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Historiography of Civilizations

EDITORS
D. P. Chattopadhyaya
Daya Krishna

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D.P. Chattopadhyaya Daya Krishna

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Itihāsa, History and Historiography of Civilization

D.P. CHATTOPADHYAYA
Jadavpur University, Calcutta

Not infrequently we witness a sense of bewilderment among the writers on the human past when they are told that many peoples lack in historical consciousness. To look closely into this issue is culturally very instructive, almost revealing. Ordinarily, modern historians understand by *history* reconstruction of human ideas and activities based on reliable record. This enterprise aims at discovering deeper meanings of the different forms of human life. It is rarely realized that this view of history is neither old nor universal. Before the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, historiography did not figure at the centre of any civilization. For an interpretation or understanding of a form of life as a whole, people used to turn their attention to religion, philosophy, literature and other forms of imagination like myth.

> . . . [H]istorians aim at reconstructing an accurate record of human activities and at achieving a more profound understanding of them. . . . [It] is quite recent. . . . It springs from an outlook that is very new in human experience: the assumption that the study of history is a natural, inevitable kind of human activity. Before the late eighteenth century, historiography (writing of history) did not stand at the centre of any civilization.[1]

If to reconstruct the meaning of *individual* human activities proves difficult, to undertake this task in the larger field of this or that human civilization as a whole is bound to prove additionally difficult. It is true that the ideas and activities of individuals cannot be understood without referring to their societal background or forms of life. Also it has to be admitted from the other end that the life of a civilization, its rise and fall, cannot be interestingly depicted without making any direct or indirect, specific or generic, reference to the lives of individual human beings who are the architects and carriers of that civilization.

Neither methodological individualism, i.e., historical events are to be understood in terms of concerned individuals, their ideas and actions, nor methodological collectivism, i.e., historical events is best understandable in terms of collectivities like class, culture, race, religion and nation, seems to be plausible as a *reductionist* program. The composite approach is often found to be more promising and fruitful. The exactly advisable approach depends much upon the nature, scope and level of the issue to be dealt with. When one proposes to reconstruct the history of a civilization, one's approach cannot be comparable to what another historian engaged, for example, in tracing the history of a family, royal or lay, is required to do. The reason is not far to seek. The life of a civilization, embodying the achievements of a people or group of peoples, is much more complex than that of an individual being or family. The heterogeneity of peoples and ideas that is held together in a civilization is marked by diverse customs, styles and values. The diversity of a civilization is manifest in its forms of knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, rites and rituals.

In our understandable eagerness to highlight the heterogeneity and complexity of a civilization, its broad unity, marked by the recognized do's and don'ts, should not be forgotten. This unity pervades the whole of a society, from the centre to the periphery. The complexity that defines a civilization, especially its cultural traits, are not uniformly or evenly distributed over the entire society. The complexity that marks, for example, the operations of a stock exchange, the administration of a lunatic asylum, and the management of a bachelors' home cannot be identical.

Property and technology impart increasing complexity to a civilization. Another important factor responsible for the complexification of a civilization is the introduction of writing. Electronics and telecommunications add new dimensions to the process. Property, technology, writing, etc. not only enable different groups of people to assume added roles than the others but also try to devise institutional means to preserve and increase the same. In the process, the traditional roles of the elite and the laity undergo dissimilar, discriminative and often disorderly change. Also change the values, norms and goals of different groups of people in different spheres and stages of life. All this contribute to increasing complexification of a civilization. Historiographical method to deal with the complex phenomena and simple or not-so-complex phenomena cannot be obviously identical.

Historiography, writing of history, and historians are understandably very intimately related. Historians, like any other group of human

beings, belong to a social milieu, and as such their self-image is, to a great extent, influenced by how others in a group identify themselves. Since everybody is born in a family, his self-identity, cannot be completely dissociated from his own familial identity. It is true that every person from the same family does not belong to his/her family in an identical manner. Some people are deeply devoted to their family, the weals and owes of the family members, and religiously follow the family traditions, its ethos, customs, rites and rituals. This is obviously not true of all family members. The persons who are strongly individualist in their disposition have their own distinct ways of viewing themselves and their relations with the family, its past and future. All of us are not equally orthodox or heterodox. These peculiarities of human personality are bound to be there in the nature of genealogists, chroniclers or historians. Besides, what is very important to note, their aims are not identical. Therefore the social milieu as such cannot satisfactorily explain how different members of the same group would recall their own past, individual, familial or collective.

The Vedic literature provides us long lists of the teachers in the context of describing the ceremonies of different sacrificial rituals. In the *Brāhmaṇas* we come across systematic reference and exposition of the oldest genealogies *(vaṁśas)*. The names of the teachers and their pupils not less then 60 in number are named in the *vaṁśa Brāhmaṇas* of the *Sāmaveda*. Many of these genealogies contain the names of deities like Agni, Vāyu, Indra, and of course *Brāhmaṇas*. Many of these names are father-related or patronymic and, interestingly enough, some are mother-related or matronymic. Reference to the family genealogies is mainly intended to lend authenticity to what is said or injuncted in the concerned context.

But it becomes clear by the time of the rise of Buddhism and Jainism that reference to the authority of the *Vaṁśas* has started losing its importance. To neither of these two heterodox religious groups *vaṁśas* establish their chronological character or binding nature. Even the reference to the names of the gods could not persuade them to accept the authority of the *vaṁśas* for performing different rituals. The authority of the *vaṁśa* literature is questioned by the sceptic not only because of the non-chronological character of different *vaṁśas* mentioned in it but also because of the duplication of the names in different genealogies. The Buddhist and the Jaina critics were additionally suspicious of the authority claim of the *vaṁśas* on the ground of their proclaimed divine origin.

Beside *vaṁśa*, the other concepts which one finds in the Vedic literature for tracing the ancestry of different persons and their groups are *gotra* and *pravara*. The term *gotra* is found both in the *Ṛgveda* and *Atharvaveda* and also in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Among its different forms are 'family', 'clan', or 'lineage'. The people of the same *gotra* are deemed to be related by blood. In the *Gṛhyasūtras* and elsewhere emphasis is laid on the prohibition of marriage within a *gotra*. Avoidance of marital relation between cognatic and agnatic groups by several degrees, varying from three to six, is *gotra*-based and often claimed to be biologically advisable. But this rule of prohibition of marriage within the *gotra* was not universally insisted upon. Neither *gotra* nor caste appears to be a universal determinant of marriage relation.[2]

Pravara stands for the 'summons' addressed to Agni at the time of sacrifice. Since Agni used to be invoked by the names of the ancestors of the priest or Purohita, the word '*pravara*' means the series of invoked ancestors. Marriage, as stated before, was forbidden not only within the same *gotra* but also within the same *pravara*. The divisions between different groups of people on the basis of *gotra* and *pravara* appear to be separated by long interval. But these principles of classification or grouping were intended to regulate inheritance, succession and title for performance of different rituals. Identification of people in terms of *vaṁśa, gotra* and *pravara*, though uneven in importance, served some specific social purposes and had a substratum of histority underneath.

Compared to *gotra* and *pravara*, historiographically speaking, more significant in the Vedic context are *gāthās* (epic song verses) and *nārāśaṁsīs* (songs in praise of heroes). Songs of victory, praise of valour, gift and benevolence, lengthy and repeated reference to sacrifices, etc. essentially literary in character and composition, are deemed to be sacred and recommended to be recited down the generations. *Gāthās* refer not only to kings—Janamejaya, Kraivya and Bharata, for example—but also to gods like Indra. These are recited not only in the larger contexts like *Aśvamedha* but also in the limited domestic contexts. Musicians *(vīnāgāṇins)* and lute-players *(vīnāgāthins)* used to compose and sing songs in praise of the sacrifices performed by kings, nobles, household people and their ancestors and, in some cases, for future generations. The authors of the *gāthās*, unlike the revealed authorship of the Vedic hymns, seem to be human. The *gāthā* and *nārāśaṁsī* literature implies the existence of a class of minstrels and its social relevance to the people of the Vedic times. In spite of the courtly exaggerations of the writings of these bards and musicians, they kept

people aware of their past and paved the way to the rise of the historical *kāvya* and epic poetry.

For the purpose of understanding the mind and activities for the Vedic people the importance of *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇa* is to be rated very high—immediately after *Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda* and *Atharvana* but well above *gāthās* and *nārāśaṁsīs*. *Itihāsa*, legends of gods and heroes, and *purāṇas*, legends of origins, are elevated to the level of the *Vedas*. In all sorts of rituals—royal, feudal, ordinary household, auspicious and inauspicious, their recitation was very common, almost obligatory. Besides ritual, their other imports were didactic, explanatory and injunctive. The legend of the Flood is found in the *Itihāsa*. In the *Purāṇas* we come across various creation-legends and the legend or origin of the four castes out of the body of Prajāpati. Wars between gods and *Asuras* are also often referred to. In the absence of specific reference to the places of war and identity of the warring groups definitive historical reconstruction (as we understand it to-day) proves very difficult, almost impossible, and much is left to imagination.

It must be remembered here that the derogatory sense that is now attached to such terms as 'imaginary', 'mythical', and 'legendary' was not there in the minds of the pre-Vedic, Vedic and Purāṇic peoples of India. The fact that the cast of the ancient mind was different from that of the modern mind is no *argument* to maintain that the former was 'pre-logical' and the latter is 'logical'. Even this so-called rational periodization (ancient/medieval/modern) of history appears to be arbitrary. Synchronically speaking, equally arbitrary seems to be the classification of *different* human minds into such categories as 'tribal', 'national' and 'international'. In using the scale of time and place for normative or evaluative purposes in the human context one has to be very circumspect.

It is not surprising that many modern historiographers are critical of such 'serious defects' as 'mixture of mythology and folk-lore', 'acceptance of the operation of supernatural forces on human affairs', indifference to 'topography' and 'complete neglect of chronology'.[3] But why this surprise? Are 'we' justified in criticizing 'them' simply because of the different ways of recollecting and representing their past? If we critically reflect on the related issues, we can easily *understand*—and *understanding* is the key concept in this very complex context—that our surprise is rooted in our uncritical ethnocentrism and the resulting lack of understanding of *their* points of view, the concepts used by them for self-identification, self-recollection, and self-representation. 'We' and 'they' can well meet and understand each other; but at no stage of our

meeting (of minds) and understanding (of the concerned points of view) our cultural gap can be completely eliminated. Our freedom and individuality, though variable, are ineliminable. Even in our own age of so-called scientific historiography all historians are not unanimous in their appreciation or/and criticism of the history of the people of India. Not only the European historians differ between themselves in their understanding of the past of India but also the Indian historians do so. If the difference between H. Oldenberg, G. Bühler, F.E. Pargiter, M. Elphinstone, James Mill, G.F. Ilynin and A.L. Basham on India is notable, the same between R.G. Bhandarkar, H.C. Raychaudhuri, Radha Kumud Mookerjee, R.C. Majumdar, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, B.N. Dutt and D.D. Kosambi is no less notable. The presuppositions, values and religious commitments, the composition and complexity of the social milieu, and political inclination of the historians and various other 'non-academic' factors silently or explicitly influence their consciousness, views, judgment and finally what they write and/or orally communicate.

The development of the Buddhist historiography in India and neighbouring countries illustrates the point clearly. If most of the people of a culture, including the learned ones, believe, for example, in miracles, doctrines of *karma*, rebirth and incarnation, in the writings or words of mouth of their historians we find their 'history' in a form which fails to be regarded as history in the modern sense. On the ancestry, life, teachings, *nirvāṇa* and the after-effects—doctrinal, institutional and religious, of the Buddha his disciples and interpreters, old and new, widely differ. The times and lives of the peoples of the Buddhist era, early and later, as found in the Pālī *Tripiṭaka*, commentaries and chronicles, Sanskrit *Mahāvastu* and *Lalitavistāra*, the tradition due to the *Dīpavaṁśa* and the *Mahāvaṁśa*, *Ambaṭṭha-Sūṭṭa*, *Mahāpadāna-Sūṭṭa* and *Soṇadaṇḍa-Sūṭṭa* of *Dīgha Nikāya*, and some *Sūṭṭas* of *Majjhima Nikāya* are not understandably coherent or do not agree in details. Even about the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha and its significance legends, traditions and authorities are not in agreement. At times one gets the impression that he was essentially a saintly human being; at times he appears as a unique superman; also he has been portrayed as a Cosmic Being, *Dharma Kāya*, an incarnation of Supreme Reality or *avatāra*.

Buddhacarita and other works of Aśvaghoṣa (second century AD) have contributed much to our understanding of the Buddha and Mahāyāna Buddhism in different ways—literary, philosophical, biographical and historical. The life-stories of the Buddha and the accounts of his teachings available in the Pālī cannon had deeply influenced the source-books of

the Pālī commentaries and chronicles, and later on gave rise to quasi-canonical works in Sanskrit language.

The history of Buddhist art and literature owes much of its substance to the different versions of his life and teachings. It is not at all without point to say, as it has been said, that the Buddha borrowed and assimilated many Vedic insights and interpreted the same in his own creative way, and that the *Vedānta-Sūtras* of *Gauḍapāda* and *Vedānta-Bhāsya* of Śaṅkara are doctrinally, not ritually, indebted heavily to the Buddha. The history of different orthodox or pro-Vedic systems of philosophy cannot be coherently reconstructed without reference to the ideas of the Buddha. Both directly and indirectly Buddhism has contributed to the emergence of the Indian ways of writing history.

It is understandable that the relatively modern writers on history in their attempts to reconstruct the past of a country or a part thereof lay emphasis on temporal linearity or chronological time. At the same time it has to be noted that many of them, especially those who are philosophically inclined or theory-oriented, are well aware of the limits of the search for linearity or chronology. Both in perceptual time and cultural time 'gaps' have to be tolerated. At times not only the historians but also the chroniclers unconsciously or even consciously skip over some events, segments of time and details thereof. Every form of representation—legend, story, fable, chronicle, history and picture—involves elements of selection, elimination and organization. What precisely has to be done, how and to what extent in respect to reconstruction and/or deconstruction history is case-specific, depends mainly on the aim of the concerned writer or the artist. For example, to write history or to deal with historical time is different from to deal with and write on cosmological time, cultural time, biographical time, this or that calendrical time. Each of these forms of activity is creative in a way and has its peculiarities. More specifically speaking, different writers on the 'history' (history in the modern sense was yet to emerge as *a* discipline) of the peoples of (what we now call) South Asia had their different approaches, individually and collectively. Pre-Vedic, Vedic, Purāṇic, Buddhist and Jaina ways of recollecting and representing 'the past of India' are not identical. Yet the discerning scholars could identify the areas of overlap between different approaches and findings, enabling them to narrate *a* coherent, but not unchanging, historical account of the bygone days, peoples, their ideas and actions.

Some of the five characteristics, *pañcalakśaṇa*, of the Purāṇas like *sarga*, original creation, and *pratisarga*, dissolution and re-creation, may not be of much significance to the historiographers of to-day but *vaṁśa*,

genealogies, and *vaṁśānucarita*, biographies referred to in the genealogies, continue to be of importance to them for recapturing the past. In this connection the student of Indian historiography is reminded of the works like Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, the chronicle of King Harṣa of Thanesar (c. 606-648 AD), and, particularly, Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarañginī*, the royal and dynastic chronicles of Kashmir written around 1148-50 AD. While Bāṇa focuses his attention on the life of one ruler, Kalhaṇa traces the life-stories of a long line of rulers. But it must be said to the credit of both that in the process of narrating a ruler's life they provide us glimpses of the ways of life of the ruled, forms of administration, diplomacy, etc. While writing about the life of Harṣa it is interesting to note that he, following the Purāṇic style, not only refers to the genealogy of the King of Thanesar but also to his own. To trace simultaneously *self*-ancestry and *other*-ancestry has a deep significance in it. It brings out the hidden point ordinarily forgotten, viz., *how* other(s) would be depicted in a 'historical' narrative depends very much upon the mental make-up, the web of beliefs, of the narrator himself, *who* he is. If the chronicler believes in the operation of supernatural forces upon the human affairs, in the efficacy of dreams, and attributes deep significance to omens and portents, his chronicle is bound to be different from that of another whose cast of mind is 'naturalist'.

In the western tradition, the ancient historians like Herodotus and Thucydides (fifth century BC) of the Hellenic world, Livy (first century BC), Tacitus (second century AD) and Polybius (c. 200-18 BC) wrote on history but, during the time, as in India, the distinction between myth, legend, antiquities, literature and history as recognized to-day was not clearly demarcated. Herodotus, referred to by Cicero as the 'father of history', was basically a traditionalist. To him history was an 'inquiry' and not narration. Like others of his time in the Asia Minor, he was also interested in genealogies. During his visit to Egypt he was told of the descent of their high priests through 345 generations. Both in Babylonia and Egypt genealogies of kings used to be kept in temples. Also there were inscribed the glory of the gods. Some of the Hellenic and Roman historians tried, not always successfully, to draw a distinction between history and biography. To them history was intended to give true story, while the aim of the biographer was to praise and to edify.[4]

Some ancient scholars like Varro (116-27) tell us that histories, being concerned as they were with chronological accounts of wars and political events, proved narrow in their aim and have to be distinguished from study of the antiquities which relied upon a variety of evidence and was concerned with a broader spectrum of happenings. This view echoes

Aristotle's dismissive attitude towards history as a branch of literature dealing only with the *particular*, neglecting the things and beings of *general* character.

The rules of rhetoric are found to have considerable influence on the historical writings of the Romans like Cicero and Livy. True to the tradition of the time, they followed the style of oratory. It is interesting to note that the historians of the ancient time were invariably found to be supportive of their own country, its culture and tradition, which included fictitious and supernatural things.

A similar attitude is evident in the Christian historiography. The Christian writers on history defended their religion against their critics. For example, Eusebius (fourth century) tells us how through a long series of acts of Divine providence a Christian Empire was established by Constantine. St. Augustine and his disciples wrote on the causes of degradation of all the non-Christian societies. Another point to be noted is that many of the ancient and medieval works on history were concerned with contemporary events and written by the people who themselves participated in those events. This partly explains the subjective character of their writings.[5]

But while we say all these things we should be careful *not* to be critical about their ways. We must try to understand their times and minds. For the writers of history, like other human beings, are product of their own times. This is not to deny that through scrutiny of the evidences used by them and their points of emphasis we can find in their writings a critical element of judgment. In other words, cultural determination of historiography is not inconsistent with the historian's freedom of judgment.

It seems that the Western historiography in the medieval age, from the fifth to the eleventh century, considerably declined. Most of the writers were learned monks. The learning of the time was quite different from what is meant by it now. The elements of folklore and miracle got mixed up with the lives of the saints or human personalities. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People (597-731 AD)* are full of supernatural happenings, miracles and visions. The sources used by him were meagre and dubious. Another work which deserves mention in this connection is *Life of Charlemagne* written by Einhard, a courtier of the Carolingian King himself. He is full of praise of the deeds of his King.

To glorify kings, Christian God and saints was the chief aim of the historians of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth century. This predominant orientation is illustrated by such works as *History of the Kings of Britain* written by Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Chronica* written by

Otto, and *Mirror of History* written by Vincent of Beauvais. Otto was a Bishop and descendant of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, and Vincent wrote his book under the patronage of King Louis IX. The royal and the theological associations of the writers are clear from the contents of their histories. Whether one accepts these writings or not, the annals and chronicles of the medieval age help us much to understand the minds and activities of the people of the time, especially those of the leading political and religious personalities.

Criticism of the medieval historiography came mainly from the humanist historians of the fifteenth century of the early Renaissance period, who started working under the influences of the Byzantine scholars who moved from the East to the West of the crumbling Roman Empire. The works of humanists like Petrarch (fourteenth century), Valla (fifteenth century) and Erasmus (sixteenth century) introduced a new orientation in historical writings. Use of philology and the methods of textual criticism started exerting a sober and disciplining influence on the medieval historiography. With the waning of the spirit of the Middle Age not only the attitude of the general public but also that of the historians as writer started changing in a big way. This is not to suggest that everything medieval was dark or whatever started emerging during the period of Renaissance was right or good. From the historical point of view the main question is to understand the changing mind of the peoples and their attitude to the various objectives, *puruṣārthas*, of life, religious and secular, divine and mundane.

The new astronomical paradigm, the sun-centric hypothesis of the planetary system proposed by Copernicus, a bishop by profession, proved very influential in changing human minds in relation to life and the world. The heleo-centric hypothesis, although did not prove immediately acceptable to the Church or even to the then scientific world of learning, raised a number of fundamental questions with clear bearing on science and society. The heleo-centric hypothesis of the Polish theologian challenged (at least in principle) the prevailing Ptolemic paradigm of astronomy. Its fall out proved widespread and far-reaching. At least some learned persons like Galileo and Bruno started feeling the necessity of rewriting not only the history of science but also that of man.

One of the significant characteristics of the humanist historiography in Europe was to focus the writer's attention on the local pride of a people and their past achievements. A number of histories along the line was written in Spain, Poland and Germany. The opposition between the Catholic historiography and the Protestant historiography is another notable feature of the time. Both in the areas of clerical history and

legal history some significant contributions were made during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The voluminous works of such scholars as Le Nain de Tillemont, Pierre Pithou and Andre Duchesne proved a very valuable store house for future historians like Edward Gibbon. Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* could not be written without the source materials left behind by the pioneers.

It is well known that, following the works of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo, significant progress was made in mathematics, astronomy and physics. Some of the prominent scientists of the time like Descartes were definitely hostile to history and dismissed its claim as a branch of genuine knowledge. Leibniz, who was both a historian and a mathematician, in his attempt to make history scientific reduced it to a sort of necessity-bound providential story. Though some historians like Mabillon and jurists like Hugo Grotius tried to give a secular look to their works on history, it took a long time before this discipline could acquire the distinction of truly 'scientific'. The French Encyclopaedists taking the wrong lesson from science, were by and large distrustful towards the past human achievements. Though the pro-scientific and anti-religious stance towards the past was tolerated in France, it was strongly rejected in the countries like Italy. Several anti-clerical writers on history were punished by the Church and their works were banned. But the 'radical' thinkers like Condorcet disregarded the frown of Church and other authorities and devoted themselves to write what may be called histories of civilization based on the thesis of the endless progress of the human mind. Gibbon's monumental *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) may be regarded as the most ambitious and successful example of rational and progress(ive) historiography. The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, one may say, gave rise to the rational historiography of the eighteenth century. Still more free and secular historiography of the nineteenth century was largely due to Darwin's evolutionary theory (1859).

When we use such words as 'rational', 'scientific', 'secular' and 'progressive' it would be wrong to think that we are favouring a particular ideological approach to history. If we are *committed* to *one* particular ideology, we are bound to be *critical* of the histories written from the *other* ideological standpoints. This intellectual arrogance is often referred to as 'scientism' or 'abuse of reason'. The historian, like everybody else, has the right to have his/her preferred ideology and methodology. Without a definite standpoint *criticism* is impossible. *Genuine* criticism, as distinguished from *sham* criticism, must have its two faces, *internal*

and *external.* If we are uncritically committed to one (and only one) particular ideology and doggedly refuse to see the merits of all other ideologies, we are condemned to end up only with *external criticism.* Genuine criticism means both (i) *self's right* to criticize the other and (ii) the *other's right* to criticize the self. Even a so-called 'a-historical' and 'enclosed' tribal society is informed of the art of internal criticism or self-criticism. In brief, nobody—nothing—is above criticism. Criticizability is the essence of free and rational creativity of 'what is objective' and also of 'what is subjective'.

It is undeniable that the Indian historiography of today has been largely, almost decisively, influenced by the European historiography as available to and interpreted and followed by the English-knowing intelligentsia. But I think that in order to understand the historians of our time and their writings we have to relate them both to our own past and the changing features of the Western historiography. When I speak of our past I mean not only the past of literati but also, perhaps more so, of the laity. That is by oral tradition, folk-lore, legends, etc., so-called pre-rational, sources deserve so much of our attention. It is well known that the Western historians or Indologists have stated repeatedly that, compared to the Hindus, the Muslims had been more history-conscious and disposed to document and keep chronicles of their times, of the events and actions of their polity and society. The said superiority of the Muslim chronicles is often attributed to the fact that they were written mainly by men of affairs, contemporary courtiers and not by theologians. At the same time it must be remembered that a significant part of the history of India written by Muslim historians bears the stamp of Sufism.

The Indian historiography has been often classified under three heads, Hindu, Muslim and British. Like several other ways of classifying or periodising history, this is also unsatisfactory, even misleading at times. For centuries together the Hindu and the Muslim chroniclers had been chronicling the events which fall under the same calendrical periods, assuming that we are following one particular calendar. But it is interesting to note here that several calendars were in use among the peoples of India. Coming close to the British period it may be pointed out that different sets of people—British, Muslim and Hindu were at work from different points of view on 'the same' Indian history. But was the 'text' itself on which they were working identical? Hardly. This is not surprising. In spite of its attending difficulty, the classification of Indian historiography under the heads of Hindu, Muslim and British has its relevance and use. Broad—only very broad—similarity is evident in these approaches. Within each approach there is difference. Between

the approaches there is overlap. For example, Muslim historiography itself may be viewed under two broad heads, pre-Mughal and Mughal. Ways of living and thinking of the peoples who came from West Asia were more or less different from those who came from Central Asia. Admittedly, their religion, Islam, proved a strongly common bond between them.

The chroniclers and the analysts who came to India with the Muslim conquerors and were yet to settle down and identify themselves culturally with the Indian milieu, understandably, had a spectator's approach to the land and people they were writing on. Their 'homeland', its people, their past, their religion, customs, manners, etc. had been working on their mind. Domiciled in India and close to the ruling families, their mental backdrop, in most cases, was West Asian. Their writings reflect the region, together with its culture, wherefrom they or their immediate ancestors had come.

Secondly, there was a distinct didactic undertone in their writings. Eulogy of the ruler was a common feature of the historiography of the time. In many of these writings of the period from the late twelfth century to the fifteenth century one finds certain characteristics in common, viz., reverential reference to the Prophets, Umayyid and Abbasid Caliphs, genealogies of the ruling families, principles for pious rulers to follow, chronology of military events, cosmological, geographical and ethnological data. These characteristics lend a sort of unity to their historical writings. The modern critic may ask: 'Was the stuff they wrote, strictly speaking, *historical*?' Whether our answer would be YES or NO depends largely upon our own standpoint.

In this connection reference may be made to the works of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir Mubarak Shah who came to Lahore with the Ghoris in 1186 and was in the court of Qutb al-din Aibak in 1206. In his work *Shajara-i-ansab-i-Mubarak Shahi*, the author tells us in details the reasons for the eminence and dominance of the Turks on the Muslim world. Referring to the *Quran* and *Hadith* he counts the virtues which rulers and their learned advisers should acquire and follow. Also he records the Ghori conquest of Hindustan (1192-1206) and the life and deeds of Qutb al-din Aibak. The other works which deserve special mention are *Taba-qat-i-Nasiri* (1259-60) authored by Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani, *The Ta'rikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* written by Yahya ibn Ahmad Sarhindi (1428-34), and the *Ta'rikh-i-Muhammadi* by Muhammad Bihamad Khani (1438-39).

In all these works much attention has been paid to biographical details of the rulers and reference has been made to the ancient and the medieval histories of such different areas of West Asia as Iraq and

Persia. History has been treated as a succession of events. Miracles, dreams and visions are liberally used. In most of these works the absence of the spirit of the *Hadith* criticism is notable.

As mentioned earlier, many of the Muslim writers took history as a branch of ethics. To think, as some European writers do, that these features of the writings of the Muslim historians show the 'decline in the critical standards of Muslim Historiography' is again misplaced.[6] By bringing history close to religion, ethics and literature the writers of the time were simply following a tradition which was then an accepted practice among the learned people.

We often tend to forget that in future techno-economic or nationalist orientation that is evident in many of our contemporary historical works may be strongly criticized as very one-sided. Even today among the historians there is no unanimity of view regarding the most advisable methodology or guiding principles of history. Even today we find religious underpinnings in the writings of very distinguished historians. One may pertinently raise the question, 'Why should we think that religious approach to history is outdated, idle or wrong?' Equally pertinent is the question, 'Must history be scientific in order to be recognized as a respectable branch of knowledge?' One may rightly point out that respectability and acceptability of a discipline is age-bound or/and group-specific.

This does not mean relativism in the bad sense. *Per contra*, this self-critical spirit encourages the enterprise of understanding across the boundaries of historical time and cultural space. For example, it is difficult to deny that the pre-Mughal Muslim historiography of India was deeply influenced by the culture—political, religious and literacy—of such countries as Persia and Iraq. But this is not an altogether new development. Even of the Vedic period the ideas on historiography that we have in relation to the northern India are not certainly of purely local origin. Cultural migration had always an understandable impact on the ways of life of the people and through them on the course of history and historiography. Some people may not be religious in the God-based sense of the term but it is difficult to deny the presence of ethical impulses in and normative enterprises of human beings. From the myths and the epics to the treatises on statecraft and administration of every civilization we find endless reference to the importance of religion and ethics. It is often emphasized that in order to be able to follow the maxims of do's and don'ts in practice humans are required to attain a degree of inner or spiritual excellence which cannot be always explained in terms of discursive reason. An element of mysticism

is found in almost all forms of religious or ethical culture. The doctrines and practices of the *Sufis* have provided rich source materials for writing on Muslim history in India and various other countries. From the life-stories of the *Sufi* saints in which facts and fictions, miracles and saintliness get blended it is not easy to extract historical materials. But it is and has been possible. Even now, at this age of science, many people, both lay and educated, believe in miracles and attribute supernatural powers to the *gurus* and charismatic persons who lived in the recent past or are still living. Simply because I, left to myself, do not believe in miracles and supernatural powers I, as a historian, cannot refuse to recognize and lightly dismiss *others'* beliefs.

The biographies of the *Sufi* saints in the Indian setting has a unique historical significance. From the thirteenth century to the fifteenth century when the Muslim rule in northern India, though established, was not very strong and many of the conquering people started accepting this land as an adopted home rather than a conquered colony, the need to neutralize the forces of the separative factors and that to bring the Indians and Muslims close to each other were being increasingly felt. What could not be achieved by the traditional forms of a proselytizing religion and those of a non-proselytizing one was being peacefully and constructively attended to by the *Sufis*. In the common mystical quest of the spirit the Indian and the Muslims, at least a sizable section of both, started culturally gravitating to one another.

While some *Sufis* wrote down their views, several others followed and favoured oral traditions of their teachers. Besides Shaikh Ali Hajweri who had written the first important *Sufi* book, *Kashful Mahjub*, in India, the other two important *Sufi* teachers of the Sultanate period who left lasting influence are Ib-i-Arabi and Shaikh Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi. The Chisti Shaikhs did not believe in writing down their principles; they used to teach by the ways of their living. The written literature on the *Sufi* principles was produced by the Suhrawardis. Some of the books, like those authored by Shaikh Hamid Nagori, because of their abstract and subtle characteristics could be comprehended only by the learned people. However, the writings, *Maktubat* or letters, of persons like Shaikh Sharaf-ud-din Yahya proved very popular. The *Maktubat* of Mujaddid Alf Sani was devoted to various subjects like science, technology, metaphysics, politics and theology. Many of these *Sufi* teachers and writers, notwithstanding their spiritual and devotional pursuits, were in touch with the rulers, high officials and of course common people. Thus their influence proved very pervasive.

The teachings of the great *Sufi* saint Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya was faithfully recorded by the poet Amir Hasan Sijzi in his famous book *Fuwaid-ul-Fuad*. From religion and education to the social and economic conditions of the time and the affairs of the state have been dealt with in this work. Nizam-ud-din's reference to Indo-Muslim mystics, difference between the jurists *(Ulama)* and the mystics, and scepticism about miracles are among the notable traits of his teachings. But, following the custom of the time, he makes no reference to the Sultan Ala-ud-din Khilji and his senior courtiers or officials. Amir Khwurd, a disciple of Nizam-ud-din Auliya, wrote a history of the Chisti order of the *Sufis*. He lived during the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak and, ordered by him, was forced to go to the southern India with many other mystics. On return to Delhi, after the fall of Tughlak's power in the Deccan, Khwurd started writing *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, giving the history of the Chisti saints from Hazrat Ali to Usman Haruni. Nizam-ud-din's life and teachings have been understandably accorded a special place in the work (c. 1357 AD).

From the research into the lives and teachings of the *Sufis* the modern historian gets very valuable information about the political and economic conditions of the Muslims in the medieval India and an insight into the Indian culture of the time.

I have pointed out earlier that European historians found nothing historical in the strict sense in the writings of the Hindus. If they refer to the works like those of Bāṇa and Kalhaṇa, it is because they are recognized as good chroniclers. Chroniclers are at best proto-historian and not historian. A somewhat similar attitude, not surprisingly, is evident from the writings of the European historians on the Muslim chronicles of the period AD 1206-1707. Henry Elliott, Elphinstone, James Mill and Macaulay had nothing very laudable to comment on the Muslim historiography of the Mughal period. By scanning the historical writings of the Portuguese, Dutch, French and Danish historians we find a more or less similar and deprecative assessment. Perhaps the only difference is that most of them are more appreciative of the works of the Muslim chroniclers than those of the Hindu ones. Perhaps a plausible way of understanding this difference in assessment is to be found in the hypothesis that the Muslim writers, compared to the Hindus, left more reliable records of their times, places and the rulers. But this hypothesis has to be taken very circumspectly and in a general way.

Henry Elliott tells us that Muslim chroniclers, primarily interested in thrones and imperial powers, had nothing very important to write on popular institutions, general administration, local judicature, commerce

and agriculture. Though these observations are not quite correct, perhaps what we can gather as essence of the critical observations of the foreign writers is this: the Muslim historians did not write much about the life of the common people. Elphinstone's *History of India* shows its highly critical attitude, if not contempt, towards the Islamic institutions and even the Prophet of Islam. He reminds one of James Mill's highly critical reference to the Hindu ideas, manners and achievements. If the Hindu and the Muslim chroniclers were more interested in chronicling the deeds of their rulers than of the events of the period, the institutions of the people, it is mainly because they were the product of their own time, following the traditions prevalent at that time. In spite of the exaggeration that we find in the writings of the Indian chroniclers it would be one-sided to think, as many European historians did and do, that their works have been vitiated by the influences of despotism, bigotry and love of flattery.

The most important difficulty that one encounters in understanding the history of India from the early thirteenth century to the early eighteenth century is posed by the non-availability of reliable official records and documents. Perhaps most of these evidences have been destroyed or lost. Besides, the remaining kinds of evidence—numismatic, epigraphic and literary, which are available in the Arabic and Persian languages, cannot be easily grasped by the general public. The European historians are twice removed from the true spirit of the available evidence preserved in foreign languages, foreign to them. Rooted in their conceptual frameworks which in turn, are located in their own languages, their cultural distance from the objects of their study is formidable. Even those who had taken the pains to learn these foreign languages did not, in the most cases, have the sympathy in them to understand the intended meanings or spirit of the available evidence. A similar misfortune had befallen also the Hindu historiography. Only by knowing Sanskrit, Pālī or Prākrit they could not get into the heart of the ideas and actions of the people of the concerned periods. This linguistic-cum-conceptual road-block also largely prevented the European historians of the last few centuries to grasp the institutional and religious forms of life embedded in cultures alien to the cultures of the writers.

When I say all these I do not intend to give the impression that the European views of the Hindu and the Muslim historiography, because of their critical tone, are to be taken lightly or dismissed summarily. In a way my reservation about their unstudied judgments rests on their own professed aims of writing on the history and historians of India. James Mill, for example, in his well known *History of the British India*

frankly tells us what motivated him most to write this very comprehensive book is to help the British rulers to understand the people of India to be ruled and to apply the Benthamite version of utilitarianism in practice. In the process he had to reject the views of scholars like William Jones, Colebrooke and Prinsep that the Hindus, at least the early ones, had reached a high degree of civilization and arrived at the conclusion that contemporary and as well as ancient India was barbarous in science, religion, political economy, law and government.

To say, as many of the Western historians do, that Indians, both Muslims and particularly Hindus, were so preoccupied with eulogy, rhetoric and metaphysics that they had little or no interest in documenting particular details. Aristotle writes in his *Rhetoric* that history is useless because it is concerned only with particulars and has nothing to do with general truths. Cicero advises the historian to follow the style of oratory in his writing. Descartes is contemptuous of history because of its alleged disregard of scientific method, indulgence into sophistry and illusion. Even to-day the controversy over the question whether history is a science or art has not been settled. Within the maze of contrary views it is not easy to decide what should be the aim of a good historian, whether he is Indian, American or European. It seems to me that while the historians' prime concern are particular events and actions of *individual* human beings, they are obliged to use, explicitly or implicitly, *general* facts or truths in order to make their story meaningful and understandable.[7]

Those who have familiarity with such works as Abul Fazal's *Akbar Namah* or *Ain-i-Akbari*, Mulla Abdul Qadir's *Muntakhib-ut-Tawarikh* and Nizamuddin Bakhshi's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, can hardly deny their value in terms of factual details. It is true that in all these writings eulogy of the Emperor is there in abundance. At the same time it is interesting to note the *critical* reference of some of these writers to Akbar's appreciation of other faiths and the encouragement that the Emperor had given to free thinking.

Of the period from Jehangir to Aurangzeb (1606-1707) we have an impressive corpus of historical writings. Jehangir's Autobiography, *Tuzak-i-Jehangiri*, is itself a very important piece of historical source material. Partly written by himself and partly by Mutamad Khan under his own supervision the Memoirs give us details about the social, cultural and spiritual life of the period. Important works were written also during the reign of Shajahan. One of these works which deserves special mention is *Padshah Namah* of Abdul Hamid. Herein also one gets concrete details of the political, social and cultural life of the time.

Akbar's religious Catholicism or eclecticism is not to be found in Shajahan's period of religious orthodoxy. Aurangzeb himself was not initially opposed to historical writings. Allowed by him, Muhammad Kazim wrote *Alamgir Namah* and *Maathir-i-Alamgiri*. But later on he held back permission to make the works public. This anti-historical stance of the Emperor has been differently interpreted. It seems that he did not like the events of his time and his own deeds are made officially public. Because, he thought, it might create avoidable political controversy and diplomatic complications.

Understandably, there is no uniformity in the views of the Europeans who wrote on India, her people, institutions and culture. As I said before, history in its modern sense was not there either in India or in Europe in the Middle Ages. Rightly or wrongly, the eighteenth century is generally taken to be the watershed between modern historiography, on the one hand, and chronicles, biographies and other proto-historical sources, on the other. Again, one has to be careful about the difference between the development of historiography and its characteristics in one culture and those in another. The elements of *Itihāsa*, as we have noted earlier, are not identical with those of history. Nor the ways of handling or using these source materials are identical. Besides the individual personality of the historian and his cultural background which enter into his writings, his preferred point of view and aim also colour his project.

Coming closer to our own time, the so-called British period of Indian history, we find some historians, primarily the European ones, are writing *for* their own countrymen, their needs and taste. For example, the French historians like Abbe Prevost, Abbe Guyon, Dernis, and Castonnet des Fosses were writing with different or mixed motives, viz., to inform their countrymen of the peoples in India and their manners, of the French achievements and failures in this part of the world. While some of them were professional historians, the rest were compilers or chroniclers.

The British writers like William Jones, Charles Wilkins, Henry Colebrooke, John Shore, Charles Grant, James Mill, Hayman Wilson, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Munro, Malcolm and Macaulay do not present a homogeneous composition either. Some were basically administrator, some really scholar and what was common to both groups is a scholarly interest in the past of the country and its contemporary affairs. The difference between their approaches, orientations and conclusions, as indicated before, are very notable. While the writers like Mill made no secret of their *British* and *utilitarian* motivations, the scholars like Jones,

Wilson and Colebrooke tried to understand the country and its people by learning their language and studying the original sources of Indian culture. Given the limited but understandable objectives of his laborious work, Mill could easily say that historians, in order to be successful in their work, are not required either to know the language of the concerned people or to have personal knowledge of the country in question. Mill became a recognized authority on Indian history without knowing anyone of the classical languages of the country and without ever visiting it despite being a senior executive of the East India Company.

That one's personal familiarity with a country does not necessarily help one to understand it better is illustrated by Macaulay's writings on India. Macaulay's home work for writing on India was apparently not as thorough as that of Mill. But his style was forceful and carrying. His bitter criticism of the Bengalis as coward and liar, feeble and effeminate, is understandably resented by the Bengalis or for that reason by other Indians. But a historian's work must not be assessed solely on the ground of his praise or criticism of people. This sort of criticism has been levelled against the Indians by the Indians themselves, against the British people by their fellow countrymen.

The main ground on which Macaulay's writings on India have to be assessed is his ability or lack thereof to understand this country and its culture. Was he really interested in understanding the people of India? Was he really qualified for the job he had undertaken? In his self-defense Macaulay observed that, given the systematically anomalous character of the British empire and of the East India Company, it was just not possible either to rule the country rationally or to understand it correctly. It seems that Macaulay consciously accepted the irony of the situation. It is clear from his simultaneous defense of British imperialism, on the one hand, and 'progressive' press laws, 'just' legal system and 'rational' educational system, on the other. Apparently Macaulay did not realize that within the constraints of the politico-economic system of the time it was not possible to give 'good' education, 'good' laws, 'free' press and, at the same time, to preserve the imperial system dictated primarily by the interests of England. Macaulay's accepted standards of historical judgment were clearly anomalous and therefore the conclusions he arrived at about India are untenable.

Macaulay's love of his motherland, England, is perfectly understandable. Also understandable is one's almost unconscious commitment to the values of his time. To Macaulay liberty and progress were the most important values which any civilized country can think of and must try to achieve. But the interesting point to be noted in the

writings of Macaulay is his uncritical commitment to the chauvinistic notions of 'progress' and 'liberty'. 'The history of England', he thinks, 'is emphatically the history of progress'. From Milton and the Mills he had his initiation into the English concept of liberty. And he had no doubt whatsoever in him that 'England was "the greatest and most highly civilized people" not only of the world of his day but of the world of all times'.[8] The English notions of liberty and progress of his time and his own passionate love for the motherland set his standard of passing historical judgment on other civilizations like India and their attainments or failures. Referring to Mill's *History of British India* he observes that Mill was right in criticizing the defects and failures of the Indian people and praising them on the counts and scores on which they could rise 'in a small degree about the common level of their contemporaries'. Macaulay commends: 'It is thus that the annals of past times ought to be written'.

Pieter Geyl clearly points out the difference between two very distinguished historians of the mid-nineteenth centuries, Ranke and Macaulay. While Macaulay was a prisoner of his 'national or time-tied delusions', Ranke was trying to explain how, in spite of unavoidable relativism, the historian must try to comprehend or understand rather than to judge. He should be as objective as humanly possible. Geyl, in this context, quotes Ranke's words of 1854: 'Every period is immediate to God, and its value does not in the least consist in what springs from it, but in its own existence, in its own self.'

In effect this view of historiography accords to a certain extent with my own view on the subject. In a way we all, including the historians and the people about whom they write, are located in a particular period and culture and influenced by its tradition and prevalent ideas.[9] If this is true of Macaulay, this is also true in a way of Ranke as well. But Ranke, basically a conservative and, unlike Macaulay, was no believer in the *natural* law of progress. Extremely anxious to be faithful to facts he was always trying to be guided by the source materials. He was totally opposed to introduction of personal, national and political biases and prejudices in history. Since culture in every period of history has its unique or individual characteristics, the historian's 'humble' task is to try to show what actually happened. In other words, history should be as factual as possible and least interpretative in its character. Whether Ranke's methodological prescription can be followed in practice is a matter of debate. But it is generally conceded that pro-objectivist approach to historiography is sure to minimize the miseffects of cultural chauvinism and relativism. Even the critic of Ranke who accuses him of

fact-fetishism tends to agree that his multi-volume works on the *Latin and Teutonic Nations, Popes, Civil Works and Monarchy in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, A History of England Principally in the Seventeenth Century,* and even *History of the Reformation in Germany* are remarkably fair and objective.

If the historians like Mill and Macaulay had written *prejudiced* history of the British India, one may pertinently raise the question: Was not the history of the Indian society written by pro-nationalist historians *biased*? Before this tricky question is sought to be answered, perhaps it is advisable to take close look at the writings of those men like Hume, Cotton, Wedderburn, Beveridge, and Yule who started perceiving the rise of the westernized middle class of India and its growing nationalist sentiment. Also of historical interest are the writings of Indians like R.C. Dutt, S.N. Banerjee, Justice Ranade, Firozeshah Mehta and Gokhale who, in spite of their exposure to the western education, got deeply interested in the tradition of India and started interpreting it. But their interpretations were basically in the light of western ideas. Their views marked a major shift of Indian historiography from the so-called British period to the pro-Indian period.

An influential section of the nationalist historians, not surprisingly, decided to combat the partisan European historiography on India by an almost equally partisan Indian historiography, defending the Hindus and what their culture stood for. The views and writings of Dayananda Saraswati, Bhudev Mukherji and Bankim Chandra Chatterji could be recalled in this context. The defence of India's past found in the writings of R.G. Bhandarkar, Rajendralal Mitra and R.C. Dutt is admittedly serious and scholarly. The historical *literature,* highlighting the heroic activities of the Rajputs, Marathas, Sikhs and the Muslims, significantly contributed to the growth of nationalist consciousness. In the changed context, the founders of the British Empire like Clive, Warren Hastings and Wellesley came in for sharp criticism. Interestingly enough, the presuppositions of many of these criticisms, on scrutiny, are found to be British or Whig in their inspiration. The gradual shift of focus from politics to culture, from political weakness to cultural richness, of India is evident in these nationalist historical writings, marked by the criticism not only of the role of the British Rule and but also of its ruling ideas.

Closely related to the pro-cultural approach to history was a renewed emphasis on the theme of Hindu-Muslim unity. Many other old themes started reappearing in new form. Lala Lajpat Rai, for example, tried to show the positive aspects of the Muslim Rule in India. Attempts were

made to deconstruct the Hindu–Muslim relation mainly in terms of collaboration, not domination or hegemonism. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, to take another example, was re-interpreted as the First War of Indian Independence.

Another notable point which, apart from the theme of Hindu–Muslim collaboration, emerged out of the nationalist historiography, is the emphasis on the synthesis of Aryan and Dravidian culture. The very significant contribution made by the peoples of the Deccan, which did not receive its due recognition earlier, started drawing the attention of the historians like Nilakanta Sastri and K.M. Panikkar.

Nationalist historiography is not the only species which flourished before and after the independence of India. Articulately or inarticulately, every historian has a philosophy or method of his/her own. And that philosophy, though ordinarily related to the historian's traditional or cultural background, turns out to be trans-national at times. For example, in the first half of this century most of the Marxist historians, irrespective of their national/cultural affiliation, professed an ideological internationalism. The true Marxist, it is said, belongs to no nation. Because nation is always class-divided, conflict-ridden and never homogeneous in its composition. The distinction often drawn between the pro-nationalist historiography of India and the European/British historiography of the country carries little weight with the Marxist historian. It is evident from the writings of two very well known Marxists, Hiren Mukherji's *India Struggles for Freedom* (1946) and R. Palme Dutt's *India Today* (1947). Because of the writers' ideological predilection it would be wrong to take these works as merely partisan or party pamphlets. A distinct and well argued point of view is found in their works. According to the Marxists, there is a general affinity of interests between the British bourgeoisie and the Indian bourgeoisie. Negatively speaking, none of them is willing to accept the rule of the poor in the country. The foreign ruler uses the services of the rich and educated 'natives' to maintain his grip over the colony and exploit it effectively. When history is written from this sort of premises, the distinction between the nationalist historiography and the imperialist historiography, between what James Mill writes and what R.C. Dutt writes, ceases to be significant. Is it not an oversimplification of a very complex and changing situation? In fairness to facts it must be admitted that the orthodox phase of Marxism is now a matter of the past, almost forgotten.

On the contrary, some very scholarly works have come from the pens of committed Marxists like D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and Irfan Habib. Even after professing his firm commitment to Marxism Kosambi writes:

'The adoption of Marx's thesis does not mean blind repetition of all his conclusions (and even less, those of the official, party-line Marxists) at all times'.[10] The technico-economic historiography of Marx and his followers has one distinct merit, it successfully separates political and dynastic history from the history of the people at large and focuses its attention on the latter. When the historian writes mainly on the community-bound life of the people, highlighting the economic elements of their living, the periodic 'storm–clouds of the political sky' are not unduly allowed to obscure the historian's view of the ground-level reality.

In 1940s the leading Marxists of the country like S.A. Dange, P.C. Joshi and B.T. Ranadive were engaged in interpreting differently the tumultuous years of war, communal conflagration and possible independence through partition. Jawaharlal Nehru, lodged in the Ahmadnagar Fort, was writing a sort of history of India during five months, April to September 1944, and, in the process, trying to discover India anew. Nehru's was a complex personality. On his own admission he was 'attracted towards the *Advaita* philosophy of the Vedānta' and 'Gandhi's ethical approach to life [had] also a strong appeal for [him]'. At the same time, 'Marx and Lenin', Nehru tells us, 'produced a powerful effect on [his] mind and helped [him] to see history and current affairs [and] ... future' in a meaningful way.[11]

It is well known that Nehru's regard for Marxism and the scientific world-view embedded into it did not prevent him from deeply appreciating the spiritual heritage of Indian culture. But, unlike many other historians, his interest in the past of this country was not only spiritual and scientific but also had a futuristic orientation in it. He wanted to *dis-cover* the covered past of India with a futuristic dream about the country in the back of his mind. Strictly speaking, Nehru was not a professional historian. Nor has he himself ever claimed it. But it must be said to his credit that his grasp of the past of India and the relation he could see between the events, personalities and institutions were remarkable. Deeply distressed by the 'arrested growth' of traditional India and convinced of the dynamic impulse of its civilization, he was thinking of the future India, free from alien rule, and making progress peacefully to a democratic and socialist goal. He could easily anticipate the forces of disruption and disorder on the way.

Nehruvian historiography has both classical and romantic elements in it.

> India must break with much of her past and not allow it to dominate the present . . . . But that does not mean a break with, or a forgetting of, the vital and life-giving in that past. We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race, the dreams of the Indian people through the ages, the wisdom of the ancients, the buoyant energy and love of life and nature of our forefathers, their spirit of curiosity and mental adventure, . . . their splendid achievements in literature, art and culture, their love of truth and beauty and freedom . . . their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments . . . we will never forget them . . . . If India forgets them she will no longer remain India.[12]

Without being a professional what Nehru has written is clearly very insightful. His perception of the relation between religion, philosophy and science, is both critical and creative. Religion, in spite of its fanatic deviations, has helped greatly in shaping the development of humanity. Notwithstanding its pitfalls, philosophy has encouraged thought and inquiry. The earth-bound modesty of science has to be taken not only as a cognitive enterprise but also as 'a method of acting and associating with our fellow human beings'. The long and strong arms of technology should not make us blind to its kind human face.

Nationalist historiography of India has been criticized from various points of view. Apart from the charge of chauvinism that has been levelled against it, some pro-Marxist thinkers have criticized it for its elitist bias and failure to appreciate the contribution of subaltern, of inferior rank, in unleashing the forces of national independence. Captured in the network of colonial institutions and ensnared by its system of education, the elite of India, it has been argued, could not identify itself with the woes, protests and causes of the masses who often fought on their own the alien ruler and/or the national elite.[13] To the subaltern historian almost all protest movements or actions, however disjointed or limited they might be in their scope, are to be taken as visible islands of the submerged continent of discontent, suppressed social psyche. Even transitional frictions are viewed in the image of class-conflict. Many of the basic ideas of subaltern historiography are traceable to Gramsci's 'Notes on Italian History' and Straussian structuralism with its sharp accent on binary social relationship.

Immediately after the independence, 1947, it was proved difficult for the Marxists in India to define their attitude to the Indian situation and the Nehru-led Government at the Centre. The moderate section of the Communist Party of India, CPI, under the leadership of P.C. Joshi, in spite of its criticism of Nehru's policies, was not in favour of taking an insurrectionary line against the Congress Government. But mainly under

the influence of the then Soviet authorities on Asia like Dyakov, Zhukov and Zhandnov and after the Cominform Meeting in September 1947, a new line was accepted. Accordingly it was decided by the CPI at its Second Congress in February 1948 that the illusion of the Constitutional Road of Socialism must be rejected and that violent peasant uprisings, as a prelude to the supposedly impending Civil War, should be encouraged. To carry out the new line Joshi was replaced by Ranadive as the General Secretary of the Party. But when the Telengana Peasant Movement failed to trigger off a Civil War-like situation as witnessed by China during the years 1945-49 and the insurrectionary method of the Party could be easily suppressed by the Government, a new centrist line was adopted under the leadership of Ajay Ghosh. The old idea that Nehru was a mere lackey of imperialism was abandoned and it was recognized that he was pursuing a policy of peace, despite its hesitant character.

After the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 when the principle of peaceful transition to socialism was affirmed, the old tension between the moderates and the radicals within the CPI resurfaced. When this line was reaffirmed at the 1960 Conference of 81 Parties in Moscow, the difference within the Party became even sharper. The Sino-Soviet ideological difference and the Sino-Indian border dispute significantly influenced the intra-Party conflict of the CPI. The flash point of the difference was reached in 1962 at the time of open border conflict between China and India. Formally the CPI was split in two in 1964: the original Party remained ideologically close to the Soviet Union and the Seceding Group, CPI(M), got openly closer to the Chinese Communist Party and its position. By 1967, when the CPI(M) accepted the Parliamentary method in the Indian context, the Chinese criticized it because of its alleged revisionist character. And a new Communist Party, CPI (Marxist-Leninist), openly came into existence. It advocated the line of armed and guerrilla insurrection which is popularly known as Naxalbari Movement.

Around 1969 when the split between the old guard of the Indian National Congress and others under the leadership of Indira Gandhi was developing, both the Communist Parties found themselves closer to the Congress(I) and started strongly criticizing the Congress(O) for its extreme rightist line on such issues as the Nationalization of Banks and the Abolition of Privy Purses.

During the years of Emergency, 1975-77, the difference between the Communist Parties became clear once again. When the CPI supported the Emergency, the CPI(M) opposed it. During the years of coalition

experiment at the Centre, 1977-79, both CPI and CPI(M) supported Janata Dal and BJP enabling the new Government to survive. A section of the Congress, critical of Indira Gandhi, came out of Congress(I) and lent support to the short-lived Government under the leadership of Charan Singh. However, after the failure of the Janata experiment Congress(I) returned to power at the Centre in 1980.

This story brings us close to our own time. If we are to believe Hegel's *philosophy* of history, in a way this story marks the 'end' of our history. Obviously it is not an end in the literal sense. For the course of events flows on. But as we are so close to the events that it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to write history or even *Itihāsa* of these events. Events as such devoid of reflective connection between these are not meaningful and historical. But reflection requires some distance between what happens and the historian who wants to write on it. When one brings one's hand very close to one's own eyes, strictly speaking, one cannot see the hand. There is no hard and fast distinction between *contemporary affairs* and history. Yet at times we draw an advised distinction between the two.

The impressions left on us by 1980s may be stated in different ways. One might interpret the years as waning of the age of planning and control. Another feature is the rise of sub-national regionalism, secessionism and the forces of national disintegration. From the international point of view one can relate the happenings of India as the fallout of what was happening elsewhere, in the former Soviet Union, the Far East and the South East Asia. In brief, economic reforms and liberalism had become the accepted goals of most of these countries irrespective of their different ideological commitments and forms of Government.

This trend has become even more pronounced now in 1990s. Economic liberalization, it is being said, is a 'right' step toward globalization. The Chinese leadership has been openly saying that political communism and economic capitalism can well go together.[14] In India the main terms of our political discourse on modernity centre round the desirable pace, not necessarily substance, of economic reforms. Whether this view is a temporary impression or considered historical judgment cannot be said at this moment. As stated before, we are too close to the events to judge them objectively, or, to change the metaphor, one might say, we are inseparably caught up in the flow of the events and unable to rise above it and see it rightly. Yet, as a matter of fact we anticipate, we dream and have our own preference and priorities in life. In a way, historiography has to accommodate all these things into its

fold. Consequently, no history, however factual it may be, can be fiction-free. An element of value judgment is bound to enter into every historical narration. Even the best effort of the most learned historian cannot get us to absolute objectivity in the sense of eternal verity. The highest premium that one can think of paying for 'insuring' historical objectivity, for minimizing the miseffects of relativism, is neither *pure* narration nor suspension of judgment, but openness to criticism.

Before I conclude this brief survey of *Itihāsa* and history as two distinct concepts, it is perhaps clear that their relational overlap is unavoidable. It is true that history in its modern sense was not there at the centre stage of human civilization before the eighteenth century or so. At the same time, it seems from the available records and their interpretations that every group of human beings, including even the wandering nomads, have their race memory, more or less distinct self-perception and myths and legends.

In a way the past of a people is retained in its language in the extended sense. Neither the objects of the past nor those of the present are grasped in their purity by us. Both biologically and psychologically in our apprehension of the world around us our self-consciousness enter in a more or less constitutive way. In other words, we do not passively receive the ready-made world of the past; we endow it something of our own mind. This reflective nature of our mind makes it difficult for us to be absolutely objective, no matter how earnestly we try. At the same time, because of this reflective ability we are not lost in the details of the objective world, nor overwhelmed by the innumerable neural intake that we receive from outside. We can select from among what we receive and this selection presupposes judgment.

The role of the historian in knowing the past is akin to other human ways of knowing the world. In the background of the minds both of the historian and the common man in every age, in every culture, there is a web of beliefs, a mix-up of facts and fictions, which colour their understanding. It is true that all human beings, all historians, because of their inherent freedom, are not identically shaped by their circumstances, past and present. Nor the contents of their imagination about the past and the future are identical. The gift of freedom largely explains the diversity, both cognitive and emotive, of our world-view, of our historical views. In a very serious sense both *Itihāsa* and history are brought into existence by the concerned professional's judgment-cum-imagination.

This is not to suggest that our freedom makes it impossible for us to grasp what is objective. It is a verdict both of common sense and of

sophisticated science that we more or less commonly share the world in our thought and action. In terms of abstract laws of science we know the predictable structure and sub-structures of the world. In terms of practical success we become and remain reasonably sure about the knowledge of our environment. The scientific views of the world are corrigible by both reason and fact. Somewhat similarly the difference in our historical views, given research and time, can also be substantially corrected or narrowed down by evidence and reasoning. After all, history is a learning process and perhaps Dionysius of Helicarnassus was right in observing that history is 'philosophy learned from examples'. History is philosophical because of its reflective character marked by *general principles;* and *particular* examples are important for it because of the concreteness it imparts to our understanding.

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Historiography of Civilization and Cultural Presuppositions

G.C. PANDE

Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

A central issue in the contemporary historiography of civilization is the definition of the mutual relationship and historic roles of different civilizations in the making of man. After the Second World War there has been a growing awareness of human unity, of which the UNO is a prime symbol. A multi-volumed *History of Mankind* was thus brought out by international cooperation under the inspiration of the UNESCO. It sought to present a unified and global history of human civilization. Here different civilizations have been treated as so many tributaries to the mainstream which remains primarily European or Western. The present dominance of that civilization, thus, appears as the destination of the past and the sure direction of the future. The conceptual framework for representing and evaluating different civilizations is drawn from the common assumptions of the contemporary West about human nature and modern Western contributions to the realization of human destiny. The contributions of different civilizations are, thus, picked up and fitted as incremental items within the framework of civilization as determined in the modern West. The alternative configurations of other civilizations are not even noticed. Those civilizations are not treated as individual and axiologically viable wholes, as alternative perspectives on man and human seeking, but as transitory and fragmentary approximations to the modern, Western model. Thus where religion is concerned, it is assumed that it is the ancient Near East which provides its most significant historical matrix. India's contribution lies in the symbolization of the numerals. China has contributed paper, the ancient Americans maize. On the other hand, the steady development of science, rationality, humanism and creativity characterize the Western tradition. Civilization itself is, thus, conceived as an evolving secular, rational, humanist enterprise in which all humanity participates in varying degrees under the leadership of the West.

Will Durant's *Story of Civilization* presents an essentially similar but dominantly humanistic, picture in a more popular and more artistic fashion. Braudel's *History of Civilizations* devotes no more than forty pages to India. Toynbee's *A Study of History* tells the story in a more reflective and critical manner but agrees in concluding that it is only the modern Western Civilization which is alive today and indicates the future of mankind. Here, however, the centre of the stage is occupied by religion culminating in Christianity rather than by scientific humanism. Needham's massive *Science and Civilization in China*, despite its deep sympathy for the Chinese civilization, is essentially wedded to the assumption that the essence of civilization is secular science, an assumption which might possibly be acceptable to the post-revolutionary psyche of China but departs from the classical tradition of China which emphasized socio-ethical humanism. A similar assumption without the sympathy has produced for India the late D.P. Chattopadhyaya's work on *Science and Technology in India* where the religious preoccupation of India emerges as a factor militating against the growth of science and technology. Indeed most modern histories of Indian civilization have been written on the historiographic model of their contemporary West and tend to emphasize the failure of Indian civilization in the areas or directions in which the West has made signal achievements. They emphasize, thus, the absence of Western literary, artistic, moral, social and intellectual forms and values in Indian civilization. Thus traditional Indian literature is found to lack the expression of individualism, secular adventure, rational protest and satire, old Indian art, naturalism and innovative experimentation. Indian ethics is found to be formal and otherworldly, Indian society to be irrational, unfree and inegalitarian. Indian philosophy is seen to be dominated by religious assumptions and lacking free rational inquiry. Indian mathematics lacks the axiomatic method, Indian science is at the same time insufficiently empirical and insufficiently rational. Indian civilization lacks a sense of history and progress. As a result what we have is a history of shadows and negativities, a modern Western judgment on Indian civilization, the modern historiography of civilization is, thus, essentially ethnocentric, whether it deals with the history of the West, the history of the World or the history of different non-Western civilizations. This situation finds ready parallels in the historiography of various traditional civilizations. Thus traditionally the Chinese regarded China as the Middle Kingdom, the only realm of civilization. The other peoples with whom they came in contact were regarded as lying outside the pale. Muslim historians traditionally began with the birth of Islam as bringing civilization where

there was only barbarism before. For the Graeco-Roman historians the Greek tradition of rationalism constituted the golden thread of civilization. St. Augustine discovered in the Roman Empire a vehicle ordained by Providence for the benefit of Christianity, a role which Toynbee has attributed to Western civilization itself today. The ancient Indian historical tradition as represented by the *Purāṇas* confines civilization within the boundaries of the Indian subcontinent.

This almost universal ethnocentricity of historiography has been diversly understood and appraised. The commonest view today is that it is rooted in avoidable ignorance and prejudice. Despite honourable exceptions much of traditional historiography had little critical knowledge of other civilizations. This situation is largely remedied today owing to the growth of critical historical knowledge. One proof of this is that historians of different countries are today in a state of reasonable communication and work within discussible differences. What is more, educated leaders belonging to diverse traditions are not only aware of the dominance of the West, they are also generally receptive to the principal scientific, technological and institutional achievements of the West.

Nevertheless, serious and unreconciled differences continue to exist. What is more, even the partial cross-cultural consensus of critical historians is largely due to the dominance of the Western educational and cultural tradition in the world today and relates mostly to evidencible factual issues. There has certainly been a fruitful cooperation in the discovery and collection of evidence relating to the human past and in the development of ancillary sciences such as archaeology with the result that many lost chapters of human civilization have been brought to light. At the same time, it is undeniable that the historical sciences like archaeology and linguistics have been placed within the conceptual frameworks provided by the new social sciences which are characteristically modern Western. As a result despite the vast increase in factual knowledge relating to human remains from the past, it cannot be said that there has been a corresponding increase in any common understanding of human civilization. The fact that the model of the historiography of civilization developed in the modern West has received wide acceptance in the world today is evidence not of its universal relevance or truth but of the political and economic dominance of the West based on its achievements in science and technology. The relevance of alternative points of view on human civilization as formulated and embodied in different traditional civilizations is not thereby eliminated even though it may be increasingly forgotten. The

fact that many ancient civilizations like the Egyptian or the Mayan have ceased to exist, does not mean that their understanding of man and human civilization has been shown to be false.

That all traditions of civilizations can be adequately comprehended within the cognitive and axiological perspective which underlies the modern historiography of civilization is, thus, open to question. It assumes that such a perspective has a necessary connection with historical science or with civilization as such. Two basic features of this perspective may be taken up for examination, viz., that human civilization constitutes a linear, evolutionary process, and that its most characteristic and essential feature is the power it gives man to control his physical environment enabling him to increase his success in the struggle for existence and the search for maximizing satisfactions. The first of these assumptions defines the very process of historical inquiry while the second defines the way in which the social sciences tend to view civilization.

Is the idea of the linear evolution of human civilization a generalization established by historical inquiry, or is it just a hypothesis which historians have borrowed from social science? Or is it a conception necessarily bound up with the very conception of historical science? Before examining these questions, it would be worthwhile to examine the present status of the idea of linear evolutionism. As is well-known such an idea can not easily be traced in any earlier traditional historiography. On the other hand, the ideas of the decline of virtue or of the advance and decline of virtue have been known. The general tendency in many ancient civilizations was to respect the past and regard the ancients as the model of virtue and wisdom. The revelatory Semitic religions started the notion of a division of history into two parts, an earlier part where man lived merely a natural life and a later part in which it is possible for him to prepare himself for a supernatural destiny. In other words, the post-revelation age of history may be described as an age of *potential* progress of human society. Nevertheless, it did erode the notion of ancient wisdom which also suffered from the scepticism emerging from rational philosophy and science in the Greek world. Nevertheless, Greek thinkers had as little sense of the historicity of the human condition as the Semitic religions had of the role of rational knowledge and material prosperity in making human life worthwhile in historical time. The Renaissance and the Reformation brought out the contrast of the Old and the New, a contrast which seventeenth-century science tilted in favour of the New. It was in the eighteenth century that the idea of the superiority of Western society to other societies and as capable

of great improvement in the future through the exercise of reason emancipated from religious or merely traditional dogmas gained a clear formulation. The idea of progress and the birth of secular social science as a replacement of religious law and wisdom arose out of this Enlightenment. The nineteenth century with its conspicuous material and scientific progress as well as the theory of natural evolution helped the emergence of the theory of human evolution which became the basis of anthropology. Anthropology in turn provided the guiding philosophy to archaeology which revolutionized the historical knowledge of traditional civilizations. The theory of economic development and its applications in the post-war world and the hope and belief that non-Western societies would be able to emulate the development of Western societies boosted the idea of civilization as a process of linear evolution.

It is clear, thus, that this idea of a single civilizational evolution is not so much the product of historical inquiry as a kind of directive principle adopted by modern historians from the social sciences reflecting the hopes of the new civilization arisen in the West and now spreading over the globe. This belief in progress, evolution, or development as the ultimate norm of the history of civilization rests by and large not on any world-historical inquiry but on the recent historical experience of the modern West in which the development of science and its social applications have played an important part. One cannot conclude from this, however, that the 'evolution' of modern Western civilization is to be attributed primarily to the evolution of science and technology since its role cannot be separated from the roles of political, economic, social and moral changes. Thus rationalism, capitalism and democracy have each been regarded as the motive force of modern history. Civilization is a complex configuration in which the development of its different dimensions is not only interdependent but is uneven. The development of science is not autonomous or unilinear. It depends on social activity and organization which have moral as well as economic dimensions. Scientific paradigms themselves are not independent of more general intellectual presuppositions. The uniqueness of historical occurrences as configurational conjunctures makes it impossible to isolate the functioning of the different variables in the process. Nor is any historical hypothesis testable.

If it is difficult to describe the historical process of modern Western civilization in terms of any neat formula or generalization—a situation which obtains for all complex civilizational traditions—it is equally difficult to appraise the overall achievement in any such case. If religion declines and science progresses, is that a gain or a loss? The criteria of

appraisal are themselves part of a changing process. As soon as one selects or generalizes from them, one moves from history to speculative philosophy. Even if a criterion were adopted, its application would remain uncertain. Any kind of social change produces contradictory consequences in different proportions and known but partially. Indeed, many historians have been struck by the dialectical character of the historical process which excludes the possibility of simple generalization or long-range prediction because the logic of historical dialectic cannot be fully ascertained either by speculative philosophy or by the analysis of a few historically given socio-economic or political systems.

It has been supposed that if the initial conditions are given and the laws of change known, it would be possible to reach a predictive understanding of the temporal universe of particular events. For the historical universe of human actions and experiences, this is plainly impossible. The historian's inquiry is confined to the critical study of the surviving records from the past. This can give at best a probabilistic understanding of some small parts of the historical universe. Much of the past and the whole of the future lies beyond the ken of the historian. Nor are any significant or unique laws of historical change accessible to him. All the 'laws' by which natural phenomena are understood are inapplicable to history because they require the reduction of historical phenomena to physical phenomena. As far as anthropological or sociological laws are concerned they tend to be either trivial or speculative, or else abbreviated historical descriptions. Even the 'laws' of economics, demography or social psychology only give probabilities within historically delimited contexts. What is commonly known of human nature does not enable anyone to predict individual behaviour with any certainty nor to predict social behaviour under unexpected conditions of which history is replete.

Thus, if the historian were to regard himself as a scientist of the historical universe, he would be unable to reach any non-trivial generalization about it such as that it is evolutionary or linear. He would only be able to apprehend the probability of some particular events within a partially given, non-recurring whole or process. There is thus an inherent fragmentariness and uncertainty in historical knowledge which militates against far-reaching generalizations claiming to reveal the historical destiny of man. That human civilization has been a single process of man's continuing improvement over the ages and may be expected to remain so in the future, cannot be asserted on the basis of historical knowledge, even if it were given a definite meaning. What is patent is that many civilizations have risen and fallen without any

rational pattern. And this constitutes too small a part of the life of man in time to serve as the basis of further *atideśa.*

It is, however, possible to argue that the viable units of historical study are not the different civilizations in which specific social interests, images and norms, ideal values, beliefs, symbols and historical memories and hopes are blended together in specific configurations but the essentially universalizable and ideally autonomous traditions of value-seeking such as science and philosophy, religion and ethics, art and social wisdom. The different civilizations would only be different experimental chapters of one continuing civilization constituted by the segments of the traditions of ideal quests available in the different civilizations. These segments could be construed as tangents of the ideal civilization which man approaches asymptotically in historical time. Thus modern science claims to subsume and carry forward all earlier traditions of science and claiming to reach the true conception of knowledge, seeks to replace the older traditions of religious and metaphysical wisdom. Humanistic and utilitarian social ethics claims to carry forward the substantive moral quest of man without being bedevilled by superstition or ideology. Modern industry promises to carry every man to the long dreamt of El Dorado. The machine promises to fulfil the dreams of power and democracy to make everyone free, equal and king. In short, modern civilization may be considered to be the self-fulfilling continuation of earlier civilizations in so far as they have been based on secular rationality or scientific humanism.

This brings us to the second of the two assumptions mentioned above, viz., that the substance of civilization lies in the quest for secular power and satisfaction. If this were accepted, modern civilization would appear for the most part to show the way to the realization of what the earlier civilizations have been seeking. There are, however, three points which need to be considered—can we speak of the growth of knowledge as a linear process? Can knowledge be defined only or primarily in terms of scientific rationality? Can value or real happiness be defined in terms of secular satisfaction and its means? As a verifiable system of judgments interpreting experience in some practical context, knowledge changes as experience changes or as the ways of thought change. The two kinds of changes may occur together and may or may not be independent. There is no inherent necessity in anyone of these processes or their interaction which would ensure continuous improvement in knowledge. Thus from prehistoric times men have used their observational knowledge of the heavens to guide them in numerous practical activities like navigation, travel, sowing and ritual. So long as

knowledge serves the purpose for which it is pursued, there is not much incentive to search for something radically new. The Babylonians were satisfied by their detailed records of heavenly observations and did not feel the need for more general mathematical formulae. The Greeks beginning with geometrical and logical inquiries at a much later date provided the theoretical tool for the development of their mathematical astronomy in the Hellenistic Age. Some of the results of this astronomy are supposed to have stimulated Indian astronomy in the Gupta Age. Arab astronomy drew on both the Hellenistic and Indian traditions and made some improvements. This cross-cultural development of astronomy spans some three thousand years. Its different phases and forms functioned within different civilizational contexts which were at once empirical-pragmatic as well as theoretical where the theoretical elements could be mythical—speculative explanations as well as mathematical relations connecting observational constants. It is the testable knowledge of these constants which constituted the hard core of astronomical science and it is this which exemplifies the cross-cultural universalizable content of scientific knowledge. This content being associated with mathematical symbolism and techniques these also were readily amenable to cross-cultural transmission. The theoretical explanation, on the other hand, of the motions of heavenly bodies has been part of a more general set of paradigmatic ideas belonging to the intellectual *Zusammenhang* of the particular civilizational age. The older civilization explained the motions of the heavenly bodies by the will or nature of a self-moving, divine agency. Eliminating the gods, modern thought explains the motions of all bodies in terms of hypothetical forces of which the formulation has been changing under the impact of new observational data, mathematical models and cosmological ideas.

The basic role in the development of scientific knowledge has been played by empirical observation for the sake of successful practical activity. The conceptual framework for systematizing such observations, explaining them and generalizing from them has tended to be corrigible in so far as it has been testable, and it has also been variable not only owing to the search for consistency and refinement but also because of changing conceptual perspectives in the larger cultural context. Thus the development of scientific knowledge within a civilization occurs within the context of its epochal social practice and cultural *Anschauung*. Thus one cannot overlook the fact that the development of modern science took place along with the Commercial and Industrial Revolutions as well as the growth of rational philosophy and the *Aufklärung*. Since these pragmatic and attitudinal factors have been relatively stable or

slow-changing in most civilizations, the development of scientific knowledge too has been slow and limited in them. Cross-cultural continuities in science too have been primarily of testable empirical knowledge while its theoretical formulations have been more readily variable.

On this view, the development of science is not only conditioned by contingent civilizational contexts but also by the contingent history of empirical discoveries. Since men have sought different kinds of practically useful knowledge within differently defined limits, one cannot speak of a universal quest for the maximization of such knowledge.

On the other hand, it has been generally made out these days that science is essentially theoretical knowledge which is ideally hypothetico-deductive in its method. Its empirical testability makes it corrigible. With its inbuilt methods of discovery and self-correction, scientific knowledge should therefore show a progressive advance and thus increasingly realize man's rational nature in course of time. It is concluded from this that however dimly and partially, the history of science in different civilizations should be held to exhibit this progressive linear process of reaching increasingly more consistent and adequate theory. In any case, science has now come of age and pursues its end of perfect rational knowledge self-consciously.

It is assumed on this view that ideally science has a universal and timeless truth which may be discovered piecemeal in different places and ages but in which, if the accidental errors are excluded, we would reach at any given moment of the history of science a fragmentary kernel of what may be called perennial scientific truth. Thus when the modern scientist reviews past science he discovers what he *already knows* though in some strange form or as a tissue of confusion and errors. The concept of linear evolution thus could be seen as a way of reconciling the corrigibility of science with its ideally timeless truth. Such a view, however, has an obvious limitation. No one can say what the ideally true science is like because future discoveries of science are unpredictable. Knowledge is structured as a system of statements, the truth of statements is not independent of the system, and it is difficult to argue that we have reached a unique systematization in which only specific gaps, doubts or errors need to be removed. The attempt to correct results tends to precipitate in due course the revision of the system itself and the truth of a system is not of the same sort as the truth of its elements. Systems often spring from presuppositions and hypotheses which are not directly or easily verifiable or falsifiable. The history of Euclidean Geometry provides a striking example. The concept of paradigm-change in the

historiography of science too, despite controversy, retains an undeniable relevance. The fact is that the notions of corrigibility and empirical testability make scientific truth pragmatic and relative, a kind of truth which has been called *Pravṛtti-sāmarthya* or *Vyavahāravisaṁvāditva.* Knowledge in this sense is an aid to practice, not an end in itself. Nor does the logical aspect of scientific theory prove of much avail, since logic constructs formal systems which, if rescued from tautology, may or may not be true. It, therefore, seems that the historian of science has no choice but to seek to relate scientific paradigms to the overall thrust of what Whitehead has called the 'form of the forms of thought' and the pressure of social change within which they have their origin and currency.

If the history of science becomes naturally divisible into integral aspects of the histories of different civilizations, the history of philosophy or art or religion or morality or social ideas would be so divisible even more. All these and similar enterprises of value-seeking do not have any universal definitions, nor are they independent of each other, nor autonomous. It would be a mistake to suppose that cultures are compounded out of distinct, pre-existing values and that different cultures are different only in the ways in which they select, emphasize and continue these values. If cultures are configurations of values, values themselves must be regarded as articulations of culture. As the Vedānta holds, different values are expressions of the same ultimate Value under different *upādhis*, and this ultimate is nothing except the Self.

The prevailing modern Western view as reflected in the contemporary historiography of civilization is to make scientific humanism the real central value of all civilizations. The human self is here regarded as natural, social and rational, the self as the subject of *mithyā* and *gauṇa pratyaya.* Its rationality is *sāṁvyāvahārika pramāṇa-buddhi* or *tarka,* independent of any revelatory or intuitive tradition, *āmnāya* or *prajñā.* Civilizations would, thus, be constituted by *tarka* and *Nīti* or their failure. These histories, could only be the long preparatory phases of trial and error before the take off phase of civilization in the modern West.

Culture or value, on the other hand, can only be a mode of self-consciousness, and different cultures or organizations of values have to be regarded as rooted in different visions of the self. In the Indian tradition the ordinary self-consciousness of man is held to be compounded of a duality in which the natural and spiritual modes of awareness are mutually superimposed, and thus subject to a dialectical

tension. This tension of *Ātman-Anātman, Śreyas-Preyas* or *Vidyā-Avidyā* requires *viveka* or *samyag-dṛṣti* for its resolution. It is through *viveka* that the *Puruṣārthas* and *sādhanas* are apprehended. *Viveka* or ethico-spiritual reason belongs, on the one hand, to the individual and, on the other, is embodied through communication and symbolization in a social tradition, *Āmnāya, Pāramparya* or *sampradāya.* To belong to this tradition is to be cultured *(śiṣṭa* or *ārya),* that is to say, to participate in value-seeking *(artha-caryā, sādhana, paryesanā)* in accordance with the cultural reason of the tradition. Now the diversity of *vāsanās* prevents the vision of the spiritual truth from being understood or expressed uniformly at the level of the mind or intellect, whether individual or social. It is only the overmind vision which can apprehend the unity of spiritual being as a uniform vision. The result is that a plurality of spiritual traditions or *Āgamas* arises as the vision receives social and symbolic expression in the cognitive-conceptual, affective-imaginative and conative-practical dimensions of human consciousness. When the expressions are still inward looking, pointing the way to turn towards the source of the spiritual tradition, we have what is often termed religion, the quest for supernatural life through superhuman wisdom. When the symbolic-expressive aspect is itself in the forefront we have the aesthetic quest. When the conative aspect is guided by the sense of a larger self, we have morality and social ethics. When the tradition is concerned with self-preservation through the control of human and natural environment, it assumes the form of techno-scientific, economic and political traditions. How these different aspects define themselves, what concepts, symbols, institutions and techniques they evolve for themselves is as a whole unique to each civilization. They cannot be subsumed within a single, historically articulate vision of values or system of ideas. To attempt to do so would be to distort them by making them marginal parts of one's own civilization.

This plurality of cultures and the relativity of values does not, however, mean any radical incommensurability in the sense of mutual non-comprehension or non-communication, though it does impose barriers, normal but removable, in the way of mutual appreciation. The task of the historiography of civilization ought to be to provide a bridge for genuine cross-cultural understanding. In fact, culture as a mode of self and history as a mode of understanding have a unique relationship owing to the historicity of the human self and the nature of history as reflective critical self-knowledge. Although temporality characterizes all phenomena including natural phenomena, historicity belongs to man as self or consciousness. Natural phenomena are located in time, change

in time and the change is causally ordered. The phenomena, however, may be regarded as classes of recurrent events and their determining causal matrix as invariant. The human consciousness, on the other hand, reconstitutes itself in time and is, strictly speaking, unique each moment. Real time is inseparable from consciousness and is nothing but its characteristic mode of being. The knowledge of self is necessarily the knowledge of the history of the self, of its constituting and reconstituting itself in time through its own activity. Every *vṛtti* reconstitutes the mind-identified self every moment. Self-knowledge becomes the knowledge of a unique *kśaṇasaṁtāna* or *vṛtti-pravāha*, a flux of *saṁskāras* dependent on *karmaphala-sambandha*, i.e., dependent ultimately on *karman*. *Karman* is the free or responsible act of the self identifying itself with some *upādhi* and goals *(artha)* and acting by its judgment (*vijñāna*). In other words, it is the freedom of the value-seeking self that constitutes and determines it as acting and experiencing. As society has been regarded as man writ large, and culture may be regarded as the tradition of social self-consciousness, civilization may in turn be regarded as a society identified by a culture. Where culture emphasizes the seeking of ideal values, civilization emphasizes the search for security, material well-being and power. The two are knit together by the framework of moral values which are determined by the conception of the ideal self. Culture determines the limits and directions of civilization, civilization facilitates or hinders the pursuit of culture. Both together image the self in search of ideal values as well as of security and utilities. The knowledge of this social self or living body politic can only be the knowledge of its history.

As concrete traditions of value-seeking, civilizations, thus, are objects proper of historical knowledge, not instantiations or recurrent behavioural patterns to be studied by social science methods. Social science methods of observation, participant-observation, etc., however, cannot apply to past societies which can only be known historically. It is true that analogies from the present may be of some help in understanding the past but that can be so only in a very general manner. To understand the unique reality of the past or of what comes down from the past, it is necessary to turn to history.

History may be said to be defined, not by its subject matter but by its method. The world which the historian studies is not accessible to him in any possible observation since it is irrevocably past and gone. He neither observes what is given to him in experience nor does he study merely possible classes of phenomena. He seeks to study the world as it appeared to men in the past. His method is to study the records of

past experience and reflections. It is the surviving record of human thought and experience that constitutes the primary evidence for the historian. This evidence has an objective as well as a subjective dimension. It can hardly be regarded as the simple record of what was the case; it must also be seen as an expression of subjectivity, a record of human reaction.

While all past records are relevant to the historian, they remain primarily records of consciousness, not records of reality as Nature. What the historical method reconstructs is the constitution of a time-specific world-appearance and its correlative subjectivity. The method works from within outwards, i.e., from the expression of consciousness to a specific form of the self-conscious human world *sub specie temporis*. It is this interpreted and reconstructed content of past records which images what may be called historical reality. Historiography may thus be defined as the interpretative rediscovery of the form of consciousness which has left behind its own records. It would be obvious that by consciousness in this context I do not mean pure, absolute consciousness, nor the personal immediacy of the individual organism. Consciousness is taken here as a trans-personal content constituted in social time, consciousness as a mediated, social self-consciousness, as word and meaning, *saviśeṣa, sopādhika, śabdānuviddha-pratyayātmaka*, including '*gauṇapratyaya*'.

Subjectivity, again, does not signify in this context the bias or prejudice of records but their being rooted in the subject, individual, social and universal, the three dimensions being interlocked in a specific temporal constitution. The historian's method of dealing with records is a complex one in which the strands of criticism, hermeneutic, phenomenology and dialectic are interwoven. It is critical in a multiple sense. It does not take the record at its face value but examines its credibility. It seeks to understand the meaning of the record and the voices within it. It seeks to place the meaning or intention within its multiple context, logical and social and personal where relevant. It seeks to apprehend the deeper forms exemplified in the meaning and it seeks to trace in them the working of a dual dialectic, the dialectic of ideas as well as the dialectic of social being. Thus the historian of Śaṅkarācārya could begin with the authenticity of the works ascribed to him and proceed to discover their meaning in which he must distinguish various traditional and non-traditional voices. The intellectual and social context of Śaṅkara could be as relevant as the dialectical criticism and interaction of philosophical ideas. The place of Śaṅkara within the historically

developing Indian tradition could be a part of the dialectic of historical being.

The method of history, thus, is quite distinct from that of any science, empirical or formal and so is consequently its subject matter. The major *Prameya* is the contextually intelligible meaning, *Āgamikārtha* as the content of *Itihāsa* was described by *Abhinava Gupta.* These meanings are, on the one hand, expressions or intentions of consciousness and, on the other, representations of ideational and life forms. Verbal communication reveals the subject from which it proceeds and the objective forms which it intends. It is a peculiar kind of effect in its first aspect, a sign or symbol created by consciousness. In its second aspect, its immediate object is a form or possibility but the same may also be referred to a perceived or imagined actuality. It should be obvious, then, that the causal factor in history not only operates through the human psyche but is also manifested through it to the historian. History here does not mean hypothetically conceived objective external events on the analogy of natural events. History here means what the historian discovers by delving in his evidence which is ultimately verbal testimony or dependent on it. Now verbal testimony is never an independent source of knowledge of natural reality or external events although it is the prime source of knowledge about human persons and minds. It is always the expression of beliefs and attitudes but the psyche to which these belong is not an isolated atom or monad. It is a participant in a wider multi-streamed psychic universe. Its autonomy is plainly limited and its heteronomy undeniable, though the nature of the causally conditioning heteros is a matter of philosophical determination. Even if one adopts a naturalistic-realistic conception of the world, it cannot be denied that one cannot *understand* human behaviour simply as a fully determinate and predictable function of the natural environment. The environment itself or at least its impact is modified by human action, the social environment is nothing but man writ large, human behaviour as intelligent and meaningful irreducible to simple physical and chemical activity. Man is a self-conscious being with a sense of freedom, and any deterministic reductionism which steps far beyond the magic circle of self-consciousness is bound to become irrelevant to historical understanding.

The historian's records, thus, are the documentary testimony of a temporally constituted social self-consciousness, his world a world of meanings fashioned and ever renewed by human beliefs, attitudes and actions. The historian's world is no longer accessible to experience and his representation of it is wholly unverifiable. It is difficult for this

representation to be independent of the beliefs and attitudes of the historian as a participant in his contemporary age, even though he cannot as historian take sides between true or false religions, or philosophies or sciences except that he can notice inconsistencies—logical, moral, aesthetic—or failures in action, or the inadequacies of means to ends within the world he studies. This attitude of objectivity is not uncommon among historians with respect to religion or philosophy nor among anthropologists with respect to archaic cultures. The situation today is undoubtedly different about science, but the situation is parallel to that of mediaeval historians firmly distinguishing between true and false religion. Pre-modern scholars or historians, indeed, did not make any radical distinction between natural science, metaphysics or theology. All of these were sciences in an increasing measure. The idea that not metaphysics or theology, but only the empirical science of nature is truly science and that the others are false or doubtful systems of beliefs, that empirical science alone constitutes positive knowledge and is a culture neutral but universal and evolutionary constant, would have found little support among them. Positive knowledge and practical skill have always been prized and cultivated but in the earlier ages they were prized within the bounds of a cultural ethos which looked beyond the merely earthy life of man to his heavenly destiny. Such, however, is the force of cultural ethos that the modern historian, even though he is not a scientist, feels it incumbent on him to endorse not merely the empirical truth of natural sciences but also an attitude of scepticism towards traditional beliefs. This is simply a consequence of the historian's acceptance of values which define modern culture, it is not relevant to his task as a historian pure and simple.

It may be said that the historian is necessarily rooted in contemporary history, his reconstruction of the past bears the stamp of the present, that in a profound sense all history is contemporary history. As a result history today is unavoidably 'scientific', just as mediaeval history was theological and archaic history mythical.

There is undoubtedly a trivial sense in which all history is contemporary since the activity of the historian belongs to his own time. The profound sense in which all history is contemporary rests on the historian's taking his presuppositions from the prevailing ethos of his age. Now while this is common, it is not necessary. The human tradition is never wholly monolithic or homogeneous, it always includes an element of self-criticism, a sense of its own inadequacy. The historian requires to be critically neutral towards his own age. To the extent he is prejudiced in favour of his own age, he fails to be a critical historian.

A relativistic philosophy is part of the historian's methodology. All beliefs and values are relative to their concrete historical context. Indeed, their meaning is constituted by their context. The positivist seeks meaning in terms of verification. In the absence of verification, the critical historian defines the meaning of past notions, norms and values through contextual colligation.

From the essential methodology of historical knowledge it follows that such knowledge is not a verifiable knowledge of external facts given independently of human experience. It can only be a critical reconstruction of past human consciousness in so far as it has recorded itself. If the records are looked upon as a kind of communication from the past to the present, it would still follow that the historian can never be sure of its whole meaning since the incompleteness of the communication is manifest. He can reconstruct merely particular histories in a limited fashion. He can relate and reflect over particular stories of value-seeking. He cannot, however, become the spectator of all times and the attempt to extrapolate the general features of human history conceived as a single story in time from the limited records available would be a manifestly impossible task. He can present many fragmentary stories but he can never have sufficient warrant for a 'complete' story of man. As a result what happens, in fact, is that every age tends to build up its own master story of man. The frameworks of such master stories may be compared to the results of cosmological speculations. In other words, an essentially speculative-mythical aspect enters history as soon as it attempts to present the story of human civilization or civilizations as a single meaningfully unified whole.

For contemporary historians civilization has been, by definition, confined to not more than 6,000 years of the past. For this various criteria have been adopted such as the presence of writing, metal technology, urban life, political organization, etc. This definition already converts civilization into a small island within the vast ocean of past history. The attempt to delineate prehistory as a preparation for the history of civilization remains guilty of an obvious *petitio principii*. Similarly, to imagine that these few millennia of civilized life contain a sure indication of the hopefully continuing and developing character of the future, is also a belief which cannot be established historically. In short, unlike the natural scientist who is guided in his researches by the notion of nature as an ultimately intelligible matrix of forces, the historian cannot postulate a parallel principle for the historical universe which never remains the same in time. That there is any deep structure in human time as such, much less in geography, which could be regarded

as constituting an explanation of historical events is itself unprovable. There are doubtless various types of structures in which human culture and civilization can be seen as framed. Similarly selected sequences of events may be seen to exhibit patterns of historical change. For example, one can see the role of the dialectic of ideas in philosophical systems. Similarly, art traditions tend to exhibit patterns of change moving from the creation of new forms to the dominance of stereotypes. Various kinds of cycles have been discerned in the structures of power. Nevertheless, these different structures show an unpredictable interlocking in history and it is difficult to estimate the pattern of change in what may be called the macro-structure or structures. In other words, although the historian may feel that there is a structural logic in the events with which he constantly deals, it is difficult for him to pinpoint such logic. Like the artist sensing a meaning or pattern which he can never fully discover or articulate, the historian too always remains in a tantalizing situation.

The kind of explanation which the historian cannot avoid seeking ultimately is a morally rational explanation. Rationality merely as causal or logical determination can never be adequate for the understanding of human affairs. If a story were to relate how a pedestrian was overrun by a speeding truck and ended there, it would surely be found very unsatisfactory. Doubtless as far as the sociology of truck traffic is concerned, such an event would make a statistical item. But the task of understanding an apparently meaningless happening in the context of human life raises questions of a different kind. One cannot understand human events without moral teleology. If teleology and the moral law are simply human expectations or beliefs to which history is in different like natural science, then historiography would cease to be an autonomous human science. It would simply become a miscellany of diverse factual studies serving as ancillaries for other more systematic disciplines. The fact, however, is that histories have through the ages sought to narrate human events within the context of understanding man as a moral and purposive being. Even today in the age of positivistic history a moral rationale is brought in surreptitiously by presenting natural history as well as human history as somehow contributing to human evolution, development or progress.

To conclude, the historiography of civilization cannot provide a master story. It can only provide particular studies, narrative and reflective, bearing on past human experience in so far as it has recorded itself. Such a historiography, despite its fragmentary character, would have an intrinsic, humanistic, moral and spiritual significance.

Cosmology and Historiography

V. SHEKHAWAT

Philosophy Department, University of Rajasthan

It is well known that cosmology—as presented in Saṁkhyā Siddhānta and Vaiśeṣika Siddhānta—constitutes the core of Indian philosophy or *Darśana Śāstra.* It is also the foundation of *Dharma Śāstra* as is evident from the theoretic structure of *Manu Smṛti* which is presumably the earliest systematic *Dharma Śāstra.* If general history of man is conceived as study of event unfolding in *social time* on the earth, it cannot be accepted as *valid* unless its *consistency* with cosmology can be shown for event-unfolding in social-time can only be a constituent of event-unfolding in time in general or in natural time. Since the unfolding of natural events in natural time is studied in *Kāla Śāstra,* this constitutes *special* cosmology so that *Itihāsa Śāstra* can only be a branch or component science of *Kāla Śāstra. Itihāsa Śāstra* itself can be general or special, the former studying formation of human societies, emergence of cultures, their decline/decay/disappearance etc., and the latter studying the dynamics of specific societies/cultures—their emergence, growth, decline, decadence, death etc. Both general and special history must of necessity be consistent with *Kāla Śāstra* as well as *Darśana Śāstra,* more so general history—in order to be accepted as valid. This gives us a fundamental clue to historiographic method and we shall here investigate its implications for writing of general history.

If history has to be not merely *descriptive* but also *explanatory,* its construction has to be *rational* for what is *explained* is always grounded in reasons/evidences/facts/causes. Further, history not only reconstructs the past but also *predicts* the future so as to *explain* why events unfolded as these did and why these will unfold as these will, in social time. This would then give a *rational account* of event unfolding in social-time. Now social-time is a constituent of natural-time in the sense that natural-social conduct of man occurs in and is determined by his social consciousness which though formed in natural time, grows and moves by a different inner logic than that of natural time. Social time does not

come into being simultaneously with natural time, rather it manifests as social consciousness of man which is formed on conditions of prolonged natural-cosmic process. With the formation of social consciousness, man enters general history/socio-cosmology as before that, he is a mere natural life-form on par with other life-forms. Thus, it is only the prolonged persistence of natural-time that makes possible the existence of social-time. The surging forth and dissolution of cosmos take place in natural-time—thus it may be said to be the ultimate *cause* of cosmos as such and thus of social-time as well.

Cosmology studies the unfolding of natural events in natural time, therefore, it may be visualised as *natural history*. General history or social—cultural history of man is thus internal to natural history. And specific history of emergence and disappearance of specific societies/cultures is internal to general history. It would thus be expected of special history to be consistent with general history, the latter itself being consistent with natural history. Special and general histories of man, then unfold in social-time which itself is a constituent of natural-time.

General history ought to explain why, when and how social consciousness of man emerged? Why, when and how social formations began to emerge? Why, when and how some social formations gave rise to cultures while others failed to do so? Why and how some cultures emerged, completed a definite life-span and disappeared while others declined/decayed yet remaining alive? Why and how societies come into contact sometimes giving rise to new culture-formations and sometimes allowing only one culture to continue and flourish? How all these processes will continue in future and what would be their end?

Special history ought to explain how and why general history influenced specific societies/cultures and vice-versa? How and why specific culture form emerged in specific society and how and why it flourished, declined, decayed or died? What features characterise specificities of special history under consideration?

In a wider perspective, the historian has to explain in what manner the pattern/periodicity of natural history relate to pattern/periodicity of general history and this latter to the pattern/periodicity of special histories. Such explanation would then provide grounds for the consistency of special histories to general history and of general history to natural history or cosmology.

Consistency itself is two-fold: strict, logical consistency or *siddhi* and non-strict, supportive consistency or *puṣṭi*. The former is displayed in a premise-conclusion pattern whereby well-established statements are

stringed together by a cognitive process of reasoning or *sūtraṇa*. Such consistency cannot be worked out in history, or, it can only be partially worked out for such is the logic of social-time that it does not yield to strict/formal reasoning. Thus, in history we seek consistency by *puṣṭi* which allows the emergence of consensus and acceptance by and large. Though a greater scope for disagreement and criticism persists in such construction, it is nevertheless *rational* construction for *puṣṭi* is impossible without evidences/facts. Further, no special means of knowledge or *pramāṇas* are required for generation of statements of history and the four *pramāṇas* accepted in cosmology, namely *pratyakśa, anumāna, śabda upamāna* and would suffice having the degree of validity strictly in that order. It will be fallacious to think that order of *pramāṇas* changes in history for that would mean revising the criteria of rationality of construction and even making it dubitable whether such construction would be rational at all. It may be noted that recorded data—*ākhyāna* and *vṛttānta*—constitute *facts* of history and thus fall under *pratyakśa pramāṇa* and require *siddhi/puṣṭi*, just like any other forms of *pratyakśa*, before acceptance of their truth.

General history thus being accepted as *Itihāsa Śāstra*, special histories become its *constituents* and subspecial histories become *components* or *aṅga vidyās* of every special history. Thus, for example the special history of Indian society/culture would be a constituent of general history and will itself have components such as history of knowledge, history of moral-seeking, economic history, political history etc., which can have further branches such as history of disciplines. History thus becomes a vast enterprise presenting detailed picture of social-time as unfolding on the earth, the world drama that starts on a determinate moment and must end at some future moment when the conclusion or climax is reached and the purpose fulfilled.

The reason why *Itihāsa Śāstra* as rational body of knowledge did not emerge amongst the major indigenous *Śāstras* is that special cosmology or *Kāla Śāstra* on the one hand and socio-cosmology of the *Dharma Śāstra* on the other hand provided jointly a fairly satisfactory picture of general history. Special history appeared uninteresting because it invariably and compulsively followed the rhythm of general history thus appearing as repetitive. Moreover, this special history appeared to be more rewarding when centered on dynasties or *vaṁśas* rather than on nations/states as the former were far more durable than the latter and as such a history illuminated and inspired the rulers for excelling by example of their forefathers. Such *vaṁśa* centered history was the subject of *Rājaguru* who was primarily an expert of *Dharma Śāstra* but

also excelled in *Darśana Śāstra* and *Kāla Śāstra* and was also responsible as teacher and advisor of the ruler's family. It is possible that special histories centering on republics were written during the early *Śāstra* period but as the republics were absorbed in the vast Mauryan empire and never emerged again, these histories also seem to have disappeared. Disappearance of *vaṁśa*-centered rule and emergence of durable/stable democratic nation states is relatively a recent phenomenon on the earth and has made the writing of nation-centered special histories indispensable particularly for cultivation of nation-consciousness in the nationals. Thus, while social-consciousness and cultural-consciousness may be efficiently cultivated by the *Dharma Śāstra*, it may not be the best vehicle for cultivation of nation-consciousness which is imbibed more efficiently by *Itihāsa Śāstra* alone—of the special kind. But the writing of such special histories is far more difficult as compared to the writing of general history for the nations have emerged as aggregates of diverse ex-ruling classes, smaller nationalities, diverse races, tribes, minorities etc., without a homogeneous structure. This requires great ingenuity in reconstruction of the past which can never be forgotten but has to be so interpreted that it can be accommodated in the recent special histories. Detailed considerations of these issues will however be postponed for the moment.

In the rational construction of general history, the concept of *ṛta/dharma* is of primary significance. In the cosmologies, *ṛta/dharma* is understood as undefinable *efficaciousness* of the not fully characterisable ultimate cause from which the fundamental constituents of the world issue forth. These fundamental constituents themselves have *efficacy* by nature, by virtue of which these are endowed with fundamental qualities and actions and ability for cohesion *(sādharmya)* and conflict *(vaidharmya)*. According to socio-cosmology of *Dharma Śāstra*, this *dharma* itself manifests as conduct *(āchāratah)* of living beings in accordance with an immanent natural order or *vidhāna*. Now in special cosmology, the life-span of the cosmos is computed as $100 \times 360 \times 1000$ *mahāyugas* so that it suffers as many *udayas* and *pralayas* after which there is *mahāpralaya*. Thus a *mahāyuga* is the period between one *udaya* and *pralaya* of the cosmos; it has the dimension of 43,20,000 solar years. A *mahāyuga* is further divided into four *yugas* with dimensions of *kṛta* = $4 \times 43{,}200$, *tretā* = $3 \times 43{,}200$, *dwāpara* = $2 \times 43{,}200$ and *kali* = $1 \times 43{,}200$ solar years and the *dharma*—both understood as efficacy of fundamental constituents and efficacy of conduct of living beings—declines/erodes by stages in the order 4:3:2:1. This implies that *dharma/ṛta* manifests in fullness in the *kṛta* period of natural time and is minimal in the *kali* period of

natural time. Clearly, this cosmological analysis of natural time has implications for social-time of general history, but the important question is why and how this erosion/decline takes place? And why this erosion is not continuous but occurs in stages or 'radical jumps'? The former question can be answered by holding that to erode *(kalana)* is the very nature of time or *kāla* and *dharma* can be no exception to it. As regards the manner of erosion, the basic insight seems to be that generally it takes longer time for erosion to set in as also substances have inherent capacity for repairment. Four divisions of stages seem to have been made for simplicity in computations and more divisions ought to be possible in finer cosmology. If thus the principle of erosion of *dharma* of entire cosmos in natural time is accepted, the earth and its man can be no exception to it. However, if general/social-cultural history has to be consistent with natural history, the problem of synchronocity of social-time with natural time would arise. How can the aggregate *dharma* on the earth be estimated and how can it be shown that although different societies show cultural-valuational maxima in a given *yuga*, this would nevertheless conform with the pattern of *dharma* variation in accordance with the principle? The problem seems aggravated when it is noted that contemporary general history confines itself to much smaller time magnitudes than are indicated by the above natural history or *Kāla Śāstra*. *Kāla Śāstra* holds the present stage to be the *kali* stage of which about 5,000 solar years have elapsed. Can the evidences of *dwāpara, tretā* and *kṛta yugas* be mustered for rational construction of general history? Do archaeological evidences last for that long duration? Therefore, is rational construction of general history at all feasible if the evidences cannot in principle be mustered? These problems will however not beset natural history or special cosmology or *Kāla Śāstra* in which the present age of planetary bodies can be somewhat estimated. It is quite possible that such fundamental difficulties in rational construction of *Itihāsa Śāstra* discouraged Indian thinkers from initiating the enterprise! The only way out seems to be that it be defended *purely* on rational grounds without much empirical support justifying it further on grounds of correctness of forecasts/predictions in near future. This procedure has been adopted particularly in special cosmology. In special cosmology, if some fundamental/ground-level premises yield by mediation of true statements, predictions which can be observably verified, then the fundamental premises are generally left unquestioned and accepted as not-false. Thus, for example, *Kāla Śāstra* predicts eclipses to satisfactory accuracy on premises of observer on earth as centre and equal velocities of orbiting bodies, though these are observationally

false. As the precision of instruments of observation increases, this often compels change of fundamental premises. If similar procedure is adopted in general history, the principle of erosion of *dharma* in natural time can be accepted as a fundamental premise without observational support *if and only if* it yields correct forecasts/predictions—that is, correct to a satisfactory degree. Acceptance of this principle would have several implications for social-cultural history. It would imply cross-sectional and vertical shrinkage of the seeking of values of knowledge (understood strictly as *atyanta duḥkha nivṛtti* and *mithyā jñāna nivṛtti*), austereness/penance *(tapa)*, and benevolence *(paropakāra)* in social time. It would also imply the tendency enmass of giving priority to *artha* and *kāma* purposes over *dharma*. It would further imply gradual ascendance of *kāma* or sensuous gratification over every other human purpose. The evaluation of such erosion would require the standardization of a *dharma*–scale with reference to which highest achievements in the search for *satya* or truth, *śiva* or goodness and *sundara* or beauty may be evaluated.

The principle of *dharma* understood in its widest cosmological perspective of natural efficacy of fundamental constituents of the cosmos in respect of their qualities or *guṇa*, actions or *karma* and cohesion—conflict or *sādharmya-vaidharmya*, can explain why formation of social-consciousness emerged on certain regions of the earth first, why culture formations emerged in certain societies first, why certain culture formations/social formations declined/disappeared while others continued etc.? The principle of erosion of *dharma* would further necessitate the coming into contact of less cultured societies with high cultured societies so that their interaction may bring about the erosion of *dharma* in high-culture societies. The principle would necessitate the impossibility of any rise of value-seeking by man on the entire earth for the entire period of *kali yuga*,—rather it would necessitate their further erosion.

General history being history internal to natural history and external to special histories, its movement is bound to be influenced by both. Thus, changes in natural history—of environment, climate, atmosphere etc.—will cause definitive changes in general history—such as widespread displacement of societies, struggles of societies, dominant/recessive trends in societies etc. Similarly, changes in special histories of different societies/cultures on earth would also influence the dynamics of general history. Special histories themselves being internal to natural history, these may be directly influenced by the latter. Thus, for example, in a

given region, one race may become dominant over others because of favourable climatic/resource conditions.

Above considerations imply mutual dependence of *Darśana Śāstra* and *Itihāsa Śāstra*. Thus, writing of general history would be impossible without guidance of philosophy (inclusive of cosmology) and construction of philosophy would remain inadequate without relevant considerations of general history.

'On the Idea of the Single Right Interpretation in History'

MICHAEL KRAUSZ

Department of Philosophy, Bryn Mawr College, USA

Should an historian always seek a presumed single right interpretation? And to what extent does the indeterminacy of an historical object-of-interpretation bear on this regulative question?

Gail Soffer argues that, beyond the bounds and multiplicities of our historical interpretations, '...the counterfactual activity of the imagination directs us towards a reality which can be determinate and univocal...'[1] She ramifies this point with the aid of a distinction between *evidential* indeterminacy and *intentional* determinacy. More fully, she says:[2]

> 'Granted that certain features of history may be phenomenologically nebulous...there remain other features which are constituted as relatively determinate, and here again essential counterfactual elements are included in the very meaning of truth, guaranteeing its univocity and constancy through various interpretations. For example, when we affirm that something "really" happened in the past, an essential part of what we mean is that, e.g., if someone capable of perceiving the event had been there, he or she would have witnessed it. This claim is in principle unverifiable, and yet it is precisely the counterfactual activity of the imagination that gives the experience of directness towards something determinable and decidable, what "really" (bivalently) happened (e.g., something I would have seen if I had been there). Thus, we have at once *evidential* indeterminacy (the evidence is insufficient to be conclusive across different interpretive backgrounds), but *intentional* determinacy (we remain directed towards a truth which is in principle but not in practice uniquely and inter-subjectively determinable).'

Soffer's point may arguably hold with respect to relatively unfreighted intentional events, such as 'Siddhartha Gautama was born in 563 BC.'

But when considering more freighted intentional actions, such as 'Siddhartha achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree near the city of Gaya,' Soffer's counterfactual 'witnessing' becomes problematic. And this has an important bearing on the question whether one should generally adopt the regulative principle that one should pursue the presumed single right interpretation.

In contrast to Soffer, I hold that for representative cases such a 'singularism' (as I have called it) needs to give way to a 'multiplism,' according to which more than one ideally admissible historical interpretation should be countenanced, allowing for reasons for preferred interpretations.[3] Salient features of historical objects-of-interpretation may remain indeterminate or 'nebulous' or 'evanescent' (to use Soffer's terms) which contributes to their answering to more than one admissible interpretation. But it is not in virtue of properties inherent in some brute fact of the matter that issues in such indeterminacy. Indeed, one cannot match interpretations with brute existence; one matches interpretations with objects-of-interpretation which have themselves been *articulated* in the context of some intentionalized setting. For example, the Buddhist will say that if Siddhartha was enlightened under the Bodhi Tree he experienced Anātma (or realized the inherent emptiness of his own self as well as that of any cosmic self). In contrast, the Hindu will say that if Siddhartha was enlightened under the Bodhi Tree he experienced Ātma (or overcame his ego-self to become identified with the cosmic self). These are opposed articulations of enlightenment. The identity conditions of the object-of-interpretation (enlightenment) and their interpretations (Buddhist or Hindu) are not given prior to interpretive practice. Indeed, it is an open question whether one might combine the Buddhist and Hindu interpretations by suggesting that Anātma and Ātma are versions of a common thing.[4] Correspondingly, whether an object-of-interpretation answers to one or more interpretations is a question that arises after judgments have been made about the singularity or multiplicity of the interpretations themselves. Indeed, one might argue that the Buddhist and Hindu interpretations may be combined. Put otherwise, it is the articulations of the object-of-interpretation in relation to their interpretation(s) that singularism or multiplism obtains. Interminable controversy in history may arise from disputing historians not having settled upon a common articulation of the events to be interpreted, especially in the histories of such highly enculturated objects-of-interpretation as religion. In these histories what one takes to be a proper or legitimate object-of-interpretation is especially vulnerable

to the interpretive assumptions of the historian, which structurally effect the very identification and articulation of the historical object-of-interpretation and its interpretation(s). Their numerical identity is essentially contested, for there is no a priori assurance that in real time terms the required common articulations are forthcoming.

This is not to say that certain features of object-of-interpretation are not relatively fixed, for example, that Siddhartha sat under the Bodhi Tree and experienced something important. Even if we grant that there is no principled way to demarcate what is 'inside' or 'outside' an historical event, some features may be invariant with respect to alternative competing interpretations. Correspondingly, as Gail Soffer says,[5]

> 'Granted that reality, insofar as it is understood as phenomenal reality, has a nebulous, evanescent quality, does it not also have its fixed points and crystalline aspects, features not subject to variation with mere changes in interpretation, and this even in the case of cultural phenomena?'

Yet we must add that the concession that certain features of an historical object-of-interpretation are invariant with respect to competing interpretations does not entail that such invariance is insured by some invariantist metaphysics. As Thomas Rockmore aptly says:[6] 'It is ... one thing to claim that we have genuine invariances and another thing altogether to claim that such invariances as we have are relative to a given framework that is itself not necessarily invariant but subject to historical change.' Put otherwise, while there may be a core of properties of an object-of-interpretation, such invariance is not foundationally fixed. It too has a history.

Indeed, this is the view of Joseph Margolis, who holds that cultural entities—including historical events—emerge from a pre-cultural domain. Yet the pre-cultural domain, which includes relatively stable referents and are part of the physical natural world, is constituted but not normally subject to change. Yet this very constituting activity has a history. It is not foundationally fixed. The physical too is constituted by interpretation. For Margolis the physical is a characterization of things with which humans interact. Since humans do not interact with 'brute reality' Margolis does not equate brute reality with the physical. Yet to say that humans constitute the physical is not to say that the physical is constituted in arbitrary ways. As Margolis says,[7]

> 'We open our eyes and see a world we cannot ignore; still, what we see is due to what we are; and what we are we are as a result of our continuous self-formation and transformation within a larger history

and the larger processes of nature. So the "resistance" of the encountered world is not at all incompatible with its being "constituted".'

Soffer's idea of directly observing historical events—even in the present—is problematic. Consider a second case: the claim that Caesar crossed the Rubicon. To be sure, under a thin description, a then present observer might well have witnessed a certain human male crossing a certain body of water. But such an observer would not have seen a more thickly describable action, one that, in crossing the Rubicon, Caesar defied Republican Law. That thickly describable event is not something that a then present observer could have directly witnessed. Indeed, Caesar himself would probably have described that action in terms of liberation; the Roman Republican would probably have described it in terms of defiance rather than liberation.

Consider a third case: the claim that urban oligarchy was transformed into a land-owning aristocracy in the period from 1219 to 1324. Patrick Nowell-Smith says that this event presumably was 'a slice of the real past, even though it was not, when it occurred, something which anyone could have "observed" or with which anyone could have been, "acquainted" ...'[8] Urban oligarchy is not the sort of thing that answers to Soffer's test. And in this respect urban oligarchy is not uncharacteristic of highly freighted intentional objects. Soffer takes the possibility of directly observing middle sized objects in the present as a test for the reality of highly freighted intentional objects, and so she offers the same test, in counterfactual terms, as a test for historical reality. But this test holds no more for salient intentional cases in the present as it does for cases in the past.

Consider a fourth case: the history of thought understood by R.G. Collingwood to be characteristic of history generally. In articulating his well-known theory of re-enactment Collingwood advances a kind of universalist realism, one which rests on mediation—which, while not directly observable, he takes to be real. Collingwood says:[9]

> '...if I not only read his [Plato's] argument but understand it, follow it in my own mind by re-arguing it with and for myself, the process of argument which I go through is not a process resembling Plato's, it actually is Plato's, so far as I understand him rightly. The argument simply as itself, starting from these premises and leading through this process to this conclusion; the argument as it can be developed either in Plato's mind or mine or anyone else's, is what I call the thought in its mediation...'

> '...it is just the universality of an event or character that makes it a proper and possible object of historical study, if by universality we mean something that oversteps the limits of merely local and temporal existence and possesses a significance valid for all men at all times. These too are no doubt vague phrases; but they are attempts to describe something real: namely the way in which thought, transcending its own immediacy, survives and revives in other contexts; and to express the truth that individual acts and persons appear in history not in virtue of their individuality as such, but because that individuality is the vehicle of a thought which, because it was actually theirs, is potentially everyone's.'

Collingwood affirms that in rethinking the thoughts of Plato we have access to a past actuality, not in the sense that we have the same mental states as Plato's, but in the (yes, platonically understood) sense that Plato's mental state grasped a mediating argument, a structure, whose mediation between Plato's thoughts and ours are one. In this sense Collingwood is a realist.

Two points deserve emphasis. First, even if Collingwood were right to hold that Plato and we might share a single mediating structure, there is no reason to believe that it would be sufficiently determinate itself finally to answer to, or issue in, one and only one interpretation. Second, the rejection of an extreme particularism does not entail a full blown universalism. It is one thing for Collingwood to say that the proper object of historical study 'oversteps the limits of merely local and temporal existence'; but it is quite another for him to say that it 'possesses a significance valid for all men at all times.' Without argument Collingwood jumps from the overcoming of the local to the universal.

To the first point, Collingwood interestingly says that the phrases ('the limits of merely local and temporal existence' and 'significance valid for all men at all times') '... are no doubt vague phrases; but they are attempts to describe something real...' Here Collingwood couples an interesting pair: vagueness and reality, one that occupies a logical space in his realist—indeed platonist—ontology. Put otherwise, we may detach determinacy from realism. And if historical phenomena may be real but vague or indeterminate, they may answer to a multiplicity of interpretations whose own defining limits are more determinate than the object-of-interpretation they interpret. So seen, Marxist or liberal interpretations of urban oligarchy each might be more determinate than urban oligarchy itself. And Buddhist or Hindu interpretations of Siddhartha's presumed enlightenment each might be more determinate than his enlightenment itself.

We have been pursuing the question of multiplism for realistically construed objects-of-interpretation. Now let us consider the separate question whether thickly describable intentionally freighted historical events are constructed by the historian or whether they are a slice of a real past actuality. The constructionist affirms the former; the realist affirms the latter. In any case, neither ontology mandates singularism.

The contrast between constructionism and realism in history is well drawn in the debate between Leon Goldstein and Patrick Nowell-Smith.[10] Nowell-Smith says the realist in history holds that the historian's aim is to discover what actually happened at certain times and places in the past; historians succeed in this, at least sometimes. On the other hand, the constructionist holds that history is what the evidence compels us to believe, and it is not about past actuality.[11]

Constructionist Goldstein holds that we can have no epistemic access to real referents, and the very idea of such referents is unintelligible. Consequently, '...what the historian constructs is not just a theory or account of what happened, but *the events themselves*.'[12] Generally the objects of knowledge are constituted within the framework of knowing. Goldstein says:[13]

> ...the referents of historical statements or statements of memory are not to be found outside of the framework of knowing...both the statements which refer and the objects to which they refer are constituted within the framework of the investigation. There is no epistemic way, as distinct from conceptual word-play, to reach out from within that framework to realistic objects.
>
> At no point does nature break into our consciousness—if that makes any sense—to present itself unmediated by the methodologies of knowing.

In contrast, a realist could agree with the thesis that historical referents are epistemically inaccessible, but still affirm that there is nothing unintelligible about the idea of realist referents. As a point of second-order theory, the realist could hold that there must be such objects without which one could not account for the notions of historical truth and reference. As in science (for example, according to Karl Popper[14]), one may be a realist without endorsing the thought that one has epistemic access to real referents. Such a realism, it might be urged, could provide the conceptual resources for an account of truth and reference. Such a realism could agree with a Goldsteinian constructionism that the real past cannot serve as the touchstone for the truth or falsity of particular distributive historical claims. Such a realism could not help the historian to sort out which of competing historical interpretations should be admitted and which rejected. Such sorting would indeed remain within the framework of historical knowing. In that sense the real past would not enter into historical investigation. But, for philosophical rather than methodological reasons, such a realism might affirm the intelligibility and utility of sustaining the idea of real historical referents or past actuality.

Indeed, this is Nowell-Smith's realist view. And he distinguishes the real target of Goldstein's criticisms from his own realism by distinguishing between *extreme realism* and *less extreme realism* in history, rejecting the former and embracing the latter. Nowell-Smith's less extreme realism presumes no epistemic access to past actuality, but historical interpretations are still held to refer to a practice-independent reality. Nowell-Smith says:[15]

> ...the discipline of history as it is actually practiced, is at no point dependent on the observation or even the possibility of observation of past events. We can take the inaccessibility of past events to present observation as a datum, and once this is granted the extreme realist is immediately refuted.
>
> But the less extreme realist...is committed only to the thesis that if an historian states truly that such and such happened, it happened whether or not anyone found out that it happened or proved by constructionist methods that it must have happened. ...the less extreme realist holds that the historian constructs an account of the real past—the only past there was—and that the real past plays the important role of being that to which statements, when true, refer.

However defensible such a realism may be, Nowell-Smith's articulation nests an issue that neither he nor Goldstein problematize. That is, he speaks of the real past as 'the only past there was' and of being 'that to which statements, when true, refer.' The issue here concerns the singularity of the history being referred to. That is, if past actuality is conceded to be epistemically inaccessible, there is no reason to assume that it has a fixed singular identity. Why not several pasts rather than one past? So seen, the idea of *a* past actuality might not be able to play even the philosophical role that Nowell-Smith assigns to it.

The constructionist who holds that there is one framework of knowing embraces a constructionist-singularism. And the constructionist who holds that there is a multiplicity of frameworks of knowing embraces a constructionist-multiplism. Constructionism per se makes no particular commitment to either singularism or multiplism. A parallel point can

be made about realism. Realism per se makes no particular commitment to either singularism or multiplism. While realism may arguably function regulatively to answer second-order concerns about truth and reference, it does no methodological work. It provides no sufficiently determinate grounds for adjudicating between characteristic pairs of competing interpretations.

Throughout this discussion I have been using the distinction between singularism and multiplism, which might appear to amount to the same thing as the distinction between critical monism and critical pluralism. But it does not. Alexander Nehamas, for example, embraces the position which he calls 'critical monism,' and that is equivalent to my 'singularism,' namely: for any cultural object-of-interpretation (including historical objects) one should ideally pursue the single right interpretation of it.[16] This is in contrast with the view he calls 'critical pluralism,' a view not equivalent to my 'multiplism.' Critical pluralism is the view that for any cultural object-of-interpretation there may be more than one ideally admissible interpretation of it *and these admissible interpretations are equally preferable.* Multiplism denies this last claim of critical pluralism. Multiplism holds that, amongst ideally admissible interpretations, there may be good reasons for one's preferences. Admissible interpretations need not, for good reasons, be equally preferable. Indeed, much of my *Rightness and Reasons* is devoted to establishing the logical space in which good reasons for preferences amongst admissible interpretations may be offered, all the while conceding that such reasons not be strong enough to unseat as inadmissible those interpretations which are regarded as less preferred; they remain admissible.

Nehamas elaborates his singularist view by emphasizing that it is a regulative principle.[17] That is, he distinguishes between *pursuing* the single right interpretation from *asserting* that there actually is a single right interpretation. He thinks that the pursuit of the single right interpretation does not commit him to the claim that there actually is one such interpretation. The distinction can be captured by contrasting the idea of a regulative principle from the idea of a constative principle. More fully Nehamas says:[18]

> 'The critical monism which I advocate is a regulative ideal and identifies the meaning of a text with whatever is specified by that text's ideal interpretation. Such an interpretation would account for all of the text's features, though we can never reach it since it is unlikely that we can even understand what it is to speak of "all the features" of anything. What we have (and that is what we need) is the notion of one interpretation answering more questions about a text than another and thus being closer to that hypothetical ideal which would answer all questions.'

But Nehamas' position is undone by its very formulation. He affirms that his regulative principle depends upon one's identifying all the features and all the questions pertinent to the complete text. But he says, to repeat: '...it is unlikely that we can even understand what it is to speak of "all the features" of anything.' The same point can be pressed with respect to the idea of 'all questions.' The idea of 'all questions' is as vulnerable as is the idea of 'all the features.' Consequently Nehamas' singularist condition is not a coherently adaptable regulative principle. Put otherwise, one cannot adopt a regulative principle whose constative analog is not coherently adaptable. Since the constative principle is not coherently adaptable, Nehamas' regulative principle is not either.

Nehamas thinks singularism is required in order to speak of progress in the history of interpretations. He thinks that we should be able to say that interpretation Y is better than interpretation X because Y better approximates the singular ideal limit. But Nehamas fails to see that a multiplist may agree that interpretation Y constitutes an improvement over interpretation X without at the same time embracing the view that such a judgment depends upon holding that interpretation Y more than X more closely approximates the singular ideal limit. Nehamas' regulative principle is motivated by the thought that in offering a given interpretation one tries to outdo previous interpretations. In this lies Nehamas' progressivism. But a multiplist may well agree with this motivation: outdoing previous interpretations is not only compatible with but is endorsed by multiplism. Yet to say that interpretation Y is better than interpretation X does not guarantee singularism. *Progressivism does not entail singularism.*

Nehamas insists that by favouring an interpretation one must propound it as bi-valently true, or approximating singular truth. He rejects the thought that one might adopt such multi-valent alternative modalities as reasonableness, appropriateness, aptness or the like. He holds that by embracing one interpretation, one is ipso facto excluding the *admissibility*—rather than the *preferability*—of other interpretations. He rejects the thought that, with the recognition that there is no end to interpretive inquiry and that there is no way of knowing what the end of inquiry might look like, we should adopt modalities softer than bi-valent truth, such as luminousness, reasonableness, appropriateness, aptness or the like.

But it would be better to say of the Buddhist and Hindu interpretations of Siddhartha's presumed enlightenment that they are illuminating, reasonable, appropriate or apt—and then go on to offer reasons for our preferences, without claiming that in doing so we must disallow as *inadmissible* or *untrue* the interpretation we do not favour.

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Re-experiencing Past Thoughts: Some Reflections on Collingwood's Theory of History

G.P. RAMACHANDRA

School of International Relations, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts a critique of R.G. Collingwood's theory, as set forth in *The Idea of History,* of historical understanding as consisting in the re-enactment or re-experiencing by the historian of the thoughts of the historical actor. Although Collingwood functioned contemporaneously with the later Wittgenstein, his work is untouched by Wittgenstein's influence. Consequently the Copernican revolution effected by Wittgenstein in the philosophy of mind has very deleterious consequences for Collingwood's theory. This paper attempts to draw out those consequences. In the last section, it attempts to show that re-enactment would be irrelevant to an understanding of much of historical activity even if it were true. The Appendix focusses on a particular aspect of Collingwood's theory—the notion that re-enacted thoughts are literally the same thoughts as the historical agent's.

THE THEORY OF RE-ENACTMENT

Mind, for Collingwood is a collection of activities—feelings, sensations and thoughts. One can remember one's past sensations, and emotions but one cannot re-experience them. One can however re-experience one's past thoughts and those of others as well. Thinking is a process going on behind action, using the term 'action' to cover the use of language as well as physical acts. Thoughts find expression in action. The relationship is one of cause and effect. All the same the thought is not something other than the event; it is the inside of the event, an inseparable part of it. The scientist studies events which have no mental component, which have an outside but no inside. He studies an event by going beyond it, to ascertain its relationship with other events, in order to bring it under a general formula or law of nature. The historian,

on the other hand, is concerned with events which have both an outside and an inside, that is, with actions and the thoughts of which they are the expression. It is his task to discern the processes of thought behind the actions of the past. The only way he can do this is by re-thinking those thoughts for himself, that is, by re-enacting or re-experiencing them in his own mind.

When a historian tries to understand why Caesar crossed the Rubicon or why a certain emperor authorized a particular edict, or why a certain philosopher composed a particular passage, he has to put himself in their places, consider what the problems facing them were and what were the alternatives and ascertain why a particular alternative was chosen rather than the others. This involves re-thinking for himself the original thought process which made the historical actors act as they did. It is not possible to re-enact the related sensations, feelings and emotions that they experienced or even the thoughts they experienced which were not expressed in the relics studied by the historian. But thoughts which did find expression can be re-experienced and must be, if the historian is to understand them.

A thought process consists of a series of thoughts, each of which is made up of an object of thought, which is a fact or truth, and an act of thought, or mental operation, by which that fact or truth is grasped or apprehended. Collingwood is at pains to insist that the historian re-experiences literally the same thoughts which the historical actor experienced, not a series of thoughts of exactly the same kind. 'It is not only the object of thought that somehow stands outside time; the act of thought does so too; in this sense at least; that one and the same act of thought may endure through a lapse of time and revive after a time when it has been in abeyance'.[1]

For re-enactment to take place, the historian's thought must be pre-adapted to it, so that the re-enacted thought is organically united with the historian's own thought and arises naturally out of it. This pre-adaptation is achieved in the way described earlier, by the historian familiarizing himself with his subject, considering what the alternatives open to the historical actor were and so forth. The re-enacted thought exists in the mind of the historian in the context of other thoughts of his own.

There can be no historical knowledge without re-enactment. When a historical fact is ascertained it is 'grasped by the historian's re-enactment of the agent's thought in his own mind'.[2] History is not 'phenomena presented externally to (the historian's) gaze' (as in the case of the natural sciences) but 'experience into which he must enter and which

he must make his own'.[3] Historical knowledge is 'an inward experience of its own object, whereas scientific knowledge is the attempt to understand phenomena presented (to the scientist) as outward spectacles'.[4] The distinction between historical and scientific thinking is the distinction between 'apprehending the individuality of a thing by thinking oneself into it, making its life one's own and analyzing and classifying it from an external point of view'.[5] History is a form of knowledge superior to scientific knowledge because the latter does not involve inward experience.

Historical and practical understanding are one and the same thing, because both are cases of understanding of mind. When I understand why a friend wrote me a letter or why a stranger crossed the street, I am able to do so because I have brought to my mind something which also arose in their minds.

Collingwood goes on to assert a partial identification between the historical agent and the later re-enactor of his thoughts. Mind is a collection of activities. The historian becomes the agent whose thought he re-experiences, because he is thinking the very same thoughts as the agent. The identity achieved is not complete because the historian does not re-experience the sensations, emotions and even many of the thoughts experienced by the historical actor.

Let us look more closely at Collingwood's notion of thinking which is fundamental to his whole conceptual structure. Here, some remarks of Wittgenstein in his *Philosophische Grammatik* are very helpful.[6] He points out that when philosophers talk of mental processes, they could be using the expression in one of three ways. They might mean by it a mechanism hidden from ourselves, which explains our intelligent behaviour. Chomsky's 'universal grammar' is an example of this. They might also mean something which can be experienced, for example, writing or imagining images. This is the view adopted by Gilbert Ryle in his *On Thinking*.[7] Finally, they might mean something which combines both these viewpoints. Collingwood's mind-model is just such an amalgam, for thinking is supposed to explain or cause events, to be the inside of events, but it is also something that we experience, that we feel to be going on in ourselves.

The notion of thinking as a mechanism explaining intelligent behaviour presents many difficulties. Language use and reflective action, which are what intelligent behaviour amounts to, can be explained in terms of the situation from which they take their rise. There is no need to invoke a psychic process to account for them. In any case, such an explanation gives rise to formidable difficulties. It leads us into an

infinite regress, for it begs the further question as to what caused the psychic process. It begs other questions as well, for example, as to how the psychic process can cause, or be caused by, material processes. These are, after all, discrete orders of reality. But in Collingwood's case, there is another difficulty which ruins his whole conceptual structure. He insists that thinking is something we experience. In that case it should be introspectible. But introspection does not reveal a psychic process causing intelligent behaviour. Nor, for that matter, does it reveal any such process as the apprehension of a fact by an act of apprehension, which Collingwood says always happens when we think. This point will be elaborated later. What should be noted here is that the terms 'thinking' and 'act of thought' in *The Idea of History* have no referent, they have no application, there is nothing in reality corresponding to them. This has the effect of invalidating all discussions in which the terms are used. For language must have application if it is to have meaning.

A concrete example will bring out the emptiness of the use of the term 'thinking' in *The Idea of History*. Collingwood speaks at one point of thinking for five seconds: 'The angles are equal'.[8] It is obvious from this that he thinks that a thought can be sustained. But how are we to do this? *The Idea of History* gives us no clue. By repeating these words to ourselves in our minds for five seconds? By trying to hold an image of two equal angles in our minds for five seconds? I can visualize two angles but I have no means of knowing that they are equal, although I know that I want them to be, and I cannot hold them in my mind for as long as five seconds. They just fade away after a second or two. Or should one try to visualize Collingwood's sentence in one's mind for five seconds? At the most, I can visualize a word or two and for not more than one or two seconds. Yet, if thinking is something we experience, we should know how to perform the experiment.

Behind Collingwood's injunction, there lies the assumption, caused by the uniform appearance of the word 'thinking' that thinking is a single homogenous activity. We shall see later that this is not the case. The processes mentioned above are diverse. Moreover none of them can be reconciled with Collingwood's conception of thinking as the grasping of objects of thought by acts of thought.

WHAT IS THINKING?

What is thinking then? The later philosophy of Wittgenstein provides an answer. The central concept in that philosophy is that the meaning

of a word is its use, that its meaning is to be found in its role in human discourse. It can be used in very different ways in that discourse which its uniform appearance in print or speech will conceal. A thought therefore is anything that is properly called a thought in the English language. Now, a word need not have a quintessential meaning which is present in all its uses and which a definition can capture. Definitions can be given but they may not cover every use of the word and their wording may constrain us to include cases to which the word in question is not normally applied and to which we would not wish to apply it. We may also wish, and we may if we wish, apply a word like thinking to processes to which it is not habitually applied provided those processes have something in common with the processes normally called thinking. When we do this, we are not making an empirical discovery about the phenomena in question. We are only exchanging the label 'thought' for the labels hitherto applied to them, and we do this only when we do philosophy and never in other contexts.

In his *Blue Book* Wittgenstein says that thinking is essentially the activity of operating with signs.[9] This definition does cover many uses of the word. It follows from this definition that the use of language is always thinking because in speech and in writing we always operate with signs. But the definition leads us to include some physical acts which are also cases of operating with signs. If, instead of telling someone to approach me, I make an appropriate gesture with my hand, my act has exactly the same function as the words I did not use. Perhaps we would not wish to call the act a thought, because physical gestures are tangible, and the word 'thought' connotes something intangible to us. Perhaps we would, because of our definition of thinking. What is important is not the decision we take but recognizing that it is a matter of terminological preference. In calling the act a thought, we have not made an empirical discovery about the phenomenon in question, we have only decided to substitute the label 'thought' for the label 'gesture' because it seems more appropriate to us when we are doing philosophy.

Moreover, Wittgenstein's definition, although very useful in destroying the hold on our minds of thinking as something spectral and private, is not comprehensive and is not repeated in the later *Philosophical Investigations*. Thinking cannot be said to be 'essentially' something; it is a polymorphous concept. There is such a thing as wordless or signless thought. This is the state in which we become aware of something and are capable of putting this awareness into words, but have not yet done so. For example, an unworded realization may have flashed upon Brutus that the only way to save the Roman Republic was by assassinating

Caesar and an unworded realization may have flashed upon Caesar that the only way to subdue Gaul was by conquering Britain. We are inclined to call these states cases of thinking because they are cognitive, because something is known in those states and we are inclined to call what is cognitive 'thinking' but they are not cases of operating with signs; there are no signs.

Again, wordless thinking may be said to take place when something outside us takes on a new aspect for us, when we see it differently, Wittgenstein give an example in the *Philosophical Investigations*:

> I contemplate a face and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing an aspect'.[10]

This is really a variant of the preceding state, the variation consisting in the fact that an external object is also involved when the experience happens. Since a cognitive element is involved, we are inclined to call it a thought, but it is not a case of operating with signs, once again, there are no signs.

When images—of words or things—pass through our minds, are we operating with signs? There undoubtedly are signs in this case, but where is the operation? When I write, for example, there is an operation of writing which is separate from the signs that are written down, but not in the case of imagining images.

Yet another difficulty. We do call the process of struggling to solve a problem, say of historical interpretation or a crossword puzzle, 'thinking'. Earlier we noted that we are inclined to call cognition thinking. But we are inclined to call this state thinking too, although it is not cognitive but a striving towards a cognition this is yet to be. So what we call, or are inclined to call, thinking need not always be cognitive either.

Moreover, the end result of this striving is something that can be put into words. Earlier, we said that the use of words was thinking. But in this case, words are the product of this striving that we call 'thought'. Here, we may feel a certain uneasiness. We may want to say 'words must either be thoughts or the products of thought, they cannot be both at the same time'. Our uneasiness can be removed by reminding ourselves that the same word 'thought' is being used in two different ways and that it is not a case of words being thoughts or being products of thought, but of our calling them thoughts or products of thoughts. The process is one of labelling, not of ascription of qualities. It is impossible for something to both have and not have a particular quality but it is not impossible for it both to be called and not called by the same name.

Incidentally these strivings might be conducted, at least intermittently, in words, in which case, what we call thoughts would be words. These could be steps towards a solution, in which case we could call them cognitions. If they turn out to be false steps, which we have to cancel, we could call them false cognitions. Strivings therefore can either be strivings pure and simple, which terminate in cognitions or strivings which are interspersed with cognitions or false cognitions. But then the gaps between the cognitions or false cognitions could be called strivings pure and simple.

What emerges from the discussion is that thinking is whatever English usage or defensible extensions of English usage permit us to call thinking: words, images, strivings, realizations, the noticing of aspects. Once this is realized, Collingwood's characterization of thinking as the apprehension of objects of thought by acts of apprehension is seen to be untenable.

When we speak or write, we are engaged in acts, but there are no acts of apprehension and there are no objects that are apprehended. When images pass through our minds, there are objects of apprehension but no acts of apprehension. When I take hold of an object, there is an object that is taken hold of and a separate act of taking hold of it but not in the case of the apprehension of images. The same is true of realizations and the dawning of aspects. There are things that are apprehended in these cases, but no acts independent of them. As for strivings, these are activities aiming at an apprehension that is yet to be. When the apprehension happens, what we have is a realization: a fact is apprehended but there is no separate act of apprehension. The point is important because Collingwood always insists that thinking is an activity that we experience or live through, in other words, something that is observable. If we could observe such an activity, we would be justified in labelling it as thinking because of its cognitive character.

Collingwood appears to have been misled by a false analogy with the act of physically taking hold of an object. Seeing would have been a more appropriate analogy. When we see an object, there is an object seen, but no separate experience of seeing of which we are conscious.

Thinking, as it is in reality, is something much messier and much more diversified than Collingwood realizes. It is a congeries of things, a flow, through time, of words (sentences and fragments of sentences) which may be spoken or written down, of images, which may be of words (fragments of sentences and very rarely, complete sentences) or of things and which can be of varying degrees of distinctness and

longevity, of realizations, of the dawning of aspects, of strivings towards cognition, which may be worded or unworded, and, if we wish, even some physical acts. It is not a single activity but diverse activities as well as things which are not activities. It is not something behind language which causes language: it *is* language (and other things as well). The *Theaetetus* is not an expression of Plato's thought, it *is* Plato's thought. Thinking is never divisible into acts of apprehension and objects of apprehension, although Collingwood insists that is always so divided. Sometimes it is just objects of apprehension without separate acts of apprehension. Sometimes, as with speaking or writing, it is activities, but not activities of apprehension. Sometimes it is just strivings, efforts to find solutions to problems, which may take place in words or without words.

There is a certain incompleteness about even this list. Earlier we saw that our definition of thinking as operating with signs presents us with the problem of deciding whether to call gestures thinking. A similar problem arises if we call cognition thinking. Since cognition is awareness, all experience, including the most elementary, sensations, could be termed thought.[11] (Because the process is one of labelling, not ascription, it is better not to say that sensation *is* thought). When we experience something, we are aware of that something. In this way, those sensations experienced by the historical agent which were connected in some way with the historical event which the historian is trying to fathom can be brought under the category of the thought behind the event. But while they *can* be, they *need* not be. It is against usage to apply a word like thinking to sensations and this is good enough reason not to call them thoughts. But sensations are something of which we have cognizance and that is a reason for calling them thoughts if we want to.

Reading is another example. When we read, we are cognizant of what we read, and we could decide to term the process thinking. One could very well decide to follow usage and not do so although what we read may be of a high intellectual level, while images, for example, which we call thoughts, have virtually no intellectual content.

If we *struggle* to understand an abstruse passage, the process *is* called thinking. It would be a case of striving or problem solving and when we understand the passage, a realization or cognition could be said to take place. But we could also speak of the dawning of an aspect, of the passage having a new aspect for us. Moreover, the process would almost certainly involve steps and false steps, which we could term cognitions or false cognitions.

We are not aiming at a full inventory of the phenomena which are or might be called thinking, but at bringing out their diversity. So let us go by usage and not call sensations and reading thinking.

We seem now to be in a position to answer the conundrum advanced at the end of the last section, about how to think for five seconds 'the angles are equal'. We seem to be able to do so in different ways: by repeating the words to ourselves for five seconds, by holding or trying to hold, an image of two equal angles in our minds for five seconds, or by trying to visualize the sentence for five seconds. Actually we are in error. These are really case of meditating, not thinking. Collingwood should have spoken of meditating for five seconds: 'the angles are equal'. Thinking implies change, a getting ahead in some way (although change and getting ahead are not, of course, identifying characteristics of thinking). Deliberately prolonging the presence of signs in one's mind for no clear purpose is not what we normally call thinking.

RE-ENACTMENT AS AN IMPOSSIBILITY

This discussion has clear implications for the theory of re-enactment. When the true nature of thinking is recognized, re-enactment is seen to be impossible. Take, for instance, the stabbing of Caesar by Brutus. All the words spoken or written by Brutus in the years before the crime in connection with the threat posed by Caesar to Republican institutions in Rome, all the images which passed through his mind in this regard, all the aspects and realizations which flashed on him, even, if we wish, the gestures he made, would come under the category of thoughts behind the crime. When these are recognized to be thoughts, re-enactment presents insuperable difficulties. There are of course, problems presented by such things as the difference in the language medium and the different grammatical requirements in the case of the historical agents and the historian. If the historian has to repeat Brutus's words—and Collingwood insists that he repeats literally the same thoughts as the agent's—he would be performing the unnatural exercise of using a language which is not his own, and he would be committing a torrent of grammatical mistakes in regard to pronouns and tenses. Even apart from this, the original thought process is obviously too extended and too variegated for any one to duplicate.

How can the historian realistically hope to reproduce all the words spoken and written by Brutus in this respect? How can he hope to reproduce all the images, verbal and pictorial, which passed through Brutus's mind in connection with the threat posed by Caesar and in the

same order, and with the same degree of distinctness and longevity? Repeating a thought process exactly must involve such things. As for the dawning of aspects, how could they be reproduced without reproducing the external setting as well? As for realizations and strivings and gropings, is the historian supposed to reproduce them all, and in the same order? The sequence would have to be the same in the case of aspects as well. Is the historian supposed to mimic all the gestures the historical actor made and in the same order? This is obviously not the way a historian acquires knowledge of the past, although Collingwood insists that re-enactment is the only means of acquiring such knowledge.

Once we understand what thinking is, once it ceases to be a concept that is both vacuous and mysterious and becomes humdrum and ordinary, the idea of re-enactment loses its attraction. What gave it that attraction was the idea of some kind of privileged access to mysterious states.

Yet another point: Collingwood says that the thought is an inseparable part of the event, the inside of the event. However, the numerous thoughts entertained by an historical agent like Brutus would have been separated from one another and from the event itself by gaps of time and must therefore be considered to be separate from the event. In fact, nothing need have passed through Brutus's mind when he stabbed Caesar. So it cannot properly be said that Brutus's thought about the assassination was an inseparable part of that event or the inside of it, although it was certainly connected with it and helped cause it.

Yet another point: Collingwood insists that the original thought process and the re-enacted one are literally identical, and not two processes of exactly the same kind. Even supposing that by some miracle, the historian succeeded in duplicating the original thought sequence (and made a thorough fool of himself in the process) it is surely obvious that the re-enacted sequence has to be one of the same kind, and not literally the same process as the original one. Collingwood's argument on this point is examined separately in an Appendix.

Yet another point: Collingwood seems at one point to confuse thinking, a process with knowledge, which is a state. He says, as we have seen, that a re-enacted thought exists in the mind of the historian in the context of other thoughts of his own. But thoughts succeed one another, they do not exist simultaneously with other thoughts in the mind, as suggested by Collingwood's wording. We know many things at the same time, but we can think about them only sequentially.

A final point. Is it possible that one element at least in the thought-sequences of the historical agent and the historian—realizations—could be identical? The historical agent notices certain connections between the elements in a situation and the historian who fathoms his thinking notices the same connections. For example, at some stage, a realization could have flashed on Brutus that Caesar posed a mortal threat to Republican institutions in Rome which could be removed only by eliminating Caesar himself, and the historian who grasps his motive would have realized this also. We are referring to realizations only, not to mental words or pictures which, according to the classification used earlier, would come under the category of images. Is there a foothold for Collingwood's theory here? Can it be made correct by restricting it to realizations? The fact is that the distinction between images and realizations is, in the last analysis, artificial. Since imagined words or pictures have no true existence, it makes no sense to say that words or pictures imagined by two different persons are the same, although we can say that they are images of the same things. A realization in our sense is just imagining without words or pictures (imagining correctly of course) and it therefore makes no sense to say that two realizations are identical.

RE-ENACTMENT AS AN IRRELEVANCY

We have seen that the thinking behind a historical event cannot be repeated by the historian. But there are some historical activities where the very question of re-experiencing past thoughts cannot arise, because there is no original thought process to be repeated by the historian; the historian is the first in the field. Collingwood writes in *The Idea of History*: 'All history is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind'.[12] In reality the historian is quite often not concerned with past thought processes at all. When, for example, a historian establishes the fact that a war which happened in ancient India took place in 55 BC not in 56 BC or 54 BC the question of re-enacting past thought does not arise, because it is only the historian, and not the participants in the war, who is thinking in this direction; the participants knew when the war was fought. Or take this statement from F.W. Maitland: '. . . the recorded manumissions alone would suffice to prove that the number (of slaves in Anglo-Saxon England) was large'.[13] When Maitland established this fact by counting the number of manumissions and comparing it with the population figures, he was enacting an original thought process. Or take a judgment like 'The (Montague) declaration was something of a

compromise and something of a mistake'.[14] The remark is historical, but the historian is not re-thinking a past thought, but making a judgment on a past policy. Again, when a historian assesses the reliability of his sources and their merits and demerits (one of his most important functions) he clearly cannot be re-thinking past thoughts. Again, when a historian substantiates a thesis, for example, that Portuguese exports to Europe from their colonies in Asia declined steadily from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, he cannot be re-enacting past thought, because his historical actors, the exporters, were not engaged in an activity of this kind. If a particular exporter did so, he functioned as an historian, not as an exporter, and the modern historian of Portuguese trade is not concerned with that activity.

These categories—establishing facts, making judgments and substantiating theses—are not watertight. Someone who establishes a fact does so by proving a thesis, someone who proves a thesis establishes a fact in the process, and both could be said to have made a judgment when they reach their conclusions. But it should be obvious that they are not thinking in ways that the historical actors they are concerned with thought.

CONCLUSION

The historical agent who lives through a situation and helps to shape it, notices relationships between the elements in the situation and the historian who comes after him and tries to discern his motives, will, if he is successful, notice the same relationships but he will not re-experience the agent's thoughts process in the sense of the sequence of words, gestures, images, realizations, dawning of aspects, and strivings that the agent experienced. And quite often there is, in historical inquiry, no original thought process which the historian can aspire to repeat.

APPENDIX

The theory of re-enactment is strange and nowhere more so than in the claim that the re-enacted thought is literally the same thought as the historical agent's and not another thought of exactly the same kind. Collingwood tries to establish this by reasoning. The confusion in his mind-model is again apparent. He insists that thinking is something that we experience (Wittgenstein's second mind-model) but now it is presumed to be something hidden (Wittgenstein's first mind-model); otherwise, why should there be a recourse to logic, not observation? His

argument is reproduced below. Collingwood's imaginary objector believes, like Collingwood, that thinking is the apprehension of a fact by an act of apprehension. Where he differs from Collingwood is in thinking that each act of apprehension of the same fact is a numerically distinct act of apprehension of the same kind.

> It is contended by our supposed objector that Euclid's act of thought and mine are not one but two: numerically two though specifically one. It is also contended that my act of now thinking 'the angles are equal' stands in the same relation to my act of thinking 'the angles are equal' five minutes ago. The reason why this seems quite certain to the objector is, I believe, that he conceives an act of thought as something that has its place in the flow of consciousness, whose being is simply its occurrence in that flow. Once it has happened, the flow carries it into the past, and nothing can recall it. Another of the same kind may happen, but not that again.
>
> But what precisely do these phrases mean? Suppose that a person continues for an appreciable time, say five seconds together, to think 'the angles are equal'. Is he performing one act of thought sustained over those five seconds, or is he performing five, or ten or twenty acts of thought numerically different but specifically identical? If the latter, how many go to five seconds? The objector is bound to answer this question, for the essence of his view is that acts of thought are numerically distinct and therefore numerable. . . . But any answer he gives must be both arbitrary and self-contradictory. There is no more reason to correlate the unity of a single act of thought with the time-lapse of one second, or a quarter of a second, than with any other. The only possible answer is that the act of thought is one act sustained over five seconds, and the objector, if he likes, may admit this by saying that such identity in a sustained act of thought is 'the identity of a continuant'.
>
> But does a continuant, here, imply continuousness? Suppose that, after thinking 'the angles are equal' for five seconds, the thinker allows his attention to wander for three more; and then returning to the same subject, again thinks 'the angles are equal'. Have we here two acts of thought and not one, because a time elapsed between them? Clearly not, there is one single act, this time not merely sustained, but revived after an interval. For there is no difference in this case that was not already present in the other. When an act is sustained over five seconds, the activity in the fifth second is just as

> much separated by a lapse of time from that in the first, as when the intervening seconds are occupied by an activity of a different kind or (if that be possible) by none . . . . Take a third case, then, where the interval covers the whole lapse of time from Euclid to myself. If he thought 'the angles are equal' and I now think 'the angles are equal', granted that the time interval is no cause for denying that the two acts are one and the same, is the difference between Euclid and myself ground for denying it? There is no tenable theory of personal identity that would justify such a doctrine.[15]

None of these conclusions follow. There is no necessary connection between being numerically distinct and being numerable. Numerability depends on the clarity and distinctness with which what is numerically distinct can be perceived. The rotations of an aeroplane propeller are numerically distinct but they are not numerable with the naked eye. In his *Philosophische Grammatik*, Wittgenstein points out that one could conceive of mental operations taking place too swiftly to be observable by us, like the movements of a sewing-machine needle.[16] Collingwood's imaginary objector is not therefore under an obligation to know how many acts of thought go into five seconds.

As to the arbitrariness of identifying the unity of the act of thought with anything other than five seconds, is it not because there is no experience of acts of thought that this assertion is made? It would indeed be arbitrary to do this. But it would be equally arbitrary to identify it with five seconds. No reason has been given for identifying it with any particular span of time. And why should it be *self-contradictory* to identify it with anything other than five seconds, unless it is because the point the argument is supposed to prove, that the act of thought lasts for five seconds, is confusedly allowed to become the postulate of the argument? As to whether a continuant implies continuousness, the answer surely is that it does, because it is self-contradictory to say that a continuant does not continue.

The attempt to prove that the break in the thinking makes no difference to the thought fails equally. There is a lapse of time in both cases, but in the second case there is also a cessation of the activity while there is none in the first. And how can we talk of a continuant when there is no continuation?

Owing to the mythical nature of Collingwood's act of thought, it is not possible to develop the argument further along these lines. But an examination of how we apply the notion of identity in situations that are not mythical might throw light on the problem. Collingwood thinks of

a thought as an activity, not as an entity. But the notion of the identity of a continuant is something we associate with entities or substances, not activities. For example, an individual is the same individual from the moment he is born till the moment he dies, irrespective of the changes he undergoes in regard to location, occupation, age, associations and so forth. But the activities we know seem always to be divisible into individual acts. Breathing for five minutes, for example, consists of a succession of individual inhalations and exhalations. (There is no necessary connection between being numerically distinct and being numerable, and I do not know how many individual inhalations and exhalations take place when I breathe for five minutes). Walking for five minutes, again, is divisible into separate movements of the feet. Sleeping for five minutes may seem to be an exception but in sleeping, as in seeing, there is in fact no activity that one can identify. (Sleep and unconsciousness can be differentiated only by the differences in their surroundings: I *fall* asleep but I am *knocked* unconscious). Even in the case of substances or entities, we are not familiar with any which regain their identity after they cease to be.

For a parallel with Collingwood's act of thought, which is born, dies and is reborn, in the same mind, or, in the case of the historian, in another mind after hundreds or thousands of years, the substances we are familiar with will not suffice. One would have to turn to the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. If Christ really rose from the dead, it was really Christ who rose from the dead. And even here, the identity would not be that of a continuant but one which is lost and then regained.

Notes and References

1. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p. 287.
2. Ibid., p. 177.
3. Ibid., p. 163.
4. Ibid., p. 172.
5. Ibid., p. 199.
6. Discussed in Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 141.
7. Gilbert Ryle, *On Thinking*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1979.
8. Collingwood, *op. cit.*, p. 286.
9. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1972. p. 6.
10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, p. 6.

11. This argument is developed in the opening pages of Michael Oakeshott's *Experience and Its Modes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966. But confusion results, because Oakeshott ascribes when he should label. For a full discussion of this central issue in philosophy, see W.E. Kennick, 'Philosophy as Grammar and the Reality of Universals' in Alice Ambrose and Morris Lazerowitz (ed.) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophy and Language*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1972.
12. Collingwood, *op. cit.*, p. 215.
13. F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, vol. I, p. 35.
14. R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974, p. 1.
15. Collingwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-7.
16. Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

The Idea of Progress and Recurrence in the Historiography of Civilizations

SHRI KRISHAN

Dept. of History, P.G. Regional Centre, M.D. University, Rewari

The belief in the idea of progress plays a very prominent role in the historiography of civilizations. The criterion generally adopted to designate civilizations is based on the technocratic model, i.e., the cultures are imagined to be superior or inferior on the basis of techniques of production. Historians consciously or unconsciously identify themselves with this notion. This scheme of history-writing has a number of implications. Firstly, the very idea of progress demands that purposive or teleological orientation takes precedence over teleonomic or species-survival-mechanisms[1] in the history of mankind. As a direct corollary of this, material productionist standpoint becomes primary and quality of life as such which includes non-material psychic needs such as relatedness to other human beings and nature and productiveness or creativity are relegated to background in the analysis of societies and cultures.[2] Theology recognized the non-material needs as is evident from the belief that suffering (pain, hunger etc.) can have purificatory functions. In order to become strictly objective, the historical science ignored the religious emphasis on non-material needs and became locked in the prison house of the central idea of progress or evolution as some others would put it. Secondly, the idea of technocratic progress envisages an anthropocentric notion because only man can make progress and only man has the right to achieve anything that is technically feasible, whatsoever may be the ecological implications of his endeavours. In his lust for progress, man might completely ignore the right of other species to live on the planet as well as the right of future generations of man.[3] Thirdly, the idea of progress is rooted in the unilinear notion of time. The notion of time is central to all historical writings; yet historians have not devoted much attention to the notion of time as such. Here, one should ask whether cultural continuity explains everything or whether there are also 'leaps' in the process of social transformation. In

some cases, there could be a possibility of regression also. These are complicated issues that need serious attention. But let us see how the idea of progress or evolution came and gained so much credence in historical-writings.

The idea of social-evolution was borrowed by History from Natural History. In 1799, Lamarck gave the idea of evolution and rejected the theological idea of creation of living-beings in immutable forms by God. It was a rationalist protest against theological dogmas of supernatural intervention in understanding life and society. For Lamarck, the mechanism of evolution was based on the notion of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.[4]

Charles Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* in 1859. Darwin's importance was not so much in showing that evolution has occurred, but in trying to give a credible scientific explanation of how it happened through the random process of natural selection. Darwin's thinking, however, belonged to a particular historical period, of middle class or bourgeois attitudes in a country in which there were deep divisions between classes, in a world in which Britain was engaged in building an Empire, and in which the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, with all its social consequences. Moreover, we may see Darwinism emerging in an intellectual tradition in which utilitarianism was strong, and in which Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer and Malthus were significant figures. There is in these theories a certain kind of 'detached' impulse to look at human life and society in quantitative, mathematical terms, which ignore the individual human being. The onward march of optimistic industrialism seemed to demand such impersonality with its inconsistent assumption that it was natural and proper for the weaker or technically inferior to go to the wall.[5] In 1850, Herbert Spencer in his *Social Statics* had indicated an analogy between society and organism. In his *Principles of Sociology*, he gave the idea of supra-organic evolution, in which factors determining growth of society are said to be different.[6] History attempts to explain society by means of models and the models of unilinear progress or of successive developmental stages are models borrowed from evolutionary biology. Such models reflect our political-social milieu and do not necessarily correspond to the real events occurring in history or in nature. The common element of evolutionary biology and history is the concept of change through time. Historians and evolutionary biologists seek to picture changing and dynamic processes, as they desire to reconstruct life from the remains of death. The historian gathers the extant fragments of past, and imaginatively rebuilds those events from a few documents, some old letters, or from the pieces

of cracked pottery, etc. The paleontologist does precisely the same. From rock splinters bearing the dull imprints of once vivid organisms, one brings back to conceptual life whole populations—teeming hordes of strange creatures. The methodologies of general history and evolutionary biology are homologous.[7] However, a homology is only a formal resemblance between two systems. This does not mean that the explanation of one will be applicable to the other. The idea of unilinear progress or successive evolution of cultural stages is, however, so deep rooted in historiography that it is very difficult to dispel it.

Boardman and Murray (1991) explain history of Greek and Romans by using such a notion of unilinearity. According to them, the history of Greece and Rome can be looked at in two different ways. It can be seen 'as forming a single whole, all the way from the emergence of the Greek city state (the polis) in the eighth century BC to the enormous expansion and eventual disintegration of Roman Empire, a society which rested on Roman military and political power but whose culture, literature, and arts were truly Graeco-Roman'.[8] In the second view, it can also be seen as two separate stories. The first, the rise and expansion of Greek culture and the second the emergence of Roman power. The idea of unilinear progress, however, permeates their writing. Thus, according to them, ever since the rise of Roman power, 'Greece and Rome have never been lost to sight. Europe has always been aware that another high culture preceded its own, and that awareness has given a distinctively long perspective to the European thought. For many centuries, the culture of Greece and Rome was the culture of Europe, "classical" in the sense of being the standard by which everything else was judged'.[9] Similar ideas have been expressed by a number of other historians. W.G. Hardy (1970) believes that the patterns set by the Greek and Romans permeate the Western civilization. The Greek literature is seen as 'an eternal achievement of the mind and the spirit'.[10] The Greek ideal of art and beauty, Greek ideas and Greek freedom of thought are all believed to lie at 'the very foundation of Western civilization'.[11] The Romans contribution to the Western civilization is said to be in practical things such as engineering, in their passion for order, law and discipline.[12]

The belief in the western superiority is also a by-product of the idea of progress and technocratic belief. Thus, Bowle (1970) believes that this idea of progress which he calls the 'practical grasp and drive' as formulated in a professionalized, new scientific method and technology and their application to deliberate exploitation of the world; have distinguished the west since sixteenth century.[13] Not only this, Bowle

believes that 'the spread of great industry and cosmopolitan communications over the whole world, confirming the impact of European ideas and exploiting the discoveries of European explorers, who first, as already emphasized, enabled humanity to apprehend the planet as a whole and brought at least the idea of a universal civilization to the horizon'.[14] It is also this perspective from which Finlay (1966) views Greek civilization. He writes about Greek technology and achievements in the following manner:

> 'Workmanship of the finest quality was abundant. Good craftsman were constantly improving their knowledge of materials and processes, in ways which left no trace in the written records. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the basic Greek technology was fixed early in the archaic period, both in agriculture and manufacture, and that there were few major break-throughs thereafter.'[15]

Moreover, Finlay believes that 'the society as a whole lacked the mentality and the motivation to strive systematically for greater efficiency and greater productivity.'[16]

Such a unilinear notion of progress arose because the nineteenth century Anthropology and Philosophy of History which emerged out of eighteenth century rationalism and enlightenment believed in the inevitability of progress and perceived all of human history and proto-history as exhibiting a single continuous process of development. This view of history-writing gained prominence, although, Oswald Spengler, in *The Decline of the West* (1926), rejected such an idea of progress and insisted that civilizations are entirely autonomous entities. Spengler also denied the possibility of cultural transmission except for a few minor diffusion of technological practices. Spengler's intention was to establish a kind of 'morphological relationship that binds together the expression-forms of all branches of a culture.' Spengler, therefore, believed that such diverse things as the Egyptian administrative system, the classical coinage, analytical geometry, the cheque, the Suez canal, the book-printing of the Chinese, the Prussian army, and the Roman road-engineering, etc., can as symbols, be made uniformly understandable and appreciable. But here, the mystified notion of Destiny, leads Spengler to a historical ordering of the phenomenal world.[17] Spengler, however, rightly rejected the Euro-centered notion of world-history in which nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Europe were looked on as 'the highest point of an ascending straight line of world history.' According to him, such higher developments may be observed in every culture that has ripened to its limit.[18] Despite Spengler's offensive

against the Euro-centric notion of world history, historians and archaeologists generally continued to believe in a progression of successive stages as a part of single continuous development of society and culture. Mortimer Wheeler, the well known archaeologist, for example, wrote that the province of the archaeologist is 'to view the past and the present as a single, continuous and not always unsuccessful battle between man and his environment and, above all, between Man and Himself.'[19] A similar unilinear progress of European culture and civilization is depicted by H.G. Wells in his *The Outline of History* (first published in 1920). To quote Wells:

> 'The Neolithic men of Europe were white men ancestral to the modern Europeans. They may have been of a darker complexion than many of their descendants; of that we cannot speak with certainty. But there is no real break in culture from their time onward until we reach the age of coal, steam, and power-driven machinery that began in the eighteenth century.'[20]

The other version of this idea of progress was development of culture and institutions, in successive linked stages. The schematic hypothesis of evolutionary model of cultures and institutions tried to depict cultures as moving from savagery to barbarism to civilization. At institutional level, it was believed that patriarchal form of family organization necessarily evolved from matriarchal form.[21] The superiority of one stage of development and technology over the other culture also led to the widespread idea of diffusionism. Grafton Elliot Smith developed Egypto-centric hyper-diffusionist doctrine in his numerous writings; such as *Migrations of Culture* (1915), *The Evolution of the Dragon* (1919), *In the Beginnings: The Origin of Civilizations* (1928), *Human History* (1930) and *The Diffusion of Cultures* (1933). In these writings G.E. Smith believed that cultural practices of Egyptian civilization spread through the process of diffusion to other areas like an exotic leaven' over the world. It was believed that the heliolithic people of Egypt looking for elixirs of life, set out from Egypt and spread civilization.[22] Lord Raglan in his work, *How Came Civilization* (1939) substituted Sumerians for Egyptians as the agents of this process of acculturation. To quote Raglan:

> 'Savages never invent or discover anything .... Many of the principal discoveries and inventions upon which our civilization is based can be traced with considerable probability to an area with its focus near the head of the Persian Gulf, and such evidence as there is suggests that they were made by ingenious priests as a means for facilitating the performance of religious ritual....'[23]

Gordon Childe rejected the notion of unilinear development and believed that diffusion and evolution lay down amicably together. Modified diffusionism of Childe demanded that before two cultural objects or traditions were compared, it must be made certain that they are functionally and formally identical, and secondly the process of diffusion should be chronologically, geographically, and historically possible. But even the modified diffusionism of Childe demanded that 'Comparison of Homo-taxial Cultures, i.e., cultures occupying the same relative positions in the several observed sequences' should be used 'to ascertain whether the agreements between them can be generalized as the stages in cultural evolution.'[24] According to Childe, social evolution was analogous to organic evolution. By this, Childe stressed the significance of variation and differentiation in study of cultures. By differentiation, he meant the splitting of large homogenous cultures into a multitude of distinct local cultures. Despite all this, Childe postulated that invention of writing coincided with the progressive enlargement of the unit of cohabitation and in the accumulation of a social surplus. Writing revolutionized technology in the form of calendarical astronomy, arithmetic and geometry-tools demonstrably used by the first civilized societies. Similarly, Childe believed that the use of metal, by imposing industrial-specialization and trade or by making advanced transport possible, was the essential pre-condition for the civilization.[25] Childe notion of urban revolution and literate civilization neglects the cultural evolution of Aztec's of Mexico, Maya of Yucatan, Guatemala, and Honduras who built elaborate temples and pyramids and who had no metal at all except a few gold and copper ornaments; and the Incas of Peru with their complicated network of roads, suspension bridges of ropes and domestication of animals. All these three civilization were based on Agriculture and Aztecs and Maya had written pictographic script.[26]

The influence of the idea of progress or unilinear succession of stages on the historiography of civilizations is quite evident. This is despite the claim by E.H. Carr that 'no sane person ever believed in a kind of progress which advanced in an unbroken straight-line without reverses and deviations and breaks in continuity'.[27] Although some historians might have stressed the role of ecological forces in creating discontinuity and regression in cultural development,[28] or the role of barbarian hordes in cultural decline of some civilizations, the general belief has been in the cultural superiority of some stages or cultures over the others. Here, the notion of Gibbon, 'the greatest historian of enlightenment,' and E.H. Carr is not much different when concerned

with the idea of progress. E.H. Carr defines 'History as progress through the transmission of acquired skills from one generation to another.'[29] The technocratic and productionist viewpoint in Carr is a product of his own socio-political milieu. To make it quite clear, let us quote E.H. Carr:

> '...Progress in history, unlike evolution in nature, rests on the transmission of acquired assets. These assets include both material possessions and the capacity to master, transform, and utilize one's environment.'[30]

In anthropology, objections were raised against the aprioristic schematism of evolutionism by M. Sahlins and others.[31] A solution was found to reside in replacing unilinear with multi-lineal sequences thus disposing of the pre-supposition that differing societies represent set stages along a single path.[32] Levi-Strauss vigorously challenged the notion of superiority of one culture over the other. According to him, the supposed difference between the primitive thought and scientific thought and primitive society and contemporary society rest on positivistic mistake. For a correct cultural understanding of the nature of objects, an adequate theory of signs is required. Moreover, Levi-Strauss postulated that the relation between a sign and what it signifies, the object in question, is determined conventionally or culturally. Therefore, any inter-cultural comparison of cultural objects such as an axe of steel or of stone, cultural achievement such as magic or science and technology belonging to different societies is deemed to be misplaced. Thus, according to Levi-Strauss, to make history meaningful, the historian is bound to be a historian for a period or of a group, i.e., to study society synchronically at a particular moment. All histories are, therefore, partial totalizations of different societies. Their continuity is a myth invented by dialectical reason.[33]

Similarly, the Foucault's notion of history stressed discontinuity rather than the continuity of events. According to Foucault, discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation and it was the historian task to remove it from history. 'Total history' which seeks a system of homogeneous relations or continuity of events is based on a notion of a single centre (a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view or an overall shape). Such a single centre acts as an essentializing force which by causing particular texts to become veils covering a hidden ontological realm, robs them of their identity as it annihilates differences. According to Foucault, tradition, influence, development, evolution, spirit, origin etc., were some principles which were sources of causal processes that

linked a succession of dispersed events. The 'effective history' must, according to Foucault, suspend these immediate forms of continuity that purports to be natural, immediate, and universal. Foucault rejects immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession.[34]

The belief in the supra-organic or cultural evolution was result of a process of hypostatization; of treating proposed evolutionary sequences as facts. It was also a result of a narrow, parochial approach to past, which simply assumed development of urbanization and literacy as the valid criterion for defining a complex society and ignored the complexity of non-literate societies and cultures such as the Inca of Peru and that of Benin in Nigeria. The new approach in historiography also tries to discard emphasis on development and evolution. In the studies of Archaeology, emphasis is laid on the centre-periphery relations (as a form of asymmetry) which are frequently glossed over in the archaeological literature under rubrics such as 'civilized-barbarian', 'urban-non-urban', 'sedentary-nomadic' and 'agriculturist-pastoralist'.[35]

This discussion brings us to the notion of time or the flow of time. The general belief is in the continuous onward flow of time. To quote Marc Block, 'historical time is concrete and living reality with an irreversible onward rush. It is the very plasma in which events are immersed, and the field within which they become intelligible.... This real time is, in essence, a continuum.'[36]

But apart from the linear notion of time, we also find frequent use of the notion of cyclic time in the historiography of civilizations. The problem is why we inherit past? Is there any recurrence in history or time? The recurrence of events appears to be out of question, but there is a possibility of recurrence at the level of social-processes, cultural traits, and institutions. Or may be we give name of recurrence to changes occurring at a very very slow pace. This again is bound to raise the old controversy of Thucydides notion of immutable, eternal human nature and Heraclitus notion of flux or change which says that we can not enter the same water in a river. The theme of recurrence, however, is central in understanding history-writing of cultures. For instance, Childe believed that cultures are the 're-current assemblages of the artifacts.'[37] Archaeologists define a culture as an assemblage of associated traits that recur repeatedly. Some order, some recurrent features must occur in any homogeneous and inter-related field of events. However, complete ordering is not possible, there will always be some elements which are arbitrary, undetermined and inexplicable.[38] We must consider

whether society, like organisms, carry, in their forms, evidence of their past growth, or the parochronistic structures.

Arnold Toynbee used such a organismic view of civilization, which is also a kind of cyclic notion of the growth and decline of civilizations. He advocated a scheme of apparentation-and-affiliation for growth of civilizations. For him, it is necessary that a civilization should end in a 'universal state' followed by the rise of a new religion (a 'universal church') which itself gives birth to new civilization or civilizations. The first civilization is called 'apparented', the later ones are 'affiliated'. Similarly, he advanced the notion of 'abortive' and 'arrested' civilizations.[39] Here, the assumption is that civilizations, like organisms, occur within a definite life cycle. A.L. Kroeber rejects this notion of simple rise-culmination-and-decline and calls the western civilization 'polyphonic and orchestral' and also a multi-national civilization. Such a civilization, according to Kroeber, come in successive surges or pulses and instead of complete breakdown or death, there may be 'interpulse reconstruction' a phase of preparation to pattern reconstruction.[40]

Fernand Braudel notion of history, in which he wants to see things whole, and to integrate the economic, the social, the political, and the cultural into a 'total history'; also depicts at a deeper level, a history of constant repetition, of ever-recurring cycles; a history whose passage is almost imperceptible, that of man in his relationship to the environment. This is a kind of historical geography or what Braudel calls it 'geo-history'.[41] At another level, Braudel wishes to study history 'globally' (his notion of 'histoire globale') because the history of events deals only with 'the surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.'[42] This takes him to the study of structures—economic, political and cultural traits which moves at a relatively slower pace than the history of events. Thus, within Braudel's schema, the multi-dimensionality of social time assumed a central place. In his structural macro-history, physical and material factors that operate over long periods of time (la longue durée) acts as constraints on human behaviour. It encapsulates centuries or even millennia long biological, environment, and social relationships.[43] Braudel's hierarchical temporal rhythms—episodic, cyclical, structural—do not represent fundamentally different orders of reality, but rather inclusive aspects along a continuum.[44]

As an aspect of human experience, two basic forms of time may be distinguished: the cyclic and the linear. In linear or sequential time, events take place in a particular, directional order along a moving continuum. In cyclic or durational time, the span of events and of

intervals between events is relative, and may be repetitive. The notion of time scales is also significantly associated with the notion of causation. (1) Hierarchical causation, which emphasizes differences between time scales: variables that operate over the long term act as constraints for those that operate over the shorter term; (2) Interactive causation, which emphasizes that closely interrelated processes operate over similar or intersecting time scales, regardless of the total time span involved. The historiography of civilizations which makes use of the idea of progress and recurrence must, therefore, resolve the dilemma of time. Here, in short, we can only say that time is not independent of physical processes. But what are the characteristics of physical processes that cause us to have a concept of time at all. Physicists believe that entropy increase is associated with the forward direction of time. But the world itself present besides presenting a world of successively different states, nature also contain processes of uniform change, especially cyclic processes, such as planets moving in fixed orbits, or pendula regularly swinging back and forth, or atoms oscillating in molecules. These processes serve as basis for clocks by which we can define time units and quantify the time between different states. The universe changes, and time is a process that brings new out of old. But their is continuity too in the process: the old is inextricably bound up in the present, and both past and present go into the future. Time gives the past its property of being complete and untouchable, and the future its property of being unknown and incomplete and yet too, time binds past and future into a coherent scheme of things.[45]

Notes and References

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2. The role of consumerist capitalist society in repressing the productiveness and creativity is analysed in Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society,* Fawceit Premier, New York, 1987, pp. 35-66.
3. This concern for ecological degradation has disturbed many persons. Arnold Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth,* Oxford University Press, New York and London, 1976 voices the same concern.
4. Gordon Childe, *Social Evolution,* The Fontana Library, 1963, pp. 13-14.
5. David Holbrook, *Evolution and the Humanities,* Gower Publishers Ltd., Aldershot, Hamshire, 1987, p. 19. Holbrook summarizes some of the main problems and concerns of the Evolutionary Theory (see pp. 17-26).

6. Childe, *op. cit.,* p. 14.
7. See Mathew H. Nitecki, 'History: La Grande Illusion', in M.H. Nitecki and D.V. Nitecki, (ed.), *History and Evolution,* State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, pp. 3-15.
8. John Boardman, Jasper Griffin and Oswyn Murray, (ed.), *The Oxford History of Greek and the Hellenistic World,* Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1991, p. 1.
9. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
10. W.G. Hardy, *The Greek and Roman World,* Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 48.
11. Ibid., p. 70.
12. Ibid., p. 1.
13. John Bowle, *The Unity of European History,* Oxford University Press, London and Oxford, 1970, p. 347.
14. Ibid., p. 354.
15. M.I. Finlay, *The Ancient Greeks,* Pelican Books, 1975 (ed.), p. 127.
16. Ibid., p. 128.
17. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West,* Allen and Unwin, London, 1959, pp. 6-8.
18. Ibid., p. 39. Spengler's offensive against Euro-centric notion can be seen in his following words:
    '...We select a single bit of ground as the natural centre of the historical system, and make it the central sun. From it all the events of history receive their real light, from it their importance is judged in perspective. But it is our own west European conceit alone that this phantom "World-History", which a breath of skepticism would dissipate, is acted out.' [p. 17].
19. Quoted in Norman McCord, 'Mortimer Wheeler', in John Canon, (ed.), *The Historian at Work,* George Allen and Unwin, London, 1980, pp. 167-8.
20. H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History,* London, 1960, p. 101.
21. This fallacious argument of Lewis H. Morgan was taken up by F. Engels, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State,* Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977.
22. Glyn Denial and Colin Renfrew, *The Idea of Pre-History,* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1988, pp. 83-5.
23. Quoted in Glyn Denial and C. Renfrew (1988), p. 87.
24. Gordon Childe, *op. cit.,* p. 27.
25. Ibid., pp. 33-6 and pp. 162-3.
26. Glyn Denial and C. Renfrew, *op. cit.,* pp. 92-4.
27. E.H. Carr, *What is History?* Penguin Books, London, 1988, p. 166.
28. See Rhys Carpenter, *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966.
29. E.H. Carr, *op. cit.,* p. 114.
30. Ibid., p. 117.
31. See M. Sahlins and E.R. Service, (ed.), *Evolution and Culture,* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1960.
32. For 'Multi-linear evolutionism' see R.L. Carneiro, 'The Four Faces of Evolution', in J.J. Honigmann, (ed.), *Hand Book of Social and Cultural Anthropology,* Chicago, 1973, pp. 89-110 and Charles Keith Maisels, *The Emergence of Civilization,* Routledge, London and New York, 1990.
33. For discussion of Levi-Strauss ideas, see D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Anthropology and Historiography of Science,* Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1992, pp. 68-72.

34. Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980, pp. 192-9.
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36. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, Vintage Books, New York, 1952, pp. 27-8.
37. Gordon Childe, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
38. Philip Bagby, *Culture and History: Prolegomena to Comparative Study of Civilizations*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963, p. 58.
39. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, London, 1934-54, vol. I, pp. 51-128, vol. II, pp. 322-85, and vol. III, pp. 1-79.
40. A.L. Kroeber, *A Roster of Civilization and Cultures*, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1962, pp. 88-94.
41. F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. I, Harper and Row, New York, 1972, p. 20.
42. Ibid., p. 21.
43. A. Bernard Knapp, 'Archaeology and Annales: Time, Space and Change.' In his (ed.), *Archaeology, Annales, and Ethno-History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1-21.
44. Ibid. p. 12.
45. Richard Schlegel, *Time and The Physical World*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1968; gives an interesting dialogue on time [see pp. 183-205].

History and the Possibilities of Emancipation: Some Lessons From India*

VINAY LAL

Dept. of History, University of California, Los Angeles

I

In 1838, in the city of Calcutta, a number of forward-looking Bengali men constituted themselves into a 'Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge.' The founders of the society, in the prospectus setting forth their aims and ambitions, admitted with great humility and shame the truth of the charge levelled by Europeans against Indians, 'that in no one department of learning, are our acquirements otherwise than extremely superficial.' The Society aimed to play its part in the elimination of the deficiencies in the knowledge of 'educated Hindus' and in the revival of learning in an ancient land. Three hundred native gentlemen gathered together on a morning in March gave their unanimous assent to these lofty goals.[1]

Two discourses on subjects various and sundry were delivered before members of the Society every month. The very first one, delivered by the Rev. Kṛṣṇa Mohun Banerjea, was 'On the Nature and Importance of Historical Studies'. Its author expounded on the virtues of studying history and having 'clear views on the subject', for history—unlike the sciences—addressed itself to 'that principle of our moral constitution which may be termed faith, belief, or credulity.' The study of history provided intellectual gratification; it taught man how to distinguish between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood. The Reverend Banerjea observed that the nations of the West, which once 'groaned under wretched degradation,' had risen by attending closely 'to the lessons of history'. Indeed, how could one reflect upon the past without imbibing 'important lessons', and the consequent detection of errors would

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secure 'the next [age] from returning into the same.' Hindus particularly were in want of that education which history supplied: their 'early education had a tendency to confound in one mass history and mythology—facts and fables—truth and fiction—receiving them all indifferently as true or else rejecting them all as wholly false—sweeping the gold away from the dross.' Such a situation had been brought about by the 'lamentable want of authentic records in our own [Hindu] literature', and though the mythological legends of India testified to the ancients' keen appreciation of poetry, such legends were not to be confused with 'historical compositions.'[2]

That Hindus were without much of a sense of the past, and prone to intersperse facts with fanciful tales, seems to have been a commonplace from at least the time of Alberuni, who first visited India around 1000 AD, and is said to have stayed there until his death nearly forty years later.[3] 'Unfortunately the Hindus', wrote Alberuni, 'do not pay much attention to the historical order of things, they are very careless in relating the chronological succession of their kings, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling.'[4] Not just India, but large parts of the East, were alleged to lack historical compositions until comparatively recent times. To Gibbon, who opined that 'the art and genius of history has ever been unknown to the Asiatics', it was indubitably certain that no Arab historian had supplied as clear a narrative of the history of the Arabs as was to be found in the pages of his own *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Before 'the coming of Mahomet', the Persians had preserved virtually nothing of their history, and as a consequence they were in the dark even about events 'glorious to their nation.'[5]

It was everywhere acknowledged that not until the arrival of the Muslims did works resembling historical compositions begin to be written in India; and even then the accounts of the early Mohammadan conquests in India, and of the later Muslim dynasties as well as the Mughal Empire, were authored almost without exception by Muslims.[6] But did these accounts deserve to be called 'history'? Sir H.M. Elliot, author of a voluminous history of India during 'The Muhammadan Period' constructed from the writings of Indian 'historians', declared emphatically that the 'Muhammadan histories' could scarcely claim to rank higher than 'Annals'. For the most part they comprised a 'dry narration of events' in strict chronological fashion, without any conception of how events could be grouped 'philosophically according to their relations'. Having had no acquaintance with any political system other than absolute despotism, these 'historians' wrote only about

'thrones and imperial powers', about 'successive conspiracies, revolts, intrigues, murders, and fratricides, so common in Asiatic monarchies,' and had not the slightest interest in illustrating the conditions under which the common people lived, the state of commerce and agriculture, the 'constituent elements or mutual relations' which characterize any society, the history of religious and social institutions, or indeed any aspect of 'civil history'. Of cause and effect the Muhammadan writers knew nothing; their reflections and suggestions, few to begin with, were of the 'most puerile and contemptible kind' and, worst of all, the writers displayed an appalling immorality, for they 'sympathize[d] with no virtues', and 'abhor[red] no vices.'[7] If the Muslim histories of India could be despatched into oblivion with such ease, then one shuddered to think of how entirely preposterous were the writings of the Hindus, who were not even remotely familiar with the conception of history.

'It is allowed on all hand that no historical composition existed in the literature of the Hindus.'[8] This observation, that runs like a refrain through British scholarship on India, acquired in the first half of the nineteenth century a sanctity that was to remain unquestioned until the advent of nationalism at the turn of the century. James Mill, in his *History of British India*, summoned no less than a dozen witnesses to support the contention that the Hindus were 'perfectly destitute of historical records', entirely indifferent to chronology, and not in the least inclined to make statements within the 'sober limits of truth and history'.[9] Mill also drew attention to the lack of any work in Hindu literature on geography that was not patently 'absurd' and 'monstrous', a geography that was not, in Macaulay's words, 'made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.'[10] It is certainly the case that Sanskrit lacks a geographical literature. No work gives us any conception of India's neighbours; and despite India's cultural empire in Indonesia, Cambodia, and other parts of Asia, no Indian traveler left behind accounts that would give us a sense of the history and geography of these places.

Mill's opinions and criticisms of Indian 'literature', if indeed so dignified a word could be used to characterize the fictions of a people belonging to a 'rude age', were not dismissed as the ravings of a madman or as the predilections of a scholar knowledgeable only in the Western classics; rather, the *History of British India* left a deep impression on the minds of Englishmen, and one man who was wholly susceptible to Mill's influence was Thomas Macaulay. As Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, Macaulay in 1835 penned the 'Minute on Indian Education', which had a decisive impact in determining British educational policies in India. Macaulay argued that educational funds

would be put to better use in teaching 'sound Philosophy and true History' than Hindu astronomy, 'which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school', or a history 'abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long', or a geography full of the most fanciful notions.[11] Henceforth HISTORY would not merely comprise a distinct and honoured part of the curriculum in schools and colleges in India, but historical analysis became, as Gauri Viswanathan has suggested, the principal method 'of teaching colonial subjects to identify error in their own systems of thought and, simultaneously, confirm Western principles of law, order, justice, and truth.'[12] While Mill's own history was to 'remain the hegemonic textbook of Indian history' throughout the nineteenth century, Indian classrooms were inundated with numerous other historical texts.[13]

The questions remains: Why should the absence of historical works in the literature of the Hindus have struck Mill and other Englishmen as a singularly important fact? To Mill it was demonstrably clear that as people emerge from a 'rude age', and reason begins to exert on human affairs a considerable influence, 'no use of letters is deemed more important than that of preserving an accurate record of those events and actions by which the interests of the nations have been promoted or impaired.'[14] An interest in history was, to the mind of Mill, the eminent mark of reason and culture, of a civilization instituted on rational principles and characterized by intellectual maturity. The Hindus had not yet understood that a 'record of the past' could be used as 'guidance of [*sic*] the future'. As a Utilitarian, Mill was acutely conscious of the uses and lessons of history, a subject matter on which English and Indian school-children were routinely asked, until perhaps recently, to display their expository and analytical skills. Moreover, Mill, whose intellectual outlook was dictated not only by the Utilitarian ethos, but by the world view of Bacon and Newton, saw poetry and history as diametrically opposed to each other. Mill was not loathe to derive moral lessons from this purportedly great divide. 'The rude and untutored barbarian' admired, and wondered at, only those events in the past which could be 'remembered solely for the pleasure of those emotions': 'Exaggeration, therefore, is more fitted to his desires than exactness; and poetry than history.' 'All rude nations,' James Mill averred, 'neglect history, and are gratified with the productions of the mythologists and poets.' The conclusion was inescapable: as Hindus had failed to produce historical works, they were still barbarians.[15] To Mill, as to other European intellectuals, the Greeks provided the needed contrast: whatever their foibles, and they too had indulged in such childish amusements as

poetry and mythology, among the earliest luminosities of the Greek world were the historians Herodotus and Thucydides.[16]

Why should, nonetheless, the attention of Englishmen in the period from the end of the eighteenth century to the aftermath of World War I have been riveted, when at all India was within the eye's gaze, upon the lack of historical works in Hindu literature? Why should that have been any more significant than, say, the fact that the Greeks did not produce any grammarians? What animated this predilection for history among Englishmen? The English middle classes in Shakespeare's time had already developed a considerable taste for history, and one historian of this phenomenon has gone so far as to state that the 'reading of history' was regarded by them 'as a virtue second only to an acquaintance with Holy Writ.' History furnished moral examples, and the lessons it provided could be used profitably in the service of the state; the didactic value ascribed to history coincided so 'precisely with the bourgeois conception of the utility of learning that histories were hailed as the perfect literature of the middle class.'[17] If an engagement with history was a measure of England's greatness, the dearth of history-reading in other societies, such as Ireland, was just as surely a measure of their impoverishment, and even of their fitness to be enslaved: as one writer put it in 1578, the Irish were 'baereued of one of the greatest benefites, that giveth light and understanding, which is by reading of histories...'[18] This English interest in history would continue to persist, except that in the England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history was seen as something entirely divorced from the imagination. The old Aristotelian distinction between poetry and history was very much alive: poetry dealt with what could be, history confined itself to facts. With the ascendancy of the New Science, 'natural knowledge' and especially mathematics were placed in sharp opposition to poetry. The *Philosophical Transactions,* established in 1665, was prepared to publish genuine pieces of knowledge 'free from the colours of Rhetoric, the devices of Fancy, or the delightful deceit of Fables.'[19] In the Augustan Age, even poetry became mathematical in the hands of Pope and Dryden. But the aftermath of the Augustan Age was, from the standpoint of the Evangelicals and the Utilitarians, unpropitious: the Romantic poets restored wicked poetry, unreason, and passion in all its monstrosity to their proper dignity. This distinction, between poetry and history, unreason and reason, fiction and fact, became then the backdrop for Mill's fulminations in India. That Indians lacked a tradition of historical inquiry, and were devoid of respect for facts and reason, was equally illustrative of the degenerate tendencies of the Romantic movement.

Observations about India had no necessary intrinsic interest for most Englishmen, but had a great deal to do with the dispute within England between conflicting ideologies; and it is even arguable that Mill's animadversions against India owed a great deal to his animus against Romantic poetry. The passion for facts among utilitarians, social reformers, and evangelicals moved by the spirit of 'improvement' had proceeded so far in the nineteenth century that Dickens was compelled to mock this development: Thus Gradgrind, the school inspector in *Hard Times*, would ask for the establishment of Commissioners of Facts, delegated with the responsibility of instituting a regime of fact.[20]

Nineteenth-century English thought, then, would be marked by a passion for facts and history, and this passion can be traced in the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, in essays by Carlyle ('On History', 1829) and others, and in such massive historical compositions as Macaulay's *History of England* (1849). The study of history was to become institutionalized, and history was to enter Western discourse as an episteme, as the determining principle of all knowledge.[21] The study of history was introduced into universities, and the transformation of this study into a 'discipline' was marked by the formation of new associations devoted to the study of the 'past', such as The British Archaeological Association (1843), The Royal Historical Society (1868), The Society of Biblical Archaeology (1870), and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877), and the introduction of various scholarly and quasi-scholarly journals, most notably the *English Historical Review* (1886) and *Antiquary* (1880).[22] The *English Historical Review* boldly recommended itself to its readers in the inaugural issue with the observation that 'history, in an even greater degree than its votaries have as yet generally recognized, is the central study among human studies, capable of illuminating and enriching all the rest',[23] and Lord Acton was to assume a similarly elevated tone in his 'Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History', delivered at Cambridge University in June 1895: 'The science of politics is the one science that is deposited by the stream of history, like the grains of gold in the sand of a river; and the knowledge of the past, the record of truths revealed by experience, is eminently practical, as an instrument of action and a power that goes to the making of the future.'[24]

As England showed the way to the future by enshrining the study of history and historical modes of thinking as characteristic of a vigorous and energetic civilization, so India was a pointed reminder of the ill-effects of lacking the historical sensibility. However, the disposition towards history was manifested not merely in the assault upon Indian

traditions and the supposed peculiarities of Indians such as the lack of historical works, but also in the creation by the British, from the very outset, of a historical discourse about India and, on the other hand, in the fixation on 'events', in the privileging of action—history being 'what happened', not what is imagined—over thought. The privileging of action in turn was manifest in the celebration of 'the man on the spot', that intrepid soldier or administrator enacting his role on the field of action, the field of history; conversely, Indians were perceived to inhabit a dream-like world, caught in the stupor of contemplation, averse to action. If this became the received view, how far did it inform the outlook of Indians ruminating about both their own past and the intellectual weaknesses of Hindu civilization? Was the observation about the lack of historical works in Hindu civilization generally accepted by Hindus, and what kind of speculations did they entertain about this embarrassing phenomenon? How did Indian nationalists respond to the charge? Did the nationalist response consist essentially in marshalling data to the contrary, and in establishing, or fabricating, knowledge of the past based upon indigenous sources? Or did the nationalists ground their response in a differing epistemology, an epistemology that, if it did not consider history to be of little consequence, saw no reason to associate organically the spirit of historical inquiry with either the triumph of reason or faith in the idea of progress? Have the nationalist historians' attempts, which prevail to this day, to elevate the so-called *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition to a tradition of historical inquiry conceived partially along scientific principles yielded different principles of historical inquiry, differing conceptions of history? How, finally, are we to interpret the significance of the British charge and, provided there is in it a kernel of truth, the significance of the lacuna itself? If history is full of 'lessons' for the present, which is the predominant popular conception of history, might not the lack of history be a more portentous guide?

II

At an address delivered in the early years of his political career, which spanned the period from 1875 to 1925, the Bengali nationalist Surendranath Banerjea observed that anyone wishing to look into the Indian past encountered a 'difficulty of considerable magnitude' at the very threshold of his inquiry. In the whole field of Sanskrit literature, only one historical work, and that too from the late medieval period, was to be found. 'Are we then to conclude', asked Banerjea, 'that our

ancestors, the great Aryans of ancient India, were ignorant of the art of historical composition and never wrote histories?' How could it be that 'the great Aryans of ancient India', who produced lasting works of philosophy, religion, poetry, drama, grammar, and law, were so deficient in the production of historical knowledge as not to leave behind a single historical work from the time of antiquity? Was it reasonable to suppose that people who were capable of such supreme achievements in the various branches of human knowledge were wanting in 'the simple art' of recording their past, 'the sayings and doings of their kings and queens'? How could progress have been made in the different branches of knowledge without some progress in the act of historical composition? Indeed, how was one to measure the idea of progress at all without an idea of history? Was it thus not very probable that the Hindus had not been ignorant of historical knowledge? Fortunately to the credit of the country's ancestors, and 'for the good name of India', Banerjea could conclude that such histories had at one time existed, but they could not survive 'the revolutions and convulsions' which India 'had unhappily too often to pass through', the 'carelessness of the Brahmins', and 'the peculiarities' of India's climate.[25]

It is worthwhile dwelling on the reasons adduced by Banerjea for why histories authored by Hindus had not come down to the present age. If James Mill and Macaulay represented one side of Orientalist discourse, the other face of orientalism, the burden of which in time was assumed especially by the nationalists, consisted in a glorification of the ancient Aryans and correspondingly in the denunciation of the non-Hindu, and particularly Islamic, elements of Indian civilization. Though self-avowedly a nationalist, albeit of the 'moderate' variety, Banerjea was echoing, inadvertently or otherwise, imperialist discourse. He observed that the 'Empire of the Kṣatriyas' was followed in turn by that of the Muslims, the Mughals, the Mahrattas, and finally the British: the history of India was an unremitting tale of depredations by foreigners who, enticed to India by the reports of 'her extraordinary wealth', 'grandeur and beauty', thundered down upon 'the fertile plains of Hindustan spreading death, destruction, desolation, on all sides around.' Amidst 'these destructive inroads' all traces of the Hindus' historical literature disappeared.[26] This essentially was the hypothesis advanced by Col. James Tod in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1829-32, 3 vols.). Finding it improbable that the Hindus were ignorant of an art which was cultivated in other countries 'from almost the earliest ages', Tod came to the conclusion that 'the paucity of its [Hindustan's] national works on history' could be accounted for by considering 'the political

changes and convulsions which [had] happened in Hindustan since Mahmud's invasion and the intolerant bigotry of many of his successors'.[27] Neither Tod nor Banerjea explained why historical works did not survive the depredations of invaders when a good many number of the sacred and law books of the Hindus did so. Sacred books were commonly stored in temples; and if temples, as is generally argued, were the most obvious targets of attack, it is these books which would have been the first objects to have been destroyed or looted. Even if more care was taken to safeguard religious texts, it is not clear why historical records would have had less chance of surviving than other, if one may use an anachronism, secular texts.

The reticence that Banerjea genuinely felt in identifying the Muslims as the chief villains of the piece was, as we shall see later, not shared by some of his contemporaries. Banerjea was too close to the Orientalist critique of India, and far too enamored of the discourses of modernity and liberalism, to understand that the question is not whether certain discourses are indeed true or false, or whether or not the climate in India is truly inhospitable to the preservation of manuscripts, but rather what are the effects of such discourses. In his observation that the 'carelessness of the Brahmins' contributed to the loss of historical knowledge, Banerjea was voicing a favorite British construction of Indian caste society. No doubt Alberuni too had observed that 'the Indian scribes are careless, and do not take pains to produce correct and well-collated copies.'[28] To the transcription of religious texts more attention may have been paid by the Brahmin scribes than to copying historical works, but this would account more for the inaccuracies present in the texts, not for their non-existence. This objection is of little consequence, however, and what is rather more arresting is the characterization of the Brahmin as the villain of the piece. When the British sought the reasons for the demise of the ancient culture of the Hindus, and the origins of their degrading practices, their ire fell upon the Brahmins, who had been entrusted from time immemorial with safeguarding the Hindu texts, sacred and profane, passing on the knowledge from one generation to another, and regularizing religious customs and practices. These Brahmins, the British believed, were venerated to the point of idolatry for their supposed learning. The Brahmins, whom one British overlord dismissed as an 'intriguing, lying, corrupt, licentious and unprincipled race of people',[29] would go to no ends to protect their privileges, keep the other castes ignorant, and prevent the British from contradicting their hegemony or attempting to enlighten the common man. All Hindu texts, it was supposed, had been 'systematically

Brāhmanized for the purpose of bringing all the religious laws and usages of the different races of India into conformity with Brāhmaṇical ideas', and the real nature of Hindu civilization was only to be revealed when the Brāhmaṇical overlay had been uncovered.[30] The scholar-administrator who ruled India, first as a servant of the East India Company, and later on behalf of the Crown, railed at the supposed pedantry of the Brahmins, their mindless devotion to the ritualistic act, and their scheming nature. The views of John Gilchrist, the 'creator' of Hindustani, may be evoked as a typical instance of the British construction of the Brahmins. 'It is not at all improbable', wrote Gilchrist,

> that the cormorant crew of Dewans, Mootsuddies, Sirkars, Nazirs, Pundits, Munshis and a tremendous roll call of harpies who encompass power here see with jealous solicitude every attempt in their masters to acquire the means of immediate communication with the great mass of the people who those locusts of the land conceive their lawful prey.[31]

Thus the Brahmins became, at an early date, the hideous monster in the story of India's degradation, in the story of the demise and loss of her traditions. In more recent years, a respected American historian of India, wishing to account for why 'historical thought and scholarship' were not represented in ancient India in greater measure, put forward a theory which resuscitates the image of the Brahmins as a devious, conspiratorial people. Dismissing quite rightly the suggestion that the *purāṇas*, the Jain and Buddhist chronicles, and other genealogical records can be said to furnish historical explanation, Burton Stein notes that three factors inhibited, indeed prevented, 'the writing and preservation of good chronicles or histories': the nature of the political system; the role of the Brahmins as custodians and carriers of Indian traditions; and the nature of the transmission of these traditions. Political power in India, argues Stein, was not highly centralized, nor was it exercised by formal political institutions; rather, it was extremely localized and vested in warriors or other elites wielding economic influence. Whatever may have been the prestige of the Kṣatriyas, the warrior elite, the full force of their power could not be felt until it had been legitimized by the priestly elite. Stein further contends that as a large proportion of India's rulers came from 'social groups of low ritual status', the legitimizing function performed by the Brahmin priests was central rather than merely marginal to the stability of the political system and the continuation of its traditions.[32] Inscriptions from medieval Andhra, for example, indicate that many local rulers of untouchable or tribal

origins were content to refer to themselves as Śūdras, members of the fourth estate; others elevated themselves to the rank of Kṣatriyas.

The presence of good histories—and we are to remember that even in Europe history was, until comparatively recent times, an account of monarchs and the political and military triumphs and defeats of their reigns—and of reliable chronicles of ruling families, would have exposed both the low origins of the founders of these families and the priests' participation in the perpetuation of fraud. On the one hand, not only would the prestige of the ostensibly warrior elite have suffered, but their authority would have considerably diminished; on the other hand, the process through which the Brahmins, while supposedly acting to ensure political stability, were enhancing their own ritual power, would have become public knowledge. The Brahmin would cease to have a monopoly over ritual power and the transmission of traditions once the sources and modes of his authority had been revealed; and it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the Brahmins would have been willing progenitors and spectators of their own demise. Thus the Brahmins, so continues the argument, chose not to transmit historical knowledge. Their control over the process of transmission of knowledge and tradition was aided by the fact that knowledge was by and large transmitted orally, and this process itself was confined to the relationship between the guru and such male students as he had himself selected. Access to a guru was further restricted to students of ritually pure birth.[33] What knowledge would be transmitted was thus left entirely to the Brahmins' discretion. Stein concludes that 'a conspiracy hypothesis' is warranted to explain why Indians of the 'ancient and medieval periods' did not address themselves seriously to the 'critical study of their past', particularly the production of historical scholarship.[34]

We have returned, with Stein, to the speculations of the early scholar-administrators of India about the conniving Brahmins, to the fixation on caste and the sacred and timeless dichotomy of Brāhmaṇical ritual power and the temporal authority of the Kṣatriyas. Although Stein brings to bear upon his subject all the paraphernalia of modern scholarship, his argument is not any more tenable. Stein admits that India is unique among 'ancient, literate and continuing civilizations' in that it lacked historically informed views about its own past, and even though his explanation of this anomaly rests upon the allegedly unique Hindu system of controlled transmission of knowledge, in truth what we are offered is a commonplace realpolitik view. Stein's query about the Hindus' failure to produce historical scholarship about their past is not grounded in the attempt to discern whether the indifference to

history was rooted in a particular epistemology and style of thinking, and whether the Hindus did, or did not, recognize history as a category of knowledge. Instead we have, in a somewhat more sophisticated form, the banal view that the victorious or dominant elites determine whether, and what kind of, history will be written.

For Stein, as for some others, the question is not only the lack of a sound historiographical tradition in ancient and medieval India, but of the Hindus' critical awareness of themselves and of their past. The 'quality of social criticism and analysis' began to show a marked improvement, argues Stein, only after the introduction of European values to India and the challenge of European civilization to the Brāhmaṇical stewardship of India's intellectual traditions, while another American scholar of India notes with evident pride that India's colonial rulers were the engine of India's intellectual growth, as they 'both historicized the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history in the Indian intellectual.'[35] India, on this view, produced many a Plato, the philosopher of the soul; but of the likes of Aristotle, the philosopher of the polis, the body politic, it had no one, nor was there any tradition of political theory. In Hindu India the tradition of analytical or critical inquiry was wanting and the 'lack of an apparatus of social criticism naturally prevented the growth of a tradition of historiography.'[36] The logical outcome of such a view would be the acceptance of an epistemology that allows space for historical inquiry and the historical sensibility and that, while it may not privilege history as a way of knowing, treats it as a distinct and legitimate category of knowledge. Is it not precisely this very accommodation that Hindu India refused to make? Is not the rejection of history as a way of knowing to be grounded in the existence of a different epistemology, indeed a different history, rather than in the quest for power, the reality of politics, and the perpetuation of deceit? Cannot the not-writing of history be a way of writing history, or perhaps more simply be a mode of living with the present, an insistent and urgent reminder that history is another mythography?

III

In the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94), the first great Bengali novelist and a masterful essayist, we move closer to the aforementioned considerations, to an understanding, without being fixated on the categories of 'caste', 'Brahmin', 'Kṣatriya', or bound by some theory of the elites or a fanciful 'conspiracy hypothesis', of why

Indians produced no scholarship providing an evolutionary, historical, and sociological view of India's religious and civil institutions, or a historical literature. In his own time Bankim was best known as a writer of historical novels, the first practitioner anywhere in India of that genre, and this itself testifies to his interest in history and in reviving the historical sense among Hindus. In the preface to the fourth edition of *Rajsingha* (1893), which Bankim described as his 'first historical novel', he denied having written 'historical novels' previously. But elsewhere Bankim also conceded that the novelist uses his imagination 'to achieve the effects he desires', and though 'the novel cannot always take the place of history', 'occasionally the purposes of history can be accomplished in a novel.'[37] Bankim peopled his novels with characters drawn from history: Aurangzeb, Man Singh and his son Jagat Singh, Raj Singh, the emperor Akbar; but the incidents in which they were described as participants were only remotely, if at all, based on historical events.

In the later years of his life, Bankim turned from writing historical novels to theological treatises. But even here his interest in history was clearly manifest—indeed, it was paramount. Bankim engaged in the reconstruction of Hinduism from the three-fold perspective of laying the basis for a sound *dharma*,[38] investing the Hindu philosophical tradition and particularly the *Bhagavad Gītā* with a religious and political significance appropriate to the designs of nationalism, and reviving the historical Kṛṣṇa, the Kṛṣṇa not of the gopis and the vaiṣṇava bhaktas, but that incarnated in the *Gītā* and in India's martial traditions. His program, if one may call it such, for making Hinduism more historical, *and thereby more masculine* and rational, wherein purportedly lay its future, was adumbrated in numerous essays and finally in a trilogy of three historical, philosophical, and theological treatises: *Kṛṣṇacaritra*, 'The Life of Kṛṣṇa' (1886); *Dharmatattva*, 'The Essence of Dharma' (1888), and the posthumously published *Śrīmatbhāgvatgītā* (1901). The origin of his quest for a masculine Hinduism and a historical Kṛṣṇa is to be found in the question which no intelligent Indian, and especially not a nationalist, could refrain from asking: Why had India been a subject nation for most of its history? Bankim rejected the view, most assiduously propagated by the British, that Indians were weak, effeminate, and childish, averse to fighting. The image of the Bengali was encapsulated in his *dhoti*, which looked to the British like a big diaper. In a 'purportedly historical' chapter of his novel *Durgeshnandini*, Bankim in contrast described 'Prithviraj [Chauhan] and other Rajput heroes' as 'resisting with matchless valour' the hordes of 'Mussulman soldierly' who burst upon India 'with new-born fanaticism and in all the pride of

strength'. But these brave Rajput warriors, 'instead of combining their strength', 'fell to quarrelling with one another.' By 'virtue of reiterated efforts', the Mussulmans triumphed, and Delhi became the seat of their empire. But the Rajput warriors did not thereby become 'lifeless': they continued to challenge 'the Yavanas [on] the field and on many occasions put them to rout.'[39] Had not the Marathas and the Sikhs, Bankim would ask, contested power well into the first half of the nineteenth century? It was a travesty to describe Indians as a supine people, when in fact the bulk of Hindu people had 'never fought for or against anyone'. 'Hindu kings or the rulers of Hindustan', Bankim wrote in a piece entitled 'Why is the Indian Nation Enslaved?', 'have been repeatedly conquered by alien people, but it cannot be said that the bulk of Hindu society has ever been vanquished in battle, because the bulk of Hindu society has never gone to war.' Bankim affirmed the lack of solidarity amongst Indians as one of the chief causes of their subjection:

> For more than three thousand years, Aryans have fought against Aryans, or Aryans against non-Aryans, or non-Aryans against non-Aryans—Magadh has fought Kanauj, Kanauj has fought Delhi, Delhi has fought Lahore, Hindus have battled against Pathans, Pathans against Mughals, Mughals against the English—all of these people have fought against one another and continually stoked the fires of war in this country.[40]

Why had not the vast majority of Hindus fought for their liberty? Did they love liberty less than the Englishman? Or was their inaction attributable to the nature of the caste system, under which the duty of fighting devolved solely upon the Kṣatriyas? In the Hindu's attitude towards power, and in his espousal of the ideals of *bhakti* (devotion) and *vairāgya* (renunciation) as ethical norms of conduct, Bankim found the second main reason for India's subjection. Although we cannot follow Bankim's historical and philosophical exposition of the Sāṁkhya system of thought, it suffices to note that both other-worldliness and fatalism, considered characteristic of most Hindus' disposition towards life, were described by Bankim as derived from Sāṁkhya, with consequences much too dire: 'It is because of this other-worldliness and fatalism that in spite of the immense physical prowess of the Indians, this land of the Aryans had come under Muslim rule. And it is for the same reason that India remains a subject country till this day.' Social progress was checked and ultimately ceased to take place at all for the same reason. Knowledge was the goal of Sāṁkhya philosophy;

but what was the use of knowledge if it were divorced from power? Europeans worshipped at the altar of power, they were its devotees, and that was 'the key to their advancement'; Hindus, in contradistinction, were 'negligent toward power', and that was 'the key to [their] downfall'. As Bankim expressed it in a concise formula, ' "Knowledge is power": that is the slogan of Western civilization. "Knowledge is salvation" is the slogan of Hindu civilization.'[41]

What was originated by the Samkhya philosophers, and perpetuated over the centuries by all schools of Hindu philosophy and even Buddhism, was given a vigorous new thrust by the advocates of *bhakti*. The emasculation of India, and the people's ignorance of the martial traditions in which their remote ancestors had been bred, owed as much to the devotional fervor that first swept over India sometime in the ninth century and was prominent throughout Bengal between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, as it did to the 'various divisions' that obtained in that ancient land 'filled with various nations and societies like a honeycomb crawling with bees'.[42] Although Bankim was of the view that the poetry of Chāndidāsa, Vidyāpati, and Caitanya could not anywhere be excelled, and was, along with comparable achievements in theology and philosophy, the hallmark of a Bengali renaissance as mighty as that which was experienced by Europe, he deprecated this poetry for instilling in people devotion to god instead of pride in the nation. As he was to write in his essay on India's subjection, 'for various reasons a sense of devotion to community has been lost in India for a very long time. Because it has been lost, there has never been any national accomplishment executed by Hindu society.'[43] Clearly, it was not devotion itself, imagined as the opposite of intellectual reflection or of action, to which Bankim was opposed: he wished to turn the energy and strength which devotion generates towards the community, the nation-state, and history, away from oneself and God. Without the nation-state there was to be no history; and in the nation-state, Bankim almost seemed to be suggesting, lay the culmination of history.

For Bankim, the contradictory tendencies inherent in the Indian situation were best epitomized in the conflicting interpretations of Kṛṣṇa that once obtained in India. Both in *Śrīmatbhāgvatgītā* and in *Kṛṣṇacaritra*, his sketch of the character of Kṛṣṇa, he set out to establish the historicity of Kṛṣṇa. If Kṛṣṇa was not to be an object of contempt and ridicule—and what else could he be if he, one of the most popular of all Indian deities, were shown frolicking on the green with Radha, tantalizing the other gopis, squandering his time and energies in

prodigious feats of sexuality, or amusing himself on the fields of Vrindaban with his playmates?—it was essential that the story of Kṛṣṇa be secured on some historical foundation, be rendered compatible with canons of reason and common sense, and that Kṛṣṇa himself be reinstated in his natural state of glory and dignity. The Kṛṣṇa of Caitanya and Vidyāpati was indeed effeminate, of sickly pallor and romantic inclination: was this the Kṛṣṇa that was to be upheld as a model of goodness, not to mention action, for Indians in their state of degradation? Then there was the other, historical Kṛṣṇa, 'who by the strength of his arms suppressed the enemy, who by the strength of his intellect united the country of the Bharatas, and who in his unique, selfless wisdom promulgated *dharma*.'[44] The mythology of Vrindaban would have to be abandoned for the historical reality of Kṛṣṇa counselling Arjuna to fight on the battlefield at Kurukṣetra; and if the God of Caitanya's Vaiṣṇavism was only Love, the god of a true Vaiṣṇavism would be not only Love but 'Infinite Power'. As the revolutionary sannyāsi says in Bankim's novel *Ānandamaṭh*, 'Caitanya's Viṣṇu is all Love, our Viṣṇu is all Power.'[45]

The 'original historical account' of the life of Kṛṣṇa, Bankim believed, was contained in the original text of the *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Bhagavad Gītā* is a part. To uncover this Ur text, a European like search for the holy grail, Bankim adopted formal and textual criteria, such as uniformity of conception and consistency of style, as well as the substantive criterion of rejecting as later accretions all accounts of 'unreal, impossible and supernatural events'. As Partha Chatterjee has aptly stated, it is remarkable that, in order to show how exemplary the character of Kṛṣṇa was as an ideal for modern man, Bankim should have felt that his discourse '*required* a demonstration of the historicity of Kṛṣṇa.'[46] Moreover, Bankim's obsession with the Ur text, and his absolute fidelity to the norms of rationality and scientificity, is a testimony to how far he subscribed to Orientalism, both as a style of thinking and as a mode of scholarship. He betrayed an emblematically European anxiety about origins. Bankim's differences with the Orientalists were not epistemological but empirical: it was not the Orientalist's historicism but his failure to abide by his own standards of scholarship that Bankim attacked with full vigor. Bankim's arguments from the historical record of Megasthenes are a case in point. He adduced evidence from it in support of his hypothesis that even Alexander was intimidated by the military valor of the Ganga-Rary elephant troops and was induced to turn back: 'Whether anyone believes or does not believe that Alexander ceased fighting through fear of the might and valor of the Bengalis, the

witness is Megasthenes himself. We are not producing some new witness we have coached.'[47] But when Albrecht Weber pointed out that the *Mahābhārata* could not have existed in the fourth century BC because Megasthenes made no mention of it, and Kṛṣṇa therefore was not a historical character, Bankim dismissed this remark as 'deliberate fraud' on the part of Weber, who knew that only fragments of Megasthenes' record had survived; moreover, it was fatuous to rely so heavily on Megasthenes, merely because he was European. With a brilliant reversal, characteristic of much of his work, Bankim disposed of Weber's objection: 'Many Hindus have travelled to Germany and have returned to write books about that country. We have not come across the name of Mr. Weber in any of their accounts. Shall we conclude then that Mr. Weber does not exist?'[48]

The defense of Hindu philosophy; the rejuvenation of India's martial traditions; giving Indians the knowledge of their true character, uncluttered by the fabrications of Muslim or British historians; bringing Indians to an awareness of themselves as Indians; the cultivation of a unitary nationalist consciousness: all of this was to be achieved primarily by reviving the sense of history, uncovering the historical past, digging into archives, and writing a new history. How had the 'Renaissance' come about in Bengal? 'Where did the nation get this sudden enlightenment?. . . Why did the light go out? Perhaps it was because of the advent of Mughal rule. . .' There was only one way to ascertain what had happened: 'Gather the evidence and find out all of these things.'[49] Yet, as he was to write elsewhere, 'Indians have no record of their exploits anywhere in writing. There is no chronicle of ancient India. Hence the military achievement of which they could take pride in has been lost.'[50] If chronicles had never been compiled, how was 'the evidence' to be gathered? No doubt written chronicles were not the only guide to the past: but surely the past could be created, invented, fabricated? What else had the Muslims and the British done? Encountering the Bengali in his present state of wretchedness, the British inferred that he had always been effeminate and cowardly; and the entire history of India had been constructed in a similar fashion. 'If a man is declared dead after having been beaten to death', Bankim's argument continues, 'the statement cannot be called a lie. But [he] who says that the Bengalis have always been of this character, that Bengalis were always weak, always cowardly, always effeminate, may lightning strike his head, his words are lies.'[51] The historical novel and the historical essay were Bankim's well-chosen forms to attempt the reconstruction of Indian history: the first allowed him the license to

fabricate history; and the essay in turn was his homage to the norms of rationality and objectivity, a medium for presenting 'evidence'.

Bankim never doubted that there is a relationship between historical awareness of the past and pride in one's own country and its accomplishments. Bankim would not have been one to agree with Alberuni's assessment of the Hindu as the most conceited of all peoples; rather, the Hindu was self-abnegating to such a degree that he never thought of leaving his mark on history. If one could not leave one's imprint on history, then of what use were historical records? In one remarkable passage Bankim explored this almost symbiotic link between a people's pride in its achievements and historical awareness, contrasting the attitudes of Indians and Englishmen in this respect:

> If the English go out to shoot birds, a history is written of the expedition. But Bengal has no history!. . . There is a specific reason why Indians have no history. Partly because of the environment, partly the fear of invaders, Indians are greatly devoted to their gods. . . . As a result of this way of thinking, Indians are extremely modest: They do not think themselves the subjects of their own actions; it is always the gods who act through them. It is this modesty of attitude and devotion to the gods which are the reasons for our people not writing their own history. The Europeans are extremely proud. They think that even when they yawn, the achievement should be recorded as a memorable deed in the annals of world history. Proud nations have an abundance of historical writing; we have none.[52]

The other-worldliness and fatalism of Hindu philosophy, on Bankim's view, engendered indifference to the collectivity that was the nation and to history as a guide to action; and once India ceased to have the historical recollection of its former greatness, and began to sing exclusively the praise of God, it became enervated. The vicious circle was not to be broken by standing by idly while the British wrote the history of India for Indians. 'When has the glory of any nation', asked Bankim, 'ever been proclaimed by another nation?' Whatever was known of Roman valor was known from Roman histories; the case for Muslim heroism rested on the records compiled by Muslim historians themselves. How could it be any different for the Hindus? Thus it was to the project of writing history, and thereby reviving an ancient land, that Bankim directed his vision; as he was to put it in a text where Bengal stood for India,

> Bengal must have her own history. Otherwise there is no hope for Bengal. Who is to write it? You have to write it. I have to write it. . . Anyone who is not a Bengali has to write it. . . It is not a task that can be done by one person alone; it is a task for all of us to do together.[53]

IV

The question of why a tradition of historiography did not exist in ancient and medieval India has been, as we have seen, something of a quandary for students of Indian civilization. Bankim's analysis of why Indians produced no historical records, and the significance he attached to history as a mode of knowledge and as an expression of political and cultural unity, constitutes one kind of response to this question. It is Bankim's view which has triumphed. But we have dwelled on Bankim so long because not only was he the most articulate spokesman for the view that historicizing above all leads to 'objective' knowledge, and that a nation is forged and its longevity ensured when its citizens think historically, but also because there is much in his reasoning that is markedly different from other nationalist views. Bankim, for instance, made no half-hearted attempt to argue that a historiographical tradition flourished in India before the advent of Muslim rule or that the climate was not conducive to the preservation of historical manuscripts. Neither can Bankim be made to speak for professional nationalist historians, if we may consider R.C. Majumdar their representative voice. While admitting that 'lack of historical writings is the weakest point in ancient Indian literature', Majumdar stated that 'advanced ideas of historiography were not altogether unknown in India'. The *Rājatarañgini*, a twelfth century chronicle of the kings of Kashmir by Kalhaṇa, a Kashmiri Brahmin, is mentioned in this vein by Majumdar and many others as an example of quite sophisticated historical literature. For Majumdar the problem was why the *Rājatarañgini*, which would 'do credit to a historian of the twentieth century', stood in such singular and sinister (or should we rather say splendid) isolation, for Kalhaṇa is 'the only historian that ancient India can boast of'. But was Kalhaṇa really an isolated phenomenon? Elsewhere Majumdar argued that 'the problem we have to solve is not the lack of historical writings, of which we have a fair number of specimens, but the absence of finished products like the *Rājatarañgini*.' Noting that Kalhaṇa had four illustrious successors who carried the history of Kashmir down to the reign of Akbar, Majumdar held out the hope that these works, having withstood the test of time, had 'not disappeared' and would one day resurface.[54]

Alongside Majumdar's attempts to argue for the presence of a tradition of historiography in Hindu India before the coming of the British must be placed the rather prodigious effort by nationalist historians over a period of fifty years, and well before them by Orientalist scholars, to have the epics, *purāṇas*, genealogical lists, and chronicles of kings accepted as historical works. The word for history in Sanskrit and the languages derived from it is *itihāsa* (iti-ha-asa, 'so it has been'). It is pointed out that the Indian's concern for *itihāsa* is manifest from the fact that the first explicit pronouncement on *itihāsa* can be found in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, which is dated to the period BC 321-296, but may be as much as three centuries later. According to Kauṭilya, 'the three *Vedas, Sama, Ṛg*, and *Yajus*, constitute the triple *Vedas*. These together with *Atharvaveda* and the *itihāsa-Veda* are (known as) the *Vedas*.'[55] The *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* likewise lists *itihāsa-Veda* among the scriptures to be read on the occasion of the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*). Kauṭilya also tells us what constitutes *itihāsa*: '*Purāṇa, itivṛtta* (history), *Akhyāyika* (tales), *udāharaṇa* (illustrative stories), *Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra* are (known by the name) *itihāsa*.' *Itivṛtta* means occurrence or event; the *purāṇas* are stories; *akhyāyika* is a prose composition, 'a connected story or narrative'; and the *Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra* denote the two classes of literature dealing with morals and material well-being, respectively. *Udāharaṇa* means both 'narration' and 'stories', as well as 'example', and it is probably the last meaning which is implied, if we consider the conventional reading of history as teaching by example.[56]

The comprehensiveness of the idea of history is further suggested by this well-known definition of *itihāsa*:

> *Dharmārthakāmamokṣaṇam upadeśa samanvitam*
> *Pūrvavṛtta kathāyuktam itihāsam pracakṣate*
> *Itihāsa* is the narration of the past arranged in the form of stories, and conveying instruction in *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa*, the four human values.[57]

And Jinasena, the author of the *Jaina Ādipurāṇa* (ninth century AD), speaking of *itihāsa*, which 'relates "what actually happened" ', and is 'a 'a very desirable subject', says that

> it is also called *itivṛtta, aitihya*, and *āmnāya* (authentic tradition). It is also described as *arṣa* for it was composed by the ṛṣis, *sūkta* for it instructs through good and pleasant discourses, and *Dharmaśāstra*, for it prescribes *dharma*.

If history is narrative, stories, anecdotes, 'what really happened', example, moral instruction, and discourses on morals, wealth, pleasure, desire, and salvation, then what is it not? Far from illustrating how *itihāsa* was privileged among forms of knowledge, or at least placed on an equal footing with the other forms of Vedic literature,[58] the very comprehensiveness of the definitions of history suggests that history was not conceived as a distinct branch of knowledge, encompassing as it did the study of man in relation to society and God and all the conceivable goals of life. There is no suggestion in the texts how the study of *itihāsa* is different from the study of philosophy (*darśana*), religion, law, or a work such as Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* itself, which falls within the domain of politics and 'economics', but surely is not history any more than is Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

If the conception of 'history' is itself so broad-minded, we may expect to find history in an equally large number of texts, and it is not surprising that the epics, hagiographies, the biographies of kings, genealogical lists, the *purāṇas*, and various other kinds of texts have been considered, if not something akin to history, quite ripe for the extraction of historical method and historical fact. So, for example, one historian writes that 'the accounts of dynasties and genealogies given in the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* and the heroic poems composed by the court poets of ancient India do contain elements of historical data', while another has argued that authors of the Sangam age 'were endowed with plenty of historical sense.'[59] The historicity of the Indian epics, as of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, must obviously lie in the fact that it is a later age looking back upon an earlier one, that the written text reflects an oral tradition of greater antiquity which supplied at least the kernel of the story. Almost any work from antiquity, especially an epic, can be mined for historical data, which however cannot substitute for historical explanation. None of the texts said to display the author's 'historical sense' reveal any understanding of causation in history; none demonstrate any familiarity with historical method and the 'rules' of evidence. Herodotus, in the opening paragraph of *The Histories*, set down his intention 'to preserve the memory of the past... and more particularly, to show how the two races came into conflict.' Greek and Chinese historical writings point, however minimally by the canons of modern historical scholarship,[60] to conscious human behaviour, to cause and effect, by way of explanation of how a society changes over time. The conception of causation found in the allegedly historical writings from India is of the kind to which even Gibbon on occasion subscribed, as for instance when, in explaining how an attack of gout

prevented Bajazet from marching into central Europe, he observed that 'an acrimonious humour falling on a single fibre of one man may prevent or suspend the miseries of nation.'[61] More often the accidental factor is assimilated to the moral aspect—a kingdom prospers if the king is virtuous and pious; and if he rules the country according to his whim, if he is wicked and irresponsible, he suffers defeat in battles and his kingdom declines. There is also widespread in Indian writings the element of the 'supernatural': because the king is unjust and disrespectful to the gods, they do not come to his assistance; but if he is properly a suppliant and god-fearing, they assist him in his battle against evil. It is by the grace of the gods that the world moves; and it because of them that evil is either combated or perpetuated. But with this we are not any closer to a causal explanation of human behaviour.

James Mill, whose views of the literature of the Hindus are nothing short of absurd, was however justly contemptuous of attempts to describe the epics or indeed anything else in Sanskrit literature as tantamount to 'historical records'.[62] From this judgment Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarañgini* cannot be exempted, if we consider that one monarch is said to have reigned for 300 years, and that the conquest of Ceylon is attributed to the god Varuṇa, who provided a passage to the Kashmirian troops by turning the sea into land.[63] While the *Rājatarañgini* is more reliable in its genealogy and chronology than other chronicles, it is not essentially different from other chronicles or from the *purāṇas*. Since the *purāṇas* have been made to shoulder so much of the burden of establishing the presence of a historiographical tradition in Hindu India, it would be useful to recall that of the five topics of which any *purāṇa* is constituted—*sarga* (creation of the universe); *pratisarga* (dissolution and recreation of the universe); *vaṁśa* (divine genealogies); *manvantara* (the ages of Manu); and *vaṁśānucarita* (genealogies of kings)—only the last could be said to have any historical content. Although, as Burton Stein observed in 1969, 'the consensus among scholars' who have used the *purāṇas* and other classes of literature with genealogical lists 'is that the useful genealogical information is frequently buried in myth and hopeless exaggeration', the *purāṇas* continue to be mentioned as works embodying 'historical consciousness' even by such well-known historians of ancient India as Romila Thapar.

The *vaṁśānucarita* is described by Thapar as the 'historical epicentre of the *itihāsa* tradition'. She argues that 'the genealogical core pertaining to those who were believed to have held power in the past' was carefully preserved because it 'purported to record the past' and would be used to adjudge the authenticity of 'future claims to lineage status'. This is

the 'first phase' in the unfolding of Indian history; here 'historical consciousness was embedded and recorded the perception of the ordering lineages.' In the second phase, which begins in the second half of the first millennium AD, north India began to witness the evolution of the state and its gradual assertion to supremacy. There was 'a need for a recognizable historical tradition at this time': there were new claimants to power, not just the monarchs, but also landowners and clan chiefs vested with revenue rights who had to prove their status whenever necessary. That the historical tradition which was preserved had some teeth to it would appear to be demonstrated by the fact that though many ruling families had their claims to power conceded, their *varṇa* status, which the historical tradition could not authenticate, was denied to them. Ruling families which could not establish 'kinship links with earlier established lineages' continued to be called *vṛtyakṣatriyas* (degenerate). Thapar also shows that Stein's thesis, which seeks to ground the lack of a historiographical tradition in the need to hide the lower class origins of many of the ruling houses in India before the coming of the Muslims, is without foundation: 'The gradual increase in references to *śūdra* rulers would indicate that political power, although in theory restricted to *kṣatriyas*, was in fact open to any *varṇa*.'[64] That ruling families were often of lower social origins was not an unknown fact and, more often than not, this fact could not be hidden. Conspiracies make for good spy thrillers; they are even a delight to the state seeking a warrant to oppress; they rarely make for good history.

Thapar has suggested that the emergence of the state, and the concentration of power in it, produces a need for historical writing. As the state grows, such functions as counting and categorizing come into their own, and similarly the state acquires the paraphernalia of historical writing and scholarship. Here we have a variation of the familiar argument, though Romila Thapar is scarcely an advocate of the nation-state, that unity of some kind is a prerequisite of historical awareness; and history thus becomes a record of the growth and activities of the nation-state. It is not enough that such unity be the unity of a common culture: it must be embodied in a political entity which gives everyone within its geographical ambit a common identity. Where there is identity, there is also difference: and from the interchange of the two emerges historical awareness. The backdrop to Herodotus is the feeling of the Greeks against the Persians, just as what animates Thucydides is the Athenians' sense of how irreducibly different they are from the Spartans. Did Indians ever experience the feeling of being different from other people, say the Chinese? Well, perhaps not; but almost all historians are

agreed, whatever they may think about Indians' feeling of themselves as Indians, that regional identities were strong throughout India's history, as they continue to be today. Bankim with great anguish asked: 'Bengalis, Panjabis, Telugus, Maharashtrians, Rajputs, Jaths, Hindus, Muslims—in all of this, who would be united with whom?'[65] If all these groups and countless others knew themselves only in their difference from others, why did not this situation give birth to multiple historiographical traditions?

But Thapar is not willing to settle for the tendentious argument that in ancient and medieval times India was never one and that Indians never knew themselves as Indians. Both the North and the South fell under Mauryan rule; 'Hindi institutions spread over dominant groups all over India'; and it is 'from this period', she has written elsewhere, that 'a political and social conception of India as a whole came into existence.'[66] Here too the question naturally recurs: if there is, as Thapar herself would argue, a natural connection between the evolution of the state and historical consciousness, or between a people coming into the fullness of their being and the emergence of historical literature, then why do we not have histories from that time? And why must we accept the reduction of history into genealogy, for is that not what we are being offered? More significantly, if historical awareness originates through the forging of a common identity, and the suppression of other identities, might it not be too much of a price to pay? Might it not be better to stay outside of history? To bring Indians into history, does not Thapar, or for that matter anyone else, have to accept the epistemological primacy of the discourse that the British established for India? This discourse dictated that Indians would be brought into history, and gifted with a history, by their imperial masters. The Indian historian like the nationalist is once again compelled to stake a position on the terrain established by the scholar-administrator, the Orientalist and the Imperialist. Thapar is caught in this dilemma: she wishes to affirm the historicity of Indians, but knows she can do so only on the Orientalists' terms, by accepting some such dictum as 'India only became One after the British imposed unity on the subcontinent'.

What, then, are the substantive differences between James Mill and Surendranath Banerjea, or between Bankim Chandra and Romila Thapar or Burton Stein? To set forth in starkly plain terms the nature of the debate, and the questions that are at issue, we have to only contrast these statements from two professional historians of the Indian subcontinent:

> It used to be said that Ancient India produced little or no historical literature. It was even suggested that the ancient Indians lacked the 'historical sense' possessed by other peoples: that they were too religious to be interested in such worldly matters. We need not trouble ourselves overmuch with the analysis of such superficial misconceptions [1961].[67]

> To say that we had no historic sense would be to court disgrace. But we did lack that sense. I am ashamed to say that we lack that sense today [1962].[68]

Historians have differed over the question of what constitutes a historiographical tradition and what kind of literature can be considered historical. There has been disagreement over whether such a tradition ever existed in India: those who have replied in the affirmative have repaired to some text or the other in justification of their position; others who have been scornful of the proposition have adduced reasons of varying sophistication to account for India's allegedly glaring deficiency in this respect. But nowhere has the value of history been doubted; nowhere has anyone disputed history's claim to be a universally acceptable category of knowledge. It is not doubted that to be anyone one must be in history. Either one is in history or one is doomed to extinction, stripped of ontological existence. Where for idealist philosophy being has nothing to do with history, now being cannot be conceived without history. What does the sound and fury signify?

V

'History may be servitude, History may be freedom.' These lines, from Elliot's *Four Quartets*, are apposite; and they would surely have met with Bankim's approval. Bankim wanted to turn history into an agent of liberation. Much like Benedetto Croce and the Cambridge historian J.B. Bury a few decades later,[69] Bankim subscribed to the idea that history was the story of man's progress and increasingly consummatory love-affair with liberty. Macaulay's own *History of England* was nothing other than the history of English liberty under the law, for without law, as Macaulay and his contemporaries were predisposed to accept, there is neither liberty nor history. India, a lawless country, subject only to the law of the despot (which is no law), quite 'empty of law' as the Law Member, Sir Henry Sumner Maine, once put it, was also without history.

From the standpoint of Bankim, India too had to fall within the ambit of history as the history of liberty, although here, as elsewhere,

Hindu philosophy no doubt presented formidable obstacles. Where the Western conception of evolution sees man moving towards a greater good and an increasingly perfect state of existence, from original sin to its final redemption, Hindu thought postulates that the current age is the one most devoid of good. The first age, the *satya yuga*, is characterized by unadulterated truth; in the following two *yugas, treta* and *dwāpara*, truth and goodness decrease in progressively greater amounts; and, finally, in the present age of *kali*, falsehood (*asatya*) and wickedness predominate. History cannot then be considered as the ascent of man but rather his continuing degeneration. The Hindu schema of four progressively deteriorating ages may well be dismissed as a mythical construct with no historical reality and with even less call upon the attention of the historian, but that would be to ignore the pivotal place of mythic constructions in the unfolding of history. The reversal effected by Hindu thought, the characterization of evolution as the progression from authenticity to inauthenticity, is for example unequivocally articulated in the Indian grammatical tradition. 'The chief criterion of validity in the classical Paṇīan tradition', the linguist Mahadev Deshpande has written, 'is that every explanation must be in consonance with Patañjali's great commentary, the *Mahābhāṣya.*' Where there is a difference of opinion between classical authorities, the classical Sanskrit grammarians attached a higher value to the views of Patañjali (first century BC) than to the views of his great predecessors, Kātyāyana (third century BC) and Paṇīni (fifth century BC) himself. But what is truly significant is that where Paṇīni recorded dialectical variations and distinguished between those which were real and those which were optional, Patañjali and the rest of the post-Pāṇīnian grammatical tradition declared all dialectical forms to be pure options, and postulated instead 'the doctrine of eternality of language': linguistic usage was 'thought to be eternal and without beginning.' 'What has happened to "history" in this case?', asks Deshpande. 'Historical fact was victimized at the altar of formal consistency.'[70] The same notion of authority is reflected in the *Dharmaśāstra* literature and in the philosophical system of Mimāṃsā.

This linguistic eternalism, Deshpande contends, must be understood 'in the context of the historical situation of the Mauryan era', when Brahminical culture was attempting to reassert its dominance in the face of threats from Buddhism, Jainism, and other non-Vedic and anti-Vedic movements. Brahminical culture and Sanskrit as they then existed were held to have been extant in the same form since the beginning of time: history did not exist. According to Deshpande, the problem of

'existence' was separated from the problem of 'attestation'. That some forms occurred in a particular text while others did not was thus a matter of accident; only 'eternal existence was the fact.' The Sanskrit grammatical tradition, then, embodies a certain conception of history.[71] Do we have a theory of knowledge which refuses to recognize the existence of history?

The theory that there is no history in a real sense was, to follow Deshpande's reasoning, articulated at a time of great change. Brahminical society was burdened with the task of countering various heterodoxies, but it was also 'facing the trauma of the Greek invasion' of India by Alexander. But of this purportedly traumatic event there is almost no mention in Indian literature, and it is to Western historians, beginning with Arrian and Plutarch, that we must turn for a description of this encounter—an encounter that was, no doubt, multicultural! English historians, in particular, would much later describe Alexander's invasion as an event of monumental significance, a watershed in Indian history. Could Alexander's invasion have been such a 'trauma' for Brahminical culture if the Indian tradition could not be bothered to record even the mere presence of a world conqueror? But it may well be argued that it is precisely because Alexander's incursion into India initiated such a massive rupture in Brahminical society that its representatives and custodians failed to give it even a passing mention. History would purposefully be ignored much as dialectical variations had been ignored.

The question of change—and permanence—assumed a great share in Western and later nationalist explanations of why Indians were without a historical sense and failed to produce a tradition of historical inquiry. The view of India as a static society, with which the figures of Montesquieu, Hegel, Marx, and numerous others, not to mention the scholar-administrators who governed India, are associated is too well-known to require more than a cursory mention. 'Absolute Being is presented here [in India] as in the ecstatic state of a dreaming condition'; and the inhabitants of India, added Hegel, could not wake up from the 'magic somnabulic sleep' into which they had fallen.[72] Marx, in turn, thought India was characterized by an 'undignified, stagnatory and vegetative life'. His verdict on Indian history was that such a thing didn't exist:

> Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society.[73]

In India nothing much happened: invaders came and left, empires were toppled and installed, the arbitrariness of one monarch was replaced and matched by that of another: and underneath this all life in the village communities of which India was composed continued as ever, unchanging, unmoving, oblivious of the passing of time. 'Vegetating in the teeth of time', the natives witnessed, without so much as the blink of an eye, the 'ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, and the massacre of the population of large towns.[74] Change was only illusory, the veneer at the surface: permanence alone was permanent. Where there was no change, what would be there to record? And from whence would spring history?

No explanation that seeks to account for India's lack of a historiographical tradition has had so many adherents than the one which equates history with change. Allied to this cosmic view of unchanging India is the commonly held opinion that Hindu civilization is marked by unworldliness. Where the business of the individual is enhancing his chances of personal salvation, and where the individual is preoccupied with discovering the presence of God within himself or offering devotion to Him to the exclusion of understanding his relationship with his fellow men, a common unity cannot be forged. History is the collective memory of a people, of their common struggle for the achievement of the good, and such history cannot transpire when each man leads an other-worldly life, strangely uninterested in the profane world. The Indologists' India, moreover, reflects the principle of immutability, which is not conducive to historical inquiry, even at the level of interpersonal relationships. It is not just Indian society as a whole which does not show much movement; individuals too stay in their places within a determined and unalterable social order: and so history becomes well-nigh impossible. India's geographical isolation, and her immunity from change, must on the Orientalist view be considered the prime reason why a historiographical tradition was not developed in India before the advent of Islam.

Although the presence in India of Muslim works of history from the period 1000 AD is commonly known, the import of this development is perhaps less clear than it should be. In the period before the coming of the Muslims, not only the cultural unity of India, but perhaps the very survival of its people, was based on a purposeful forgetfulness. In what manner would the people of India have lived with the burden of the knowledge that their country had repeatedly been subjected to the rule of foreigners? Modern man thinks of history as an aid to living in the

present, but to the Indian history has the contrary effect of not enabling one to live in the present. Each civilization must find its way to eliminating the suffering that is born of existential dilemmas, of decay from within, and of oppression from without; and the latter was best achieved by a *wilful amnesia*.

The first significant dent in the wilful amnesia of an entire civilization appeared with the establishment of the Islamic faith on Indian soil. The incursions into India by the Muslims followed that of the Sakas, the Pahlavas, the Kuṣāṇas, and the Huns, but the Muslims unlike their predecessors brought with them a strong monotheistic faith. Among the great continuing world civilizations, the sense of history has been most evident in those characterized by a monotheistic faith and a strong proselytizing tendency. The most notable exception here would be China, which in the figure of Ssu-ma-chien produced a great historian as early as the first century BC, but lacks a mythology as rich and diverse as that of India. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all monotheistic faiths, have been marked by an acute sense of history, and unlike Hinduism these are proselytizing faiths, though the Hinduism of some Hindus has now begun to acquire their characteristics. Where redemption is only possible through the acceptance of the Chosen One, the Savior, and the rejection both of polytheism and of the possibility of redemption through other avenues, the writing of history must become an imperative task. History records the triumph of that faith, its spread through vast spaces over a period of time, and the acceptance by the conquered peoples of the personal savior as the redeemer of mankind. There is, for each of these faiths, only one possible history; and the eschatology is not the redemption of man by the Savior but rather his redemption by history. Does not history, and the development of a historiographical tradition, have a natural association with the notion of a personal savior and with proselytism? Stated less strongly, the argument suggests only that monotheistic faiths almost certainly have resorted to the idioms of historical thought and writing, while Hinduism has been indifferent, if not hostile, to the historical enterprise.

The acceptance of history is nothing but the narrowing of man's options, the submission of a people to the reigning ideas of the time, and the renunciation of multiple eschatologies for the exceedingly dubious benefit of being part of the global destiny of the human race. It is not that 'history may be servitude': history is servitude: and it is this view, which has found its greatest exponent in Gandhi—the real one, not his unpropitiously named namesakes, bent on bringing India into the orbit of world history—which must principally account for why

Hindu civilization chose not to produce a historiographical tradition. As the epistemological clarity of this position is best seen in the writings of Gandhi, and in the style of thinking and mode of action associated with his name, we shall turn to him to explore the meaning of this profound indifference to history, and the possibilities of constructing a theory of knowledge which allows little or no epistemological space to historical knowledge, historical writing, or even historical consciousness.

VI

For much the same reasons that Bankim was willing to accept history as a guide to action, Gandhi was not. Bankim's interest in history, the historical sense and historical evidence, was derived partly from a desire to demonstrate that the past of India, and particularly of his native Bengal, was one of martial traditions and military prowess. His historical novels set out to establish that the various invaders of India, far from being allowed to inter and pillage the country without contest, were given battle at every turn. But Indians, when at all they had any knowledge of the past, gained that understanding from the accounts of Europeans, for whom non-resistance and cowardice characterized the response of Indians to alien invasions, to the mere threat of violence. As Robert Orme, the first British historian of India, put in 1782: if a European sailor 'brandishes his stick in sport, [he] puts fifty Indians to flight in a moment'.[75] Indians had thus been induced to believe that violent resistance formed no part of their past.

Gandhi, on the other hand, displayed a rather more complex and ambivalent attitude to the question of whether violence had constituted a part of the people's response to oppression and injustice, whether inflicted by invaders or indigenous rulers. In Gandhi's Gujarat, various traditional forms of resistance, such as *hartal* (boycott), *hijrat* (migration), and *dharna* (sit-in; fasting; literally, being an 'obstacle'), were still being employed in the nineteenth century.[76] In his treatise of 1909, *Hind Swaraj*, cast in the form of a dialogue between the skeptic ('the reader') and Gandhi ('the editor'), Gandhi showed his awareness that 'passive resistance' had for a very long time been offered by the people to seek redressal of their grievances or to protest against the unjust rule of monarchs.[77] When asked by the imaginary reader whether there was 'any historical evidence as to the success of . . . soul-force or truth-force', Gandhi replied that if history meant 'the doings of kings and emperors', then 'no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance was [to be found] in such history.' If history, he added, had the meaning—'it so

happened'—given to the word in Gujarati (and other Indian languages), then 'copious evidence' could be supplied.[78] However, later, when he had the experience of many years of satyagraha in India behind him, Gandhi was to describe many of the methods of passive resistance which he had earlier condoned as a form of *duragraha* (the grasping on to falsehood) and coercion which was not any less a form of coercion on account of being non-violent. Whatever may have been the forms of resistance in the past, Gandhi knew only too well that his attempt to apply non-violence on a mass scale in India's fight for freedom and thereby to induce the social transformation of Indian society was altogether unprecedented. History could be no guide to action in the present; indeed, the very idea that battle had to be given to the opponent non-violently required that history be ignored, or else the burden of the past would have been so overpowering as to render futile the enterprise at the very moment of conception. Gandhi rejected the notion, widespread even today, that there are 'lessons' to be learned from history. Perhaps the only lesson was that history itself had to be unlearned.

As history had serviced imperialism, so it could be wielded as an ideological weapon by nationalism. The study of history by Hindu nationalists and historians predictably began in earnest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when nationalism was first emerging in force. The study of history received its first impetus from nationalist sentiment. Gandhi's rejection of the nationalist use of history is once again seen best by way of contrast with the historicism of Bankim. To Bankim's mind there was no doubt, as we have seen, that Kṛṣṇa was a real, historical figure, and the *Mahābhārata* a text with a historical core. The vast majority of Indian nationalists, and virtually all of the most important Hindu leaders with the exception of Gandhi, were of one mind with Bankim on this question. The mammoth interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* by Bankim's renowned contemporary, Tilak, can be adduced as evidence of this tendency; and neither is it surprising that the *Gītā*, wherein Kṛṣṇa induces Arjuna to accept the creed of the Aryan warrior, was the favoured text of Indian 'terrorists' or 'extremists'.[79] Gandhi, however, was just as firmly indisposed towards treating the *Mahābhārata* as a historical record and accepting the historicity of Kṛṣṇa. 'The *Mahābhārata*', he wrote in 1924, 'is not to me a historical record. It is hopeless as a history. But it deals with eternal verities in an allegorical fashion.'[80] The original core of the *Mahābhārata* was just as allegorical as the accretions; there was nothing historical about it. Gandhi developed his interpretation of the *Mahābhārata* as an allegory, and of the war between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas as the fight

within the soul between the forces of darkness and the forces of good, in an extended commentary on the *Gītā*.[81] As for the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata*, there was not enough knowledge to warrant the conclusion that he 'ever lived'. 'My Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do with any historical person', affirmed Gandhi.[82] His secretary and close personal associate, Mahadev Desai, describing Gandhi's attitude towards the *Gītā*, was certain that 'no textual discovery' would 'affect by a jot the essence or universality of that message. The same thing may be said about questions of the historical Kṛṣṇa'.[83] Thus Gandhi distanced himself from interpretations of the *Mahābhārata* which sought to establish its historicity and resuscitate Kṛṣṇa as a historical figure who not only urged Arjuna to use his arms but was also not above using some chicanery to defeat the forces of evil.

Gandhi would have considered the resort to history as another facet of the attempt of educated Indians, and particularly of the modernizing and urbanized elite which constituted a vanguard, to enter into a race with the West. He saw very clearly how the program to rewrite history, to turn Kṛṣṇa into a historical figure and depict the *Bhagavad Gītā* as a historical record of Kṛṣṇa's teachings to Arjuna, had a hard, even cold-blooded, edge to it, a natural link with realpolitik and an exaggerated masculinity. Gandhi alone among Indian nationalists and thinkers recognized not merely that women have been evicted from history, but also that history has been a masculinist enterprise, and that history produces no notable truths about humanity, but rather *man's* truth.[84] Is it surprising that Veer Savarkar, a noted Hindu chauvinist who was suspected of having master-minded the conspiracy to murder Gandhi, first made his presence as a nationalist known by rewriting the history of the so-called 'Sepoy Mutiny' of 1857, terming it instead 'The First War of Indian Independence'? The assassin of Gandhi, a history buff who understood Gandhi better than all those who dubbed him 'mad', felt compelled to extinguish the life of Gandhi because the old man, by introducing such fads as 'fasting' and obedience to the 'inner voice' into politics, was emasculating the nation; moreover, Gandhi's creed and policy of non-violence was an affront to history, which in 'a thousand years' had never been prey to a 'more stupendous fiction' than that fostered by Gandhi when he led Indians and the world to believe that non-violence was anything other than 'suicidal'.[85]

Whereas the nationalists chose to exploit history for their own ends, Gandhi shunned it altogether: what was corrupt at the source was irredeemable. Almost nowhere else did he reveal himself to be so characteristically Indian. In terms both epistemological and practical at

once, the implication of this rejection of history was the abandonment of the notion that history has 'lessons' to offer to human beings and of the idea of progress, or at least progress as it was conceived by the Enlightenment thinkers. History as it was practiced when Gandhi was writing was still mainly political history, the history of kings and of the wars which they periodically fought, the history of cities sacked and rebuilt only to be sacked again. This no doubt deepened Gandhi's indifference to history. But how could doing history one way rather than another way, when the very idea was oppressive, have made a difference? Would the advent of social and cultural history, the explosion of women's history and the history of other marginalized and oppressed people,[86] and the quest (following Foucault) for the archaeologies of knowledge, have made history more palatable to Gandhi? History with a capital 'H' has enough detractors, and they have almost entirely wound up on the side of history with a small 'h'. This would be, if one had to furnish an analogy, tantamount to settling for sexism, so that we tolerate insults to women, innuendoes about their conduct, and insipid jokes about their 'nature', so long as we are agreed that we cannot abide by Sexism, or the more flagrant forms of oppression which women have suffered at the hands of men, including exposure to sexual assault and their forcible relegation to domestic tasks. And we must also ask apropos of these new developments in history: do they suggest that whatever may have been the reasons which induced Indians to forgo the creation of a historiographical tradition, such reasons do not exist any more? If history once oppressed, does it now liberate?

Gandhi would have welcomed the sentiments behind recent developments in historiography and the good intentions of their proponents. In his own way Gandhi tried to bring women into the public arena and into political life. He decried the use of history to propagate a hyper-masculinity; indeed, he consciously strove in the other direction of feminizing Indian politics, as the introduction of both fasting and spinning, which came to acquire a complex web of meanings, into politics amply demonstrates.[87] Women were 'out of history'; but was Gandhi seeking, as are modern feminists, to write them back into history? Similarly he set up the untouchables and the lower castes against the higher. But it was not Gandhi's intent in challenging the authority of Brahminism that equality should come about by everyone being treated as a Brahmin: true equality would obtain when every Indian felt himself or herself to be an untouchable. The political parity he sought to win for Indians 'was not done in the name of restructuring traditions but in the name of strengthening Indianness, Hinduism or

dharma, all of which are supposedly collectivist-hierarchical in spirit.'[88] But where there is something almost profoundly ahistorical about how Gandhi set out to restructure Indian society and yet strengthen Hinduism and the *sanatāna-dharma* (the eternal religion), the project of Bankim, Tilak, and others in achieving precisely the same ends entailed the glorification of the hyper-masculinity, the imitation of the West, and the fabrication of history.

We began with the query as to why India lacked a tradition of historical inquiry. In concluding with Gandhi it is not meant to be suggested that there is a linear history to this ahistoricism at the end of which stands the Absolute Spirit, reincarnated not as Hegel but as Gandhi the Prophet. The past can be read from many objects; there can be many kinds of 'texts'. But it must be candidly admitted that the past of India cannot be read from historical records. A tradition of historiography has not existed in India until very recent times, and did not exist for very good and compelling reasons. The growth of such a tradition is not necessarily a propitious development, and we have only to look at the revival of history in its crudest forms among the advocates of the Rama Janmabhoomi movement to understand how the aspiration to be possessed of a history has now entered the public domain and wrought havoc.[89] Gandhi has been summoned as an instance of why we should believe that the absence of historical inquiry suggests an acute presence of mind and why this lack, an allegedly grave fault, must be revalorized and turned to advantage. If it is claimed that universal history has given way to local and particular histories, that claim provides no relief when we consider that the discourse of history has become the universal discourse of our times.

Science has been hegemonic for the last four hundred years. The triumph of the scientific world-viewpoint heralded the triumph of the West. Science was never without its detractors, but Europe suppressed its own traditions of dissent, and now, in the twentieth century, some considerable chinks in the armor of science have begun to appear within the dominant traditions of European intellectual inquiry. Science is even being described as a myth; and by others science and all that it denotes has been relegated to the backwaters. The race around the entire non-Western world to catch up with the scientific West does not nearly have the unanimous appeal it once did, but perhaps this race matters less today then it did even a few decades ago, when modernization theory prevailed, and the West, despite the anti-colonial struggles, could only be emulated for its achievements. Instead we are now witnesses

to the universal enshrinement of history. Is there an educational system where history is not part of the curriculum, and is there a country where history textbooks are not the subject of acute debate and unrest? No sooner is a people faulted or pitied for having no history, for not having been part of history, than one of them set out to write that glorious history of his or her people. Is there a people that does not want a history?

This is, if we are to believe the pronouncements of French pundits who have been generating their own brand of ahistoricism, the age of 'late capitalism', and the civilization of the West is now largely 'post-modern' and 'post-industrial'. What is transnational is not so much the leviathan corporation which pays scant respect to history and to the nation-state but history itself. Science never achieved the conquests which history is now positioned to accomplish. History is the new dogmatism; and as a dogma, as well as a mode of conquest, it is more unremitting and total than science, which has had its detractors from the very beginning. What better instance of the totalizing tendency of history do we have than the manner in which Gandhi, who dismissed history to the periphery of human knowledge, has in turn been dismissed by history as an anachronism to the periphery of human knowledge? If Indian intellectual and cultural traditions, of which Gandhi was supremely emblematic, present something of an anomaly, that appears to be perfectly apposite for a civilization that has chosen to burn, not bury, its dead. To use the historian's jargon, the only 'lesson' history has to offer is that as the Indian tradition did without this historical sense, so might we. In a world where the most radical theories are sold on the market, and revolutions are managed by financiers and corporate executives, the abandonment of history may well be the only heresy that remains to us, for that defiance is nothing other than the defiance of the categories of knowledge which have become the most effective and insidious means of oppressing humankind today.

* This paper was written and completed in the summer of 1988; certain portions of it have now been revised, though I have seen no reason to change the more substantive parts of the argument. I have allowed a great deal to stand even where the style conflicts with my present disposition, or where I would have perhaps stated the argument differently, and even where some of my own writings appear to me to supersede some of the formulations here, so long as the trajectory of thought remains clear. This paper has been kept alive by the enthusiasm of numerous friends, and I am particularly grateful to Ashis Nandy for his continued interest in this paper over the last seven years; he has extended some of my arguments in his keynote address at the Conference on World History at Wesleyan University, 25-26

March 1994, now forthcoming in *History and Theory* (1995) as 'History's Forgotten Doubles'. I have a companion piece to this paper, entitled 'The Discourse of History and the Crisis at Ayodhya: Reflections on the Production of Knowledge, Freedom, and the Future of India', *Emergences*, nos. 5-6 (1993-94), pp. 4-44.

A word of explanation is required for my use of the word 'history' in this paper. By that term I seek to designate, least of all, 'what happened', or the record supplied to us of the past. By history I mean historical writing and historical thinking, and thereby also a certain method of investigation, and the discipline of history as it is known in the academy; history also suggests a narrative mode, and the *via media* for certain forms of philosophical investigation encapsulated under the notion of 'systematic philosophies of history.' By history I also mean the historical sensibility, the ability to reason historically, and to ground one's arguments in a historical sociology; and, lastly, history designates an awareness of the past, an awareness of time—and of its conjunction with space—and what is popularly termed 'historical consciousness'. In this paper, 'history' designates most of all historical writing, historical thinking, historical consciousness, in short the historical sensibility.

Notes and References

1. See Gautam Chattopadhyay, ed., *Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century* (Selected Documents), Vol. 1, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 1965, pp. iv-lix.
2. Rev. Kṛṣṇa Mohun Banerjea, 'Discourse on the Nature and Importance of Historical Studies', in *Selection of Discourses Delivered at the Meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1840, reprinted in Chattopadhyay, *Awakening in Bengal*, pp. 1-23; see esp. pp. 4, 7-8, 22-3.
3. For details about Alberuni's life, see Sir H.M. Elliot, *The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period*, ed. (and continued) by John Dowson, 8 vols., reprint ed., Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, n.d., 2:1-13.
4. Edward C. Sachau, trans. and ed., *Alberuni's India*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1888; reprint ed., S. Chand & Co., Delhi, 1964, 2 vols. in 1, 2:10-11. The translation of Sir H.M. Elliot, working from a French version which he compared with the Arabic text, appears to be less adequate: 'The Indians attach little importance to the sequence of events, and neglect to record the dates of the reigns of their kings. When they are embarrassed, they are silent.' See Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, 2:10.
5. Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. li and x, p. 442, cited by James Mill, *History of British India*, ed. with notes by Horace Hayman Wilson, 10 volumes, 5th ed., James Madden, London, 1858, 2:48 n. 2. John Malcolm, in his *History of Persia*, 1:273, wrote of the ancient Persians that he had never heard of any work by them 'in the ancient Pehlavi that could be deemed historical.' See James Mill, ibid., 2:49.
6. See Mill, *History of British India*, 2:47-48.
7. Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Original Preface by Sir Henry Elliot, pp. xviii-xxi.
8. Mill, *History of British India*, 2:47.
9. Ibid., 1:114-5. Mill cited, among others, one Captain Wilford: 'The mythology of the Hindus is often inconsistent and contradictory, and the same tale is related

many different ways. Their physiology, astronomy, and history, are involved in allegories and enigmas, which cannot but seem extravagant and ridiculous...', 'Discourse on Egypt and the Nile', *Asiatic Researches* III.29. Another of Mill's 'authorities' was Major Rennel, a naval officer who served as a major in Clive's army, and went on to become Surveyor General of the East India Company Territories of Bengal: 'There is no known history of Hindoostan (that rests on the foundation of Hindu materials or records) extant, before the period of the Muhammedan conquests', *Rennel's Memoir*, Introduction, p. xl. Similarly Scott Waring, whom Mill described as an 'Oriental scholar of some eminence', said of 'Hindu mythology and history' that they appear to be buried in impenetrable darkness, see Mill, *History of British India*, 1:116 n. 2 and p. 117 n. 1. H.H. Wilson, in his notes to the fifth edition of Mill's history, made a brave and well-intentioned but, as I shall argue later, fruitless and misdirected, attempt to counter Mill's assertions about the poverty of Hindu literature, whether historical or otherwise. James Mill and H.H. Wilson represent the two faces of Orientalism, and as Ronald Inden has so aptly remarked, romantics like Wilson constituted a 'loyal opposition' to positivists like Mill. See Inden, *Imagining India*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, pp. 41-48.

Captain Wilford's allegation that among the Hindus 'the same tale is related many different ways' is striking. It is extraordinary that 'the Hindus' should have had to defend themselves against such a charge. The supposition that there is only one way of telling a tale is one that only 'Enlightenment' Europe was capable of harboring. It is this hyper-rationality that induced, within European thinking and action alike, a singularity of purpose that, on the one hand, led to European colonialism and a display of self-aggrandizement such as had never been witnessed before, and on the other hand to a conception of knowledge that had no room for plurality of opinions, or for a plurality of modes of apprehending the world. After Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, no one can insist that there must be one way of telling a tale, and it is just as clear that the decentring of narratives, which one can accept as the principal contribution of post-modernism, is also one of the central strategies deployed in Indian texts. But this is a matter that I cannot take up here.

10. Mill, *History of British India*, 2:51; Thomas B. Macaulay, 'Minute on Indian Education', *Selected Writings*, ed. John Clive, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980, p. 243 (para 13).
11. Macaulay, *Selected Writings*, pp. 242-3.
12. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989, pp. 100-101.
13. Inden, *Imagining India*, p. 45.
14. Mill, *History of British India*, 2:46.
15. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
16. It is not my claim here that Thucydides, and much less Herodotus, were 'historians' in the sense in which that might be understood today. Even from the standpoint of a Mill, there was too much of 'myth' in the writings of these Greeks, and indeed Herodotus was full of fanciful and absurd notions, but no one would have been willing to allow that Herodotus and Thucydides were *not* historians. The problems of claiming the Greeks as their true intellectual ancestors, as the fount of their civilization, is one that Europeans have scarcely addressed, and the emotional and intellectual disruptions that this enterprise would create are not such that Europeans are equipped to handle with equipoise.

17. Louis B. Wright, 'The Elizabethan Middle-Class Taste for History,' *The Journal of Modern History* 3, no. 2, June 1931, pp. 175, 179.
18. Ibid., p. 177, citing Barnabe Rich, *Allarme to England* (1578).
19. Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London*, 1st ed., 1667; 4th ed., J. Knapton, J. Walthoe, etc., London, 1734. See also Richard Foster Jones, 'Science and English Prose Style in the Third Quarter of the Seventeenth Century', *PMLA 45* (1930):977-1009, esp. p. 1002.
20. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1983, pp. 48-49.
21. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage Books, New York, 1973, pp. 367-73.
22. For an exhaustive study of the institutionalization of history, see Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians, and Archaeologists in Victorian Britain, 1838-1886* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.
23. Cited by Christina Crosby, *The Ends of History: Victorians and the 'Woman Question'*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991, p. 4.
24. Quoted in Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 183.
25. S.N. Banerjea, 'The Study of Indian History', *Speeches of S.N. Banerjea, 1876-1880* (n. p.; n.d.), pp. 2-3
26. Ibid.
27. See comment by K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri et al, 'Historiography: India and the West', *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* [hereafter *BITC*], Part 1 Madras, 1962, p. 299.
28. *Alberuni's India*, ed. Sachau, p. 18.
29. Mountstuart Elphinstone, *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Peshwa* [1821], excerpted in George W. Forrest, ed., *Selections from the Minutes and Other Official Writings of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone*, Governor of Bombay, London, 1884, p. 260.
30. J. Talboys Wheeler, *The History of India from the Earliest Ages*, Trubner, London, 1869; reprint ed., Cosmo Publications, Delhi, 1922, p. 6, cited by Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p. 125.
31. John B. Gilchrist, 'Preface', *A Dictionary of English and Hindoostanee*, part I, Calcutta, 1786; part II, 1790, p. xxvi, cited by Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', *Subaltern Studies* IV, ed. Ranajit Guha, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985, p. 302. Gilchrist was of the opinion that Sanskrit was a 'cunning fabrication' of the 'insidious Brahmans', an artificial language derived from 'Hinduwee', see Cohn, pp. 304-5.
32. Burton Stein, 'Early Indian Historiography: A Conspiracy Hypothesis', *Indian Economic and Social History Review 6* (1969): 41-60, esp. pp. 48-51. But cf. Romila Thapar, 'Society and Historical Consciousness: The *Itihasa-Purāṇa* Tradition', in Romila Thapar and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, eds., *Situating Indian History—for S. Gopal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, pp. 353-83, esp. pp. 366-67.
33. Although undoubtedly the transmission of knowledge from a guru to a male student was a purely Brahminical affair, our understanding of this very process hinges upon the definition of a 'Brahmin'. There is no reason to suppose, as Stein does so, that a 'Brahmin' signifies membership in a *jati* or *gotra* of ritually pure birth. The story of Satyakāma [seeker of truth] in the *Chandogya Upaniṣad* (IV. 4) is illustrative in this respect. Seeking to live the life of a student of sacred knowledge, Satyakāma asked his mother of what family he was descended. She replied that she begot him in her youth when she 'went about a great deal serving as a maid', and did not know who had fathered him. When Satyakāma came before Haridrumata Gautama and asked to be admitted as his student, he was queried about his family, whereupon Satyakāma relayed the exact words spoken to him by his mother. The guru accepted Satyakāma as his student, for he had not deviated from the truth, and no non-Brahmin (*a-brahmana*) would have done the same. There are other famous instances of Hindus of low social origins and even non-Hindus such as Kabir being accepted as students of sacred knowledge. The point is that a Brahmin was a Brahmin not by virtue of birth but by his steadfast devotion to truth and the purity of his character. But by and large it is true, if the Dharmaśāstras be our witness, that the injunction against the Śūdras learning, reciting, and hearing the Vedas was very strong. Manu said that the Brahmin who explained the sacred law to the Śūdra would, along with the latter, sink into hell, *The Laws of Manu*, IV. 80; cf. III. 156ff; and Śūdras would gain merit if they 'imitate[d] the practice of virtuous men without reciting sacred texts' (X. 127; translation of G. Buhler). The cultural politics of staking the definition of Brahminhood on conduct and behaviour is scarcely unproblematic; from one standpoint, it is more oppressive than the conventional and circumscribed meaning of 'Brahmin', which restricts this appellation to persons of certain birth, for on the more generous reading every person of good moral conduct must perforce be a Brahmin. This would, needless to say, not be acceptable to certain sections of Indian society, such as the Dalits or others harbouring anti-Brahminical sentiments.
34. Stein, 'Early Indian Historiography', pp. 41, 58-59.
35. Ibid., pp. 55-56, and David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835*, University of California Press, Berkeley,1969, p. 275.
36. Comment of N. Subramaniam, in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri *et al*, 'Historiography: India and the West', *BITC*, pp. 266-67.
37. See T.W. Clark, 'Bengali Prose Fiction Up to Bankimcandra', in T.W. Clark, ed., *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1970, p. 65; and Vera Novikova, *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay: His Life and Works*, trans. Nishitesh Banerjee, National Publishers, Calcutta,1976, p. 169.
38. I might note here that a number of words appear in two or more forms: within a quotation, the word is reproduced from the original without any alterations, but my own usage of that word may reflect the more common or modern transliteration.
39. Bankim Chatterjee, *Durgesa Nandini* or *The Chieftain's Daughter* (1880), trans. Charu Chandra Mookerjee, 2nd ed., The Classic Press, Calcutta, 1903, pp. 15-16. 'Yavanas' may be translated as 'foreigners' or 'barbarians'.
40. 'Bharatvarsa Paradhin Kena?' *Bankim Racnābalī* [henceforth BR], ed. Yogesh Chandra Bagal, vol. 2, Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta, 1965, p. 239.
41. 'Saṅkhyadarśan', *BR* II:222-26, cited by Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, Zed Books, London, 1986, pp. 56-7.
42. Bankim, 'Bharatvarsa Paradhin Kena?', *BR* II:239.
43. Ibid., p. 240.
44. *Idem, Dharmatattva, BR* II.
45. *Anandamath*, translated as *The Abbey of Bliss* by Nares Chandra Sengupta, Padmini Mohan Neogi, Calcutta, 1904, p. 97.
46. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 59.

47. 'Pracar', *BR* II:334, cited by Rachel R. van Meter, 'Bankimcandra's View of the Role of Bengal in Indian Civilization', in *Bengal Regional Identity*, ed. David Kopf, Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, Lansing, Michigan, 1969, p. 62.
48. *Kṛṣṇacaritra*, *BR* II:411, cited by Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 60.
49. 'Bangalar itihās sambandhe kayekti katha' ('A Few Words Concerning the History of Bengal'), *BR* II:339, cited by Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 79.
50. Quoted in V. Novikova, *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay*, p. 91.
51. *Pracar*, *BR* II:333, cited by Van Meter, see note 46 at p. 69.
52. 'Bangalar itihās sambandhe kayekti kathā', *BR* II:330, cited by Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, p. 82 n. 9.
53. Cited by Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth-Century Agenda and Its Implications*, S.G. Deuskar Lectures on Indian History, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Calcutta, 1988, p. 1.
54. See R.C. Majumdar, *Historiography in Modern India*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1970, p. 5; 'Ideas of History in Sanskrit Literature', in C.H. Philips, ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, Oxford University Press, London, esp. pp. 27-28; and *Seminar*, no. 39 (1962), p. 15.
55. Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra*, trans. R. Shamasastry, 8th edition, Mysore Printing and Publishing House, Mysore, 1967, p. 6; the subsequent quote is from pp. 9-10.
56. See V.S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 4th rev. and enlg. ed., Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, v. *itivṛtta and itihāsa* (p. 245), *ākhyāyika* (p. 202), *udāharaṇa* (pp. 269-70).
57. Ibid., v. '*itihāsa*', p. 245; the translation into English is by Chidambara Kulkarni, *Studies in Indian History*, Shri Dvaipayana Trust, Bombay, n.d., p.3.
58. This is the view of R.C. Majumdar, 'Ideas of History' (note 55), p. 13 and Buddha Prakash, 'The Hindu Philosophy of History', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16, no. 4, October 1955, 495.
59. F.E. Pargiter, *The Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, cited in *BITC*, see note 28, p. 258; and comment by one Mr. Sanjivi, in *BITC*, p. 294.
60. Even 'Thucydides, whose value as an historian no one has as yet questioned, has been accused by F.M. Cornford in *Thucydides Mythistoricus* of having no clear conception of causation. See E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, Vintage Books, New York, 1961, p. 114.
61. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Ch. lxiv, cited by Carr, *What is History?*, p. 128.
62. James Mill, *History of British India*, 2:48-49: 'An inclination at first appeared among the warm admirers of Sanskrit to regard the poems *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, as a sort or historical records. A more intimate acquaintance with those grotesque productions has demonstrated the impossibility of reconciling them with the order of human affairs...'
63. R.S. Pandit, trans., *The Rājatarañgini*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1953; reprint ed., 1968, Book III, verses 470 and 171.
64. All quotations in this paragraph are from Romila Thapar, 'Society and Historical Consciousness' (see note 33), pp. 365-67.
65. 'Bangadarśan', *BR* II:240, cited by Van Meter, see note 48 at p. 69.
66. R. Thapar in *Seminar* (1962), no. 39.
67. A.K. Warder, in Philips, *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (see note 55), p. 44.
68. K.K. Pillay, in *BITC* (see note 28), p. 289.

69. Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty* [1938], George Allen & Unwin, London, 1941; J.B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Growth and Origin* [1932], Dover Books, New York, 1955.
70. Madhav Deshpande, 'History, Change and Permanence: A Classical Indian Perspective', *Contributions to South Asian Studies* I, ed. Gopal Kṛṣṇa, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979, pp. 6-8; the last line is quoted from Siddheshwar Varma, 'Scientific and Technical Presentation as Reflected in the *Mahābhaṣya* of Patañjali', *Vishveshvarananda Indological Journal* 1, no. 1 (1966).
71. Deshpande, 'History, Change and Permanence', pp. 8-9.
72. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, reprint ed., Dover, New York, 1956, pp. 139-40.
73. Marx, 'The British Rule in India', in *The First Indian War of Independence 1857-1859*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, n.d., p. 20 and, in the same volume, 'Further Results of British Rule in India', pp. 32-38.
74. Marx, 'The British Rule in India', in ibid., pp. 15-22.
75. Robert Orme, 'Effeminacy of the Inhabitants of Indostan', *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire...*, F. Wingrave, London, 1805; reprint ed., Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, p. 299.
76. Cf. Howard Spodek, 'On the Origins of Gandhi's Political Methodology: The Heritage of Kathiawad and Gujarat', *Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (Feb. 1971):361-72.
77. M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, reprint ed., Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962, p. 83. Gandhi himself rendered satyagraha as 'passive resistance', but later, realizing that the English phrase did not do the word justice, that there was nothing passive about non-violent resistance, he used the phrase 'non-violent resistance' and, more often, the word satyagraha itself to describe his method, teachings, and movement.
78. *Hind Swaraj*, p. 77.
79. There is no systematic treatment of the place of the *Gītā* in nationalist writings; a small beginnings, however, has been made in Dilip Bose, *Bhagavad-Gita and Our National Movement*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1981.
80. 'My Jail Experiences—XI', *Young India*, 4 Sept. 1924, reprinted in Raghavan Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 1, *Civilization, Politics and Religion*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 183.
81. See Iyer, ibid., 1:77-100; Mahadev Desai, *The Gītā According to Gandhi*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1946; and M.K. Gandhi, *Discourses on the Gītā*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1960.
82. 'Sikhism', *Young India*, 1 October 1925, reprinted in Iyer, ibid., 1:484-85.
83. Desai, *The Gītā According to Gandhi*, p. 6.
84. Christina Crosby has addressed the intricate ties between the Victorian passion for history and the interest in the 'woman question' in *The Ends of History: Victorians and 'The Woman Question'*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991.
85. Tapan Ghosh, *The Gandhi Murder Trial*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1976, see especially pp. 15, 212-36. Godse's speech in his defense, which took over five hours to deliver, was proscribed by the Government of India. The text is now available: see Gopal Godse, *May It Please Your Honor: Statement of Nathuram Godse*, Vitasta Prakashan, Poona, 1977. The literature on the assassination, which has been growing rapidly over the years, is in the main devoted to enumerating the details of the conspiracy to murder Gandhi. Ghosh's sensitive study is an exception in this regard; more exceptional still is Ashis Nandy's article, 'The Final Encounter:

The Politics of the Assassination of Gandhi', in *At the Edge of Psychology: Essay in Politics and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, chapter 4.

86. For some of the current trends in history, and a brief account of the significant developments—such as women's history, subaltern history, microhistory, and post-modern histories—over the last twenty years, see the succinct monograph by Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*, Routledge, London, 1992. From the standpoint of Indian history, the most arresting development has been the emergence of 'subaltern history'. Numerous secondary accounts of this phenomenon exist, but I have not felt it necessary to address some of the issues raised by subaltern history in this paper. Critiques of subaltern history from orthodox Marxist, feminist, and even post-modern positions, while not without interest, nonetheless share in the enthusiasm for 'history', and the study of history even among its theorists is unfortunately characterized by a fatuous belief in the emancipatory possibilities of what is called 'radical' history. For the most recent intervention in these debates, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of *Subaltern Studies*', *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 14 (8 April 1995): 751-59. I have written a critical account of subaltern studies in 'Walking with the Subalterns, Riding with the Academy: The Curious Ascendancy of the Indian Historian', unpublished manuscript, 1994.
87. On the question of fasting and the feminization of politics, see Vinay Lal, 'Gandhi's Last Fast', *Gandhi Marg 11*, no. 2 (July-September 1989):171-91.
88. Ashis Nandy, 'From Outside the Imperium: Gandhi's Cultural Critique of the "West"', *Alternatives* 3, no. 2 (June 1981):184. The same paper, in a revised version, appears in Ashis Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, pp. 127-62.
89. For an extended discussion, see Vinay Lal, 'The Discourse of History and the Crisis at Ayodhya: Reflections on the Production of Knowledge, Freedom, and the Future of India', in *Emergences*, nos. 5-6 (1993-94), pp. 4-44. As I argue, this predilection towards history is common to secularists and Hindu revivalists. See also Gyanendra Pandey, 'Modes of History Writing: New Hindu History of Ayodhya', *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 25 (18 June 1994): 1523-28. Pandey fails to reflect, however, on how it is that the 'new Hindu history' was able to come into place and gain the assent of many Hindus. Though he recognizes that the discourse of the Rama Janmabhoomi movement is postulated on ascribing a divine importance to Ayodhya (and in particular the contested spot) as the supposed birth-place of Rama, he does not take into consideration the epistemological and political consequences of staking a claim on the notion of 'place' rather than 'space'. It was the function of colonial discourse to collapse the notion of 'place' into the notion of 'space', and the renewed emphasis on 'place' constitutes a discursive challenge to the notion of 'space', though—as in the case of the Rama Janmabhoomi movement—this particular ascendancy of the notion of 'place' is hardly desirable. There are other similar problems in Pandey's paper: Thus Hindutva discourse is described as exemplifying a nationalist 'excess', as seen in the fixation on numbers and statistics, on grotesque figures as in the '1,74,000 Hindu lives' said to have been sacrificed before the supposed temple was brought down by Mir Baqi. Pandey appears to have no better strategy than to imply that such narratives are quite unbelievable; and though they may well be unbelievable, the question is whether such numbers are to be taken seriously, and if so, the only way to take them is to consider them as reflective of some 'real' conditions. If

kings can be described in the purāṇas as ruling for 600 years, or there can be 330 million gods and goddesses, or if the Kauravas can be described as being one hundred in number, is this also the 'excess' of 'nationalist' narratives? What kind of interpretive strategy is required to understand the cultural logic of such 'excess'?

Historiography of Indian Civilization: Harappans, Dravidians Aryans and Gandhi's Freedom Struggle

SURESH CHANDRA

Seri Lingampally, Hyderabad

In order to understand our remote past we are required to understand our present limitations. The data that is given to us for constructing or reconstructing the ancient Indian Civilization is completely distorted. The responsibility for distorting this data goes to the academic industry of the West. Our minds have been blocked. In the present situation one has to do some detective work. In spite of his best ability, the plunderer leaves some clues which may lead us to our plundered goods. Finding those clues may be difficult but not an impossible task. In order to get our plundered goods back, to get our past heritage back, we are required to do some detective work. We have to find out all those clues which may lead us to our plundered property. Only then there is a possibility for us to get our property back. The colonial rulers have plundered our past heritage, and we have to get that heritage back from them. This article is the result of my detective work. I have checked and re-checked the data obtained from the academic industry of the West. An attempt in this article has been made to get our past heritage back from the hands of the Western plunderers. Plundering of our past heritage started as soon as the Europeans entered into India.

Historical steps which the European countries took in capturing India and the other Afro-Asian countries were very fast. So were fast their earlier steps for discovering the new lands and suppressing, if required then exterminating, the original inhabitants of those lands. Science and machine helped the Europeans in enslaving the whole world. All this is common knowledge about the deeds or misdeeds of the Europeans. What is not so commonly known is the attempt on the part of the European countries to give birth to creatures on Afro-Asian soil, looking like human beings but mentally crippled. Industrial

revolution also activated the academic industry of the west to generate ideas which were meant for paralysing the mind of Afro-Asian people towards their own cultural heritage, towards their own religion, civic life and political system etc. Their cultural identity and unity was totally broken. Transition from their free past to their colonized present was made to appear as if they had descended from some kind of hell to the heaven. Political slavery was followed by mental slavery. The latter kind of slavery is far more dangerous than the former. Even if the former is withdrawn the latter continues. European scholars started generating myths of two kind, one kind was meant for distorting the history of the subject countries and the other for highlighting the glorious past of Europe. These myths were provided with historical garb. Philosophical backing was given to the crafty products of the historiographers. Thus, philosophical achievements of Europe have to be studied in the light of their history and historical achievements in the light of their philosophy. Philosophy and history are twins. Not only the present of Europe is great, their past was not inferior to their present. First man might have taken his birth in some part of Asia or Africa or in the land of the red Indians. But the first 'historical man' could not have taken his birth anywhere else except in some part of Europe. Thus, expounding the myth of the historical man the German historian, Herder, tells us that among the races of the world, the European race is one 'whose life instead of remaining static grows into higher and higher forms.'[1] Historical life is the product of the natural environment of Europe:

> The favoured centre in which this historical life arises is Europe, owing to its geographical and climatic peculiarities; so that in Europe alone human life is genuinely historical, whereas in China or India or among the natives of America there is no true historical progress but only a static and unchanging civilization or a series of changes in which old forms of life are replaced by new forms without that steady cumulative development which is the peculiarity of historical progress.[2]

If Herder is right then it is quite wrong to think that it is only the *accident* of science and machine that has made European countries superior to the Afro-Asian countries. Nature created Europe for the birth of a superior race. Afro-Asian countries were geographically and climatically unfit to give birth to a noble race, a race which may be fit for spreading culture and civilization to the rest of the world. Of course, it is possible that nature evolved science and machine in Europe in order to satisfy its own design of keeping the European race safe against the possible

invasions of barbarians from Afro-Asian countries. Afro-Asian countries are capable of producing only barbarians who believe in all kinds of gods and spirits. Their life is dominated by magic and superstition and as a consequence they suffer from all kinds of diseases, hunger and famine. Though the European historians and philosophers have rejected Herder, his views have been accepted in practice. Herder's views have gone deep into the psyche of the European scholars.

Consider the case of Indus civilization in the light of Herder's views about the historical progress of man. Did Indus evolve a static civilization? When did it originate? How was it destroyed? Once it is decided that the earliest civilization that came to occupy its place on the globe of the world is Sumerian, then it does not require any historical intelligence to infer that the Indus civilization took its birth later than the Sumerian civilization. And so far as the destruction of the Indus civilization is concerned, it has to be adjusted with the myth of the Aryan invasion of India. Historians of Europe, followed by a whole regiment of Indian scholars, have made the Aryan invasion of India responsible for the destruction of Indus civilization. The myth of 'Aryan invasion of India' is more powerful than the myth of the 'historical man'. The former myth has been presented in a more guarded fashion than the latter myth. Whatever be the reasons for the destruction of Indus civilization, it was certainly not a static civilization. Its historical progress can be judged by the fact that the Harappan inscriptions in considerable quantity were found in Mesopotamia which was the seat of Sumerian civilization. The discovery of Harappan inscriptions in Sumer has led Toynbee to infer, not only that there was a trade relationship between the two civilizations but also that the Sumerian civilization was responsible for the genesis of Indus civilization. As he remarks, 'If the influence of the Sumerian civilization radiated itself south-eastwards, by the sea, as well as north-westwards overland, the possibility that Indus civilization may have been brought to birth by cultural stimulus from Sumer cannot be ruled out.'[3] This is justified on the ground that the 'seals, engraved with inscriptions in the Indus script have been found in an archaeological stratum that is older than Sargonid dynasty.'[4]

Toynbee has remained contended with such phrases as 'radiation from Sumer' and 'cultural stimulus from Sumer'. He has not gone to the extent of saying that there was 'an invasion from Sumer'. Sumerians did not invade the Indus basin. Had they invaded the Indus basin, they would have left the marks of their invasion. They would have at least left their inscriptions. But the Sumerian script is so very different from the Indus script. Indus script could not be deciphered, and this is the only

script found in the Indus basin. Sumerian as well as the Egyptian scripts have been deciphered. Does not it show that the Indus script is more primitive than the scripts of Sumer and Egypt? Does not it also show that the Indus civilization is more primitive than the Sumerian and the Egyptian civilizations? Then how is the Sumerian or the Egyptian civilization prior to the Indus civilization? However, Toynbee, following the lead of his senior European historians, fixes the date for the Indus civilization 'as early as 2500 BC'[5] In fixing this date Toynbee has been very economical. For the Indus inscriptions were found in a strata which is pre-Sargonid, and 'Sargon reigned from c. 2371 to 2316.'[6] The capital of Sargon was Agade whereas the inscriptions of Indus were found in the city of Ur, which was the capital of the city-state of Ur. Only the prosperous cities attract fortune hunters of all kinds, be they business men, artists, artisans or searching for ordinary jobs and ordinary engagements. Indus people would have come to Ur only when the city of Ur was prosperous. But the city of Ur was prosperous only when it was the capital of the city-state of Ur. This means that the Indus inscriptions entered into Sumer when Sumer was divided into different city-states. They are not only pre-Sargonid, they are also pre-Lugalzaggisi. Lugalzaggisi attempted for the first time to unify Sumer but his power was taken away by the Akkadian Sargon who founded the city of Agade and made it his capital. Does not all this mean that the Indus inscriptions found their way into Sumer when civilization was at its first stage in Sumer, when the unification of Sumer did not begin, when there was a dynastic rule in the independent city-state of Ur. Toynbee is certainly not ignorant of all this, yet he does not wish to clarify the situation.

A civilization to grow takes time. Harappan civilization was no exception. By 2500 BC, if not earlier, Harappans made so much progress as to leave their imprint on Sumer where a civilization was at its childhood state. Before the Harappans travelled from the Indus basin to the Tigris-Euphrates valley, they were well-settled and established people in the Indus basin. If not the earliest civilization of the world, Indus civilization is as old as the Sumerian, and if the Indus cities Harappa and Mohenjo-daro are not older than Ur and Lagash then they belong to the same age. Since the Indus script has not yet been deciphered we do not know whether Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were independent city-states, whether like the Tigris-Euphrates valley the Indus valley too started its civilization with the emergence of independent city-states? The only bond they had was the bond of culture, including language and script. Indus certainly did not have independent city-states, and if there were any such states that stage might have come and gone.

Emergence of city-states leads to inter-state wars as was the case in Sumer till the emergence of empire builders Lugalzaggisi and Sargon. Inter-state wars do not allow states to think in term of going beyond their states, going to distant lands and establishing relationships with the people of the outer world. Indus was at peace with itself, therefore its people could establish contact with the outside world. If the Indus had business contacts with the Sumerians, as the European scholars think, then Sumer was a sleeping partner. Transition of business from Indus to Sumer was in the hands of the Indus people, they were free from the inter-state wars of Sumer. How long the Indus people remained in contact with the Sumerians cannot be known. As Toynbee points out 'the earliest of these strata concerning Indus seals are pre-Sargonid, but the terminal date for the presence of the Indus seals in Sumer and Akkad is uncertain.'[7] Terminal date depended on the decline of civilization in the Indus basin. Toynbee explains the decline of Indus civilization by a few remarks on the nature of Indus language:

> the language conveyed in the so far undeciphered script is not primary Sanskrit, since the invaders who brought this Indo-European language into the Indian subcontinent did not arrive there till at least a thousand years later than 2500 BC. But we do not know whether the language of the Indus civilization's inscriptions was a member of the Dravidian family, which preceded primary Sanskrit in the subcontinent, or whether it was a language of the Austro-Asiatic family, which seems to have been an earlier arrival in the subcontinent than either primary Sanskrit or the Dravidian languages.[8]

Toynbee does not seem to be so much concerned about the Indus script as about the invaders of India. A time came when India was invaded by the speakers of the language of Austro-Asiatic family, then the speakers of the Dravidian language and in the last the speakers of the primary Sanskrit which was the language of the Indo-Europeans. 'The Indo-European languages' according to Toynbee, 'have originated somewhere in eastern Europe, on the fringe of the Eurasian steppe.'[9] Thus the last invaders of India during its ancient days were Europeans. So were the Europeans, the British, the last invaders of India in our own time. Therefore, the European rule over India in our own time carries no novelty. We were ruled by the Europeans from our ancient days.

Toynbee has given expression to the latest-revised-view of the European historians. Was not Herder right that the 'historical man' can take birth only in the geographic and climatic conditions of Europe? 'An Aryan' is an historical man. Therefore, neither he nor his language

can take birth outside Europe. Some beginners in the historiography of civilizations, though Europeans, mistakenly thought that the Aryans, their Sanskrit language and their horses came from Central Asia. Their views require correction. Correcting their views Burrow writes about the original home of the Indo-European languages:

> In the early days it was usually held that this lay in Central Asia, and that from there successive waves of emigration had carried the various members of the family to Europe. . . . There is not the slightest trace of evidence or probability that the ancestors of Germans, Celts, Greeks and other European members were ever near this area. Consequently it is now usually held that the original home lay somewhere in Europe.[10]

Thus it is for the convenience of the Europeans, i.e., Germans, Celts, Greeks and their other neighbours that Burrow has shifted the original home of the Indo-European languages from Central Asia to Europe. The distance between Central Asia and Europe was too great. Of course the Central Asia as the home of the Indo-Europeans was also the invention of the European mind. Now they have rejected that invention. Now the new invention is that the Indo-European languages, one and all of them, took their birth in east Europe, and Sanskrit is one of the Indo-European languages. History unfolds itself according to the wishes of the Europeans. At one time they wished that the Central Asia be considered as the original home of the Aryans. Now Central Asia has been converted into a kind of halting station for the Aryan migrants. The original home lies in east Europe. Everything remains unchanged except the discovery of a new route from east Europe to Central Asia. Since the stage is primitive time, it would not be difficult to find a new route. The present day obstructions for travel were missing.

The concept of the 'original homeland of Aryans' has become a fluid concept. What is the guarantee that tomorrow a new original homeland of Aryans is not discovered, and discovered by the Europeans themselves? Consider the case of Ireland. May be tomorrow some Irish scholar feels like making Ireland as the original home of the Aryans. What he requires is simply the invention of a route to east Europe. Once he reaches east Europe his migrants would destroy the sea-boats and would halt there for a few hundred years before starting for the second halting station, Central Asia. Since the shift of the original homeland is only from east Europe to the north of Europe he may have support from the European historians as Toynbee has come out to support Burrow's view. Indian support for the Irish homeland of the Aryans is guaranteed.

They have already come out in support of the hypothetical Irish scholar. According to a reputed Indian historian 'it will not be a small surprise' to those who hale from Ireland 'that the name of their dearly loved native country is the same as that which the ancestors of the Hindus assigned to their own land. Ireland is no other than an English version of the Indian *Āryadeśa* or Aryaland.'[11] Thus a new myth could be introduced that the Aryans from Ireland invaded India and destroyed the Harappan civilization and later demolished the Dravidians. Indians have already prepared themselves to receive and propagate this myth.

For several reasons the European historians have not come out with the hypothesis that the Sumerians were the first invaders of the Indus basin, Austro-Asiatics followed them. If the quantum of Indus inscriptions found in the city of Ur had matched the quantum of Sumerian inscriptions in any city of the Indus basin, then there was a possibility for an European historiographer to come out with the thesis that the first invaders of Indus were the Sumerians and not the Austro-Asiatics or the Dravidians or the Aryans from Europe. Not only the Sumerians, there was a possibility for the Romans to have initiated the invasion of India. According to Toynbee, 'The Indus civilization's architecture, both public and domestic, gives the impression of being the work of a utilitarian-minded society. The water supply, drainage system, baths, and quays are of an Imperial Roman and indeed almost Modern Western standards.'[12] But unfortunately there existed no Imperial Rome around 2500 BC. And the Modern Western world had its roots in the Imperial Roman world.

The possibility that the Indus people might have migrated to, if not invaded, Mesopotamia and to the territories which later became Greco-Roman settlements, has never been contemplated by the European historians. The contemplation of such a possibility would deprive the myth of the Aryan invasion of India its special flavour. (Aryans were required to demolish dirty looking Dravidians, only then it was expected that the racial wars in India would start. Have not the European historians succeeded in their mission?) But the exodus of the Indus people to foreign lands explains why the Indus civilization disappeared from the Indus basin. Its town planners, its seamen, its husbandsmen, its artists and artisans etc., might have migrated to the outside would. Of course not all the Indus people moved to Sumer, some of them might have branched off towards the territories which later emerged as the Greco-Roman settlements. The people who branched off were later responsible for the emergence of Roman art and architecture. They carried their

art from Harappa to what later emerged as the Roman world. They were responsible for the Imperial glory of Rome.

Exodus of the Indus people to Mesopotamia, or even their movement for business purposes to the new world, explodes the myth that the original home of the Aryans and their Sanskrit language was in Europe. So also it explodes the myth that the Dravidians came from a place out of India. Neither the Aryans came from Europe nor the Dravidians were inhabitants of any foreign land. Dravidians and Aryans were as much Indian as the Indus people. Harappans occupied the Indus basin, Aryans Punjab, and the Dravidians, the Central India. So far no historian from Europe has succeeded in distorting the history of the Aryans and Dravidians, and their respective languages. They have succeeded only in distorting their *pre-history*. Aryans composed *Rgveda* in India in the setting of Punjab. Sanskrit language passed through its oral stage to the evolution of its own script. Maturity of the Sanskrit script was the achievement of Indians. What the Indians did not achieve was giving birth to the Aryan race, to the primary Sanskrit and to the horses and iron weapons. All of them originated outside India. Similarly, the Dravidian language and script developed in India, its classical works were produced in India. Only the primary Dravidian speakers were not Indians, they came to India from foreign soils. Therefore, what is required is to study the Aryan and Dravidian pre-historical records. As has already been pointed out that the Indus script appears as the most primitive script of the world, hence also the most primitive script of India. Indus were pioneers in the art of establishing civilization. But at the last stages of their civilization they might have become purely businessmen and might have developed the character of a trading community. They might have lost their character as warriors. Therefore, though they had business contacts with Sumerians, they could not establish any kingdoms in Mesopotamia or its neighbourhood. That job was left to the newly emerging peoples of India.

The Dravidians and Aryans, who were evolved later in India than the Harappans, differed with their predecessor in one marked way. They were more spirited people, they were empire builders, they were interested in kingdom-making. When the Dravidians moved from the Central to the South of India they started establishing kingdoms. Similar phenomenon can be observed with the Aryans. When they moved from Punjab to Bengal they established kingdoms on the way. The art of kingdom making was carried by the Dravidians and the Aryans when they started their invasions of the foreign lands. The first migrants from India, the Harappans, opened the routes for Dravidians and Aryans to

invade foreign lands and to establish kingdoms in those lands. Harappan paintings of the sea-boats have led historians to imagine that the Harappans used sea-route to Mesopotamia. They travelled by sea from the Indus basin to the Tigris-Euphrates valley. But the Harappans also used carts with wheels and animals yoked to them. A large number of these carts with different models have been discovered. This is a good evidence for showing that the Harappans might have used land-routes to reach Mesopotamia. Their caravans might have travelled from the Indus to the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Before reaching the Tigris-Euphrates valley these caravans passed through the vast territory of Elam which is in the immediate neighbourhood of Sumer. Elam is to the east of Sumer. It is like an arrow indicating that if one wishes to go to Sumer one should take the westward route, and if the wish is to go to the Indus basin then one should follow the eastward course. Though later than the Sumerian and the Harappan civilizations, Elam evolved a civilization of its own. The question is who established this civilization. The credit cannot be given to Sumerians. So also it cannot be given to the Harappans. Elamite language was different from the Sumerian, and so also it has no similarity with the Harappans. Referring to the Elamite civilization Toynbee writes, 'To the east of Sumer, the alluvium deposited by the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates is adjoined by a smaller alluvial deposit of the Rivers Karkhah, Diz, and Karun, and here, in Elam, a civilization had arisen which can also be classified as a satellite of the Sumero-Akkadian civilization or alternatively as a veritable province of it. Like the Egyptians, the Elamites had created a script of their own.'[13] But if the language and script of the Elamites were different from those of the Sumerians, then like the Egyptians, the Elamites created a different civilization from that of Sumer. Since the Elamite civilization was in the neighbourhood of the Sumerian civilization, Toynbee is led to think that Elam was a satellite of Sumer or one of its provinces. This is not wholly true.

Elam is important, most important civilization, in the context of the ancient Indian history. Harappans passed through Elam for reaching Ur and other cities of the Sumero-Akkadian hold. But they seem to have left no special mark on Elam or Sumer except their inscriptions in the Sumero-Akkadian world. However, the Dravidians followed them and created a new history. Toynbee accepts that a stage in history reached when the Dravidians occupied the Indus basin. This is proved by the fact that 'a language of the Dravidian family, Brahui, was still current in parts of Baluchistan in the twentieth century AD.'[14] But the Dravidians who occupied the Indus basin by driving away the Harappans from the

Indus basin were coming from the side of the Central India where they were originally evolved. From Central India some of them branched off to the South of India where in due course they established Dravid kingdoms. But some of them moved towards the Indus basin. In all probability they were responsible for the exodus of Harappans to Mesopotamia and other parts of the outside world. But the Dravidians did not sit silently after occupying the Indus basin. They followed the Harappans, they started a sort of chase. Harappans were a kind of advance party, they were exploring lands which were later to be occupied by the Dravidians. Harappans certainly passed through Elam, but were not in a position to settle down there. Their destiny was Tigris-Euphrates valley which could provide them with jobs. However, following the trail of the Harappans, the Dravidians reached Elam, and settled down there and started a civilization, the Dravidian civilization. The Elamite civilization was Dravidian civilization, therefore it was so very different from both the civilizations, Sumerian and Harappan. The Dravidians brought their own language and script from India. Therefore, it is no surprise that there exist linguistic parallel between 'Dravidian and Elamite'.[15] How inconsistent are the European historians? Linguistic similarities between Brahui and the Dravidian languages made them to infer that the Dravidians occupied the Indus basin. But the linguistic similarities between the Dravidian and the Elamite languages have not made them to say that the Dravidians occupied Elam. But whether the European historians accept or not, there is all probability that Elam was occupied by the Dravidians and the Kingdom of Elam was established by them. And they reached Elam by following the trail of Harappans. The trail might have passed through Baluchistan where the Dravidians left their imprint.

The Dravidians were not satisfied merely by establishing themselves at Elam. Perhaps the Sumero-Akkadian empire at one stage in history subjugated Elam, therefore Elamites decided to bring an end to that empire. Dravidians were quite unlike the peaceful Harappans; they were interested in establishing kingdoms. Around 2006 BC the Dravidians destroyed the city of Ur and ultimately destroyed the whole of Sumero-Akkadian empire, and created their place also inside that huge empire. As Toynbee writes, 'The third dynasty of Ur was overthrown by a revolt of its Elamite subjects. The city of Ur was sacked by them—a catastrophe from which Ur never recovered—and the empire was partitioned among a number of contending local successor-states. Elam not only recovered its independence; it imposed an Elamite dynasty on the Sumerian city-state Larsa.'[16] Dravidians introduced such a spirit of

independence in Elam that even Hammurabi (ruled 1792–1750 BC) failed to bring Elam under his empire. Hammurabi was the greatest empire builder of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. He created one empire out of Sumer, Akkad and Babylon. But he failed to destroy the independence of Elam. Elam remained an independent force to be counted till the Assyrian conqueror Asshurbanipal destroyed it in between '646 and 639 BC.'[17] Success of the Dravidian rule in Elam can be understood by the fact that the Dravidian or Elamite language was 'adopted in the last millennium BC as one of the official languages of the First Persian Empire.'[18] The fact that the Persian Empire gave national recognition to Elam shows that Asshurbanipal could only destroy 'the Kingdom of Elam, not the Elamite nation.'[19]

When the Dravidians were preparing Elam to attack Sumero-Akkadian stronghold Ur, their brothers in the Indus basin might have lost their home. In all probability by 2000 BC Aryans from Punjab occupied the whole of the Indus basin. Those who could not go to Elam might have gone back to Central India from where they came. History seems to have been moving very fast in the Indian subcontinent. It was faster in the Indus basin, the place where the first Indian civilization took its birth. Original inhabitants of Indus might have started their migration to the outside world around 2500 BC. Their migration might have been completed by about 2300 BC when the Dravidians started knocking at their door. Dravidians could not stay in the Indus basin for a longer time. However, though they lost the Indus basin they gained their foothold in Elam. Their defeat at home was compensated by their creation of a new home. The Aryans occupied Indus basin only after they created their language, i.e. Sanskrit. When they composed *Rgveda* their language was only at the oral stage. It is only after the composition of *Rgveda* that they thought of exploring the new world. Most of the European historians accept that *Rgveda* was composed in Punjab where five rivers flow. Indus basin where the Indus civilization took its birth is in the immediate neighbourhood of Punjab.

While in Punjab the Aryans might not have heard about the foreign exploits of Harappans and the Dravidians. But once they occupied the Indus basin they could not have remained ignorant of those exploits. The Aryans were not advancing towards the Indus basin from a different planet; they were simply advancing from one part of the Indian subcontinent to the other. The foreign exploits of the Harappans and the Dravidians might have induced in them a desire to conquer foreign lands. It is also not necessary that the Aryans were of a different racial stock from the Harappans and the Dravidians. Linguistic differences do

not necessarily imply racial differences. A race can be multilingual. So also many races may have only one language in common. Of course the maturity of civilization in the Indian subcontinent might have led Aryans to become technically more advanced than their ancestors, the Dravidians and the Harappans. It is quite possible that before the Aryans started their foreign conquests, they domesticated the ancestor of the animal that we know by the name of horse. If a skeleton of that animal is presented to us we would refuse to call it a horse. As Toynbee describes the originally domesticated horse 'the original domesticated horse was a punny beast. He could not bear the weight of a human rider and a team of four horses was required for drawing a two-wheeled chariot made of the lightest possible materials.'[20] The fact that we may fail to find the archaeological remains of the horse that the Aryans used in the ancient days does not at all mean that the horse was not domesticated by the Aryans, and that it was not used by them in their chariots. The fact that the Harappans could not domesticate horse does not mean that the horse was not domesticated by the Aryans, so also that the horses were not yoked to the two-wheeled Harappan carts. With the aging and maturity of civilization in India Aryans were much advanced in animal and plant breeding. They domesticated many new varieties of plants and animals. Aryans were better equipped for foreign conquests than the Harappans and the Dravidians. By yoking horses to the Harappan carts, they converted them into fast moving chariots. So also they might have discovered the technology of converting iron-ore into iron. This technology was not known to the Harappans. And their business partners, the Sumerians, could not give them this knowledge because there was no iron-ore in the lower Tigris-Euphrates Valley. However, the iron-ore existed in abundance in India. Of course the credit goes exclusively to the Harappans and the Dravidians to induce Punjab Aryans to take up foreign conquests.

Indus-Aryans created a skeleton of different routes from Indus to reach different places in Central Asia. This skeleton was provided to them by their predecessors. They might have heard about the Harappan and Dravidian exploits of Elam, Sumer and Akkad. During eighteenth century BC three Indus-Aryan tribes intruded from the Iranian plateau into Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Babylonia. They are Hittites, Mitannis and Kassites. They might have started from Indus to Iran either in the twentieth or in the nineteenth century BC. According to Toynbee, 'There is linguistic evidence for the presence of primary-Sanskrit speakers among the invaders who, in the eighteenth century BC, established the kingdom of Mitanni in Mesopotamia (the Jazirah), as well as among

those who imposed Kassite rule on Babylonia.'[21] Hittites were perhaps the earliest wave. Just four hundred years after the Dravidians attacked Ur, Indus-Aryans attacked Babylonia. Toynbee writes about this attack and its impact upon the Sumero-Akkad empire:

> In 1595, Babylon, in its turn, suffered Ur's fate. It was sacked by raiders—in this case, not Elamites, but Hittites led by king Mursilis I. The Hittites came and went; the Kassites reaped the harvest. The Hittite raiders extinguished the First Dynasty of Babylon. The Kassite occupied Babylon and thus re-united all Sumer and Akkad.[22]

The Kassite rule lasted till 'c. 1169 BC.'[23] Is it that the Hittite Aryans left the Sumero-Akkad to be ruled by their brother Aryans who came from Indus? Toynbee considers the Kassite rule over Babylon for four hundred years as a rule of the barbarians. For him Kassites were Sanskrit-speaking Eurasian nomads. A nomad moves where the nose of his horse takes him; he is led by the feeding needs of his horse; he is under the control of his horse. But the Kassites were not Eurasian nomads, they were civilized Indus Aryans, came from the Indus basin. Their horses were under their control, and they led them to where they wanted to lead them. If the Kassites were barbarians, then there should have been no cultural development of Babylon. But Toynbee accepts that culturally, 'under the barbarian Kassite regime,' 'Babylonia was now in her prime. This was the age in which the epic themes, bequeathed by the Sumerians, were put into their classical forms.'[24] The cultural development of a country is possible only under a cultured and civilized ruler. In Toynbee's diction 'barbarian' simply means 'Aryan'.

The relationship between Hittites and Kassites should not lead one to think that the Indus-Aryans were always having wars with the non-Aryan races and tribes once they came out of the Indus basin. Once they got settled in the foreign lands they also started having wars with each other. Though both of them were Aryans, Hittites and Mitannis collided with each other. Hittite documents reveal this. Records of these documents have been unearthed. Burrow comments on these documents:

> The contemporary Hittite kingdom had close relations both of peace and war with the Mitanni Kingdom, and some of the documents from the Hittite capital provide important evidence for the presence of Aryans in the Mitanni country. The most interesting of these documents is a treaty concluded between the Hittite king Suppiluliuma and the Mitanni king Matiwaza (c. 1350 BC). Among the divinities

sworn by in this document there occur four well-known Vedic divine names. They are. . . Indra-, Mitra-, Nāsatya- and Varuṇa-.[25]

Study of the Hittite documents have led Burrow to comment further that 'not only Aryan language, but also Aryan religion in a form closely resembling that known from the *Ṛgveda*, was current in this region of the Near East during this period.'[26]

Hittite documentary records clearly establish that the Aryans who settled down in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia could not have migrated from those lands which specialise only in producing cattle-feed. Land from where the Aryans migrated specialized in producing divine ideas, it was the land of Five Rivers. Once they crossed Indus basin and headed towards their Central Asian destinations they could very well be described as Indus-Aryans. No serious scholar has ever doubted the fact that the *Ṛgveda* was composed and compiled in the Valley of Five Rivers. Harappans and the Dravidians already established routes for the Indus Aryans to migrate from India to the outside world. Burrow himself accepts that the treaty between the king Suppiluliuma and the king Matiwaza involved divinities which were Ṛgvedic. As he says, 'As far as the treaty gods are concerned, they are prominent in the *Ṛgveda*, and are indeed all mentioned together in one hymn (*RV.* 10.125.1).'[27] Not only the *Ṛgveda* even the Sanskrit language in which the *Ṛgveda* was composed and compiled is located in its earliest form in Punjab. As Burrow himself accepts that 'the Sanskrit language, in its Vedic and classical form, had. . . a definite geographical location. In the very earliest period this lay in Punjab.'[28] However, Burrow goes wrong when he starts saying, 'The Aryan invasion of N.W. India can be dated by the end of Indus civilization, for which no doubt they were largely responsible.'[29] N.W. India refers to a wide region, it includes both Punjab and the Indus basin. If history in not mixed up with mythology, then there is not the slight historical evidence that the Aryans brought Indus civilization to an end. The existence of Brahui language is a concrete historical evidence that the Dravidians brought Indus civilization to an end. It is also a pointer to the fact that the Dravidians migrated to Elam via Baluchistan. They followed the trail of Harappans. Whose trail were the Aryans following when they invaded India from the outside world? The trail of some mythology and also perhaps the direction set up by the noses of their horses. Their horses might have smelt grass growing in the Indus basin so turned their heads to that direction. Nomadic tribes move where their horses move them, and Burrow's Aryans were nomads.

Leaving mythology aside and coming to history, when the Aryans set out from Punjab to move to Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Babylonia via Indus and Iran they did not have Sanskrit script, they had only Sanskrit language with them. Sanskrit was at the oral stage. Therefore, the Hittite documents were produced 'in an adaptation of the Sumerian script.'[30] There is a sense in which it was good that the Aryans did not carry their distinct script with them. It helped in the independent development of the so-called Indo-European languages like German, Celt and Greek etc. The Indic language Sanskrit remained at the root of European languages, without depriving them of their independent identity in terms of delivery and script. The designation 'Indo-European languages' is proper for all those languages which have Indic or Sanskrit roots. Burrow thinks like Wittgenstein when he talks about the family of Indo-European languages. But the family resemblance between two languages does not necessarily mean that they are sisters or brothers. The relationship may be that which holds between a mother and her daughter. But this unique relationship would not prohibit them from having a resembling nose. So also the fact that a mother has given birth to ten sons and daughters, does not mean that she has given birth to all of them by staying in one and the same place. May be each son or daughter was born in a different new place. The language that took its birth in Punjab, the language of the Aryans, was an embodiment of perfection, therefore the Aryans considered it as the divine language, the language of Gods. According to Sir William Jones, 'The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them strong affinity both in roots of verbs and the form of grammar.'[31] The affinity comes from the antiquity of Sanskrit, that the Sanskrit acted as the model for the development of Greek and Latin. It cannot be ruled out that Sanskrit was in some way responsible for the birth of all Indo-European languages. There is no Indo-European language older than Sanskrit of which we have documentary records. Toynbee accepts that 'our oldest documentary records of any Indo-European language are Indo-European Hittite documents.'[32] Hittite documents are the documents of the Sanskrit-speaking Aryans, and the language of the documents is Sanskrit expressed in the Sumerian script.

Sanskrit was not the only contribution of the Indus Aryans to the world. The other important contribution was iron-technology. When the Indus-Aryans reached Asia Minor and established the Hittite empire, they discovered iron-ore there. Though iron was missing in the Tigris-

Euphrates valley, it was found in good quantity both in India and Asia Minor. Indus-Aryans were equipped with the technical knowledge of how to get iron from iron-ore. They used this knowledge. May be it is their knowledge of iron-technology that led them to establish their empire. Hittites kept their knowledge of iron-technology a secret. As Toynbee points out:

> The overthrow of the Hittite Empire had one abiding consequence that has come to be of world-wide importance. It ended the precious Hittite embargo on the dissemination of the knowledge of the technology for producing wrought-iron . . . . Hittites managed to monopolize the invention and to keep it to themselves as a valuable state secret.[33]

If Toynbee is right then the credit for the evolution of Sanskrit and the advancement of technology goes to the Eurasian nomads. Collingwood considers Toynbee as one of the scissors-and-paste historiographer. Such an history as written by Toynbee 'is constructed by excerpting and combining the testimonies of different authorities.'[34] Such an historian proceeds by omitting those statements which contradict the set of statements which the pigeon-holes of his historiography allow. Concerning historical knowledge, Collingwood thinks that Toynbee 'possesses enormous quantities of it, but he treats it as if it were something he finds ready-made in books, and the problem that interests him is only the problem of arranging it when collected.'[35] Toynbee's work on the historiography of civilizations, particularly his history of the Aryans, Dravidians and the Harappans is only putting flesh and blood to a skeleton which he already obtained from his earlier European historians and linguists. Toynbee highlights this skeleton when he writes, 'The inventors of pastoral nomadism on the Eurasian steppe seem likely to have been the primary-Sanskrit speakers who, beyond the southern bounds of the steppe, made a temporary mark on Babylonia and on Mesopotamia and a permanent mark on India.'[36] Toynbee starts putting flesh and blood to this skeleton, without questioning at all whether it is really the skeleton of 'historical Sanskrit speakers'. His predecessors were such great scholars as William von Humbolt and Max Müller. How could he question them? He is required only to submit to them. He is simply required to collect data in support of their view. It simply does not occur to Toynbee's mind that if the Sanskrit speakers, who left a permanent mark on India and a temporary mark on Mesopotamia and Babylonia, came from the Eurasian steppe, then they should also have left some mark of their Sanskrit speeches on the Eurasian steppe. But

they certainly left no mark of their Sanskrit speeches on the Eurasian steppe because our oldest records of any Indo-European language being spoken come from the Hittite country. How strange? How fantastic? How suddenly the pastoral nomads became civilized Sanskrit speakers as soon as they reached Mesopotamia and Babylonia? How suddenly they invented the names of the Rgvedic Gods? Magic lies with Mesopotamia and Babylonia, that it can convert even wild human beings into the Sanskrit scholars.

Since the myth of Aryan invasion of India was introduced before the discovery of the Indus basin civilization and the identification of Indus inscriptions in Sumer, the European scholars are making frantic efforts to save the original myth. Attacking the historian Bury, Collingwood points out, 'He never saw that one new fact added to a mass of old ones involved the complete transformation of the old.'[37] The discovery of Indus civilization brings into existence a whole set of new facts, yet the European scholars are not willing to give up their outdated myth of the Aryan invasion of India. Rather they are now busy in making matters more complicated. Not only the Aryans, even the Dravidians came from outside India, most probably from Elam. Thus, the linguist Zograph remarks, 'The argument for a Hither Asia passage of the Dravidians towards India is reinforced by the linguistic parallel which have been identified between Dravidian and Elamites.'[38] Did the Elam-Dravidians establish the Indus basin civilization? It is impossible, for the Indus script does not belong to the family of scripts to which the Dravidian, Brahui and Elamite belong. Indus language is neither like the languages belonging to the Sanskrit family nor to the languages belonging to the family of Dravidian languages. This is one reason why it has remained so far undeciphered. Then does the responsibility for the destruction of the Indus civilization go to the Elam-Dravidians? But then what would happen to the views like those of Burrow and Toynbee who have reserved Indus civilization to be destroyed by the Eurasian nomads?

There is no doubt that Toynbee would like the idea that not only the Aryans but the Dravidians should also come from some place outside India. We have already seen his approval of such a view. It is only such a view which can show that the Indian form of speech is a foreign form. Indian form of speech is divided into two sub-forms, Aryan and Dravidian. Burrow opens his writing on the Sanskrit language by saying, 'In the greater part of India today languages are spoken which are derived from a single form of speech which was introduced into India by invaders from the north-west more than three thousand years ago.'[39] If the Dravidians are included among the foreign invaders then most of

the Indian languages, if not all, would have forms of speech coming from foreign lands. So Toynbee has given his formal approval to the view of Zograph. He even accepts that the Dravidians entered into India through the north-west, through Baluchistan. But the Indus basin civilization comes to the rescue of the Indians against the distortions of history by the Western scholars. If Elamites established the Indus civilization, then there should have been Elamite inscriptions and not the unique Indus inscriptions in the Indus basin. The fact that Indus evolved a language and a script of its own nearly five thousand years ago makes Indian subcontinent a fertile land for evolving languages and scripts. How can one accept, unless one is a pure victim of propaganda, that the present languages and scripts of India came from outside India, particularly from places which had no historical records for producing languages and scripts of any kind. Some languages did come from outside, not all of them.

Can one accept the thesis that the Indus evolved a language and a script five thousand years ago, and the rest of the Indian subcontinent remained speechless, remained without any language and any script, till the Eurasian nomads invaded India three thousand years ago? If the Indians were so dull that they could not learn from their immediate neighbours how to create a language and a script, how could they learn this art from complete strangers with whose tongues they were not acquainted? Sumerian civilization can inspire civilizations to grow in its neighbourhood like Akkad and Babylonia. But the Indus civilization cannot inspire its neighbours to become civilized. Even Punjab and the Central India remained uncivilized when the Indus civilization developed to such a level that it was in a position to leave its imprint on the Sumerian civilization. Sumer can accommodate the rising of a distinct language and script in Akkad, but the Indus basin cannot accommodate the rising of Sanskrit language in Punjab and the Dravidian language in Central India. Indus civilization was totally cut off from the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Rest of the Indian subcontinent was so inactive that it was not even in a position to destroy the civilization that was growing in its neighbourhood? They had to wait for more than two thousand years for the Eurasian nomads to reach India and to destroy the Indus civilization. Sumer could digest the Akkadian semitic rule of Sargon but the Indus could not digest the Aryans coming from Punjab to rule them. Babylon could digest the four hundred years rule of the Aryans but the Dravidians from Central India could not reach the Indus basin to rule it. The European scholars have converted India into a strange country. For them it was just a geographical entity to be occupied

by foreigners from time to time. At one time the most civilized country of the world, has been converted into a most uncivilized country of all times.

The persuasive power which the myth of the Aryan invasion of India has is derived from a half-digested analogy. The analogy is half-digested because if it is fully digested, the myth will not arise at all. The analogy refers to the birth of a human being till he becomes adult. When a child is born he is not the speaker of any language. But as he grows he starts stammering language. He picks up a few words, and starts using them along with other kind of noises. But once he becomes adult he has full control over his speech, he starts delivering speeches. The same thing happened with the language which we know as Sanskrit. It took its birth in the Eurasian steppe or the Aryans who were to use this language took such a birth. But while the Aryans were in the Eurasian steppe they were not in a position to speak Sanskrit. They become primary-Sanskrit speakers when they reached Mesopotamia and Babylonia. To say that they were primary-Sanskrit speakers means to say that they were at the stage of stammering a few Sanskrit words. They were not full-fledged Sanskrit speakers. They became adult when they reached India, they developed control over their language. After reaching India they were in a position to produce *Ṛgveda*. They had a perfect hold over Sanskrit. The analogy is half-digested. In order to digest it fully we have also to see that a man grows old. And in his old age a stage comes when he has no hold over his memory, his physiology also weakens. He starts stammering like children again. Therefore, old age is compared with the age of a child. He lives the life of a child till he is on his death-bed. Is the stage of Sanskrit at Mesopotamia and Babylonia the stage of a child-stammerer or the stammering of an old man? Is he a primary-Sanskrit speaker or the speaker of Sanskrit which is dimly retained in his mind? The whole thing depends on the question whether the Sanskrit took its birth in the Eurasian steppe or in the land of the Indian subcontinent?

In order for a civilization to grow, it must give up its pastoral nomadism. Nomads are not settled people, therefore they cannot evolve a civilization. And the birth and evolution of a language is the result of civilization; it is the result of a settled life. It is after giving up nomadism that the first civilizations of the world, the civilizations of Indus basin, Sumer and Egypt took their birth. And they gave birth to the first languages and scripts of the world. Pastoral nomadism was given up in India nearly five thousand years ago, and then India became fertile for giving birth to languages and scripts. Would Sanskrit take its birth in this soil

which has become fertile for producing languages or in the soil of Eurasian steppe which was fertile only for producing grass? Taking birth for the civilized languages like Sanskrit and Dravidian was possible only on the Indian subcontinent and not on those lands where pastoral nomadism persisted. The historical order in which the Indian subcontinent gave birth to languages seems to be that immediately after the Indus language, the Dravidian language took its birth followed by Sanskrit.

In order to distort the history of the Indian peoples and their languages, myths were provided to them, myths showing that their forms of speech have their sources in foreign lands. Their historical existence was derivative; it was not original. When the Indus-Aryans started for their foreign conquests their language was quite matured, it had passed through the stage of producing *Ṛgveda.* In reaching Mesopotamia the Harappan-Indus people avoided encounter with the Iranian people. So was the case with the Dravidians when they reached Elam and established the Dravidian civilization near Sumer. But Indus-Aryans perhaps wished to colonize Iran so took their direction towards the Iranian habitations. Iran might have remained the colony of the Ṛg-vedic or Indus-Aryans for quite some time. Referring to the similarities between *Ṛgveda* and *Avesta* Burrow comments: 'It is quite possible to find verses in the oldest portion of *Avesta,* which simply by phonetic substitutions according to established laws can be turned into intelligible Sanskrit. The greater part of the vocabulary is held in common.'[40] This shows that the Ṛgvedic thoughts were quite fresh in the mind of the Aryans when they reached Iran and colonized it. Old age has not yet come to them.

Zoroaster's *Avesta* is also a document that shows hostility of Iranians towards the Vedic colonizers. For the Avestans the Vedic *Devas* became demons (Daevas) to be rejected, and the Vedic *Asuras* became gods (Ahuras) to be worshipped. Religion through the ages has remained a powerful weapon of protest. In worshipping *Asuras* and rejecting the *Devas* the Iranians were exhibiting a deep sense of resentment against the Aryan colonisers. *Asuras* being the enemies of the Vedic Aryans became the object of worship for the Avestans. And *Devas* being the gods of the Aryans became enemies of the Avestans. Iranian hostility towards the Ṛgvedic Aryans forced them to vacate Iran. Perhaps their passage to go back to India was blocked by the Iranians. They had no alternative but to move towards Mesopotamia and Babylonia. But by the time they started their journey towards the new lands, beyond Iran, old age came to them. Their memory became weak, their knowledge of

Ṛgveda became faint. They were Ṛg-vedic only in name, they lost hold over *Ṛgveda.* When they reached Mesopotamia and Babylonia they were only stammerers of Sanskrit, they retained only the names of Ṛgvedic gods, other things were forgotten. In old age these Ṛgvedic Aryans started appearing as if they were the speakers of primary-Sanskrit. In old age one starts stammering like a child. Ṛgvedic Aryans became children again; they even forgot that they used to move in the Valley of Five Rivers. They were nearing their end, and the end came with dignity. Of course they were planning a new journey, journey to the other world, a journey that starts only after the death of one's body. Of course they were not afraid of their new journey; they believed in life after the death of their bodies.

The foreign conquests of the Indus-Aryans, and the Asian language Sanskrit, posed a big challenge to the European scholars. They were dwarfed by both of them. Their own languages were much inferior to Sanskrit, both in terms of historical priority and in terms of their grammatical forms. They faced the challenge in a crafty academic way. They postulated 'a common home for the Aryans and their languages' lying outside the boundary of India. A common home was conceived as a kind of neutral zone, it is neutral with respect to the *use* of languages, only the languages were allowed to take their birth in the neutral zone; they were used outside the neutral zone. The common home is not a language but a physical boundary, so also the common home of the Aryans is not an Aryan but a physical boundary. He can take his birth in this physical boundary but his Aryan activities occur outside this boundary. The concept of a common home excludes certain questions to be asked. It excludes the question concerning the *uses* of language. So also it excludes the question concerning the activities of the Aryans. If two languages take their birth in this neutral zone then they are sisters even if one of them has taken her birth one thousand years after the other. Applying it to concrete languages, suppose it is proved that Sanskrit took her birth one thousand years earlier than Latin, then they will only be sisters if they have taken their birth in the neutral zone. So Sanskrit has been deprived the chance of being considered as the mother of Latin. Similarly, if an Aryan tribe has taken its birth one thousand years earlier than the other Aryan tribe then they will only be brothers if they come from the same neutral zone. The relationship cannot be that of father and son. Whether the concept of a neutral zone passes the test of history or fails in that test, it is quite secular in character. It has converted all Indo-European languages into foreign languages. There exists no native Indo-European language; all of them

are foreign languages in their own countries. Greek is a foreign language in Greece, because it took its birth in the neutral zone and migrated from there to Greece. So is true about French, English, German and the other European languages. All these languages reached their respective countries by travelling from the neutral zone. So why should the Indians worry if their Sanskrit comes from a foreign source? So also there exist no native Aryans. All Aryans came to their native countries by migrating from the neutral zone. So the Indians should not be specially unhappy that their own people came from some foreign land. Neutral zone is quite productive of cultures and languages. It is far more productive than Indus or Sumer or Egypt. Therefore European scholars have been arguing against each other for the placement of the neutral zone. They are in search of its precise spatio-temporal coordinates. Toynbee's Eurasian steppe appears to be an ideal neutral zone, for it carries no record of either Sanskritization or Aryanization. No civilization in the ancient days sprung up there. It was totally free from the bath-room cultures of Indus and Rome. It was in a most uncivilized state, therefore passes the test of neutrality.

The European historiographers passed their stage of discovering history. They reached the stage of inventing history. Whatever was worth discovering was already discovered. Even the last discovery, the discovery of Indus, was completed. Now was the age of reconstruction. The age of discovery gave way to the age of invention. This was in tune with the general spirit of Europe. America was discovered and colonized. African slaves filled the vacuum created by the extermination of the red-Indian population. More slaves would have been a burden therefore slave trade was stopped on human grounds. Interiors of Africa were discovered and enslaved and Australia was also discovered and colonized. Therefore Europe reached a stage when it could afford its exclusive devotion to inventions, inventions of machines which were required to keep control over the Afro-Asian countries. Therefore, there is nothing surprising if the European historians got themselves involved in inventions. Aryan invasion of India and the consequent Aryan-Dravidian conflict was the result of the inventive mind of the European historians. *Deva-Asur* conflict from mythology was brought down to the earth and was converted into Aryan-Dravidian conflict. *Asurs* were bull-lipped, black and devoid of speech, therefore the Dravidians were supposed to have all these features. Since the Aryans were Eurasian nomads, in India too they continued with their nomadism. Europeans did succeed in their inventions, a racial difference between the Aryans and the Dravidians was created. Our Indian historians started behaving like

their European masters. It does not occur to their mind that the *Deva-Asur* conflict also continued when the Aryans colonized Iran. Were the Iranians also Dravidians, bull-lipped, black and devoid of speech? And if both, the *Devas* and the *Asuras*, were sons of Prajāpati, then how could a racial difference occur to them. How could the Aryans belong to one race and the Dravidians to another if both of them had the same parentage? Even it does not occur to their mind that India gave up nomadism nearly five thousand years ago, then how do they dare to convert Indian Aryans into nomads of any kind.

European scholars, supported by the European rulers, attempted to break the cultural unity of India. 'But in the course of its long history', reflects Professor S. Bhattacharyya:

> India was politically united only occasionally, but political diversity and even enmity did not harm the cultural unity of India. Nāgārjuna, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja were all Dravidians who, Western scholars tell us, were the enemies with whom the Aryans fought. Yet the philosophy and religion of Nāgārjuna, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are essential elements of Indian culture.[41]

It is high time that we correct our history. The fact that the Dravidian script is different from the Sanskrit script does not mean that those who know Sanskrit cannot express their thoughts in the Dravidian script. So also those who know Dravidian languages cannot express their thoughts in Sanskrit. Script diversity does not lead to the diversity of religion and philosophy. So also script diversity is not a sign for racial diversity. We should not stop reading the writings of the European scholars, but we should keep our mind open, and should not start thinking their thoughts. An example may be quoted of an Indian Linguist-historiographer. In order to show that the Dravidians had no kind of language and culture he writes:

> The *Rgveda* describes them as *Mridhravach*, or 'of imperfect speech'. Elsewhere they are said to be *Anasa*, or 'mouthless' or 'speechless'. Some Ṛsis condemned them as 'priestless and hymnless', fit only to be slain.[42]

From where has our linguist-historian friend discovered that these mouthless people are Dravidians. They cannot be even aborigines like Coles, Bhils and Minahs. For no aborigine existing anywhere in India is mouthless. Such Dravidians and aborigines may be existing on the Mars, but not on this planet. *Ṛgveda* has given only one message, that the enemy is to be slain. Giving horrible descriptions of the enemy is a

part of the game of wars. From these descriptions one cannot discover who the enemy is, whether he is a Dravidian or a non-Dravidian. Our linguist-historian friend is so much charmed by the myth of the Aryan invasion of India that he goes on writing such things as, 'If we trace the growth and history of the Aryan colonization in India we are led to the conclusion that the Aryans continued steadily to advance, and the Dravidians to recede and decay.'[43] He does not feel shy of writing that 'we find them (Dravidians) to have been the very reverse of a literary race.'[44] If the Dravidians were the reverse of a literary race, then how did they produce Nāgārjuna, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja? If we do not correct our history, we would remain slaves of the colonial thinking in spite of the fact that the colonial rule has been withdrawn formally. We should also remove formally our colonial thinking.

Formal withdrawal of the colonial rule from India and other Afro-Asian countries has been a shock to the historiographers of Europe. According to them European colonizers have not made a humanistic move in freeing the Afro-Asian countries. They should have waited till Afro-Asian countries became civilized. They should have remembered Rudyard Kipling. Since the Afro-Asian countries were given freedom by their Western rulers without their subjects becoming civilized, genocide started as soon as these rulers left their subject-countries. It is in this spirit that Toynbee writes:

> When, in 1947, Britain abdicated and the former British Indian Empire was partitioned between the Indian Union and Pakistan, Hindus and Muslims committed genocide against each other while they were in the act of segregating themselves. This was, in the end, the price of the liquidation of Western imperialism in the Indian subcontinent.[45]

It was certainly not the liquidation of the British imperialism but the partition of India into India and Pakistan that led to the genocide. Who nurtured the two-nation theory of which the genocide of 1947 was the consequence? It might have been the creation of a given Indian mind, but the British imperialism nurtured and nourished it. The history goes back to the partition of Bengal in 1905. In order to crush the Swadeshi movement of Bengal a division was created between Muslims and Hindus, favouring Muslims over Hindus. Of course this was not the situation after the revolt of 1857 till the close of the nineteenth century. Then the Hindus were favoured. The British were afraid that there may be revolt of Muslims. The British took power from the hands of a Muslim emperor. Then the Muslims were the mainstay of the Revolt of

1857. But the situation suddenly changed by the end of the nineteenth century. Nationalist politics was considered as a Hindu dominated politics. Hindus became a potential danger to the British rule in India, therefore favour to Muslims against the Hindus started. The survival of British rule in India was far more important than the survival of Indians. The responsibility for genocide that occurred after the British left India goes back to the British rule in India. Of course the Indians have also to be blamed, for they acted as mere pawns in the hands of the British.

The British never cared for the survival of Indians. Their acts leading to the genocide of 1947 were nothing if we compare this genocide with the loss of life during famines. Famines were a permanent feature of the British rule in India, and they were far more widespread than any genocide that occurred in India because of the excitation of religious feelings. Professor Bipan Chandra quotes William Digby, a British writer, about the figures of famine-deaths, 'In all, over 28,825,000 people died during famines from 1854 to 1901.'[46] These figures exclude the figure of 3 million famine deaths in Bengal alone in 1943. The famine of 1896-97 was quite widespread. It extended to 'Madras, Mysore, Hyderabad, Maharashtra, Western UP and the Punjab. Maharashtra lost 8 lakhs people, Madras nearly 35 lakhs, Mysore nearly 20 per cent of its population, and UP over 12 lakhs.'[47] Famine was perhaps the most inexpensive weapon for controlling population during British rule. During the British rule rural India as a whole lived in a famine state. Foodgrains which the agriculturists produced were meant for foreign markets. Bipan Chandra again quotes Charles Elliot, a member of the Governor-General's Council remarking, 'I do not hesitate to say that half the agricultural population do not know from one year's end to another what it is to have a full meal'.[48] A prosperous peasant of British India was one who could afford one meal a day and *chabena* (parched grain) once or twice a day. In many areas of UP the peasants used to save even their one meal a day during the *mahua* crop, yet Toynbee gives credit to 'the alien rule' on the ground that it brought 'domestic peace'. Domestic peace has been defined by Toynbee in terms of the absence of religious genocide.[49]

The Khilafat movement brought Muslim masses to the national politics. Therefore, the British became more active in creating Hindu-Muslim Divide. Soon after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation, Hindu-Muslim conflicts started throughout the country, and they continued through the Civil Disobedience and the Quit India movement. Religious tensions were created to stop the national awakening for freedom. Gandhi's call for non-violence was countered by nurturing and

nourishing the feelings of violence among the Indians. One would feel that the British ultimately succeeded and Gandhi failed. The violence of 1947 was Gandhi's failure. If Gandhi failed the British also did not succeed. Religious tensions were created to stop freedom movement, to stop national awakening. The British were planning to bring the end of freedom movement just after the end of Non-Cooperation. But the freedom struggle continued, and continued with more vigour. It passed through the Civil Disobedience and then to the Quit India call. Gandhi sacrificed none of his ideals. He refused to convert India into a Hindu state. There is a sense in which India was never divided, only its territories were reduced. The new nation that came into existence after reducing the territories of India was Pakistan, a religious state, a Muslim state. A large number of Hindus expected that the division would bring a new India into existence, a Hindu India into existence. Gandhi demolished their expectations, therefore, one of them killed him. Was Gandhi ever defeated?

Like other European scholars Toynbee has a tendency to undermine the achievements of Gandhi. He says about Gandhi that he 'accomplished a political revolution; but Gandhi's strategy was non-violent non-cooperation, and his economic objective was, not to complete the incorporation of India in the mechanized world, but to sever India's existing ties with it.'[50] Gandhi certainly did not reject machine and industry. Had he rejected machines and industry, then he would have prohibited the development of cottage industry and handicraft. He wished the machine and industry to reach each and every house of an Indian village. He had the vision of a perfectly employed India. His vision was realized when his machine, the *charkha,* reached the villages of India. Most of the villages of India became big industrial centres, and most of the householders of these villages became industrialists. This was Gandhi's industrial revolution, quite unlike the industrial revolution that occurred in Europe. Man was dwarfed by the big industries of Europe. But the man kept his dignity with the small machine of Gandhi. Invention of big machines led to unemployment, and unemployment led to the evolution of the underworld of criminals in the cities and hunger and famines in the rural areas. Big machine was not suitable for the employment of women, children and old men. For Gandhi's small machine, nobody was debarred from using it. It was rather better suited to be handled by women and children. Once *charkha* reached a home, nobody in that home remained unemployed. Even an extremely poor man could buy a *charkha. Charkha* was a remarkable invention of Gandhi.

Toynbee exhibits a total misunderstanding of Gandhi's strategy for bringing a political revolution in India when he says, 'Gandhi's countrymen did not respond to his call to revert to pre-mechanical methods of industrial production, and eventually they failed to live upto Gandhi's ideal and practice of eschewing the use of violence.'[51] A strategy for political revolution is not very different from a war-strategy. The major item of Gandhi's political strategy was to bring freedom to India from the alien rule. Once India became free from the alien rule it would be quite wrong to expect that India should have continued using all those weapons which were invented for fighting against the alien rule. In peace time some of those arms become obsolete. Thus in peace time, after India won freedom, *charkha* was shunted to the background. It is now restricted to villages where it continues to function even now as a subsidiary source of income. India was now in a position to evolve its own big machines, and the products of those machines would be as much *swadeshi* as the products of *charkha.* It is wrong to think that Gandhi gave any spiritual importance to *charkha;* he gave it only an economic importance. Rejecting alien cloth does not mean rejecting a machine cloth, for *charkha* itself was a machine. Without thinking about a national alternative how could British cloth have been boycotted? *Charkha* was a national alternative to the British cloth. Now there is no necessity of that alternative. *Charkha* functioned as a political weapon, to whichever house it reached the voice of *swaraj* reached. There was a time when owning *charkha* was supposed to be a bigger crime than owning an unlicensed gun. During no-rent campaign peasants were arrested simply because they owned *charkhas.* Peasants used to hide their *charkhas* as the revolutionary terrorists used to hide their guns. Gandhi's *charkha* symbolized silent terrorism. However, there is limit to *charkha.* The fact that Gandhi patronized Nehru shows that he was not allergic to the vision of a socialist India, an India that is free from class distinctions, an India which has its place in world economic order. Gandhi had no desire or intention to take India back to a pre-machine age. This is an impossible task. But one can live in machine age without allowing machine to devour man. Living in machine age should not lead to unemployment, should not lead to hunger and famine. India has undoubtedly stopped famines, or reduced them to a great level. Famine was during the British rule no news; now famine makes a news.

It is again quite wrong to think that Gandhi was some kind of a biologist, attempting to bring into existence a special kind of human breed which would be deprived of all traces of anger and violence. Even

if Gandhi had succeeded in bringing into existence such a breed of non-violent human beings, the breed would have died out as soon as it was brought into existence. Man's animality is an essential condition for his survival in the animal world. Gandhi was interested in the survival of Indians and not in their extinction. And he wished his Indians to survive with dignity. Survival with dignity in an alien rule is impossible. So he wished to remove the alien rule. He was original, highly original. Gandhi did not follow the past examples of resistance. An alien rule survived through force, and any resistance against an alien rule also succeeded through force. Force nourished the alien rule, so also force nourished an opposition to that rule. Gandhi rejected history. He wished to create history. And he succeeded in creating history when he decided to resist the alien rule without the use of any force. Thus he created 'civil resisters' to face the alien rule. The British took precautionary measures against the possibility of an armed revolt in India. Licences were issued to those Indians who wished to possess arms. If an armed revolt occurred at any place in India, these licence holders were rounded up. They were to be deprived of their licences if they did not help in crushing the revolt. Thus the British had not only an army and a police to protect their rule they had the backing of all the licence holders of the country. The licence holders were unpaid soldiers of the British army. The British were following history; they saw to it that no kind of armed resistance occurs in any part of India. But in facing Gandhi the British realized that they were facing the breakdown of history. They were facing a resister who carried no gun, a resister who carried the biggest army of the world that ever existed in history. The army that was under the command of Gandhi was the army of young and old, women and children, Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, sadhus and faqirs, peasants and labourers and so on. History had never observed such a composition of an army of resisters against an alien rule. One can obtain a glimpse of Gandhi's political strategy when he wrote on the eve of Civil Disobedience:

> Supposing ten persons in each of the 700,000 villages in India came forward to manufacturing salt and disobey the Salt Act, what do you think this Government can do? Even the worst autocrat you can imagine would not dare to blow regiments of peaceful civil resisters out of a cannon's mouth.[52]

The alien rulers followed history, therefore, prepared themselves for facing the armed regiments of freedom fighters. But what they faced was only the regiments of peaceful civil resisters. All the preparation

made by the British was a waste. Was not Gandhi creating a new history, a history that was quite unlike any history of revolts, occurred at any time and in any part of the world?

It would be quite wrong to think that Gandhi recommended abolishing violence from human nature. His strategy for a free India was quite different from his strategy for an enslaved India. There was a time when Gandhi preached for peaceful co-existence of peasants and landlords, he talked about trusteeship etc. He recommended landlords to be the trustees of their estates and to look after their tenants like children. But his views about free India were very different. He had no trust in landlords, and never expected that they would be honest trustees of their estates. Therefore, he did not hesitate in recommending 'peasant violence' in free India. When in April 1942 Louis Fischer asked Gandhi 'What would happen in a free India? What is your programme for the impoverishment of the lot of peasantry?'. Gandhi's response may shock all those who have converted Gandhi in their imagination as some sort of Buddha. Gandhi answered Louis Fischer 'The peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it.' Louis Fischer wished to know whether Gandhi was recommending peasant violence. Therefore, he asked Gandhi to be vocal whether he was recommending that the peasants would take the land 'with violence'. Gandhi's response was 'There may be violence.'[53] Was Gandhi living upto his ideal when he recommended peasant violence? Then how should you expect that his disciples would be living upto his ideal? Who has converted Gandhi into a saint rather than a politician, a politician of the highest order? He never recommended that India should go back to the pre-machine age. So also he never recommended that the Indians should behave like a new species of human beings, deprived of all their feelings of anger and violence. If Gandhi had not imbibed in himself a deep anger against the British then he would have failed to organise a mass resistance against them. Gandhi wished Indians to live and grow as normal human beings, living with dignity among the free peoples of the world. To live as slaves is not to live like a normal human being.

Toynbee is not satisfied only with showing that Gandhi's political revolution failed because his countrymen could not stand upto his ideal of non-violence; that his countrymen could not de-link India from the economic order of the world. He wished to attack Gandhi himself and his political revolution by showing that Gandhi was not the Founding Father of Indian political revolution and that his revolution was not original; it was only a derived copy. Toynbee attacks Gandhi in a very

subtle way in his opening lecture delivered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1961. In his lecture he considered American political revolution of April 1775 as original, and all the other revolutions of the world that occurred after this date as its derivatives. The Indian political revolution too is a derivative because it occurred after 1775. These revolutions were the result of the shot of liberty that was fired by the American farmers in 1775. 'Within these last one hundred and eighty six years the sound of that American shot has been travelling round and round the globe like a Russian sputnik.'[54] This shot was responsible for two revolutions of France, two revolutions of Russia, two revolutions of China and so many other revolutions that occurred in the world after the first shot of liberty that was fired in America. Toynbee certainly does not mean that the American shot was the first shot of liberty that was fired in the human civilization. Liberty and slavery were well-known to the world since the dawn of civilization. However, the American shot has a special significance. It is this shot, and not the earlier ones, that moved different countries of the world to revolt after 1775. But in making this generalization Toynbee seems to have overlooked the basic lesson of logical thinking. The lesson is that temporal priority is not a sufficient condition for causal priority. It may be a necessary condition, but a necessary condition cannot be converted into a sufficient condition. Of course Toynbee has never been clear about the distinction between necessary and sufficient conditions. It is this unclarity that led him to infer that Sumer influenced the Indus civilization because Sumer was temporally prior to Indus. Undoubtedly Toynbee is a giant historian, but lacks the rudiments of logical thinking. American shot was indeed temporally prior to all the other shots of liberty that were fired after 1775, but whether it was also causally responsible for any of those other shots? Toynbee feels no compulsion at all for showing that the American shot was causally responsible for all the other shots of liberty fired later in different parts of the world. Temporal priority of the American shot is for Toynbee its causal priority. So his lecture at Pennsylvania 'The Shot heard round the world' is not a move in history; it is purely a move in journalism, or history at the service of journalism.

Now consider his remarks on the genesis of the Indian Freedom Movement. In praise of the American shot he remarks that the shot:

> roused the Founding Fathers of the Indian National Congress. I believe, by the way, that the original instigator of the Indian Congress Movement was an Englishman. If I am right about this, that Englishman launched a far bigger movement that he can have realized at that time. The Indian Congress Movement has been the mother of all the independence movements in all the Asian and African countries that, till recently, have been under the West European Colonial powers. But, anyway, whoever may deserve the credit for having started the Indian Congress Movement, the inspiration of it came from the sound of that American shot as this shot travelled over the Indian subcontinent on its east-ward course.[55]

Toynbee wishes to highlight four things. First, a Briton started the Indian Congress Movement. Second, the Congress Movement succeeded. Third, the Indian Congress Movement became the mother of all the independence movements of all the Afro-Asian countries. Fourth, Indian Congress Movement was inspired by the American shot. The American shot to which Toynbee has referred has come out from the mouth of the guns of the American peasants. The poem that inspired Toynbee's lecture is engraved on a bronze plaque near the bridge at Concord, Massachusetts, USA. The poem reads:

> Here once the embattled farmers stood.
> And fired the shot that heard round the world.[56]

Toynbee finds a perfect analogy for reading Indian freedom struggle in terms of the American freedom struggle. Toynbee is an historian and not a poet. Yet he has taken the poem literally and created some kind of history out of it. No doubt the poem is wonderful, but whether Toynbee's history matches the poem.

The creator of the world is reverred and considered as God simply because he takes interest in his creation. Congress was taken out of the hands of the Briton who created it; it was given a new form, a form which no party of freedom fighters has ever observed in the history of freedom fights of the world, including that of America. Gandhi became the Father of Indian Nation and not that Briton who created the Congress. Indian masses do not even know that a Briton created Congress. For them Gandhi meant Congress and Congress meant Gandhi. Though Gandhi appeared on the Congress platform long after the Congress was formed, all eyes were turned towards him. His appearance on the Congress platform was the appearance of a Deliverer. Congress for the first time got respectability. Congress was received as a party of freedom fighters by the Indian masses only after the entry of Gandhi into it. If not all, some of the earlier leaders of Congress had good amount of nationalism flowing into their blood. They even inspired the revolutionary terrorists. But nations do not get freedom only by

having such nationalists however large their number may be. Freedom requires the participation of masses, even the participation of those who have very little amount of nationalism flowing into their blood, who have the tendency to sit on the fence. Gandhi for the first time gave mass base to the Congress, it was no more the party of city intelligentsia. He even tried to allure the fence-sitters to participate in the national struggle. Whoever is in the nation should participate in its struggle.

Indian Congress Movement became the mother of all the independence movements of Afro-Asian countries because its leader evolved an unique technique of freedom struggle, the technique of peaceful resistance. Following Gandhi the freedom fighters of Afro-Asian countries started evolving the regiments of peaceful civil resisters. It is these regiments which forced the European rulers to leave Afro-Asian countries. How can a peaceful civil resister get his inspiration from the shot that is fired from the barrel of a gun? How can an American peasant be the source of inspiration for an Indian peasant? An American peasant came into existence by occupying the land through bullet, by physically exterminating the natural owner of the land. He again used the gun to obtain freedom from the Briton whose descendant he was. History of the American peasant does not coincide with the history of the Indian peasant. And the leader who prepared the Indian peasant to join the war of independence did not allow him even to use his *lakri* (*lathi*). Gandhi was not inspired by any violent revolt, be it American, Egyptian or Sumerian. He was the founder of a new civilization of freedom fighters.

Gandhi's attempt to initiate a new civilization of freedom fighters has come for attack not only from the western quarters, from the European scholars, but also from his own countrymen. European attack is understandable, for the Europeans lost their control of Afro-Asian countries. Gandhi is partly, if not wholly, responsible for this loss. Toynbee may be exaggerating when he made the Indian Congress Movement as the mother of all freedom movements of Afro-Asian countries, and the consequent freedom of these countries. But Gandhi did play a significant role in the freedom of the Afro-Asian world. It is therefore natural for the European scholars to be critical of Gandhi; to be critical of his devotees like Nehru. But the Indian contribution to the European critique of Gandhi is a phenomenon which is difficult to explain. How can Gandhi be deprived of the position that he acquired? How can it be shown that he misdirected the freedom movement of India? Obviously, the proper direction would have been for Gandhi to have followed history, to have followed the violent revolts of history, to

have followed the Russian model or the Chinese model or the Italian model. Gandhi should not have plunged into the breakdown of history; he should not have taken unhistorical steps. He should not have created his own model, he should have become a copy of some foreign model, Lenin's model or Mao's model or Gramsci's model. The West is full of models; Gandhi should have approached the West for the supply of a good model. By following his own model, an Indian model, Gandhi has lost his respect in the eyes of the educated elite of India. His model has too much smell of Indianness. Christ has not yet taken birth is the belief of the Jews. For them Jesus was not Christ; he was only the son of a carpenter. Liberator of India has not yet taken his birth. Gandhi was only a *Bania,* and a 'Forgotten Bania' according to one Western historiographer.[57]

Indian contribution to the European critique of Gandhi and the Indian freedom struggle has been a singular achievement of the Subaltern historiography that has taken its birth among the academic historians of India in 1980. This historiography has inspired the production of several volumes under the heading '*Subaltern Studies*'. These studies, according to one of its founding fathers, are 'the Gramsci-inspired series on Indian history that became influential in 1980s.'[58] Of course the period of Indian history that this historiography covers is only the period of freedom struggle, and this historiography has converted Gandhi and Nehru as the main villains. What would happen if one produces a Gandhian inspired studies of Chinese history and converts Mao into a chief villain? Whatever else may happen or not but one thing will surely happen, that those studies will be thrown into the gutters by the Chinese people. But Indians have a history of tolerances; it is this historical tradition that has led to the birth of Gandhi. The birth of this historiography has been taken as the birth of an alternative historiography, particularly by those academicians of India who are not well-acquainted with the moves of this historiography. Thus Professor Daya Krishna has written about the subaltern historiography of India:

> The data in history has another dimension which makes it doubly suspect. Most of it is written by rulers or their propagandists who have a particular view to propagate. The rise of the so-called '*Subaltern Studies*' where the viewpoint of the 'other' is supposed to be expressed is evidence of this.[59]

Was Gandhi a ruler of India? Was the Congress party, before the Independence of India, a ruling party of India? But by calling Gandhi as a *Bania* elite leader, and the Congress as an elite body an imagery has

been successfully created where Gandhi appears as a ruler of India and his party as the ruling party. Therefore any historiography which appreciates the role of Gandhi and his peaceful civil resisters is dubbed as elite historiography. Subaltern historiography is the only genuine historiography. Professor Daya Krishna is wrong in thinking that the subaltern historiography is an *alternative* to elite historiography, because elite historiography is no historiography; it is only 'a spiritual biography of the elite'; it is 'unhistorical historiography'.[60] Only the Gramscian-inspired studies of the freedom-struggle of India present a real freedom struggle of India, Gandhian-inspired studies are no good. For the simple reason that the Gandhian-inspired struggle was only an elite struggle. Gandhi would have succeeded in having a genuine subaltern struggle if he had followed the Gramscian-model of struggle. Since he failed to follow the Gramscian model he failed to bring a desirable political revolution. It is so unfortunate that Gandhi was not inspired by Gramsci. His failure to have this inspiration has converted Indian freedom struggle into a tragedy. It was not a tragedy for the British to have lost their British Indian Empire, it was a tragedy for the Indian masses, the Indian subaltern classes, that the political power has gone into the hands of the peaceful civil resisters.

Notes and References

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4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 81.
6. Ibid., p. 67.
7. Ibid., p. 89.
8. Ibid., p. 80.
9. Ibid., p. 82.
10. T. Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language*, edition 1973, London, p. 9.
11. Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, Vol. II, Indological Book House, 1969, p. 440.
12. Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth*, p. 80.
13. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
14. Ibid., p. 89.
15. See G.A. Zograph, *Languages of Asia and Africa*, Vol. 3 —*Languages of South Asia*, tr. C.L. Campbell, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p. 130.
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24. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
25. Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language*, p. 28.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 44.
29. Ibid., p. 30.
30. Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth*, p. 82.
31. Quoted by Burrow in his *The Sanskrit Language*, p. 6.
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33. Ibid., p. 113.
34. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 257.
35. Ibid., p. 163.
36. Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth*, p. 93.
37. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 147.
38. Zograph, *Languages of South Asia*, p. 130.
39. Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language*, p. 1.
40. Ibid., p. 4.
41. This refers to a paper of Professor S. Bhattacharyya entitled 'An Indian Approach to Indology'. This paper was the basis for one of his Lectures delivered at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. Till recently the paper was not published.
42. Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, p. 463.
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45. Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth*, p. 586.
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54. Arnold Toynbee, *A Selection From His Works*. Ed. E.W.F. Tomlin, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 235.
55. Ibid., p. 236.
56. Ibid., editor's footnote, p. 235.
57. See D.A. Low's article 'The Forgotten Bania: Merchant Communities and the Indian National Congress', D.A. Low's edited, *The Indian National Congress: Centenary Hindsights*, Oxford University Press, 1988. Low has attempted to tarnish the image of Gandhi and the Indian Freedom Struggle.
58. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories and Question of Enlightenment Rationalism: Some Recent Critiques of Subaltern Studies', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 8, 1995, p. 751.
59. Daya Krishna, 'Some Reflections on Modern Historiography after a Visit to a Hospital', *New Quest*, May-June 1994, p. 135.

60. See Ranajit Guha's article 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. I, ed. Ranajit Guha, Oxford University Press, 1982. pp. 1–7. Ranajit Guha is accepted as the father of Indian Subaltern Historiography.

Ranajit Guha's Axiomatic Historiography: A Study in Elite and Subaltern Domains of Politics*

NISHA RATHORE

Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

The history of Indian Nationalism or the history of Indian freedom struggle, according to Ranajit Guha, is 'written up as a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite.'[1] His paper 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India'[2] on the one hand exposes 'this un-historical historiography'[3] of the elite and on the other provides a framework to the subaltern historiography. However, in his attempt to despiritualize history, Ranajit Guha has converted history into an axiomatic system. He has presented historical truths as mathematical truths which could not be otherwise. History which is presented by Ranajit Guha is not very unlike geometry where axioms are sensed by intuition and deductions are made on the basis of these axioms. History, for Ranajit Guha, is not an empirical science but an axiomatic system. Perhaps the only difference is that in an axiomatic system you begin with certain axioms and then take further steps to demonstrate the deductions made. In Ranajit Guha's axiomatic system you come to an axiomatic truth after taking several steps. You can discover, if you try, the most important axiomatic truth of Ranajit Guha's historiography at the eighth step. This truth is revealed in his own words as: 'Parallel to the domain of elite politics, there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were ... subaltern classes and groups.'[4] The domain of subaltern politics was autonomous. This follows from the axiomatic truth that the domain of subaltern politics was parallel to the domain of elite politics. Parallel lines do not meet. And if they do not meet then there is no question of one of them originating from the other. Thus, Ranajit Guha informs us about his deduction of the character of the subaltern domain of politics that 'it neither originated from the elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter.'[5]

Ranajit Guha is aware of the fact that his historiography is an axiomatic system, it is not any kind of empirical science to be proved or disproved by making an appeal to empirical data. In order to 'demarcate the domain of subaltern politics from that of elite politics' he remarks, 'The co-existence of these two domains or streams, which can be sensed by intuition and proved by demonstration as well, was the index of an important historical truth, that is, the *failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation.* There were vast areas in the life and consciousness of the people which were never integrated into their hegemony.'[6] One does not 'sense by intuition' historical truths. One does this with axiomatic truths. Axiomatic truths are sensed by intuition, and then they are demonstrated through deductions. Once it is accepted that the domain of elite politics runs parallel to the domain of subaltern politics, then it follows that the elite politics does not exhaust the national politics. Subaltern classes remain outside the sphere of the national polities of the elite. Conclusion is clear: the Indian elite, the Indian bourgeoisie, could not speak for the nation. It could speak only for a part of the nation, the part to which it was restricted. But it is not only the Indian bourgeoisie that had failed to speak for the nation, no Indian of the colonized India was in a position to speak for the nation. For an Indian was either an elite or a subaltern, he could not be both. Elite and subaltern are exclusive categories. If Ranajit Guha is right then there was no national struggle for freedom, for no one could be in a position to speak for the nation. Then why blame the bourgeoisie for its failure to speak for the nation? Ranajit Guha's axiomatic historiography has gaged the mouths of the colonized Indians to speak for the nation.

Ranajit Guha has distinguished 'elite' and 'subaltern' in such a rigid fashion as one would distinguish cats from dogs. Cats have a totally different nature from dogs; cats mew whereas dogs bark. Nationalism of the elite is like a cat's mewing, it is 'legalistic and constitutionalist in orientation.'[7] Nationalism of the subaltern is like a dog's barking, 'it is violent'.[8] Thus, nationalism has two meanings, quite different from each other. If the elite were fighting for *swaraj*, then the subaltern were fighting for something else. This is shown by Ranajit Guha's remark 'Popular mobilization in the colonial period was realized in its most comprehensive form in peasant uprisings.'[9] Except Kheda, peasant uprisings in general were anti-landlord or anti-feudal type of uprisings. Quality of peasant uprisings was very different from the quality of elite actions. If the elite's fight for *swaraj* is described as anti-colonial, then the peasant uprisings can be described as anti-feudal. Referring to the

ideological dimension of the subaltern domain of politics Ranajit Guha writes 'one of its invariant features was a notion of resistance to elite domination.'[10] Elite domination in this context means the domination of landlords. Peasants are those subaltern individuals who were dominated by the landlords. Therefore it was natural for the peasants to resist this domination. Though he does not make it explicit Ranajit Guha means that Gandhi and his other elite colleagues failed to speak for the nation because they failed to tie their anti-colonial struggle with the anti-landlord struggle. Sumit Sarkar gives vent to the view of Ranajit Guha when he writes, as quoted by Gyan Pandey, that the greatest tragedy of modern India was 'the failure to intermingle the currents of national and social discontent into a single anti-colonial and anti-feudal revolution.'[11] Gyan Pandey has all his praise for the views of Sumit Sarkar. Thus, Ranajit Guha, Sumit Sarkar and Gyan Pandey, the trio, blames Gandhi for failing to speak for the nation because he totally failed to intermingle the anti-colonial struggle with the anti-landlord struggle. But the trio has failed to realize, or it does not wish to realize, that this intermingling was intrinsically impossible if one takes seriously the way they have desired of 'elite' and the 'subaltern'. Ever granting that it were somehow possible, transgressing their definitions and making nonsense of their whole structure, they do not seem to realize that by doing so, it would have come in the way of India's fight for freedom. The British wished that Gandhi should have started supporting peasant uprisings rather than be involved in any kind of battle for India's freedom. But Gandhi was intelligent enough. If he had intermingled his anti-colonial struggle with the anti-feudal struggle then he was required to open two fronts, one against the British and the other against the Indian landlords. The chances in such a situation were that he would have lost on both the fronts.[12]

Consistency is the basic virtue of an axiomatic system, therefore, so much importance is given to the 'proof of consistency' in that system. But instead of consistency, it is inconsistency that is the basic virtue of Ranajit Guha's axiomatic historiography. It is the parallelism of 'elite' and 'subaltern' that led Ranajit Guha to deduce that the 'domain of subaltern politics is autonomous'. But by the time he takes the thirteenth step he totally forgets about his axiom of parallelism intuited at the eighth step. Now he finds it wrong to think 'that these two domains were hermetically sealed off from each other and there was no contact between them.'[13] There would have been no problem if the two domains were hermetically sealed off, because such a sealing off creates no mathematical or logical difficulty. The difficulty is only physical. Physical

barrier can be broken. But mathematical barriers cannot be broken so easily. Autonomy of subaltern consciousness is the result of a mathematical barrier; two parallel lines do not have a point of contact; they do not cross each other, therefore, elite and subaltern classes remain restricted to their own domains. Ranajit Guha has certainly jumped out of his axiomatic historiography. Once the autonomy of subaltern domain is established in an axiomatic way, with the help of the axiom of parallelism, he does not require this axiom. Somehow he is not in a position to overlook the historical truth that the elite and subaltern domains interact. He would be taking a highly objectionable historical step if he rejects the interaction between these two domains.

The interaction between the elite and the subaltern creates hardly any difficulty to the axiomatic historiography of Ranajit Guha. Consider his remark: 'the braiding together of the two strands of elite and subaltern politics led invariably to explosive situations indicating that the masses mobilized by the elite to fight for their objectives managed to break away from their control and put the characteristic imprint of popular politics on campaigns initiated by the upper classes.'[14] The elite approach the subaltern. They mobilize them for their objectives. The subaltern gains nothing because it is mobilized for the objectives of the elite. The subaltern leaves its imprint on this mobilization. Historical facts can easily be twisted to correspond to the axiomatic truths. Expressing her dissatisfaction with the subalternist view on the interaction between the elite and the subaltern Mridula Mukherjee writes, 'If on occasion the "elite" domain does impinge on the "subaltern" domain, its influence is necessarily negative. Therefore, "elite" influence is either non-existent, or if visible, negative. Its negative nature is axiomatic, it does not have to be proved.'[15] Is there anything which is non-axiomatic in Ranajit Guha's historiography? Perhaps only that which is deduced from the axiomatic truths is non-axiomatic. Ranajit Guha has not written history but a parody on history. History is an empirical science and cannot be converted into an axiomatic system.

As an axiomatic system also Ranajit Guha's historiography is open to serious difficulties. An axiomatic system has its alternatives. As an alternative to the two-valued logic there is multi-valued logic. Euclidean geometry has its alternative in the geometry of the spherical surfaces. Ranajit Guha's axiomatic system operates with only two values, 'elite' and 'subaltern', not very unlike the logical operation with two values 'true' and 'false'. But so far as the national movement for freedom of India is concerned Ranajit Guha's operators have a very limited range of operation. Ranajit Guha has not referred to the revolutionary

terrorists. One cannot doubt the nationalism of Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad and so many others like them spread over the whole country during the colonial rule. But the 'elite-subaltern' dichotomy cannot be applied to them. So also is the case of the Ghadar Party that wished to liberate India from the colonial rule by importing arms from the outside world. And what about the Indian National Army? This army too cannot be fitted into the pigeon-holes of 'elite' and 'subaltern'. Ranajit Guha does not refer to the nationalists who were known to the whole colonial India. The reason is simple. Neither the terrorists nor the INA have been given credit to liberate India from the British rule. They had their contribution in the freedom struggle. But for Ranajit Guha's historiography their contribution was not of much importance. History of the freedom struggle, the elite history, according to Ranajit Guha, has given all the credit to Gandhi, Nehru and their other elite brothers for making India free from the British rule. Therefore they alone have become the target of Ranajit Guha's historiography. They were the target of the British also. Now they have become the target of the subaltern historians. Their names should be wiped out from history. To wipe out their names from history, history has to be re-written. The history of the national liberation has to be rewritten, if not through empirical data then through the introduction of axiomatic truths. For such truths can be sensed by intuition, they do not require the backing of historical evidence.

Ranajit Guha overlooks historical evidence that goes against his axiomatic historiography. To quote Mridula Mukherjee once again she writes 'A particularly distressing feature of the "historical method" of the "subalternists" is that they tend to ignore even their own empirical evidence when it runs counter to their theory.'[16] Ranajit Guha is certainly not ignorant of the Champaran peasant movement. But this movement has not taken the axiomatic steps required for the historiography of the subalternists. Therefore, they ignore it. How ignorant were the urban elite about the condition of the rural Champaran becomes clear from a remark of Kripalani made in 1917. Jacques Pouchepadass quotes Kripalani writing, 'In those days such was our nationalism that we did not know what was really happening in the villages. We, the educated, lived more or less an isolated life. Our world was confined to the cities and to our fraternity of the educated. Our contact with the masses was confined to our servants, and yet we talked of the masses and were anxious to free the country from the foreign yoke!'[17] Pouchepadass has quoted Kripalani to show 'how cut off from the rural masses the urban intelligentsia still was in 1917.' Kripalani's remark gives strength to the

subalternist view that the subaltern domains of politics was autonomous as was the elite domain of politics autonomous. But this autonomy was broken in 1917. What conditions led to the breaking of the autonomy? The educated elite thought the country could not become free from the foreign yoke if their movement remains restricted to the cities. And on their own part the subaltern classes of Champaran realized that their autonomous political action has brought no results. Both required one another. First move was made by the subaltern classes of Champaran. Their leader Raj Kumar Shukla contacted Gandhi to help them for removing the European planters from Champaran. The fact that Gandhi was contacted and other national leaders were ignored speaks volumes about the relationship between Gandhi and the subaltern classes. To talk about the autonomy of peasant consciousness or the autonomy of subaltern political action after 1917 in Bihar is to exhibit hangover of pre-history, or history prior to that year. How wrong is Ranajit Guha in axiomatizing that the elite mobilize the subaltern classes 'for their own objectives', and then deducing that 'the subaltern classes gain nothing from this mobilization.' Champaran shows that it is the subaltern classes which were moved to mobilize the elite, and the result of this mobilization was in favour of the subaltern classes. As a matter of fact it is the interaction between elite and subaltern that ultimately led to the removal of European planters from Champaran.

Not very different from Kripalani was the reaction of Jawaharlal Nehru when in 1920 he visited Pratapgarh villages on the invitation of the Awadh peasant leaders. He was amazed to see the organization of Pratapgarh peasantry. The peasants organized themselves without the instrumentality of city intelligentsia. Jawaharlal Nehru was led to write 'I realized more than ever how cut off we were from our people and how we lived and worked and agitated in a little world apart from them.'[18] Like the Champaran peasantry, the Awadh peasantry too gave up its autonomous consciousness, autonomous political action. They had been agitating since the inception of the Oudh Rent Act in 1868. Their agitation brought no result. So they moved to take help from the urban politicians. This is how Jawaharlal came in contact with them, and a permanent interaction occurred between them and the city intelligentsia. In Awadh too, to talk about the autonomous domain of subaltern politics after 1920 is to exhibit the hangover of pre-history, the hangover of the situation operating before 1920. Ranajit Guha's axiomatic historiography suffers from all kinds of hangovers. It ignores the fact that the subaltern consciousness is also the consciousness of human beings. It is not the consciousness of a cat or a dog. Human

consciousness changes and grows. It is not stagnant. Ranajit Guha's axiomatic historiography takes for granted that the peasant consciousness does not come out of its shell; it remains within its shell. Even the peasant's meeting with the outside world does not change him, he remains autonomous. He is not unlike a tortoise. Whenever required the tortoise takes out the head from its shell, and the head goes back to the shell again. So a peasant meets the elite, and as soon as the meeting is over his head goes back into the shell. Ranajit Guha has not written about the greatness of Indian peasantry. He has converted the Indian peasantry into an animal stagnancy. The elite too has been painted as another species of animal. He too does not change. He is not very unlike a fox. A fox is cunning. So is an elite cunning. Nature has given him birth to exploit the subaltern classes.

The axiomatic historiography of Ranajit Guha has led him to a tragic conclusion. Indian struggle for freedom of the country from the colonial rule has failed to have 'a decisive victory over colonialism.'[19] It failed to have 'a new democracy' which was possible only 'under the hegemony of workers and peasants.'[20] This hegemony could not be realized because of two conditions on the part of working class. The working class failed in developing its 'consciousness as a class-for-itself'.[21] So also it was not 'firmly allied yet with the peasantry.'[22] The working class was not in a position to lead the peasantry, so 'the numerous peasant uprisings of the period' '... waited in vain for a leadership to raise them (peasants) above localism and generalize them into a nationwide anti-imperialist campaign.'[23] As a result India failed to have 'anything like a national liberation movement.'[24] Since there was no anti-imperialist campaign, no national liberation movement, how could India have a victory over colonialism!

Though the British left India, they left behind them, if Ranajit Guha is right, imperialism and colonialism. Gandhi's *swaraj* has not brought freedom from imperialism and colonialism. Thus Ranajit Guha is blaming the course of national movement for freedom. The leaders of this movement, being elite, could not give proper direction to the movement. The proper direction for the national movement was possible only under the leadership of working class. The working class should have started the movement and in due course should have taken the leadership of peasantry. Only then there would have been a decisive victory over imperialism and colonialism. But the working class, according to Ranajit Guha, was not mature enough to take up the leadership of peasantry, it failed to develop even its 'consciousness as a class-for-itself'. Does not all this mean that in order to have a decisive

victory over imperialism and colonialism India should have waited for the working class to become mature? It is only after the maturity of the working class that the nation should have thought about starting an anti-imperialist campaign and a national liberation movement. The question arises, how much time was required for the working class to develop its 'consciousness as a class-for-itself'? Take the case of Awadh alone. Once it was annexed, the British demolished its traditional industry. Industrial development of the new type, the European type, started with the First World War. If the British had continued ruling India, they would not have allowed the industry to develop with a faster speed. Several decades, if not several centuries, were required in order to have the industrial development of the required type, and then the working class to organize itself and ultimately to take the leadership of peasantry. Would the working class have succeeded in liberating India on 15 August, 1947?

Has Ranajit Guha's axiomatic historiography suggested an alternative way of obtaining freedom from the colonial rule or an alternative way of continuity with that rule? Ranajit Guha has rejected Gandhi's way of acquiring freedom from the British rule. But he has not provided us with any alternative way of acquiring that freedom. He has only suggested to us to remain slaves of the British for a few decades, if not a few centuries, more. And, in any case, how can he or any other subaltern historian blame Gandhi for not doing what, by definition, he could not have done, that is, create a mature working class which could provide the leadership to the peasants for the type of revolution they demand.

One would be quite amused to study the fourteenth and fifteenth steps of Ranajit Guha's historiography; these steps undo whatever was done by Ranajit Guha at the earlier stages of his paper. When one starts reading Ranajit Guha's paper one would feel that he is all out in support of peasant insurgency, in support of popular movement. The elite historians hardly give any importance to their insurgency, to their movement. The peasants, being subaltern, are 'violent' and their violence is 'spontaneous'. Perhaps Ranajit Guha wishes to distinguish the subaltern action from the action of the revolutionary terrorists. Violence of the terrorists was not spontaneous, it was calculated. And then the terrorists were as much interested in *swaraj* as Gandhi and his followers. They disagreed about the *means* to have *swaraj*. But Ranajit Guha hardly talks about *swaraj* in the context of subaltern political action. However, Ranajit Guha himself accepts that the 'peasant uprisings' of the colonial period suffered from 'localism' and 'economism.' And because of this nature the peasant unrest could not be converted into 'a nationwide

anti-imperialist campaign.'[25] But this shows that the peasants were required to give up their localism and economism in order to participate in an anti-imperialist campaign. Does not the struggle of peasants against their landlords demonstrate the localism and economism of peasants? The peasant uprisings during the colonial rule suffered from localism and economism, because they were uprisings against the Indian landlords; they were not uprisings against the British imperial rule. In rejecting the localism and economism of the subaltern struggles Ranajit Guha is not only betraying the subaltern struggle of these peasants but also echoing the voice of Gandhi. Gandhi opposed the class struggle of peasants and landlords. He advised the peasants to give up their factional, parochial and local struggles. They had to jump into the battle against the British imperialism and colonialism. Though Ranajit Guha's working classes were not mature enough to take up the leadership of peasantry for removing their localism and factionalism and putting them on the path of a nation-wide anti-imperialist struggle, Gandhi and his other elite brothers took up the role of the working classes. Gandhi and his elite brothers did exactly what Ranajit Guha's working classes were expected to do. The participation of peasantry in the Civil Disobedience Movement and later in the Quit India Movement clearly shows that the peasantry left behind its localism and economism. Ranajit Guha clearly suffers from the influence of that historiography which he describes as elite, blinkered, spurious and unhistorical. He may not be aware that he has also contributed a chapter to the spiritual biography of the elite.

While closing his Subaltern manifesto Ranajit Guha writes 'In any discussion that may ensue we expect to learn a great deal not only from the agreement of those who think like us but also from the criticism of those who don't.'[26] Criticism can be of two kinds. It is possible to attack a system by remaining in that system. The other way is to go out of the system and attack it from the outside. Remaining within the system, it is possible only to detect those mistakes that are minor, the mistakes committed in deductions made on the basis of the axioms sensed by intuition. However, there is another way. In order to fight against an axiomatic system, the other way is to take help from an alternative axiomatic system, an alternative axiomatic historiography. But this would only be an attempt to introduce another closed system. If one wishes to keep history as an open-ended discipline, as an empirical science rather than a closed system of intuited truths, then one has to reject not only Ranajit Guha's historiography, but all those historiographies which follow Ranajit Guha's pattern of history writing.

Ranajit Guha is convinced that the 'elitist historiography should be resolutely fought by developing an alternative discourse based on the rejection of the spurious and unhistorical monism.'[27] But monism is the essence of an axiomatic system. Only those truths are accepted in an axiomatic system which follow the intuited axioms. And an axiomatic system is unhistorical, for the person who develops such a system closes his eyes to historical reality. In order to fight the elitist historiography Ranajit Guha should have developed an alternative discourse rather than producing an axiomatic system of intuited truths. He should have contacted history and reality, rather than living in a world of fancy.

* The genesis of this paper goes back to a paper of Dr. Mridula Mukherjee entitled 'Peasant Resistance and Peasant Consciousness in Colonial India: "Subalterns" and "Beyond".' (*EPW*, Oct. 8 and Oct. 1988). In her paper she has hinted at the axiomatic character of Ranajit Guha's historiography (see pp. 211-12).

Notes and References

1. Ranajit Guha, 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', *Subaltern Studies-I*, Delhi, 1982, p. 2.
2. This paper is a kind of introduction to the subaltern studies.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp. 5-6.
7. Ibid., p. 4.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 5.
10. Ibid.
11. Cited in Gyan Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization*, Delhi, 1978, p. 217.
12. It is interesting to note that Ranajit Guha himself accepts at a later stage that the peasant uprisings suffered from localism and economism.
13. Guha, *Subaltern Studies-I*, p. 6.
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16. Ibid., p. 2114.
17. J.B. Kripalani, *Gandhi, His Life and Thought*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 61. Cited in Jacques Pouchepadass, 'Local Leaders and the Intelligentsia in the Champaran Satyagraha (1917): A Study in Peasant Mobilization' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, no. 8, 1974, p. 70.
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22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 7.
25. Ibid., p. 6.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.

Notes Towards a Phenomenology of Historiographies

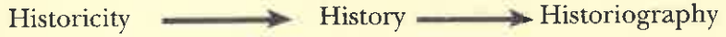
R. SUNDARA RAJAN

IIAS, Shimla

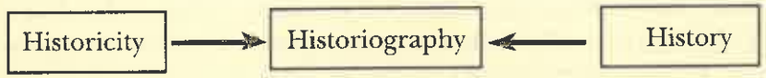
HISTORY AS ACTION AND HISTORY AS DISCOURSE

It has often been remarked that the expression 'history' could mean either a series of actions or happenings (res gestae) or an account or record of such happenings (historia).[1] As such, the expression points in two directions at once—towards those basic tendencies and dispositions of human subjects which are summed up in the term 'historicity' of Dasein and also towards the discursive practices, the language and logic of representations of that historicity and its outcomes. The term 'history' therefore links the ontological and hermeneutic levels thus affording us glimpses of an ontologically founded phenomenology of discursive practices.[2] The present paper seeks to offer a few preliminary suggestions towards precisely such a phenomenology of historical reason.

A naively empiricist view would hold that human dispositions and powers cause actions and it is these human acts together with their causes and consequences that are the subject matter of historical writing; in other words such a view has a linear frame of reference



But the over determination of actions as well as the complex mediations between character and action, very soon complicate the picture, which may take shape as



It is this perspective that I propose to call the empiricist perspective,[3] for according to this way of thinking, the primacy belongs to the subject matter in the form of actions and human powers and needs. According to the empiricist perspective, discourse does not constitute historical

phenomena but only reflects them. Therefore those who write historical accounts and to a lesser extent, even those who read them, must let the facts speak for themselves. The over riding virtue of a great historian is passionless lucidity before the phenomena.

The third perspective, which may be called the constitutive model, recognizes the formative agency of discourse and thus places historiography as one of the determining factors of history,[4]

The dimension of historicity may be taken to represent the invariant or constant element in history, while the discursive dimension of the logics of historical representation stand for the variability or difference. As we shall see, the structures of historicity are given in the temporality of Dasein at this level, since Temporality is the ultimate structure of Being itself, it represents the all ways present form of human existence; in short, it presents the existential mode of being-in-the world and at this level, the only element of variability is between the authentic and inauthentic modes of temporality.[5] But these uniform or constant modes are worked over into different configurations by the variable exigencies of discursive representation. The existentialia are inter-preted in different ways and hence thus arise difference, variability and plurality. It is thus that history, in one sense, is ever the same but in another sense, never repeats itself. In this scheme, the hermeneutics of historiography is not a reflective but a constitutive one; language is not merely a device for communication, but is, in its own way, a formative force such that our practices are linguistically mediated forms of life. But once we accept discursive constitution, it may be thought that we can go one step further and surrender the ontological posit of historicity also to discursive and behavioural schemes, thus;

In this schema, the existentials themselves loose their primordiality and become the consequences and not the causes of history. But I believe that would open all the horrendous issues of relativism; indeed a double relativism, for the historical subject is now constituted by language as well as by action and that too by the discourse of the other.[6] Historiography now would not be representative but presentative. But I believe that even after we have acknowledged all the creative fecundity of historiography we must yet recognize its intentionality—as orientation

to something other than itself. Also, we must remember the moral power of this discourse, its capacity to disclose forms of authenticity and inauthenticity in our historical being and action. As we shall see, it is the ontological level of historicity as a mode of being of the subject that founds the distinction between authentic and inauthentic.[7]

The discursive formation of the historical subject may be seen at two levels; firstly, it is at the level of discourse that all the elements of action, character, motives, needs, circumstances, co-agents and counter agents are assembled together to form an actional unity of a project. It is this synthesis effected by language that Ricoeur calls mimesis.[8] We may say that it is in such modes of description that a historical scene, such as the crossing of the Rubicon, or the taking of salt from the sea, is prepared. That it is a production can be seen from the fact that in some other frame of reference, such as that of physics or physiology, the 'historicalness' of the situation utterly vanishes. If the order of representation constitutes the historic context, the narrative order constitutes the identity of the historical agents. By thematising an aspect or set of aspects, the flow of events is changed into a plot, thereby giving to the temporal flux, the directionality of a historical destiny.[9] It is in the processes of emplotment that we experience the transformation of a natural being into a historical subject. But as Ricoeur has shown us, emplotment is common to both fictional as well as historical narratives. But then does it mean that a historical destiny could as well be based on a fictive identity as an objective one and that what matters is the power of the narrative rather than any impossible objectivity; is historical truth an issue of coherence rather than one of correspondence?[10]

The epistemology of the historical science is vastly too big and complex an issue to be gone into at this point, but we can make one minor point here. If we make a thought experiment and imagine two contrasted types of historical communities—the first one, seeking its identity as a historical community only in the facts and nothing but the facts and the second whose historical claims, memories, hopes, fears and longings are wholly fictive. I think we cannot coherently describe either these communities and that failure of our imagination is, it seems to me, very significant, for it tells us that there is a kind of fictive quality in historical experience. This also may be seen in the light of Ricoeur's analysis of the aporiae of temporal experience and its overcoming—the dialectics of distentio animi and intentio animi. The sense of a unifying identity is yet erected upon the experience of dispersal, disunity, discord and difference. In the very moment of identifying ourselves with the past, we overlook its otherness, we blur

the differences and forge a bond with some fictive supports. Because of this essential fictionality in the his-torical experience, there is bound to be a touch of art in great historical writing. But not only the aesthetic component but the moral character of historiography also arises from this fictive element in historical truth itself. For it is because of this fictive element in historical experience that authenticity is not altogether removed from and different from inauthenticity but is only a modification of it. And that in turn implies that an individual as well as a community could, as it were, slide from authenticity to inauthenticity i.e., a community could betray its own historical identity at the very moment it is claiming to be in authentic touch with it. The validity of an historical sense does not lie in an impossible objectivity which dreams to be wholly free of all fiction, but in the way we respond to the fictional elements in our identity.

Historical writing, we suggested, is a device of overcoming the dispersal of past, present and future; as Augustine pointed out, our souls are stretched to the tearing point by the antinomies of past, present and future. A narrative, be it fictional or historical, seeks to convert this distentio into a concordance, an intentio. But perhaps, at this point, we could, following the genial lead of Paul Ricoeur, take one more step and speak of three forms of intentio animi. These three would give us three different historiographical configurations; we may call these the conservative, the pragmatic and the utopian topoi respectively.

THE CONSERVATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Present ⟵ Past ⟶ Future

To the conservative historical sensibility, the past, in the form of tradition, is not merely an object of understanding, but also a principle of understanding, a norm for judgment of both the present and the future.[11] The present is seen in terms of its belongingness to the past; the meanings that we find in our collective life and the goals that we pursue as also the institutional forms which regulate the pursuit, are interpreted in the light of the past. The vulnerability or the bad faith of such a sensibility lies not in assertion of belonging to the tradition as such, but in two other associated mistakes: one, the overlooking of the fact that we also belong to the present and to the future; of course, the sense of belonging in these cases are different but the bonds that connect us to the present and the future are also genuine and cannot be reduced as a consequence of our belonging to the past. Secondly, and more importantly, there is a dangerous pride in the claim that we

have a complete understanding of our belongingness. Our belonging to the past runs so deep and connects us with so many different aspects of the past, in ways unsuspected by us, such that it overflows any doctrinaire ideology of belonging. We can therefore see that in each one of these modes, there is the distinction between the authentic and inauthentic; also, the difference or distinction may turn on the very strength of the authentic form. With regard to the pragmatic form of historical sensibility, we can say that it looks upon the past as resource for responding to the problems of the present and conceives of the future as a continuation or extension of the present.[12] So also the utopian or futuristic perspective looks upon the past a period of latency and prefiguration of the future and the present as a preparation for it.[13] Both the pragmatic and utopian orientations err in thinking that the future belongs to us, whereas in reality, we belong to it. To say that the future belongs to us is to assert a mastery over it, whereas to say that we belong to the future is to recognize that we and our achievements come under the judgment of the future and may find a meaning and value in such a judgement which exceeds our own understanding. Here too the excess of participation over expression, the deep roots of belonging, mark the genuine or the authentic form of historical perception. As we saw, the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic forms pertain to each one of these orientations. Thus, we may say that with reference to the past, if the authentic form of experiencing the past may be called *remembrance,* the inauthentic form is *possession.* In authentic present, we have *responsibility,* while in the inauthentic mode, we have a *mastery.* With regard to the future, in the authentic form, we have *a vision,* as contrasted with the inauthentic *waiting.*[14]

The fact that we recognize different forms of authenticity considerably complicates the situation. For Heidegger, authentic temporality was futural and this was pitted against the self deceptions of everydayness; authentic resoluteness on the one hand and blind unthinking conformity to 'They'—on the other; the moral dimension of the situation is clear enough although Heidegger coyly disclaims any moral intention in drawing the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic. But if there are many voices of authenticity, if there could be a contestation, not between the good and the bad, but between the goods themselves, then the moral situation becomes more complex and judgement harder. Different historiographies are expressions of this essential contestability of the historical. It is to this fundamental contestation that I wish to turn now.

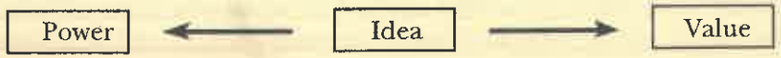
HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ITS THEMATIC DIMENSION

Gerald Holton in his *Thematic Origins of Modern Scientific Thought* has suggested that we must understand scientific theory in terms of three and not two dimensions, as usually supposed; he calls these, the x-axis, the y-axis and the z-axis of scientific theory respectively.[15] Thus, the x-axis is the phenomenal or empirical dimension, the domain of relevance of the theory, while the y-axis refers to the logico-mathematical infrastructures as well as the theoretical principles and models of the science concerned. But the discovery of the z-axis or the third dimension is the chief achievement of Holton's study. He calls this the thematic dimension and in his philosophy of science, it has rich and complex connotations but two of them stand out. Firstly, thematic principles are interpretative devices, which give a particular and evident style to the theory; they are not themselves empirical hypotheses, nor are they merely a part of the theoretical scaffolding; they organize the totality of the theory, its empirical and conceptual components alike and the same body of knowledge could be organized by different themata. Secondly, although themata are macro organizing principles, sometimes operating throughout the life work of a scientist, yet the people concerned may not even be conscious of them or even if they become aware of them, it is a sort of peripheral awareness.

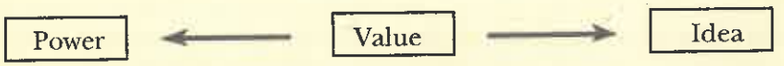
I suggest that we may, at this point, identify the thematic principles of historiography. Implicit in our previous discussion, there seem to be three such thematic principles—Power, Idea and Value, giving us three kinds of historiography—*History as Power, History as Reason* and *History as Vision.* But there seems to be one aspect where the themata of history appear to be unique and different from the thematic principles of the sciences. In this, perhaps, history is closer to philosophy. The themata of the history not only cover the whole domain of phenomena but they seek to frame the other thematic principles, giving an interpretation of those interpretative devices themselves. Thus, within the historiography of power, there is a specific placement of reason and vision. These other themata in turn seek to frame each other; thus we have three meta models:

History as Power

History as Reason



History as Vision



Within the framework of history as power, there is a specific epistemology according to which power and knowledge implicate each other.[16] Not only does knowledge give power, which after all is something of an epistemological commonplace, but power generates knowledge. In this understanding, the growth of knowledge presents itself in a very different manner and the conflicts of opinions and belief also are seen as the site for a power struggle. Given this new image of power knowledge, the historiography of reason such as the perspective of the Enlightenment itself would now appear as one of the phenomena to be interpreted. The emergence and vicissitudes of vision too appear in new connections within such a historiography. The historiography of power does not overlook or omit to consider philosophy and moral vision; it seeks to explain them as constituted by the vicissitudes of power. So also in the perspective of History as Reason, which is the Hegelian counter thema to Foucault's thema of power, power itself is used by the cunning of reason to achieve its own ends. So also the different visions of the Good such as those of Antigone and Creon, of Stoicism, Christianity and the Enlightenment are the forms through which the Idea works out its own self clarification; moral, religious and aesthetic consciousness are interpreted as embodiments or images of the idea. Lastly, the historiography of vision has its own specific angle upon the history of power and the history of reason, thus interpreting both as correlates and consequences of changing visions.[17] Thus, each historiography seems to have a place for the other but we are taken aback when we discover that this framing reveals an unsuspected aspect of the matter. Thus, within the frames of Foucaldian power, we understand reason and rationality in new connections; the initial shock may make us feel that the very notion of truth and the good have been deconstructed but a second and more attentive reflection shows epistemology in a new light.[18]

These different historical styles contest each other but at the same time, they also illumine each other revealing unsuspected dimensions of each other. At any one time, therefore, historical experience and historical subjects of these experiences are given different interpretations. And not merely that, but they offer different interpretations of historical discourse itself but precisely because each one of them is capable of this, none of them can become a meta

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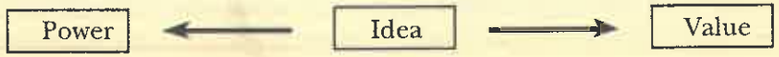

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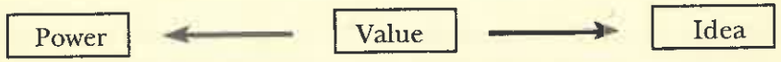

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narrative. We are left with an irreducible plurality of understandings. But since each one of these schemes can reveal a truth about the other, which they themselves cannot achieve by themselves, their interactions is not merely a situation of conflict and contestation, but also necessary for our own awareness. We need to enter into this inter historiographical conflict, for this struggle promises to give us a better measure of what we are. The considered response on our part therefore cannot be the choice of one of these frameworks and the giving up of the others; nor can it be the dream of a more inclusive frame of understanding. If philosophy of history means such a meta narrative, then, the dream is over. Neither unity nor totality can be the proper response to the fragmentation of our historical identity. But we must learn to embed these themata within the historiographical theory we are crafting, so that the inter historiographical contestation can become an intra historiographical one. Thus, within a given historiographical scheme itself, we must find a place for the political, the philosophical and the ethico-religious frames of understanding. To say that these three vectors are irreducible means that any form of life as unitary and homogeneous is beyond the horizons of historical understanding. History is for self divided and divisive beings only, but for them, it is a road of enlightenment, for it is in this form of understanding in terms of Power, Knowledge and the Good, that we learn what it is to be human. In that respect, nothing has changed since the times of Herodotus; for us also, history is the great teacher but what it can teach us now, is the glory and misery of being human. Neither power, politics nor philosophy nor morality can be the meta narrative for history; on the contrary, history humanizes these for it shows that the power that humans have struggled for and against, is a power which raises philosophical and moral questions and that if these larger concerns are obliterated, we do not have a human pursuit at all. Similarly, a knowledge which does not run the risk of a dialogue with power, or which does not problematize itself ethically and spiritually, is not something which has moved science and philosophy. And lastly, our visions of goodness occur in political context and under definite philosophical presuppositions. We may not be able to unify power, knowledge and goodness, but we know that we cannot keep them apart.

But today historiography too like other moulds of understanding, is on the threshold of a three fold transformation—the linguistic, the feminist and the ecological turns.[19]

Today, among the human sciences there is a new awareness of the centrality of language to the issues and problems of human individuals

and communities.[20] From symbolic logic to symbolic theology, language is being seen as not merely one of the objects of human studies but a way or perspective of understanding. It is this shift from viewing language as a problem to viewing it as a resource that may be called the linguistic turn in which historiography does not seem to be as much involved as some of the other disciplines. The linguistic turn depends upon a new way of understanding language itself. Although it is through language that every object is known, yet language itself cannot be objectified completely. The new awareness of language premised in the linguistic turn is a performative understanding of language. We may describe this way of understanding as consisting in the following transformations:

1. From viewing language as an object in the world, to viewing the world as in language.
2. From viewing communication as a form of social relation to viewing every social relation as a form of communication.[21]
3. From viewing language as an expression of identity, to viewing identity as formed and constituted in the networks of communication.

It is in so far as historiography also undergoes these changes in perception concerning the historical world can we say that it too has performed the linguistic turn. And it would seem that the historical world, the world of decision, destiny and vocation would be most appropriate to a linguistic sensibility. But in the case of history we must make a distinction between the language *in* history and the language *of* history. Although this distinction overlaps with that between language and meta language, yet it cannot be wholly absorbed by it. For one thing, the language *in* history is not only the speech and writing of historical subjects but their practices too, may be regarded as a form of communication and hence a language. A theory of communicative practices and not merely a meta language is needed to clarify their sense. Secondly, the reflective language of history, the theorization about decisions, motives and plans of action is also available to the historical subjects themselves. This kind of participant history cannot be ignored or wholly regarded as data or subject matter by the languages of historiography for an occasion, they may serve as models and standards of appraisal of the historian's own account for one of the conditions of adequacy of the historian's account is to explain the possibility of such participant theory. Also the reflective theory of the historical subject may function as a norm and standard for the historian's own projections; lastly, reflections on the part of the historical subject makes the situation

between the subject and the historian *symmetrical;* unlike a psycho analyst who can interpret the analysand's theorization as a symptom and respond to it on that level, the historiographer has to grant fellowship to the theorization on the part of the subjects. And lastly, today the phenomena of interactive historiography is becoming increasingly evident and important. As per this, the historical reflections and reconstructions of the historian become available to large masses of people who now use these reconstructed logics as inputs to their own schemes of perception and action. Once the historian publishes his work, it enters the domain of inter textuality and is understood or accepted only in terms of the networks of related texts. We may, at this point, recall the immense effect a work like that of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* had in shaping the sense of historical crisis. Today historiography itself has its own specific form of 'effective history'. And when the outputs of the historian become available to the key players in the historical scene at a crucial point of their lives, the influence such historiographical texts may have upon their perceptions and shaping their motives and mobilizing their efforts may turn out to be decisive and not to be ignored. In this way ancient history impinges upon the current events by way of the historian's specific form of 'memoria'. The impact of such 'history at a distance' is being quite noticeable in our increasingly reflective times, when the historical players form an important audience of the historiographer. One of the changes brought about by interactive historiography is that the historian may be called upon to play an interventionist role; when such a thing happens, the distinction between the two senses of history with which we started gets blurred. It seems to me the theme of interactive historiography may well repay careful consideration. Three issues in particular may focus our research in this area:

1. *The Inter Textuality of Historical Texts:* What kind of literary and human scientific milieu into which the historical productions are accommodated? What are the interactions between genres and how does this intellectual landscape shape the self consciousness of the historian?
2. *The Politics of Interactive Historiography:* What kind of interface exists between political players and historical texts? What kind of politics show an 'elective affinity' with what kind of historical texts? And lastly, what are the manifest and latent functions of such historiographical intervention?
3. *From Historical Reflection to Political Action:* As we saw, increasingly historians are called upon to intervene in the on going political process and assume an active role. The historians too are becoming increasingly aware of this expectation on the part of people as well as organizations. How does this perception affect the style and substance of their histories? On the other side, how do their historical scholarship and understanding affect their political interventions? What are the forms of leadership available to them and what forms of co-optation lie in wait for them? And on a deeper plane, what are the professional and moral consequences of such interventionist historiography and what are the most appropriate sites for it?

The relevance of the ecological turn for historiography may be seen in re-thinking and re-ordering the contexts and relations between Nature and History; on this issue, there have been two polarly opposed dispositions—on the one hand the tendency to absorb the human within the schemes of nature—a tendency which provoked among some historians the danger of denying history to humans altogether. As a sort of reaction to this programme of naturalization of the human, in some quarters of the humanists, it was declared that Nature knows no history because of its determinate repetitiveness and that history, which is another name for the idea of progress, makes sense only within the human world. But today after the attack on the idea of linearity itself and in the wake of the dialectic of enlightenment, it is no longer possible to oppose Cosmos and Anthropos on the usual registers of causality and freedom, law and individuality, force and meaning.[22] Instead, we must return to the idea of the natural history of humankind as the underside to the history of culture and civilization. The natural history of humankind has also its redeeming features but we must first go to school for its dark and dismal lessons. We must learn to compute the price of every human achievement in terms of the suffering it has imposed upon other forms of life and measure the guilt and sin of the long course of human evolution; we must learn a new hedonic calculus—human pleasure and animal suffering. But when this ecological repentence has entered over historiographies, then indeed we can be ready for the true measure of the natural of the human.[23]

The natural history of humankind tells us that:

1. throughout its history, the human species has lived and evolved only on this planet.
2. In the course of this evolution, the human species has developed complex and pervasive bonds with the natural environment,

which bonds have a way of making themselves felt even when we are ignorant of them or forget them or seek to deny them.

3. Such bonds have given rise to needs which pervade every aspect of our lives.
4. We are beginning to realize that such needs for contact and communication with other species, when frustrated, may lead to all sorts of unsuspected deprivations and deficits; on the other hand, the fulfilment of such communicational needs is a particularly satisfying and even a healing process; we are beginning to suspect that ecological respect may have a therapeutic meaning also.
5. On the other side of the scene, as recent studies of animal communication and animal learning suggest, humans seem to stimulate the cognitive potentials of other species. It appears possible that we can play another role than that of a predator.

But perhaps the most momentous and transformative of all is the feminist turn. Also, with regard to this change, historiography is already caught up in it; already a new sensitivity for the role of gender in the local as well global histories of humankind is slowly being recognized as an imperative component of the historical sense; already a change from viewing gender in history to seeing history as constituted by gender relations is taking place. Such a new sensitivity may begin as a move within the pre-given frames of reference of historical writing, as, for example, when the role of women and their contributions are added as a new chapter in another wise settled narrative.

But ultimately the promise of the feminist turn extends far beyond merely a new concern for the problems of women; on the contrary, it is a new way of thinking about all problems including those of men. It is to see history from the other side, not merely from the point of view of the victims and the defeated but from the point of view of those who have been denied a voice in the first place. The gain is nothing less than a hitherto unsuspected sense of the unity of humankind.

When historiography successfully negotiates the linguistic, the ecological and the feminist turns, the given distinctions and dichotomies of conventional wisdom may be questioned; this may appear to be the end of history but that is to mistake the exhaustion of a style of representation for the closure of a human possibility. Beyond the deserts of deconstructionism and post-modernism, perchance a new historiography awaits us.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The two senses of 'history' distinguished in the paper, as well as the connection between them is based on Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative.* More importantly, the idea of an ontologically based hermeneutics also derives from him. See Don Hyde, 'Paul Ricoeur's Place in the Hermeneutic Tradition' in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur,* The Library of Living Philosophers, North Western University Press, Evanston, 1994.
2. Ibid.
3. It may be noted that empiricism as understood herein is characterized by a reflection theory of language.
4. For the constitution perspective, see R. Sundara Rajan, *Towards A Critique of Cultural Reason,* Oxford University Press, 1987.
5. See, for the further discussion of this point, R. Philip Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility,* Kluwer Academic Publishers, Norwell, MA, 1992, pp. 205-13.
6. A double relativism because the understanding of the historical agent would now be relative to his own interpretations as well as the interpretations of the historian.
7. However, this point should not be taken as an indication of foundationalism, for it is argued in the sequel that historicity itself is a constituted phenomena, in some sense.
8. Paul Ricoeur *Time and Narrative,* vol I, tr., K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984.
9. Ibid.
10. See a similar discussion of coherence and correspondence in 'Phenomenology and Psycho Analysis: A Hermeneutic Mediation' in R. Sundara Rajan, *Studies in Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Deconstruction,* Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi, 1991.
11. For further elaboration of such an attitude towards tradition, see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* (tr.) Garett Barden and John Cumming, Sherd and Ward, London, 1975.
12. This may be one variety of 'presentation discussed in Mitchell Dean', *Critical and Effective Histories,* Routledge and Keagan Paul, London, 1994, pp. 23-42.
13. The 'utopian' perspective described herein may recall Habermas' idea of the telos of communication. See Jurgen Habermas *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* tr., F. Lawrence, Cambridge, 1987.
14. For a similar discussion of attitude to temporality, see, Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility.*
15. James Holton, *The Thematic Origins of Modern Scientific Thoughts.*
16. For an elaboration of this point, see Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories,* ch. 5.
17. The 'historiography of vision' is similar to Pitrim Sorokin's theory of cultural change as elaborated in his *Social and Cultural Dynamics.*
18. Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories,* ch. 5.
19. The idea of the thee-fold transformations mentioned here is the central theme of my forthcoming book, *Beyond the Crisis of the European Sciences* (in 2 vols.).
20. The linguistic turn in history and politics is treated in vol. I of *Beyond the Crisis of the European Sciences,* forthcoming.

21. This is the basic point of the theory of communicative practices. For details see R. Sundara Rajan, *Towards A Critique of Cultural Reason* and *Studies in Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, ch. 2.
22. Dilthey's distinction between explanation and understanding is an aspect of this.
23. For the natural history of the human, see R. Sundara Rajan, "Philosophy as Geophilia: Towards Recovery of the Idea of the Earth", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. xxii, no. 4, Oct. 1995.

Vedānta in the First Millennium AD: The Case Study of a Retrospective Illusion Imposed by the Historiography of Indian Philosophy

DAYA KRISHNA

Vedānta is supposed to be the most dominant and distinctive philosophy of India, accepted and propagated as such by innumerable writers on Indian philosophy. And yet, if one searches for its presence in the first millennium AD, one is surprised to find very little evidence of its presence before Śaṁkara and even for quite some time after him. The Upaniṣads that are supposed to be the source of Vedāntic philosophy had flourished sometime during the later half of the first millennium BC or even some centuries earlier than that. It is commonly supposed that as the Upaniṣads form the last part of the Vedic corpus, the term Vedānta is applied to them, literally meaning the end of the Vedas or the concluding portion thereof and the thought propounded therein. This, of course, is a myth as many of the Upaniṣads do not form the concluding portion of the Vedic corpus and also continued to be composed till as late as the thirteenth century, that is, a long time after Śaṁkara wrote his commentaries on them. As we argued in an article written some time ago entitled 'The Upaniṣads—What are They?' many of the major Upaniṣads do not occur as a last part of the Vedic corpus, that is, the Saṁhitās, the Brāhmaṇas or the Āraṇyakas but rather in the middle followed by other portions which are sometimes regarded as separate Upaniṣads with a different content, or, what is the case many a time, are regarded as not Upaniṣads at all. It is well known, for example, that the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* consists of chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the second *adhyāya* of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka, excluding* the third *adhyāya*, even though it explicitly proclaims itself as a Upaniṣad.[1]

However, in any discussion of Vedānta in the first millennium AD the status of the Upaniṣads and of the thought propounded by them in the

philosophical scene of those times is a secondary matter as what is of relevance in the assessment of the position of Vedānta in the first millennium AD is the attempt at a coherent, unified presentation of their thought by Bādrāyaṇa in his *Brahmasūtras* (50 AD). The presence of Vedānta in the first millennium AD thus can only be understood in terms of what happens to the *Brahmasūtras*, and the attention they aroused in the philosophical world of India after they were composed. Normally, the impact of the foundational sūtra literature of the various schools of Indian philosophy is known by the commentaries that they generated and by the discussions and refutations they met at the hands of their opponents. Surprisingly, the *Brahmasūtras* remained entirely unnoticed until the appearance of Śaṁkara who wrote his commentary on them along with the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagvadgītā* which resulted in the famous myth of the *Prasthāna Trayi*, that is, the view that the source of Indian Philosophy lies in these three texts when even the so-called different schools of Vedānta do not treat them in this way, as except for Śaṁkara and Madhva, no one else has commented on all the three so as to establish his position as to what Vedānta really means.

Before Śaṁkara, the only thinkers who are mentioned in connection with the *Brahmasūtra* in Potter's new Bibliography are Bodhāyana (350 AD), Dramiḍācārya (525 AD), Bhartṛprapañca (550 AD), Viśwarūpadeva (600 AD)., and Brahmadatta (660 AD). As for Bodhāyana, it is doubtful whether he wrote anything on the *Brahmasūtra*, though there is sufficient evidence that he wrote on the *Mīmāṁsā Sūtra*, particularly on the Saṁkaraṣaṇa-Kāṇḍa, according to Nakamura in his work on early Vedānta philosophy.[2]

Dramiḍācārya, mentioned after Bodhāyana in Potter's bibliography, finds no mention in Nakamura and Potter's work only says that he wrote a Bhāṣya which exists in manuscript form which has neither been seen nor published by any one. Also, it appears that the work has not been referred to by subsequent thinkers in the tradition.

As for Bhartṛprapañca, he is supposed to be an exception to the general position held by most Vedāntins that Brahman cannot be known by reasoning, and that it can only be known through the *Śrūti* or perhaps even through intuition. As for Viśwarūpadeva he is not mentioned by Nakamura in his comprehensive work on early Vedānta, though he is mentioned in Potter's bibliography and is supposed to have written a work called *Vivekāmāraṭaṇḍa*.

As for Brahmadatta, he is supposed to have held a position regarding the relations between self and Brahman as both identical and different,

a position held by thinkers who have been referred to in the *Brahmasūtras*, and generally not supported by it.

The earlier thinkers referred to in the *Brahmasūtras* are, as is well known, Kārṣṇājini, Kāśakṛtsna, Ātreya, Auḍulomi, Āśamarthya, Bādari and Jaimini.

Besides the five thinkers who have been mentioned in Potter's *Bibliography* between Bādrāyana and Śaṁkara, there is the independent work of Gauḍapāda who occurs in 600 AD (new) and 550 AD (old) and whose *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* is a well-known work in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta strongly influenced by Buddhism and is by common consent supposed to have influenced Śaṁkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* in a significant manner. However, his is an independent work which has nothing to do with the *Brahmasūtra* and thus is an independent source of Vedāntic thinking in later times. In fact, Nakamura mentions him along with Bādarāyaṇa and Bhartṛhari as precursors of Śaṁkara and specifically assigns the strong advaitic position to him rather than to Bādarāyaṇa.[3]

Thus in the pre-Śaṁkara period the total presence of thinkers who could even be remotely designated as Vedāntins is not only negligible but many of them have to be included just because they have been mentioned by some one else or because their work has a marginal reference in the tradition. As for the notice of the Vedāntic thought being taken seriously by others, that seems to be even less for, according to Nakamura, we find direct references only in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* where the Vedāntic position is supposed to be refuted twice and while, according to him, there is no mention of it in the *Nyāya-Sūtras*, it is referred to in Vātasyāyana's *Bhāṣya* on the *Nyāya-Sūtras* and by Udyotakara in his *Vārtika* on the *Bhāṣya*.[4]

The situation does not seem to improve much even after Śaṁkara for, if we exclude his immediate disciples, he does not seem to have made as much of an impact as is made out by his admirers and the author of the *Śaṁkaradigvijaya*. In fact, there is little evidence of the so-called *Digvijaya* as it is the philosophers of the other schools who continue to outnumber the Vedāntins in the centuries after Śaṁkara. Not only this, even the Buddhists are ahead of the Vedāntins, both in quantity and quality, thus nullifying the myth that they were defeated by Śaṁkara. Hastāmalaka, Troṭaka, Padmapāda and Sureśvara are the well known disciples of Śaṁkara and Maṇḍana Miśra, the author of *Brahmasiddhi* can be regarded as almost half his disciple. If we exclude these, then in the post-Śaṁkara period, we have, besides Bhāskara, who has written an independent Bhāṣya on the *Brahmasūtras*, Gopālāśrama

(780 AD), Jñānaghana (900 AD), Jñānottama Bhaṭṭāraka (930 AD), Vimuktātman (960 AD), Vācaspati Miśra (960 AD), Prakāśātmana (975 AD) and Jñānottama Miśra (980 AD). Thus we have only eight Vedāntins listed in the post-Śaṁkara period in the first millennium AD, if we exclude his disciples and Maṇḍana Miśra. Within almost the same period we have 117 Buddhist thinkers and 27 Jain thinkers. As for the so-called orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika number about 13 (9+4).

The first serious notice of the advaita position seems to have been taken by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa in his explicit refutation of that position in *Nyāyamañjarī*. But he does not refer to Śaṁkara by name. As his date is supposed to be 870 AD, it can be assumed that the presence of Śaṁkara and his disciples on the philosophical scene had established the advaitic position as one of the philosophical positions to be taken into account. Udayana, whose date is supposed to be around 984 AD is another example of this as he not only refutes the Vedānta position but also seems to give the Vedāntic realization of non-difference a position just below the Naiyayika realization of mokṣa. However, he is supposed to have referred only to Bhāskara and not to Śaṁkara, thus suggesting that Śaṁkara's preeminence was not established by that time.[5] In fact, it appears that Udayana in his *Ātmatattvaviveka* has given six stages of realization of the self in ascending order and at least two of which are ascribed to advaita-Vedānta. The first stage is characterized by the appearance of object in consciousness wherein it alone is treated as real. This, according to him, is the stage of Cārvāka and Mīmāṁsā thought in philosophy which treats action for the satisfaction of oneself through the acquisition of objects alone, as *real* and meaningful. The second stage is characterized by the appearance in consciousness of the meanings of objects and is associated, according to him, with the Yogācāra school of Buddhism where it is not objects but their meanings which alone are considered as real. The third stage is supposed to be characterized by a realization of the unreality of all meanings by consciousness and is closely related to the position of Śūnyavāda Buddhism on the one hand and advaita-vedānta on the other. The fourth stage is the arising of a discriminatory consciousness where the consciousness becomes aware of its radical distinction from the object. This stage he attributes to Saṁkhya. The fifth stage of realization is where the focus of consciousness shifts from the discriminatory awareness and centres on the self luminosity of consciousness itself. This, according to him, is also the state of advaitic realization, though it is different from the advaitic realization of the third stage. The last stage of realization goes beyond this where the self is not aware even of its own self and abides completely in its own reality. This, according to him, is the highest stage and is characterized by the realization which Nyāya postulates for the self at its highest level.[6]

There seem however some problems regarding the delineation of these stages and the association of the third and the fifth with advaita Vedānta. It is not clear to whom the third position is being ascribed. As for the fifth stage it is difficult to say that it is the exact position held by Bhāskara as it seems to describe more correctly Śaṁkara's position. In any case, it seems from all this that the positions of Vedānta are only vaguely known and not in the sharp, focal manner in which they were formulated by the advaitins in the second millennium AD.

We thus have to divide the question regarding the presence of Vedānta in the first millennium AD in two parts, the first relating to the period after the *Brahmasūtra* and before Śaṁkara's Bhāṣya on it in the early eighth century AD and the second after Śaṁkara, that is, roughly from 700-1000 AD. There can be little doubt that the *Brahmasūtras* had little impact on the philosophical scene in India after their composition and in fact were practically absent from the philosophical scene if we compare them with the influence exercised by the other sūtras, particularly those relating to Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. Even the impact of Sāṁkhya, which may be regarded as independent from the traditions deriving from the Vedic corpus, was far, far greater in the period than that of the *Brahmasūtras*. We have, for example, between 50-750 AD ten Sāṁkhyan thinkers, many of whom have written independent works of their own. In fact, if we take *Ṣaṣṭitantra* as the first important Sāṁkhyan work, then we have in the first millennium AD not only the *Sāṁkhyakārikā* around 350 AD but Svarṇasaptati, 655 AD and other works totalling eight in number before Vācaspati Miśra's work on Sāṁkhya.[7]

The situation is no different if we try to find the presence of the *Brahmasūtras* in non-Vedic traditions of philosophizing such as those of the Buddhists and the Jains. Nāgārjuna who occurs around 150 AD and is the first great thinker belonging to the Mādhyamika School of Buddhism shows hardly any awareness of Vedānta as propounded in the *Brahmasūtras*, even though more than 100 years had elapsed since its composition. The situation does not seem to improve later as his disciple Āryadeva (180 AD) shows no awareness either. The Yogācāra School which seems to start with Maitreyanātha (270-350 AD) and develops through Asaṅga (360 AD) and Vasubandhu (360 AD) also does not show any awareness of the *Brahmasūtras*. This is specially significant

as they do discuss other schools of Indian philosophy such as Nyāya. The first clear cut reference to Vedānta as a distinctive school of philosophy occurs in the work of Bhavya or *Bhāvaviveka*[8] in 550 AD, that is, more than five hundred years after the composition of the *Brahmasūtras* and about 150 years before Śaṁkara appears on the scene. However, in his presentation, the elements of the Vedāntic doctrine of the Ātman seem to be inexplicably intermixed with the doctrine of the Puruṣa which finds no place either in the *Brahmasūtras* or in Gauḍapāda or Śaṁkara. Also, though he is aware of the distinction between the Jīva and the Ātman or the embodied self and the liberated self, and treats the distinction between the two as analogous to the way the infinite space is limited by adjuncts such as a pot etc., he is still not aware either of the doctrines of *Avidyā* or *Māyā* which were later to play such an important role in Śaṁkara's thought. In fact, the situation does not seem to improve even with Śāṁtarakṣita who occurs a little later than Śaṁkara, though he discusses both *puruṣa* and *Ātman* he hardly refers to Śaṁkara. The same seems to be the case with Kamalaśīla who has written a prose commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Tattasaṁgraha*.[9]

It seems that the composition of the *Brahmasūtras* had hardly any effect on the philosophical scene of India as it remained unnoticed at least till five hundred years after its composition. And even after that its major attempt to present in a unified manner the conflicting positions of the Upaniṣads and to give a Brahman-centric interpretation of it was not clearly grasped in the philosophical world of India.

The non-existence of Vedānta as a significant philosophical force in the first millennium AD will become even more clear if we notice the fact that Haribhadra Surī, the great Jain thinker belonging to 750 AD, who wrote perhaps the first survey work on the various schools of Indian philosophy, did not even mention Vedānta as a separate, distinctive school of Indian philosophy, even though he mentions not only Buddhism but also Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Sāṁkhya explicitly and even Lokāyata which certainly was not regarded as a major school of philosophy by anybody in India. As both Śāṁtarakṣita and Kamalaśīla belong to this very period, it appears that the influence of Śaṁkara and his disciples had not permeated the philosophical atmosphere as is usually alleged by those who regard *Śaṁkara Digvijaya* as an authentic work descriptive of his triumph over all other philosophical schools of India. However, as the millennium moves towards its closure there seems some evidence of the spread of the influence of Śaṁkara's thought as one finds, for example, in Udayana's *Ātmatattvaviveka* in which there seems to be a distinctive attempt to come to terms with the

Advaitic position as regards ultimate realization. Within the Nyāya framework, particularly the one relating to the denial of the self-luminosity of the Ātman. Udayana's work comes closest to an advaitin position even though it does not declare itself to be such. But even if one does not accept such a characterization of Udayana's work, there can hardly be a debate about the presence of powerful advaitic leanings in that work. The whole work in fact closes with a recommendation to meditate on the self and suggests the gradual stages of realization which would occur during the course of the meditation. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Mīmāṁsā position is equated almost with that of the Cārvāka and that the Śāṁkhya position of discrimination between the self and the object is placed very high in the scale of meditational realization on the self. The millennium which had shown, during most of its course, no signs of Vedānta closes with signs of its impending dominance in the forthcoming millennium where it establishes its supremacy, particularly after the disappearance of Buddhism in east India with the destruction of Nālandā. The only rival that it has in the second millennium AD is Nyāya on the one hand, which repudiates Udayana's attempt of advaitising the Nyāya position and Rāmānuja and Madhva Vedānta on the other. There is thus practically no Vedānta in the first millennium AD and the idea of its dominant presence there is a super-imposition by the historiography of Indian philosophy due to its being dazzled by the picture in the second millennium AD. The propounders of the theory of Adhyāsa have perhaps themselves imposed one on the history of philosophy in India.

Notes and References

1. See on this whole point my article 'The Upaniṣads—What are They?' in *Indian Philosophy—A Counter Perspective*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991.
2. Upavarṣa who occurred around 150 AD is sometimes mentioned in this connection. However, according to Potter he is only supposed to have written a *Vṛtti* on the Mīmāṁsā Sūtra while according to Nakamura he has also written on the Saṁkarṣaṇakaṇḍa.
3. Hajimae Nakamura, *History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1983, p. 127.
4. Ibid., pp. 330-56.
5. Ibid., p. 67.
6. *Ātmatattvaviveka*, Translation, Explanation and Analytical critical summary by N.S. Dravid, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1995, pp. 455-58.
7. Ibid., see p. 335.
8. Ibid., p. 184.
9. Ibid., pp. 226-29.

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