

# Need of the hour -- Indian Ethos for history writing.

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The idea of removing distortions and rewriting Indian history is really the need of the day. But unfortunately the very attempt has landed into a quagmire of controversy as historians of repute are wrangling about what is distortion and what is not. This is resulting in the general public to disbelieve the whole exercise. But the most disconcerting part in the debate has degenerated into personality attacks and abuse than a healthy academic discussion.

One has to remember that India has been the only country in the world which honed into perfection the process of academic debate where the search for truth was of ultimate importance and it was not to be restrained by one's ideology, impression or belief. It was in India, maximum intellectual freedom was given to debate on any aspect of knowledge. Freedom of expression, public debate, acceptance of the superior logic totally was the hall mark of India. It is also a fact that either the social stance and understanding or the intellectual stand taken by an individual or group regarding an issue was never allowed to come in the way of social harmony or friendship between the academic antagonists. This noble tradition to decide issues on academic merit and with the ultimate aim of truth being supreme has to be revived. Then alone we can think of a History which is to say the least will be least controversial.

Before going to distortions and rewriting, let us examine what are the inputs that help a historian in reconstructing the history. For him the sources are mainly the

1. Archeological artifacts

2. Inscriptions

### 3. Contemporary literature.

Even though Archeological artifacts, inscriptions can be considered as the best of evidences in formulating history, they naturally limit our study in terms of time frame to one or two millenniums. As the material in which it is written and the writing also along with the artifacts disappears due to the ravages of time, it makes the restructuring of history incomplete. This can be seen more vividly in the case of ancient civilizations like that of India which dates back to hoary past crossing at least one more millennia. This is where we need to recourse to folk tradition mores etc. of the Indian culture which can throw more light on to many puzzling factors in History. It accounts for the strange turns in history and so on.

But the problem that has been facing the historian is how to authenticate the folk lore etc which is generally an oral tradition which has also taken local variations over time leading to many visions of the same episode. So how are we to analyze the contents of folklores and traditions?

It is here we feel that we can get the technique that our Rsis had perfected to wrest the truth from this knowledge bases.

They have brought into perfection the analysis of any statement thoroughly. That is how to squeeze out the purport, intent, authenticity etc. of a statement. They have used this technique to verify the truth of statements made in the scriptures. These go under the name of six systems of philosophies. Now we feel it is possible to use the same norms to be applied to the statements of folk lore too.

With this idea in background, this paper tries to apply certain norms that were used by the Rsis of yore in streamlining the discussions so that it can lead to tangible and useful practical results.

All discussions without a clear basic framework which is mutually agreed upon will be an exercise in futility. This lack of consensus and the intentional confrontationist's attitude has been forcing the society at large to throw the claims of the legitimate and the illegitimate both to the dustbin. A heavy loss indeed!

It has been the tradition of India that any branch of knowledge, if it has to be considered as essential part of human knowledge, it should be capable of clearly enunciating its goal, course and the source. Without clearly demarking the purpose, no knowledge system should start its enunciation.

If so, what would be the Indian perspective and approach to history? Traditionally acclaimed historian of India Kalhana who wrote the Rajatarangini says,

“Dharmaartha-kaama-moskshanaam upadesa-samanvitam |

Puraa-vrttam, kathaa-rupam lthihaasah pracakshate ||”

History will be the narration of events as they happened, in the form of a story, which will be an advice to the reader to be followed in life, to gain the purusaarthas namely Kama the satiation of desires through Artha the tool, by following the path of Dharma the human code of conduct to gain Moksha or liberation.

.The kalhanian formula seems to be the ideal perspective to be followed in writing history. For we feel that it will avoid to a large extent the subjective distortion that has invariably been creeping in to the histories written so far.

By accepting such a norm, History becomes relevant and contemporary and accepting the logic of the six systems of philosophy by which one can fine tune the authenticity of a statement based on just oral tradition along with the objective evidence of the artifacts available. That apart we also have the clear enunciation of the way of life (Dharma) enunciated in the smrtis. This can be applied at three stages Namely Dharma of nature, human dharma, and locational dharma. This helps one to come to conclusions which can be fairly logical and acceptable to the majority. It is after all, the conclusions that lands historians into controversy. The more objective it is, more comprehensive it is, more purposeful it is, will naturally lead to the reduction of controversies.

The norms developed on this basis and also based on the definition of truth in which our scholars of yore have done an in depth study, if applied to history writing, we are confident that it will lead to the writing of not only Indian history but also the history of the different countries and civilizations of the world which will be acceptable to one and all.

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