discovered in the excavations by the French archaeologists in Bình Định during 1930s of twentieth century, which have been commonly known as the Hindu statues of Tháp Mẫm style (or Mẫm Tower), are currently displayed at the Museum of Chăm Sculpture in Đà Nẵng, the National Museum of Vietnam History in Hà Nội and Museum of Vietnam History in Hochiminh City. However, the findings after 1975 are exhibited at the Bình Định Provincial Museum. Basing on iconography, classically, the Hindu Chăm statues can be categorized as of three types, free-standing, high-relief and bas-relief.⁴ From the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, Champa civilization was mainly Hindu; that is to say, it borrowed from Indian cults, principally that of Shiva (God of Destruction).

By Surveying the Hindu artifacts in Bình Định Provincial Museum, I realized that the ancient Chăm artisans presented their creative inspiration source by four topics of sculpture. Firstly, the highest power divinities in the Hindu mythological system, the Trimurty (three forms) which consisted of Brahma (God of Creation), Vishnu (God of

Preservation) and Shiva (God of Destruction). Secondly, the great Goddesses (*Sakti* of the Trinity), who play the role as both of consorts and the persons maintaining divine capacities. Thirdly, beneath there is the system of supported gods and sacred animals used as holy rides or guarding the sleep of the couple of dominated deities. And the last ones are sculptures describing battle scenes in Ramayana epic, the figures of dancers, musicians, helmets, the religious activity scenes etc. that reflected different aspects of Champa society in Vijaya period.



Figure 3: Brahma, the end of twelfth century Sandstone, Cháp Dyóng Long – Bình Định. Photo: Phan Anh Tú

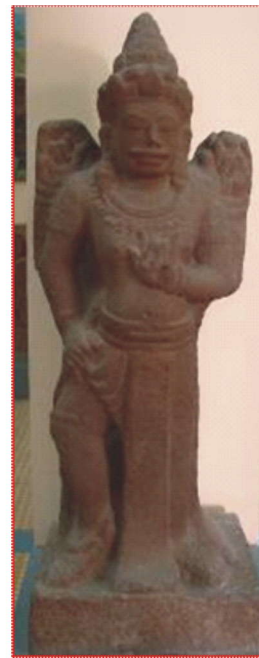


Figure 4: Vishnu, tenth-eleventh centuries Sandstone, Khýóng Mỹ - Quảng Nam Photo: Phan Anh Tú

The Art Style in Vijaya Period

Comparing previous sculptural styles such as Trà Kiệu, Mỹ Sơn E1, the Bình Định style in the Vijaya period bring several new features relating to types of statues and reliefs to our notice. For example, in Bình Định Province, the sacred animals occupied prominence; the

artisans paid more attention in decoration of the sacred animals, especially, the holy beasts symbolizing the monarchy strength or the sacred animals supporting the divinities. During the Vijaya period, the divinity statues used to present independently which depicted the divinities in seated or standing posture in the covered frames; the statues of gods riding on their holy rides as in the Khmer and Javanese styles are so rare. On the other hand, new images appeared in the Vijaya sculptures such as Gajasimha, decorated pedestals or Yoni bases decorated around by string of breasts etc. These findings represent the Chắm artisans' creative capacity as well as the material conditions that are relatively strong in the Vijaya period. In addition, the characteristic points of the Binh Đ́nh style expressed the carving technique reaching to the sophisticated, skillful level, presented statue charismatics; the characters' emotional status are clearly reflected and the classification nature is so high.



Figure 5: Garuda and Naga, thirteenth century, Sandstone, Tháp Mẫ́m - Binh Đ́nh, Photo: Phan Anh Tú



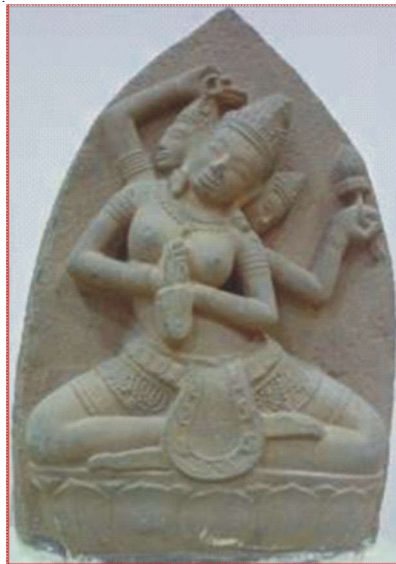
Figure 6: Garuda and Naga, thirteenth century, Sandstone, Tháp Mẫ́m - Binh Đ́nh Photo: Phan Anh Tú

The Vietnamese scholars have separated Tháp Mẫ́m style out of Binh Đ́nh style. However, Cao Xuân Phổ suggested that the Binh Đ́nh art (eleventh – fifteenth centuries) should be divided into three periods among which the stage of two centuries twelfth - thirteenth could be

the period of Tháp Mẫm style (Cao Xuân Phò 2004, 27). Thus, Tháp Mẫm style is one of three phases of Champa sculpture in Vijaya period. Cao Xuân Phò's classification is impossible accurate; however, in situation research of Champa art nowadays, I have not seen any better classifications. Additionally, I notice the Bình Định style of Vijaya period has reflected the inherited, continuation characteristics of the previous styles such as Đồng Dương, Mỹ Sơn A1 in the art historical process of Champa Kingdom.

The Significations of Sculptural Artifacts in Vijaya Period The Sculptures Reflecting the Hindu Myths

Indian myths are the tales about the gods, which the Indians have believed and whom, they have worshipped throughout the pre-historical and historical length. From early days of the founding of the kingdom, the Champa culture has been conditioned in exposure to Indian sub-continent via the maritime trade and missionary activities. The Võ Cảnh Inscription found near Nha Trang City, dated the second century, and written in Sanskrit, demonstrated that the ancient Champa Kingdom



*Figure 7: Saravati, twelfth century,
Sandstone, Nghi Sơn – Bình Định
Photo: Từ Thị Kim Hậu*



*Figure 8: Ganesa, twelfth century,
Sandstone, Tây Sơn – Bình Định
Photo: Phan Anh Tú*

had intimate relationships with India and received its cultural influences in the early age. The Champa inscriptions mentioned the divinities who originated in Indian mythology such as Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, Indra, Uma, Laskmi etc. These gods were worshipped in temples, towers of the Champa residents, and their shapes, functions, as well as characters are described in detail in the inscriptions.

The themes in Vijaya sculptures were mostly inspired by the Hindu legends and god images in the Indian religious systems. That was names, images, characters and incarnations as well as origin of the gods. Most of the stories and functionalities of the divinities were similarly described, according to the Indian mythology by the Chẵm. Besides those, to fit the indigenous cultures, the Chẵm have added several traits and details. The gods were carved with shapes, facial characteristics bearing racial elements of the indigenous people. For example, most of the deities' faces were expressed with features such as chin, square and large face and protruded thick lips, wide mouth, round and short shape. These local facial characteristics can be clearly seen through the sculptural images of Brahma, Shiva, Balarama, Indra etc. Besides the religious topics, the war themes between good and evil sides in the Indian epics are also embodied in the sculptures. These reliefs decorating on altars, tower bases and temple corners described battle scenes of the great hero, Rama and Hanuman (the Monkey God) in the Ramayana epic.

Hindu myths and legends have dominated the Champa residents' ideology, values, traditions, customs and beliefs that reappeared more or less through the sculpture. Typically, Shiva was respected in the Kingdom of Champa. As the Chẵm's view, the Shiva ruled aspects, creation and destruction among the three Supreme Gods. Shiva had a lot of incarnations and symbols; one of his most important symbols is Linga-Yoni symbolizing male and female sexual organs. It is instrument for maintaining the breeds, representing for Shiva's creativity nature. In Champa culture, Shiva was raised to the highest position and worshipped as a supreme god. Shiva corresponded to the Champa kings' incarnation power, reaching to the highest level in the culture and the Champa's awareness. Shiva statues were made with tremendous size and sophisticated design details, set up the clusters of important temples, typically in the main shrines (Vihara) or city centres. Especially, for the

royal families or noble class: “for the princes, the gesture to offer *Linga* for temples often aims at target to honor their noble clans. For senior mandarins in the imperial government, this is the action which aims at showing their position and power in the society.”⁵

The Sculpture Reflecting Indigenous Beliefs

The natural condition in the Kingdom of Champa was relatively harsh. Lack of supplied water for agricultural production and drought situation were the main cause; the rain divinity worshipping cult or rain creating beasts were respected similarly as in the other agricultural countries of Southeast Asia. The images of marine monster, Makara were commonly engraved with numerous quantities in the Vijaya sculpture. Makara, in Hindu mythology, was a species of sea monsters, a crocodile incarnation, which followed to support the God of Ocean, Varuna. However, this meaning gradually faded in the Chăm culture, Makara was understood as an incarnated creature of the Raining God, bringing rain to farmers, which was similar to Dragon in Vietnamese and Chinese cultures. The Makara images carved popularly in many different shapes, sometime presented as independent statues or accompanied by Naga. In some cases, the Makaras were decorated on doorways, altars, tiers, corners or pedestals of towers or frames covering gods.



Figure 9: Linga – Yoni, twelfth-centuries, Sandstone, Tháp Mãm– Bình Định, Photo: Tê Thậ Kim Hậu



Figure 10: Indra on his elephant thirteenth Airavata, twelfth century, Sandstone, Tây Sơn, Bình Định Photo: Phan Anh Tú

In addition, Nagas were the holy beast found in Vijaya region with numerous amounts more than other areas. Some theories suggested that it was influenced from the Angkor sculptures by the cultural exchange between two kingdoms. The main owners of these Naga sculptures were the Chẵm that showed partly their persuasion to Naga cult, a belief involving water and rain. The Southeast Asian myth described that Naga was a rain-giving beast of God Indra so Naga images in Vijaya region were not out of the desire and expectation for rains and water source as well as plant fertility as the indigenous people's general conception in the area.



Figure 11: The bas-relief describing seated King Pô Rômê on Yoni and his consort (replica statue) nearby. seventeenth century, Sandstone, Hâu Sanh, Ninh Thuận Province
Photo: Phan Anh Tú

Besides worshipping the natural divinities, the Chẵm also respected fertility cult. Being similar to other indigenous peoples, they were interested in breeding, presented by fertility elements in the folk beliefs. It can be demonstrated by numerous Linga-Yoni, symbol of breed maintaining carved in the sculptural art. The Linga-Yoni sets in the Champa sculpture were focused and carved in various forms; “in the Hindu influenced arts, nowhere, the Linga-Yoni, symbol of fertility and

respectable worship is as common as in the Champa art” (Cao Xuân Phổ 2004, 24). Particularly, in the Vijaya period, the Yoni bases were sophisticatedly and skillfully sculptured with vitality, breasts embracing pedestals expressing for fertility desire and life power.

Among three great divinities, Shiva, God of Creation and Destruction, was highly admired because Shiva’s features described in Hindu myths corresponded to indigenous beliefs. The Chăm’s folk stories sometime tell about the god who created the universe, notably the characteristics of Champa gods depicted under bisexual form which were influenced from Shiva. The cultural similarities between India and Champa were an important point for Hinduism to affect in the Champa culture. On the other hand, when the Chăm received the Indian influences, they turned Indian gods into the indigenous gods basing on their available beliefs.



Figure 12: Mahisa – Sumadini, twelfth century, Sandstone, Binh Nghi – Tây Sơn – Bình Định. Photo: Phan Anh Tú

The Vijaya sculpture partly expressed the cultural exchanged colour between indigenous beliefs and the Indian religion. The Indian mythical images such as Bhagavati (Lord Shiva’s consort), Uma, Laskmi, Parvati etc. who the Chăm considered as the goddesses paroling the agriculture

and their daily activities, specifically, the goddess Uma was localized as Pô Ina Nagar – the Mother of Homeland who was made into statue and worshipped in the Champa temples. Up to now, the Chăm – their descendants have still worshipped the goddess at home or the temples (in Phú Yên Province, Nha Trang City and Hậu Sanh village in Ninh Thuận Province). However, the goddess’s background, as well as her Indian origin, are rarely known in the contemporary people’s awareness, because the belief has been localized since the Indian culture was introduced into Kingdom of Champa.

The Sculpture Reflecting Vijaya Social Context

Hinduism became a dominant religion, both for the royal family and the common people in the Vijaya period. The issue showed clearly through the cultural art with a large quantity of the hermit statues or bas-reliefs relating to this theme. The hermit images were also created in diversity postures such as standing statues or on meditation busts, and whole statues, accompanied by holy beasts Makara and Naga. Most of the hermit faces showed the same features as slightly opened eyes, calmness reflecting religious practice, overcoming the suffering or thinking about human life. Availability of a large number of hermit statues and bas-reliefs demonstrate that the Champa society in Vijaya period was deeply influenced by clashes which caused the noble king and mandarin classes to have desire which wanted to leave the reality life, looking for peaceful places for liberating themselves by practicing austerities and asceticism.



Figure 13: Male dancers, twelfth century, Sandstone, Tháp Đồi – Bình Định Photo: Phan Anh Tú

In contrast to previous periods, sculptural themes of the Vijaya period were plentiful and diverse. Besides the themes of religion, beliefs, the normal life also reflected in sculptures, such as in the images of elephant family, which include parents and joyful baby elephants or royal dancers gently and flexibly performing the dance. From the sculptures, we can see partly the Champa society in Vijaya period that expressed more than the previous periods, the themes concentrated not only on religion but also reflecting on the routine life.

It was not only a pacific and prosperous society, the wars also broke out in the Vijaya state. The Champa launched offensives on neighbouring states from which it also faced retaliations. For example, during the period from 1139 to 1285, Champa had wars with the Khmer, the Vietnamese and the Mongolians. Reasonably, there were many bas-reliefs decorating war themes which appeared in that period. According to my research, the bas-reliefs relating to war themes partially recreated battle scenes in the Ramayana epic as well as it represented the true conflicts leading Vijaya society to situations of chaos and wars.



Figure 14: Warriors executed war prisoners, twelfth century, Sandstone, An Nhòn – Binh Định. Photo: Phan Anh Tú

On the other hand, the Vijaya period was also assessed as the most powerful phase in the Champa history. The richness of materials and wealth were depicted in sculptures not only in the number of statues, bas-reliefs and plentiful themes but also in the new images which rarely appeared in any previous periods. Gajasimha⁶, the image was made with sophisticated designs, completely covering his body. The enormous size of the statue demonstrated his august charisma and unparalleled strength. Furthermore, the Gajasimha body wore a skillfully decorated robe and jewelries which demonstrated that the holy beast represented authority and power of dominated class. The Gajasimha was also

considered as a perfect holy beast because he was embodiment of wisdom and power (elephantine head symbolizes Ganesha, the God of Wisdom, and lion body = Vishnu's incarnation, the Dharma power defeating evil). The combination of two holy beasts met the ruling class's will and needs because it fitted the aim to enhance the monarchy power and the kings' wisdom. Additionally, the Gajasimha was specie that showed a special symbol of royal court and only appeared in the Vijaya reign. Since then, it demonstrated that the Gajasimha was the most sacred beast symbolizing Vijaya state with the dynasties of a full authority and stable power in the Champa history. The locations, where the Gajasimha statues were found, also underpinned this view because the statues were mainly concentrated on the ruin mounds Tháp Mẫm (Mẫm Tower) in Nhon Thành Hamlet, An Nhon District – which was considered to be the political and religious center of Vijaya Citadel (Chà Bàn in Vietnamese), Champa. The findings suggested that the Gajasimha statues were positioned at the main towers in the Citadel Centre or located at Champa kings' imperial palace.

In the regional relations of the Vijaya state, besides the deep acculturation with Angkor culture, Champa still promoted the trade exchanges with kingdoms and other cultures in Southeast Asia and outside region. Thus, so many elements originating from these cultures were also shown in the Champa sculptures. Specially, the Vijaya period was a brilliant and powerful era of Champa. “*Champa emissaries, merchants have been to the countries such as China, Khmer, Siamese or maritime Southeast Asian countries. Champa goods were available in the market of other countries; aromas, value products and Champa pottery were also exported to many places. According to the available documents, we know that Champa ceramics was sold in 32 locations in Southeast Asia and to further markets, the Middle East, in Southern Sinai and Arabian peninsulas*” (Lê Đình Phụng 2002, 349). The international trade network that linked regions in the world has contributed to justify the powerful and cultural development of Vijaya state.

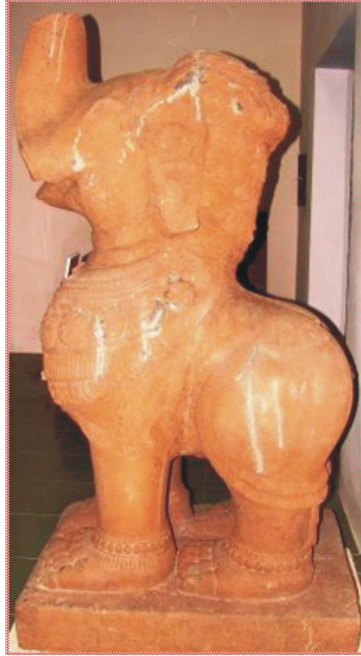


Figure 15: Gajasimha, thirteenth century, Sandstone, Tháp Mâm – Anh Nhòn – Bình Định, Photo: Phan Anh Tú

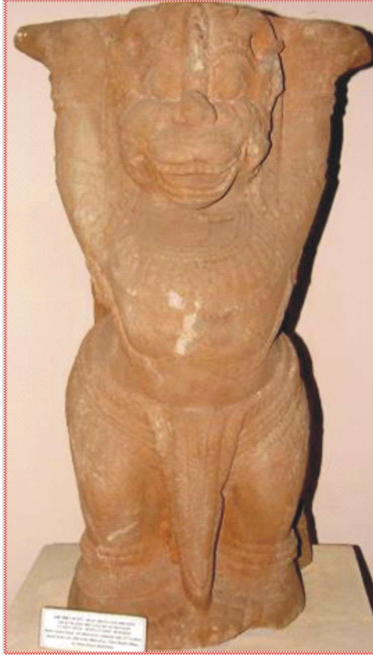


Figure 16: Lion (Simha), thirteenth century, Tháp Mâm Anh Nhòn Bình Định, Photo: Phan Anh Tú

The Sculpture Reflecting the Regional Acculturation

During the period of its founding and after its flourished, the Vijaya state had cultural relations with regional countries such as Đại Việt (the Great Viet Kingdom; former Vietnam), China, Java, Angkor etc. However, not any of such relations led to profound changes in Champa culture, architecture and sculpture. I believe that the Champa culture in Vijaya period only accepted the most influential elements from some countries, especially Angkor and Java.

It is said that the historical milestones marked relations between Vijaya state and Angkor empire began by a sequence of important events. In 1080, the Khmer invaded Vijaya but in the last quarter of twelfth century (1170, 1177) Champa invaded Angkor in turn. Then, during consecutive years of early thirteenth century, many battles were fought between the Champa and the Khmer. During the long time, the

Champa had exposed condition and influenced Khmer culture. Especially, through the invasions, Champa brought home a lot of booty and war prisoners who were Khmer builders and skillful artisans. There is a theory to suggest that in the most powerful period, Khmer empire was ruled by Jayavarman VII (1181-1201) a talented king, who not only focused on military campaigns for enlarging the empire's territory but was also particularly interested in constructing architectural works and temples, even in the colonies.⁷ The above theory can be reliable because the Vietnamese researchers also suggested that Dương Long and Tháp Đôi (Twin Tower) towers were built when the Khmer occupied Champa. As results, the Khmer culture had opportunity to influence deeply the Champa architecture and sculptures. Besides historical background, the geographical condition and the same religious sharing forced the Khmer and Champa to come closer; so cultural influence was inevitable.



*Figure 17: Kala, twelfth century, Sandstone, Tây Sơn – Bình Định
Photo: Phan Anh Tú*



*Figure 18: Nandin, twelfth century, Sandstone, Tây Sơn – Bình Định.
Photo: Phan Anh Tú*

Analyzing iconographical manifestations of Tháp Mẫm art style, I realized that the holy beasts were created with huge body, expressing wild beauty, aggressive appearance and decorative details, escaping from soft features of previous styles such as Đông Dương (Indrapura) and Trà Kiệu (Simhapura). The sculptures found in a cluster of Khmer impacted towers, Dương Long, Tháp Đôi and Bánh, manifested cultural exchanges between Angkor and Champa. Especially, the marks of Khmer art still presented on the statues of Brahma, Shiva, Naga, Gajasimha, Kala etc. It seems that there were new elements to appear in Vijaya

iconography with the Garudas, Nagas, lions and Dvarapalas decorated at corners and bases of towers. The researchers suggested that these works were influenced by the appearance of Khmer art style and art of Angkor Wat and Bayon style (Lê Đình Phụng, 2002, 349). In addition, a notably trait was the stone material used in the works of architecture and sculpture influenced from the Angkor style.



Figure 19: Naga, twelfth century, Sandstone, Dương Long – Bình Định Photo: Phan Anh Tú



Figure 20: Makara spouting Naga, twelfth century, Sandstone, Dương Long – Bình Định Photo: Phan Anh Tú

The relations with Java can be studied through historical and iconographical findings in Bình Định Province. Champa is geographically the maritime passage between China and Indonesia. Java influence can be realized: the busts with hair large curls in Củng Sơn (Phú Yên Province) are very close to those of Chandi Bima on the Dieng plateau or the Makaras in Bình Định have similar shape and features as those in Java. The relation between Champa and Java were known in an inscription, that of Nhan Biều, that the Cham prince Rajadvara went to Java twice at the beginning of tenth century. In addition, texts, tell us that in 1292, Champa assisted Majapahit Empire (Indonesia) to resist Mongol invasion from the sea, that King Jaya Simhavarman III, the Chăm sovereign, married a Javanese princess and, that in 1318, the Chăm prince Chế A Nan took refuge in Java. This is enough to prove true ties, that themselves would serve as foundation for sculptural similarity.



*Figure 21: Lion (simha), twelfth century, Sandstone, Thành Đồ Bàn– An Nhơn–Bình Định
Photo: Phan Anh Tú*



*Figure 22: Makara, twelfth century, Sandstone, Tháp Dương Long – Bình Định
Photo: Phan Anh Tú*

Conclusion

Due to the historical factors, the Kingdom of Champa had no longer existed on the map of Indochinese peninsula. However, the cultural values that the ancient kingdom leave to our generation is becoming a valuable resource for scholars who have studied the history and culture of Champa in particular and the Southeast Asian region in general. Currently, the Chăm communities, the descendants of the Champa settlers, are living and preserving their Champa cultural values, which have enriched and contributed to the Vietnamese identity.

The Champa sculptures in the Vijaya period reflected the different cultural aspects in the Kingdom of Champa from natural conditions, the trade relations, indigenous beliefs, acculturation to the social context. Through sculptures, researchers may understand fully the Champa society during the Vijaya period; they may find the culture of the powerful Vijaya state, and the economic and military power, it had, in comparison to that of the other states of Southeast Asia of that period.. The Champa – Vijaya sculptures also reflected religious beliefs and Hinduism, which were interwoven to become a philosophy affected to the social ideology, especially of the ruling class.

Among the Champa cultural heritages, the sculptural art plays a vital role, showing the culture presenting the Champa characteristic in the ancient periods. Especially, in the Vijaya period, the sculpture reached the highest level with the skillful carvings. The artifacts showed

the whole picture about culture, politics and society as well as on the relations among the ancient Kingdom of Champa with the states in the region, including the Khmer Empire. Research of the Vijaya sculptural heritages may demonstrate that Hinduism was the main factor that dominated the entire spiritual culture of Champa. However, the Indian influence was not imposed in the state of Champa residents. Their representative, the kings and aristocrats absorbed and transformed the Indian elements to the traditional culture by the acculturation process.

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Notes

- ¹ The research paper: *Bước đầu xác định danh hiệu các tiền vương quốc (?) thuộc miền Bắc vương quốc cổ Chiêm Thành (champa) tại miền Trung Việt Nam khoảng giữa thế kỷ 11 và 15*, published in website: vanhoahoc.edu.vn.
- ² In *Le Champa Géographie – Population – Historire* (translated in to Vietnamese by Hassan Poklaun) – the chapter People, Prof. Pierre Bernard Lafont wrote that the inscriptions always remain the vamsa role, not any princes’ clans taken to the throne as kings of Champa Federation with the title “King of kings” in the inscriptions. Three familiar vamsas are vamsa (Vamsa), vamsa (Vamsa) and Brsuvamsa (Lafont 2012, 63). The Lafont’s suggestion is a very interesting and debated issue so I temporarily apply the terms clans both of Narikela and Kramuka groups in the papers as a popular way in Vietnam.
- ³ Currently, a large number of indigenous communities have still resided in the provinces of Bình Định, Phú Yên and Quảng Ngãi or the Highland

(Tây Nguyên). The population statistical data preserved in the Bình Định Provincial Museum provides that besides the Việt (or the Kinh), there are three other ethnic groups living in the Bình Định area, the amount is 5, 336 Cham living in Vân Canh District and 18,175 Bana, 9, 201 H're in An Lão, Hoài Nhơn, Vân Canh, Vĩnh Thạnh Districts and they are indigenous people who have resided in the province for a long history.

- ⁴ A free – standing piece is a sculpture that one can walk around in order to admire the sculptor's work. A high relief is a sculpture with a very prominent relief but cannot be detached from its background. Finally, a bas-relief is a sculpture that is not very prominent, place on a uniform background.
- ⁵ <http://www.champaka.info>
- ⁶ Gajasimha is holy beast which combines half of elephant and half of lion, Gaja = elephant, Simha = lion
- ⁷ The above theory I received from some local researchers in my field studies to Bình Định Province in early 2012.

In Favour of Freedom of Expression

Koenraad Elst*

In the lifetime of the older ones among us, freedom of expression in India first became a hot item with the Salman Rushdie affair, when in 1988, his novel *The Satanic Verses* was banned. This was done by Rajiv Gandhi's Congress government at the request of Muslim leader Syed Shahabuddin, in exchange for the latter's calling off a Muslim march on Ayodhya (then a hotspot because of the temple/mosque controversy) expected to cause bloodshed.

For the younger generation, the main events were the withdrawal of A.K. Ramanujan's essay *300 Ramayanas* from Delhi University's syllabus in 2011 under Hindu pressure; and Penguin Delhi publisher's withdrawal of Wendy Doniger's book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* in 2014, likewise under Hindu pressure.

Neither document was judicially banned, but the Hindu plaintiffs wielded an article of law as threatening argument, and this could not be ignored: Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code. Why is this article there, and what role does it play in India's public life?

Looking in from outside: the Doniger affair

In November 2014, at its annual conference, the American Academy of Religion (AAR) held a panel discussion on censorship in India under Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code, itself occasioned by the Penguin publisher's withdrawal under Hindu pressure of Wendy Doniger's book *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. This translated into a section of the latest issue of the Journal of the AAR (JAAR) with four contributors

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and a response by Wendy Doniger. It addresses “the true source of the conflict, Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code.” (Pennington 2016:323)

This Article 295A criminalizes “outraging the religious feelings of any class of Indian citizens.” Dina Nath Batra, former national director of the Hindu Nationalist organization Vidya Bharati, had entered a lawsuit against the publisher under Section 295A. The latter recognized that the case had a solid legal footing and decided to avoid defeat by settling out of court. He agreed to withdraw the book from circulation and pulp all remaining copies. Not that any book actually got pulped: before they could be physically withdrawn, “all extant copies were quickly bought up from the bookstores” (Doniger 2016:364) because of the sudden free publicity.

While many academics accused Penguin of cowardice, Wendy Doniger understood that they had acted under threat of the law, and emphatically denounced Section 295A: “The true villain was the Indian law that makes it a criminal rather than a civil offence to publish a book that offends any Hindu, a law that jeopardizes the physical safety of any publisher, no matter how ludicrous the accusation brought against a book.” (Doniger 2014, quoted by Pennington 2016:330)

This statement is entirely correct, except for one word. Doniger is being brazenly partisan and incorrect where she claims that the law prohibits every book that “offends any *Hindu*.” Formally, it does not discriminate and applies to all Indians regardless of religion. Historically, as we shall see, the law was enacted to prohibit books that offended Muslims, and to silence Hindus. Her insinuation that this law has a pro-Hindu bias, giving Hindus a privileged protection that it withholds from others, is simply false in both respects. It fits in with the common narrative that India is a crypto- “Hindu Rashtra” oppressing the minorities, when in fact the minorities are often privileged by law vis-à-vis the Hindus.

Likewise, in Pennington’s paraphrase (2016:329), Martha Nussbaum claims that in India, such defamation laws “are used primarily by majority groups to bludgeon minorities.” This is wildly untrue (though it is true in the other successor-state of British India, viz. Pakistan), as will become clear when we see how Section 295A came into being.

Reactions against book withdrawals and censorship

But first a word about the significant reactions to this famous case of book-burning. The recent changes in syllabi and the objections to books

by pro-Hindu activists, both phenomena being summed up in the single name of Dina Nath Batra (who is also editor of some schoolbooks), have met with plenty of vocal reprimands and petitions in protest, signed by leading scholars in India and abroad.

Thus, at the European Conference for South Asia Studies in Zürich, July 2014, we were all given a petition to sign in support of Wendy Doniger's book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* against the publisher's withdrawal under Batra's judicial challenge. (Full disclosure: I signed, with heartfelt conviction.) The general opinion among educated people, widely expressed, was to condemn all attempts at book-banning. Unlike other petitions, this one did focus on the negative role of Section 295.

To be sure, most intellectuals' indignation was selective. There have indeed been cases where they have failed to come out in defence of besieged authors. No such storms of protest were raised when Muslims or Christians had books banned, or even when they assaulted the writers. Thus, several such assaults happened on the authors and publisher of the Danish Mohammed cartoons of 2006, yet at its subsequent annual conference, the prestigious and agenda-setting AAR hosted a panel about the cartoons where every single participant supported the Muslim objections to the cartoons, though to different degrees, and none of them fully defended freedom of expression. (Another panel there was devoted to lambasting the *jihadwatch.org* website by Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller, both targets of death threats and at least one effective but failed attempt on their lives, but not defended at the AAR panel by anyone.)

In their own internal functioning too, the AAR scholars and Indologists don't put a premium on the freedom to express dissident opinions. Here I speak from experience, having been banned from several forums where Wendy Doniger and some of her prominent supporters were present and gave their tacit consent. (Elst 2012:350-385) The most high-profile target of this policy has probably been Rajiv Malhotra, a sharp critic of Indologist mores and anti-Hindu bias, some of whose experiences in this regard have been fully documented. (Malhotra 2016)

It is entirely reasonable for India-watchers, like for freedom-loving Indians, to deplore this law and the cases of book-banning it has justified; but less so for people who chose not to speak out on the occasion of earlier conspicuous incidents of book-banning. Where was Wendy

Doniger when Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* was banned? At any rate, many Indian secularists, who mostly enjoy the support and sympathy of those American academics, upheld the ban, which was decreed by a self-declared secularist Prime Minister (Rajiv Gandhi) and ruling party (Congress). Where were they when demands were made to ban Ram Swarup's *Hindu View of Christianity and Islam*, or when the Church had Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* banned?

American Indologists including Wendy Doniger have always condoned religious discrimination on condition that Hindus are at the receiving end; they only protest when Hindus show initiative. And much as I deplore Dina Nath Batra's initiative, it meant at least that Hindus were not taking Doniger's insults lying down. Briefly: while everything pleads against this act of book-burning, the American India-watchers are not very entitled to their much-publicized indignation.

The point is that the intellectuals' selective indignation shows very well where real authority lies. Threats of violence are, of course, highly respected by them. The day Hindus start assaulting writers they don't like, you will see eminent historians turning silent about Hindu censorship, or even taking up its defence for that is what actually happens in the case of Islamic threats and censorship. Even more pervasive is the effect of threats to their careers. You will be in trouble if you utter any "Islamophobic" criticism of Islamic censorship, but you will earn praise if you challenge even proper judicial action against any anti-Hindu publications. This, then, safely predicts the differential behaviour of most intellectuals vis-à-vis free speech.

The Doniger affair: What is in it for the Hindus?

For the Hindus, the book withdrawal was a Pyrrhic victory. The publicity they gained worldwide was entirely negative, and it corroborated their recently-manufactured image as authoritarian and intolerant. The decision was also ineffectual, for in the days of the internet, it remained easy to access a soft copy of the book. The Hindus concerned also kind of admitted that they were unable to fight back with arguments.

Yet, they did have the arguments. A list of the numerous factual errors in Doniger's book has been compiled by Vishal Agarwal, an Indo-American medical engineer and Sanskritist (2014, but already online since 2010). Most of all, he has shown how her book's treatment of Hinduism is unconscientious and flippant to a degree that would never be accepted from a professor of her rank (Mircea Eliade Professor

at Chicago University, top of the world) for more established religions. In the reprint of her book through another publisher (*Speaking Tiger*, Delhi 2015), she didn't deign to acknowledge this work nor to make any correction.

This is a serious aspect of the case that Western academics and their Indian cheerleaders have strictly kept the lid on. On the contrary, Pennington (2016:330) claims that the book was lambasted "even when a scholar is demonstrating what is manifestly true based on her research."

We can vaguely get an idea of Hindu opinion in India about Doniger's book through the sparse comments by the Hindi-language press. S. Shankar in *Dainik Jagran* "charged Doniger with a familiar set of shortcomings: overlooking standard classical works, exoticizing the Hindu tradition, writing history in league with India's Marxist historians, and relying largely on foreign rather than Indian scholarship." (Pennington 2016:331) In Shankar's own words, she shows a "negligent and arrogant mindset... born of colonial and racist thinking." Vivek Gumaste at Rediff.com asserts that "this is not a pure battle for free speech," but "a parochial ideological ambush masquerading as one" (Pennington 2016:331). He calls it "subtle authoritarianism" out to "suppress the Hindu viewpoint." (quoted by Pennington 2016:331).

To an extent this is simply true, there is no level playing field, and the American academics including Wendy Doniger herself have done their best never to give the Hindus a fair hearing. On the other hand, this power equation is the Hindus' own doing. They have never invested in scholarship, and so they had to take umbrage behind a threatened judicial verdict now that they had the chance. Here, Hindus only pay the price for their self-proclaimed vanguard's non-performance during the last decades.

Building a scholarly challenge to the present academic consensus is a long-term project that admits of no shortcuts. By going to court and twisting Penguin's arm, Hindus think they have scored a clever victory, but in fact, they have only demeaned Hinduism. Prominent Hindus from the past would not be proud of Hinduism suppressing freedom of expression: great debaters like Yajñavalkya, the Buddha, Badarayana, Shankara and Kumarila Bhatta.

Ancient Indian thought was never divided in box-type orthodoxies on the pattern of Christians vs. Muslims or Catholics vs. Protestants. This is only a Western projection, borrowed as somehow more prestigious by the Indian "secularists," who impose this categorization

on the Indian landscape of ideas. At any rate, the vibrant interaction of ancient India's intellectual landscape, where free debate flourished, was nothing like the modern situation where Doniger's own school has locked out the Hindu voice and the latter has reactively demonized her and thrown up hurdles against expressions of her viewpoint.

But the taste of victory had become so unusual for Hindus that even many people who should have known better, have cheered the book's withdrawal. (see Elst 2015:74-87) It was not the best response, but at least it was a response. And of course, Article 295A may be a bad thing, but as long as it is on the statute books, it should count for Hindus as much as for Muslims and Christians.

History of Section 295A

Section 295A was not instituted by Hindu society, but against it. It was imposed by the British on the Hindus in order to shield Islam from criticism. Thus, it is truthfully said on the digplanet.com/wiki website, consulted on 5 August 2016, under the entry *Rangila Rasul* (see below): "In 1927, under pressure from the Muslim community, the administration of the British Raj enacted Hate Speech Law Section 295(A)."

The reason for its enactment was a string of murders of Arya Samaj leaders who polemicized against Islam. This started with the murder of Pandit Lekhram in 1897 by a Muslim, because Lekhram had written a book criticizing Islam. A particularly well-publicized murder took place in December 1926, eliminating an important leader, Swami Shradhananda, writer of *Hindu Sangathan, Saviour of the Dying Race* (1926), next to V. D. Savarkar's *Hindutva* (1924) the principal ideological statement of Hindu Revivalism. (However, the trigger to the murder lay elsewhere, viz. the protection he gave to a family of converts from Islam to Hinduism.) Moreover, there was commotion at the time concerning a very provocative subject: Mohammed's sex life, discussed by Mahashay Rajpal in his (ghost-written) book *Rangila Rasul*, more or less "Playboy Mohammed," a response to a Muslim pamphlet disparaging Sita as a prostitute. Rajpal would be murdered in 1929.

Wendy Doniger and the four authors who wrote about the origin and meaning of Section 295A for the Journal of the AAR strictly keep the lid on this crucial fact. None of the contributors has let on that the trigger for this legislation was repeated unidirectional communal murder, viz. of Arya Samaj leaders by Muslims, nor that it was meant to appease

the Muslim community. None of them so much as hints at this. Anantanand Rambachan (2016:367) even alleges that “the aggressive party was the Arya Samaj.” No, the Arya Samaj took the initiative of criticizing Islam, an attitude which psychologists might call “aggression” in a metaphorical sense. But aggression in the sense of inflicting violence on the other party was one-sidedly Muslim.

And even verbally, the Arya Samaj was not really the “aggressive” party. In Shraddhananda’s authoritative biography, not by a Hindu, we read that “some of his writings about the Muslims expressed harsh and provocative judgments. But (...) they were invariably written in response to writings or pronouncements of Muslims which either vehemently attacked Hinduism, the Arya Samaj, and the Swami himself, or which supported methods such as (...) the killing of apostates, and the use of devious and unfair means of propaganda.” He himself “never advocated unfair, underhand or violent methods.” (Jordens 1981: 174-175)

C.S. Adcock (2016:341) comes closest to the truth by writing that “polemics continued to cause resentment and increasingly, it seemed, serious violence”. For an academic writer on the origins of Section 295A, it is bizarre that he has so little grasp of the basic data and doesn’t know the nature of the “seeming” violence. And even he falsely insinuates that this violence was symmetrical, avoids mentioning the deliberate murders (as opposed to emotional riots), and hides the Muslim identity of the culprits. When Hindus allege that Indology today is systematically anti-Hindu, they can cite this as an example.

The British finally resolved to curb this form of unrest. While their justice system duly sentenced the murderers, they also decided to make an end to the religious polemics that had “provoked” them. After the Mutiny of 1857, Queen Victoria had solemnly committed the British administration to avoiding and weeding out insults to the native religions. However, the right to religious criticism had been taken for granted, on a par with the right of Western missionaries to criticize native religions in a bid to convince their adherents that they would be better off joining Christianity.

For example, in 1862, the magistrate sitting in judgment upon a case against a reformist who had criticized the caste-conscious Vallabhacharya Vaishnava community, upheld this right: “It is the function and the duty of the press to intervene, honestly endeavouring by all the powers of argument, denunciation and ridicule, to change

and purify the public opinion.” (quoted by Adcock 2016:345) He “upheld the importance of religious critique, and held public opinion in religious matters to be susceptible to reasoned argument.” (Adcock 2016:345)

In Britain, reasoned debates between worldviews flourished, for public opinion was held to be “susceptible to reasoned argument.” Initially, the colonial authorities treated Indians the same way. But this assessment was reversed by Section 295A, and quite deliberately.

This process had started a bit earlier, in a case against Arya Samaj preacher Dharm Bir in 1915. Ten Muslims were sentenced for rioting, but Dharm Bir was also charged and “a judge was brought in who could assure conviction.” (Adcock 2016:346) He was duly found guilty, then under Section 298 for “using offensive phrases and gestures (...) with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings” of another community; and under Section 153, for “wantonly provoking the riot which subsequently occurred.” (Adcock 2016:345)

As described by Adcock (2016:346), the British twisted the existing laws into prohibiting any religious polemic: “Because religion is ‘rooted in the sentiments,’ the judge concluded, religion is likely to provoke a riot, and that is all it can do. Religious debate is pointless and therefore unjustifiable; the right publicly to controvert arguments therefore does not properly extend to religion. To enter into religious debate is nothing but a provocation, an act calculated to arouse hatred. Therefore, it is intolerable.”

Note that the British public would never have stood for such a reasoning. But what was unacceptable to them, and not even countenanced for the Indian subjects fifty years earlier, was imposed on the colonial underlings during the last phase of the British Raj. And has remained with us since.

The murder of Shradhdhanada finally made the British rulers turn this attitude into law: “In 1927, Section 295A was enacted to extend the ease with which ‘wounding religious feelings’ by verbal acts could be prosecuted.” (Adcock 2016:345) Apart from punishing the murderer, they sought to punish Shradhdhanada as well, retro-actively and postumously.

Counterproductive

The British were not so much interested in justice, they merely wanted peace and quiet so the economy could flourish. The Arya Samaj was not doing anything that the Christian missionaries had not been doing

(and are still doing today) to the populations they wanted to convert, viz. trying to convince them that their native religion was unwholesome and wrong. This implied saying negative things about that religion, or as the emotion-centric phrase now goes: “insulting” it.

But if the Arya Samaj’s *words* provoked unwanted Muslims *deeds*, they were part of the problem and had to be remedied. However, in spite of this intention to prevent riots, the new law did not end the recurring Muslim murders of Arya Samaj leaders until WW2 nor the concomitant riots, as discussed by Dr. Ambedkar (1940:156). It was the Partition that broke the Arya Samaj’s back, driving it from its power-centre in West Panjab with the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College in Lahore. After Independence, anti-Islamic polemics were blackened as “communal” by an increasingly powerful “secularism,” and thus abandoned. But Section 295A had little to do with this.

More fundamentally, this law put a premium on violence by making it the best proof that the statements prosecuted had indeed “provoked” violence. It “extended the strategic value of demonstrating that passions had been aroused that threatened the public peace, in order to induce the government to take legal action against one’s opponents. Section 295A thus gave a fillip to the politics of religious sentiment.” (Adcock 2016:345)

And so: “When coordinated acts of violence are justified as the inevitable result of hurt feelings, legal precautions against violent displays of religious passion may be said to have backfired.” (Adcock 2016:347) This present-day effect of Section 295A could easily convince the scholars to sign a petition against this undeniably despotic and unsecular laws. Still, it is odd that with their widespread anti-Hindu and pro-minority bias, they object to a law originally enacted to shield a minority from criticism and to punish Hindu words for Muslim murders.

Though originally and for a long time serving to shield Islam, Hindus gradually discovered that they too could use the religiously neutral language of this Section to their seeming advantage. Christians as well have invoked it, e.g. to ban Dan Brown’s novel *The Da Vinci Code*. This creates a sickening atmosphere of a pervasive touch-me-not-ism, with every community outdoing the other in being more susceptible to having its sentiments hurt.

Rationale for Section 295A

When Batra and other Hindus put publishers under pressure to withdraw Wendy Doniger’s book, or earlier, A.K. Ramanujan’s *Three Hundred*

Ramayanas, the publishers buckled under the fear of having to face trial under Article 295A, as well as under their regard for the Hindu public's purchasing power. Apart from ideological factors, entrepreneurs also take into account the purely commercial aspect of a controversy. In this case, they reckoned with the only power that Hindus have: their numbers.

But the Hindu instigators did not inspire "fear," and definitely did not have the backing of political authority. This all happened when the Congress Party was in power. It is not entirely unheard of that Indian judges are on the take, but in most cases, the Indian Judiciary is independent, so a Government sometimes has to suffer verdicts not to its liking. Thus, Narendra Modi was repeatedly cleared by the Courts from alleged guilt in the post-Godhra riots of 2002 while Congress, which invested heavily in anti-Modi propaganda, was in power.

It is strange how fast people can forget. Modi's BJP has only very recently come to power: in May 2014, after ten years in the opposition. At the time of the Ramanujan and Doniger controversies, Congress was safely at the helm. If the publishers were in awe of any powers-that-be, it must have been of the Congress "secularists." So, regardless of the prevailing regime, Section 295A by itself exercises a pro-censorship influence.

Now that the BJP is safely in power, we find it is not making any move to abolish Section 295A. This is partly because it has apparently resolved not to touch any communally sensitive issue with a barge-pole, committing itself instead to safely secular "development," but partly for a deeper reason.

The colonial view, ultimately crystallized in Section 295A, came to the fore after the Mutiny of 1857, which had formally erupted over seemingly irrational religious sensitivities: objections to the use of cows' fat or pigs' fat, taboo to Hindus and Muslims respectively. India was reorganized as an Empire ruled by the Queen of Britain, henceforth also the Empress of India. She made a solemn declaration to win over the Indians: "Queen Victoria's declaration of religious neutrality (...) explicitly promised to refrain from interference in the religious beliefs and practices of Indian natives. (...) What provoked Victoria's declaration was the assumption that religion in India was the source of volatile passions that were a threat to the peace." (Vishwanath 2016:353)

This position was colonial par excellence, contrasting Britons capable of reasoned debate with natives who were prisoners of emotions

and superstitions. Yet, it had a kernel of truth: not that Indians were more emotional or superstitious than Britons, but they seemed to have an aversion to religious debate. Nineteenth century Europeans were keen to know the world, and everywhere the conquerors of foreign lands were followed by students of the newfound languages and cultures. They prided themselves on this curiosity and thought it typical for the indolent natives that they did not have it. Thus, the early Indian pioneers of linguistics were greatly admired and accepted as inspiration for the budding science of linguistics, yet it was also noticed that they had not shown any interest in foreign languages. Thus, though Panini lived close to the Iranian- and Burushaski-speaking people, he is not known to have used their languages in his linguistic theories.

So, it was only a logical extension to apply this to religion. Consider the native welcome given to the Syrian Christians in Kerala, the Zoroastrians in Gujarat, and other refugees: no questions were asked about the contents of their faith. They were perfectly allowed to practise their traditions (within the bounds of “morality,” as the Constitution still says, e.g. the prevailing taboo on cow-slaughter, which they had not known in Syria or Iran), to honour any Prophets or Gurus or Scriptures they wanted, to build any churches or temples they chose, yet no interest was paid to what exactly their religion was about. This was simply not the business of the natives, who were satisfied with practising their own traditions. Not even purely for scholarly sake did Hindus or Muslims show any interest in other religions; al-Biruni and Dara Shikoh being the exceptions that prove the rule.

Colonial prejudices are not always incorrect, but this one really does injustice to the average Hindu, who is more interested in other religions than was the case among Christians until recently. But perhaps they show less of a tendency to criticize. From experience, I tend to think that their natural tolerance as shown towards the refugees is not due to indifference and smugness but to open-mindedness.

For Western religious converts like Saint Paul (Judaism to Christianity), Saint Augustine (Manicheism to Catholicism) or John Newman (Anglicanism to Catholicism), it would be an insult to deny the role of reason in their religious development, or to say that “to enter into religious debate is nothing but a provocation, an act calculated to arouse hatred,” as the British judge had told the Arya Samaj in 1915. But the colonial view crystallized in Section 295A did hold the Indians

to be a different race, less rational and not to be trusted with debate, but fortunately also disinclined to such debate. So, it would only be a slight exaggeration of a tendency already present in Indian culture to outlaw religious debate.

That, indeed, is how many Indian secularists and their allies in Western academe now justify this continued muzzling of debate: “In India, the notion that to be truly tolerant in religion is to refrain from criticism of religion is a widespread secularist ideal.” (Pennington 2016:346)

Secularism

To assert that refraining from religious criticism is a “secularist ideal,” brings in the S-word. This would trigger a far longer discussion than we are prepared for here. But because it now serves as the new justification for the colonial Section 295A, at least this.

For a scholar, it is very poor to use this word as if it hadn't acquired a meaning in India (since Jawaharlal Nehru, ca. 1951) totally at variance with its original Western meaning. This should be obvious to whomever studies the types of Indians calling themselves secularist, and those lambasted as anti-secular: “The concept of Secularism as known to the modern West is dreaded, derided and denounced in the strongest terms by the foundational doctrines of Christianity and Islam. (...) It is, therefore, intriguing that the most fanatical and fundamentalist adherents of Christianity and Islam in India – Christian missionaries and Muslim mullahs – cry themselves hoarse in defence of Indian Secularism, the same way as the votaries of Communist totalitarianism coming out vociferously in defence of Democracy.” (Goel 1998:vii)

Thus, in the West, secularism means that all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of their religion; or what Indians call a Common Civil Code. In India, by contrast, all secularists swear by the preservation of the present system of separate religion-based Personal Laws, though they prefer to avoid the subject, hopefully from embarrassment at the contradiction. And all Indian secularists swear by the preservation of constitutional, legal and factual discriminations against the Hindu majority. (In case you have recently lived on another planet and don't believe that there are such discriminations, one example: the Right to Education Act 2006, which imposes some costly duties on schools except minority schools, has led to the closure of hundreds of Hindu schools.)

Likewise, in the West, the enactment of secularism went hand in hand with deepening criticism of religion, which was pushed from its pedestal and recognized as just another fallible human construct, open to questioning and criticism. In India, by contrast, secularists cheer for the application, formally or in spirit, of Section 295A to outlaw religious criticism – except when it is Hinduism that gets criticized. And that is why the AAR scholars, in solidarity with their Indian secularist friends, have never moved a finger about minority-enforced censorship but made a mountain out of the Doniger molehill. Here, they vehemently denounced the clumsy Hindu attempt at banning an otherwise poor book that, to them, has the cardinal virtue of riding roughshod over Hindu self-perception.

Conclusion

All the Hindu justifications of the “withdrawal” of Wendy Doniger’s book amount to: “Freedom of speech does not mean freedom to insult.” This just shows the speakers’ thoughtlessness and illiteracy. All debates about book-banning, or at least one of the contending parties in them, will at some point come up with George Orwell’s famous observation: “If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.” Freedom of speech doesn’t mean much if it doesn’t imply the freedom to offend. If the freedom to insult were forbidden, than anything meaningful would be found to displease at least someone somewhere and thus be forbidden.

Moreover, many lambasters (including Wendy Doniger) honestly feel that they have done a fair job and not “insulted” anyone. So, even the term “insult” is merely subjective: “Insulting is everything that anyone feels insulted by.” This would make the worst touch-me-not the arbiter of whether books are allowed to be published.

So, down with censorship or any procedure amounting to the same, including forcing publishers to withdraw their publications with the threat of Section 295A. Down with censorship laws. Freedom of expression is a fundamental element of democracy, a precondition for making it possible at all. Equal participation in decision-making implies equal access to information and opinions, rather than one group deciding what another group is allowed to read and write.

As for the stated fear that if “insults” are not curbed by law, soon the atmosphere will be filled with unbearable swearing in the guise of “criticism”: India has done without such censorship laws for thousands

of years, and the amount of insults in the religious field was not appreciably worse than in the colonial period or today. Such exaggerated fears can be laid to rest by civil society without state interference. People will give each other feedback, and they themselves will keep criticism and “insults” within reasonable bounds.

Finally, the possibility has to be faced that the fanaticism potentially emanating from certain worldviews has something to do with the contents of these worldviews themselves. Not every religion is equally prone to get provoked to violence by criticism. I make bold to say that, through a felicitous coincidence, the religions originating in India are quite capable of solving ideological differences of opinion peacefully.

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Is 'Dalit' Activism Just Propaganda by Other Means?

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Activism and programmes have proliferated both in India and elsewhere that purport to help 'Dalits'. In this essay, we shall consider the proposition that they are not quite what they seem to be, and consider whether they are intended *per se* to support the so-called 'lower-castes,' as they may have other ill-effects and could well be *malafide*.

As I write this, there is a brouhaha in the media about alleged mistreatment of SC/ST people in Una, Gujarat. Quite coincidentally, there is an election coming up in Gujarat. And over the last few months, there have been the incidents around Rohith Vemula, who may or may not be SC (some say his family is OBC, and others say he was no longer a Hindu, but had converted), which have made the 'Dalit' issue quite visible.

The extremely political nature of this episodic shedding of tears can be seen from a single, but enormously pertinent fact: the most important leaders of a certain political party made a beeline for Gujarat, to milk the sympathy vote. But when that same party was ruling in Kerala just a few weeks ago, and an SC girl named Jisha was brutally (extreme brutality and torture) murdered just before elections there, there was no rush by the same people. Vote-bank politics is the word that leaps to mind.

The amorphous, ambiguous term 'Dalit'

To start with first things first, the very term 'Dalit' is both a manufactured construct and an amorphous one. I understand that the word *dalit* means

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'broken' in Hindi. But to say that a large mass of people (almost 20% of the nation's population) are all uniformly 'broken' is at the very least exaggeration, and most likely inaccurate.

The term is a neologism, apparently created by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century (according to Wikipedia) and popularized by Dr. Ambedkar in the twentieth century. It is apparently meant to convey "weakness, poverty and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society." "Dalits were excluded from the four-fold Varna system and formed the unmentioned fifth varna," continues the Wikipedia entry.

The definitional problem starts right there. Furthermore, the general impression is that 'Dalit' equals 'scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.' On the contrary, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes in 2004 explicitly called the term 'unconstitutional' and asked state governments to end its use. Why are we using a term that is 'unconstitutional?' It should be an offence to do so.

What is 'caste' anyway? It is not *jati* as we know it. 'Caste' is a European term, derived from the Spanish *casta*. It is applied to mixed-race people in the conquered Inca, Aztec etc. territories of Latin America. Those with more white blood are superior in the *casta* system, and those with more indigenous blood are inferior. These racial differences are visible, and so they are perpetuated.

Casta is about 'racial purity,' and miscegenation, which is and was taboo. Similarly, in the American slavery system, there were elaborate classifications: mulatto (half white), quadroon (quarter white), octroon (one-eighth white), and so on. But in essence a 'single drop' of black blood was enough to make a person 'black.' And since race is a persistent and visible characteristic, racial prejudice against individuals will almost never disappear.

This whole system has nothing to do with the *jati* system which arose from the division of labour, and entire *jatis* could move up and down the hierarchy as their services became more or less valuable. That is not true of *casta*: if your skin isn't white, you are forever low in the hierarchy, even if you are a highly paid rocket scientist or investment banker. That is the sum and substance of racism in the US to this day. Blacks, even affluent ones, make bitter jokes about "driving while black," meaning you are liable to be pulled over and interrogated just because you are black. The entire # Black Lives Matter meme shows how this discrimination is perpetuated, and will always be with us.

Are OBCs ‘Dalits’?

Furthermore, it is not that only SC/ST were excluded from the *chaturvarnya* system. Many of the numerous OBC or Other Backward Communities were also excluded from the *varna* classification at least as codified (and ossified) by the British through their census. The census, incidentally, had the remarkably deleterious effect of making *jati* inflexible, whereas it had been fluid earlier.

Therefore, is ‘Dalit’ confined to SC/ST? What about OBC groups? In practice, only SC/ST are considered ‘Dalit’, and all the upliftment activities are confined to them, whereas OBCs who could also claim serious discrimination are ignored. Therefore, they are not ‘Dalits?’

In fact the OBCs then have a serious claim that they are being discriminated against by the current system. If the ‘upper castes’ are the elites, and the SC/ST ‘Dalits’ are the ones who receive the significant quota benefits, then what about the OBCs? Their historical grievances count for nothing? Therefore, the ‘Dalit’ characterization is creating a new hierarchy – ‘upper caste’ elites, then protected ‘Dalit’ SC/ST, and at the bottom the unprotected OBC. In other words, just change the victims?

Indeed, most OBC groups do not wish to be identified as ‘Dalits,’ simply because they don’t consider themselves to be ‘broken.’ It is only in the discourse of the so-called ‘liberals’ that OBCs are lumped in with SC/ST as ‘Dalits.’ In fact, it is often OBCs and low-*sudrajatis*, those closest in the hierarchy to the SC/ST, that discriminate most vigorously against SC/ST. No, these groups are not to be considered ‘Dalit,’ thus confusing the definitional issue evermore. So we should simply stop using such an amorphous term.

Why, then, does this confusing and ill-defined term gain increasing currency? It must be profitable to somebody. Thus, it is likely that the ‘Dalit’ identity is a constructed and *malafide* identity to create fissures in Indian society, as part of what the scholar Rajiv Malhotra calls “Breaking India” in a book of the same name. It is quite possible that ‘Dalit’ is a deliberate replication of the American term ‘black,’ and therefore an American gambit intended as part of a civilizational assault especially by conversion-seeking fundamentalist Christians.¹ This impression is strengthened by the preponderance of American² fundamentalists in ‘Dalit’ projects. It appears to be what I call ‘nomenclature terrorism.’

Furthermore, there are lots of noises made about 'Dalit Christians.' That is paradoxical and meaningless, to say the least, but in fact it is a major problem. On the one hand, Christians claim that they are immune to the widely condemned 'caste³ system,' but in practice, many converted 'Dalits' testify that they are severely discriminated against, and treated as *untermenschen*. Why, they ask themselves, did they convert in the first place? That, of course, is the secret of marketing.

While not denying that there continues to be discrimination in Indian society (which society is immune to that problem?), the various efforts to ameliorate it in the case of SC/ST have been half-hearted, half-baked, and in some case, just plain harmful. It is not the case that 'reservations' or affirmative action programmes are altogether wrong. Unlike many critics, I would not claim that, and I would argue that within limits, they do have benefits, and should be continued in a rational form.

What 'liberals' have done is to create a race to the bottom: more backward than thou.

What affirmative action programmes should do is to positively discriminate in favour of the SC/SCT candidates at the margin. If an SC/ST candidate is genuinely meritorious, they should not feel the need to take refuge in the reservations, and they should compete in the general quota. If an SC/ST is borderline, then he/she should be given preference as compared to a borderline general category candidate. That could be one relatively fair mechanism to compensate for past wrongs, and the fact that those from disadvantaged backgrounds have that much further to go.

But the so-called 'liberals' of India have created a system that is completely insane. They did two things wrong. One is that they have failed to create development; if the pie were to grow sufficiently, the need for government intervention would diminish, as there would be enough wealth to go around for all, as in affluent countries.

The second, and even more deleterious, effect of their policies has been to create a 'race to the bottom.' Since there is a such a premium attached to being backward (in terms of those termed such being handed State largesse) that everyone view to be 'backward,' 'more backward,' and 'extremely backward.' This is totally counter-productive, as the incentive structure is to claim backwardness, not to strive to improve oneself through hard work.

Other examples of nomenclature terrorism: ‘minority’ and ‘secularism’

Further, the Nehruvian State started showering its largesse on the so-called ‘minorities’ (another ill-defined and vague term). That was supposed to be for ‘religious minorities’ and ‘linguistic minorities.’ In practice, Christians and Muslims get extraordinary benefits, and Hindus are severely oppressed. And linguistic minorities get absolutely no consideration. The irony escapes most observers.

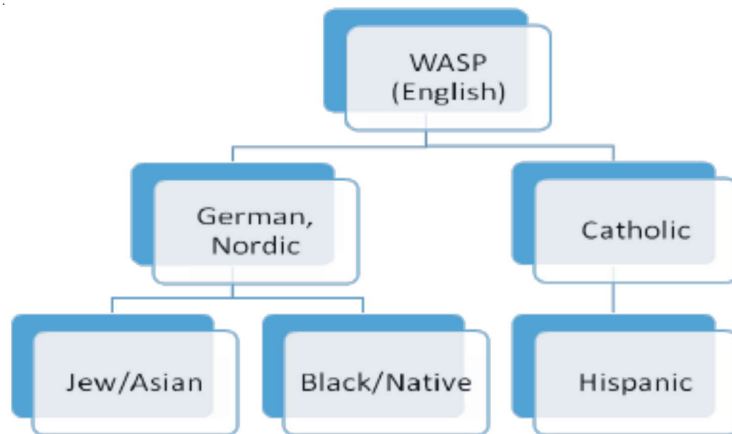
The very term ‘minority’⁴ is a construct from Europe based on the fact that Christians were constantly running genocide campaigns and pogroms against Jews, Gypsies, Druids and other numerically smaller groups. On the contrary, in India, religious and other minorities were generally not persecuted, although there were indeed many wars and violence throughout Indian history.

The concept of ‘minority,’ just as the concept of ‘secularism,’ only make sense in the context of Abrahamic religions, because they emphasize the in-group/out-group dichotomy. Thus, there is always a white and a black, there is a good and a bad. The good are PLU: people like us, those who believe the same myths that we do. The bad are everyone else. And then we proceed to beat up the ‘bad’ people. If they are numerically inferior, we proceed to massacre them and exterminate them. This is not theoretical: until recently, in some cases the 1960’s, aboriginal children in North America and Australia were forcibly separated from their families and ‘civilized,’ almost always converted to an Abrahamic faith. Aborigines were classified under the Flora and Fauna Act, that is, as animals, in Australia till the 1960’s. In those cases, yes, ‘minority’ makes sense. Minorities were the targets of pogroms, genocides and extermination.

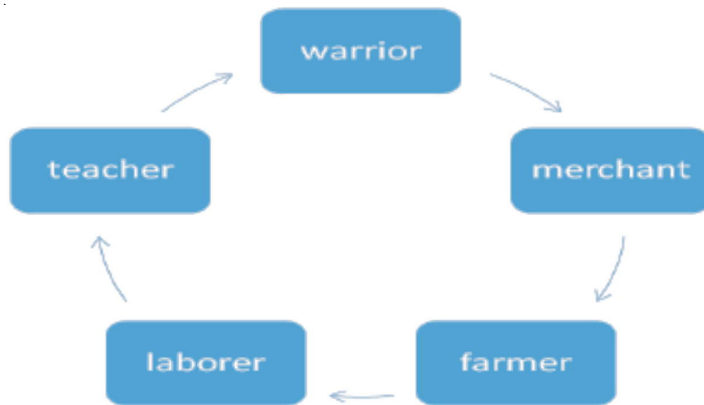
None of this has made any sense in India, as the various *jatis* did not live in a hierarchy (as the western narrative makes it out to be, although in fact that is what western society actually *is*). Consider the American narrative before WW2, and perhaps to some extent even today: whites were on the top of the hierarchy, but it was strictly in order. WASPs⁵ of English descent first, of German descent next, of Scandinavian origin after that, Catholics of French, then Italian, then Eastern European origin, and finally, at the bottom, Jews, Spanish-speakers, and blacks, then at the very bottom, the sorry remnants of the North American tribes, that is, those few who had escaped extermination.

Jati as division of labour

In contrast to this top-down structure, Indian society was much more holistic, in that it was a clear division of labour for the benefit of society at large. In philosophical terms, Indian society was utilitarian, seeking “the greatest good of the greatest number,” with groups competing in a quasi-market environment to offer more value. Those groups that succeeded in providing more value to society rose to prominence, either in terms of societal respect or in terms of wealth.



(Representative Picture) Incomplete Hierachy of Americans



(Representative Picture) Division of Labour in India

It is this holistic picture that has been systematically undermined by first, the imperialists, and later, the leftists of India. The *purushasukta* does metaphorically suggest that the *varnas* are all part of an integral whole, but in fact, it is more like a modern industrial society, where there are specialists of various kinds who offer their products and services to society. The traditional India, the one that from 0 CE to around 1600 CE had the highest GDP in the world,⁶ was a harmonious entity, where new arts and crafts were constantly created, and the intellectual property in these were widely seen as belonging to society at large. Groups that created high-IPR products would move up in society, and those that didn't would fall: so there was constant incentive to create. No wonder, then, that India was by far the most creative and innovative society in the world for long.

This division of labour seems to have worked well: the *dhobi*, and the goldsmith, for example, were content in their traditional livelihood. This is a point most observers ignore. Even today, if you ask most people, including OBC and SC/ST, they are content to remain in their *jati*, and in fact have significant *jati* pride. They tend not to believe that their *jati* is inferior, but different. A part of a smoothly-running machine called society, which needs people with different skills and traditional knowledge, passed on from father to son. In other words, guilds in a different guise.

This system is what produced world-class products and services in India. For instance, Indian metal-workers produced wootz (from Tamil *urukku*) that is nano-carbon steel, the sharpest and best in the world, known as damascene to crusaders, who thought it came from Damascus, Syria. Indian doctors performed plastic surgery to repair noses; Sushruta in 2600 BCE described an early form of removal of the lens in a cataract patient.

How SC/ST were 'manufactured' by ruining an affluent society

In a society that appears to have been affluent, there was enough of the pie to go around, and there, one imagines, wasn't great oppression, because there were job opportunities. For instance, Prasannan Parthasarathi⁷ suggests that:

“Indeed, there is compelling evidence that South Indian labourers had higher earnings than their British counterparts in the eighteenth century and lived lives of greater financial security.”

Thus, the entire picture of a rigid, suffocatingly oppressive, caste-ridden society quite probably is a historical fabrication by vested interests. What actually happened was that in the wake of the British assault on India, they impoverished hitherto prosperous artisans and small entrepreneurs. These are people who had, for example as weavers (remember the famous Dacca muslin) or shipbuilders or any number of other professionals had enjoyed a fair income. All of a sudden, under forced de-industrialization, they lost their professions and became indigent, landless labourers, *untermenschen*, and over time, they would have become a despised *jati* low in societal esteem. To wit, SC.

Similarly, the origin of the Scheduled Tribes is likely to be that these were rebellious groups, especially warriors, whom the British declared to be suspicious characters, and pushed out of the towns and villages, so they had to become forest-dwellers. In Kerala, in another variant of this, all the *kalaripayat* warriors were forced into hiding.

Also in Kerala, there is the intriguing fact that the traditional *vaidyas* were either the Brahmin Nambudiris or the OBC Ezhavas (some of these Ezhavas converted and there are Christian *vaidyas* as well). Thus, the supposedly strict lines between *jatis* and *varnas* were somewhat porous. And this, too, in highly conservative Kerala of old.

The diverse responses to oppression

To stay with Kerala for a moment, it was known to be a centre of *jati* based discrimination,⁸ and it had elaborate rules based on *jati*. The top *jati*, the Brahmin Nambudiris, had evolved a complex system that one had to adhere to. The state had hardly any *vaisya* or *kshatriya* classes. These functions were largely handled by the Christian and Muslim merchant classes and the *sudra* Nair community. Beyond this, there were the OBC Ezhavas, and SC Parayas, Pulayas, and ST Kanis, Kurichyas, Nayadis and so on.

There were elaborate rules too, to prevent ‘pollution’ by touch, and even by the shadow of a lower-*jati* person falling on a higher-*jati* person. For instance, a Nair was supposed to stand 5 feet away from a Nambudiri, an Ezhava had to keep 10 feet away, a Pulaya was expected to be 15 feet away, and so on. Correspondingly, there were prohibitions against access to temples, and to education. Those down to Nairs (*savaranas*) were allowed to go to temple and to school, but none below that, such as Ezhavas and Pulayas (*avarnas*).

Oddly enough, many of these strictures seem not to have applied to Christians and Muslims. For instance, there were public roads that

were forbidden to say, an Ezhava Sankaran. But Sankaran simply had to convert, and become a Thomas or a Bashir. From that very moment on, he could walk on those roads. There was no prohibition. It was this grave injustice that was the focus of the famous Vaikom Satyagraha on 1924, led to T K Madhavan, an Ezhava, demanding the rights of all to walk on the roads around the great Vaikom Siva temple. Indeed, in 1936, the Maharaja did declare Temple Entry, throwing open all temples in Travancore to all Hindus.

The responses of the lower *jatis* were quite interesting. The abject humiliation of the inability to walk the roads or to enter temples, while it irritated them greatly, did not seem to impel Ezhavas to convert *en masse*, although they did threaten to. Despite this ill-treatment, Ezhavas continued to remain the largest group among Hindus in Kerala, as they are to this day.

However, there was large-scale conversion among Ezhavas a century prior to this. The reasons are quite interesting. There was an unmet thirst for education among Ezhavas, as they were prohibited from attending the schools set up by the kingdom of Travancore. However, in 1819, the queen was persuaded by the British Resident, one Colonel Munro who was an evangelist, to donate a sum of Rs. 10,000 to the Christian church (an astronomical sum in those days, equivalent to some Rs. 4100 crores in today's money assuming 8% inflation).

The church promptly set up the Big Church in Kottayam and opened schools for anybody who would convert. And many Ezhavas did, and I have seen conjectures that as many as 80% of Kerala's Christians are of Ezhava origin. Similarly, OBC Nadars in neighbouring Kanyakumari district converted in large numbers, so that that district is now overwhelmingly Christian.

Thus, the responses by different *jatis* varied, depending on their circumstances and their needs. There must have been similar variations among the various SC groups. To use a blanket statement that "all 'Dalits' did x" is absurd and contrary to facts, but that is the narrative that has been used by the 'liberal' intelligentsia. This one-size-fits-all in fact trivializes and objectifies the SC/ST and OBC.

Two paths, one a failure, the other a success

It was this sort of Nietzschean dichotomy that drove the so-called "rationalists" and the "social-justice movement" in Tamil Nadu, led by the charismatic E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, also known as Periyar (The

Great One). His Dravida Kazhagam was the ancestor of all the various DMK type parties in the state, and it had an appealingly simple mantra: “Brahmin = bad, others = good;” which over time became “Hindus = bad, others = good.”

In dramatic contrast, Sree Narayana Guru in Kerala preached another simple mantra, of self-help. When people complained that they were not allowed into temples, he told them to build their own. When people complained that they were not allowed into schools, he told them to build their own. His message of self-improvement, while still being completely inside the Hindu fold, and while being an orthodox Saivite monk, had a dramatic impact on Kerala: it is now the most egalitarian part of the country.

Meanwhile, over in Tamil Nadu, tremendous oppression of SC/ST continues, and it is interesting that this is done mostly by OBC *jatis*, including Periyar’s own Mudaliar community. So much so that there are occasional mass-conversions of SC/ST, such as what happened in Meenakshipuram some time ago.

In summary, those *jatis* that pulled themselves up by their bootstraps have thrived. Those that fell for the swansong of identity politics and demanded hand-outs from the state have not done so well. This stands to reason: accepting charity leads to corrosion of the soul, as you always wonder whether you are really good enough or, got whatever you got as a bone thrown to pacify you by people who have no intention of ever allowing you to grow beyond your current state.

Sree Naryana Guru said: “become enlightened through education; become strong through organizing yourselves.” The message could not be clearer: do not ask for hand-outs, demand your rightful place by deserving it, not by begging for charity.

There have been several studies, by P. Kanagasabapathy, R. Vaidyanathan, and S. Gurumurthy among others, that looked at the fortunes of different *jatis*. And they have found that *jati*, if understood well, is social capital that you can use.

And that, in the final analysis, is what all oppressed people should be saying to themselves, whether SC/ST or other: self-help. Some of these schemes and programmes are created with malign intent by those who are not your friends, and even if it is not malign intent, the damage they cause may be greater than the benefits that you gain. While there are well-intentioned people who create these programmes (but are unable

to think through the unintended consequences), the majority of these are created by people with ill-intent, who want to use SC/ST as a wedge for breaking India.

Notes

- ¹ An example is the Orwellian “US Commission for International Religious Freedom” which in practice is a smokescreen to support fundamentalist Christian evangelization efforts especially in India.
- ² The ‘Dalit Freedom Network ’ is a website run by an American church, for instance.
- ³ And similarly ‘secularism’ was a device to prevent the Christian church from over-running the nation-states of Europe. The Vatican had its own armies, and was a competitor to the temporal power of kings, periodically establishing its own empires. This is completely immaterial to the Indian situation, as the brahmanas had almost no temporal power whatsoever.
- ⁴ White Anglo Saxon Protestant, and among them those of Pilgrim ancestry, the ‘Boston Brahmins’ whose forebears “came over on the Mayflower“ were at the top.
- ⁵ Angus Maddison, *An Economic History of the World*, OECD, Paris.
- ⁶ Prasannan Parthasarathi, “Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in Eighteenth Century Britain and South India,” *Past and Present*, February 1998.
- ⁷ Swami Vivekananda famously called it a “lunatic asylum.”

Indian History and the Colonial Historiography

Makkhan Lal*

In India historical knowledge was always given importance to the extent that Kautilya's Arthashastra prescribes that king must spend his afternoon hearing the *Itihas Puranas* from knowledgeable scholars. The Puranas were the preserve of Indian history. Subsequently, much of the historical knowledge has been enshrined in Sanskrit literature, dealing with the various subjects and aspects of Indian society. After the arrival of the Mughals a tradition of court historiography began where rulers commissioned the historical account of their reigns. This has not been the tradition in India during the pre-Mughal periods. Whatever was written was written by independent scholars. With the advent of Europeans, history of India started being written by them. This can be divided into two phases.

Enlightenment and till early Nineteenth Century

The European historiography on India began with the advent of Enlightenment. Many scholars like John Holwell, Nathaniel Halhed and Alexander Dow – all associated in various capacities with the British East India Company – wrote about Indian history and culture, underscoring the pre-eminence of Indian civilisation in the ancient world.

On the basis of Puranic references, they described the immense antiquity of human beings. Holwell wrote that Hindu texts contained a higher revelation than the Christian ones, they pre-dated the great deluge described in the Old Testament and declared that, "The mythology, as

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well as cosmogony of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans were borrowed from the doctrines of the Brahmins.”¹ Hall had critically examined the various aspects of Indian history, religion, mythology, etc. He discussed the vast time of human history assigned to the four *Yugas* and concluded that “human reason can no more reconcile itself to the idea of Patriarchal longevity of few thousand years for the entire span of human race.”² Based on considerable volume of literature produced in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many scholars and intellectuals who had never travelled to India wrote about it. The great intellectual and statesman, Voltaire, viewed India as the homeland of religion in its oldest and purest form and also as the cradle of human civilisations. He was convinced of the pre-eminence of Indian achievement in the areas of secular learning and world culture. He described Indians as the people “to whom we owe our numbers, our backgammon, our chess, our first principles of geometry and fables which have become our own.” He further wrote, “In short, I am convinced that everything – astronomy, astrology, metaphysics, etc. – comes to us from the bank of Ganges.”³

The French naturalist and traveller, Pierre de Sonnerate, also believed that all knowledge came from India, which he considered to be the cradle of civilisations. In 1807, well-known metaphysician Schelling wrote, “What is Europe really but a sterile trunk which owes everything to Oriental grafts?”⁴ The great philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, also acknowledged the greatness of the ancient Indian culture and civilisation. He wrote, “Their religion has a great purity ... (and) one can find traces of pure concept of divinity which cannot easily be found elsewhere.”⁵ He also declared that Indian religious thoughts were free of dogmatism and intolerance. J. Michelet held that the Vedas were, “undoubtedly the first monument of the world.” And, it is from India that emanated “a torrent of light and the flow of reasons and right.”⁶

That was the fairly objective assessment of India history, though sometime some scholars did get carried away emotionally. But this situation did not last long. With the beginning of the nineteenth century, attitudes started changing and any objective and fair treatment to Indian history and civilization itself gradually became history. Indian history started being looked down upon, and denigrations and distortions began as if by design, because of political and racial considerations and a superiority complex among the British, in particular, and Europeans, in

general. Thomas Trautmann writes, “British Indo-mania did not die of natural causes; it was killed off. The Indo-phobia that became the norm in early-nineteenth century Britain was constructed by Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism and its chief architects were Charles Grant and James Mill. British Indo-phobia was, above all, a deliberate attack upon the built-up structure of a just and fair treatment of Indian history; it was devised to oppose it and destroy it.”⁷

Civil Servants, Missionaries and Indologists

A search for the roots of systematic distortion of Indian history during the last two centuries leads us to the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, which contributed towards the writing of Indian history in its own way. However, it must be mentioned at this very stage that generally these writings reflect the contemporary debate on religious faith and the notion of nationality and also their vested interests in enlarging the European colonies for economic exploitation. Some leading intellectuals of the nineteenth century who traversed this path are William Jones, H.H. Wilson, Monier Williams, M. Elphinstone, James Mill, T.B. Macaulay, Karl Marx and Max Mueller. The most prominent twentieth century historians belonging to this school of thought were Vincent Arthur Smith and E.J. Rapson.

A large section of European scholars and Christian missionaries got worried when the greatness of India’s past started being acknowledged, and when Indian philosophy, logic and writings on such things as the origin of the universe, human life and the age of the universe started gaining acceptance. For well over a millennium-and-a-half, much of the Europe had accepted the Old Testament as the final statement documenting the history of human beings. Thomas Maurice, for example, was bitterly upset over the appreciation for and acceptance of India’s past, its philosophy, logic, etc. He wrote in 1812 about “the daring assumptions of certain skeptical French philosophers with respect to the Age of the world ... argument principally founded on the high assumptions of the Brahmins... (which) have a direct tendency to overturn the Mosaic system, and, with it, Christianity.”⁸ These people were also worried about the increasing trend of questioning the Biblical story of Creation. Bishop Usher had calculated that the universe was created at 9.00 a.m. on 23rd October 4004 B.C. and that the Great Flood took place in 2349 B.C. These dates and creation stories were facing the threat of being proved wrong in the face of Indian belief

which talked in terms of the four *Yugas* and several hundred million years. This threatened the very foundations of the Christian faith and its attempts to compress the civilizational time frame within the 4000 B.C. chronology.

It was under these circumstances that William Jones came to India as an employee of the East India Company. He was determined to study the Indian languages and literature *vis-à-vis* Christianity. However, the faithful were relieved by “the fortunate arrival of... the various dissertations, on the subject of Sir William Jones.”⁹ On his own part, Jones’ concern was second to none. He wrote in 1788, “Some intelligent and virtuous persons are inclined to doubt the authenticity of the accounts delivered by Moses.” Jones too was very clear that “either the first eleven chapters of Genesis... are true or the whole fabric of our national religion is false, a conclusion which none of us, I trust, would wish to be drawn.”¹⁰ He further wrote, “I am obliged of course to believe the sanctity of venerable books [of Genesis]”.¹¹

In order to prove that the Genesis Chronology was correct and was corroborated by the Brahmanical sources, Jones resorted to narrating the chronological events described in the *Bible* and the *Puranas* as parallel happenings. Exactly at this point began the wilful distortion of Indian history and, at the first instance, it came to be seen as an appendage for the corroboration of the Genesis stories which had come under fire due to the scientific discoveries, and the confirmation of the higher antiquity for the existence of this earth and the universe, as described in Sanskrit literature.

While delivering his first Presidential lecture at the Asiatic Society in 1784, on the topic, ‘On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India’, Jones laid bare his scheme both in terms of religious semblance as well as the Mosaic chronology *vis-à-vis* the Hindu faith, beliefs and the chronology. He writes, “It is my design, in this essay, to point out such a resemblance between the popular worship of old Greeks and Italians, and that of Hindus.”¹² But, in practical terms, he not only talked of resemblance between the Gods of two different worlds but also their chronology. Talking of the deluge described in the *Puranas* and the first incarnation of Bhagwan Vishnu, i.e. *Matsyavatara*, Jones writes:

“This epitome of the first Indian history ... though whimsically dressed up in the form of an allegory, seem to prove a primeval tradition of this country of universal deluge described by Moses and fixes consequently the time when the genuine Hindu

Chronology actually begins.... We may suspect that all the fourteen Menus [Manus] are reducible to one, who was called Nuh by the Arabs, and probably by the Hebrews; though we have distinguished his names by an improper pronunciation of it. Some near relation between the seventh Menu and the Grecian Minos may be inferred.”¹³

In this paper Jones continues with a similar one-to-one parallel identification of Greek and Italian gods with those of Hindus. But before that he says something which is worth quoting. He says, to any lay man it “must be indubitable that their [Hindus] doctrine is in part borrowed from the opening of Genesis... In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was void and waste... and God said: let lights be – and light was. The sublimity of this passage is considerably diminished by the Indian paraphrase of it, with which Menu, the son of Brahma, begins his address to the sages on the formation of the Universe.”¹⁴

What Jones is saying, in effect, is that Hindu doctrine, mythology, etc. have been borrowed from the Genesis. He further writes, “Rama and Crishna must be introduced, and their several attitudes distinctly explained. The first of them, I believe was the Dionysos of the Greeks” (214).

So Rama became an imagined God – Dionysos – of Greeks, a God of wine and worldly pleasure, rather than an embodiment of idealism and virtue, Jones further writes:

“The first poet of the Hindu was the great Valmic, and his *Ramayanis* an Epic poem... comparison of the two poems [the Dionysus and the *Ramayana*] would prove Dionysus and Rama to have been the same person; and I am inclined to think, that he was Rama, the son of Cus, who might have established the first regular government in this part of Asia.”¹⁵

What Jones sought to establish through his ornate circumambulation is that Rama was the first European to begin the practice of colonialism and made Asia his colony! The strong impact of absurdities advocated by Jones has appropriately been summarized by Thomas Trautmann. He writes:

“Jones’ reconciliation of the story of the past in Sanskrit literature with the biblical narrative fixes upon the list of Vishnu’s ten avatars or “descents” into earthly forms to save the goodpast in Sanskrit from destruction by forces of evil.

The series begins with three avatars that were especially associated with the story of a world-wide flood: the fish, the tortoise and the boar. The fish incarnation in particular seems readymade for identification with the Biblical flood, carrying Manu (the first human), his family and the seven sages (*rishis*) in a ship (the Ark of Noah!) fastened to a horn on his head. Jones identified Manu with Noah, distinguishing this Manu from an earlier one, the progenitor of a human race, whom he identifies with Adam. Manu II, then, and the seven sages can be identified with the eight humans aboard the Ark in the Biblical story (Noah, his three sons, and the four wives), from whom the entire human race has since been propagated. Jones further more identifies the fourth avatar of Vishnu, the man-lion Narasimha, with the Biblical Nimrod, descendent of Ham. Bali, the demon who was overcome by the fifth avatar, the dwarf Vamana, is identified with the Biblical Bel. The seventh incarnation, king Rama of Ayodhya, Jones identifies with the Biblical Raamah, also in the line of Ham; with him begins the “civil government” in India, or as we would say, civilization. In this manner the whole series of avatars of Vishnu can be forced into the diluvian and post-diluvian chronology, and Sanskrit literature can be read as reporting the same historical events as does Genesis. But this reconciliation of Indian chronology with the Biblical chronology is only possible by simultaneously rejecting the vast spans of time that make up the *yugas*, *kalpas*, *manvantaras* of Indian time cycles. The four *yugas* are squeezed into the Ussherite chronology, rejecting the traditional figures for their duration (4,320,000 years for the entire cycle four ages), or the traditional dating of the beginning of the Kali, namely 3102 B.C. In outline, Jones’ Mosaic reading of Indian chronology may be represented as follows:

Adam	Manu	<i>Krtayuga</i>	4004 B.C.
Noah	Manu II		2948 B.C.
the Flood	fish, tortoise, boar avatars		2349 B.C.
Nimrod	Narasimha	<i>Tretayuga</i>	2217 B.C.
Bel		Bali	2105 B.C.
Raamah	King Rama	<i>Dwaparyuga</i>	2028 B.C.
	The Buddha	<i>Kali yuga</i>	1026 B.C.

Both the acceptance of Hindu flood mythology as history and the rejection of Indian cyclical time as mythology are part of the unitary project of Mosaic ethnology.”¹⁶

Eager to settle the question of the Genesis stories, and *vis-à-vis* Indian philosophy and chronology, Jones took upon himself the responsibility of unravelling Indian chronology for the benefit and appeasement of his disconcerted colleagues: “ I propose to lay before you a concise history of Indian chronology extracted from Sanskrit books, attached to no system, and as much disposed to reject Mosaic history, if it be proved erroneous, as to believe it, if it be confirmed by sound reason from indubitable evidence.”¹⁷ Despite such assurances, Jones’ own predispositions in this matter were revealed in several earlier writings. In 1790, Jones concluded his researches by claiming to have “traced the foundation of the Indian empire above three thousand eight hundred years from now,”¹⁸ that is to say, safely within the confines of Bishop Usher’s date of the Creation of the Universe in 4004 B.C. and, more importantly, within the parameters of the Great Flood, which Jones considered to have occurred in 2350 B.C. The same was the constraint with Max Mueller, when the question of the chronology of Sanskrit literature came up. Lacking any firm basis of his own and rejecting every Indian evidence, he arbitrarily dated the entire Sanskrit literature, taking the earliest i.e. the *RigVeda* to be from the period 1500-1200 B.C., once again within the safe limits of the Genesis chronology propounded by Bishop Ushers.

Such efforts on the part of European scholars, chiefly British, brought some relief and made this new approach safe for Christianity and its ardent followers. Assessing the impact of such works, mainly of Jones, Trautmann writes, “Jones in effect showed that Sanskrit literature was not an enemy but an ally of the *Bible*, supplying independent corroboration of *Bible*’s version of history. Jones’ Chronological researches did manage to calm the waters somewhat and effectively guaranteed that the new admiration for Hinduism would reinforce Christianity and would not work for its overthrow.”¹⁹

As we shall now see, with the passage of time the efforts to forge similarities between the Indian mythologies and gods and goddesses on the one hand and Greeks and Roman on the other were abandoned, but the chronology given by William Jones remained a benchmark, and still remains one for all further references. Till date it remains within the safe limits of Bishop Usher’s framework of the Genesis chronology,

so that no Brahmanical thought is able to disturb the Mosaic chronology, irrespective of what geology, palaeo-biology, astrophysics, palaeontology, etc. say about the origin and chronology of the Universe, earth, humans beings etc.

In view of the growing concern of the faithful, the Boden Professorship of Sanskrit was endowed by Colonel Boden at Oxford University, specifically to promote Sanskrit learning among the English so as “to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion.” Awards and prizes were given to literary works undermining the Indian tradition and religion. The first occupant of the Boden Chair was Horace Hayman Wilson. Writing about a series of lectures he delivered, Wilson mentions that, “these lectures were written to help candidates for a prize of £ 200 given by John Muir... for the best refutation of the Hindu religious system.”²⁰

Friedrich Max Mueller is considered to be one of the most famous Sanskritist of the nineteenth century. He was a German but in his 20s he migrated to England in search of a job and spent the rest of his life there. Finally he did find a job with the East India Company. On the basis of financial support of the British East India Company he undertook the massive job of translation and interpretation of the Indian religious texts in English. Though he achieved an unparalleled feat of getting a huge mass of Sanskrit texts translated into English, thereby unfolding it to the English-speaking world, his approach and intentions were never free from prejudice. Though many of his writings are camouflaged with incredible ingenuity in praise of Indian religion, philosophy and literature, their real nature and purpose can be understood better in the light of his private correspondences with his own family members, several British officials and missionaries. Max Muller was driven into doing this by his financial position, his religious belief and the political exigencies. Besides the problem of the religious beliefs of Christians, which has been discussed earlier, India lost its political freedom completely in 1857. Both these problems coloured the approach for writing and interpreting Indian history. The sole aim of writing Indian history now was to lend support to the education system pushed by Macaulay for creating “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in morals and in intellect.”

In 1857, the year in which the British control of India became complete, Max Mueller wrote to the Duke of Argyll: “I look upon the

creation given in the Genesis as simply historical.”²¹ Therefore, in terms of the time span all he had was only 6000 years. He could go back, at the most, only up to 4000 B.C. within which the entire history – right from the origin of the Universe to the modern times – had to be squeezed. It was under this guiding principle that William Jones, Max Mueller, Vincent Smith and others wrote Indian history.

Thus, the fate of Indian history got wedded to the concerns of the safety, propagation, and pleasure of Christianity. The culmination of the objectives and the results of the efforts of the European Indologists are seen in private correspondence. Max Mueller writes to his wife regarding his monumental work of editing 50 volumes of *Sacred Books of the East*:

“ I feel convinced, though I shall not live to see it, that this edition of mine and the translation of *Veda*, will herein after tell a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years.”²²

Two years later, in 1868, Max Mueller wrote to the Duke of Argyll, the then Secretary of State for India:

“The ancient religion of India is doomed, and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?”²³

He had expressed similar sentiments in a letter to Chevalier Bunsen written on August 25, 1856. Here Mueller says:

“India is much riper for Christianity than Rome or Greece were at the time of St. Paul. The rotten tree has for some time had artificial support... For the good of this struggle I should like to lay down my life, or at least to lend my hand to bring about this struggle... I should like to live for ten years quietly and learn the language, try to make friends, and then see whether I was fit to take part in a work, by means of which the old mischief of Indian priest-craft could be overthrown and the way opened for the entrance of simple Christian teaching... Whatever finds root in India soon overshadows the whole Asia... Much more could be said about this; a wide world opens before one, for which it is well worth while to laying one’s life.”²⁴

He wrote to Dr. Milman, Dean of St. Paul, on February 26, 1867:
“I have myself the strongest belief in the growth of Christianity in India. There is no other country so ripe for Christianity as India...”²⁵

Max Mueller’s brilliance in camouflaging his writings well, and in not allowing the real purpose of his writings to be understood by all and sundry, has been acknowledged in most glowing terms by Chevalier Bunsen in his letter to him written on April 17, 1855. Bunsen writes:

“You have so thoroughly adopted the English disguise that it will not be easy for any one to suspect you of having written this ‘curious article.’ It especially delights me to see how ingeniously you contrive to say what you announce you do not wish to discuss, i.e. the purport of theology. In short, we are all of opinion that your cousin was right when she said of you in Paris to Neukomm, that you ought to be in the diplomatic service!”²⁶

Max Mueller was not alone in writing this type of history and desiring to uproot all Indian tradition from the soil. Monier-Williams, famous for his *Sanskrit-English* and *English-Sanskrit* dictionaries, and a Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, wrote in 1879:

“When the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahmanism [Hinduism] are encircled, undermined and finally stormed by the soldier of the Cross, the victory of Christianity must be single and complete.”²⁷

Thus, it becomes obvious beyond even the slightest doubt that most of the work done on Indian history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was guided by the preconditions imposed by the ardent belief in the Genesis stories of creation as narrated in the *Bible* and to subserve the interests of Christianity. These books were to counter all the writing that projected India of the past as a great civilisation and Indian philosophy and thought indicating great antiquity in the context of the origin of universe and that of the human beings.

Another factor that contributed to the distortion of ancient Indian history was the British imperial interest in India. By 1804 we notice a marked shift in British attitude towards India. After the defeat of French forces at the hands of the British and the weakening of Maratha power, the British became confident of their rule over India. However, they were worried about the fact that the British civilians coming to India were getting brahmanised and developing an inferiority complex. To

overcome this problem and to inculcate a superiority complex in the British officers in relation to the western culture they adopted a two-pronged strategy. First, and most importantly, they followed the policy initiated by the Utilitarian school led by James Mill, who between 1806 and 1818, wrote six volumes on the history of India without ever visiting it or knowing any Indian language.²⁸ He divided Indian history into three periods – first, Hindu Period; second, Muslim Period; and third British Period – without any logic or justification. He presented an extremely denigrating picture of the Hindu period. He condemned every institution, idea and action of that period and held Hindus responsible for all the ills that the country had been beset with. These volumes were introduced as textbooks in the Harleybury school in England, which was established to educate young Englishmen coming to India as administrators and civil servants. James Mill, his son, John Stuart Mill, and his disciple, Lord Macaulay, played the most crucial role in shaping the imperialist policy in India and the future of Indian education, at the core of which was the distorted history of ancient India as we have seen earlier.

However, it was James Mill who brought complete destruction of the Indian history. Dharmpal writes:

“The complete denunciation and rejection of Indian culture and civilization was, however, left to the powerful pen of James Mill. This he did in his monumental three-volume *History of British India*, first published in 1817. Thenceforth, Mill’s *History* became an essential reading and reference book for those entrusted with administering the British Indian Empire. From the time of its publication till recently, the *History* in fact provided the framework for the writing of most histories of India. For this reason, the impact of his judgement on India and its people should never be underestimated.”²⁹

According to Mill, “the same insincerity, mendacity, and the perfidy; the same indifference to the feelings of others; the same prostitution and venality” were the conspicuous characteristic of both the Hindoos and Muslims. The Muslims, however, were perfuse, when possessed of wealth and devoted to pleasure; the Hindoos almost always penurious and ascetic; and “in truth, the Hindoo like the eunuch, excess in the qualities of a slave.” Furthermore, similar to the Chinese, the Hindoos were “dissembling, treacherous, mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the usual measure of uncultivated society.” Both the

Chinese and Hindoos were “disposed to excessive exaggerations with regard to everything relating to themselves.” Both were “cowardly and unfeeling.” Both were “in the highest degree conceited of themselves and full of affected contempt for others.” And, above all, both were “in physical sense disgustingly unclean in their persons and houses.” James Mill further writes:

“Our ancestors, however, though rough, were sincere; but under the glossing exterior of the Hindoolies a general disposition to deceit and perfidy. In fine, it cannot be doubted that, up on the whole, the gothic nations, as soon as they became a settled people, exhibit the mark of the superior character and civilisation to those of the Hindoos.”³⁰

Mountstuart Elphinstone was not far behind Mill in denigrating India in his *History of India: The Hindu and Mohamdan Periods*. Hindus came to be the special targets.

Besides denigrating India and its ancient history in every conceivable way, major efforts were also made towards proving that India was neither a country nor a nation. They replaced the term *rashtra* (nation) with the term ‘sub continent’ and, of course, put forward the theory that India was not a nation but a conglomeration of nations, and the Indian people were more of a rag-tag gathering. Articulating the British view, John Strachy wrote in 1880:

“This is the first and foremost thing to learn about India that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity – physical, political, social and religious, no Indian nation, no ‘people of India,’ of which we hear so much.”³¹

To understand these abominable views of Strachy better we need to take a look at another description of India prepared by J.A. Dubois under the auspices of the East India Company. Dubois saw a large number of nations within a small geographical area. In this book, *A Description of the Character, Manners and the Customs of the People of India; And of Their Institutions, Religious and Civil* (edited by G.U. Pope, 1879), Dubois writes:

“A good observer will remark, under general points of resemblance, as much difference between a Tamil and a Telugu, between a Kanares and a Mahrata, as one would perceive in Europe between an Englishman and a Frenchman, an Italian and a German. There are countries in India peopled from time

immemorial by different nations who, though, mixed together in same province and even in the same district, still preserved their distinct language, character, and national spirit. On the Malabar coast, for example, within a space of forty or fifty leagues from north to south, from Telichery to Onore or to Nagar, there are no less than five different nations peopling that small territory; and all of them appear to have been settled there upwards for a thousand years. These five nations are the Nairs or Naimars, the Kurgs or Kudagu, the Tuluvu, the Kaunguni and the Kanariese. These are not merely names of castes as might be supposed, but they distinguish five different nations, each of which is divided, like all of here Indian nation, into a variety of castes; and although these five races dwell in the same district, each has its peculiar language by which it is must discriminated as by it national customs, spirit and character.”³²

Thus, what we witness is a group of five nations within a few square kilometers area.

It is surprising that some respected historians like E.J. Rapson, who edited *Ancient India: From Earliest Times to the First Century A.D.* (Cambridge History Series; 1914), also subscribed to the view that India was not a country but consisted of “several large countries and a multitude of smaller communities each having its own complicated racial history and each pursuing its own particular lines of development independently of its neighbours.”³³

Following in the footsteps of Mill, Elphinstone, and Marx (whose views we shall discuss a little later in the section dealing with Marxist historiography), in 1904, V.A. Smith, an ICS officer serving the British Government in India, prepared a textbook titled *Early History of India*. As a loyal member of the civil services, he emphasised the role of foreigners in ancient India. Alexander’s invasion cornered almost one-third of his book. Smith’s racial arrogance is too obvious when he 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.”³⁴ Smith gives the impression as if Alexander had conquered the whole of India from the Himalayas to the seas whereas the fact is that he touched only the north-western borders of India and it was a virtual non-event. This is proved by the fact that despite a lot of information about various

foreigners in Sanskrit texts, we do not have even a fleeting or vague mention of any event connected with, or even the name, of Alexander. Further, citing the example of India's political condition after the death of Harsha in 646 A.D. Smith says that it must "give the reader a notion of what India always has been when released from the control of supreme authority and what she would be again, if benevolent despotism (i.e. British) which now holds her in its iron grasp should be withdrawn."³⁵

Smith presented India as a land of despotism which had never experienced political unity till the establishment of the British rule. He observed, "Autocracy is substantially the only form of government with which the historians of India are concerned". Historian R.S. Sharma has best summed up the whole approach of British/Imperial historians:

"British interpretations of Indian history served to denigrate Indian character and achievements, and justify the colonial rule... However, the generalisations made by historians were either false or grossly exaggerated. They could serve as good propaganda material for the perpetuation of the despotic British rule. ... At the heart of all such generalisations lay the need of demonstrating that Indians were incapable of governing themselves."³⁶

What Sharma has written about British historiography of India is correct. But, it is unfortunate, that he himself becomes a British/Imperialist historian when it comes to writing Indian history in his professed Marxist framework. Indubhushan Banarjee, in his Sectional Presidential Address to the Modern History session of the IHC, said:

"European writers on Indo-British history have often failed to rise above the political exigencies of the situation, and that is why it has been said that the British Indian History has been the 'worst patch in current scholarship.' [British] Historians... appear as pitiful apologists for British rule in India."³⁷

S.N. Mukherjee, who has written a book on William Jones writes: "It is often forgotten that all Oriental studies in the eighteenth century had a political slant and all political pamphleteers writing on East Indian affairs based their theories on Oriental researches ... [these] orientalist were not isolated groups. They were involved in the political conflicts of the time and 'theories' about Indian history and culture were influenced by their respective political positions and intellectual convictions."³⁸

The mental, physical, economic, political and emotional breakdown of Indians, especially Hindus, was such that it moved even Karl Marx (who supported India being enslaved by the British, as we shall see later) to the extent that he took up the issue openly. After discussing the havoc played by the Arabs, Turks, Mughals, Afghans, etc. on Hindus, Marx writes in the *New York Daily Tribune* (1853):

“There cannot, however, remain any doubt that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindostan is of essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindostan had to suffer before... All civil wars, various invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strongly complex, rapid and destructive as successive action in Hindostan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptom of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of new, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the recent misery of the Hindoo, and separates Hindostan, ruled by Britain from all its ancient traditions and the whole of its past.”³⁹

It must be mentioned here that this dispatch was written by Marx on June 10, 1853 and published in the *New York Daily Tribune* (No. 3804) on June 10, 1853. While Marx has been very critical of the British in this dispatch, his position in the second dispatch written on July 22, 1853, and published in the *Tribune* on August 8, 1853 is vastly different. In his second dispatch, Marx is not only devoid of any sympathy with which he talked in his first dispatch but also does his best to justify the destruction of Hindu society, polity, economy and all that he was lamenting earlier. It requires no great intelligence to guess why all that sympathy disappeared within a month. Marx was already living as a refugee in England (I describe Marx as a refugee in Britain because that is how he describes himself in a letter to Engels written on April 16, 1856). Probably, the British could not tolerate such a stinging criticism of their doings in India from someone to whom they had given asylum and extended financial help and infra-structural facilities to carry on with his research work in the British Museum. I believe that pressure was exerted on Marx to mend his ways and write favourably about the British, which he did in the very next dispatch.

The distortion of Indian history by the British was lamented by all educated people and not just contemporary historians. Bankimchandra Chatterjee wrote:

“There are distortions and systematic suppressions of the achievements and physical prowess of the Hindus in the country of western scholars. None of the books on Bengal written by British authors contain a true history of Bengal. The Bengalis have to write their history themselves, from their own view point and relating to their own interests. We need a history of Bengal; otherwise there will be no hope for Bengal. But who will write it? You will write it, I will write it, everyone will write this history. Whosoever is Bengali will write it.”

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Colonial Imprint on Historiography in India

Navaratna Rajaram*

Politics has subverted historiography in India for nearly two centuries. The tendency has persisted even after independence due to political patronage.

Background: Indology but no historiography?

As one trained in the physical and mathematical sciences who came to the study of history some twenty years ago, the first thing that struck me was the absence of any methodology or agreement on standards that could be used to check the validity of a claim. This lacuna extends even to agreement on field data. This is something that would not be allowed in the exact sciences like physics or even in applied fields like engineering and medicine.

To cite an example, a claim in one of these fields would have to be verified by others in the field using universally agreed methodology usually based on mathematics and experiments that can be repeated in any suitably equipped laboratory anywhere in the world. Without such validation, no claim calling itself a theory can hope for acceptance.

No such procedure is available or even attempted by historians writing about India. It is not expected that history will ever become an exact science like physics but some standards have to be there.

Otherwise theories, often little more than conjectures and opinions get entrenched as established facts on the whim and influence—often political—of protagonists. This has been the case in Indian historical

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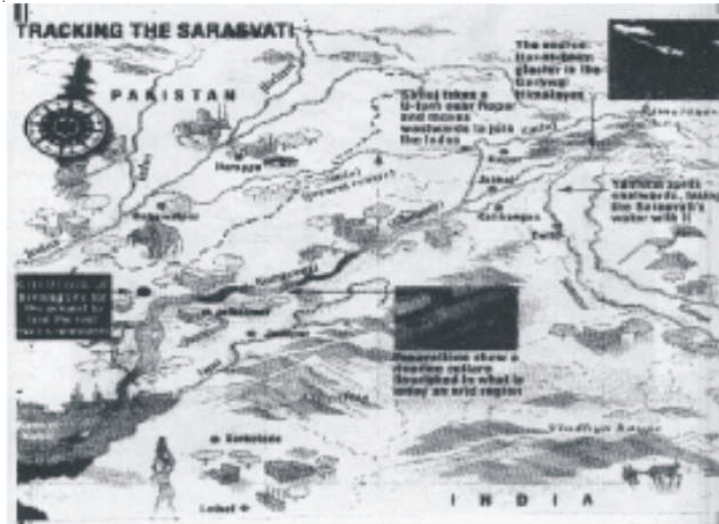
scholarship ever since European scholars began to take interest in India beginning in the eighteenth century. This gave rise to a discipline called Indology which was created by Western scholars, especially the British to meet the needs of governance of their expanding empire. In the circumstances, it should come as no surprise that they created a 'history' that reflected their interests and beliefs.

This field which began as a study of the similarity between Sanskrit and European languages soon came to dominate Western study of India, especially ancient India, which to a large extent is still true in Western academia and a significant segment of Indian academia. What has escaped notice is that it has undermined objective study of history with predetermined conclusions dictating the methodology— the exact reverse of the scientific approach. Any methodology or even argument that raises questions about these entrenched beliefs is dismissed with expletives like obscurantist, nationalistic etc.

Since history is a narrative and not a science, historiography is created to bring order and discipline into its study. It is supposed to embody the methodology to be used in arriving at historical conclusions based on sources like archaeology, literature and the like. But this has been turned on its head in the study of India. It is required that no methodology is valid unless it supports some predetermined conclusion which is held to be inviolate. This can be illustrated with two examples—the Aryan invasion and the language of the Harappan seal messages.

Vedic Sarasvati

As the map shows the Sarasvati used to flow to the east of the Indus exactly as the *Rigveda* describes it. Geological studies show that it dried up around 2000 BCE. Archaeology shows that many if not a majority of the sites termed Indus valley or Harappan were located along the now dry Sarasvati. This shows that the Harappan civilization was closely linked to the Vedic and succeeded it. Harappan archaeology represents the material remains of the culture and civilization described in the Vedic literature. By no stretch of imagination can the Harappans and their language be attributed to Tamil which came into existence more than 2000 years later. But scholars tried to get around this by moving the Sarasvati River to Afghanistan.



Historiography subordinated to serve politics

Since at least the mid-nineteenth century, affinities between Sanskrit and European languages has been attributed to the invasion of Eurasian people variously called Aryans, Indo-Europeans and Indo-Aryans (also as Indo-Germanische). These so-called Aryans were said to have brought the ancestor of the Vedas and the Sanskrit language from outside India. This is believed to have occurred in the second millennium BCE or around 1500 BCE. It is not widely known, and never mentioned that the date was assigned to make it fit into framework of the Biblical belief system that the Creation of the world took place in October 4004 BCE.

This in brief is the seed of the famous (increasingly infamous) AIT (Aryan invasion theory). While its roots may have been in language comparison, the theory or hypothesis was and remains political. It was put to political use by Nazi Germany with results, too well known to need repetition here. Less known is its use by the ruling British to divide the people of India along racial and linguistic lines as Aryan and non-Aryan. Following the disrepute into which the word Arya has fallen, scholars increasingly use the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic in place of Aryan and non-Aryan, but otherwise keep the formulation unaltered, holding Vedic civilization and language to be of foreign origin.

This idea of Sanskrit and the Vedas to be of non-Indian origin brought in by invaders in the late ancient age is not supported by archaeology or literature. If anything, archaeology contradicts it. But archaeology is deliberately misrepresented to gloss over, if not deny the contradictions. When ruins of Indus-Sarasvati valley were discovered a century ago, they were attributed to the depredations of the invading Aryans. The profuse Vedic themes in the iconography of Harappan remains were and still are studiously ignored.

Aryans never defined

While theories and debates about the Aryans are common, Indologists have never agreed on a definition of what is Aryan? At first they were defined as a race. But the notion of race was discredited by science and worse made disreputable by the Nazis. But it is still acceptable in Western academia to talk about Aryans though the word is left undefined. Indian literature uses the word Arya strictly as a cultural attribute and never used to refer to race or language.

Even geography has not escaped misrepresentation. When it was pointed out that the *Rigveda* attaches great importance to the Sarasvati River which had dried up by 2000 BCE and hence Vedas must have been anterior to it, scholars responded to it by moving it to Afghanistan. But the *Rigveda* describes it as flowing from the mountain to the sea—which is impossible in land-locked Afghanistan. This is fairly typical of the way scholars have dealt with evidence that contradicts their positions.

The same uncertainty about meaning and definition hangs over the identity of the language of the writings of the Harappans on the seals. Since the bulk of Harappan writing examples are found in the heartland of Sanskritic people mentioned in the Vedic and Puranic literature, there are no reasons to believe the language to be unrelated to Sanskrit. But since this contradicts the entrenched AIT, the Sanskrit identity is rejected and the language is claimed to be a version of Tamil (proto-Dravidian) that was still 2000 years into the future.

One consequence of this dogmatic attachment to Aryan-non-Aryan divide is that any attempt to offer a solution to the problem relating the Harappan language to Sanskrit is dismissed out of hand without giving a reason—but in reality because it violates the AIT dogma.

Since there is no methodology, no criteria are given that would allow one to validate or invalidate an approach. It is purely the whim of the entrenched establishment.

This means, the goal of keeping the Vedas and the so-called Aryans to be of foreign origin has dictated the methodology and even the representation of the primary data from archaeology and literature. And this is determined by political considerations—hence politics has gained control of the historiography. As we shall see, a similar situation prevails in the treatment of medieval and even modern history.

Medieval India: a mirror reversal

When it comes to Medieval India, we see politicization again—a denial of the obvious, destruction and depredations on a massive scale by invaders which is sought to be denied in the interests of a political doctrine called secularism, though the invaders and the rulers of the period emphatically did not believe in the separation of religion from the state—which is what secularism really means. But the historical scholarship of Independent India has gone to great lengths to deny the obvious—that it was a period of theocratic tyranny.

Anyone questioning the establishment view by pointing to evidence is dismissed as a Hindu chauvinist. So we have a mirror reversal of the situation in ancient India, where a foreign origin and an invasion are invented to account for it, the role of invasive and destructive influence is sought to be minimized and even denied. Something called a syncretic culture of invaders and natives is invented to account for the survival of Hinduism in India, attributed to the supposed tolerance of one or two relatively tolerant rulers like Akbar. This is extended to cover known Islamic tyrants like Tipu Sultan who has been made into a nationalist hero and freedom fighter on little or no evidence.

Modern India: colonial hangover

When India became free in 1947, its politics was dominated by a Westernized elite which for the most part continued colonial era institutions and even values. Both Nehru and Gandhi were British educated and anglophiles. This needs change. Gandhi used a lot of Western citations for political reasons for West to understand better. After Gandhi's death Nehru and his followers controlled both the political and the intellectual scene. They carried forward the colonial era Indological prejudices—that Aryan invasion myth as well as the medieval Hindu-Muslim syncretism for 50 years and more after independence.

Further, Nehru and his Congress party carried an ingrained anti-native and pro-Western bias in policy decisions. For example, when

Pakistan attacked Kashmir, Nehru took the dispute to the United Nations on the advice of the Britisher Louis Mountbatten. It was a similar story in the northeast where the Indian General (later Field Marshal) Cariappa advised Nehru that the region should be developed. But Nehru ignored it while accepting the recommendation of the British missionary Verrier Elwin to preserve its primitive character as a tribal area.

To this they added a third myth — of Gandhi and Nehru as the heroes who were responsible for India's freedom and decolonization in general. This ignored the impact of Subhas Bose and his INA on the Indian armed forces. This was acknowledged by Clement Attlee, the British prime minister, who noted it was the loss of loyalty of the Indian land and naval forces that forced the hand of the British Government. Thanks to Subhas Bose and the INA, Indian soldiers began to see themselves as defenders of India and not soldiers of the British Empire. This culminated in the naval and other mutinies when INA officials were put on trial by the British.

Both the Aryan invasion myth and the whitewashing of the Islamic record in Medieval India continued under Nehru and his successors, augmented by Marxism (called socialism in India) which was made official by being added to the Preamble to the Indian Constitution by Indira Gandhi.



Sane voices suppressed: Goel and Ram Swarup

It is not as if sane voices were lacking. Historian Sita Ram Goel and philosopher Ram Swarup produced several volumes highlighting errors in the official version of history. Goel documented the massive destruction by Islamic invaders with reference to the primary sources by Muslim writers themselves, supplemented by archaeology. Ram Swarup (photo left) showed by critical analysis that this destruction was no accident but in accordance with the teachings of Islamic scripture — the Quran and the Hadits.

They were ignored by establishment scholars, meaning those in the good books of the government and holding positions at universities. No academic attempt was made by their critics to refute Goel and Swarup, instead they were denounced as Hindu chauvinists and opposed to the officially sanctioned ‘secularism’ ideology of Pandit Nehru and his followers. This secularism came to mean not the separation of religion and the state but suppression of Hinduism. Given this climate, it did not take for national institutions and universities to be dominated by the so-called secular and Marxist ideologues, especially in fields like history and sociology.

It is interesting that critics made no effort to refute the findings of Goel and Ram Swarup but denounced them as anti-secular. Worse, Ram Swarup’s important work on Islam was banned even though it was composed mainly of quotes from the Hadits (Muslim scripture) and Swarup’s explanations. Goel suffered worse fate in being arrested by the Nehru Government for publishing such scholarly works seen as being hostile to the official ideology of secularism, which included avoidance of any critical study of Islam.

Future course: need for a historiography

The sorry state of history writing in India, of which the present article shows only a part justifies scientist Dr. Priyadarshi’s characterization of writing on Vedic India and its adjuncts as an academic hoax. In similar vein it may be said that history writing of the medieval and the modern periods are a political influenced. They have no place in the books and curriculum used for educating children training scholars. They were created to serve the political interests of colonial rulers but have continued for over half a century to serve the interests of politicians and their academic courtiers of particular thinking.

It is obvious that history should be rewritten, for as George Santayana once said, “history is always wrong, it must always be rewritten.” But in India the situation was worse—it was subverted and fabricated to serve special interests.

One organization under the leadership of historian Sita Ram Goel and philosopher Ram Swarup made a valiant effort to fight this evil for which they were denounced and demonized. But they have shown that it can be done. It is our duty to continue their struggle.

But the need of the hour is approach to historiography, in which different viewpoints can flourish and are freely criticized. Here again no one group, be it Marxist, nationalist, secularist or whatever, can be allowed to monopolize as the establishment. Again Voice of India, founded by Goel and Ram Swarup can serve as a useful model of openness and logical rigor.

In constructing a historiography one can begin by setting down some definitions followed by criteria for validating and discarding conclusions. No methodology is conceivable without definitions and some agreement on such criteria. They cannot be left to the whim and caprice of academics and politicians often serving one another and not the interests of genuine history.

Time may have finally arrived to rewrite history as it should have been done more than sixty years ago. It should begin with historiography.

New Perspective on Ancient Indian History in the Context of Emerging Insights

Come Carpentier de Gourdon*

Our Changing Understanding of the Past

The basic notions of history inherited by western academia were influenced by what was regarded as “common sense” knowledge, even though it was explicitly or subconsciously shaped by Biblical chronologies and the time “ceiling” that they set for the creation of the world. Nineteenth century positivists beginning with Auguste Comte built a theory of evolutionary progress starting from early religious societies, transiting through philosophically motivated ones and rising towards the ultimate scientific stage of human rationality. Both socialists and liberal thinkers generally held on to that vision of linear growth from quasi-animal origins through ever higher stages of intellectual complexity, industrialization and knowledge. Archeological research seemed to confirm that the earliest civilizations had appeared in the Near and Middle East, cradle of the Old Testament, around 3 000 years before the beginning of the Christian era and had expanded from there all over the world. Thus, as is often the case, religio-philosophical doctrines and contemporary scientific discoveries converged. In that instance the first ‘scientific’ western archeologists focused their efforts on Greece, Egypt and West Asia hoping to find verification for Biblical accounts.

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Many ancient chronologies and traditions however, in West Asia and Egypt as in Iran, India, China, South and Central America as well as in Europe itself recorded the rise and fall of societies, cities and empires many millennia before that supposed “dawn of history.”¹ However those reports were increasingly disregarded as the historical discipline became more “scientific” and reliant on original inscriptions and illustrations, verifiable precise dates, material artifacts and techniques such as the C14 dating method thought to be completely accurate. History was a largely self-contained area whose practitioners did not usually have access to other sciences and skills, such as astronomy, the knowledge of ancient botany, oceanography and climatology to derive their conclusions although they commonly invoked disputable or since discredited theories involving race, skin colour, phrenology and linguistics.

The advent of new research tools and the discovery of many then unsuspected archeological sites have already forced a review of many concepts long held to be definitive. To begin with, comparatively advanced civilizations are now known to have flourished more than seven or eight thousand years ago in various continents and they take us back to the dawn of our ongoing Holocene period, soon after the end of the last glacial age.² Further, those civilizations did not exhibit a uniform pattern of growth but rather went through cycles of expansion, blossoming and decadence. Some died for good but most revived in a changed form or were absorbed and in a way reincarnated in other more or less related cultures.

Nowadays it is no longer clear that the “Holocene horizon” draws the limit of civilisation’s antiquity. Indeed, several physical indices and logical implications compel us to admit that powerful and sophisticated human cultures and even political states existed during the last glacial age and may have originated earlier. Such remains and records are to be found in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Andes, Siberia and Central Asia, the Malayo-Indonesian region, Europe, China and South Eastern Africa to mention only the most striking evidence³ although some of the chronological estimations are still vague and controversial while many historians predictably refuse in principle to revise long held beliefs or even consider facts that cannot be explained by current notions.

Evidence of two planet wide “extinction level events” that took place with the explosion of the Toba volcano in Indonesia about 71 000 years ago and at the end of the last ice age about 10 000 years

back respectively, supports the contention that any civilization existing prior to those cataclysm must have been practically wiped out. Hominid species possibly older than *homo sapiens* such as the Denisovan and others have been recently discovered in prehistoric Asia and the Americas and they might well have built civilizations of their own in previous eras.

The Case for the Sindhu-Saraswati as a Cradle of Civilizations

One of the great civilizations that provides multiple proofs of its permanence since the dawn of the Holocene at least is the Northern Indian culture now often defined as the Saraswati-Sindhu civilization. In a large area of the subcontinent, South of the Himalayas and North of the Deccan, from modern day Afghanistan to the confines of Bengal ruins of settlements, artifacts and traces of crops can be dated back several thousand years before the common era.⁴

Robin Bradley Carr⁵ has persuasively argued in a well researched and reasoned work that civilization usually grows and expands around a large and fertile river valley and that, like the Nile, the Tigris, Euphrates, Yang Se K iang, H w a n g H o, A m u D a r y a *et al.* the Indus, the now dried Saraswati, the Yamuna and the Ganges provided a suitable environment for the very early rise and extensive development of a major civilizational complex that expanded to a much wider area, both in India and in contiguous areas of Iran, Arabia and Central Asia if not farther. That thesis may explain the spread of the “vedic” or “Indo-European” family of languages and cultures across Eurasia, all the way from the Tarim valley in Eastern Turkestan to Scandinavia and the Britannic islands.

Archaeology and the rich literary records handed down by the vedic and other Indic traditions coincide in revealing to us a practically uninterrupted history over more than eight thousand years.⁶ It is not the purpose of this paper to recapitulate the various scientific (astronomical, paleo-botanical, chrono-textual and so on) methods used to establish convincingly that some parts of the Vedas, especially the Rig Veda already existed about 7000 BCE, the period from which material remains of human habitat, agricultural and artistic-industrial activity are being found with increasing abundance in the region of Northern India that the Vedas lyrically celebrate. The connection between the physical records unearthed in that area and the early literary creations associated

with it is also becoming increasingly probable. There are ever more reasons to regard the Saraswati-Indus valley proto-historic society as a vedic or late vedic one.

We are now in possession of a body of evidence for the existence of an extensive, widespread, continuing proto-Indic or Hindu civilization which inspired and produced in the course of time the great epics, philosophical and religious treatises, legal texts and technical manuals that have made India famous worldwide. The well known linkages between the Indian subcontinent and the outlying Asian landmass, in particular with Indochina, the Indo-Malayan archipelago, Central and West Asia, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan may then be suspected of being even older than previously thought.

Likewise, traces of contacts between ancient South Asia and Eastern Africa, the Middle and Near East and Europe should be investigated with an open mind, taking into account the many references to outside contacts and outward migrations found in Vedic and post-Vedic texts, in the context of a new vision of world history as a cyclical succession of civilizations, often separated by long eclipses as a result of massive environmental disasters, politico-economic breakdowns and demographic collapses. The philosophy of history must take into account the concept of recursion so present in Indian cosmology, overarching the familiar notion of linear progression.

Such a perspective seems far more realistic than the outdated positivistic concept of occasionally faltering but constant upward progress presupposing a relatively young human species barely endowed with fifty or sixty centuries of history.

An Open System View of Life and Culture on Earth

While expanding our historical horizons to look much farther back in time than we have so far in conventional academic circles, we should also widen our geographical scope to a cosmological scale by accepting the possibility that the Earth is not a closed living system in a barren universe but rather that life, in both elementary and advanced intelligent forms travels and communicates at a galactic, if not an inter-galactic scale. That opening should enable us to better understand and conditionally consider the insights provided by many ancient texts, in India and in other nations, that refer explicitly to connections with and inputs of various kinds from other regions of the universe. Taking a

new look at those testimonies or traditions may in turn unlock certain mysteries of the past that tend to be ignored or disregarded by most contemporary scholars.

One such enigma is the substantial and demonstrably ancient poetic, strategic and technical literature related to the theme of air and space flights and various sophisticated technologies in Vedic, classical and medieval India.⁷ The existence of advanced scientific and technical civilizations in the distant past is deemed impossible by most academics, given the lack of archaeological evidence but such an in-principle objection does not take into consideration the plausibility of contacts with other, more advanced civilizations either visiting the Earth from space and sharing some of their knowledge and instruments with our ancestors or having settled on this planet for more or less extended periods before departing or losing their own technical superiority for any reason. Yet this is precisely what various venerable documents and oral traditions from India and other lands say.⁸ So far they have been regarded by modern academia as mythological legends or philosophical allegories, even when they contain factual technical descriptions but we need to look beyond what such subjective “common sense” interpretations which are based on our prejudices about the “primitive past” vs. the highly developed and sophisticated modern humanity.

In conclusion, we need to define a new, larger framework for the planet’s history encompassing Fernand Braudel’s “tres longue duree” through multidisciplinary studies involving physical, natural and social sciences as well as an enlightened but faithful interpretation of ancient texts to discover convergences and corroborations.

Geology, genetics, paleo-astronomy, climatology, oceanography and pollenology are increasingly influencing our understanding of past evolution and many hitherto puzzling enigmas are being unravelled or are at least shedding some of their mystery although many secrets continue to elude us at the present state of knowledge⁹. Naturally, much rigorous research must be carried out to test and validate all hypotheses with the fewest possible preconceptions. The Government of India should support and promote this undertaking through its various relevant agencies and help morally and financially private organizations such as I-SERVE in their work since they don’t suffer as much from the bureaucratic drawbacks and international peer pressures that affect most public bodies.

*This paper is based on a presentation made to the seminar organized and hosted by I-SERVE in New Delhi on November 1, 2014 on dates of chronology of Vedas and Itihasas.

Notes

- ¹ Egyptian traditional chronology records dynasties dating back to 36620 years ago, according to the Turin Manuscript (Edward Malkowski in **New Dawn**).
Sumerian annals (Apkallu list) contain a list of kings stretching over more than 200,000 years before the great flood (www.crystalinks.com/sumeriakinglist.html)
Plato in the Critias situates the war between Atlantis and Athens some 9000 years before his time, or around 9400 BC.
Indian Puranic records quoted by the first greek sources from Megasthenes list a line of kings beginning in 6776 BC with Manu or Dionysos in the greek account.
See also the work of P Foster and A Toth (2001) on the antiquity and extent of the assumed original proto-Indo-European language.
- ² See available research and data on Gobekli Tepe (www.gobekli.info), Catalhoyuk (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/catalhoyuk)
Underwater remains of Doggerland (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/doggerland and www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-18687504)
Sunken cities under Gulf of Khambat in India (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/marine_archeology_in_the_gulf_of_Khambat and archaeologyonline.net/artifacts/cambay)
New data on antiquity of Gizeh sphinx and pyramids in Egypt (sphinx dated 5600 to 7000 BC by J. A. West and R. Schoch on the basis of geological analysis)
For context see JF Jarrige and R. H. Meadows (1980), S. Asthana (1985) and A. Tosoni, H. J. Bandelt et al (2001) in **American Journal of Human Genetics** 69(4), T. Kisivild, M. J. Bamshad et al (1999) in **Current Biology** (9-22)
- ³ Goraia Shornia in Siberia (mysteriousuniverse.org/2014/02/super-megalithic-site-found-in-russia)
Sunduki site in Khakhassia, Russian Federation - 16 000 years old according to Prof. V. Larichev (www.messagetoeagle.com/sunduki.php)
Ruins of Gunung Padang (estimated at 26000 years old by the head archeologist of the digs, Dr Natawidjaja), Indonesia (www.grahamhancock.com/civil.../Hancock69-mystery-lost-)
Pyramids, Bosnia, estimated to be 30,000 years old (www.bosnianpyramids.org)

Ruins of Tiahuanaco in Bolivia (www.crystalinks.com/tiahuanaco.html and www.worldmysteries.com/mpl_6.htm)

- ⁴ See V.S. Shinde, T. Osada et al (2008), S. R. Rao (1991) D. N. Pal (2008), J. M. Kenoyer *New Perspectives on the Indus Tradition* in **Sindhu-Saraswati Civilization** (Nalini Rao, ed. 2014), D Frawley (2001), D. Frawley and N.S. Rajaram (2006), R. Joshi (1994) in **History of Humanity** vol. 1, (UNESCO and Routledge) B.B. Lal (2009). E. Bryant (2001), R.S. Bisht (1999) in **The Dawn of Indian Civilization** (G. C. Pande ed.) C. N. Nautiyal (2012) and K. Mishra (2012) in **Historicity of Vedas and Ramayana Eras**, S Bala and K. Mishra (eds.) I-SERVE
- ⁵ R. Bradley Carr *The Riverine Agricultural Argument for the Indo-European Nature of the Indus Valley Civilization* in **Sindhu-Saraswati civilization** (ibid.)
- ⁶ K. D. Abhyankar *Antiquity of the Veda Calendar* in **Bull. Astron. Soc. Of India**, 26 A. K. Bhatnagar (2012) and K. Mishra (2102) ibid. I-SERVE
- ⁷ Several ancient and medieval texts in Samskrit and Prakrits may be mentioned, including the Rg and Yajur Vedas, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Vishnu, Skanda and Markandeya Puranas, the Arthashastra, Emperor Asoka's rocks edicts at Kalsi, Girnar, Dhauli and others, the Paramatthajyotika (6th century CE), the Harivamsa, the Samarangana Sutradhara (11th century CE), the Yantra Saraswa, the Vaimanika Prakarana, the Vimana Shastra, published by Dayananda trust in 1968 and G. R. Josyer in 1973 et al. Modern works on the subject include D. K. Kanjilal's (1985) and various books by western authors as well. The multiplicity of texts dealing with this subject and in some cases the existence of relatively ancient original manuscripts kept in separate libraries across India and Tibet attest to the authenticity of the tradition and refutes claims that some of the more technical treatises on flight and other technologies must be recent forgeries or fabrications.
- ⁸ The Bible in the Book of Genesis is one of several ancient texts that allude to "angels" (elohim, annunaki etc.) who came down from the sky and had intercourse with the daughters of men, begetting a race of giants. Similar accounts are found in Indian, Central Asian, Tibetan, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Northern European and American pre-columbian mythologies where those super-human beings are called gods or demi-gods. Plato likewise describes in Critias/Timaeus the descent of gods and their mingling with humans producing offspring. This widespread archaic traditional belief seems to reflect a common human memory of its origins and early past. Emperor Asoka's aforesaid

edicts specifically mention “aerial chariots and divine beings and forms” (*vimanadasana astine devyani rupani*).

- ⁹ The list of unsolved mysteries surrounding past civilizations is long and possibly growing longer. Some examples are given by Michael Cremona and R. L. Thompson (1993) and Cremona (1999, 2008), Graham Hancock (1996, 1998, 2002, 2006), i.e. the famous Piri Reis ancient maps, Erich von Daniken (1968, 1970, 1972, 1988), Klaus Dona (www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/esp_ciencia_life48.htm) et al. and not all have been explained, despite attempts to dismiss everything alleged by those authors. See also the enigmas surrounding the Serapeum in Egypt (www.khemitology.com), the nearby Cheops pyramids, the colossal platform of Baalbek in Lebanon, the Nazca lines and various cyclopean pre-Columbian buildings (Puma Punku, Sacsayhuaman et al.) of Peru and Bolivia whose construction must have required very advanced technologies and tools.

Stupidity in the Garb of Scholarship

B.B. Kumar*

India's encounter with the West after discovery of Sanskrit generated sympathetic chord among many Western thinkers. Oriental Renaissance (movement) was erected on the foundations of Sanskrit. F. Schlegle, Schopenhauer, Schiller, Schelling, Schleismacher, F. Nork, F. Majer, J.G. Herder, Voltaire, Burnouf, Wagner, Tiek, among others felt oneness with India. Even Tolstoy sought a cure for the Western spirit in India.

The Oriental Movement, however, was opposed by Christian missionaries and European Imperialism, and was very soon downgraded by Eurocentricity. William Jones, who saw relation between Sanskrit and European classical languages, offered hypothesis of a third unknown source of the East and West. Marx applauded the constructive and destructive role of British imperialism in India, and held it as a progressive step. Hegel, a soldier-scholar of colonial-missionary forces, justified historical necessity of European colonialism, deemed spread of Sanskrit as "dumb, deedless expansion," and excluded the Orient from history of philosophy. He saw Europe moving towards an "absolute idea" beyond reach of other cultures.¹ M. Heidegger referred to the complete Europeanization of the earth and mankind.² Many Euro-American scholars, however, take the India-centric discourse to very low level. For Pat Robertson, an American scholar, for example, Mother Ganga is 'Siva's sperm,' 'Siva (is) the God of Destruction, and his consort, the Goddess of Death (Kali) – that black, ugly statue with all those fierce eyes.'³ As we may find in the following paragraphs, some of the American professors crossed all the civilized limits in such depictions.

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Christianity, rather the Semitic theology, which by its very nature happens to be a colonial theology, and the terrorizing Semitic God are the limiting factors, which come in the way of its adherents in the understanding of the perennial philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism. The problem arises as the old bias of the Christian theology is carried forward by social sciences, philosophies and ideologies of the West. Then there is the arrogance and the sense of superiority, rather stupendous egocentricity, among the Western scholars putting hurdle in understanding the culture and religion of the 'other.' But few, such as Huxley, got rid of the initial hurdle, could pass over the ideological iron curtain and understand the inadequacies of the time-philosophies.

Three global networks are active in undermining India's integrity, and they often openly collude to achieve their nefarious game. They are (i) Maoists and Marxist radicals, (ii) Islamic radicalism linked with Pakistan, and (iii) Western interventions in the garb of human rights. Seeking caste and race equation is not an innocent game. Of the three, the third one is more subtle and full of craft. The group is actively promoting Dravidian and Dalit faultlines, wishing foreign intervention on the pretext of human rights, to its end towards breaking India⁴ Somehow similar game was played during 1931 Census, aiming at caste-tribe divide, and winning away the tribal population from the Hindus. The western intervention started almost from the beginning of the British rule in India, and it continues unabated in various forms.

A prominent section of the Euro-American scholars, working in the field of Indic studies, are engaged in the following fields of researches:

- i. Deconstructionist studies, mainly in the field of Dalit, women and minorities studies;
- ii. Studies invading the Indian Sacred.

The first category of research is conducted to show that oppression is inherent in Caste-based Hindu society and Dalits, women and the minorities are the sufferers. Hindu/caste traditions are subjected to fetishizing and psychoanalyzing; the root-cause of the social maladies is searched in Hindu society's DNA.

The purpose of the second category of research, on the other hand, is to rob the Hindus of their reverence for their Gods and Goddesses—Shiva, Ganesha, Kali, and others—and holy men, such as Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The purpose of both is to break India and destroy Hinduism. This is the new *avatar* of the millennia-old game, which

succeeded elsewhere in the world, but was only marginally successful in India. It has left the world poorer in culture and wisdom. Macaulay initiated it in India in mid-nineteenth century. He proposed to pay ten thousand pounds (equivalent to Rupees one lakh; a heavy sum in 1854) to Max Mueller for translating Rig Veda in such a manner that it would destroy the belief of the Hindus in the Vedic religion. Max Mueller accepted the proposal for the sake of his religion.⁵

Many books on Hindu Gods, Goddesses are provocatively demeaning and notoriously offensive for a Hindu. The writers want to read too much and take the analysis at beastly level using psychoanalytical tools. Although psychoanalysis has been largely rejected within contemporary Western academia, it has become a very fashionable methodology to study Indian culture. It is surprising that scholars like Wendy Doniger and Jeffrey Kripal, who pioneered such studies have even no training in the field of psychoanalysis. Here, it needs mention that some important studies of blatant invasion of India's sacred are Wendy Doniger's books, Jeffrey Kripal's *Kali's Child*, Paul Courtright's *Ganesa, Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings; Kiss of the Yogini: Tantric Sex in its South Asian Context* by Professor David Gordon White; *All the Mothers are One: Hindu India and the Cultural Reshaping of Psychoanalysis* by Stanley N. Kurtz.

Wendy Doniger, the Mircea Eliade Professor of History and Religion at the University of Chicago (USA), a former president of the American Academy of Religion, a past president of the Association of Asian Studies, and currently, the director of the Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion at the University of Chicago, and chair of many academic bodies, having two Ph.D.s, one from the Harvard and one from Oxford, is a prolific writer, and one of the most influential persons in the study of religion. But, "she is notorious for her racy, bawdy, interpretations of Hindu texts."⁶ As wryly described by a BBC-linked site, "Professor Wendy Doniger is known for being rude, crude and very lewd in the hallowed portals of Sanskrit Academics. All her special works have revolved round the subject of sex in Sanskrit texts."⁷ Ironically, her research-students and followers, known metaphorically and as satire as "Wendy's Children," also follow the same trend, and share her attitude towards Hinduism. The general attitude of these scholars has been to trivialize, Indian deities, scriptures, religious practices and the personalities exuding antipathy rather than empathy for the subject of their study, which is a serious scholarly deficiency.

Jeffrey Kripal's book, *Kali's Child*, was based on his Ph.D. dissertation on the Hindu mystic; Sri Ramakrishna under the guidance of Wendy Doniger.⁸ Kripal follows Doniger's Freudian approach to Indian society in totality. For this sex-obsessed pervert, "Ramakrishna was a child molester, who also forced homosexual activities on Swami Vivekananda. Further, this new 'discovery' claimed that Ramakrishna's mystical experiences, and those of Hindu mystics in general, are pathological sexual conditions in need of psychoanalysis."⁹ Yet other "award-winning scholarship from America describes Hindu Goddess in ways that would resemble sex maniac and demonic person." (Ibid) Again, some well-placed American scholars have concluded that Ganesha's trunk symbolizes a 'limp phallus;' his broken tusk is a symbol for the castration-complex of Indian men; and his large belly and love of sweets are proof of the Hindu male's enormous appetite for oral sex. Shiva is interpreted as womanizer whose temples encourage 'ritual rape,' prostitution and murder, and his worship is linked to violence and destruction."¹⁰ These are few examples, which only represent the tip of the iceberg. The problem is that "such academic works have received awards from the most prestigious American institutions of scholarship, and such views about Hinduism have started to gain respectability in mainstream America."¹¹ Needless to say, that such irresponsible scholarship needs adequate response, as international community cannot ignore the inherent dangers, about which Jeffry D. Long, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown has warned:

"Indeed, hateful speech and false information can create a climate in which ... violence is to be expected ... So how long will it be before a crazed gunman attacks a crowded Hindu temple in America, believing, ... that Hindus are possessed by demons? How many children will grow up believing Hinduism is a 'filthy' religion, or that Hindus worship the devil? When they grow up, how will such children treat their Hindu co-workers and neighbours? Will they give them the respect due to a fellow citizen and human being?"¹²

And again, it needs mention that irresponsibility does not lie only with above mentioned scholars depicting Hindu/Indian culture as pathological, exotic and abusive. There are many others also whose roles in propagating such works need scrutiny. For example, *Encyclopedia Britannica* has listed Kripal's book as its top choice for learning about Ramakrishna.

As an Eastern graduate student of Hinduism at a US university suggests towards broader prejudice against Hinduism, "... in American academia it is politically incorrect to treat Hinduism in a positive light and it is taboo to deal negatively with Islam."¹³ This disease, it needs mention is widespread. Take the case of *Encarta*. Whereas it presents insider authors for Christianity and Islam, the same is not done in the case of Hinduism.¹⁴ Authors, needless to say, the Encarta should have taken steps to have emic views on Hinduism projected, rather than prejudiced etic views.

The difficulty with the Western scholars in the field of Indology and social sciences of Wendy Doniger-type is that (i) they are unable to free themselves from colonial hangover; superiority and arrogance are in-built in their nature. It, more than often, results into dismissive response, though one may find some of them deceptively courteous, but full of craft. When asked for discourse, they point towards the position, they hold, rather than discussing the facts. Such attitude is found among established Indian leftist scholars also. (ii) They have undue faith in the superiority of their research methodologies/tools of analysis, without caring for the suitability and authenticity of the same. (iii) They ignore the emic view; impose the etic ones; (iv) have overdose of partiality.

The above mentioned weaknesses make their best works also worthless. We may cite the case of *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. In 12 volumes, it contains the articles written by 450 scholars. They are Europe's best minds, great linguists and top-notch theologians. The volumes, as Ram Swarup writes, "study world cultures, past and present. But with their scholarship, they constitute a hate-book, a declaration of war against all non-Christian cultures and peoples. They prove that European intellect is profoundly inadequate for dealing with other peoples' cultures. It has neither the necessary sympathy nor the insight for this kind of task."¹⁵

In case of the Hindus, the problem is also internal. There is false division of Hindu intellectuals into "liberal" and "communal"; so-called "liberal" Hindu intellectuals are Hindu-baiters;¹⁶ (16 Ibid, pp. 43-44) There are many Hindu elites, who condemn Hinduism to prove their Indian nationalism; many are Hindus by accident of birth but anti-Hindu by their freely chosen roles;¹⁷ they have become illiterate about their cultural heritage and history,¹⁸ and apologetic and ashamed of their (Hindu) identity¹⁹

Again, there is problem with neo-Hinduism, as “it uses Western categories to defend Hinduism,” and “in the same spirit, it uses traditional Indian categories to promote Semitic religions. In its insatiable desire for “synthesis” and similarities, it seeks and finds Vedanta in the Bible and the Quran and in Das Kapital too; it says that Jesus and Muhammad and Marx all are incarnations and Rishis and that they all say the same thing.”²⁰ This is an unbalancing act as (i) both differ fundamentally, and (ii) the adherents of Semitic faith declare the other as untrue and continue the polemics.

There are many church men for whom unity of the country is an obstacle. A Tamilnadu based missionary, in his paper titled ‘Spiritual Conflict in the Indian Context’ in 2000, the Theology Strategy Working Group and the Intercessory Working Group under the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization hosted workshop for sixty key strategists, on what they called ‘spiritual conflict, spiritual warfare, identified the unity of India as a major impediment to Christianity. It said: “But the spirit of being Indian is the binding factor which has totally integrated the country into one. Today, displaying the ‘unity in diversity,’ India portrays one entity. What is considered as the merits of India, are unfortunately the deterrents for evangelization.”²¹

It is not that unity of India is taken as an obstacle in the path of spread of Christianity; even civil war is envisioned in this country. Kancha Illaiah, the author of *Why I am not a Hindu*, writes:

“Historically, upper castes have suppressed the lower caste masses with weapons, as the Hindu gods’ origin itself is rooted in the culture of weapon usage. The SC/ST/OBC will then have to turn to a war of weapons in the process of elimination of Hindu violence from India.”²²

Illiaiah’s above mentioned book, which is prescribed in introductory course on Hinduism at many American universities, has parallels with the anti-Jewish caricatures in Nazi literature. Koenraad Elst, writes in the review of that book:

These anti-Hindu forces are exploiting the Aryan Invasion Theory to the hilt, infusing rank racism in vast doses into India’s body politic. Read, e.g. Kancha Illaiah’s book *Why I am not a Hindu* (Calcutta, 1996), sponsored by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, with its anti-Brahmin cartoons; move the hairlocks of the Brahmin villains from the back of the head to just in front of the ears, and you get extra replicas of the anti-Semitic cartoons from the Nazi paper, *Der Stumer*.²³

Needless to say, that the above mentioned missionary is not alone. There are many others like Illiaiah, for whom, national unity is

meaningless. They remain ever-ready to exploit every faultline, every vulnerability for the cause of evangelization and dividing the society and country. The situation is such that even *Spiritual advantages of Famine and Cholera* are discussed as conversion strategy.²⁴ All sorts of strategy is permitted for getting one converted to Christianity. As for example, the strategy for evangelization of students includes the following programs:

- * Train Christian students to develop close friendship with Hindu students
- * Conduct special Bible studies for Hindu students
- * Help them financially when the students are genuinely needy

The 'strategy for social concern' warns the missionary not to give room for suspicion.²⁵

Bias and unsympathetic attitude towards Hinduism and inadequate knowledge of Indian culture, religion and languages have come in the way of the understanding of India and its religion in the West. Deep study and proper attitude of some Western scholars, such as Huxley and Professor Smith desired proper understanding. Root of the difficulty was also the wrong motive and the sponsored scholarship. We may take the case of Boden Professorship of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford, which was established by a foundation created as per the Will of Colonel Boden. He stated in his will that the special object of the same was to promote the translation of Scriptures into Sanskrit, so as to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion.²⁶ W.W. Wilson was the first occupant of the Boden chair. John Muir, a Sanskrit scholar, donated fund for a prize for the best refutation of the Hindu religious system. Wilson wrote *The Religious and Philosophical System of the Hindus* in order to help candidates for that prize.²⁷

The second person to occupy the chair was Sir Monier Williams, who wrote *Vedic Grammar*, and a *Sanskrit Grammar* also.²⁸ His following remarks about Hinduism reveal his motive and bias against Hinduism:

"Brahmanism, therefore, must die out. In point of fact, false ideas on the ordinary scientific subjects are so mixed up with its doctrines that the commonest education, the simplest lessons in geography without the aid of Christianity must inevitably in the end sap its foundations."²⁹

"When the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahmanism are encircled, undermined and finally stormed by the soldiers of the Cross, the victory of Christianity must be signal and complete."³⁰

Rudolf Roth and Otto Bothlingk were the joint editors of the *St. Petersburg Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Roth expressed the possibility that “Shudras did not belong to Aryan society.”³¹ According to him, a qualified European was in a better position to interpret the Vedas than a Brahman due to latter’s theological bias.³² He was boastful of his ability to interpret the hymns of the Vedas, and wrote that with the aid of the ‘German Science of the Comparative Philology, he could interpret much better than Yaska, the hymns of the Vedas.’³³ William Dwight Whitney, a Sanskrit scholar of American origin, and author of Sanskrit Grammar, had also the same view that “principles of the German School are the only ones which can ever guide us to a true understanding of the Veda.”³⁴ These scholars were boastful of their scholarship, and that of the German School of Philology. Professor Goldstucker, however, severely criticized the shortcomings of the *Sanskrit German Dictionary*. This made Weber, another Sanskrit scholar, angry, who used abusive and extremely undignified language against Goldstucker, forcing the latter to expose the weaknesses of, what he called, the Saturnalia of Sanskrit Philology—Bothlingk, Roth, Weber, and Kuhn. He wrote:

“It will of course be my duty to show at the earliest opportunity, that Dr. Bothlingk is incapable of understanding even easy rules of Panini, much less those of Katyayana and still less capable of making use of them in the understanding of classical texts. The errors in his department of the dictionary are so numerous ... that it will fill every serious Sanskritist with dismay, when he calculates the mischievous influence which they must exercise on the study of Sanskrit philology.”³⁵

He further wrote:

“Questions, which in my mind, ought to be decided with very utmost circumspection, and which could not be decided without very laborious research, have been trifled with in his *Worterbuch* in the most unwarranted manner.”³⁶

Goldstucker further wrote against the mischievous act of mutilation of sacred texts in print, the propagandist scholarship of Western Sanskrit scholars, and their unjustified attack on Vedic tradition:

“When I see that the most-distinguished and the most learned Hindu scholars and divines—the most valuable and sometimes the only source of all our knowledge of ancient India are scorned in theory, mutilated in print, and as a consequence, set aside in the interpretation of the Vedic texts; ... When a clique of Sanskritists of this description vapours about giving us the

sense of the Veda as it existed at the commencement of Hindu antiquity;—when I consider that this method of studying Sanskrit philology is pursued by those whose words apparently derive weight and influence from the professional position they hold; ... then I hold that it would be want of courage and a dereliction of duty, if I did not make a stand against these Saturnalia of Sanskrit philology.”³⁷

Here, it needs mention that Wendy Donigers knowledge of Vedic Sanskrit, as attested by Professor Michael Witzel of Harvard University, is also severely flawed. On being publicly challenged, Professor Witzel published examples of Doniger’s ‘Sanskrit mistranslations on the Web. According to an anonymous source, “Witzel was privately reprimanded for being so critical of the latter-day ‘*Queen of Hinduism*’. He was blackballed in disregard of his right to criticize such blatant blunders, especially given the clout and power enjoyed by Wendy. If Gods, Goddesses, and saints can be deconstructed by her, then why should her work be exempt from criticism?” The flaws of her translations, even of other books, have been brought to notice by Professor Witzel and others. Her critics include Prof. Antonio de Nicolas, professor of Philosophy, SUNY, Stony Brook, and Nicholas Kazan, a European Indologist. She was also criticized for her laziness, non-use of secondary sources, not using better translations rather than going for self-translation, As Kazan writes, “she seems to be obsessed with only one meaning—the most sexual imaginable,³⁸ and all that in the absence of reliable referencing.”

Not only the Western Sanskrit scholars, there were many others among the scholars of the West, who were not less biased against India and Hinduism. Take the case of Mill, whose *History of British India* was recommended for study to the candidates for the Indian Civil Services. Max Mueller’s opinion about the book is quoted below:

“The book which I consider most mischievous, nay, which I consider most responsible for some of the greatest misfortunes that have happened in India, is Mill’s *History of British India*, even with the antidote against its poison, which is supplied by Professor Wilson’s notes.”³⁹

Max Mueller further writes:

“Mill’s History, no doubt, you all know, particularly the candidates for the Indian Civil Service, who, I am sorry to say, are recommended to read it and are examined in it. Still, in

order to substantiate my strong condemnation of the book, I shall have to give a few proofs.”

“Mill, in his estimate of the Hindu character, is chiefly guided by Dubois, a French Missionary, and by Orme and Buchanan, Tennant, and Ward, all of them neither very competent nor very unprejudiced judges. Mill, however, picks out all that is most unfavourable from their works, and omits the qualifications, which even these writers felt bound to give to their wholesale condemnation of the Hindus. He quotes as serious, for instance, what was said in Joke, namely, that ‘a Brahman is an ant’s nest of lies and impostures.’ Next to the charge of untruthfulness, Mill upbraids the Hindus for what he calls their litigiousness.”⁴⁰

Here, it needs mention that all the Westerners were not equally biased against the Hindus. Munro, the eminent Governor of Madras, and powerful advocate of the Ryotwar settlement,⁴¹ (41) and Colonel Sleeman, the writer of *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*,⁴² have come out with the positive assessment of the Indian character. Munro has written: “I have ample opportunity of observing the Hindus in every situation, and I can affirm, that they are not litigious.”⁴³ The general trend, however, was uncritical acceptance of the biased writings. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, eminent Social Anthropologist, for example, eloquently praised Dubois’s work. He wrote: “Many Excellent ethnographic accounts were written long before social anthropology was even heard of, for example, Dubois’s *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (1816).”⁴⁴

Mill and Abbe J.A. Dubois used choicest adjectives for the Indians. The Britishers had no love for the ‘so-called Niggers of India,’⁴⁵ whom they often addressed as ‘suar’ or ‘pig.’⁴⁶ The native gentry were insulted even by the best among the Britishers whenever they had the opportunity of doing so.⁴⁷ Indians were often subjected to the indiscriminate criminal assault by the European officers and European soldiers on their hunting sprees.⁴⁸ Under such circumstances, it was not unnatural for them to use choicest adjectives for their priests. Dubois termed them flatterers,⁴⁹ beggars,⁵⁰ degenerate,⁵¹ gluttonous,⁵² proud and arrogant,⁵³ abusive,⁵⁴ deceitful,⁵⁵ dissimulate,⁵⁶ deprave,⁵⁷ immoral,⁵⁸ untrustworthy,⁵⁹ etc. Mill did not lag behind; he goes further to declare that a “Brahmin may put a man to death when he lists. ...”⁶⁰ Max Mueller writes against the above mentioned remark of Mill:

“In fact, he represents the Hindus as such a monstrous mass of all vices that, as Colonel Vans Kennedy remarked, society

could not have held together, if it had really consisted of such reprobates only. Nor does he seem to see the full bearing of his remarks. Surely, if a Brahman might, as he says, put a man to death whenever he lists, it would be the strongest testimony in their favour that you hardly ever hear of their availing themselves of such a privilege, to say nothing of the fact—and a fact it is—that, according to statistics, the number of capital sentences was one in every 10,000 in England, but only one in every million in Bengal.”⁶¹

In India, the Colonial Government encouraged Christian missionaries in their evangelical work from the very beginning. Macaulay, who was chairman of the Education Board of the East India Company’s Government in India, had colonial motives in doing so. The British authorities actively encouraged the proselytizing activities.⁶² Macaulay wanted the end of idolatry, i.e., Hinduism through colonial education. His enthusiasm and hope in the success of his endeavour are reflected in the letter written by him to his father in 1836. He wrote:

“Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. The effect of this education on Hindus is prodigious. ... It is my belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any effort to proselytize, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, by natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the project.”⁶³

Of course, the British colonial functionaries found proselytization beneficial and actively helped the missionaries. Johnstone, British Agent in Manipur, and author of *Manipur and the Naga Hills*, wrote:

“the late General Dalton, C.S.I., when Commissioner of Chota Nagpur did his utmost to aid Christian Mission among the wild Kols; his argument being like mine, that they wanted a religion and that were they Christians, they would be a valuable counterpoise in time of trouble to the vast non-Christian population of Bihar. In the same way it can not be doubted that a large population of Christian hillmen between Assam and Burmah would be a valuable prop to the state.”⁶⁴

Professor Horace Hyman Wilson (1784-1860) was considered to be the greatest Sanskrit scholar of his time. Macaulay wanted him to do the translation work, which was given to 32 year old Max Mueller,

who never came to India, but translated Rig Veda. About his work and its impact on Hindus, he wrote to his wife in 1866: "... This edition of mine and translation of the Veda, will hereafter tell a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls on that country. It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years."⁶⁵ As Max Mueller was very sure of the effectivity of his work, he wrote to the Duke of Argyll, Under Secretary of State for India in his letter dated December 16, 1868, that "The ancient religion of India is doomed and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?"⁶⁶

Max Mueller believed that ultimately Buddhism shall help Christianity through its error, and latter one shall replace the former. He wrote:

"History seems to teach us that the whole human race required gradual education before, in the fullness of time, it could be admitted to the truths of Christianity ... The religion of Buddha has spread, far beyond the limits of the Aryan world, and, to our limited vision, it may seem to have retarded the advent of Christianity among a large portion of the human race. But in the sight of Him with whom a thousand years are but as one day, that religion 'like the ancient religions of the world may have but served to prepare the way of Christ, by helping through its very errors to strengthen and and to deepen the ineradicable yearning of the human heart after the truth of God.'⁶⁷

Likewise, he believes in the replacement of the religion of the Persians by Christianity:

"...many people, most competent to judge, look forward with confidence to the conversion of the Parsis, it is because, in most essential points, they have already, though unconsciously, approached as near as possible, to the pure doctrine of Christianity. Let them but read the **Zend-Avesta**, in which they profess to believe, and they will find that their faith is no longer the faith of the **Yasna** and, **Yanidad** and the **Vispered**. As historical relics, these works, if critically interpreted, will always retain a pre-eminent place in the great library of the ancient world. As oracles of the religious faith, they are defunct and a mere anachronism in the age in which we live."⁶⁸

Admittedly, Max Mueller was a narrow-minded bigot. Any similarity with Christianity of a religion meant the borrowing from the former

and not otherwise for him. Dr. Spiegel once expressed the view that, perhaps, the Biblical account of creation of the universe had been borrowed by the Christianity from the Iranian sources. This remark was too much for him. He was too intolerant to accept the innocent remark of Spiegel, who had to bear the virulent attack of Max Mueller. He wrote: "A writer like Spiegel should know that he can expect no mercy; nay, he should himself wish for no mercy, but invite the heaviest artillery against the floating battery which he has launched in the troubled waters of Biblical criticism."⁶⁹

I would like to conclude by quoting the statements of Professor W.C. Smith, a former Professor Emeritus of the Comparative History of Religions at the Harvard University about the missionary activities in Nagaland and on certain aspects of Hinduism. Professor Smith served in India as a missionary in Naga inhabited area and then he taught in Forman Christian College, Lahore in pre-partition days. His publications, *Modern Islam in India* and another one on Ao Nagas were highly praised. He wrote about missionary attitude and practices thus:

"Familiarity with missionary attitude and practices, which are all too characteristic, make inevitable the conclusion that there is entirely too much negation, too much taboo and too little positive."⁷⁰

Professor Smith gave up for good the use of the term 'idolatry' (a Christian's fond name for Hinduism) several decades earlier as he started believing that "no one has ever worshipped God in the form of an idol." The realization came after reading Yoga-Vasishtha; "Thou are formless, the only form is our knowledge of Thee." Professor Smith started believing that "a Christian 'doctrine' too is no more than a 'statue' and that for Christian to think that 'Christianity is true or final or salvatic' is a form of idolatry." He further said that "Christianity have been our idol."⁷¹ Another scholar, Tom Driver has admitted that there is "such a thing as idolatrous devotion to God" and that there is abundant Christodolatry in Christianity."⁷²

Range of human experience of the Hindus is wide and diffused

Apart from the shortcomings of the Western scholars discussed above, the root cause of some other Indian social and historical distortions may be searched in the inadequacy of the West's own perceptions. As for example, it was difficult for a Western scholar to think of the

history crossing Biblical chronology of 4004 B.C. Naturally, there was chronological squeezing and distortion in the history written by them. Again the racist interpretation of history is based on Westerners' own historical experience.

The range of inter-personal relationship between communities, as well as men and women is wide and diffused in India. We also have certain practices and values, such as, *Yama*, *Niyama*, etc. engrained in our social behaviour takes the Indian behaviour far above the animal behaviour; sex and violence do not predominate as in the West. Therefore, pathological mindset of readily accepting psychoanalysis is difficult for us.

The fact that so much has gone unchallenged by Indian scholarship is a sad commentary on our own Sanskrit and Vedic scholarship and their laziness. This failure is equally shared by the pro-West/Marxist influence on our education and culture after independence which uncritically accepted the Western views on India, and its culture, and suppressed and marginalized those academics who opposed them. Even Vivekananda, Gandhi and Tagore could not remove their blinkers. No wonder Macaulay will be smiling in his grave having succeeded in spawning successive bunches of servile and willing scholar in India. We must ponder why is it so? Is it lack of courage or selfishness or laziness? No country has faced for so long the brazen attack on its culture and values as India over a century and half, and that also from sources whom Gandhi and Vivekananda felt had no civilisational virtues. Our social and cultural derisiveness, encouraged by the West, has enfeebled us and we lost self-respect and faith to stand up.

The pertinent question is why there is no similar psycho-analysis by these scholars of Christian and Islamic texts characters, mythology and claims? Our scholars should have examined the limitations of Western scholarship and endeavoured to correct the distortions. Unfortunately, they have not only failed to bring positive change, but have even collaborated with the wrongdoers.

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Wendy Doniger's Vulgar Hindu History

Shankar Sharan*

“Aldous Huxley once said that an intellectual was someone who had found something more interesting than sex; in Indology, an intellectual need not make that choice at all.” (Wendy Doniger, *When the Lingam is Just a Cigar*)

Wendy Doniger is a Professor of Religious History at the Chicago University (USA). Her fame is for being an Indologist. In the West she has guided highest number of Ph.D.s on Hindu religion and Sanskrit texts. Considered such an authority on Hindus that she is also called ‘queen of Hinduism.’ Not long ago she was in news because of her book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (2009). It’s print version was withdrawn from the market by the publisher Penguin-Viking. Some Hindu organizations had lodged a plaint in the court asking for a ban as wrong and defamatory statements against Hindu deities abound in the book. During the court proceedings both parties to the case came to a mutual settlement under which the book was withdrawn from the market.

Asking for book ban is not a good idea. In fact, the section 295 (A) of the Indian Penal Code is a legislation imposed by the British rulers to shield Islam from criticism. The reason for its enactment was the murder of Pandit Lekhram in 1897 by a Muslim because Lekhram wrote a book criticizing Islam. The British sentenced the murderer, but also sided with him by enacting the law, thus retro-actively blaming Lekhram.

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Since this law was used against the book, Wendy and her academic admirers do have a moral right to criticize this law. However, their criticism is elective; as they have never spoken out against it on earlier occasions of book-banning. For instance, Wendy and her Indian friends remained silent when Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* was banned. Most Indian secularists, vocal in their support to Wendy, actually supported the ban imposed by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with an executive order. Taslima Nasreen faced similar treatment and even CPM led govt. in West Bengal did not protect her. Ideal response should be to academically refute the fallacies of any bad book. That would be a typical Indian or Hindu response, healthy for society. This article is such an effort made about the Wendy Doniger's book "The Hindus: An Alternative History."

Wendy Doniger has engaged herself for a long time in interpreting Hindu texts and traditions in sexual terms. Everything, be it epics, festivals, deities or folklore of Hindus she seems obsessed with giving them an erotic turn and interpreting these in Freudian psycho-analytical framework, which is alien to Indian spiritual and religious thought processes and sensibilities. As the above quote from Wendy Doniger¹ shows, she believes intellectual work *per se* on Hinduism is tantamount to erotic exercises. This has been a kind of signature tune of Wendy Doniger. No wonder her latest book is on Kama Sutra "The Mare's Trap" (2015) an ancient treatise on sex by Vatsyayan.

For instance, how Wendy discussed the original sources necessary to study Hinduism, can be seen in her twenty-eight years old book *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism* (1988). The book contains, according to Wendy, the basic information about the most significant Hindu texts. On the 'Contents' page in the beginning of the book, under the Chapter 'Vedas,' she has given the titles of themes as "Killing the dog," "The mockery of the women," "The king copulates with the people." Further, in the Chapter 'Shastras,' she gave titles such as "Women not to sleep with," "Married women to sleep with," "Married women who will sleep with you," "Married women who will not sleep with you," "The karma of marriage: the king's wife, the Brahman's wife, and the ogre," etc.²

Under such titles, Wendy had undertaken to guide a new researcher in the West to study Hinduism – a religion with a hoary past. Going into some detail of this initial enterprise of hers is useful, for understanding both her approach and determination to portray Hinduism

in sexual context and fantasies. Hence a whole school of Indology guided by her, aptly called by Rajiv Malhotra as ‘Wendy’s Children’ producing similar studies and competing with each other in giving anything in Hindu tradition a sexual orientation. She appears to be a person obsessed by sex a concept alien to Hindu sensibilities which treats it as normal human urge to be dealt with restraint.

So, the *Textual Sources*... presents Vedas primarily as rituals. Under the rituals, well, the sex related rituals is the main thing one can find in this Wendy book. She has quoted from *Shatapatha Brahmana* extensively. But, the peculiar thing is that her quotes from it do not match the book she has mentioned in the Bibliography of her book. The Bibliography mentions “*Shatapatha Brahmana*, ... translated by J. Eggeling, Sacred Books of the East,... Oxford, 1882.”³ However, the extensive quotes given by Wendy in her book from the *Shatapatha Brahmana* vastly differs from the translation given by J. Eggeling himself. The complete text, translated by Eggeling are available online at <http://sacred-texts.com/hin/sbr/sbe44/index.htm>. We may see a text, for example, given by Wendy Doniger and the same by Eggeling.

First, the text of *Shatapatha Brahmana* (13.2.9.6-9) as translated by J. Eggeling:

13:2:9:6. [The Adhvaryu addresses one of the attendant maids, Vâg. S. XXIII, 22,] ‘That little bird,’—the little bird, doubtless, is the people (or clan),—‘which bustles with (the sound) “ahalak,”—for the people, indeed, bustle for (the behoof of) royal power,—‘thrusts the “pasas” into the cleft, and the “dhârakâ” devours it,’—the cleft, doubtless, is the people, and the ‘pasas’ is royal power; and royal power, indeed, presses hard on the people; whence the wielder of royal power is apt to strike down people.

13:2:9:7. [The Brahman addresses the queen consort, Vâg. S. XXIII, 24,] ‘Thy mother and father,’—the mother, doubtless, is this (earth), and the father yonder (sky): by means of these two he causes him to go to heaven;— ‘mount to the top of the tree,’—the top of royal power, doubtless, is glory: the top of royal power, glory, he thus causes him to attain;— ‘saying, “I pass along,” thy father passed his fist to and fro in the cleft,’—the cleft, doubtless, is the people; and the fist is royal power; and royal power, indeed,

presses hard on the people; whence he who wields royal power is apt to strike down people

13:2:9:8. [The chamberlain addresses the king's fourth wife, Vâg. S. XXIII, 30,] 'When the deer eats the corn,'—the grain (growing in the field), doubtless, is the people, and the deer is royal power: he thus makes the people to be food for the royal power, whence the wielder of royal power feeds on the people;—'it thinks not of the fat cattle,'—whence the king does not rear cattle;—'when the Sûdra woman is the Arya's mistress, he seeks not riches that he may thrive,'—hence he does not anoint the son of a Vaisya woman.

13:2:9:9. But, indeed, the vital airs pass from those who speak impure speech at the sacrifice. [The queen consort having been made to rise by her attendants, the priests and chamberlain say, Vâg. S. XXIII, 32, *Rig-v.* S. IV, 39, 6,] 'The praises of Dadhikrâvan have I sung, (the victorious, powerful horse: may he make fragrant our mouths, and prolong our lives!),'—thus they finally utter a verse containing the word 'fragrant': it is (their own) speech they purify, and the vital airs do not pass from them.

Now the same section presented by Wendy Doniger is as follows.

The quotation marks in the passage are all as given in the book of Wendy. The entire passage below does *not* contain any interpretation of Wendy, because she has presented it as the translated *text* of the original in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*:

'The little female bird rocks back and forth making the sound "ahalag" as he thrusts the penis into the slit, making the sound "nigalgal," and the vulva swallows it up.' Now, that bird is really the people, for the people rock back and forth at the thrust of the royal power. And the slit is the people, and the penis is the royal power, which presses against the people; and so the one who has royal power is hurtful to the people.

'Your mother and father climb to the top of a tree; saying, "I desire to have you," your father presses his fist back and forth in the slit.' Now, the mother is this (earth), and the father is that (sky); by means of these two (the priest) causes (the king) to go to the world of heaven. The top of

the royal power is glory, and thus he causes him to attain the pinnacle of royal power, glory. The slit is people, and the fist is royal power, which presses against the people; and soothe one who has royal power is hurtful to the people. 'When the deer eats the barley, (the farmer) does not hope to nourish the animal; when the low-born woman becomes the mistress of a noble man, (her husband) does not hope to get rich on that nourishment.' Now, the barley is the people, and the deer is the royal power; thus he makes the people food for the royal power, and so the one who has the royal power eats the people. And so the king does not raise the animals; and so one does not anoint as king the son of a woman born of the people. But the vital breaths go out of those who speak impure speech in the sacrifice. And so they utter at the end of the sweet-smelling verse, the verse that begins, 'I praise Dadhikravan.' Thus they purify (their) speech, and the vital breaths do not go out of them. (*Shatapatha Brahman* 13.2.9.6-9)⁴

What makes it mysterious is that Wendy has not mentioned if she has presented her own translation or is it taken from someone else's translation. As the Bibliography given at the end of her book mentions the text translated by the same J. Eggeling, and none other; it becomes a moot question whether she presented Eggeling's translation? If yes, why such an enormous discrepancy? If not, then whose translation is that Wendy presented in her book without accreditation? So much for her scholastic integrity.

The curious choice made by Wendy to guide a Western reader about basic Hinduism is obvious. The above is not an exception in her presentation of the Vedas, but a typical example of it. What she has selected about Hinduism was candidly mentioned: "Within each genre, I have picked the texts I like best, and these have tended to be texts about women, animals, sin, food, and sacrifice; the arbitrariness of this selection was in any case inevitable, but it does have the incidental advantage of demonstrating how certain themes run like a thread through several different genres..."⁵

Thus, Wendy's presentation of Vedas is at best amateur and selective, if not motivated. As this writer is no researcher on Vedas, he asked a learned Hindu scholar about the *Shatapatha Brahman*. He

observed that “this is a Shukla Yajurvedian Brahman volume, divided into two branches: Madhyandin and Kanva. It is called *Shatapatha* because it has one hundred chapters., though the later branch has one hundred and four chapters. The entire theme of this volume is *Yajna*. All kind of *yajnas* are described in this volume, such as bricks, their selection, formal making of *yajna vedis*, *havan*, duties, donations, repentance, self-studies, Astronomy, *Dev-shastras*, *Akhyan* (stories), geographical details, cosmology, etc.”⁶

In view of this simple information about the *Shatapatha Brahman*, the selections made by Wendy and presented along with other Hindu texts and folk-lore in her book, it appears a caricature of Vedas. Or plain ignorance of the commentaries by Indian scholars from olden times to the present.

Either Wendy Doniger is not able to or she has not tried to understand the symbolic language of the Vedas. The best proof for this surmise is her own Bibliography given in the book. It simply misses the names of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and SriAurobindo, to give just an example. Both are well-known for their life-long work on the Vedas. In fact, Swami Dayanand’s commentary on Vedas is considered one of the best ever. Therefore, not only Wendy selected the pieces in Hindu texts ‘arbitrarily’ and what she ‘liked best’; but also she chose to ignore such authorities from whom she could not find help in sexual interpretation of Hinduism, howsoever great authoritative and important these may be.

Shall we say then, that all Wendy has done so far for decades is only to titillate the Western novices coming forward to become ‘experts’ on Hinduism? A subject, incidentally, chosen in the Western countries usually by third or second rate brains. The best go to science and technology, followed by to Russology, Sinology, Islamic studies, Biblical studies, literary-criticism, etc. Only the leftovers come to Indology, where there is no strict demands on merit and impeccable research. All ‘Wendy’s children’ are a case in point. When challenged, they all, along with their mentor Wendy, resort to organizational tricks, censorship, and stock-abusing critics. Rajiv Malhotra as well as Koenraad Elst have detailed enough incidents about how they were gagged and called names by Wendy Doniger and her admirers in India. However, the answer to this question can wait, while we go into her book *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (2009), and also her direct observations about Hindus, Hindu texts and Hinduism.

As can be guessed, Wendy has invited criticism mainly on the ground that she has misled the Western public and academia about Hinduism. In fact, it did not stop at academic level; it distorted India's general image, and those of Hindus in particular, among the Western policy-makers too. Their choice of generous donations and politico-diplomatic support for all kind of vicious anti-Hindu political groups in India masquerading as 'human rights' or 'dalit' activists is directly influenced by Wendy kind of scholarship tarnishing the contents and forms of Hinduism.

It is no coincidence at all that all anti-Hindu political groups in India stood as one to defend Wendy Doniger, irrespective of the fact that most of them never bothered to read her book. Why this ready affinity? The answer is provided by Wendy herself. Her taunting observations about Hindus, Hinduism and present day Indian politics leave no doubt where her sympathies and antipathies lie. Hence, the open partisan show. Her apologists in India seem to defend her persona and not scholarship. It's not so much about scholarship as about the political use/misuse.

It would be in order, therefore, to evaluate Wendy Doniger academically. It is necessary to read her learned critics also. One sided presentation of her books and her views have been rightly called a fiction literature, not worthy of being called history. Facts and arguments from both sides should be objectively evaluated. Wendy, till now, has not approved this. She assumes the air of one and only authority on Hinduism, whom everyone should just listen to and not answer back. She has an army of "academic freedom" votaries to stand by her but none to respect the similar rights of those who question her claims.

Strangely, Wendy does not seem to realize that subjecting Hindu texts mainly in sexual tint and distorted interpretations may not be academically right. She keeps doing the same again and again. For instance, when her controversial book *The Hindus...* appeared in 2009, she gave an interview to the Indian weekly '*Outlook*' (26 Oct. 2009). She casually repeated her observations about *Ramayan* as if every character in this great epic was nothing but sexually obsessed or perverted. According to her, Dashratha was a 'sex-addict,' Rama was on the verge of being similar sex-addict, when he deserted Sita. Her leitmotif of the entire talk was aptly summarized by the magazine in the title of the interview. It ran thus: "*Ram Was Happy With Sita...Indulging In Every Way...And Then He Threw Her Out.*"⁷ Her

supporters in academia need soul searching as freedom of a writer cannot become a license to distort and calumniate an ancient religion and character of Ram revered by nearly a billion.

This kind of presentation is not supported by the *Ramayana* written by Valmiki or Tulsidas or Kamban. From where Wendy found literary or scholarly support for her arcane interpretation? The answer is available, again, in the huge bibliography given at the end of her large book *The Hindus*.... Though original sources, that is, old texts are there, but the overwhelming materials comprise all kind of secondary, tertiary writings; many of them hardly on the subject. Materials intended for a 'history' of the Hindus include stray articles, observations, etc. by the kind of people who seemed to support her line of pre-conceived conclusions.

Suppose, you have a fixed conclusion that America is a country of murderers. Now, in Wendy style, all you have to do is to collect newspaper clippings for a year in a dozen of newspapers and articles on the subject of law and order. By the end of a year, any year, you might have hundreds of news clippings, statements, laments on law and order, stories and anecdotes about murder, crimes, rapes, etc. happened and happening. If you gather all of them into a thick volume, with your own 'expert' interpretation of all those items accumulated, and get it published by a reputed international publisher; it will be a volume on par with what Wendy seems to have done in *The Hindus*.... The bibliography does indicate this kind of selection of materials. The unfortunate thing is that while no good publisher would agree to publish your 'America is a murder country' as a history book, in the case of India the opposite is true. Only negative books are lapped up by international publishers on Social Sciences about India. Why is it so is a different, though a very relevant, subject.

So, in the interview to the '*Outlook*' she nonchalantly claims one after another outrageous thing with the help of 'probably,' 'might have been,' 'Brahmans might have removed such portions' in a text, etc. without giving an iota of evidence for such claims. The best Wendy could offer was to redirect Indian readers to non-descript current Indian literary writers and good old Romila Thapar. To say that Sri Lanka of today is not the Lanka described in the *Ramayana*, she had this to tender: "We don't even know, as Romila Thapar has pointed out, that the Lanka of the *Ramayana* is the Sri Lanka of today. There's a lot of evidence that they are not the same place at all." The pet style of the

Indian Marxists as well: to quote each other, thus try to prove the case and win the game. Who is Romila Thapar to be trusted on such a point? She is definitely no historian of Sri Lankan history, much less of Ramayana. So resorting to Romila Thapar is a deception to befuddle the reader; that since another big name also says so, it must be right. However, if you question Romila about how she is sure about it, the answer may be equally interesting, or evading.

We don't know who took this trick from whom: Romila and her clan from Wendy and her children, or the reverse? Apparently it is the later. But the method is obvious in the book *The Hindus...* as well as in the interview. When in want of credible evidence on a crucial proposition Wendy could not point to a single, credible, original source. She refers us to Romila or other writers. Just as Romila referred a questioner on evidence (about her oft-repeated claim of 'Hindus too destroyed temples,' and its was a 'custom' in Indian history) to go to so and so professor or scholar, never herself being equal to write even an article on such stupendous claims! Thus, flaunting each other's eminences have been a ploy of Indian Marxist historians for decades; 'trust us, we are the authority' have been a pet proof for them. It is noteworthy that Wendy Doniger, too, uses this subterfuge on crucial issues about Hindu history presented by her. Situation of Sri Lanka is just one of the issues. After all, it is she who took up Ramayana to write an ambitious history, not Romila. Why a questioner should go elsewhere to seek evidence? Let us see, what Wendy says:

You have a chapter in Valmiki's Ramayana where Rama was so happy with Sita, they drank wine together, they were alone, enjoying themselves in every way, indulging in various ways, not just the sexual act. And in the very next chapter he says I've got to throw you out. So I'm suggesting: what is the connection between those two things? And what does it mean that Rama knows that Dasaratha, his father, disgraced himself because of his attachment to his young and beautiful wife. So I'm taking pieces of the Ramayana and putting them together and saying these are not disconnected.⁸

Read it closely. First, she wants to use Valmiki's authority for her conclusions about what she calls 'alternate' history. Logical would have been to show an alternate source, simply because Valmiki never formulated such conclusions Wendy wants to purvey. Although she claims to bring together 'pieces,' but fails to mention them as such.

Imagination plus one's own interpretation of Valmiki does not add up to a credible alternate history. What she tries to connect are her own wild imaginations, her selective preferences, that too with willfully distorted translations. All these may become a fiction of historico-literary genre, but calling it a history book is too far fetched.

Also consider: Wendy does not mention anything else from Valmiki and directly jumps to sixteenth century devotional poets of India! She starts from a source before Christ and then comes directly to A K Ramanujan and Romila Thapar of today to interpret Ramayana as she likes. This kind of presentation does not reflect a serious study of tradition. She has hardly any material except similar present-day stray articles, observations and interpretations of like-minded writers. It shows clear lack of scholastic rigour and a preference for pre-determined conclusions; not based on the credible literature or scholarship.

In the course of interview, Wendy does more surmising than informing. To the question "If whatever you say about the Ramayana is all there in the texts, why don't we recognize it?" she responded, "It happened over the centuries. After all, the oldest Ramayana is well over 2,000 years old. Over the years things have happened, Hinduism has changed a lot. It probably started with the Bhakti movement — in the sense of the passionate worship of a single god." The crucial part is *over the years things happened*, but she was not able to give an example of what actually happened, and how one knows about it? Surmising about eighteen centuries, without mentioning any single thing — source, story, anecdote, etc. — from such long eras, she clutches straws from Bhakti movement, that too, with a *probably*. It still does not fit with her assertion and proclamation that what she wrote about Ramayana "must have been." You don't recognize it because, she argues, the evidence must have faded, destroyed, erased, etc. It is but begging the question. The question is precisely how she wrote what she wrote and on what was it based? Is it on the basis of specious conjectures? Like our Marxist historians, who wrote history of ancient times on the support of just a theory of 'historical materialism.' That the past must be an age of slavery, what else it could be? Plus, some guess-work from the present mindset.

For instance, according to Wendy: "Well, in order to have a temple you have to have a real movement. You have to have a lot of money, land, a whole system of building temples, which the Hindus did not have at first." This is the error of gross presentism (amply found in

Romila Thapar as well); that is, imposing today's mentality and customs onto distant past. As if what seems logical today must have been the same ages ago too. But we have nothing at hand to ascertain that in order to build a temple what they required two thousand years ago land? Movement, money, license, etc. are today's requirements. The same was a must two thousand years ago is an puerile logic. But use of such logic and plenty of surmises seem more prominent in Wendy Doniger's scheme of writing history than logical, corroborative, verifiable evidences.

In the same interview, Wendy said: "Then you have other stories that say that in fact Lakshman was really in love with Sita, which of course Tulsidas doesn't say, and neither does Valmiki. And you have stories in which Sita is the daughter of Ravana. Until recently, there was no one who said there was only one way to tell the Ramayana. Everyone in India knew that the stories were told differently..."⁹

At this instance, too, Wendy did not name any identifiable 'story' to support her astounding claim. Though she knows well the weight of even single evidence. The point is: her titillating, provoking statements are invariably supported by nothing in particular. Countering the narratives of Valmiki and Tulsidas, her resort is either unnamed 'stories' or some Ramanujam, who again was just another claimer like her. Because Ramanujan is not a seventh century author of some Ramayana story. He also just made claims similar to that of Wendy, that there had been dozens or hundreds of Ramayana. Clutching to unspecific stories of uncertain credibility claimed by another is at best a purveying of news, not writing a convincing history.

The last sentence in the reply of Wendy again confirms the use of presentism. Because different persons narrate an incident today in different ways, so the stories of Rama, Sita, Ravan, etc. must have been different. And one version might have been what I wonder, who knows! This is the fisherwoman psychology she seemingly resorts to. A kind of haughty claim too, that since there are always differing versions of an incident, why not one mine also? If I 'like best' imagining all kind of incest, copulation, infidelity, etc. why not explain texts of Hindu epics in such terms? If people object, it is nothing new. They keep objecting, don't they? The problem, however, is that it is not different versions of an ordinary incident she is writing about, but one of the oldest living religions and its several icons.

The central fallacy in Wendy Doniger's entire project of writing an Alternate History of Hindus is that she presents her imaginary interpretation not as hers, but coming from 'people' of India centuries ago. Otherwise, she could have plainly mentioned that in this tome, in that area, according to this source or folklore it was said that Sita was a lover of Lakshman, or the elephant-trunk of Lord Ganesha is but a 'limp phallus.' This latter piece of imagination is found in a Ph.D. study done under Wendy's guidance. Have a look at this study by one of 'Wendy's children,' Paul Courtright:

...there is a meaning in the selection of the elephant head. Its trunk is the displaced phallus, a caricature of Shiva's linga. It poses no threat because it is too large, flaccid, and in the wrong place to be useful for sexual intercourse... [Ganesha] remains celibate so as not to compete erotically with his father, a notorious womanizer, either incestuously for his mother or for any other woman for that matter. ... Ganesha is like a eunuch guarding the women of the harem. In Indian folklore and practice, eunuchs have served as trusted guardians of the antahpura, the seraglio. "They have the reputation of being homosexuals, with penchant for oral sex, and are looked upon as the very dregs of society" (Hiltebeitel, 1980, p. 162) ... Like the eunuch, Ganesha has the power of bless and curse; that is, to place and remove obstacles.¹⁰

This is the 'alternative' history of Lord Ganesha, according to Wendy Doniger, which in her consideration merited a Ph. D. - no less! It is becoming obvious what she likes best. The obsession with sex-fantasies seems to be one of them. Evidence or no, even a psycho-analytical conjecture into the past is also a history to her. This Freudian interpretation is a Western fad, not Indian or oriental. These unscholarly interpretations bypass the deep spiritual symbols and thoughts behind them.

There are conjectures galore in the presentations of Wendy Doniger. In her enthusiasm for giving alternative narratives, she little cares about contradictory propositions. For example, on the one hand she brings Valmiki for saying certain things, and then doubts if there was any such person in history. In her words, "we don't know who Valmiki was? It's unlikely that one person wrote the whole Ramayana. Certainly unlikely that Vyasa wrote the Mahabharata—it was too great a book for a single

author.”¹¹ Please note the strange basis of denying an author’s existence. As if standardizing one’s limited inability, a great book cannot be written by one author!

Contradiction is also in her presentation of Rama, Sita, Dashratha, etc. in various hues, because at another place she also says that Ramayana is a fiction. So, portraying colourful sexual fantasies about them is *history*; but if Ramayana is mentioned as an indicator of cultural greatness of Indians ages ago, then the same is mere *fiction*. This is inconsistency and lack of academic rigour at its worst. Picking Shambuka-*vadha* as the evidence of caste oppression at the hands of Brahmins, but denying Ayodhya as a land of happiness and absence of sorrow in the same narrative. This pick and choose is never on any academic merit, but solely on politico-ideological imperatives of today.

There are other basic academic deficiencies in Wendy’s observations on Hinduism. First of all, what is called ‘Hindu religion’ is not a faith and ideology, based on a text book or official instructions. Theoretically Wendy, too, recognizes it. In her *Textual Resources...* she has noted that, “Hinduism as a whole has been well characterized as orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy: Hindus define themselves by what they do rather than by what they think.”¹² Still, her interpretations and judgments chose more from books than the practices of Hindus. That too from all kind of books, with significant omissions.

Her decisive statements about present day Hindus are sweeping and not supported by empirical data. For example, “Mainstream Hinduism is the Hinduism of the Sanskrit texts, the Hinduism that supports caste laws and orient itself in terms of Vedas; this is the Establishment that establishes the rules of the game in India.”¹³ Who exactly is the ‘Establishment’ she is referring to? This is an arbitrary imposition, unsupported by evidence or practice of Hindus today. Hinduism is neither a monolith nor subscribers to a central source or authority.

One of the biggest drawbacks of Wendy Doniger’s controversial book, *The Hindus* ... is its reliance on tertiary, not even secondary, sources. She has taken casual observations and opinions of all kind of writers, giving them same respect and weightage as to a serious historian or to a great old text. The bibliography of this book is 50 pages long, with about two thousand books and articles. The fact to note is that about 90% of this material is non-Hindu and non-Indian.¹⁴ In other

words, by their very nature all those articles and books, and observations therein, cannot be considered primary material to know about Hindu history, religion and culture. They are secondary-tertiary, many even irrelevant, and highly selective only to suit Wendy's preferences.

As Koenraad Elst has rightly observed, such frivolous style and collection of materials would not be acceptable in similar studies on Christianity, Islam or Judaism. That Wendy did so with regard to Hinduism is also reflective of her conceit and racial-colonial mindset. Whether it came from the high chairs coming to her at a very young age or from being called 'the queen of Hinduism' by sycophants for a long time, we do not know; but unjustifiable arrogance is there. Her statements and claims about the Hindus, betray a lack of scholastic humility.

Lack of detailing the source for unusual statements, and conclusions, is a case in point. It puts a question mark on her stature as a scholar. It is a rule of academic reference, especially according to the Chicago University manual for research, that if a quotation is taken from another writer's book, then it should also be mentioned from where that other writer took it. So that a reader may have the recourse to check or delve more, and also to rate its worth. By not following this rule, as Wendy did, a reader is forced to take a fact, an opinion and a hearsay on equal footing. This is a serious flaw in Wendy the scholar.

Suppose some historian in his book on Mahatma Gandhi put this information under quotation marks, "Once Gandhi thrashed his wife Kasturba with shoes." Since it is a quote, one may like to check the source of this supposed fact. But going to reference he finds just this: 'John Smith, *A biography of Gandhi*, p. 56.' With only this he would be at loss to know from where this originate? Where John Smith found it? If he heard or read it from a direct witness's account, say, a son or close associate of Gandhi, then the value of the statement would be in one category. But if Smith, too, took it from an article of William; and William in his turn caught it from an anecdote told to him by someone else on the strength of 'I read somewhere,' then the statement is worthless, a category not admissible in serious scholarship.

Wendy, likewise, while writing bizarre things about Hindus, Hindu deities and related incidents, has not taken care to give complete information about her sources, or the basis for her weird conclusions. For example, in her *The Hindus: An Alternative History* she has given a long quotation, which goes as follows:

One night while Sita and Rama were lying together, Sita discussed Lakshman very affectionately. She said, “There he is sleeping alone. What is that keeps him away from woman? Why doesn’t he want to marry?” This roused suspicion in Rama’s mind. Sita slept soundly, but Rama kept awake the whole night imagining things. Early next morning he sent for Lakshman from his lonely palace and asked him suddenly, “Do you love Sita?” Lakshman was taken aback and could hardly look at his brother. He stared at the ground for a long time and was full of shame. Lakshman gathered wood and built a great fire and shouted, “Set fire to this wood and if I am pure and innocent I will not burn.” He climbed onto the fire holding in his arms a screaming child. Neither of them were even singed. He left Rama and Sita and would not return, though Sita kept trying to lure him back.”¹⁵

This quotation Wendy has given prominently and separately, sure to show its importance. As it is in quote marks, so the reference has to be there. But going to it, one finds just this: ‘Elwin, *Myths of Middle India*, 65-67.’ No way a reader would be able to know how reliable is this Elwin and where he found it? Is it from a fiction or a good source, secondary or primary, etc? Title itself calls it ‘myths.’ A reader is thus compelled to take it on the basis of Wendy’s authority (if an Indian history student again re-quotes it, he will naturally refer it as taken from the great Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus...*, pp. 669-70). This, of course, is no reliable history writing. It is myth-making of a pervert kind. Also because it is about personae, held in highest regard in India since time immemorial.

As the grave import of the above quotation is self-evident, one is bound to conclude that Wendy’s writing on Hindus cannot and should not be taken seriously. She has been playing too many tricks. Besides, any serious scholar of Hindu tradition knows that the relationship between younger brother and elder brother is of great affection, and respect. A Western mind cannot comprehend the delicacy of this relationship. At least the camp followers of Wendy in India should. But they did not care, undoubtedly for political reasons.

In the name of academic writing it all reflect a propagandist mindset, with a propensity for pronouncements without care for checking facts. We find numerous examples in Wendy Doniger of this mindset. In her

school of scholarship, the red colour of Holi festival is 'symbolic of the blood that was probably used in past centuries.'¹⁶ Or, putting *kumkum* and *bindi* on the forehead by Hindu women is the symbol of 'menstrual blood.' Or, again, the terrible pose of the Goddess Kali is but 'a goddess with a penis.'¹⁷ And, the famous *tri-bhangi mudra* (body flowingly upright) of flute-reciting Krishna is a 'cocked hips' as a 'hint of homosexual attraction.' More: the Shiva is a god of 'ritual rape,' and Ganesha's love for sweet *laddu (modak)* is but a symbol of 'his liking for oral sex.' His elephant-trunk, as we have noted already, is 'limp phallus.' Ramakrishna *paramhansa* was attracted to Narendra (Swami Vivekanand) as a homosexual,¹⁸ etc. etc.

The list is endless. Such is the understanding of Wendy Doniger and her followers, considered highest authorities on Hinduism in the world. An associate of Wendy, Sarah Caldwell has a title of her article as: "The bloodthirsty Tongue and the Self-Feeding Breast: Homosexual Fellatio Fantasy in a South Indian Ritual Tradition." This is the title about Goddess Kali! In the article a ghastly mixture of imagery has been made with use of words violence, blood, semen, menstruation, breast milk, oral sex, pregnancy, pregnant belly, etc. It is difficult to appreciate how and why a scholar imagines this kind of creepy hotchpotch?¹⁹ Do these thoughts even cross the minds of devotees of Kali or Ganesha? Any ordinary scholar would cringe at such interpretations, but not the admirers of Wendy and her children.

With such determination to force perverted conclusions, Wendy and her followers also mis-translated several Sanskrit terms at will. So that the whole meanings can be manipulated. It has not gone unchallenged, however, even in the Western academia. Well-known Sanskrit scholar from the Harvard, Michael Witzel, has recorded 43 mistakes by Wendy Doniger in translating just one Sanskrit song! It is not all out of ignorance, but some appear deliberate also.²⁰

Even more serious is the charge made by Witzel about her translation of *Rigveda*. According to Witzel, instead of translating faithfully, Wendy Doniger has 'paraphrased' it. That is, in the name of translation she has liberally put her own words as to the meaning of a relevant section of the *Rigveda*. Also, according to Witzel, the writings of Wendy are frequently 'anacoluthas' (incoherent, erratic)²¹. As we have seen first hand in the beginning, Wendy's presentation of the text from the *Shatapatha Brahman* is inexplicably different from the same translated text by J. Eggeling. Perhaps, she liberally 'paraphrased' it

too; only without clarifying if she was doing so! The curious difference there and Witzel's comment here point to serious lapses in Wendy's writings, scholarship and knowledge of Sanskrit.

One of the biggest flaws in *The Hindus...* is the tendency to select sundry statements from any quarter to suit her pre-conceived notions. It is no chance omission, we repeat, that the huge bibliography in *The Hindus...* does not include such great books like *Secret of Vedas* by SriAurobindo. Nor anything of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekakanand, Raman Maharshi or Narayan Guru. Instead she has included the writings of Shashi Tharoor, Kumkum Roy, Mahesh Rangarajan and likes. It clearly shows that the book is prepared on the basis of general commentaries and run-of-the-mill opinions of others, not even caring for their relevance to the subject; and ignoring acknowledged authorities on the subject.

In a vast history of Hindus not taking into account the writings of great Hindus scholars like Swami Dayanand, Vivekanand, SriAurobindo, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Raman Maharshi, Swami Shivanand, Ram Swarup, J. L. Mehta, Govind Chandra Pandey, and many others, indicates only two possibilities. Either Wendy does not know who these were, and what they are for the Hindus; or, else, she is a follower of the 'eminent historians' of the Indian Marxist hue; who manufactured myths and gather references only to give their pre-existing conclusions an academic appearance. One must start wondering if these projects of Wendy and her cohorts is a continuation of the motivated colonial history writings from the nineteenth century to denigrate the Indian culture and history to suit the Church-missionary projects and the British imperialism.

It all boils down to a simple conclusion: Wendy Doniger is not such an authority on Hinduism as she has been made out to be. This is further confirmed by her flippant remarks about critics and others. Every critic of hers must be a stooge of a particular political party of India: such is her general standpoint. With breathtaking superciliousness she disdains them as 'this crowd,' 'Hindutva types.'²² The political motive seems to take precedence over scholarship. To the question, why do you call your book "An Alternative History?" She forthrightly answered, "I also wanted to show an alternative history to the BJP version—about Babur's mosque being built over a Ram temple sort of thing or that monkeys built a bridge to Lanka."²³

This one answer puts Wendy in a very very poor light, as far as serious history writing is concerned. First, no history of BJP version ever existed! It is a term of pure abuse for long-established historical accounts written long ago by meticulous historians, Indian and foreign. Lumping it all to be produced or instigated by a recent political party born is a cheap jibe. Secondly, her statement regarding the Babur's mosque built over a Rama temple suggests that her knowledge about it does not go beyond the current pamphlets written by the Indian Marxists.

One more serious point. When confronted on her fondness of giving Hindu texts, deities, rituals, festivals, etc. a sexual and violent meaning, she justified it sometimes on the ground that she has been doing a 'psycho-analysis' of the Hindu texts and past. But, this makes her writings even more untenable! Because, first, she has no training in psycho-analysis – which is a strict requirement for doing so (punishable in the West, if done on persons). She accepted it when pointedly asked by Rajiv Malhotra in a seminar/conference. Therefore, her so-called psycho-analysis of Hindu texts becomes ipso-facto worthless.

Secondly, and quite explainable by the first, a psycho-analysis is never done on dead people! As Wendy and her fellows did on Ramakrishna *paramhansa*. Third, 'psycho-analysis' is not resorted to deities, scriptures and old texts. Fourthly, Wendy and her associates never tried such psycho-analysis of the Christian and Islamic deities, texts and scriptures – although she taught at the Divinity School of Chicago University, not just a school of Hinduism. Thus, doing this honour to Hinduism only has been a deliberate play. No amount of justification can explain this selective abuse of Hinduism and culture, that too for three decades. Fifth, when similar psycho-analysis were done on Wendy Doniger and her associates, to find out why they are so obsessed with sex while writing on Hindu themes, they objected.

Although such psycho-analysis for reference was indeed done, according to Rajiv Malhotra, with verifiable research on the life and careers of the Wendy group, resulting in provable conclusions. Such as, these authors are suffering from the collective effects of little knowledge; troubled personal life; unfulfilled desires; complexes and fantasies. The same is reflected in their scholarly attempts on Hinduism, the psycho-analysis on them reflected tentatively. This conclusion seems more precise on the scientific standards set by the discipline. Because these

authors, including Wendy, are available for responding and verifying from their behaviour, records, etc.

In fact, she has been called such in the West itself in comparable terms. For instance, a BBC website interview introduced her as: “Professor Wendy Doniger is known for being rude, crude and very lewd in the hallowed portals of Sanskrit Academics.”²⁴ These epithets unknowingly have a psycho-analytic conclusion about her, which she did not then object, perhaps because it was given as appreciation and not a critical evaluation by differing academics.

In conclusion, the amount of awe and sycophancy the subjective scholarship of the likes of Wendy Doniger and others generates is rather surprising. It is basically fuelled by lack of serious scholarship on part of Indians, and effete resort to book bans and court cases, by ignorant pro-Hindutva elements. In fact they are a threat to scholarship. A recent (Dec 2015) incident at Udaipur University (Rajasthan) where Prof. Ashok Vohra of Delhi University had a case registered against him for defaming Hindu deities, when he was actually in a scholarly manner rejecting the likes of Wendy Doniger. It is because such pro-Hindu elements that Romilas and Wendys have flourished.

A final point worth mentioning is that any ancient religion or institution is bound to have serious contestations, interpretations and fault lines. But these have to be civilised and scholarly debates of the past. What is being done by many Western scholars betrays that they cannot appreciate or comprehend the complex sensibilities of an Indian or Chinese about their deities and religions. All this strengthens a suspicion that Western scholars are pursuing a deconstructionist agenda vis-à-vis Indian history and traditions, with a colonial lineage.

At another level this raises two questions. Are Wendy and her ilk serious scholars of Indian history and Sanskrit? As far as Indian scholars of Indian history are concerned, both their scholarship and moral courage are at stake. They must answer to their conscience if academic freedom should also subscribe to the deliberate deconstruction of long held beliefs, sacred spaces and sensibilities to alien insensitive academia without demur or protest? Supporting Wendy’s tribe is like accepting intellectual colonialism, though the political one has disappeared. While upholding total academic freedom of Wendy Doniger, do her academic followers have also to swallow unscholarly claims? It reflects poorly on Indian scholarship that it has been unable or uncaring to debunk such crudity for so long.

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- ¹⁹. Please also consider the devastating impact of such academic writings, taught and propagated through the prestigious Chicago University. On their basis school textbooks are written. Young American and European children trust it as the defining features of Hinduism, with a crooked image of India. The same influence the Western policy makers to decide how to reform such a perverted people, and help all those missionaries, progressive forces and 'disenfranchised people like dalits, minorities, women,' etc. All these phenomena are linked, we should properly see influence of American academia.
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Sati Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse

Meenakshi Jain*

The deliberations on sati in the post-independence era have largely taken place within the parameters of Lord Bentinck's Regulation XVII of 1829. That Regulation, which declared sati a criminal offence, marked the culmination of a sustained campaign against Hinduism by British evangelicals and missionaries anxious to Christianize and Anglicize India. The attack on Hinduism was initiated by the evangelical, Charles Grant, an employee of the East India Company and subsequently member of the Court of Directors. As early as 1786, he presented a *Proposal* for the establishment of a Protestant mission in Bengal and Bihar. In 1792, Grant prepared a draft of his famous treatise, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain*, which elaborated the scheme sketched out in the *Proposal*. A harsh evaluation of Hindu society, it challenged the then current Orientalist policy of respecting Indian laws, religion, and customs set in motion by the Governor General, Warren Hastings (1772-1784). Grant argued that the introduction of the language and religion of the conquerors would be "an obvious means of assimilating the conquered people to them" (Grant 1832: 84-90). Grant was joined in his endeavours by other evangelicals and Baptist missionaries, who began arriving surreptitiously in Bengal from 1793 onwards.

This is not an article on sati *per se*. It does not address issues of the possible origins of the rite; its voluntary or mandatory nature; the

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role, if any, of priests, or family members; or any other aspect associated with the actual practice of widow immolation. Its primary focus is the colonial debate on sati, particularly the role of evangelicals and Baptist missionaries. It argues that sati was an “exceptional act,” performed by a miniscule number of Hindu widows over the centuries. Indeed, because sati was of rare occurrence, those who practiced it were deemed extraordinary and aroused the deep reverence of traditional society. Its occurrence was, however, exaggerated in the nineteenth century by evangelicals and Baptist missionaries eager to Christianize and Anglicize India. The “missionary assault on Hinduism” dramatized the practice of sati (Bayly 1991: 222).

Evangelical missionaries wanted, firstly, to secure the consent of the British Parliament to operate in the East India Company’s territories in India (which was denied to them till the Charter Act of 1813). Thereafter, to validate British presence in the country, they presented graphic accounts of the raging “ills” of Hindu society, among them female infanticide, *ghat* murders, and widow immolations. The “catalogue of horrors” was intended to shock and motivate the British public and also garner funds at home for missionary work in India (Major 2006: 124). Significantly, several contemporary non-missionary observers insisted that these “evil practices” were nowhere as rampant as alleged. It is pertinent that in missionary accounts the epicentre of these practices was the vicinity of Calcutta, the very area in which the Baptists operated and the seat of British power in India.

The Baptist presentation of sati marked a radical departure from earlier foreign accounts of the rite, beginning with that of Diodorus as far back as the first century B.C. (Majumdar 1960: 240-241). These accounts mostly resonated with awe and incredulity and speculated on the possible reasons for the custom. They also revealed how limited the practice actually was. It was only in the opening decades of the nineteenth century that evangelicals and Baptist missionaries presented appalling figures of thousands of widows being burnt on the pyres of their husbands. Also, in contrast to earlier accounts which typically described sati as an act of voluntary martyrdom, missionary writings presented sati as murder or suicide (a mortal sin). This version of sati became dominant in the early nineteenth century.

Most recent studies have credited the British drive for social reform in the nineteenth century to an ascendant liberal sentiment. The extent to which the reform agenda was invented by evangelicals and Baptists

missionaries eager to validate their presence in India has not been adequately emphasized.

Almost alongside, a change in the attitude of Company officials stationed in India also began to be discernible (Sramek 2011: 43-46). From the 1790s onward, some Company men sought to maintain a distance from their native subjects and rule India as a “domination of strangers” (Wilson 2010). Early indicators were the decision of Lord Cornwallis to dismiss all Indians from Company jobs in 1793, the establishment of Haileybury College in 1806, and the appointment of moral thinker Thomas Robert Malthus as a professor in the College (Sramek 2011: 10-12). British colonial officials and authors of several India tracts began to blame Hinduism for the alleged Indian venality, corruption, deficiency in moral instructions, and lack of regard for truth. They contrasted Hinduism with Protestantism and its stress on the individual’s personal moral responsibility for his actions. From their writings it almost seemed as if colonialism was “India’s fault.” “Control and reform” became the two facets of British presence in India (Robb 2007: 14-15).

The growing confidence and assertiveness of Britain’s governing classes following victory over Napoleonic France and territorial successes in India resulted in a refurbished British national identity. Missionaries were vital contributors to the “Protestant worldview,” which permitted many Englishmen to view themselves as a distinct and chosen people.

The Evangelical-missionary campaign

The evangelical-missionary campaign against sati falls into two phases — the first, from 1803 to 1813 when the case was prepared; the second, from 1813 to 1829 when awesome figures were marshalled to demonstrate that it was a raging practice. The entire campaign was coordinated by a handful of evangelicals and Baptist missionaries that included Charles Grant, John Shore, William Wilberforce, Rev. David Brown, Rev. Claudius Buchanan, and the Serampore missionaries Rev. William Carey, Rev. William Ward, and Rev. Joshua Marshman.

Missionary registration of sati cases

In 1803, William Carey, with his colleagues, attempted to collect data on the prevalence of sati. Ten people were engaged to record all cases of sati that occurred within 30 miles of Calcutta (Fisch 2005: 232).

But the results of the registration varied considerably in missionary accounts. According to Rev. Claudius Buchanan, 275 cases were recorded in 1803; between 15 April and 15 October 1804 the number was 115 (Buchanan 1849: 21-22).

William Ward presented two sets of data. The first figure, noted in 1802 and said to be based on guesswork, was twenty-five to thirty thousand immolations a year. Two years later, Ward wrote that 30 miles around Calcutta no less than 438 widows had been burnt with their husbands the previous year. Applying the figures collected to the rest of the country, the missionaries presumed that several thousand widows were burnt every year (Ward IV 1990: 108-128).

Registration by the Government

The registration of cases of sati by the Government began in 1815 (continued till 1828) and covered the three Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The data collected by the Government revealed a curious picture. In the ten years between 1815 and 1824, 6,632 cases were reported for the three Presidencies. Of these, an astonishing 5,997 (90.4 per cent) occurred in Bengal. The heavy preponderance of cases in Bengal, a region not historically associated with the rite, creates reservations about the reliability of the data. In the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, during the years 1815 and 1820, the average number of satis recorded was below fifty. As per Government data, the region around Calcutta, with 62.9 per cent of the cases, constituted the real nucleus of the rite. This was surprising, given that the city of Calcutta was the harbinger of the Bengal Renaissance. This raises questions about the influence of evangelicals and missionaries on the official exercise.

Analysis of Government data

Age of victims

That apart, the Government data contradicted missionary accounts of sati in several respects. Most missionary accounts had emphasized the tender age of the widows. Government statistics, however, claimed that almost half the satis were in the age group of 50 and above, and two-thirds 40 and above. Less than five per cent of all satis between 1815 and 1829 were in the age group of eleven to twenty (Yang 2007: 41; Roy 1987: 48-49; Mukhopadhyay 1957: 114).

Number of widows on pyre

Government figures also revealed that of the 8132 widows who immolated themselves in the Bengal Presidency, 8004, i.e., 98 per cent mounted the pyre alone. The survey did not mention a single instance of more than four widows immolating with one man (Fisch 2005: 259-260).

But William Ward, in his *History, Literature, And Mythology of the Hindoos*, cited several instances of a large number of widows burning with one man. He mentioned one occasion in which 13 widows immolated with one man, another involving 37 widows of a man, another 12 widows, and yet another incident in which 18 widows burnt with one man (Ward IV 1990: 101-106).

Why Bengal?

Kulinism

The high incidence of sati in Bengal was linked in some missionary accounts to *kulin* (Brahmin) polygamy. Claudius Buchanan, in his *Memoir*, gave instances of *kulin* Brahmins who had over a hundred wives (Buchanan 1805: 71). However, Rammohun Roy, in his *A Second Conference between an advocate for and an opponent of the practice of burning widows alive*, pertinently asked, "How many *kulin* Brahmins are there who marry two or fifteen wives for the sake of money, that never see the quarter number of them after the day of marriage, and visit others only three or four times in the course of their life" (Anand 1989: 10).

The geographical distribution of sati, moreover, did not substantiate the connection with *kulin* polygamy. The incidence of sati was higher in West than in East Bengal (more in Calcutta than in Dacca Division), whereas *kulinism* was more prevalent in East than in West Bengal (Yang 2007: 38; Gupta and Gombrich 1984: 256).

Dayabhaga

The missionaries attributed the frequency of sati in Bengal also to the Dayabhaga School, which, in contrast to the Mitakshara School, allowed women greater access to their deceased husband's property for their maintenance. However, Jimutavahana, who is credited with the introduction of Dayabhaga to Bengal, did so in the mid-twelfth century, whereas incidents of sati increased only in the decades preceding its

abolition, when first the missionaries and then the British Government presented statistics on the extent of the custom (Bayly 2001: 154).

Missionaries and the campaign against sati

The entire colonial debate on sati centred on figures provided by the missionaries and the Government, each of which suffered from serious flaws. But the figures seem seldom to have been questioned during the course of the campaign the evangelical missionaries unleashed.

The “consolidation of missionary discourse” on sati occurred in a number of overlapping ways (Mani). The figures collected by the missionaries on satis in Bengal in 1803 and 1804 were cited by Claudius Buchanan in his widely read *Christian Researches in Asia* (1811). In 1813, he informed the Court of Directors that on the basis of further data supplied by the Serampore missionaries and the official estimates of the population of India, he had calculated that about 10,000 satis took place annually. The figure was a gross overstatement. But there was no one who was sufficiently informed to contradict it, and it served to create an impression of its vastness.

Further publicity was given to the Baptists’ figures in the House of Commons in 1813 when William Wilberforce included them in his speech on the renewal of the Company Charter.

The outcome of the debate on sati was inconclusive, so the missionaries felt it necessary to further publicize their data. The *Missionary Register* (a publication of the Church Missionary Society), and the *Missionary Papers* circulated a series of accounts of satis sent by missionaries in India. In June 1813, at the height of the parliamentary debate, the *Missionary Register* published an extract on sati from Ward’s *Hindoos*. Its motive in reproducing the passage was to “Let every Christian Woman who reads the following Statement, pity the wretched thousands of her sex who are sacrificed every year in India to a cruel superstition, and thank God for her own light and privileges, and pray and labour earnestly for the salvation of these miserable fellow subjects.”

The following month, it published another extract from Ward’s discussion on sati under the title, “Instance of the Cruelty of Hindoo Superstition.” The intention was to raise funds for missionary work through consistent “exposes” of Hindu superstitions and to convince British readers of the enormity of the evangelical task (Jain 2016: 194-197).

The *Periodical Accounts* (a series of edited compilations of letters and journals received from Baptist missionaries in India), likewise in the volumes covering the period 1812-1814, reprinted three instances of sati from letters of the BMS, each of which concluded with comments like, “The scene was calculated to strike the mind with inconceivable horror.”

In 1815 the second edition of William Ward’s *View of the History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindus* was issued by the Serampore Press. It contained a chapter citing the Baptists’ figures on sati in the Calcutta area and included accounts of the most outrageous cases known to Ward.

In 1816, the first known major pamphlet on the subject, *A Collection of Facts and Opinions Relative to the Burning of Widows with the Dead Bodies of their husbands and to other Destructive Customs Prevalent in British India*, was published in England by William Johns (a missionary expelled by the British from Serampore in 1812). He based his account mainly on the second edition of Ward’s *Hindoos*.

William Ward, on a visit to England during the years 1819-1820, personally confirmed missionary accounts of sati. While in England, he delivered a number of speeches, the substance of which was published in the form of *Farewell Letters* to his friends. Ward’s *Hindoos* went through at least eight editions between 1811 and 1822 and was repeatedly cited by evangelical publications.

The Baptists kept up the attack through the *Samachar Darpan* and *Friend of India* (both started in 1818). The quarterly *Friend of India* (started in June 1820 by Joshua Marshman), published a series of articles on sati in 1822-23. These were reprinted in England in 1823 by the Baptists as part of a series, *Essays Relative to the Habits, Character and Moral Improvement of the Hindoos*. English periodicals like the *Oriental Herald* and *Quarterly Review* plagiarized large portions of the articles. The *Bengal Hurkaru* and other Calcutta periodicals reprinted several articles.

In 1825 Rev. T.S. Grimshawe wrote a pamphlet “*An earnest appeal to British humanity on behalf of Hindoo widows.*”

In the January 1826 issue of the journal *Oriental Herald*, the Utilitarian, James Silk Buckingham, a former Company official, also urged immediate abolition of sati “According to the last returns there are about on an average two women burnt to death every day of the year”¹ Other issues of the journal kept up the pressure.

In 1828, the missionary, James Peggs, published a pamphlet, *Suttee's Cry to Britain*.

In addition, several public meetings were held in Britain, beginning in 1823. In 1827, a meeting was called at York in which only supporters of the abolition of sati were permitted to speak. The details were published in a pamphlet, *An account of the proceeding at a public meeting held at the City of York, on the 19th January 1827, to take into consideration the expediency of petitioning Parliament on the subject of Hindoo widows in British India*. Another open meeting was held in 1829.

The result of all these endeavours was Regulation XVII of 4 December 1829 which banned the practice of sati.

Sati – An infrequent occurrence

The strident evangelical missionary campaign virtually drowned out other voices on sati. However, several near contemporary and contemporary accounts had observed that sati was not a common custom. Alexander Dow, in 1770, stated that the practice had “for the most part, fallen into desuetude in India...” (Dow I 1973: xxxv).

George Forster wrote from Banaras in 1782 that, “The wives of the deceased Hindoos have moderated that spirit of enthusiastic pride, or impulse of affection, which was used to urge them to self destruction on the pyre of their husbands ...many of the Hindoo widows, especially in the Marhatta country, have acquired by their ability, their wealth, connection, or intrigue, the possession of extensive power and influence” (Foster I 1970: 8).

Eliza Fay, wife of a judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta, in a letter from that city in September 1781, wrote that though the fact of sati was “indubitable,” she had “never had an opportunity of witnessing the various incidental ceremonies, not have I ever seen any European who had been present at them” (Fay 1908: 160-161).

H. T. Colebrooke (1765-1837), Judge and later head of the Sadr Diwani Adalat and Professor of Hindu Law and Sanskrit at Fort William College, who spent over three decades in Bengal, in an article titled “On the Duties of a Faithful Hindu Widow,” said the practice was rare (*Asiatic Researches* IV 1795: 205-211).

It is significant that in the area where sati was alleged to have been most prevalent in British times, i.e. West Bengal, no case has been reported for several generations, whereas solitary instances continue to

occur in other parts of India, particularly Rajasthan. This lends credence to the inference that the incidence of widow immolation in Bengal was embellished by evangelicals-missionaries firstly, to gain the right to proselytization, and subsequently, to justify British rule in India.

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Sub-regionalism in South Asia: Potentials and Prospects of BBIN

Mohammad Monirul Islam*

The issue of region, regionalism and sub-regionalism are, perhaps, contested owing to their varied interpretations and approaches. However, South Asia is widely recognised as a region which roughly includes the territory between China in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south; and between Afghanistan in the west and Myanmar in the east, because of geographical contiguity, shared history and cultural identity of the countries composing it. South Asia had developed a 'regional complex' even before the British colonial period. The region marked a history of interdependence between the small principalities and big empires and this interdependence was extended from trade and commerce to migration of people and from conquests of territory to intermarriages among ruling dynasties. However, following the end of British rule, the newly independent south Asian nations became more protective of their own sovereignty and territorial integrity and thus the interdependence between them gradually started receding. The countries in the region were unable to evolve regional approach to any region or global issues. A host of factors responsible for it, include, *inter alia*, lack of common approach towards the cold war/super power rivalry, absence of common perception towards the extra-regional threat to the regional states, conflict between the two major powers in the region (India and Pakistan) and preference of bilateralism over regionalism/multilateralism in resolving the regional issues.¹

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The South Asian nations have finally managed to build an institution for cooperation – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – with a view to accelerating economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region. However, the conditions spelt out for cooperation between the nations under this Association apparently serve as a stumbling block to the growth of the SAARC. There is no provision of flagging off any bilateral issues/concerns in the SAARC forum, even though the matters have regional implications. Most of the SAARC nations have been grappling with issues like river water sharing, cross-border violence, drug/human trafficking and terrorism/extremism, which are truly regional/global in nature. Political and security issues have been categorically excluded from the SAARC agenda. This raises a million dollar question, does it really make any sense, in this politically charged and security sensitive world, to think of development, delinking politics from the economics or the economics from the politics? This is, perhaps, one of principal reasons why SAARC has not been able to produce what is expected from it, notwithstanding that it has institutionally widened and deepened over the years and undertaken numerous commendable measures, especially in trade and economic sectors. The disappointing performance of SAARC has created the fertile ground for conceptualising and developing sub-regionalism in South Asia region. The recently constituted BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) is such an organisation, which holds considerable potential and thus generates substantial amount of optimism and prospects.

This kind of initiative of establishing a sub-regional mechanism in South Asia is, however, not entirely new as several attempts were, made earlier in this regard. The SAARC itself promotes the idea of sub-regionalism as the Article VII of its Charter reads “The Standing Committee may set up Action Committees comprising member states concerned with implementation of projects involving more than two but not all member states.” The idea of sub-regionalism in South Asia was first introduced in 1996 in the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting, which eventually crystallised as South Asia Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) consisting of Northeast India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal at the ninth SAARC Summit in 1997 at Male. Formation of SAGQ was, perhaps, inspired and posited by the success stories of other growth triangles in the region like the Johor State of Malaysia, Singapore and

Riau islands of Indonesia (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore Growth Triangles-IMS-GT), the South China Growth Triangle comprising Guangdong and Fujian provinces of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). A plan of action was drawn for cooperation under the SAGQ in key sectors including multimodal transport and energy. Despite huge possibilities, the SAGQ has not taken off properly owing to the reluctance of some of the SAARC member states.

Pakistan has always been apprehensive about the creation and promotion of sub-regionalism under the SAARC as they view it as an Indian ploy to isolate Pakistan. During the late 1990s, Pakistan's thoughts were supported and reinforced by some other SAARC nations as India's scheme to bypass SAARC and dominate small countries. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Pakistan is averse to the construction of sub-regional organisation all together. The country appears to be feeling more affinity to the west and aiming to integrate its economy with China and some member countries of Economic Cooperation Organisation.² Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan are in the process of concluding a trilateral trade and transit agreement between them. According to the Joint Statement issued following the state visit of the President of Tajikistan to Pakistan in November 2015, both sides underscored the importance of early finalisation of this particular agreement which is believed to immensely contribute to further cementing trade and economic cooperation in the region. The two leaders instructed the Joint Commission on Energy and Infrastructures to explore and identify new projects for exporting electricity to Pakistan. The two sides expressed satisfaction over the progress achieved in the implementation of Central Asia South Asia (CASA-1000) Power Project and hoped that the project would be completed by 2018.³ India has conveyed its desire to join Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan Trade and Transit Agreement (PATTA) during the visit of India's Prime Minister to Tajikistan from 12-13 July 2015. The Central Asian country is learnt to have sought greater Indian engagement in the country's hydropower sector. The Indian companies, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) are already working on the upgradation and modernization of Tajikistan's hydropower stations.⁴

The concept of sub-regional collaboration between the eastern South Asian nations was revived with renewed spirit during the official visit

of Bangladesh Prime Minister to India in January 2010. Both the Prime Ministers agreed to put in place a comprehensive framework of cooperation for development in the areas of water resources, power, transportation and connectivity, tourism and education.⁵ This renewed spirit received yet another boost during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Bangladesh in September 2011, when the Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development was signed, consolidating the intent of the highest political leadership to harness and synchronise the benefits of sub-regional cooperation in water resource management, power, physical connectivity, environment and sustainable development.⁶ At the first ever meeting of Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) between the Foreign/External Affairs Ministers of Bangladesh and India held in New Delhi in May 2012, both sides welcomed the formation of technical level committees for sub-regional cooperation in water & power and connectivity & transit. This was the new beginning of sub-regionalism in South Asia and since then it has been moving forward at a reasonable pace and outcomes.

Factors facilitating the creation of BBIN:

The following elements are considered important in facilitating the creation of BBIN and in making it fully functional to deliver result oriented outcomes in the days to come:

(a) Resuscitating ‘Gujral Doctrine’:

‘Economics and trade’ have emerged as key determinants of India’s neighbourhood policy, which has, on one hand, helped India to gain trust and confidence of small neighbours for a greater economic integration and on the other, it has prompted India to alter its attitude of behaving as an ‘elder brother’ instead of a ‘big brother.’ India has come to the realisation that it needs economically secure, peaceful and vibrant periphery to advance its own developmental agenda. Prime Minister Modi’s breathed oxygen into the “Gujral Doctrine” by extending invitation to the leaders of the South Asia in his swearing in ceremony in May 2014. Modi has justified his intention of giving neighbours a priority by paying his maiden visit to Bhutan as Prime Minister of India. He has not only visited Nepal during his first year into office, he paid a visit to Bangladesh in the early second year of his office.

(b) Re-enforcing ‘Look East Policy’:

Considering the physical and economic size of India, that shares border with all the BBIN countries, the responsibility basically lies with New Delhi to translate any sub-regional venture in the region into a reality. Indian leadership has displayed long awaited political will in transforming the BBIN into a meaningful instrument for realising the aspirations of the people of the region. Moreover, the BBIN is, geo-politically, geo-economically and even at the geo-civilisational level, in consonance with India’s ‘Look East Policy.’ Addressing the India-ASEAN summit for the first time on 12 November 2014, Prime Minister Modi has rephrased ‘Look East Policy’ as ‘Act East Policy,’ a clear signal with certain amount of assertion that the present government wants more close, intense and cooperative relations with ASEAN nations. In addition, the ‘Act East Policy’ seeks to prioritise the following:⁷

- To strengthen trade relations with the Eastern (Bangladesh) and North Eastern (Bhutan and Nepal) neighbouring countries
- To improve the sub-regional connectivity in order to realize regional connectivity goals with Southeast Asia
- To develop the North Eastern Region of India through cross-border cooperation

(c) Remain out of the SAARC umbrella

The BBIN is an independent body and completely out of the influence of SAARC. The credit might go to some extent to the way it (BBIN) has evolved. The disapproval of Pakistan on the SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement (SAARC MVA), which was mooted for signing at the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, Nepal in November 2014, had prompted the BBIN countries, particularly India to look for an alternative arrangement in this regard. New Delhi has transmitted a message loud and clear, “if the SAARC route is clogged-up, impediments are dragged up, then India will not hesitate to encourage sub-regionalism in the region.” New Delhi’s endeavour to sub-regionalism is not restricted to BBIN, it is also looking forward to setting up similar sub-regional group with Sri Lanka and Maldives and despite Pakistan’s obstructionist approach, India is keen to engage Afghanistan and Pakistan on western sub-regional front.⁸”

(d) Changes in Bangladesh's policy regarding transit to India

Transit has been an emotive issue between Bangladesh and India. This appears as a matter of mutual interest when looked through economic prism and turns into concern, especially for Bangladesh when security takes precedence over economy. Simply, put it, the transit facility would allow mainland India to be connected with its north-eastern states, enabling it to save on the huge cost and time of transportation. Transit also seems to be economically viable for Bangladesh as the country could earn hefty revenues out of it, in addition to other associated benefits. Bangladesh, however, fears that transit to India may draw the country into 'India's internal security matrix' as this facility may be utilized by India to tackle insurgency in the north-east. This perception has begun to change of late.

Bangladesh has realised that it cannot afford to remain unconnected with the global network including the Asian Highway. BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar) Economic Corridor, Indian-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway are few examples of fast growing transport connectivity in this region. Bangladesh government earlier constituted a committee to evaluate the option of granting transit to India. The Committee submitted a comprehensive report in April 2011, embracing various aspects of transit such as transit routes, transit fee/charge, investment for infrastructure development and return from investment as well as economic impact of transit.⁹

(e) Achievements in Bangladesh-India bilateral relations

The relationship between Bangladesh and India, marked by physical contiguity, sharing of common borders, rivers and eco-systems as well as cultural, linguistic, social, religious and ethnic ties/affinity, is multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and ever evolving and enlarging. Recent developments in the relations between the two neighbours have ostensibly cleared the long-held skeptical view that the relations of two countries are characterized by deep mistrust and suspicion. The current transformations have not only contributed to further better understanding of each other's perspectives but also minimizing trust and confidence deficits. Perceptible progress has been made in the following areas:

(i) Land boundary demarcation: The Land boundary dispute that has been serving as one of the major irritants between the two countries has finally settled during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister

to Bangladesh in June 2015, through the exchange of instruments of ratification of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) and its 2011 Protocol. As a part of the implementation of LBA, 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh turned into Bangladesh territory and 51 Bangladesh enclaves in India integrated into the Indian territory. More than 50,000 'stateless' enclave residents have finally acquired the status of citizenship of either country, what they have been longing for more than six decades.

(ii) Security: Given their geographical proximity, porous international border and similar sort of security challenges, it seems imperative for Bangladesh and India to evolve a mutual security architecture. However in reality, there is no concept of mutual security due to mutual suspicions.¹⁰ India was of the view that Bangladesh has, wittingly or otherwise, been providing sanctuary or even abetting, elements of various militant groups from the north-east Indian states who were actively pursuing anti-India activities, using the neighbouring country as a launching pad.¹¹ Bangladesh has, of late, shown a great deal of sensitivity to this issue. Handing over top ULFA leaders to India go well with the Bangladesh's tough stand and zero tolerance policy against terrorism and extremism.

The two countries signed an Extradition Treaty in January 2013 which has not only consolidated the security cooperation between the two countries but also paved the way for tracking the criminals in the third country. The two countries had earlier signed several other security related documents in January 2010 during the visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister to India, which include Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters, Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons and Agreement on Combating International Terrorism, Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

(iii) Trade and Economic Cooperation: Trade volume between Bangladesh and India has grown substantially and two-way trade now stands at USD 6.6 billion. This has been possible, partly because of duty-free, quota-free access of all Bangladesh products (except 25 items under SAFTA negative list) into the Indian market. Signing of agreement between the standards and testing institutes of the two countries is believed to unleash a positive impact on the trade by eliminating technical barriers. Opening of border haats have not only provided benefits to the local people on both sides living close to the border, but are also considered a step forward to formalise the informal trade, the volume of which is significant as compared to the formal trade. Opening

up some immigration facilities and improving/developing some Land Custom stations/ports and other trade infrastructures would, in one hand, facilitate the trade interactions between Bangladesh and India, and on the other it would boost up regional/sub-regional trade involving third country like Bhutan and Nepal. Bangladesh has offered land for the establishment of Special Economic Zone for India, which would eventually encourage Indian FDI into Bangladesh and narrow the bilateral trade gap.

In order to intensify trade and commerce and people to people contact between the two countries, Bangladesh proposes to increase its consular and diplomatic presence in India.

(iv) Connectivity: Significant forward movements have taken place in this sector. The recently concluded bilateral trade agreement, the PIWTT and the Coastal Shipping Agreement have been instrumental in bringing seamless connectivity between these two countries. The launching of Dhaka-Guwahati-Shillong and Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala bus services has strengthened the people to people interactions. Some more new bus services (Khulna-Kolkata and Jessore-Kolkata) are in the pipeline. Bangladesh's decision to allow India, Nepal and Bhutan to use Chittagong and Mongla ports has encouraged sub-regional connectivity. This has been reciprocated by India allowing Bangladesh to access Nepal and Bhutan using Indian territory. As far as rail linkages are concerned, both the countries are considering to revive some old railway links and build some new railway links (Akhaura-Agartala railway link is underway). Coastal shipping between Bangladesh and India is at its advance stage.

(f) China factor:

India is apparently sensitive to the presence of extra regional power in the South Asia. What India considers as a single geo-strategic and geo-economics whole is China's growing engagement with many of the South Asian countries is, perhaps, perceived as a threat to India's security and geographical interest. There is a widespread view that China has intensified its interactions with the South Asian region in the backdrop of warming up relations between India and USA following the signing of civil nuclear deal in 2005. Factors that influence Chinese foreign policy in South Asia are:¹²

- the strategic location of South Asia in terms of a market for acquiring raw materials and selling finished products

- the region's proximity to international sea routes in the Indian Ocean and also to the two disturbed provinces of China (Xingjian and Tibet)
- its strategic ally-Pakistan-can be used to counter-balance India in case of a conflict situation
- supplying of military hardware to India's neighbours, which both fuels and sustains regional antipathy vis-à-vis India.

Chinese interest is matched by the desire of many South Asian countries that want to engage China to balance India's dominance in the region. Chinese proposed Maritime Silk Route is largely seen as a mechanism to advance Chinese interests in this region. In October 2013, President Xi Jinping called for a joint development of an "Economic Belt along Silk Road" and a "Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century" (the one Belt and one Road Initiative one), which proposes to link Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa bringing Pan-Asian and Eurasian regional cooperation to a new level. Purpose of the Initiative is said to promote people to people exchange (cooperation in areas such as tourism, culture, art, archaeology, sports and health), trade facilitation and economic integration, improve road connectivity (open-up transportation channel from the Pacific to Baltic Sea and to gradually form a transportation network), financing for development (funding for infrastructural developments) and policy coherence (discuss policies and strategies to seek common ground and uphold harmony and stability in Asia).

(g) India-Pakistan and Bangladesh-Pakistan relations:

India-Pakistan relations continue to deteriorate that has pushed the relations back to square one. There is no sign suggesting the improvement of this relation in the near future. India perhaps can not afford to unsettle both sides of its borders (west and east) at a time and this has propelled India maintaining peaceful borders with its eastern neighbours such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. On the other hand, the bitter relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan has turned acrimonious over the Pakistan's reactions to Bangladesh's attempt to deal with the war criminals who committed atrocities during the Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971. This has led Bangladesh to forging closer relations with India.

(h) Strategic Interests of India:

India has close historical and cultural ties with the BBIN countries which may be well articulated as ‘Organic linkages’ between them. India needs to scale up its engagements with all the BBIN nations in order to advance its geo-political and geo-economic interests and more importantly geo-strategic interests. For example, ‘Siliguri Corridor’ is regarded as strategically significant in the context of Indian national integration and security, as it is the only land connection between mainland India and the north-eastern states of India. On that count, it may also be described as ‘strategic vulnerability’ for India; any blockade/disruption of the corridor may result in complete isolation of the heartland India from its strategic north-east. Here comes the importance of Bangladesh as an alternative route to access the north-east in the event of any eventuality in the Siliguri Corridor, as happened during 1962 India-China border war.

This logic can also be extended to Bhutan-India-China perspective. If the Chinese were to gain possession of the Doklam plateau in Bhutan, in the event of hostilities it would have the ability to essentially “cut-off” main land India from the northeast territories by blocking the Siliguri Corridor.¹³

Areas of Cooperation under the BBIN framework:

(a) Connectivity and transit:

The first ever trilateral meeting between Bangladesh-Bhutan-India held on 19 April 2013 in Dhaka had virtually re-opened the possibility of comprehensive cooperation at the sub-regional level, leading to the formation of BBIN. This was treated as the first Joint Working Group (JWG) of BBIN (despite the fact that Nepal was absent), which explored the modalities of enhancing connectivity among the parties involved. The second meeting of JWG on sub-regional cooperation involving all members of the BBIN was held in New Delhi in January 2015. In this meeting, views were exchanged on potential cargo and passenger routes involving at least three countries involved in addition to the existing bilateral routes. Suggestions were made proposing few new routes in this connection which include, inter alia, SamdrupVonkhar (Bhutan)-Guwahati-Shillong-Dawki (India)-Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka/Chittagong (Bangladesh); Kathmandu-Kakarvita (Nepal)-Fulbari (India)-Banglabandha-Dhaka-Mongla/Chittagong (Bangladesh) and Timphu-

Phuntsholing (Bhutan)-Jaigaon (India)-Burimari-Dhaka-Mongla/Chittagong (Bangladesh).

The signing of path breaking Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) on 15 June 2015 between the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) countries is viewed as a 'benchmark' for sub-regionalism in South Asia. The MVA will help reduce transport time and costs and it will foster the development of transit facilities and multimodal transport that will in turn promote greater trade and improve connectivity between the BBIN countries.

The BBIN motor vehicle agreement is not entirely a new document, rather a re-drafted text of the SAARC motor vehicle agreement. BBIN nations had made an effort to sign the agreement in a revised text/format, while keeping open for the participation by the other countries of the SAARC. In this context, India hosted a meeting of the transport Secretaries of the BBIN countries in Kolkata on February 2015. The text was amended and negotiated by the parties involved and finally signed by the transport Ministers of the BBIN countries in Thimpu in June 2015. A six month action plan from July to December 2015 was drawn for the implementation of the BBIN motor vehicle agreement in a phased manner. Subsequently, the BBIN Friendship Motor Rally was held in November 2015 to highlight the scope and opportunities for greater people to people contact and trade under the aegis of BBIN initiative. The vehicular movement among the BBIN nations is expected to commence in the first part of 2016. Asian Development Bank (ADB), which has been involved in the upgradation of transport networks in South Asia under SASEC, has pledged to finance 30 priority transport connectivity projects worth \$ 8 billion in the next five years to upgrade connectivity in the BBIN region.

(b) Water Resources Management and Power/hydropower cooperation:

The Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) is the manifestation of ability of the newly formed BBIN to explore and venture into other areas of cooperation. BBIN is reported to all set in working out the modality of power trade and grid connectivity within the BBIN countries. The BBIN Joint Working Group meeting held in January 2015 in New Delhi not only agreed to make joint efforts in harnessing water resources including hydropower of the sub-region but also agreed to participate, on an equitable basis, in the future hydropower and power projects to be

jointly undertaken involving at least three countries. There is a symmetry existing between the BBIN countries in terms of energy supply and demand, which provides a suitable ground for creating energy market. While Bangladesh and India have been grappling for energy shortage, the other two nations of the BBIN (Nepal and Bhutan) hold huge reserve of untapped hydropower potentials. Bhutan has, so far, been able to generate around 1500 MW hydropower, which is only five per cent of the estimated potential of 30,000 MW. The situation of Nepal is serious. The Himalayan country has been successful in generating only 16 per cent of the estimated feasible potential of 43,000 MW.¹⁴ BBIN therefore offers a conducive ground for trading in power sector, especially in the hydropower between the countries involved.

Power trading have already been taking place at the bilateral level in this particular sub-region between India-Bhutan and India-Nepal more potentials are being actively explored and transmission lines being setup.

Electricity trading between Bangladesh and India is also progressing quite well. Bangladesh is importing 500 MW of electricity from India through Bheramara-Bahrapur grid-interlink since October 2013. During the 10th meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) in power sector between Bangladesh and India held in Delhi in November 2015, two sides expressed satisfaction over the successful operation of interconnection since its commissioning. The meeting also discussed about the supply of additional 500 MW power from India to Bangladesh through capacity upgradation of the existing Bheramara-Bahrapur interconnection. This additional power supply is expected to come into effect by January 2018. Discussion was also held in supplying of 100 MW electricity to Bangladesh from Palatana power plant in Tripura. At a press conference following meetings of Power Minister of Bangladesh and Tripura in Dhaka on 09 January 2016, it was informed that the two sides sorted out the price of per unit electricity tariff (US 0.08) and expected to supply electricity from Tripura to Bangladesh in the first quarter of the year.¹⁵

As far as sub-regional cooperation is concerned, it is reported that the countries have primarily identified hydroelectric projects to be carried out under the sub-regional cooperation. It is also reported that Bhutan has welcomed the participation of Bangladesh in one of its hydropower projects which would be implemented jointly by Bangladesh, Bhutan and India. Bangladesh has also been welcomed by

India for investment and participation in the hydropower plants in north-east region. Apart from power trading and investment, there are huge possibilities for cooperation between and among the BBIN nations in crude oil refinery and renewable energy sectors.

Challenges for Sub-regional cooperation:

(a) Outstanding bilateral issues:

Bilateral relations between India and other BBIN nations are marked with high and low and often characterised by mistrust and suspicion. A kind of apprehension in smaller nations owing to their size, resource base as well as economic and military capabilities vis-à-vis India has perhaps failed to completely understand and effectively address this fear. This has literally pushed the Indian small neighbours to develop ties with powerful countries outside the region in a bid to balance India's influence. On the part of India, failure to have small neighbours as a totally trustworthy ally remains a matter of concern.¹⁶ Although Bangladesh and India have witnessed remarkable growth in their relationships in recent times, there are some thorny issues between them that have the potential to damage the goodwill generated so far. These include border violence/skirmishes occurring between the two neighbours at regular intervals affecting people on both sides.¹⁷ Water sharing of the rivers is another issue which is emotionally connected to the people of Bangladesh. Although there is an agreement over the Ganges water sharing, Bangladesh alleges that they are not getting their due share, especially in the dry season. The Teesta episode has also not gone well with the people of Bangladesh, who are still waiting to make it happen sooner or later. The proposed river linking project by India has raised sufficient political temperature on the Bangladesh side and may create dents in the relationship, if not properly addressed. Tippiamukh dam issue also needs to be amicably resolved. Although undocumented/illegal migration has occasionally come up in the Indian politics, it may flare up to the point that may negatively impacts the relations.

There is an anti-Indian perception in Nepal which has trickled down from the political elites to the general people over the time. India has seemingly failed to manage anti-Indian sentiments in Nepal. Existing controversial treaties, border disputes, trade and transit issues, perceived Indian interference in the internal affairs of Nepal etc. serve as major

irritants in India-Nepal relations. China's strategic interests in Nepal also do not augur well for India. Nepal comes second in importance for China after Pakistan in South Asia region. China, on one hand, has intensified its economic engagements with Nepal, investing in strategically crucial infrastructure projects like airports and important highways and on the other, it makes endeavour to neutralize India's influence in Nepal. While India has been coping with growing Chinese influence in Nepal, Pakistan's proven anti-India activities in Nepalese soil complicates the situations further. All these are the potential factors that may put India-Nepal relations at a risk in particular and the growth of the BBIN in general.¹⁸

(b) Domestic political compulsion:

The political chemistry between the ruling parties and the other major political parties of a given country of the BBIN may impede the growth of the organisation. The various states of India are seen exercising their clout in the country's foreign policy domain. The role of West Bengal is no more a secret in determining/influencing the course of Bangladesh-India relations. India had to pull back from signing of the Teesta water sharing agreement with Bangladesh at the last moment in September 2011, due to domestic political equations/compulsions. This did not only embarrass the government of Bangladesh, but also played a role in strengthening the perception held by many that India is not a credible partner.¹⁹ The sharp division between various political parties in Bangladesh and Nepal may pose a great challenge in advancing the interests of the BBIN. One could recall the opposition and protest staged by the major political parties in Bangladesh in case of exporting gas to India.

(c) Insufficient infrastructures:

Inadequate infrastructures impede the growth of any connectivity, whether it be land connectivity or energy connectivity. For example, lack of connectivity has virtually isolated the north-east region of India not only from the rest of the country and the world, but also within itself. Insufficient road and rail transportation networks have not only hampered mobility but also hindered the development of market. The energy corridor that is envisaged today from the Chittagong port (Bangladesh) to Bhutan and Nepal through North-East India requires

huge development of infrastructures to make this corridor economically feasible and viable.

(d) Inadequate financing:

BBIN countries have been suffering from constraints to finance their own domestic needs, let alone the investments for export infrastructure. The sub-regional cooperation which is envisioned on the foundation of hydroelectricity trading between the BBIN countries requires substantial investments in bringing these projects into fruition. Although the cooperation between Bhutan and India is apparently on a good track, several hydroelectric projects in Bhutan are not taking off because of inadequate investments from India. Nepal is also struggling with the shortage of investment in its hydroelectricity sector.²⁰

(e) Social and environmental cost:

There are reports suggesting that hydroelectricity which is considered as the bedrock of sub-regional cooperation has adverse impact on the social and environmental harmony, causing displacement of the people and impacting on the ecology. Hydropower generation and the construction of multipurpose projects are considered to have significant environmental repercussions. Internationally, it is still highly debated whether hydropower is a renewable energy source or not. The construction of multipurpose projects, which include large reservoirs, means a disruption of riverine fauna and displacement of human settlements and agriculture.²¹

Conclusion:

Given the current state of mutual trust and the level of confidence between Bangladesh and India, there is enough space for them to work together in tapping the full potentials of Bangladesh-India relationship. A close and coordinated cooperation between Bangladesh and India would not only serve the interests of these two countries, but would also contribute to regional stability and prosperity. India, however, needs to beef up its developmental activities and assistance in Nepal in order to protect and promote its strategic interests in the Himalayan country. India is required to do something more to diffuse anti-Indian perceptions held by the Nepalese people and gain trust and confidence of the people. India also needs to allow the smaller neighbours to grow

its own term and transmits a clear and credible signal that it believes in non-interference in the internal affairs of any country. The other BBIN nations need to understand India's compulsions and sensitivities too.

Notes

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Energy Scarcity and Ambiguity making India Vulnerable against Non-Traditional Security Threats

Prabhavit Dobhal*

Abstract

Energy is a vital component of development and its utilization pattern is significant determinant of the growth of a nation. So its quantity, quality and sources of availability are important elements in the measurement of a country's comprehensive national power. Rapidly increasing energy demand and growing concern about economic and environmental consequences call for an effective and thorough energy governance in India. Strengthening our fuel reserves and diplomatic relationship with a wide range of oil rich nations; developing technology to nurture indigenous energy resources such as hydroelectricity, wind and solar energy along with efficient machines/mechanisms for energy use/distribution and honest policies framing to get rid of ambiguity over all these issues can be the panacea for resolving the energy crises in India.

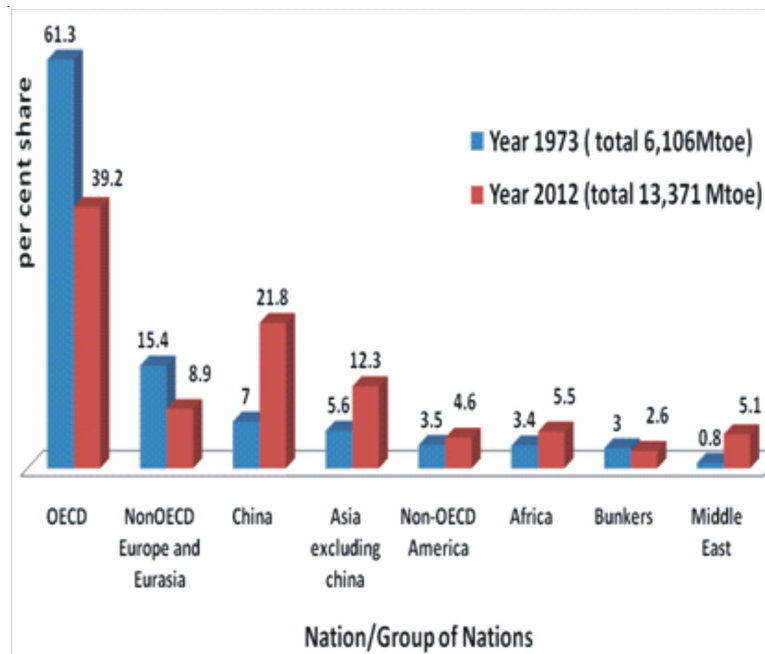
Introduction

In the past 50 years or more, rapid industrialization and urbanization process has led to constant increase in demand for energy. The total primary energy consumption of world has grown around three folds from 4672Mtoe (Million tons of oil equivalents) in 1973 to 13,371Mtoe in 2012. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

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(OECD), a group of 34 countries is consuming around 61.3% of world energy followed by China 21.8% and Non-OECD Europe and Eurasia with 15.4% share (Fig. 1A). In terms of composition, oil is leading with 31.4% share in world's energy supply, followed by coal 29.0%, natural gas 21.3%, bio-fuels and waste 10%, nuclear 4.8%, hydro 2.4%, other sources like solar, wind, heat and geothermal energy 1.1 %. So, it's beyond doubt that coal and oil as a tradition are still serving most of the energy needs of the developing world and sustainable sources like hydro and nuclear are still far behind in fulfilling the energy need of growing human civilization (Fig. 1B).

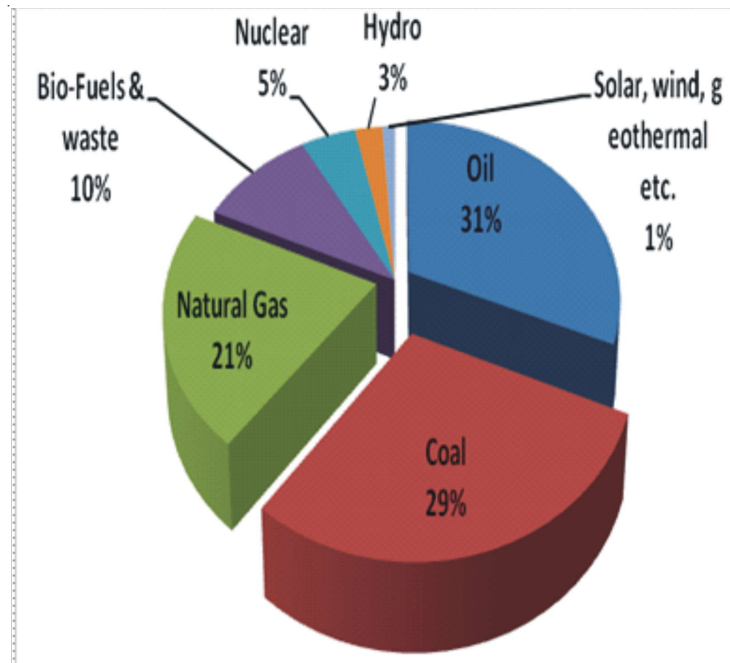
Figure 1A: Regional share in total energy demand of the globe.



According to an estimate of International Energy Agency (IEA), the world primary energy demand will double by the year 2030, climbing from the current level of about 13000Mtoe to about 18,000Mtoe by 2030 and will reach in between 25,000 to 30,000Mtoe by 2050. The Demand for energy in the world increased suddenly due to ever

increasing energy demand from Asia, particularly china, Non-OECD America and Middle East.¹ Primary energy demand is estimated to increase by 41% between 2012 and 2035, with average growth of 1.5% per annum. Growth slows, from 2.2% p.a. for 2005-15, projected to slow further to 1.7% p.a. in between 2015-25 and just 1.1% p.a. in the decade 2025-35².

Figure 1B: Share of different type of resources in satisfying energy demand at global level.



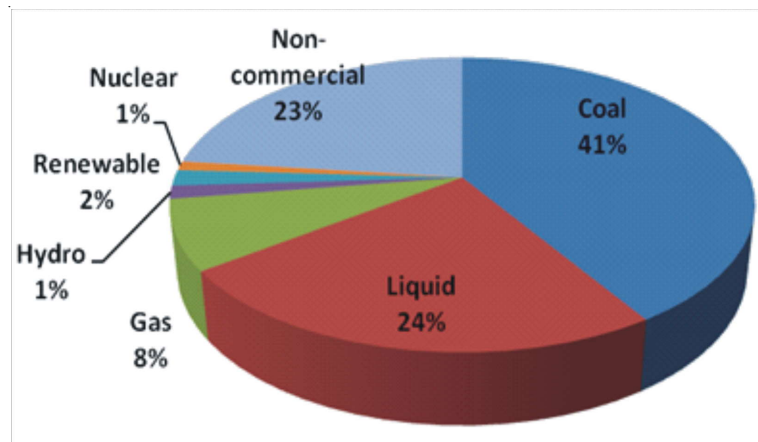
Source: Key World Energy STATISTICS 2014, The International Energy Agency.

India's Energy Sector

India imports around 30% of its primary energy (total 691Mtoe) requirements. This becomes still more critical because it made 38% of her primary commercial energy requirements in year 2010. Although there is an increase in indigenous production of coal, oil, gas, hydro,

nuclear and renewable energy resources, these are estimated to fall far short of the requisite 1508mtoe in 2030. As a result, energy dependency of India will shoot up to 51% of her primary energy requirements. Our neighbour China is expected to have import dependence of 20% by 2030. Thus, energy dependency will be a major hurdle in growth of our nation³ affecting our competing ability to a great extent.

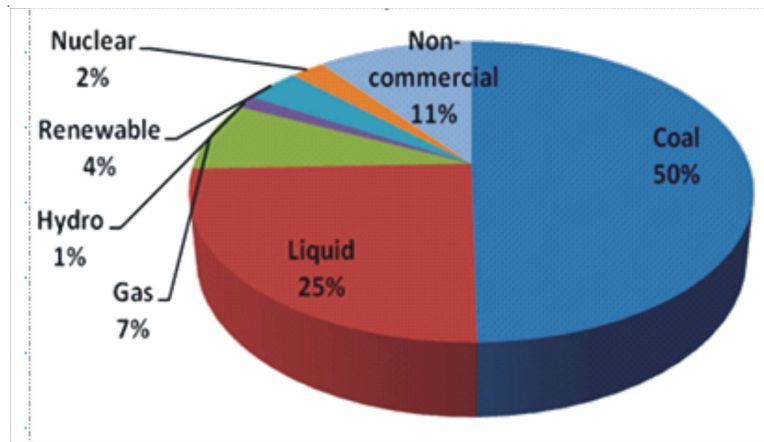
Figure 2A: India's composition of different resources within total primary energy demand *i.e.* 691Mtoe for year 2010.



The Indian economy uses a variety of energy sources both commercial and non-commercial. Fuel wood, animal waste and agro-waste are the traditional or 'non-commercial' sources of energy that continue to meet the bulk of the rural energy requirements even today. However, the share of these fuels in the primary energy supply has declined from over 70% in early 1950's to around 20%⁴ as of today and is being gradually replaced by the commercial fuels' such as coal, lignite, oil, natural gas and electricity (Fig. 2A). After year 2030 only 11% of energy supply will come from non-commercial energy resources (Fig.2B). Although India is in transition stage of traditional to model energysset up, the recent and future picture of India's primary energy demand and supply is not very promising. In 2010, non-renewable

resources supplied 96% of total energy demand, not very different by 2030 only 7% energy demand is likely to be filled by renewable energy including hydro- and nuclear energy.⁵

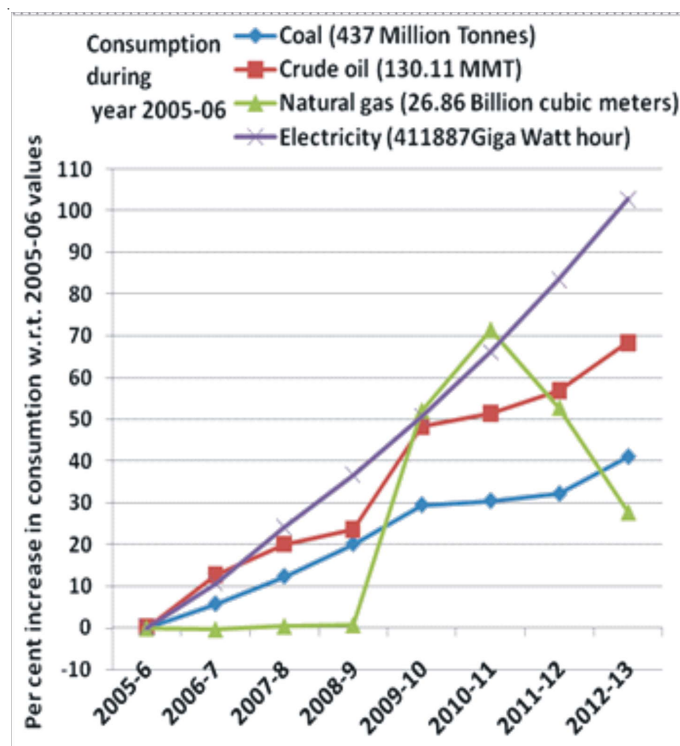
Figure 2B: India's projected composition of different resources within total primary energy demand i.e. 1508Mtoe for year 2030.



Projections for 2030 are provided by Business As Usual (BAU).

Until 1991, when economic reforms and liberalization actually began in India, the commercial energy sector was totally regulated by the government. After that private sector participation and consequently the competition in the coal, oil, gas and power sector started to happen. Due to liberalization, the economy improved and the GNP increased from \$330 billion in 1992-93, to about \$411 billion in 2001-02.⁶ There has been a global curiosity of foreign investors in India's energy sector since liberalization. India with an economy expected to grow at 8% for the next 25 years will require significant energy boost to sustain it. A population of over 120crore, rapid urbanization, industrialization, rising incomes and growing use of energy-intensive products has propelled the country to become the fifth largest energy consumer in the world, accounting for 3.45% of the total annual consumption.

Figure 3A: Trends in consumption of different energy resources of Energy in India with respect to 2005-06 values.

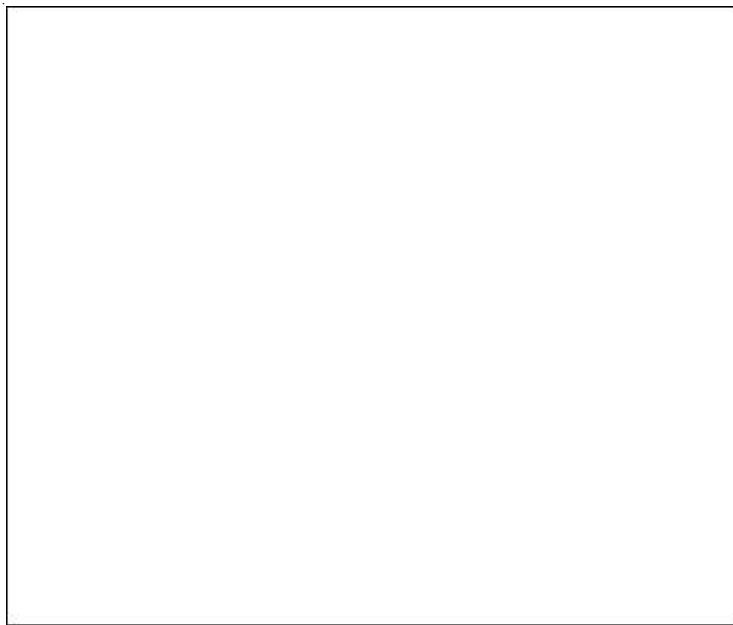


Sources: Office of Coal Controller, Ministry of Coal; Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas; Central Electricity Authority.

After 2005-06 there is nearly 41% increase (437.27 to 616.64 Million Tonnes) in coal consumption and 68.5% increase (130.11 to 219.21MT) in crude oil consumption till 2012-13 (Fig.3A). The Natural gas consumption also increased up to 71.4% in the year 2010-11, but decreased to 27.7% (*i.e.* increasing from 26.86 to 46.04 and further decreasing to 34.3 Billion cubic meters) in 2012-13. There is a significant increase in consumption of electricity including thermal, hydro & nuclear electricity, growing (from 411887 to 835513 GWH) constantly at an average rate of 10.63% per year, reaching 102.9% in comparison to 2005-06 consumption. In comparison to electricity, the average rate of increase in consumption of crude oil, coal, and natural

oil was 7.9, 5.06 and 5.3% respectively. Electricity is a basic requirement of any growing nation, Fig. 3A indicates significant increasing need of electric energy in coming years.⁷ During the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-11), GDP growth was 7.94 per cent. The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) projected a GDP growth of over 8 %. There is estimation that corresponding increase in energy demand will be 6 %. Unfortunately, as history indicates, now and in the near future we are not able to indigenously meet this energy demand (Fig. 3B). We are not well-equipped with energy resources except for coal and the energy efficient technologies like one we have acquired in case of cement industry. The existing policy ambiguity makes it more difficult to manage demand and supply.

Figure 3B: Trends in demand and supply of Primary Energy Sources in India (Mtoe).



Source: Eleventh Five Year Plan, Planning Commission.

Over the years, there has been a significant change in the pattern of supply and consumption of energy (Fig.3B). The total primary commercial energy supply has risen from 147.05Mtoe in 1970-71 to

715Mtoe in 2011-12. But till 2006 the per capita primary energy consumption in the country was 520kg of oil equivalent which made just 20% of the world's average of 1502kgoe.⁸ Commercial energy serves as the backbone of development. The major commercial energy consuming sectors in the country are: Industry (consuming 49 share), Transport (22%), Agriculture (15%), Household (10%) and others with 14% consumption. There is almost 805% increase in demand and supply of commercial energy in 40 years after 1971. But the supply from domestic resources in India were 21% in 1971 and also found to be 20.3% in 2011-12. It was only during around 2001 to 2007 that we were able to generate almost 30 to 33.7% of India's commercial energy needs. Import of almost 79% of commercial energy demand remains a major hurdle in development of Indian economy.

The Diversity in Energy Resources

As already discussed above, though diverse in quality of energy resources available, in terms of quantity energy sector in India has long been coal dominant, with coal accounting for more than a half of primary commercial energy consumption and oil accounting for almost one-third. Coal is commonly used directly by means of generating high temperatures in industry or indirectly by electricity derived from it in industry, commercial and non-commercial buildings. Oil mostly serves as the backbone of transport, agricultural, captive power generation and to a lesser extent in industry and other development. The relative availability and demand of different energy resources in India is as follows.

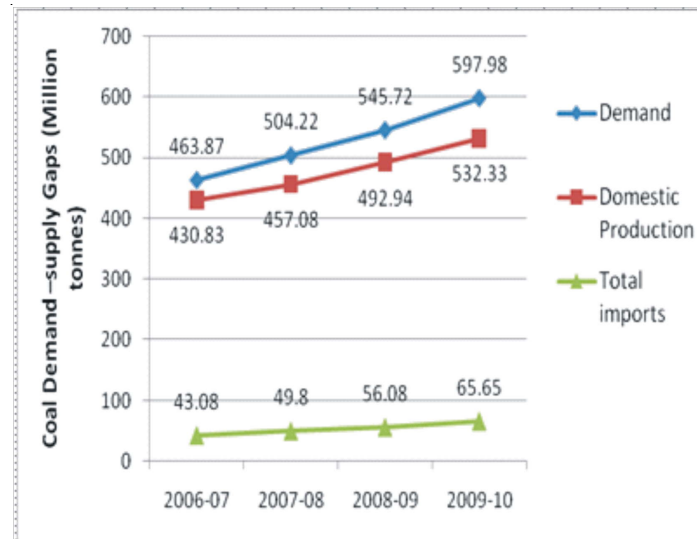
Coal

The Global proven coal reserve was estimated to be 9,84,453 MT (Million Tons) by end of 2003. Around 25.4%, 15.9% and 11.6% is shared respectively by USA, Russia and China followed by India with 8.6% (84,396 Million Tons) reserve. However, in India recent estimates of CIL (Coal India Limited) show that only 40,000MT of the proven reserves are presently extractable. India is the third largest coal producer in the world (behind china and USA) and accounts for 8.5% of the world's annual coal production. It is also the third largest coal consumer and accounts for nearly 9% of the world's annual coal consumption. The coal reserves of India may last up to 230 years at the current Reserve to Production (R/P) ratio. But the dilemma is that most of these coal resources are in the forest areas, rich in biodiversity and inhabited by tribal population. According to Twelfth Five Year Plan, it

is absolutely essential to ensure that domestic production of coal increases from 540 MT in 2011–12 to the target of 795 MT during 2016-17. In this increase of 255 MT, it is assumed that 64 MT will be in captivity and the rest being met by Coal India Limited. However, even with this increase, the country will need to import 185 MT of coal in 2016-17 to meet future energy needs.⁹

The coal reserve is the most abundant primary energy resource available in India. More than half of the country’s energy needs are met by coal and about 75% of electricity is now fuelled by coal. The rest is mainly consumed by the steel industry, cement, fertilizers, chemical production, paper making and sugar-mills etc.¹⁰ Although the domestic production has increased rapidly over the last few years, demand continues to outstrip domestic supply. While demand for coal exceeded domestic supply by around 20-25MT in each of the years between 2001-02 and 2003-04, the deficit is being bridged largely through imports. Since 2006, with the demand increasing at about 10% per year (Fig. 4A), the gap between supply and demand also widen by 15.1% per year. This has the potential to put in danger the future economic growth.¹¹

Figure 4A: Coal demand –supply Gaps

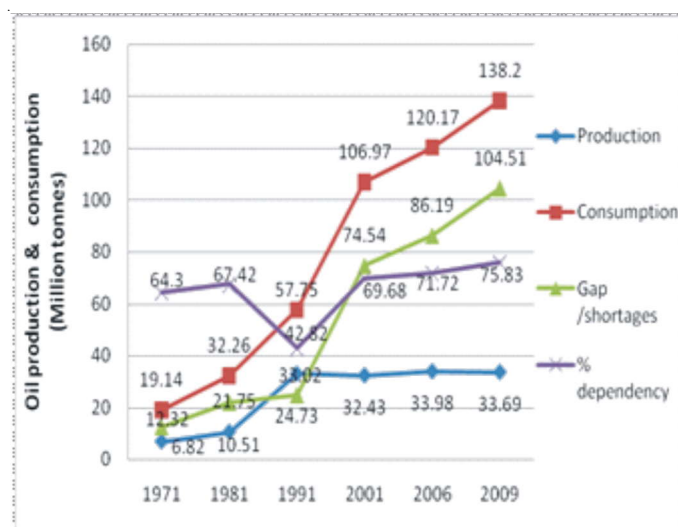


Source: Mid-term Appraisal of the Eleventh Plan, Planning Commission, 2011.

Oil and Natural Gas

Ranking sixth in the list, India consumes 2.9% of the world's total annual petroleum production. Twenty-nine per cent of it is used in transport, 17% each in commercial, industrial and domestic sectors. The domestic production grew slowly from 33.02 million tons in 1991 to 33.69 million tons in 2009. During this period our oil reserves remained in between 700 to 750 million tons. Fig. 5A shows the trend in oil production and consumption and the import dependency since 1975. We are able to generate just 17% of our consumption needs of oil and our dependence on imported oil is growing fast. Oil and oil products is the single largest item in India's entire annual import bill (Fig. 5B). We are spending about 40% of our export income to import oil for domestic consumption. With such large dependency on imports, the economy always remains at risk of volatility in international oil price fluctuations, as well as political threats.

Figure 5A: Trends in oil production and consumption (Million tons)

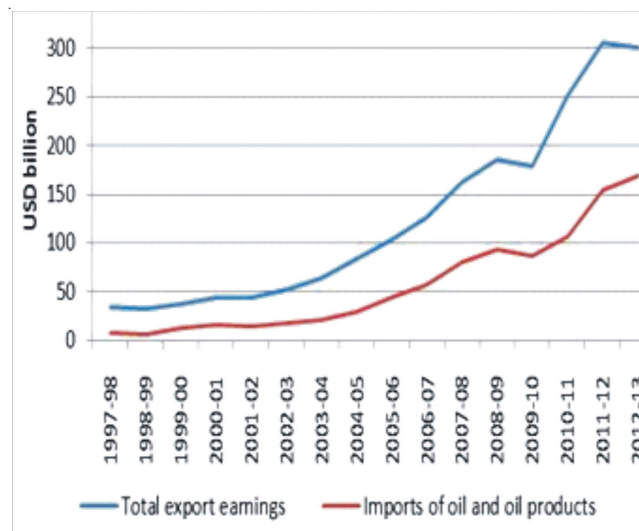


Source: Report of the Expert Committee, Planning Commission and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

The world's oil prices are cyclic and keep rising and falling. It increased from 10US\$barrel⁻¹ in 1975 to 90US\$barrel⁻¹ in 1979 and then progressively going down in 1990's and again rising in 2005-06

to 70US\$barrel⁻¹ and further to 142US\$barrel⁻¹ in 2008-09. Studies indicate that a gradual 5% per year increase in the oil price would bring down India's GDP by 0.25 % and raise the inflation by 0.6per cent. The oil price hike after 1973 decelerated the economy by 0.3% and increased the inflation rate to 20.2% once again in 1979 the increased global oil prices brought down our growth rate by 5.2% and inflation rate shooting up to 14%. Similarly, in 2005-09 again the prices shot up to 112US\$ a barrel¹, increasing inflation and enhancing the current account deficit of India's balance of payments. With the growing domestic demand for oil, at 3.5-6% per year and the world oil prices around 120 US\$ a barrel¹ (except last one year), the cost of import is proving to be heavy burden on foreign exchange reserves¹². The petroleum sector suffers from major problems like controlled low product selling rate and high cost of production. Domestic prices for diesel charged by oil marketing companies was 35.3% lower than trade parity prices before the recent price adjustment. Kerosene and LPG are provided at 72.6% and 53.6% lower than their actual price.¹³ This discourages private investment and scope for quality research in

Figure 5B: Trend of export earnings vs. oil import payments.

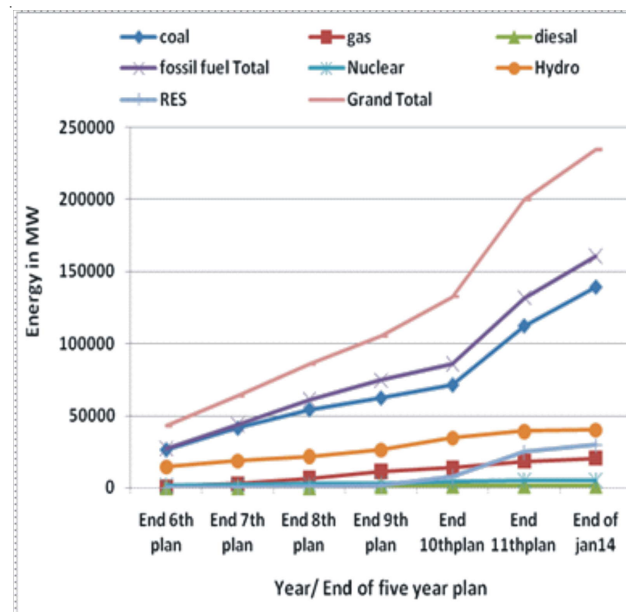


Source: RBI (2013)

petro sector. The impact of the recent decline in oil prices to US\$ 120 a barrel will have to be assessed if it stabilises around it.

Natural gas, over the years has emerged as the most preferred fuel due to its inherent eco-friendly nature, greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. Transport, agriculture and domestic use account for most of natural gas consumption. The demand for natural gas has sharply increased in the last two decades at the global level. In India its production was almost negligible at the time of independence, at present it is at 34.3 billion cubic meters (BCM). India has got only 0.5% of world proven natural gas reserves. It now supplies about 8% of our energy, with the share expected to remain at 7% by 2030 (Fig. 2A, 2B). Its consumption increased from 26.86 BCM during 2005-06 to 46.48 BCM in 2010-11 (Fig.3B). Then it decreased to 34.64 BCM in 2013-14 although its consumption was projected high at 48.81 BCM. To fulfil growing demand of natural gas, public and private sector companies are pursuing import options.

Fig 6A: Change in share of different type of energy resources in production of power, during last Five Year Plans of India.

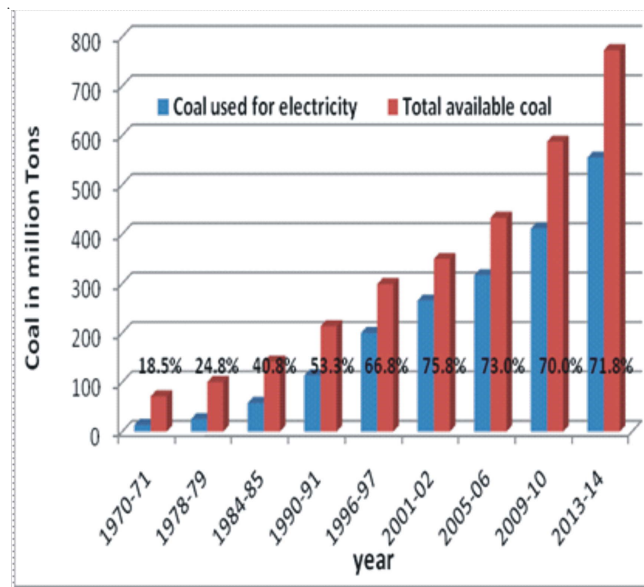


Source: Government of India, Ministry of Power, Central Electricity Authority, New Delhi. Executive Summary Power Sector. January- 2014

Power

In the very first year of the twenty-first century, 56% of houses in India were electrified. After a decade in 2011 the number increased to 67% but in rural areas, just 55% houses possessed electricity connection. Despite the impressive increase in the installed capacity, the electric power supply continues to remain short of demand. The energy shortfall has been at 3.8% in the year January 2014 after reaching the highest of 13% in 2008. On the other hand, the peak shortage has reached at the level of 4.1% after reaching 16.6% in the year 2008. With an intense increase in power demand with economic growth and more earning capacity, in India uninterrupted power supply is still a dream to come true. To fill this gap the Eleventh Five Year Plan added 55,000 MW of generation capacity which, though short of the target of 62,345MW, it was more than twice the capacity added in the Tenth Plan. Further the Twelfth Five Year Plan aims to add another 88,000 MW.¹⁴

Fig 6B: Amount & Per cent of coal used for electricity in comparison to available quantity.



Source: India Energy Book (2012), World Energy Council, Indian Chamber Committee.

In January 2014, India generated 2,34,601.94 MW electricity. Out of it, thermal power *i.e.* fossil fuel produced 68.41% (*i.e.* 1,60,483.99MW), nuclear produced 2.037% (*i.e.* 4,780.00MW), and hydro produced 16.99% (*i.e.* 39,875.40MW) and Renewable Energy Resources produced 12.56% (*i.e.* 29,462.55MW). Beside this, captive power of 39,375.36MW was also produced. Coal leads it with production of 59.2% (*i.e.* 1,38,903.4 MW) energy. Graph 6A clearly shows that the country is depending heavily on coal to fulfil our electricity needs.¹⁵ To produce this much electric power, nearly 71.8% of the total available coal from all sources is burned in power plants. Fig.6B clearly shows that the share of power generation in coal consumption remained above 70% in the last one and a half decade. Domestic coal production has not kept in pace with the growing demand for coal in the power sector. Non-availability of the desired quality of coal has resulted in generation loss and hampered the growth of thermal generation. Further, the shortage of gas and high prices of oil add up to slow down the production of power. The heating, cooling and lighting demands of residential and commercial buildings account for 29% of the total electricity consumed in India. Remaining 46% goes to industries, 19% to agriculture and the left over 6% is used for other purposes.

While the technology and GDP is increasing, the energy demand by buildings will continue to grow. The residential area is projected to increase by 4.3%, the commercial built-up area is projected to increase by 6.9% by 2030. Consequently, the demand of electricity for lightning and appliances is expected to rise by 127% by 2016–17. To overcome this demand, Indian Government promoted energy efficient appliances by making energy efficiency labelling mandatory for four appliances, namely, frost-free refrigerators, room air conditioners, tube lights and distribution transformers led to easy availability of appliances with improved average energy efficiency ratio. The emergence of solid state lighting, based on Light Emitting Diode (LED), presents brilliant opportunity for increasing lighting energy efficiency. The importance of it can be estimated from the fact that year 2014 Nobel Prize in physics has been awarded to Isamu Akasaki, Hiroshi Amano and Shuji Nakamura, inventors of blue LEDs. The Prime Minister of India suggested that common New Year gifts should be replaced by of LED bulbs to several government schemes to promote LED usage.

The availability of reliable and quality power at affordable price plays a pivotal role in growth of the economy. In order to decrease

dependency on imported fuel for power generation, India adopted a blend of thermal- and hydro-power, as the backbone of electricity generation. In 2012, India was the seventh largest producer of hydroelectric power in the globe, with 115 Billion Kilowatt hours generated. According to the CEA, the total utility-based installed capability of hydroelectric power in early 2014 was nearly 41GW. Further, hydro-power has 21% share in total power generation and offers opportunity to produce cheap and clean power. Poor infrastructure, ecological hazards, social and displacement, and judicial intervenes act as obstacle in the large-scale development of hydro-power. e.g. Sardar Sarovar Dam on River Narmada benefits both Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Similar experiences leading to disputes in Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh have held a number of hydro-electric projects. India is also focusing on nuclear and solar energy to ensure uninterrupted power for development of the nation. Although the nuclear share of total generation is 3% in comparison to 9.7% of OECD and 4.8% for whole Globe.² The government plans to increase nuclear share of total generation from 3% in 2011 to 25% by 2050. The total installed capacity presently is 4780MW. The potential installed capacity through uranium and domestic thorium is more than 500000MW. After developing and demonstrating thorium-fuelled Advanced Heavy Water Reactor (AHWR), we are able to use thorium for the third stage of nuclear power programme. This reactor is equipped with several innovative passive safety features that have now assumed special importance, globally following the Fukushima-Daiichi events.¹⁶ But supply of equipment of global standards and size to enable fast capacity addition and continuous supply of fuel to keep the plants running remains critical concerns. However, the recent resolution in six year long dilemma in India-US civil nuclear cooperation seems to be a step forward in this direction of achieving continuous uranium supplies and consequently maximum power from nuclear energy.¹⁷

Non-Commercial Sources of Energy

A significant share of energy requirement in India, in particular of rural India, is met from non-commercial sources i.e. wood, crop residue, animal waste and animal muscle power. Firewood leading with 65% of this total non-commercial energy resources of rural India is also useful in semi-urban households to a certain extent. The National sample survey 2000 revealed that in 86% of rural households, the primary source of cooking energy was firewood and woodchips or dung cakes.

The efficiency with which useful energy is presently being realized from these sources is very low, at about 10-15%. The share of non-commercial fuels in the total energy supply has, however, declined from 74% in 1950-51 to 52.07% in 1980-81; 27.37% in 2006-07 to 23.63% (i.e. about 167 Mtoe against total of 715Mtoe) in 2011-12 (Fig. 3B). However, despite constant decrease in non-commercial energy supply in total energy supply, the energy supply from non-commercial resources has doubled in 40 years from 86.72Mtoe in 1970-71 to 167Mtoe in year 2011-12.

Renewable Sources of Energy

India plans to double its renewable energy capacity to 55,000 MW by 2017 as part of efforts to increase efficiency of its energy use, including non-conventional energy sources such as wind, solar, and energy from biomass.¹⁸ Given the limited amount of domestic conventional commercial energy resources, renewable energy sources hold a special attraction for the country. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat have significant potential of generating wind power. India is positioned among the top five countries in wind power installation after Germany, USA, Denmark and Spain. Wind power capacity reached nearly 13184MW by January 2011, with an estimated potential of 45000 MW.¹⁹ It is one of the clean sources that hold out the promise of meeting energy demand in the direct, grid-connected modes as well as stand-alone applications.²⁰ In the Twelfth Five Year Plan raising the height of the tower is considered an important factor in making wind a major renewable source of power generation for India, adding 30,000MW by 2020.²¹

Biomass (non-commercial energy resource) consisting of wood, crop residues and animal dung continues to dominate energy supply in rural and traditional sectors, having about 23.7% share in the total primary energy consumption in India. Co-generation technologies, based on multiple and sequential use of a fuel for generation of steam and power, aims at surplus power generation in the process industries, such as sugar, paper and rice mills. Out of total 5000MW aggregate biomass combustion based power and sugar-co-generation capacity, 2560MW have been achieved.²²

Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) contributes at present around 2.5% of the power generation based on non-conventional energy technology in India. Though the present share of solar energy in our energy demand is very small it has got vast potential, to fulfil the environmental and

sustainable development needs of energy of independent India. By 2022 Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) sets an ambitious target of setting up approximately 1000MWp (Megawatt Power) grid connected and 2,000MWp off-grid Solar Photovoltaic systems with a phase scale-up of current system with aggregate capacity of 47MWp that have been deployed for different applications for providing voltage support in rural areas and peak load sharing in urban areas. Similarly, 1,000MWp is targeted to be generated by solar thermal technologies having a very high potential for applications in solar water heating systems for industrial and domestic applications and for solar cooking in the domestic sector.²³

Commercial Energy: Demand and Supply Gaps

India started reform in energy sectors long before. Reforms are continuing but our goal remains unachieved. India satisfies indigenously only 75% of its energy needs rest through imports. Particularly in case of oil and natural gas, our domestic production is almost stagnant. The gap between demand and supply increased from 12.3% in 1971 to 75.8% in 2009. The natural gas, production was 26.8 Billion Cubic Meter in 2005-06 and increased to 34.3 Billion Cubic Meter in 2012-13, but its demand is increasing more rapidly at the rate of more than 6.5% per year. In May 2015, our import dependency for oil and natural gas was at 79.9%, this import was 34.4% of the gross import of the country.²⁴ The growth of the energy sector is mainly due to the coal sector and it has served our needs to a large extent. But in totality the demand always remained more than production and the gap is constantly widening. Following are the limitations in quenching the energy thirst of India.

1. Since 2007, the production of coal increased moderately by about 4% per annum, against demand growing at more than 7% annually. The shortage in the demand and supply of coal is due to the infrastructural bottlenecks, accumulating pit-head stocks, inferior quality of coal and low productivity in mines.²⁵ This is because India lacks more advanced technology to have deep underground mining operations. 90% of our mines are opencast and situated in rich forest regions of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The delays in regulatory approvals, opposition based on environmental concerns, land acquisition issues, etc. take considerable time and effort to resolve. Additionally, inefficient utilization of rail capacity also affects about one-half of the coal transported within India.

2. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, crude oil imports have increased due to an increase in petroleum product demand, mainly in the transportation sector and the stagnation in domestic oil production is around 33MT. High international oil prices in the last few years and the growing demand for oil products have increased the country's fiscal deficit, due to mounting fuel subsidy bill. The vulnerability of the economy to the global oil prices is putting a tremendous pressure on the economic growth, inflation and payment balance of the nation.²⁶ However the sharp dip in prices after June 2014 has resulted in low inflation at around 7% during first half of 2014-15 and 0.4 in October 2014. However, dependency makes the transport sector highly susceptible to any shock in the market. Although to a small extent, as already been in practice, the diversification in energy supply of transport sector by natural gas and electricity will save this sector from international shocks in oil prices.

In order to reduce the impact of oil shock,²⁷ first, construction of Strategic Petroleum Reserves is the most immediate solution. Their formation is already in process. The first phase and the second phase are going to add 5.33 and 12.5MT of crude oil storage space. Other countries can also be involved to undertake joint storing and releasing activities. Second, there is an urgent need to revisit the country's policy on fuel subsidies, which increase fiscal deficit and discourage companies to invest in research to increase domestic production capacity and expansion of infrastructure. Third, the nation should diversify sources of crude oil imports and substitutions towards alternative needs to be made. Fourth, the domestic oil production also needs a boost, and foreign companies with expertise in exploration, particularly in deep offshore fields, need to be invited. Fifth, the Indian companies already hold share in oil/gas block in Sudan, Russia, Venezuela, Azerbaijan and Mozambique. The government should encourage these companies to acquire overseas assets, as a way to shield domestic energy sector from global volatility. Sixth, there should be an emphasis on developing the solar and wind based energy generation. The government should promote CNG and electric vehicles and provide a quality public transport.²⁸

3. Most of India's gas consumers pay rates that are much lower than the prices of imported gas. At present the government is providing nearly Rs.14 per litre subsidy on domestic LPG. With only 0.5% of the world proven gas reserves, and the consumption is expected to rise. India is bound to import natural gas.²⁹

4. The power sector is the largest and fastest growing area of energy demand, its share raised from 22% to 36% of the total energy consumption between 1990 and 2011. Rapid industrialization and increased domestic use, the development of irrigation have enhanced the demand for electricity to a level far in excess of supply. The major causes of this deficit are the inadequate planning techniques, resulting in cost escalations, delays in project formulation and implementation, under utilization of the installed capacity, and high AT&C losses around 30-40% against 6-11% in developed nations. Surprisingly, with the increase in technology, our AT&C losses increased from 15% in 1966-67 to in between 30-40%. The major part of the loss is taking place only in distribution sector, which accounts for 80-90% of the total T&D losses.³⁰

5. India's energy efficiency is far below international standards; the country is rated as one of the highest energy intensive economies in the world. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the energy intensity (energy consumption per unit of GDP) is nearly 2.88 times that of the developed countries. This means that for producing the same quantity of output, the consumption of energy in India is almost three times that of any one of the developed countries.

In India due to relatively more growth in energy consumption in comparison to GDP growth, energy intensity increased by 10% from 0.137KWh/rupee to 0.1518KWh/rupee in 2005-06 to 2012-13. On the other hand, according to BP Energy Outlook 2035, at global level, the amount of energy required per unit of GDP is expected to decline by 36% (1.9% p.a.) between 2012 and 2035.³¹ The per capita energy availability growing more rapidly in comparison to GDP.³² The reason may be that with the increase in income, now we are using relatively more commercial energy in non-developmental work and using energy less-efficient below international standard appliance/devices in commercial and domestic use. Further, as mentioned earlier, T&D losses is one of the major causes of high energy intensity in India.

6. Last in the list but not the least is the poor governance that has been mainly responsible for the dismal state of the country's energy sector. Whether due to corruption in granting of clearances for mining or power and other energy projects, or theft/diversion of power, refusal to implement reforms related to pricing and subsidies, or taking decision based solely on vote bank considerations, it has led to a poor investment climate in upstream as well as downstream energy projects, and a lack of upgradation of infrastructure, thereby contributing to higher transmission and distribution losses.³³

Conclusion

Hence, it could be concluded that the Indian energy sector is characterized by low per capita commercial energy consumption, skewed distribution of primary energy resources, increasing demand and supply gap, inadequate energy infrastructure, and high import dependence mainly in the form of crude oil and gas. It becomes critical to develop an oil pool against the backdrop of increasing international oil prices, which have doubled since the beginning of 2004 and have tripled since 2002. Electric power supply and the demand gap is still persistent due to fuel supply problems. A large investment is a pre-requisite to tap the non-conventional energy potential. There is an urgent need of becoming energy independent through hydroelectric dams and coal mining to ensure our national security. The concerned environmental issues should be tackled wisely with thinking that there should be no compromise with energy/strategic security of our country. An efficient energy management system needs to be developed for making energy conservation cost effective in the issue of fossil fuels. Subsidies should be provided to the poor only through an efficient distribution system. The high energy intensity is a very important matter that must be considered seriously, because we are highly energy dependent and getting so costlier energy that is linked directly with our growth and security. As it happened in the case of Ganga, energy security should become an independent ministry. That should work in a holistic and integrated manner, dealing together with power, petroleum, gas, coal and renewable energy.

Notes

- ¹ <http://www.iaea.org>, 'Key World Statistics 2014.' N.p., 2014. Web. 14 Jan. 2015. pp.7-9.
- ² <http://www.bp.com>, 'BP Energy Outlook 2035'. N.p., 2015. Web. 14 Mar. 2015. p.9
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