

# India: From the Year 1.4 million BCE to the Year 1818 CE

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*A Compilation of 20 Twitter Threads from  
2022 on India's History, Literature, Philoso-  
phy, and Culture*

*\*\*This document is a compilation of Twitter Threads published on the Twitter Account of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. Although they are based on authentic academic research, these write-ups only offer a superficial summary of the topic. These threads are based on various sources and lectures by individual scholars and aim to provide basic information to readers. They do not reflect Institute's views or position\*\**

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## About Bharat Vidya – The online learning platform for Indian History and Heritage

[www.bharatvidya.in](http://www.bharatvidya.in) is an online learning platform of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), which provides on-demand and self-paced access to online courses on diverse topics related to India's history and heritage.

The first six courses published on the platform are-

- [Veda-Vidya – Veda-s to Vedaanga-s \(introductory course for beginners\)](#)
- [भारतीय दर्शनशास्त्र - एक परिचय \(Hindi\)](#)
- [18 Parvans of Mahabharata – Introduction to the Incredible Epic](#)
- [Kalidasa and Bhasa – Two Icons and Two Iconic Plays](#)
- [Fundamentals of Archaeology](#)
- [Digital Sanskrit Learning](#)

Courses on Bharat Vidya are based on primary sources, and are purely academic.

Through Bharat Vidya, we aim to reach people at large and schools and colleges that lack qualified resources on the subjects. The courses are compliant with the new National Education Policy.

Readers can also follow BORI on social media handles for regular updates on the Institute's new content, courses, and publications.

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/Bhandarkarl>

Facebook - <https://facebook.com/BORIPUNE>

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YouTube - <https://youtube.com/@bhandarkarorientalresearch2553...>

Koo - <https://kooapp.com/profile/BORIIndia...>

Instagram - [https://instagram.com/bori\\_1917/](https://instagram.com/bori_1917/)

Medium - <https://medium.com/india-in-depth>

## Five unique Archaeological Sites in India

There are many prehistoric sites across India, which shed light on the history of human settlement in the country. This thread enlists five such unique sites.

### 1. Bori (Pune)

*(Not to be confused with B.O.R.I. - the institute is old, but not 'that' old)*

The site at Bori provides some of the oldest evidence of human settlement in India. Reported artefacts from Bori suggest the existence of humans in India around 1.4 million years ago.

However, the most fascinating part about this place is that the site was found covered in volcanic ash, which came from the eruption of the super-volcano Mount Toba. Eruptions of Mount Toba over the millennia are believed to be highly influential catalyst events in the earth's history.

### 2. Isampur (Karnataka)

A densely concentrated complex of 200 odd sites, Isampur excavation, uncovered a human settlement that is approximately 11 lakh years old site. At Isampur, ancient manufactured tools made from bedrock can be found.

### 3. Suabare (Odisha)

Odisha offers rich and diverse archaeological sites from various prehistoric eras. One such place, a chalcolithic site of Suabare, is unique because many elephant bones are found here.

### 4. Agiyabir (Uttar Pradesh)

Situated on the banks of the Ganga, the Agiyabir site shows evidence of a Neolithic human settlement that carried out subsistence fishery.

## **5. Pre-Harappan Pit Dwelling Site of Girawad (Haryana)**

Pit-dwelling site is a peculiar type of settlement. In such sites, we find that ancient men dug pits 3 to 5 meters in diameter in the ground for occupation. These are found in places that experience harsh winters.

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These are excerpts from a lecture by Dr. Pramod Jogalekar, which is a part of the online course "Fundamentals of Archaeology". The course is available for on-demand access on [www.bharatvidya.in](http://www.bharatvidya.in), the online learning platform of B.O.R.I., at the following link - <https://bharatvidya.in/p/fundamentals-of-archaeology>. The course fee is INR 1800.

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## A brief overview of Rigveda and its expanse

Rigveda is a collection of hymns (सूक्त) and the oldest known Vedic text. Rigveda can be defined as 'ऋचां वेदः ऋग्वेदः'. It means a Samhita, which consists of Riks or Mantras.

We find references to 21 branches of Rigveda, but we can find only two of them as living traditions, which are Shakala (शाकल) and Bashkala (बाष्कल).

Today only the 'Shakala' branch still exists in a well-arranged form. Its Samhita has a total of 1028 hymns and 10,528 verses/mantras. We find two arrangements of Rigveda based on the classification of the number of Mantras. The arrangements are called Mandala arrangement and Ashtaka Arrangement.

1st and 10th mandalas are the newest and comprise the largest number of hymns. Most of the oldest hymns are found in the 2nd to 7th Mandalas. These and the 8th Mandala are also called Rishi mandalas. The 9th Mandala is entirely dedicated to the 'Soma-Pavamana.'

Each Sukta of the Rigveda has a deity, a theme, Rishi, and a subject.

Broadly we can find a few themes of Rigvedic hymns or Sukta-s such as 'Devata-Stuti' (praising deities), 'Dana-stuti' (importance of donation), 'Samvada' (Sukta-s in dialogue form) and Philosophical Sukta-s. The principal theme, and the essence of the Rigveda, is Knowledge.

The Rigvedic literature further includes -

- Brahmanas – Aitareya Brahman (ऐतरेय ब्राह्मण), Shankhayana/ Kaushitaki Brahmana (शाङ्खायन/ कौशितकी ब्राह्मण)
- Aranyakas – Aitareya Aranyaka (ऐतरेय आरण्यक), Kaushitaki Aranyaka (कौशितकी आरण्यक)
- Upanishad – Aitareya Upanishad (ऐतरेय उपनिषद्)

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“Vedvidya – From Veda-s to Vedaanga-s” is an online course by B.O.R.I., available on [www.bharatvidya.in](http://www.bharatvidya.in) at the following link - <https://bharatvidya.in/p/veda-s-to-vedanga-s>.

The course offers a comprehensive introduction to Vedic Literature and also draws upon Vedic tradition in offering glimpses of oral tradition and unique original footage of a Yajna and Veda Pathashaalaa. The course fee is INR 1500.

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## The Ancient Indian Port of Lothal

*An incredible 4500-year-old story of human ingenuity, international trade, climate change, calamities, and the world's earliest known dock*

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Around 6,000 years ago, a nascent civilisation emerged on the banks of the Sindhu (Indus) and the Saraswati rivers. Over the next two millennia, it spread around the region in all directions, from Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, and Rakhi-gadi to today's western Uttar Pradesh in the West and Dholavira in the South.

The town of Lothal, along with Dholavira, was one of the southernmost points of this civilisation.

There is evidence that the Pre-Indus cultures occupied the region, and around 2,700-2,400 years ago, they amalgamated into the prosperous Indus civilisation.

Lothal sits in the Gulf of Khambat, near where the Sabarmati River system meets the Arabian Sea. It is situated 80 K.M.s southwest of Ahmedabad.

Overseas trade was a vital driver of the prosperity of Lothal. The town developed several local industries to fulfil the needs of Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Sumerian cultures. The Indian Ocean was perhaps the first ocean to be explored for trade purposes. Thousands of miles of the shallow sea waters was the bridge that connected Indian, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Sumerian cultures.

Lothal exported beautiful beads from the Narmada valley, cotton, timber, and ivory in return for baser metals, wool, and cosmetics. Between 2,450 BCE to 2,350 BCE, Lothal was a small dock that could house small boats.



However, the small trading town of Lothal had a natural nemesis: floods. Every few years or floods would ravage the village. The flood of 2,350 BCE was particularly brutal, and it levelled the town completely.

The people of Lothal created an opportunity out of the calamity.

While planning the new town, or rather a new city, they added an artificial dock for berthing larger ships, and in a more significant number than was hitherto possible. The engineers built the dock away from the main water-stream but still close enough to the city so that the vessels could be safely berthed even during the storms.

In the first instance, a trapezoid basin, 214 × 36 meters, was excavated on the eastern margin of the city and enclosed with massive brick walls. The excavated earth was used to make bricks for constructing the wharf, warehouse, and private dwelling. The structure's design reveals that all problems relating to dockyard engineering, such as the rate of silting, the velocity of the current, and the thrust of water in the basin, were carefully considered. First-class kiln-fired bricks were used in the construction.

Dr. S. R. Rao (A.S.I.), in his 1964 essay "Shipping in Ancient India," offers an astonishing comparison of Lothal with the modern-day ports of Mumbai and Vishakhapatnam.

<i>Name of the port</i>	<i>Name of the dock-yard</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1. Lothal	—	209.3 m(E) 224 m(W)	34.7 m(S) 36.4 m(N)	4.15 m at high tide; 2 m. at low tide	Minimum depth over silt
2. Bombay	(a) Mere Weather	152.4 m	19.96 m	6.71 m	—do—
	(b) Hughes (divisible in 2 compartments of varying length)	304.8 m	30.48 m	10.06 m	—do—
3. Visakhapatnam	—	111.46 m	18.29 m	4.27 m	Below L.W.

This new port transformed Lothal into a booming and prosperous city for almost 350 years.

However, a massive flood in 2,000 BCE caused tremendous damage to the port. Through strategic repairs were made swiftly, a natural shift rendered them void. As a result of the flood, the river silted its mouth and abruptly changed its course towards the East. It cut off the ships' access from the Gulf of Khambhat to the dock.

The citizens did not give up. They dug up a canal - 2 meters deep and 2 km long — to connect the dock to the gulf again. It, however, diminished the viability of larger ships entering the port. Trade declined as a result. While disasters dealt a sudden blow, a consistent process of climate change, which included weakened Monsoons and resultant land aridity and deforestation, were harbingers of a slow death.

The declining city was wiped out of existence in a deluge in 1900 B.C.E. While people continued to inhabit the region for eons, Lothal did not reach its earlier height again. At its peak, Lothal was a shining example of the evolving human race and the ingenuity and gumption of the ancient Indian civilisation.

The reconstruction of Lothal's long-lost glory has been a remarkable triumph of the interdisciplinary field of Archaeology. This process has included the study of marine archaeology, anthropology, ecology and climate, and metallurgy.

These fundamentals of archaeology are covered in our online course that is available on our online learning platform, [www.bharatvidya.n](http://www.bharatvidya.n), at <https://bharatvidya.in/p/fundamentals-of-archaeology>.

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## The Geographic Details of India Mentioned in the Shatapatha-Brahmana (शतपथब्राह्मण)

Shatapatha-Brahmana is the Brahmana text associated with the Shukla Yajurveda.

This enormous Samhita was said to have consisted of 100 adhyaya-s, and thus was deemed "Shatapatha."

The Shatapatha-Brahmana is replete with references to debates in the royal court of the Videha kingdom. Videha kingdom corresponds with modern-day parts of Bihar and Jharkhand.

Shatapatha Brahmana gives decisive clues about the spread of Vedic culture from the north-western parts of India to the eastern parts of the country. We find repeated references to the regions of Kuru, Panchala, Kosala, and Videha in the Shatapatha-Brahmana as opposed to the areas around the Sindhu river in the earlier Vedic texts, such as the Rigveda.

Shatapatha-Brahmana (1.4.1.10) mentions the Sadanira (सदानीरा) river as the boundary between the Kosal and Videha kingdoms. Sadanira river is the modern-day Gandaki (गण्डकी) river.

Another interesting point is the tale of Manu and Matsya (fish) and the great floods (प्रलय). While there are distant and vague allusions to the story in the Atharva Veda, the full extent of the story first appears in the Shatapatha Brahmana.

These are merely some tiny glimpses of the Shatapatha-Brahmana. Beyond these aspects, it greatly elaborates on many topics such as vidya-s, rituals and ritualistic practices, and philosophy.

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## The essence and evolution of "Dharma"

The concept of "Dharma" is a defining aspect of the Indian civilisation. A synthesis of values, qualities, rules, customs, contextually appropriate behaviour, ideal decision-making, and devotional practices; the scope and the meaning of "Dharma" have evolved over thousands of years.

It is said that Veda-s are the origin of Dharma - "Vedo'khilo hi dharmamoolam."

The word 'Dharma' occurs as an adjective in the hymns of the Rg-Veda' or as a noun and primarily means 'upholder or supporter,' as is evident from the Rgvedic passages.

In the Atharva-Veda\*, the word 'Dharma means "merit acquired by the performance of religious rites. In the Aitareya Brahmana, it is used in an abstract sense of 'the whole body of religious duties.

In Chandogyopanisad, the word "Dharma" is employed in the sense of peculiar duties of the Ashramas, i.e., stages of life.

"Dharma" ultimately means 'the privileges, duties, and obligations of an individual as a member of their varna and the community in a particular stage of life. This can be seen across texts such as the Taittiriyaopanisad, Bhagavad-gita, Manu-Smṛti, and the Yajñavalkya-Smṛti.

Medhātithi on the Manu-Smṛti includes under Dharma, the Varna-dharma, Asrama dharma, varnashrama- Dharma, Naimittika dharma, and Gunadharmā. The Gunadharmā implied the duties of a king to protect the subjects, and Different texts such as the Manu-Smṛti, Yajñavalkya-Smṛti, and the Matsya Purāṇa emphasised the man's possession or cultivation of virtues as Dharma.

There are further definitions of Dharma given in the different systems of philosophy like the Purva-Mimámsa, Vaishesika, etc. They maintain "that is Dharma from which results the happiness and supreme blessedness."

In the Buddhist works, however, the word 'dharma' means 'the whole teaching of Buddha. Another meaning, 'an element of existence of matter, mind, and forces' is also suggested for the term 'Dharma.'

In the Puranas, social service and removal of sufferings and distress are treated as the highest Dharma, as noted in the History of Dharmashastra by Shri. P.V. Kane.

Dr. Kane has also pointed out that the meaning of Dharma is shifted to vratas, bhakti, nama-smarana, dana, bathing in a sacred place, and visiting holy sites, thereby securing higher results with little effort, particularly at the time of the compositions of the Puranas.

Lastly, in the Kularnava'-Tantra, the kula-dharma is treated as superior to all the dharmas, such as sacrifices, pilgrimages, vratas, etc.

The idea of Dharma is hence a complex one. It is an amalgamation of philosophy, psychology, and interpersonal behavioural practices. It offers a relevant discourse in our era of uncertainty, crisis, and many challenges.

Therefore, we at the Bhandarkar Institute have decided to launch a mini-YouTube series on the idea of Dharma, based on the "History of Dharmashastra" by Shri P. V. Kane and "Essence of Dharmashastra" by Shri S.G. Moghe. This thread is based on the same – <https://youtu.be/XSDmmPuRPBY>

The books History of Dharmashastra and the Essence of Dharmashastra are both the publications of [@BhandarkarI](#) and are available on the online book-store - [bori-india.stores.instamojo.com](http://bori-india.stores.instamojo.com)

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## How to Overcome the fear of Death?

Death is one of the biggest fears and fixations of humanity. Death, and especially what comes after, is probably the greatest enigmas of our existence. The uncertainty, anxiety, and mystery surrounding Death have led to the eternal desire to conquer and to understand Death.

Upanishads and several other ancient Indian texts have deliberated on this existential mystery. We are going to gain a glimpse of it through three stories.

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**Nachiketa** was the son of a person called Vajshravā.

Vajshravā once arranged a sacrifice. In the sacrifice, he offered himself as Dakshina in his entirety. When one offers oneself entirely, his son, too, is included in that.

A kind and honest soul even at a young age, Nachiketa asked his father as to whom he would be presented he pledged? His father ignored him for the first time. But when Nachiketa persistently asked the same question, Vajshravā retorted, "I am going to donate you to Death."

This reaction was purely driven by anger.

But when Nachiketa heard that his father had given him to Death and saw that Death hasn't come to fetch him, he decided to go to Death, to Yama, himself.

For three days, Nachiketa waited for Yama outside Yama's abode.

When Yama saw the young boy, he was startled. He, though, first apologised for making Nachiketa wait. Yama said, "It is a sin if a guest starves at your doorstep. As my repentance, I grant you three boons."

In the first boon, Nachiketa asked for his father's anger to vanish, his heart to be happy, and that he should welcome Nachiketa with love on his return. Secondly, he asked for a complete Knowledge of Agni. Yama gladly agreed, saying, "Indeed! Agni is the backbone of the world and is mysterious."

Finally, Nachiketā asked for the Knowledge of Atman as his third boon. Nachiketa asked, "what happens when a person dies? People say that the Atman remains, but what does it mean?"

Yama was now in a bind.

He could not come around the idea of giving such a coveted and complex Atmajnana to a young boy like Nachiketa.

He implored Nachiketa to instead ask for a life of a hundred years or progeny that would live for a hundred years or cattle, wealth, and a kingdom of the whole world.

However, Nachiketa was resolute. He was aware of the transient nature of wealth and power. He insisted that wealth or kingdom held little allure for him.

The answer pleased Yama.

Yama praised Nachiketa's ability to grasp the difference between "Shreyas" (beneficial) and "Preyas" (gratifying), and Yama appreciated that Nachiketa chose "Shreyas" over "Preyas."

Yama proceeded to grant him the Knowledge discussed in all the Upanishads, including the essence of everything - ॐ. ॐ Is known as Aksharbrahma. Knowledge of Aksharbrahma leads to the understanding of Atmajnana.



Yama elaborated upon "Atmasvaroopa" and the difference between Atman and the body. Yama said Atman is understood by them, whose organs had satiated and whose grief had vanished. When organs disappear in mind, mind in intellect, and intellect in Atman, everything merges in the Atmatattva, and 'jiva' and 'brahman' are in union.

This is Atmajnana.

Only those who are "anandmaya," full of happiness, can realise the Atman. Atman is not understood by just teaching or just by the intellect. It is understood only when the Atmatattva feels its Knowledge should "happen" to a person.

Yama's last advice is the famous quote, 'uttishthata jagrata...' - Get up, wake up and go to a guru, acquire the Atmajnana.

This shows that Nachiketa won over Yama and, thereby, Death. He did so through the pursuit of Knowledge. So, wisdom or Knowledge can triumph over the fear of Death.

Now we come to the well-known story of **Satyavana-Savitri**.

This story occurs in the Aaranyaka parvan of the Mahabharata. In this story, she stops Yama with her love for her husband.

When Yama took away Satyavan's life, he freed the soul stuck in the bonds of the body. As a result, Satyavan's body became lifeless. Savitri stopped Yama. She insisted that she wished to accompany her husband wherever he went, including the afterlife.

She was astute and articulate. Yama gave in to her love and her intellectual argument. He was pleased with her talk and told her to ask for a boon.

Savitri asked for her father-in-law's lost eye-sight and kingdom and Satyavan's long life. Happy with her, Yama blessed her with all the boons, and Satyavan came back to life.

Here, Savitri won over Death with love.

The third story comes from Puranas, **the story of Markandeya rishi.**

A rishi named Murkandu did not have a child. He thus performed penance. Happy with his penance, Lord Shiva appeared and gave him two choices: he would either get a brilliant son who would only live for sixteen years or an ignorant one with a long life. Knowing the importance of intellect, sage Murkandu asked for a son with a short life but a brilliant mind. That's how Markandeya was born.

Markandeya went on to become a faithful devotee of lord Shiva and also developed into a wise soul. When the day of his Death arrived, he went to a Shiva temple and sat there quietly, embracing the Shiva linga. A beautiful relationship between God and devotees is seen in this story.

Yama arrived to take Markadeya away when 16 years were complete. He threw his trap over Markadeya, but since Markadeya was embracing the Shiva-linga, the trap covered the Shiva Linga too. Due to the pull, the Shiva-linga cracked, and Shiva appeared. Furious with Yama for snatching his devotee, the enraged Shiva killed Yama.

However, he had to bring Yama back to life again to maintain the balance of the worldly cycle of birth and Death, the process of growth and decay.

Markandeya rishi, thus, was saved.

Since they conquered Death, Markandeya and Shiva were both deemed Mrityunjaya. And bhagwan Shiva is hence called Mrityunjayeshwara.

The critical point here is, in the story of Yama-Nachiketa, Nachiketa wins over Death by the power of Knowledge- Jnana, Savitri wins over Death by the power of love- Priti and Markandeya rishi has won over Death by the power of devotion, bhakti.

The discussion on the principle of Death is the common thread in all these three stories. On a broader level, these stories also indicate some ways to deal with and overcome the debilitating feeling of fear.

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This write-up is a part of a lecture by Dr. Gauri Moghe on Upanishads in the online course, *Vedvidya – Veda-s to Vedaanga-s*. It is an online course by B.O.R.I., which is available on [www.bharatvidya.in](http://www.bharatvidya.in) at the following link - <https://bharatvidya.in/p/veda-s-to-vedanga-s>. The course offers a comprehensive introduction to Vedic Literature and also draws upon Vedic tradition in offering glimpses of oral tradition and unique original footage of a Yajna and Veda Pathashaalaa. The course fee is INR 1500.

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## Five interesting facts about Ramayana's different versions across Asia

The epic saga of Ramayana transcends borders and the barriers of race, religion, and language.

Ramayana has cast an everlasting shadow on Asia, and many cultures have adopted it as their own.

This thread enlists five instances where the adaptations of Ramayana take a unique twist.

- The Thai version of the Ramayana contains twice the number of verses compared to the original Indian epic. Ramayana has 24,000 verses, whereas the Thai recession has 50,286 verses.
- In countries like Malaysia, the naval designations similar to the Admiral are called Laksamana, inspired by Lakshmana of the Ramayana.
- In Laos, the version of Ramayana differs unexpectedly. In this recession, Hanumān is a son of Shri Rāma and Sītā
- In Myanmar's Ramayana, Mount Popa is believed to be the Dronagiri Mountain.
- In China, the Chinese Tripitaka depicts a Buddhist version of Ramayana, in which Shri Rama and Sita are shown as siblings.

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## Five thoughts on governance and economy from the Shanti-Parvan of the Mahabharata

Shanti-parvan is a dialogue between Yudhishthira and Bhishma. In his dying moments, Bhishma advises Yudhishthira on the intricacies of Raj Dharma. The term Raj-Dharma is a broad term including governance, jurisprudence, personal behaviour of the king, and policy-making. Here are five pieces of Bhishma's advice on taxation and financial management of the kingdom.

1. A king who wishes for the state's safety must spend on defence but should also invest in keeping the peace. A king who desires this should incorporate a tax for this purpose in their regime. (Shanti-Parvan 12.69)
2. It is mentioned in multiple places that the overall taxation should constitute 1/6th of a person's income. (Shanti-Parvan 12.71)
3. A king ought to focus on empowering the livelihoods of the people. Mahabharata mentions three activities in this context: agriculture, cattle and animal husbandry, and trade. Bhishma advises Yudhishthira to protect people engaged in these activities. (Shanti-Parvan 12.89)
4. Like a gardener who nurtures their garden and only plucks an austere and just amount of flowers and fruits, a king must tax his people in a similar careful manner. (Shanti-Parvan 12.72)
5. Taxes should be collected with due consideration to the context of time and place. Taxes should be increased gradually. (Shanti-Parvan 12.89)

Shanti-Parvan, along with the subsequent Anushasana-parvan, remains a treasure trove of ancient wisdom into the best practices of human behavior in various contexts

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## Five Hallmarks of a Great Leader According to Mahabharata

1. 56.34 - न कोशः परमो ह्यन्यो राज्ञां पुरुषसंचयात् । - The Rulers' best treasure is the accumulation of competent persons in several spheres.
2. 56.40 - तस्मान्नैव मृदुर्नित्यं तीक्ष्णो वापि भवेन्नृपः । वसन्तेऽर्क इव श्रीमान्न शीतो न च घर्मदः ।  
- The Ruler should neither always be mild nor always be severe. They should be attractive like the sun in the springtime: neither cold nor causing perspiration.
3. 58.15 - उत्थानधीरः पुरुषो वाग्धीरानधितिष्ठति । - A person proficient in actual achievements stands far superior to someone who is only skilled in words and schemes. Actions matter far more than just words and claims.
4. 69.4 - आत्मा जेयः सदा राज्ञा ततो जेयाश्च शत्रवः । - The Ruler should first conquer and control their Self and only after that should proceed to conquer their opponents.
5. 59.57 - अलब्धलिप्सा लब्धस्य तथैव च विवर्धनं । प्रदानं च विवृद्धस्य पात्रेभ्यो विधिवत्तथा । =  
Acquiring what has not been acquired, augmenting what has been obtained, and donating what has been augmented for worthy objects and with necessary planning.

These five verses sum up some key attributes of leadership, such as:

1. Eye for talent
2. Dispassionate, patient and astute behaviour
3. Focus on accomplished actions
4. Self-awareness and self-control
5. Proactive and prudent planning

These verses and the translations are taken from the Introduction to Shanti Parvan, the 16th volume of the Critical Edition of Mahabharata published by the Bhandarkar Institute. It was edited by Shri Shripad Krishna Belvalkar: the founding father of the Bhandarkar Institute.

This is a minor glimpse of the incredible epic that is Mahabharata.

Visit "18 Parvans of Mahabharata - An Introduction to the Incredible Epic" to learn more about this foundational heritage of the Indian civilization. - <https://bharatvidya.in/p/18-parvans-of-mahabharata>

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## 14 Inscriptions of Ashoka - A Peek into the Ancient Emperor's Mind and Policies

Today we know Ashoka as one of the mightiest emperors of the ancient world, whose empire stretched from Eastern India to Central Asia. However, for centuries, the memory of the great emperor Ashoka and his empire was lost to history.

An accidental discovery of an ancient inscription written in an enigmatic script spurred the search for the identity of a forgotten king and the lost language. The subsequent hunt led to the discovery of the Brahmi script, and eventually, it led to the identity of Emperor Ashoka and his empire as it existed in the 2nd century B.C.E.

The eventually discovered 14 inscriptions of Ashoka shed light on the political philosophy of the great emperor, the geography of his empire, his understanding of Vedic & Shramana traditions, influences of Buddhism, Hinduism & Jainism, his relations with the Persians, the Greek-Roman world, and his vision for his public.

Following are highlights of each of the 14 inscriptions of Ashoka.

1. In the first inscription, Ashoka desists from the practice of Slaughter, and he further commands a judicious selection of animals according to the purpose.
2. Ashoka emphasizes the importance of planting and encourages the collection of medicinal herbs required by humans and animals. This edict mentions the Pandyas, Satyapuras, and Keralaputras of South India.
3. Ashoka defines Dhamma as the following: serve and respect your parents, elders, friends, relatives, and honor and take care of elders. He mentions



that a Brahman is someone very learned, and Shraman is the learned one who has renounced everything.

4. Ashoka says that spreading Dhamma through education and conviction (not through enforcement) has gradually changed people's thinking.
5. The nomination of Dhammamahamatras —knowledgeable and respected individuals whose job is to spread Dhamma among the public.
6. In the 6th Inscription, Ashoka mulls over a king's duties. He mentions that it is his (Samrat's) duty to be available for his people all the time – irrespective of what he may be doing. He expresses his desire to work relentlessly (without "Trupti") for his people.
7. Ashoka declares that people of all genders, Panth, or religions are welcome to continue living in his state with their respective dhamma-shraddha. There is a mention of policies for the public in his and his neighboring kingdoms.
8. Along with the description of his visit to Bodhgaya, there is something about "Vana-bhojana" - hunting of animals is no more practiced. Instead, whenever the king goes to the forest, he presents gifts to the Brahman and the Shraman and seeks their advice on adhering to Dhamma.
9. In the 9th inscription, Ashoka denounces popular religious ceremonies and their excesses. Instead, he places a premium on following the Dhamma in daily life and urges to help Bhrahmanas and Shramanas. Dhan/Arth (Finance) is as important as Dhamma.
10. Ashoka denounces the pursuit of fame and a selfish chase for success.
11. Ashoka again emphasizes Dhamma's significance and says it is the best policy to follow.

12. Respect all cults, vansh, and religions without expecting anything in return. it's advised to practice Vak-sayyam.(वाक्संयम) Vak (वाक्) - sayyam (संयम) means speaking with restraint and kindness and abstaining from hurtful speech. It encourages interactions and dialogues where ideas, principles, and thoughts are exchanged.
13. The 13th inscription is a significant one. It mentions the war of Kalinga, Ashoka's victories over Kings Antiochus of Syria (Amtiyoko), Ptolemy of Egypt (Turamaye), Magas of Cyrene (Maka), Antigonus of Macedon (Amtikini), Alexander of Epirus (Alikasudaro). This inscription amply illustrates the warrior side of the emperor Ashoka and hints at the change that the toll of the war brought to him. And eulogising victories in war, the inscription leans towards the path of Dhamma. It then asserts that Ahimsa (अहिंसा - Nonviolence) and Sat (सत् - Truth or Righteousness) are integral to Dhamma. There is an emphasis on Sadasad-vivekbuddhi (सदसद्-विवेकबुद्धी) - following the path of truth with love, respect, and compassion for all.
14. An epilogue of sorts, the 14th inscription goes into the purpose of the endeavor. Ashoka extolls a Society that is formed based on Prem (प्रेम - love), Daya (दया - compassion), Mardav (मार्दव - Kindness), and Audaryaa (औदार्य - Generosity).

This thread is based on the recent talk on 14 inscriptions of Ashoka, which was delivered by Mr. Bhupal Patwardhan - <https://youtu.be/e33lwqbRPzA>

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## Paper in Ancient India

The antiquity of writing in India is a very tricky subject. Oral tradition preserved the lineage of ancient literature impeccably. However, the earliest-available evidence of writing only goes to the 4th/5th century B.C.E.

Against this backdrop, some references to paper usage in Ancient India offer a curious insight.

Alexander the Great had appointed Nearchus as his ambassador in Punjab faround 327 B.C.E. Nearchus, in his report on India, mentions seeing people making paper by beating cotton cloths. (Max Muller in History Of Ancient Sanskrit Literature). Pt. G. H. Ojha cites observations of Megasthenes in his book, The Palaeography of India (1894). Megasthenes (306 BCE) indicated that India in the Mauryan era used paper for writing horoscopes and almanacs.

Another reference comes from the article "Outline of Palaeography" by H.R. Kapadia. in Bombay University Journal, May 1938. In the case of ancient Jaina literature, Kapadia mentions that though no Jaina work is found written in ancient times, it appears that India knew how to make paper in the 3rd century B.C.E. But, Prof. P.K. Gode cites the lack of available corroborative evidence in this regard. However, the mention of the process of making the paper from cotton rags remains common in numerous accounts given above.

P.G. Gosavi, a lecturer at the Handmade Paper Institute, Pune, offers a fascinating insight in his article on this process. "The quality in paper-making Comprises two main characteristics: Strength and Durability. ... Both these characteristics result from the chemical bond, which is termed as the degree of polymerisation ... the purest form of which is found in the cotton just plucked ... paper made from fresh cotton is durable for around 500 years. ... However for various purposes, rags have been the more popular raw material for paper-making, and they are the next best raw material for the purpose".

These arguments and references still need conclusive and deeper investigation to establish the proper trail of paper-making and its antiquity in India. But The references above indeed indicate of an exciting possibility for a detailed study and research.

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## Ancient Origins and evolution of Yoga

Probably the earliest allusion to Yoga can be traced back to a rare seal found in the Mohenjodaro excavation bearing the imprint of a Siva-like Yogi (M.G. Dhadphale in his preface to "Yogasutra of Patanjali by Prof. K.S. Arjunwadkar).

Patanjali's "Yogasutra" is the first known composite guide on Yoga. Today we find little information on Patanjali, and his chronology remains a matter of conjecture. In his book "The Yoga of Patanjali," M. R. Yardi suggests that Patanjali belonged to the first century C.E.

However, various ideas of the Yoga philosophy appear separately and sometimes in unison in various ancient texts.

The word Yoga appears in the Vedanta literature. Especially the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, which is known as the locus classics of Yoga. It gives a vivid description of Yoga. The Bhagavadgītā elaborates upon the same, as well.

Jainism and Buddhism also have their Yogic traditions. Their terms sometimes differ from the Pātañjala vocabulary; yet in doctrine, they are akin to what is known later as Rajayoga/Rājavidya/Rājaguhya.

Philosophically, Yoga shares many ideas with Buddhism and the Samkhya philosophy.

Yoga originates from the Sanskrit word "Yuj," which means "to join," "unite," "yoke," "attach," and "harness." Thus, Yoga means the union of two entities, which implies the method that can help Jivatman unite with the Paramatman. Late M. R. Yardi proposes another point of view in which the word "Yuj" denotes contemplation.

In the Yajnavalkya-Smriti, it is said that the highest Dharma lies in the realisation of the Self through Yoga.

The term Yoga conveys a range of meanings. It goes much beyond the current purview of postures and breathing techniques. Patanjali himself defines Yoga as "Chitta-Vritti-Nirodha," i.e., it restrains the mind's function. Agni Mahapurana also gives various (372. 1-2) alternate definitions of Yoga, such as (i) knowledge of Brahma-enlightenment; (ii) one-pointedness of mind; (iii) the restraint of the fluctuations of the mind, and (iv) union of Jivatman and Paramâtman.

History of the word "Yoga" shows that as early as in the Bhagavad-Gita, the scope of the term Yoga transcended meditation (dhyâna), the sense, which by the time was well established and included practices aligned to spiritual goals such as action (duty, Karman), devotion (bhakti), renunciation (sannyasa) and Knowledge (jnana).

Ancient texts such as Puranas, Gita, and Yogasutra mention various types of Yoga – Karma-yoga, Kriya-yoga, maha-yoga, Jnana-yoga, Raja-yoga, Dhyana-yoga, and the Ashtanga-Yoga.

The ashtangas of Yoga are yamas (restraint), niyama (observances), asana (postures), pranayama (control of vital airs), pratyahara (withdrawal), Dharana (fixation), dhyana (contemplation), and samadhi (concentration).

Most of the Mahapuranas agree with the Yogasutra in that Yoga comprises eight (Ashtangas) or six (Shadanga) aspects, the latter without counting the Yamas and Niyamas. They not only refer to Ashtangas in the same order adopted by Patanjali but also generally agree on the number of Yamas and

Niyamas being five and mention the same Yamas and Niyamas. The terminology used in these texts does not differ from that of the Patañjala Yogasûtra.

Practices such as Hath Yoga differ from the Yoga philosophy. Hath Yoga is a narrower idea that focuses on postures and Mudras and is more physical in its approach than philosophical.

We can safely assert that, for the last 2000 years, the science and the philosophy of Yoga have remained a continuous tradition in essence and in practice. It has positively influenced people during all these centuries, as well. Unsurprisingly even today millions of people are turning to Yoga for the remedies of mind and body. There cannot be a more remarkable testimony to the relevance and influence of Yoga.

### **Yoga Manuscripts at the Bhandarkar Institute**

The Bhandarkar Institute is fortunate to host around 200 rare and old manuscripts on Yoga. The oldest manuscript in the collection dates back to 1413 CE. The name of the manuscript is "Yogashastrantargat Shloka."

### **Publications on Yoga by the Bhandarkar Institute**

Bhandarkar Institute has been actively engaged in the research on Yoga and has several publications on the topic. One of the very first publications of the Institute was the second revised edition of the Yogasutras of Patanjali with the scholium of Vyasa, edited by Rajaram Shastri Bodas. It was published in 1917. "The Yoga of Patanjali" by the Late Mr. M.R. Yardi remains one of the most influential books on the topic. It was first published in 1979. Later in 2006, the Institute published "Yogasutras of Patanjali" by K.S. Arjunwadkar and "Yoga Doctrines in Mahapurana-s" by G.K. Pai in 2007.

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## The three faculties of Learning, according to Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika

### 1. बुद्धी

An inherent property of the soul: akin to cognition, it is perceptive, and in combination with the ego (I am), results in the subjective Knowledge that can be described in multiple ways such as उपलब्धी (acquisition of fact), ज्ञान (Knowledge), प्रत्यय (realisation)

### 2. स्मृती

It includes a) remembrance that is spontaneous, b) recollection that is deliberate, and c) reminiscence, which is an act of recalling and reuniting with the former state of consciousness. This reminiscence is akin to "प्रत्यभिज्ञा".

### 3. अनुभव

It is an act or the condition of the mind in which it receives a notion of an object. This can be incomplex or complex; these two resemble निर्विकल्प and सविकल्पक states of Knowledge.

These types and classifications seem similar to the modern understanding of Informal Learning. In informal Learning, experience, action, perception, and reflection are some of the critical drivers of the process of Learning.

This thread is a very superficial summary of the topic and includes concepts interpreted in multiple manners across texts. This thread is based on a book by Y.Y. Athalye and M.R. Bodas - "Tarkasamgraha by Annambhatta - Edited with critical and explanatory notes ."First published in 1897, its second edition was published by @Bhandarkar in 1918, and today the book is in its 5th reprint.

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## The Spread of Indian Medicine across the Ancient world

As we saw in previous threads, Indian civilisation had developed interactions with other ancient societies a few thousand years ago. And as the societies evolved, these interactions expanded to include exchanges of ideas on science, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Most of these civilisations had their own approach and methods of medicine. And yet Indian medicine proved to be a significant export of ancient India.

In this thread, we will trace some examples of this.

This thread is based on excerpts from the article "The Expansion of Indian Medicine Abroad" by Jean Filliozat (College De France, Paris). It was published in "India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture" in 1964.

We see several parallels between the medicinal practices of ancient Greeks and ancient Indians. "For example, we find both in the Hippocratic Collection and in the Ayurvedic treatises the idea of breath (pneuma in Greek and prana in Sanskrit) ... pervading throughout the body to produce all movements and changes and also being a form of the wind in nature." However, it is impossible to conclude if one borrowed it from the other entirely.

Filliozat gives us two examples of Indian influence.

"An example of this is the similarity of a general theory explained in Plato's Timaeus with the famous tridosha theory of classical Ayurveda. Conceptions referred to by Plato, without any indication of origin, are isolated in the Greek tradition. "(In Plato's thinking) Health rests upon the correct association between three elements: pneuma, which represents the wind, chole, the gall, which represents the fire, and phlegma, which is a form of water. ... "These respectively correspond to prana, pitta, and Kapha - the tridosha of the Sanskrit tradition. As these doshas, especially the association between the gall and the

fire, are already known in Vedic literature, the tridosha theory cannot have been borrowed in India from Plato." "On the contrary, as during the Persian domination of Greek, Asian Countries and on the part of India, scientific intercourses have been easy, an influence of the Ayurvedic theories on those described by Plato is quite probable." "In any way, we have several direct references in the Hippocratic Collection to the borrowing of some Indian drugs and Indian medical formulas in Greece."

In the coming centuries, we find the eastward journey of Indian medicine in Central Asia, China, and other parts of Asia. This epoch coincides with the rise of Buddhism as well.

Filliozat further writes, "We have recovered from the sands of Central Asia not only Buddhist texts and documents of archives in Sanskrit, or Prakrit, but also medical manuscripts in Sanskrit, or translated from Sanskrit into regional languages, like Kuchean or Khotanese."

"The Bower Manuscript is a collection of several Sanskrit therapeutical texts. There also is a part of a bilingual manuscript of the Yogasataka, ascribed in India either to Nagarjuna or Vararuci." "The Sanskrit text in the manuscript is intermixed with its literal translation into the Kuchean language. The text summarizes the Ashtanga of Ayurveda and thus exactly corresponds to a text described as famous in the 7th century by the Chinese pilgrim Yi-tsing."

This text was also translated into the Tibetan language. And more impressively, it was in use in Sri Lanka till the 19th century.

In the case of countries like China, Japan, and Korea, which have their medical traditions, they accepted Indian drugs rather than the Indian philosophy of medicine. Several drugs, together with their Indian names, have been preserved in the famous Japanese Imperial Treasury, the Shôsho-In, since the 8th century.

In Cambodia, where the name of Sustuta (Susruta) occurs in the Sanskrit epigraphy, several inscriptions give Sanskrit lists of drugs presented to temples under king Jayavarman VII around 1200 C.E.

In Tibet, Indian medicine got its greatest popularity. It had been fully adopted in the country. In the 8th century, a significant work in four parts (catustantra, in Tibetan: Rgyud bzhi) entitled "Amritahridaya" is said to have been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. "The teaching embodied in this text is ascribed to Buddha Bhaisajyaguru. The original Sanskrit is unknown, and some scholars have supposed it never existed. But some passages are literal translations of quotations from Caraka or Susruta. This work was commented upon in Tibet and translated from Tibetan into Mongolian. It was brought to Russia at the end of the last century from Mongolia and gained great popularity there too. Pozdneev partly published a Mongolian version together with a Russian translation."

On the other side, Indian medicine has been known in Persia and Arabic countries through Arabic versions or reports from Āyurvedic texts, chiefly in the initial period of the development of sciences in Islam. "In 850 C.E., the Persian physician Ali ibn Rabbun at Tabari has written a treatise, the "Firdaus ul Hikmat," in which is included detailed information about Indian medicine."

This is a brief but broad overview given by Jean Filliozat. And it is an awe-inspiring journey to say the least.

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## Arikamedu – The Ancient Tamil Port that Traded With the World 2000+ Years Ago

On the eastern coast of India, A few minutes south of Puducherry, on the banks of the River Ariyankuppam, lies Arikamedu - once upon a time one of the most vibrant and fascinating cities of the ancient world.

In previous threads, we have seen India's buoyant relations with other ancient civilisations. Its trade with the western world initially took place via the waste coast.

The kingdoms of India prospered greatly in the first millennium B.C.E. Moreover, the Indian peninsula sits at the centre of the Indian ocean. This led to India being a centre of trade between ancient Asian powers such as China and ancient Europe and Africa. The southeastern coast hence also gained prominence in the second half of the first millennium B.C.E.

A site that has thrown considerable light on the global trade on the southeastern coast of India is Arikamedu.

Arikamedu was a significant center of Indo-Roman trade from the 2nd century B.C.E. and one of the earliest known manufacturing centres of Indo-Pacific beads.

While its origins are uncertain, many discoveries, such as shells, beads, and pottery, have established that a thriving local culture existed long before the arrival of foreign influences.

Arikamedu found mentions in several significant Greco-Roman texts, such as "Periplus of the Erythraen Sea," written in the first century C.E. It refers to Arikamedu by the Roman name 'Poduke.' Arikamedu was also mentioned in

Ptolemy's "Atlas Geographia" as a 'Poduke emporion' in the mid-first century C.E.

We find the reflection of this on the Indian side as well. Various works of the Sangam tradition, e.g., "Pattupattu" (written well before 300 CE), provide accounts of the Romans and the trade with the Romans. Here, the Romans were called Yavans (Yavanaha).

These references talk of the export of Black Pepper, Italian wine, and sounds made by loading and unloading ships, to mention a few points.

Despite having been such a booming town for almost a thousand years, Arikamedu was lost to history for centuries until the French East India Company accidentally discovered ancient ruins in the 1730s.

It was later excavated extensively by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, then Director General of A.S.I., in the 1940s and by Jean-Marie Casal. A.S.I. has continued to study the site ever since.

Excavations at the site have uncovered substantial evidence of a Roman trading settlement, including amphorae, lamps, glassware, coins, and beads made of stone, glass, gold, and gems.

These discoveries suggested that the settlement engaged in considerable trade with the Roman and later Byzantine world between the 2nd century B.C.E. to the 8th century C.E. That is around 1000 years.

Arikamedu was also a centre of manufacturing in its own right producing textiles, particularly the cotton fabric muslin, jewelry, stone, glass, and gold beads (It was particularly famous for this).

Sites such as Arikamedu tell the story of a comprehensive exchange between the Roman world and the Indian Subcontinent. It shows that the interaction

was rich and multifaceted. It also highlights the booming trade between world civilisations that existed 2000 years ago. This trade also allowed distant communities to share various elements of craft and culture, which in turn, enriched these societies considerably.

The volume of Rome's trade with India was so high that it compelled Pliny the Elder to lament In "Natural History" that "India, China, and the Arabian peninsula take one hundred million sesterces from our empire per annum at a conservative estimate..." Natural History is one of the most important literary works in history, and it is the single largest work to have survived from the first Roman Empire to the modern day. "Natural History" is a compilation of information from other ancient authors. It was written in 77 C.E.

Arikamedu, at its peak, was a melting pot of civilisations. An apt ode to its location as a geographic centre of the maritime Silkroad These global settlers stayed in the town for centuries, long after the trade dwindled, correspondingly with the decline of the Romans.

The thousand years of the known history of Arikamedu must have left a tangible legacy in three-forms - the knowledge of the sea in the region, the awareness of global trade and geography, and the maritime skills honed in the local populations. And perhaps, it can be hypothesised that these legacies contributed to the maritime ascendancy of the Cholas, who dominated the Indian ocean theatre between the 9th-12th centuries.

Now that story, it is for another day.

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## Sources of information on Shankaracharya

Sri Shankara Bhagavatpada, known as Sri Adi Shankaracharya, was the eminent philosopher of Advaita philosophy. His contributions to Indian culture and civilisation are immense. The Acharya's life history has been told through various biographies. This write-up enlists five significant treatises that provide rich information on Adi Shankara.

### 1. “Sankara-Vijaya” by Anantanandagiri

This biography is considered to be older than others. It contains 74 prakaranas or chapters. Many chapters were devoted to the Acharya's victory over heretic sects.

### 2. “Sankara-Vijaya” by Vyasacala

This was printed and published by the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library of Madras in 1954. This is an excellent Kavya in 12 cantos, totalling 1,192 verses.

### 3. “Sankaradigvijaya”

This was 1st published in Nagari script. This biography has become popular because it has been recently printed in some of the regional languages and, due to the large amount of information on events in the life of Adi Shankara found in it.

### 4. “Sankara-Vijaya-Vilasa”

This biography of Shankaracharya is ascribed to an ascetic Cidvilasa. At the end of each chapter, the colophon states that it is a story of Adi Shankara narrated by Cidvilasa to Vignanakanda.

## **5. “Sankaracarya Caritam”**

The author is Govindanatha of Kerala. This is a succinct biography of the Acharya. This has nine chapters containing a total of 561 verses.

## **6. “Sankarabhyudayam”**

This biography of Shankaracharya was written by Rajachudamani Dikshita, a renowned scholar, who flourished in the court of the Nayak ruler, Raghunatha Nayak (1614 to 1633 A.D., of Thanjavur, Tamilnadu) This has 552 verses, spread over eight cantos.

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## Ancient Origins of Idli

We all love southern dishes, and they are popular all over India. The nutritional value of all these foods is excellent. Like many other Indian dishes, they have a long history and a great cultural significance. And Idli perhaps the most well-known and loved of these delicacies.

It might surprise many that the innocuous Idli comes with a long history and heritage. The oldest available reference to Idli goes back 1100 years, to the ninth century B.C.E.

Idli is referred to as 'Iddlige' by Shivkoti Acharya, author of the ninth-century Kannada literary work 'Vaddaradhane .'

In the eleventh-century Kannada encyclopedia Lokopkar, the composer Chamundarai has described the Idli recipe.

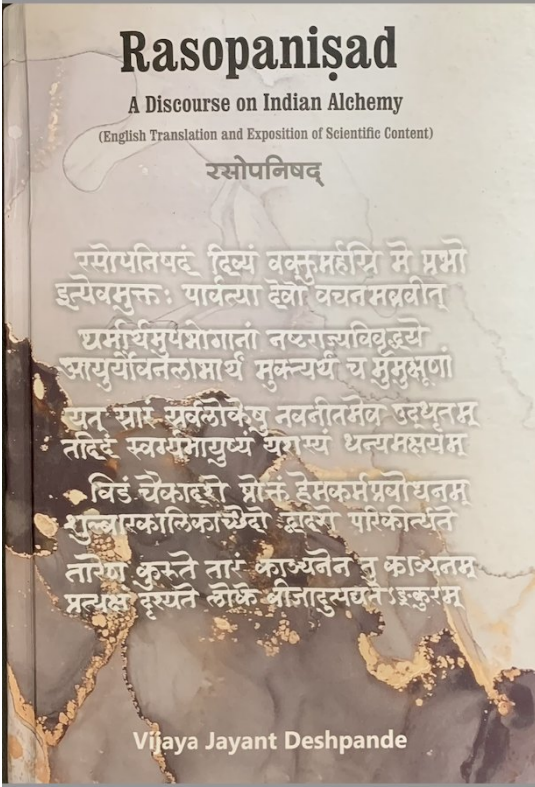
Idli's reference is also found in the magnificent encyclopedia "Manasollhas," composed by King Someshwar III around 1129.

There is a phrase like Idrika, and the word "Indulika" is used in the text.

Suffice to say, similar to many other celebrated and venerated recipes of India, Idli too carries a rich and unique legacy of its own.

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## "Rasopaniṣad: A Discourse on Indian Alchemy"



Rasopaniṣad is a significant Sanskrit work on alchemy written by an unknown author in the early medieval period. The text is replete with insights that are in sync with modern ideas. The rarity of the text is attested by the fact that only two copies of its manuscript existed.

One incomplete copy was in the library of Thirunakkara Swamiyar Matom in Kottayam, and another worn-out but complete manuscript was in possession of Vayaskara Narayanan Moossu of Kottayam.

K Sambasivasastri edited these copies, and the Superintendent, Government Press, Trivandrum, in 1928, printed the book.

Today for the first time, the original Sanskrit text has been translated into English with a scientific explanation authored by Dr. Vijaya Jayant Deshpande.

The present book includes lists of measure words, apparatus, and plants with their scientific names. The Sanskrit chemical terms used in the original text are also explained in modern terminology.

Stunningly, it was found that the book contains modern ideas in a seminal manner.

A few examples: - a recipe for gun powder mixture - chemical tests for identification of ores - methods of collecting pure metal using the principle of displacement in a sequence that fits the modern electrochemical series.

It won't be an overstatement to assert that the history of Indian alchemy, chemistry, and metallurgy would not be complete without considering the contents of this book.

The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute is proud to publish the translation of such a seminal text. Dr. Vijaya Deshpande authors the translation.

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## The Ancient Indian Imprints in Siberia

Approximately 4000 kilometres to the northeast of India lies Lake Baikal. Lake Baikal is the world's largest freshwater lake by volume, containing 22–23% of the world's fresh surface water. And around Baikal, in the Republic of Buryatia, lives the Buryat community. This community has centuries-old ties to Indian ethos through Tibetan Buddhism and other linkages.

Mr. Lokesh Chandra, in his article - Indian Culture in Transbaikalian Siberia, published in 1970, gives us a great glimpse into these ties. This thread is based on his writing and some other sources.

### **Baikal and Vadvanala -**

The name of Baikal is split up as bai 'existing, being, having' + Kal 'fire.' In this context, Lokesh Chandra parallels the Sanskrit concept of "vadavanala," which means submarine fire.

### **Indra and Agni in Shaman Songs -**

He further writes that the pre-Buddhist cult of the Siberian Buryats was Shamanism, where elements of nature and topographic edifications were freely fused with Shaman songs extolling Indra, Agni, and other Indian deities. These fascinating songs were prevalent only half a century ago. Now they are known from Prof. Zamcarano's collections from the early 20th century.

### **Tibetan Buddhism -**

In the early 18th century, around 1720, Tibetan Buddhism began to spread in the region. They built monasteries and took the teachings of Gautam Buddha to the people of Buryatia. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Tibetan Buddhism became the predominant religion in the region.

## **Influences on the Local Deities**

These influences can be seen in the localisation of the Indian deities. We can see its extent in the article written by Daniel Berounsky - Tibetan ritual texts concerning the local deities of the Buryat Aga Autonomous Region, Part II.

It goes as follows - Indra (dbang po), Yama (gshin rje), Varuṇa (chu bdag), Yakṣa (gnod sbyin), Agnideva (me lha), Rakṣasa (srin po), Vāyudeva (rlung lha), Bhūta ('byung po), Brahma (tshangs pa) and Vanadevī (sa'i lha mo).

Even today, one of the area's most popular deities and temples is the Tibetan version of Saraswati. <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/the-mystical-image-of-sarasvati-in-buryatia/>

## **Ramayana -**

The Ramayana is also known in Siberian folklore. The Research Institute of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has the manuscripts of Prof. Golstunsky's work on a short version of the Ramayana in the Kalmuk language.

## **Gangin-os, or Holy Water of Gahga in Siberia**

Dr. Lokesh Chandra recounts a personal experience in his article and the story behind it. "The Siberian Buryats revere the Holy Water of Gangā. The writer has carried it to these remote regions. Before receiving the Holy Water, the Patriarch recited Sanskrit mantras and visibly moved. The Patriarch continued reciting Sanskrit mantras while Gangā-jala poured from the Indian to the Buryat vessel.

## **Āvurveda in Siberia**

There is a rich tradition of Āyurveda in Siberia. The libraries have preserved an enormous literature on the subject, including personal memos on prescriptions in handwritten form.

### **The Vagindra script**

Agvan Dorzhiev, or Agvaandorj, a Khory Buryat, developed the script in 1905 with the assistance of Tseveen Jamsrano[1] as a means of cultural unification of the Buryats, naming it "Vagindra" for the Sanskrit version of his name.

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We are ending this thread with a verbatim quote from Dr. Lokesh Chandra's article, which speaks of India's place in the minds of the Buryat community.

*"Freezing Siberia is a land where monasteries had the academic traditions of Nalanda, where Sanskrit names are still prevalent, where the Holy Water of Gangā is deeply revered, where mantras ring forth in the immensities of space and silence, where you may witness themadhuparka offered with wooden spoons in the true tradition of the Sruti, where pūrṇimā and amavasyā are holy days with 'white food,' where Mahakala pervades the primaeval vastnesses, where stotras to Goddess Tārā are hummed amidst the clanging and sonorous instruments, where Panini is the model for their linguistic development, where Meghaduta is their first lyric, where Āyurveda is revealed in the fullness of its tradition, where an entire literature inspired by India is preserved, where blessings are given on the triple plans of kāya, vak and citta, where the saffron is the colour of sanctity, where mantras are still written in the ornamental Indic script termed Rañjanā, where pure gold illumines large scroll paintings, where people wonder at the size of India's lotuses on which their Gods and Goddesses sit or stand, and so on. To Transbaikalian Siberia, India is the embodied Divine, the cittam, prakṛiti-prabhāsvaram."*

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## From < 3000 km<sup>2</sup> to 25,00,000 km<sup>2</sup> - the Journey of the Maratha Empire

In 1645, the seed of what will become an Empire a century later was sown by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in his teen years.

It began with the conquest of Fort Torna, which lies approximately 50 km southwest of Pune. In the next 25 years, the Maratha kingdom rose to prominence under the exemplary leadership of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Its farthest frontier was Gingee in Tamil Nadu and its impregnable fort. Later, the fort proved the strongest bastion in the most delicate hour.

Shortly after Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's Death, Emperor Aurangzeb invaded the kingdom, and what ensued was 27 years of massive struggle in the Deccan.

A great turmoil and an epic clash of will and fortitude in every sense, the Decan Wars shaped the future of the Indian Subcontinent.

These 27 years saw the remarkable but short reign of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, his brutal execution by Emperor Aurangzeb, the increasingly intrusive presence of European powers, internal political strife in Mughal and Maratha durbar, Aurangzeb's conquest of Bahamani forces, the fierce resistance of Marathas under Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj (and Maharani Tarabai, Senapati Santaji Ghorpade & Senapati Dhanaji Jadhav), the captivity of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, and then finally, the Death of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

After a short internal struggle, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj took reign of the kingdom, and he appointed Balaji Vishwanath as his Peshwa.

An inflection point in time, this juncture harbingered the century of Maratha Supremacy.

The ascent was further fuelled during the 20 years' relentless tenure of Peshwa Bajirao I. The undefeated warrior, Peshwa Bajirao, is credited with expanding the Maratha kingdom at a rapid pace and establishing it as the premier military power in the Subcontinent at that point.

Peshwa Bajirao was succeeded by his son Peshwa Nanasaheb I, who was assisted by multiple able administrators and generals. During his reign, in 1760, the Maratha Empire peaked as it spread over an area larger than 25 lakhs sq km (80% of modern India's size).

In 1761, the 3rd battle of Panipat proved to be a significant setback to the Maratha Empire.

The 17 years old Madhavrao took the reins of the empire in 1761 and consolidated it to its former glory within a few years. His untimely Death in 1772, at the young age of 27, was the most decisive loss.

For the next 30 years, the internal squabbles within the Peshwa family led to the gradual disintegration of the central power. Remarkable individuals such as Raja Mahadji Shinde and Nana Fadnis, to name a few, ensured supremacy and arrested the decline for a brief flashes of time.

The reign of Peshwa Bajirao II between 1795 and 1818 marked the period of the empire's terminal decline and eventual end. The most notable moment of this era was the Treaty of Bassein in December 1802 between the Marathas and Britishers.

In 1818 as the Britishers defeated the Marathas in the 3rd Anglo-Maratha war, it affirmed the decisive beginning of the British colonial rule over India.

This thread is a highly superficial summary of an epoch that lasted for 173 years.



The Maratha empire and its interactions with its contemporary powers - Islamic rulers (Shah Jahan to Tipu Sultan), European powers, Rajputs & other Hindu rulers - had far-reaching implications on the Modern history of India.

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