



Ancient India: The foundation to modern society

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Abstract : *India's history and culture is dynamic, spanning back to the beginning of human civilization. It begins with a mysterious culture along the Indus River and in farming communities in the southern lands of India. The history of India is punctuated by constant integration of migrating people with the diverse cultures that surround India. India is the planet's largest, oldest if exclude the 19th and 20th centuries wealthiest civilization. The influence of ancient Indian history on the modern world is due to the many manifestations of Indian genius and the fact that the language people used was so logical that it nourished critical thinking on the fundamental unity underlying mankind's diversity.*

Key words: *Migrating people, communities, migrating people*

1. Introduction

India's history and culture is dynamic, spanning back to the beginning of human civilization. It begins with a mysterious culture along the Indus River and in farming communities in the southern lands of India. The history of India is punctuated by constant integration of migrating people with the diverse cultures that surround India. Available evidence suggests that the use of iron, copper and other metals was widely prevalent in the Indian sub-continent at a fairly early period, which is indicative of the progress that this part of the world had made. By the end of the fourth millennium BC, India had emerged as a region of highly developed civilization.

2. The Indus Valley Civilization

The History of India begins with the birth of the Indus Valley Civilization, more precisely known as Harappan Civilization. It flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia, what today is Pakistan and Western

India. The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China. Nothing was known about this civilization till 1920s when the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed. The ruins of buildings and other things like household articles, weapons of war, gold and silver ornaments, seals, toys, pottery wares, etc., show that some four to five thousand years ago a highly developed Civilization flourished in this region.

The Indus valley civilization was basically an urban civilization and the people lived in well-planned and well-built towns, which were also the centers for trade. The ruins of Mohenjodaro and Harappa show that these were magnificent merchant cities-well planned, scientifically laid, and well looked after. They had wide roads and a well-developed drainage system. The houses



were made of baked bricks and had two or more storeys.

The highly civilized Harappans knew the art of growing cereals, and wheat and barley constituted their staple food. They consumed vegetables and fruits and ate mutton, pork and eggs as well. Evidences also show that they wore cotton as well as woollen garments. By 1500 BC, the Harappan culture came to an end. Among various causes ascribed to the decay of Indus Valley Civilization are the recurrent floods and other natural causes like earthquake, etc.

3. Vedic Civilization

The Vedic civilization is the earliest civilization in the history of ancient India. It is named after the Vedas, the early literature of the Hindu people. The Vedic Civilization flourished along the river Saraswati, in a region that now consists of the modern Indian states of Haryana and Punjab. Vedic is synonymous with Hinduism, which is another name for religious and spiritual thought that has evolved from the Vedas.

The Ramayana and Mahabharata were the two great epics of this period.

4. The Buddhist Era

During the life time of Lord Gautam Buddha, sixteen great powers (Mahajanpadas) existed in the 7th and early 6th centuries BC. Among the more important republics were the Sakyas of Kapilavastu and the Licchavis of Vaishali.

5. Alexander's Invasion

In 326 BC, Alexander invaded India, after crossing the river Indus he advanced towards Taxila. He then challenged king Porus, ruler of the kingdom between the rivers Jhelum and Chenab. The Indians were defeated in the fierce battle, even

though they fought with elephants, which the Macedonians had never before seen. Alexander captured Porus and, like the other local rulers he had defeated, allowed him to continue to govern his territory.

6. Gupta Dynasty

After the Kushanas, the Guptas were the most important dynasty. The Gupta period has been described as the Golden Age of Indian history. The first famous king of the Gupta dynasty was Ghatotkacha's son Chandragupta I. He married Kumaradevi, the daughter of the chief of the Licchavis. This marriage was a turning point in the life of Chandragupta I. He got Pataliputra in dowry from the Licchavis. From Pataliputra, he laid the foundation of his empire and started conquering many neighbouring states with the help of the Licchavis. He ruled over Magadha (Bihar), Prayaga and Saketa (east Uttar Pradesh). His kingdom extended from the river Ganges to Allahabad. Chandragupta I also got the title of Maharajadhiraja (King of Kings) and ruled for about fifteen years.

7. Harshavardhana

With the commencement of the 7th century, Harshavardhana (606-647 A.D.) ascended the throne of Thaneshwar and Kannauj on the death of his brother, Rajyavardhana. By 612 Harshavardhana consolidated his kingdom in northern India.

In 620 A.D. Harshavardhana invaded the Chalukya kingdom in the Deccan, which was then ruled by Pulakesin II. But the Chalukya resistance proved tough for Harshavardhana and he was defeated. Harshavardhana is well known for his religious toleration, able administration



and diplomatic relations. He maintained diplomatic relations with China and sent envoys, who exchanged ideas of the Chinese rulers and developed their knowledge about each other.

7. Modern History of India

Early modern European history is usually seen to span from the start of the 15th century, through the Age of Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. During the late 16th and the 17th Centuries, the European trading companies in India competed with each other ferociously. By the last quarter of the 18th Century the English had outdone all others and established themselves as the dominant power in India. The British administered India for a period of about two centuries and brought about revolutionary changes in the social, political and the economic life of the country.

Once the British set their foot solidly on Indian soil, they began the commercial exploitation of the natural resources of India. By the middle of the 19th Century arrogant exploitation of the people had tried the patience of the Indians to the limit. The British imperialism reached its zenith between the middle of the nineteenth century and the First World War. The exploitative policies of the British in India saw the birth of nationalist agitation against it. With increasing intrusion of aliens in their lives, a group of middle class Indians formed the Indian National Congress (1885).

The anti-British struggle became truly a mass movement with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi (1869 - 1948). It was followed by numerous movements

against the British rule. With the passage of time and stubbornness of the Indians the British had come to realize that the day was not far off when they will have to quit India. Successive campaigns had the effect of driving the British out of India in 1947, but with independence came the independence of the country into Pakistan.

Freedom Fighters India

His brave deeds earned Vallabhbhai Patel the title of the iron man of India. For his role in the Bardoli Satyagraha, Patel came to be called the Sardar. Sardar Patel was a famous lawyer but gave up his practice in order to fight for the freedom of the country. After independence he became the deputy PM of India and played an important role the integration of India by merging numerous princely states with the Indian Union.

Indian Independence

The feeling of nationalism had started growing in the minds of Indians as early as the middle of the nineteenth century but it grew more with the formation of the Indian national Congress in 1885. Though the Congress started on a moderate platform but with the passage of time and apathetic attitude of the British government, the national movement began to shape well.

8. Ancient India as foundation to modern society

India is the planet's largest, oldest if exclude the 19th and 20th centuries wealthiest civilization. The influence of ancient Indian history on the modern world is due to the many manifestations of Indian genius and the fact that the language people used was so logical that it nourished critical thinking



on the fundamental unity underlying mankind's diversity.

Mathematics

Indians invented zero and the number system, one of the greatest innovations in history. The decimal system, the value of pi, algebra, trigonometry, calculus and many mathematical concepts were all born in India. The largest number Greeks and Romans used was 10 to the power of 6; well before 5000 B.C., Indians used numbers as big as 10 to the power of 53.

Albert Einstein was once quoted: "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discoveries could have been made."

Medicine

Sushruta was the father of medicine -- the first to invent the art of performing surgery with anesthesia. The first school of medicine, Ayurveda, was based on a systematic knowledge of plant-derived medicines and is practiced effectively even today. Detailed knowledge of anatomy, embryology, digestion, metabolism, physiology, genetics, immunity, psychology and etiology can be found in many ancient Indian texts.

Metaphysics/astronomy

Some of Europe's greatest discoveries were first made in India thousands of years earlier, before Europe even existed. Gravity, for example. It was not Isaac Newton, but an Indian named Brahmagupta, who explained gravity, 1,000 years before the British Empire emerged. Ancient Indians had a profound knowledge of the origin and age of the universe and Earth, the circumference of the Earth and other planets. Mathematician Bhaskaracharya

accurately calculated the time it takes our planet to orbit the sun to be 365.258756484 days, well before Western astronomers.

The Indian system of astronomy is by far the oldest. It was the source from which the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Jews derived their knowledge. The motion of the stars on the tables of Giovanni Cassini and Tobias Mayer, used in the 19th century, do not vary by even a minute from Indian calculations made 4,500 years before. Indian tables give the same annual variation of the moon as discovered by Tycho Brahe -- a variation unknown to the schools of Alexandria and the Arabs.

Religion

Four of the world's major religions -- Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism -- originated in India. India's literary, artistic and philosophical contributions to the world are far greater than those of any other civilization in history.

Almost all religious, philosophical and mathematical theories taught by the Pythagoreans were known in India in the sixth century B.C. Indian sages of philosophy were the prototypes of Greece -- to whose works Plato, Thales and Pythagoras were disciples. The priests of Egypt and the sages of Greece drew directly from India. Nearly 2,500 years ago, Pythagoras went from Samos to the Indian Ganges to learn geometry.

Indians also invented yoga -- the art of unifying the mind and body. Today, it is practiced for its health benefits all over the world. The Chinese learned yoga, martial arts and Buddhism from India. Chess, snakes and ladders, buttons, high-grade steel manufacturing, the art of



navigation, playing cards, the gymnasium, the university, rocket artillery, almost every geometrical instrument, the cultivation of cotton and jute, mining, the concept of gross domestic product -- all have roots in India.

Conclusion

It is concluded that if there is one place where all of humanity's dreams have found a home from the very earliest days of existence, it is India. Modern Indians should understand the original scientific culture their ancestors developed, make use of modern technology to demonstrate their in-born abilities, and strive for breakthroughs that will help all of society. And modern writers may need to rewrite the scientific history books after consulting Indian experts.

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