

Itihas

The myth of the eternal return.

- that time is a cycle, massive cosmological cycles, no distinction between human and divine.

these cycles were yugas - ~~kaliyug~~, satyayug, tretayug, dwapar and kali

Nyas went to beas kund and meditated.

Itihas is revealed not rationally investigated.

Shruti: Oral traditions, authoritative but authorless

eg. vedas, Upanishad.

Smriti: written, author known but not text derivative

eg. Ramayana, Mahabharat

Buddhist tradition

- Original state

- Process of decay: desire (food and clothes), attachment, family and govt.

• Buddha said king was elected to maintain ~~peace~~ order.

• ~~Common~~ Cosmological but republican influences (elements of modern theories of history and politics)

• Few traditions of history writing died out and merged into mythology.

• Two historical traditions - family genealogies and court chronicles.

British in India

They originally came in the 1500s to trade. Orientalists thought highly of Indian society and economy.

• ~~traders~~ used to trade with Surat and they would pass the goods to Europe. They controlled the economy and Europeans wanted to break this.

Conquerors were eager to know about India's philosophy and history. They collected material artefacts, texts, oral traditions and customs.

Asiatic Society formed in 1784 at Fort William Calcutta by William

Jones

"...enquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by man or produced by nature"

A group of Brahmins were collected to define the Bengali language and modern day Bengali emerged. H H Wilson, 1808, Indians made members.

Asiatic Society Bombay 1805
Dominant perspective till 1830s.

Liberals and Militarists

They were deeply influenced by 'European enlightenment' which had the motto 'Equality, Liberty, equality and fraternity'.

They felt India was backwards and did not know this. So the British had a civilising mission: make India modern, based on a vision of equality of (human).

James Mill, 'The History of British India' 1806-1817, never set foot in India, knew no Indian language, thus claimed objectivity.

Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote 'Minute on education', legal code.

British rule

Macaulay divided into 3 parts,
(based on religion)

(1) Periodisation: Hindu, Muslim,
British

- Hindu India from beginning of history to Muslim invasions
- Muslim India from 10-11th century
- British India as modern and progressive

(2) ~~1857~~

1857 - Victory of Conservative
Liberalism

- Change India slowly as they were did not like the unpredictability of Indians
- Entrenched a deep fear of Indians and sense of superiority.
- They felt they should collect more facts, so started census, gazetteers and settlement reports.
- Census 1872, then 1881

All facts were organized around religion, caste and language.

Imp. milestones

- Brahmi and Kharoshthi script.
James Prinsep was a clerk in a mint in Calcutta. He became an expert in code breaking. (He got transferred to Banaras ^{later}). He identified Brahmi (the script in which Sanskrit was written).

The name Devanampriya Piyadasi kept coming up on artefacts and it was later found out that he and Ashoka were the same.

- Archaeological Survey of India (1861)
Developed by Alexander Cunningham (Director General) researched into Buddhist traditions, Ashoka, Kharoshthi.

- History Dept. in Calcutta and Bombay University - Indian history and Indology in English, German and other Western universities.

- Mohenjodaro and Harappa
→ known since 1856-7, bricks were used for building rails.
→ after the first world war, the 2 cities were discovered in 1921-22

- National archives of India
Imperial Records Dept. (1891),
Romila Thapar.
Rabita Thapar.

Main schools

- British / Colonial
- Nationalist
- Marxist
- Subaltern

British / Colonial history

- Claimed there was nothing called India
 - Too diverse
 - Convenient geographical moniker
 - Too many disparities, no unity
 - Empire, not a nation or culture
 - Each community, group, region and caste had separate history
- Identified overseas despotism and village community.
- Claimed British Rule was agent of change as well as unification
- Claimed Indians did not want independence, but place at high table
 - Only the elites and not the masses had rights like voting.

→ Not nationalism but self-interest,
'sedition babu'

- Cambridge school

Cambridge university historians
believed in this view.

Nationalist history

- India had history and a
tradition of history writing.

- stressed the greatness of unifying
empires

Ashoka, Gupta, Kushan, Mughal

- unifying ideologies

Vedas, Buddhism, Shankaracharya
Bhakti

- sought causes for conquest by
British or Mughals depending
on political tilt.

- worked to write one Indian
history.

- Romesh Chunder Dutt, Jadunath
Sarkar

Mughals, Rajputs, Shivaji, Bengal,
economic history, Sanskrit source

- Jawaharlal Nehru

Discovery of India

- Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra