

A Critical Review of Romila Thapar's Early India - From The Origins to AD 1300

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Politics

The first striking feature of this revised edition of Thapar's *A History of India* is that barring rare exceptions, none of the claims and sweeping generalizations she makes in this book, as in the earlier edition, is annotated by any references. Thapar calls such historians of stature as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and R. C. Majumdar "nationalistic" and whose interpretations she claims "were biased by nationalistic sentiments".¹ The reader wishes that Thapar had at least meticulously backed her arguments with references to primary sources, as those historians did. For a serious student of history, this book would indeed be a disappointment because there is no way the reader could validate the often outlandish claims, by referring to the primary sources. For the historical neophyte, this book could be dangerous, as students consume it unquestioningly. Ultimately, it is not difficult to understand why Thapar hasn't bothered to provide corroborating references for her claims: many of her claims have no basis.

The very first chapter "Perceptions of the Past" reads like a political pamphlet where she sets up the BJP² as her political rivals, and uses her supposed historical tomb as if it were an op-ed piece, to lambaste the Sangh Parivar.³ She even falsely claims that in the Hindutva⁴ worldview the Christians and the Muslims are not regarded as the inheritors of India.⁵ It is bad enough to settle contemporary political scores in a book on Ancient Indian History, it is worse to resort to lies and hate-speech as the means to achieve that. On the same page, she

¹ Romila Thapar, *Early India*, University of California Press, February 2003. ISBN 0-520-23899-0 cloth [here after referred to as EI] pp. 16

² BJP - Bharatiya Janata Party, the largest constituent of India's multi-party National Democratic Alliance [NDA].

³ Sangh Parivar - All socio-political organizations sharing the same Hindutva ideology.

⁴ Jagmohan, *Hinduism and Hindutva: What Supreme Court says?*, *The Hindustan Times*, January 8, 1996. Available at: <http://www.hvk.org/articles/0103/352.html>. Paraphrase: The Supreme Court of India has defined Hindutva as a way of life based on traditional practices from every walk of life, and has declared that it can't be equated with sectarian religious practices alone. Hindutva is also the ideology of a cohesive group of social and political organizations in India that are concerned about safeguarding Indian traditions and providing a sense of common identity to all Indians, irrespective of their religious affiliations. The Hindutva organizations are opposed to discrimination based on one's religious affiliation that has been the bane of Nehruvian India. It is to be noted that India has separate civil laws based on the Islamic Sharia't for the Muslims, even allowing such obscurantist practices as polygamy and denial of alimony to the divorced Muslim destitute women.

⁵ EI pp. 14

claims that the Hindus of the 1920s accepted AIT⁶ because that helped the upper-caste Hindus to identify themselves with the British. It is not surprising that sections of colonized Indians accepted AIT, as it was the prevailing theory then. It would have been nearly impossible for most Indian academics to oppose AIT in a colonial India because many British academics didn't tolerate any opposition to AIT. At times, they even resorted to no-holds barred attack on the Indian scholars who challenged the imperialistic paradigms.⁷

What Thapar fails to mention, rather conveniently, is that large sections of very influential Hindus of that period, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo for example, as well as several academics like A. C. Das, had opposed AIT. Ironically, it was one of Thapar's mentors, A. L. Basham, who continued to support AIT even in the 1960s. Today, several archeological excavations⁸ have established that there has been no Aryan invasion or break in India's civilization. Yet, it is the historians of the Marxist school of India,⁹ like Thapar, who still continue to propagate the myth of AIT.

“Anything but Sarasvati please!”

⁶ AIT - Aryan Invasion Theory, which proposes that the Aryans originated outside of India and invaded India. There is no unanimity on their point of origin or their date of entry into India, nor is there any archeological evidence for any such invasion, though the theory itself has become mainstream due to mere repetition.

⁷ A. C. Das, *Rig Vedic India* [1920] had proposed a greater antiquity and Indian home for the Vedas, presenting geological and geographical evidences. Instead of objectively reviewing the evidences, A. B. Keith dismissed the work in the following words [letter quoted Ibid pp. 47]: “...The fact that for many generations no one has felt the difficulties you have raised and most of them do not appreciate them as an argument of considerable weight against their validity.”

⁸ B. B. Lal, *India 1947 - 1997: New Light on the Indus Civilization*

J. M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*.

⁹ JNU - Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where Thapar taught, is the bastion of Marxism. A handful of historians, Thapar included, had colluded for well over 4 decades to present a distorted version of India's history. This cabal had also indulged in several financial irregularities, as Arun Shourie demonstrated in his book *Eminent Historians: Their Technology, their Line, their Fraud*. Though adept at politicking, these historians often lacked knowledge of India's Classical languages [*Appointment of Professor Romila Thapar to the Kluge Chair at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

An Open Letter of Protest <http://www.bharatvani.org/klugethapar.html> see “A. Prof. Thapar's Lack of Required Skills”] and shied away from public debates over their methods of history writing. On one occasion, an associate of Thapar, K. M. Shrimali, made the cardinal error of appearing on a television debate. Much to the chagrin of the Marxist historians, he was shown completely lacking in knowledge of the Vedas and other old Sanskrit texts, which are key to understanding India's past. It was indeed a pathetic day for the Marxist historians, as one of their ilk couldn't present a line of evidence for the false claims regards beef eating in ancient India that he made, and was exposed in the full view of the television audience. A member of the audience even brought forth copies of the Vedas and read verses from the Vedas condemning beef eating, thus falsifying the Marxist claim. The audience demanded that K. M. Shrimali point to the verses to substantiate his claims. The Marxist historian couldn't. [Ibid pp. 40 - 43]. These Marxist historians have perfected suppressio veri suggestio falsi into an art!

Her discussion of IVC/SSC¹⁰ is no more accurate and up to date than it would have been three decades ago in the original version of this book, for in this much heralded revised edition she does not even take cognizance of the numerous archeological and satellite imaging discoveries of the past two decades. The discovery of numerous archeological sites on the banks of the erstwhile Sarasvati, about which the Vedas talk in glorious terms doesn't merit any attention in her book. There is no mention about such things as the mapping of the paleo channels of the Vedic Sarasvati. Instead, Thapar objects to calling the civilization SSC and argues that even though far more numerous sites have been found on the banks of the Sarasvati than the Indus, they had not reached the threshold of quality to rename the civilization!¹¹

Thapar argues that the signs of urbanization were less noticeable at these sites. She doesn't tell us what qualifies a site as urban. If it is size then the number of sites to the east of the Indus that were about a hundred hectares was no less numerous than those to its west.¹² More importantly, the sites on the eastern side, such as Kalibangan, reveal utilization of advanced techniques in crop cultivation.¹³ The techniques from these ancient times are still in use in Punjab today. Likewise, excavations at Kalibangan reveal that its residents not only fortified their Lower Town,¹⁴ a feature unknown in Mohenjo-daro, but also showed ingenuity by making their houses termite-proof.¹⁵ In fact, Lothal, a port to the east of the Indus, was not matched by anything similar to the west of the Indus.¹⁶ Stone statues have been found in Dholavira,¹⁷ a rarity among the Harappan sites.

If diversity were the factor, then one should acknowledge the importance of the Sarasvati side of the civilization as it had more to offer. If the size of the urban centers were the factor, then the ones on the banks of the Sarasvati were comparable to those on the banks of the Indus. If sheer number of sites unearthed were the factor, then we have more on the banks of the Sarasvati than the Indus.¹⁸ Gregory Possehl points out¹⁹ that most of the agricultural produce

¹⁰ IVC/SSC - Indus Valley Civilization or Sarasvati Sindhu Civilization.

¹¹ EI pp. 78

¹² Kalibangan, Banawali, Lothal, Surkotada, Rakhigarhi and Dholavira were some of the major urban centers on the Sarasvati side of the civilization, while Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were on the Indus side.

¹³ B. B. Lal, *India 1947 - 1997: New Light on the Indus Civilization*, pp. 57, for details regarding the oldest agricultural field in the world unearthed at Kalibangan.

¹⁴ *Ibid* pp. 19

¹⁵ *Ibid* pp. 21

¹⁶ *Ibid* pp. 67, for a discussion on Lothal, "The Earliest Dockyard Known To Humanity". This site served as the conduit for sea trade. The boats plied through a river that connected the dockyard to the Sabarmati, which in turn flowed into the Arabian Sea.

¹⁷ *Ibid* pp. 40

¹⁸ A total of 2600 sites have been identified so far, a large number of them on the Sarasvati plains.

¹⁹ Gregory L. Possehl, *Indus Age, the Beginnings*, pp. 53

of IVC/SSC came from the Sarasvati system. Jane McIntosh, pointing to the density of the clusters of sites even declares²⁰ that calling that civilization IVC is actually a misnomer, as the Sarasvati played a far greater role in nourishing it.

McIntosh²¹ says that though some of the sites like Lothal were smaller than Mohenjo-daro, internally they were very complex structures. The same author also draws our attention²² to the finds by the leading archeologist J. P. Joshi of huge settlements varying between 100 and 225 hectares in size on the Sarasvati part of the civilization. The sites identified - Dhalewan, Gurni Kalan I, Hasanpur II, Lakhmirwala, and Baglian Da Theh - are all located within a small area along the Sirhind stream [a tributary of the Ghaggar] within 30 km of each other.

Thapar vigorously opposes the renaming of Indus Valley Civilization to Sarasvati Sindhu Civilization, but fails to tell us the reasons for her opposition. Instead of objectively receiving the archeological evidence, she accuses the archeologists, both Indian and foreign, of projecting an Indian home of the Aryans²³. Negation at its best! It is indeed sad that Thapar should without question or even a modicum of academic objectivity, stick to AIT or AMT²⁴ and shy away from discussing contrary evidence. Ironically, though Thapar is on the defensive these days in her public lectures and vehemently denies that she ever subscribed to AIT, she still replaces it with the equally baseless AMT.

“The evil Aryans arrive at Kot Diji”

In this book itself, she unmistakably argues in favor of AIT.²⁵ Here, Thapar argues that there is archeological evidence at Kot Diji²⁶ to support AIT. She even implies, on the same page, that the supposed destruction finds mention in the Rig Veda, but as is often her ploy, fails to specify the verses. Which verses, Professor Historian? Ironically, Thapar doesn't realize that the example of Kot Diji that she cites, actually demolishes her case for AIT/AMT.

²⁰ Jane R. McIntosh, *A Peaceful Realm - The Rise and Fall of the Indus Civilization*, pp. 24

²¹ Ibid pp. 88 - 89

²² Ibid pp. 104

²³ EI pp. 69

²⁴ AMT - Aryan Migration Theory is the new avatar of AIT. Ever since archeological and other evidences discounted the probability of AIT, its dogmatic adherents like Thapar have switched over to propounding AMT. As per this theory, the Aryans still came from outside, but in trickles, without leaving any archeological trace. Now with AMT, it is not even necessary to present any archeological evidence, as pastoral immigrants supposedly leave no traces. So, the hypothesis itself becomes proof too!

²⁵ EI pp. 88

²⁶ Kot Diji - An IVC/SSC settlement from the North West.

Kot Diji belonged to the *Regionalization Era*²⁷ of IVC/SSC. This phase was the final critical one that led to the formation of urban centers. This phase thrived between 3300 BCE and 2600 BCE.²⁸ The ash layer present at this site is indicative of destruction by fire. Assuming that the invading Aryans were the destroyers, as Thapar implies, one must then accept the presence of the Aryans in IVC/SSC even before its *Mature* [i.e. urban] *Phase* had started. The Marxist historians defiantly claim that the Aryans invaded India only towards the end of the Mature Phase of IVC, which is around 1900 BCE.²⁹ If that were the case, how could the Aryans have been the destroyers of the Kot Diji settlement? This brings up another interesting question: Was there really an intentional hostile destruction³⁰ at Kot Diji? Kenoyer³¹ tells us that the fire at Kot Diji needn't have been intentional [and hostile], that the settlement was rebuilt at once and that there was strong continuity in ceramics and other artifacts suggesting that the inhabitants were not replaced by a new culture. Thus, Thapar falsely portrays a non-hostile fire at Kot Diji as wanton destruction by the Aryans, even before they are supposed to have arrived at IVC/SSC! She conveniently suppresses the facts regarding the continuity of the culture before and after the fire.

“The Horse”

Thapar claims³² that the horse was unknown to the people of IVC/SSC and says that it was irrelevant to them ritualistically. The obvious implication being that for the Aryans, the horse was very important, as it supposedly finds several mentions in the Vedas, and hence the Aryans couldn't have been the architects of IVC/SSC. This claim is contrary to the facts. Lal has summarized evidence that unequivocally points to the presence of the horse.³³ Apart from the terracotta figurine from Lothal, he lists the finding of a second upper molar. He also lists the findings of horse bones from Surkotada and Kachcha, an identification that has been

²⁷ J. G. Shaffer, *The Indus Valley, Baluchistan and Helmand Traditions: Neolithic Through Bronze Age* for a discussion on this.

²⁸ J. M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*, pp. 40

²⁹ B. B. Lal, *India 1947 - 1997: New Light on the Indus Civilization*, pp. 113 - 115 for dating.

³⁰ There could have been intentional non-hostile destruction too. Burning settlements to get rid of pestilence was a known practice.

³¹ J. M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*, pp. 42

³² EI pp. 85

³³ B. B. Lal, *India 1947 - 1997: New Light on the Indus Civilization*, pp. 109 - 113.

endorsed by Sandor Bokonyi.³⁴ Lal also draws³⁵ the reader's attention to Jarrige's find of terracotta horse figurines from Nausharo. It is certainly true that horse remains and artifacts depicting the horse from IVC/SSC have not been numerous, but they definitely belie Thapar's claims that the horse was non-existent in IVC/SSC.

Even pretending that Thapar is correct, it is simplistic to argue on this basis alone that IVC/SSC was a non-Aryan civilization. If we are to assume literal meaning for the use of the word *asva* in the Rig Veda and that the Aryans introduced the horse to IVC/SSC during the Pirak phase,³⁶ then we are faced with a more interesting question: Is there a quantum jump in the finds of horse remains during and after the period the Aryans are supposed to have invaded the IVC/SSC? The answer is a clear no. We find such a jump only posterior to the end of the Pirak phase. Likewise, if the Aryans had indeed invaded IVC/SSC between 1900 BCE and 1400 BCE, one would expect to see several horse remains in such potential staging points as BMAC,³⁷ in the period just anterior to this. Much to the disappointment of the proponents of AIT, such evidence doesn't exist either. So, far from strengthening the claims that the lack of horse remains in IVC/SSC points to the Aryan invasion, the lack of such remains in BMAC and other potential staging spots, a pre-condition for any invasion to have occurred, weakens the proposition of AIT.

This leaves the question of horse a vexed one. Did the word *asva*³⁸ necessarily always mean the horse in the Rig Veda? Sri Aurobindo convincingly argues³⁹ that the words *go*⁴⁰ and *asva* are constantly associated in the Vedas, as in *gomati*⁴¹ or *asvavati*⁴². So, they can't refer merely to the physical steed. Instead, he says, that they symbolically refer to light and energy respectively. He draws our attention to the conception of *vyahrtis* and *ritam* in the Vedas. It is

³⁴ Ibid pp. 111 quoting Sandor Bokonyi: "Through a thorough study of the equid remains of the pre-historic settlement of Surkotada, Kachcha, excavated under the direction of Dr. J. P. Joshi, I can state the following: The occurrence of true horse [Equus Caballus L.] was evidenced by the enamel pattern of the upper and lower cheek and teeth and by the size and form of incisors and phalanges [toe bones]. Since no wild horses lived in India in post-Pleistocene times, the domestic nature of the Surkotada horses is undoubtful. This is also supported by an inter-maxilla fragment whose incisor tooth shows clear signs of crib biting, a bad habit only existing among domestic horses which are not extensively used for war."

³⁵ Ibid pp. 112

³⁶ Dated 1800 BCE - 800 BCE, J. M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*, pp. 177

³⁷ BMAC - Bactria Margiana Archeological Complex.

³⁸ *Asva* - Horse, when literally translated, but also means [spiritual] energy in the metaphoric constructs of the Rg Veda.

³⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, pp. 44

⁴⁰ *Go* - Cow, when literally translated, but also means [accompanying] light or knowledge in the metaphoric constructs of the Rg Veda.

⁴¹ *Gomati* - Accompanied by [the] light [of knowledge].

⁴² *Asvavati* - The manifestation of knowledge in the mind of the seer as spiritual energy.

also worth mentioning that the Rig Veda itself explicitly states that its words are metaphors and not literal.⁴³ It is ironical that Thapar, who negates all explicit and graphic descriptions of atrocities by the Islamic invaders against the Hindus, despite the contemporary epigraphs and chronicles detailing them, reads literal meaning into the Vedas regardless the Vedas cautioning against such. A classic case of bending the evidences to fit the theory?

The Brahmins' hearth?

She tries hard to wish away strong archeological evidence that establish the Vedic nature of IVC/SSC. For example, Thapar dismisses the presence of the fire altars in many of the sites as mere hearths.⁴⁴ Lal tells us⁴⁵ that there is very strong archeological evidence for the practices of animal sacrifice and worship associated with fire altar having existed in IVC/SSC. He also explains how these altars were unlike the Parsi⁴⁶ fire altars. The altars of the Lower Town of Kalibangan were sunk into the ground and had a central stele. Circular or biconvex cakes of clay, as if placed as offerings, have also been found. There is also a presence of ash and charcoal leaving no doubt that these were used as fire altars. The altars were situated such that those offering worship face eastwards - a practice common in today's Hinduism as well. The Citadel in Kalibangan has thrown up seven contiguous altars. In the proximity of these altars was a well, bathing pavement, and drain, all clearly indicative of the ritualistic bath seen among today's Hindus. Lal also draws our attention to the presence of a sacrificial pit in the Citadel of Kalibangan, as well as to the terracotta figures that confirm this practice. Excavations at other IVC/SSC sites such as Lothal, Banawali and Rangpur have also revealed that the fire altars were a common feature.

V. H. Sonawane and R. N. Mehta⁴⁷ draw our attention to the site of Vagad in Gujarat that belongs to the middle of the second millennium BCE. The numerous fire altars here were internally plastered with cow-dung paste mixed with clay, while the pits contained ash of probably cow dung cakes. The absence of any bones clearly rules out any purpose other than ritualistic. The authors also draw our attention to the three Vedic fires of Garhapatya, Ahavaniya and Dakshinatya along as well as Utkar seen in the traditional Vedic yajnasalas. Then, they draw the attention of the reader to the striking parallel of the three bigger altars dug in the north, south and western portions of the trench at this settlement, their diameters being 1 m, 1.45 m and 1.30 m respectively. They were arranged in a triangular form at an

⁴³ *Rig Veda* 1:164:45

⁴⁴ EI pp. 85

⁴⁵ B. B. Lal, *India 1947 - 1997: New Light on the Indus Civilization*, pp. 92 - 99

⁴⁶ Parsis - Followers of Zoroastrianism. They fled Persia under Islamic persecution and took refuge in India, which welcomed and embraced them with open arms, just as it had embraced the Jews and the Christians at an earlier time. The Avesta of the Parsis has some similarities with the Vedic texts. Since the Parsis are fire worshippers, fire altars were a feature in their worship too, though these altars were structurally different from the Vedic.

⁴⁷ V. H. Sonawane and R. N. Mehta, *Vagad - A Rural Harappan Settlement in Gujarat: Man and Environment*, Vol. IX, pp. 38 - 44

approximate distance of about 90 cm between the two. The fourth one, cylindrical in shape, having a diameter of 40 cm., was placed a little inside between the southern and the western pits.

It is pathetic scholarship to dismiss such strong evidence without offering any explanation. Unfortunately, this tendency is to be noted all over this book. Contrast this with McIntosh, who admits⁴⁸ that the discovery of several Vedic fire altars or what resembles them is indeed an embarrassment for those who have all along maintained that IVC/SSC was not IA in nature. Such honesty while faced with new archeological evidence, as one sees in McIntosh, has never been the virtue of Indian Marxist historians.

Avesta

Thapar avers⁴⁹ that the Avesta talks of “repeated” migrations from Persia to the Indus Valley! She neither cites any references nor offers any arguments to back such an extraordinary claim. So, it is impossible for any reader to validate her claim. David Frawley has convincingly argued, while discussing the ocean symbolism in the Rig Vedic verse 7:88:3, that the Yasht 5 of the middle Avesta itself might have borrowed this symbolism from the Rig Veda.⁵⁰ This would suggest that there is evidence that the Iranian text borrowed from the Vedas. We do have incontrovertible evidences from the Vedic texts that the Aryans indeed migrated both westwards and eastwards starting from the Sapta Sindhu region.

The Pururava-Urvasu legend is mentioned in the Vedic and other texts.⁵¹ In the former, the couple and their son Ayu are related to the Agnyadheya rite. Among these, the information contained in Baudhayana Srautasutra is of special interest to us. Willem Caland, the Samavedin from Utrecht, translates⁵² the verse in question as: “To the East went Ayus; from him descend the Kurus, Pancalas, Kasis and Videhas. These are the peoples that originated as a consequence of Ayus's going forth. To the West went Amavasu; from him descend the Gandharis, the Sparsus and the Arattas. These are the peoples which originated as a consequence of Amavasu's going forth.” Other renowned experts translate the verse in the

⁴⁸ Jane R. McIntosh, *A Peaceful Realm - The Rise and Fall of the Indus Civilization*, pp. 121

⁴⁹ EI pp. 107, pp. 113.

⁵⁰ David Frawley, *A Reply To Michael Witzel's Article "A Maritime Rigveda? How not to read the Ancient Texts"*, *The Hindu*, 25th June 2002 available at: <http://www.bharatvani.org/davidfrawley/ReplytoWitzel.html>.

⁵¹ *Rig Veda* 10:95

Satapatha Brahmana [Madhyandina] 11:5:1:1

Baudhayana Srautasutra 18:44 - 45

Vadhula Anvakhyana 1:1:2

⁵² Willem Caland, *Eene Nieuwe Versie van de Urvasi-Mythe. Album-Kern, Opstellen Geschreven Ter Eere van Dr. H. Kern*, pp. 57 - 60. Translated from the original Dutch by Koenraad Elst, and compiled by Vishal Agarwal.

same way as Caland does.⁵³ Baudhayana Dharmasutra declares⁵⁴ that Aryavarta is the land that lies west of Kalakavana,⁵⁵ east of adarsana,⁵⁶ south of the Himalayas and north of the Vindhyas. Another sutra⁵⁷ confines Aryavarta to the Ganga - Yamuna doab, and considers people from beyond this area as of mixed origin,⁵⁸ and hence not worthy of emulation by the Aryans. Yet another sutra⁵⁹ recommends expiatory acts for those who have crossed the boundaries of Aryavarta. Baudhayana Srutasutra⁶⁰ recommends the same for those who have crossed the boundaries of Aryavarta and ventured into Afghanistan and other far away places.

So much evidence from the Indian sources assigns an Indian home for the Aryans. Even if we pretend that the Avesta talks of “repeated” migrations from Iran to India, how does one reconcile the opposing pronouncements? That is, if at all one should accord any merit to the unsubstantiated claim of Thapar that there is literary evidence for the migration of the Aryans from Iran to India.

The Mittani Gods and Kikkuli’s Horses

Elsewhere,⁶¹ she claims that the earliest evidence of the Indo-Aryan comes from Northern Syria. The references here, though not stated by Thapar, are to “The Mittani Treaty”, “The Kikkuli Horse Training Manual” and “A Hurrian text from Yorgan Tepe”.⁶² The implication

⁵³ Chintamani Ganesh Kashikar, *Baudhayana Srutasutra [Ed., with an English translation, 3 volumes, volume III, pp. 1235: “Ayu moved towards the east. Kuru - Pancala and Kasi - Videha were his regions. This is the realm of Ayu. Amavasus proceeded towards the west. The Gandharis, Sparsus and Arattas were his regions. This is the realm of Amavasus.”*

D. S. Trivedi, *The Original home of the Aryans*, ABORI volume XX, pp. 49 - 68: “The Kalpasutra asserts that Pururavas had two sons by Urvasi - Ayus and Amavasus. Ayu went eastwards and founded Kuru - Pancala and Kasi - Videha nations, while Amavasus went westwards and founded Gandhara, Sparsava and Aratta.”

⁵⁴ *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* 1:1:2:10

⁵⁵ Kalakavana is modern day Allahabad.

⁵⁶ Adarsana - the spot where the Sarasvati disappears in the desert

⁵⁷ *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* 1:1:2:11

⁵⁸ *Ibid* 1:1:2:14

⁵⁹ *Ibid* 1:1:12:15

⁶⁰ *Baudhayana Srutasutra* 18:13

⁶¹ *EI* pp. 107

⁶² J. P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo Europeans*, pp. 37: The Mittani Treaty was signed between the Hittites and the Mittani. The king of the latter invokes both the Hurrian Gods as well as a few others whose names are cognate with that of the Vedic deities Mitra, Indra, Varuna and Nasatya.

The Kikkuli Horse training manual, which goes by the name of its Mittani author, is a Hittite text on horse training and chariotry. It deploys numerals that are cognate with the Indic numerals eka, tri, pancha, sapta and

is that since these are supposedly the earliest evidences of Indo-Aryan, and since they occur in Northern Syria, they point to the migration of the Aryans from there into India. Is that really so?

The Mittani ruled a vast area between the Mediterranean and Northern Syria in the fifteenth and the fourteenth centuries BCE. They spoke Hurrian, a non-IA language. All the words that are cognate with IA⁶³ are found in martial contexts in connection with horses, warriors and chariots. A few men among the Mittani had IA names, while this is not to be noticed among their women. What does this mean? As Mallory suggests, this could mean that these warriors of Indic origin superimposed themselves on the Hurrians and became their noble class. This wouldn't mean, by any stretch of imagination, that the Aryans themselves originated from Northern Syria. If that were so, one should expect to see predominantly IA words in non-martial contexts. One would also expect to see a prevalence of IA names among their females. This is not the case.

Let us pretend that the Aryans originated from Northern Syria. Since they had inscribed in Syria, one would expect to see them as literate during the earliest phases when they were supposed to have entered India. Rather, the earliest inscriptions in India are from the Mauryan era.⁶⁴ Does Thapar expect her readers to believe that the Aryans who were literate in Syria in 1500 BCE forgot to write as they entered India? A more logical explanation is that these Mittani were the Kshatriyas⁶⁵ who had left India for Northern Syria. Since writing was present in that area even a few centuries earlier, it is reasonable to assume that these Kshatriyas, who had not known any *lipi* before, had learnt them as they settled in their new Western homes. Since they emerged as the royalty, their own Vedic Gods were invoked while signing the treaties.⁶⁶ So, far from strengthening AIT/AMT, these treaties and texts actually point to Westward migrations of select groups of Aryans from India. One hopes that at least the unfortunate readers of the book are more perceptive and logical than its author!

“Dravidian Elephant?”

Thapar claims that the Aryans were curious about the elephant and called it *mriga hastin*, *the animal with one hand*.⁶⁷ Why not? After all, the Aryans invaded India from outside, and the elephant, an Indian animal, should have been new to them. Naturally, this should mean that

nava.

A Hurrian text from Yorgan Tepe employs a few words cognate with those in Indo-Aryan to describe the color of the horses - babhru, palita and pingala.

⁶³ IA - Indo Aryan.

⁶⁴ Around 250 BCE, when Ashoka ruled.

⁶⁵ Kshatriyas - Kings and warriors among the Aryans.

⁶⁶ J. P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo Europeans*, pp. 38

⁶⁷ EI pp. 114

the Dravidians, who Thapar implies⁶⁸ were the earlier residents of IVC/SSC, must have been more familiar with the elephant ahead of the Aryans, right? Thapar has repeated this claim about the elephant having been a novelty to the Aryans earlier too.⁶⁹ Let us hear about the elephant from the horse's mouth!

The Dravidian family of languages is largely confined to Peninsular India. Among them, Tamil has the oldest extant corpus of literature, the Sangam anthologies. These are basically collections of bardic poetries dating from 100 - 250 AD.⁷⁰ Sangam literature speaks of Tirupati⁷¹ as the northern boundary of the Tamil country, beyond which was spoken a language other than Tamil. Another Sangam poem⁷² talks of the Pandyas fighting their wars deploying the elephants raised in Tirupati. Yet another Sangam song⁷³ talks of the elephants that were trained in Tirupati. One may ask, while all these references establish that the elephant was trained in, and probably resided too, in the region that was either at the northern most part of the Tamil country or beyond that, how all of this would prove whether or not the Dravidians were ahead of the Aryans in domesticating the elephant.

We have references from three more Sangam poems that pronounce the judgment. One of them⁷⁴ talks of "the great male elephant trained by the Aryans with the help of a cow elephant." Another⁷⁵ says that "the mahouts trained the elephants using Sanskrit."⁷⁶

⁶⁸ EI pp. 106. Here, Thapar claims that IA incorporated elements of Dravidian and Munda and states that these languages [what she means is *language families!*] were known only to India. This naturally means that the Dravidians, in her opinion, were the original residents, and the Aryans, the invaders. Other Marxist historians like Irfan Habib have been more vocal about the Dravidian authorship of IVC/SSC, while Thapar just alludes to it.

⁶⁹ R. Thapar, *The Aryan Question Revisited*, hosted by the web page of the Academic Staff College, JNU: http://members.tripod.com/adm/popup/roadmap.shtml?member_name=ascjnu&path=aryan.html&client_ip=198.81.26.45&ts=1058079070&ad_type=POPUP&category=teens&search_string=asc+cjnu+cnew+delhi&id=b4758c95dc3e6602e7263ad00a45ad05. Here Thapar argues: "There has been a lot said about for example words for flora and fauna, animals particularly. Why is it that the elephant is called not by any other generic name but is called "mrga hastin", "the animal with a hand". It is because these people [the Aryans] were unfamiliar with elephants, and the elephant is of course is a very familiar animal from the Harappan seals."

R. Thapar, [Ed.] K. N. Panikkar, T. J. Byres, U. Patnaik, *The Making of History, Essays Presented to Irfan Habib*, "The Rg Veda: Encapsulating Social Change", pp. 21

⁷⁰ Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan On Tamil Literature of South India*, pp. 23 - 45, for a discussion on these dates. The dates assigned by Zvelebil are reasonable, though not always correct. There are other estimates.

⁷¹ *Akananuru* 211:7 - 8. Venkatam is modern Tirupati.

⁷² *Ibid* 27:6 - 8

⁷³ *Purananuru* 389:9 - 11

⁷⁴ *Akananuru* 276:9 - 10

⁷⁵ *Mullaippattu* 35

⁷⁶ *Vatamozhi*, literally meaning *the Northern language*, was the term used to refer to Sanskrit.

Yet another⁷⁷ says that “the mahouts used a mixed [Sanskrit and Tamil] language to train the elephant.” This settles the argument game, set, and match! If the Dravidians were the first to have tamed the wild elephant, then there is no need for the Sangam works to talk of the Northern Aryans as its trainers and tamers. Not only that, the oldest Tamil records also speak of having used Sanskrit, and not Tamil, to train them. This only means that the Dravidians learnt the art of domestication of the wild elephant from the Aryans. The last of the references above, which talks of training the elephant with a mixed tongue, suggests that a transition regarding the domestication and the training of the wild elephant was happening between the Aryans, the original domesticators and the Dravidians, who received that art from them. Or, would Thapar like her readers to believe that the Dravidians had somehow forgotten the art of domestication of the elephant, and a 1500 years later, re-learned it from the Aryans?

Those familiar with Tamil as well as Sanskrit can see on what pathetic scholarship Thapar's argument⁷⁸ regards *mriga hastin* is concocted. The Tamil word for the elephant's trunk is *puzhaikkai*, as in literary Tamil or *tumpikkai*, as in the colloquial. This means, freely translated, *tubular hand*. Would Thapar argue that the elephants were unknown to the Dravidians as well, as they didn't have a generic name for its most distinctive part? These methods of history writing are inscrutable, and devoid of any logic!

In any case, it is worth noting that the Rig Veda uses atleast 3 generic terms to refer to the elephant: *varana*,⁷⁹ *srni*⁸⁰ and *ibha*.⁸¹ It is not at all a bad idea for this “eminent historian” to familiarize herself with India’s ancient literature, both Tamil and Sanskrit, before offering her “expert judgment” spiced with Marxist masala. She may consider learning those two languages for starters. It takes considerable time to master these languages and appreciate the nuances, so she may as well cultivate a belief in reincarnation, so that in a future birth she could do better justice as a historian!

Suppressio veri suggestio falsi

Thapar’s attempts at whitewashing the Islamic crimes, no matter how extensively they have been documented by contemporary chroniclers, are very well known. For various reasons, this has been the methodology of history writing practiced by the Marxist historians since the independence. This tendency, even though of no utility to an objective scholar of history, is easily understandable when we notice the proximity of these Leftist historians to the most fundamentalist of the Muslim organizations.⁸²

⁷⁷ *Malaipatakam* 326 - 327

⁷⁸ EI pp. 114

⁷⁹ *Rig Veda* 1:140:2, 8:33:8, 10:40:4

⁸⁰ Ibid 10:106:6

⁸¹ Ibid 9:57:3

⁸² Arun Shourie, *Eminent Historians: Their Technology, their Line, their Fraud*, pp. 9. R. Thapar is closely associated with the fundamentalist and highly obscurantist Sunni Waqf Board, which is opposed to granting alimony to destitute Muslim women, who have been arbitrarily divorced by their husbands. In the highly

Along with this negation goes the demonizing of the Hindus. Thapar has indulged in every sleight of hand and even outright bluffing to portray the Hindus as the destroyers of the Buddhist and the Jaina places of worship.⁸³ Sita Ram Goel demanded that she produce evidence. She cited 3 cases, hoping that Goel would go away. Alas, Goel returned after completing a thorough research on the inscriptions she had quoted. Two of them had no connection at all with the Buddhist or the Jaina monuments, while the authorities held the third as a concoction. In any case, it told a story very different from what Thapar had insinuated.⁸⁴ Goel has thoroughly catalogued⁸⁵ the destruction of the Hindu temples by the Muslims, and has demanded that Thapar substantiate likewise the supposed destruction of the Buddhist and Jaina places of worship by Hindus. Predictably, once cornered, Thapar has turned incommunicado!

There is no evidence that the Hindus ever destroyed the Buddhist places of worship or persecuted its practitioners. This catholicity of the Hindus existed in the past, and it exists today. While *RNI*⁸⁶ historians like Thapar denigrate the Hindus and their culture, non-partisan practitioners⁸⁷ of the Buddhist Dharma, haven't failed to recognize the accommodating spirit of the Hindus.

The Oracle has spoken!

A reader, while going through this book, would often wonder if he were some Prophet to whom Gabriel is revealing the axioms! It must be conceded that proofs and logical analyses are for mere historians and their students. Archangels and Prophets needn't be constrained by such trivia. Hence, the reader must dispel all such doubts arising in his or her mind, and instead be grateful that he or she is not burdened with the demands of reason, as those pursuing objective academic studies are. Consider a few "revelations" in this book:

politicized Ayodhya case, R. Thapar appeared as witness number 66 on behalf of the Waqf Board.

⁸³ R. Thapar, *Times of India*, October 2, 1986. In her letter, R. Thapar claimed that the Hindus had destroyed the Buddhist and the Jaina monuments. Quoted: <http://www.bharatvani.org/books/htemples2/app4.htm>

⁸⁴ Arun Shourie, *Eminent Historians: Their Technology, their Line, their Fraud*, pp. 99.

⁸⁵ Sita Ram Goel, *Hindu Temples: What Happened to them? Volume II, The Islamic Evidence, Appendix 4*, available at: <http://www.bharatvani.org/books/htemples2/app4.htm>.

⁸⁶ RNI - Resident Non-Indians, a term coined by Rajeev Srinivasan, a columnist with Rediff.com, *Patriot Games and resident non-Indians* <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/may/22rajeev.htm>. This refers to those born in India and of Indian descent, but hate its culture and spare no attempt to distance themselves from the same or denigrate it through means often foul. Brown on the outside, but white within [vicariously fantasizing themselves to be the colonial masters whom they willingly serve], they are also called coconuts!

⁸⁷ *Light of Truth Award for Indians*, <http://headlines.sify.com/1546news3.html?headline=Richard%7EGere%27s%7E%27Light%7Eof%7ETruth%27%7Eaward%7Efor%7EIndians>. Richard Gere said, "No nation has helped the Tibetans more than India. Its contribution remains unparalleled as the displaced people have not only been able to rebuild their monastic institutions but have also prospered materially." One may note that the Tibetans came to India as refugees, after the Communist China invaded Tibet, and created a blood bath. It is worth noting that the Marxist historians of India have no harsh words for such acts of genocide perpetuated by the Communists.

- The Mahabharata “may have been” a localized feud, and the Bhagavad Gita a wholesale interpolation!⁸⁸
- The Ramayana “probably” was a local feud, and the Southern locales in the Ramayana “may” have been later day interpolations!⁸⁹
- Alexander the Great was “perhaps” hostile to the Brahmins, and so they hated the Yavanas!⁹⁰
- Ashoka didn’t inscribe in Tamil, “perhaps” because that language didn’t have a script then!⁹¹
- The Greek Goddess Ardochsho enters India at the turn of the first millennium AD, and gets absorbed into the Hindu pantheon as Shri!⁹²
- The Gupta Age was not the Golden age. Archeological evidence reveals that the laity was more impoverished than under the previous rulers!⁹³

This “eminent historian” adduces no references for such claims. This is the usual trick in the Marxist trade. They start their hypotheses with uncertainty, using the word *perhaps*, but conclude the statement quite assertively, as if their uncertain speculation in itself has metamorphosed into evidence as well. Many of them repeat the same claims,⁹⁴ using almost similar phrases, making you wonder if they are drawing from the same source. Let us look at the specific claims.

If the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were indeed local feuds, a claim that Thapar fails to substantiate, then how would she explain their popularity across the sub-continent? Of course, she would say that they became popular because they were transmitted through ballads. Sure, they were, but the question is, why only these “local feuds” were rendered through ballads and why not any other feud? Even at the beginning of the first millennium AD, the Tamils were very familiar with these two epics and had internalized them. So thorough was the internalization that these epics find expression even in poetry that was connected with such themes as war and love.

⁸⁸ EI pp. 102, pp. 277

⁸⁹ EI pp. 103 - 104

⁹⁰ EI pp. 160, pp. 217

⁹¹ EI pp. 182

⁹² EI pp. 223

⁹³ EI pp. 282

⁹⁴ Arun Shourie, *Eminent Historians: Their Technology, their Line, their Fraud*, “Maybe perhaps, probably mostly Therefore”, pp.157 - 177, for an excellent deconstruction of similar Marxist chicanery in D. N. Jha, *Ancient India, An Introductory Outline*

A Sangam song⁹⁵ praises the Chera King of having provided food for the Pandava and the Kaurava armies, while they battled at Kurukshetra. One can very well say that this is a mere exaggeration, as no Chera king is mentioned in the Mahabharata. True, but the point is why would a bard insult his patron king of having provided culinary feast for some “local feud”? A Sangam anthologist⁹⁶ is well known as the translator of the Mahabharata.

In another Sangam song⁹⁷, a poet eulogizes his Chola king, and is rewarded with expensive jewelry. He distributes his fortune among his relatives, who, overwhelmed by the royal jewelry, wear them quite awkwardly. The poet draws an analogy to a scene in the Kishkinda Kanda,⁹⁸ where the monkeys of Sugriva, says the Tamil poet, toyed with the jewelry that Sita had dropped, while Ravana was abducting her. In yet another Sangam song,⁹⁹ the heroine’s liaison with her lover becomes the gossip of the town. Then he marries her, and the town settles quietly. The poet compares this with a scene in the Ramayana, where Rama meditates at Dhanushkoti¹⁰⁰ before waging war on Sri Lanka. The poet says that just as the banyan tree, under which Rama meditated, fell silent after the chirpy birds vacated it, the town too got cleansed of the gossip once the lovers married. Ironically, according to our Marxist “eminence”, the Southern locales in the Ramayana “may have been” later day interpolations! May I suggest that the “later day editors” not only “interpolated” those verses in the Sanskrit original, but also made sure that the same was replicated in an analogy in a song of love in a Sangam Tamil anthology?

The Tamil poets of the Sangam age demonstrate familiarity with the proverbial wealth of the Nandas that the monarchs had hidden beneath the bed of the Ganges,¹⁰¹ the military might of the Mauryas,¹⁰² in addition to the traditions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Strangely,

⁹⁵ *Purananuru* 2:13 - 16

⁹⁶ *Bharatam Padiya Peruntevanar, Peruntevanar who translated the Mahabharata*, wrote the invocation hymns to a few Sangam anthologies such as *Akananuru*, *Purananuru*, *Kuruntokai*, *Narrinai* and *Ainkurunuru*. His translation of the Mahabharata has not come down to us, though he has attained fame for that.

⁹⁷ *Purananuru* 378:16 - 21

⁹⁸ *Kishkinda Kanda, Canto 6* depicts this scene differently. Here, Sugriva presents the jewelry tied in a scarf to Rama, and tells Him that Sita had dropped them. The narration of the monkeys wearing that jewelry is not found in the original.

⁹⁹ *Akananuru* 70:15

¹⁰⁰ *Koti, Dhanushkoti*, a location in Southern coastal Tamilnadu.

¹⁰¹ *Akananuru* 251:5, 265:4 - 6

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, pp. 12, draws our attention to the immense wealth of the Nandas that Xenophon alludes to. So, it is reasonable to assume that the Tamil poets were referring to a tradition that has its roots in history.

¹⁰² *Akananuru* 69:10 talks of the roads that the Mauryas had laid for their chariots to ply.

Ibid 281:8 talks of the expedition of the Mauryas to conquer the South.

Purananuru 175:6

they display little awareness of Ashoka, regardless how the edicts portray him. So, it is fair to conclude that those only events and legends of real significance, and not some “local feuds”, that caught the attention of those poets, found literary expression. Yet, in the rich Marxist tradition anything Hindu must be discounted as myth or interpolation, while even blatant myths pertaining to other religions must be bestowed with an aura of legitimacy. Having denounced the Ramayana, Thapar admits that any historical evidence for the myth¹⁰³ of the supposed arrival of St. Thomas in the Tamil country in AD 52 is lacking, but in the very next line unhesitatingly declares that such a visit is plausible!¹⁰⁴ Sure, even the Miraj¹⁰⁵ is plausible right Ms. Thapar?

To reject the *Bhagavad Gita* as an integral portion of the “original” *Mahabharata* betrays Thapar’s ignorance of the subject matter. The nucleus of the epic as it exists today, based on the internal testimony of the text, was the *Jaya Samhita* containing 8800 verses. In Vaishampayana’s *Bharata*, this was enlarged to 24000 verses. By the time of its last canonical recital by the time of Ugrasrava Sauti, this text had come into modern form and came to be called the *Mahabharata*. In other words, the *Bhagavad Gita* has always been an integral part of the *Mahabharata*. Had she argued that the *Bhagavad Gita* wasn’t part of the *Jaya Samhita*, perhaps she might have had a case, albeit a case that can’t be substantiated with incontrovertible evidence.

There are several internal references to the *Bhagavad Gita* in the *Mahabharata*, the most important of them being the instruction of Krishna to Arjuna, in the form of the *Anu Gita*, long after the Kurukshetra war is over. In the *Anu Parvan*, the protégé insists that Krishna again impart the teachings that He originally had given during the war. The Friend and the Philosopher doesn’t oblige [literally speaking], though He delivers the *Anu Gita*. What else could have been this reference to *the teaching in the battlefield*, if not the *Bhagavad Gita*?

If there is ever an unkind word for the Yavanas, in any Sanskrit work, then it must only be because Alexander supposedly didn’t patronize the Brahmins and so they cultivated a hatred for him! Never mind that Thapar wouldn’t substantiate this claim too. The Sangam Tamils too described the Yavanas quite unkindly, calling them *mlecchas*;¹⁰⁶ in the same song, the

¹⁰³ Thapar carefully uses the terms *legend and tradition*, while referring to this Christian myth, regardless the fact that this *tradition* is a 14th century AD Portuguese concoction, while any Hindu tradition, however well attested literarily, is invariably called a *myth*.

See, Ishwar Sharan, *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, available at <http://hamsa.org/index.htm>, for a very systematic and thoroughly referenced deconstruction of the myth of St. Thomas.

¹⁰⁴ EI pp. 279

¹⁰⁵ An Islamic myth, as found in the *Fath al Bari*, a collection of *Hadiths*. As per this myth, Prophet Mohammad started from Mecca, traveled to Jerusalem and then to the seven heavens where he had auditions with the previous prophets, all in the course of a night!

¹⁰⁶ *Mullaippattu* 66

Yavanas are portrayed as serving the Tamil royalty. Now, is this also a brahminical reaction to the supposed denial of patronage?

She is of course right that Ashoka didn't inscribe his edicts in Tamil, but the reason she gives, that Tamil didn't have a script then, is misleading. Marxist historians have always argued that in ancient India, only the upper castes were literate, a point which Thapar repeats in this book too.¹⁰⁷ If what she says were true, then only the upper castes would have been able to read the inscription in any case. So, even if Tamil hadn't had a script, Ashoka could have inscribed his Tamil edicts in the Brahmi script, as inscriptions following soon were. Since she claims, without any evidence of course, that the Brahmins were Sanskrit speakers who supposedly were forced to learn Tamil¹⁰⁸ upon arriving in the Tamil country, they would have had no difficulty understanding the Brahmi inscriptions, right? The true reasons that Ashoka didn't inscribe in Tamil are, one that his rule didn't extend over the Tamil country but ended with Southern Karnataka, and two that the Tamil language was not spoken in Karnataka. As the Tamil sources themselves state explicitly,¹⁰⁹ the land where Tamil was spoken, had Tirupati as its northern boundary.

Her unsubstantiated claim that Shri is a Greek import must be treated as the product of her own fertile imagination, just as her claim that Christianity influenced Madhvacharya's doctrines¹¹⁰ or her suggestion that the Bhakti movement of the South "may have been" influenced by Christianity!¹¹¹ Every Marxist historian proposes a different place origin for Shri. Anything is fine, so long as She did not originate in India, or so long as one endows her with a non-Aryan pedigree. D. N. Jha asserts¹¹² that Shri "may have been" a non-Aryan fertility Goddess, who was absorbed into the Arthashastra, and later on ended up as the wife of Vishnu. Evidence? The Oracle has spoken!

Thapar reads nothing but class struggle into India's past; a struggle in which Sanskrit supposedly came to symbolize the ethos of the upper castes, while the laity was at best indifferent to the same for they remained unlettered. Nevertheless, when confronted with the fact that Shilpashastras were mostly written in Sanskrit,¹¹³ and since they were prescriptive texts for the benefit of the artisans, who must have then understood Sanskrit, she sheepishly suggests that it "probably" meant that the status of the artisans was improving! Under whom?

¹⁰⁷ EI pp. 387

¹⁰⁸ EI pp. 234

¹⁰⁹ *Akananuru* 211:7 - 8. Venkatam is modern Tirupati.

Panamparanar, *Tolkappiyam, Invocatory hymn*, states that the land where Tamil was spoken extended between Tirupati and Kumari.

¹¹⁰ EI pp. 401

¹¹¹ EI pp. 356

¹¹² D. N. Jha, *Ancient India, An Introductory Outline*, pp. 66

¹¹³ EI pp. 404

The temple destroying jizya-imposing Mughals, Ms. Thapar? Jha blatantly summarizes¹¹⁴ the bottom line of the Marxist tirade against India's past: "The truly golden age of the people doesn't lie in the past, but in the future!" No matter what the epigraphs, chronicles, travelogues, inscriptions and archeological evidences say to the contrary, the "eminent historians" must be right! If you are still wondering why she discounts the Gupta era as the Golden age, she doesn't keep you guessing for long. Weren't the Chola and the Mughal eras golden too, she tamely asks.¹¹⁵ In case you hadn't comprehended, that was her "evidence" for the earlier claim that during the Gupta rule, the laity was poorer than they were under the previous rulers!

When was the Anklet smashed?

Thapar is almost clueless while talking about Tamil literary and historical traditions. This is not surprising given that she doesn't even have a cursory knowledge of the language, which is crucial for analyzing the primary sources that throw information on the ancient Tamil society. She dates Silappadikaram¹¹⁶ to the 5th century AD,¹¹⁷ and as usual fails to furnish any supporting reference or argument. She, and certainly her readers, would have benefited had she at least perused the seminal works written over the last several centuries on the dating of this epic. V. R. R. Dikshitar has summarized many of those methods, with necessary critique.¹¹⁸ Three of the methods that he discusses¹¹⁹ are noteworthy. One of them, mostly the product of modern Indological research, arranges the Tamil epics and anthologies, on a relative chronological scale, using the percentage of Sanskrit words used as the basis. As per this method, Silappadikaram uses eleven percent Sanskrit words, as compared to the thirty percent used in the Bhakti literature of the Azhwars and the Nayanmars. Since, the latter two lived between the 5th and the 10th century AD, and allowing for at least 3 centuries for Sanskritization of literary Tamil from eleven percent to thirty percent, the epic is dated to the 2nd century AD.¹²⁰

Even though Dikshitar is not being judgmental, it is easy to notice the fundamental flaw in this method. Firstly, it assumes that Sanskrit entered the Tamil country at a certain time, anterior to which a pure Tamil literary tradition existed. There is little evidence to support such a hypothesis, and much to the contrary. So, one can't make inferences starting with an unproven hypothesis. Secondly, the relative usage of Sanskrit words in Tamil literature after the 5th century AD doesn't reveal any certain pattern. There are later day works that deploy

¹¹⁴ D. N. Jha, *Ancient India, An Introductory Outline*, pp. 115 - 116

¹¹⁵ EI pp. 280 - 282

¹¹⁶ *Silappadikaram, Lay of the Anklet* is one of the 5 epics from the Tamil country.

¹¹⁷ EI pp. 345

¹¹⁸ V. R. R. Dikshitar, *The Silappadikaram*

¹¹⁹ Ibid Appendices I and II

¹²⁰ V. R. R. Dikshitar, *The Silappadikaram* pp. 350 - 353

fewer Sanskrit words, while there are earlier works that deploy more. The same can be said of the Sangam epoch also. Most importantly, the entire Sangam corpus is not only aware of the Aryans, but the Brahmins were among its poets too. They enjoyed the most exalted position in the society, and the brahminical norms were the ideals of the society. A terse line from the oldest extant Tamil grammar tells that the ideal education is that which leads to the realization of *tat tvam asi*.¹²¹ None of the Sangam works even implies that the Brahmins ever came from the outside. This being the case, the increased usage of Sanskrit words in the Bhakti corpus can't be due to any migration. Such a proposition is simplistic. So, even though the Indological speculation arrived at a correct date for this epic, albeit inadvertently, it is fundamentally flawed.

The second method that Dikshitar discusses, is sound, and is based on the astronomical references contained in the epic, as well as by matching those keys with those in another contemporary epic *Manimekhalai*. A medieval commentator of *Silappadikaram*, *Adiyarkkunallar* collates information regards the calendar used in the epic and the position of the stars recorded therein. Dikshitar correctly points out that the commentator has used the *Sauramana* method of reckoning, thereby eliminating any confusion that may arise to due identification with the *Chandramana* reckoning. The calculations based on this data places the critical events of the epic in the year 174 AD.¹²²

The third method is the well-known *Gajabahu synchronism*¹²³ that is based on the reference in the epic to the Sri Lankan king by that name, who attended the coronation of the Chera monarch. Gajabahu ascended the throne around 171 AD, so the reference to him in the narrative of the epic is credible.

In short, taking any of the routes, and objectively analyzing, one can place the narrative of the epic around 170 AD. Not Thapar, to whom the epic belongs to the 5th century AD. Perhaps, she is optimistic that the bulk of her readers wouldn't be any more inquisitive, empirical or informed than she is! It may not be a misplaced optimism given the caliber of the students who end up at JNU. There are 2 categories of students that specialize in history in India. The first category is those who seek the truth about the past. They are non-partisan, sensitive, and have a healthy regard for the traditions of the society they wish to study. They have few agendas to push. Unfortunately, such students could never hope to rise in their career, given the nepotism and intolerance at JNU. The second category is those who ended up at the bottom of their classes in their preceding high school examinations. For them, history was not the choice but the last refuge, after they were denied admissions to any science stream. This is in particular true of India. Such students, if they are willing to follow the cabal of Marxist historians, can be assured of meteoric rise in their career.

¹²¹ *Tolkappiyam, Poruladikaram* 186. A superficial reading of this verse misleadingly suggests that the ideal education should be confined to 3 years of studying. This is ridiculous because the wise grammarian couldn't have been restrictive about learning. *Nacchinarkiniyar*, the medieval commentator of the grammatical treatise, gave the more meaningful interpretation that the reference is to the realization as expounded in the Vedanta.

¹²² V. R. R. Dikshitar, *The Silappadikaram* pp. 353 - 357

¹²³ *Ibid* pp. 14

Sati

The earliest evidence for Sati,¹²⁴ claims our historian, occurs in Eran¹²⁵ in AD 510, and as usual fails to provide any references. It is imperative to discuss at length how far off the mark Thapar has been on this subject matter. This practice was found across several cultures even from the Mesolithic settlements. While discussing the Early Bronze Age cultures of Italy, Mallory tells us¹²⁶ about the *Tomb of the Widow* that offers evidence for the burial of the wife, when her warrior husband died. The same was noticed in the Southeastern Europe as well.¹²⁷ Now, let us turn our focus to the historical times. Strabo¹²⁸ says that the Greeks under Alexander noticed this practice being observed in Punjab. Yet, the most vivid recordings of this practice come from the Sangam Tamil literature. Evidently, a woman either joined her husband in his funeral pyre or burial urn, or led the austere life of a widow comparable to that of an ascetic. Most cases of Sati are spoken of in the martial context. It can be argued that when the king died not only his queen[s], but also his attendants committed sati. A queen chastises the courtiers for not [apparently] performing sati and tells them that she would rather join her beloved husband in the pyre than lead the spartan life of a widow. Not for her, says she, is the life of a widow who eats one meal of rice mixed with gingili oil and *neem* leaves, and who sleeps on the bare floor. May you not commit sati, the queen tells the courtiers, rather sarcastically, but for me the cold water of the lake is not different from the fire of the pyre.¹²⁹ And the very next song confirms that she did commit sati.

Another Tamil woman implores the potter to make her husband's burial urn large enough to hold the widow as well.¹³⁰ Tolkappiyam¹³¹ says that the highest glory that a woman can aspire for is to join her husband's funeral pyre. Those ethos were emulated not only by the common women, but even Kambar, who appeared towards the end of the first millennium AD seems to have regarded sati quite highly, for he lets Mandodhari die at the battlefield once Ravana had fallen. N. Subramaniam has suggested¹³² that even the great sage Tiruvalluvar alludes to the

¹²⁴ Ceremonial union of the wife with her parted husband, in his funeral pyre or in burial.

¹²⁵ EI pp. 304

¹²⁶ J. P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo Europeans*, pp. 93

¹²⁷ Ibid pp. 184

¹²⁸ H. L. Jones, *The Geography of Strabo*, 15:1:30, 62

¹²⁹ *Purananuru* 246

¹³⁰ Ibid 256

¹³¹ *Tolkappiyam, Poruladhikaram* 77

¹³² N. Subrahmanian, *Sangam Polity*, pp. 300. He draws the attention of the readers to Kural 56, where the sage delineates the duties of the wife towards her husband and the need for her to keep her honor. He almost repeats the same message, a rarity in his pithy expression, in the next couplet where he says that a prison is of no avail if a woman can't keep her honor. Subramaniam argues that this is an allusion to the reality that a woman choosing to lead the spartan life of a widow has none but herself to guard her. In the very next couplet, the sage says that the woman who earns the opportunity of serving [following] her husband shall earn the blessings of the gods of the heaven. The author says that this could be construed as the sage approving sati.

glory of a woman who performs sati. Manimekhalai has an interesting narrative¹³³ where the chaste Adhirai wrongly concludes that her trader husband had died and attempts to commit sati, but the fire refuses to engulf her. Then her husband returns and they live happily ever after! It is reflective of the belief of the social milieu that a chaste wife is the one who protects her husband.

A woman wasn't always allowed to commit sati. A Sangam song says¹³⁴ that *after her son's father departed*, the widow's head was tonsured and her bangles were removed. Then onwards, lily with rice became her staple food. So, scholars have argued¹³⁵ that those women, who had children, were rather expected to observe widowhood than commit sati. Interestingly, Manusmriti¹³⁶ doesn't prescribe sati even for those widows who have no offspring. It expects them to lead an ascetic life of honor. Its prescriptions, barring the tonsuring of a widow, are very similar to the descriptions of a widow's life that one finds in the Sangam poetry. It is evident that the wives of the deceased themselves looked down upon the plight of a widow, who had to tonsure her head, and rather thought of sati as a glorious option.¹³⁷ G. L. Hart draws¹³⁸ our attention to the prescriptions of Skanda Purana, which includes even the tonsuring of the widow; he points out that Skanda Purana's injunctions regards the vows of a widow exactly match the social mores of ancient Tamilnadu.

Why then, does Thapar falsely claim that sati is evidenced only in AD 510? Ignorance? None would doubt that. Is it also because this augments the usual Marxist rhetoric that the Gupta era supposedly led to the ascendancy of the Hindu orthodoxy, and hence the marginalizing of the woman, an ideal recipe that "could have" resulted in sati? In the same page, Thapar claims that with sati in place, the emerging debate over widow remarriage "could've been" nipped! Elsewhere,¹³⁹ she claims that cattle raids were very common in Peninsular India, and alleges that the commemorative stones depicting sati were meant to cultivate a heroic ethos in defense of the settlements not protected by the royal army! She provides no evidence. In the Marxist scheme of things, any Indian war has to be a "cattle raid" and practices like sati have to be reduced to utter banality. If she were right, then what does one do with all those instances of the women of royal households committing sati? Tonsuring of the widows continued even till a few decades ago among the Brahmins of Tamilnadu. The Brahmins are not known to have participated in the battlefield, until mid medieval times. Was this tonsuring of the Brahmin widows too a practice aimed at cultivating heroic ethos for defense against "cattle raids"?

¹³³ *Manimekhalai* XVI

¹³⁴ *Purananuru* 250

¹³⁵ S. K. Aiyangar, *Beginnings*, pp. 145

¹³⁶ *Manusmriti* 156 - 160

¹³⁷ *Purananuru* 280

¹³⁸ G. L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil, Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*, pp. 115

¹³⁹ EI pp. 342

Even during the Sangam times, sati was more an ideal than common practice. In every instance where it occurred, the widow performed sati willingly. The internal references in the poems regards the spartan living of the widows is abundant proof that most widows took to ascetic living. For all practical purposes, it was only the royalty that took to sati. This was practiced on a large scale only during the times of Islamic invasions. The Rajput women embraced the funeral pyre of their husbands, to avoid being raped and ending up in the harem of the Islamic aggressors. The Leftist historians, to whitewash the Islamic culpability, have often tried to project sati as a retrograde Hindu religious practice, which it wasn't. In fact, Manusmrti,¹⁴⁰ even prescribes the duties of a widow, but has no word on sati. No other Hindu law book either. Barring inevitable exceptions, it is evident that the women, who performed sati, did so joyfully. Friar Jordanus,¹⁴¹ the Christian missionary, observes succinctly sometime in the early 1300s AD: "In this India, on the death of a noble, or of any people of substance, their bodies are burned; and eke their wives follow them alive to the fire, and, for the sake of worldly glory, and for the love of their husbands, and for eternal life, burn along with them, with as much joy as if they were going to be wedded; and those who do this have the higher repute for virtue and perfection among the rest. Wonderful! I have sometimes seen, for one dead man who was burnt, five living women take their places on the fire with him, and die with their dead." Despite his contempt for the Hindus and his missionary zeal, he was honest in his observation that sati wasn't forced.

Devi Chandra Gupta

While discussing the play *Devi Chandra Gupta*, written a full two centuries after the reign of Chandra Gupta II had ended, Thapar claims¹⁴² that this play "supposedly" deals with the events that followed the death of Samudra Gupta. According to the narrative of the play, Rama Gupta was defeated by the Sakas, to whom he then agreed to surrender his wife. His younger brother was enraged by this, and he assassinated the Saka king as well as Rama Gupta. Then she claims that the play was written to justify the usurpation of the throne by the younger brother [by slandering the elder]. This beats common sense. The play was written two centuries after the supposed event. By the time it was written, the Gupta dynasty was long gone. Why would anyone write a play based on an invented myth to vindicate the monarch of a bygone era, when his dynasty had effectively crumbled? Vindicate the "usurper" in whose eyes? For whose benefit? Searching for logic in our historian's writing would prove more elusive than looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack!

Devi Chandra Gupta, unfortunately, has been lost to us. All we have are references to and quotations from this drama in five other works.¹⁴³ The original has been attributed to

¹⁴⁰ *Manusmriti* 156 - 160

¹⁴¹ K. A. N. Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India, From Megasthenes to Ma Huan*, pp. 203

¹⁴² EI pp. 285

¹⁴³ V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Gupta Polity*, pp. 44 - 52, lists them: *Abhinavabharati* XVIII, *Sringaprakasha* XII, *Natyadarpana*, *Natakalakshana Ratnakosha*, and an Arabic work *Mujmalu-t-Tawarikh*.

Vishakadatta,¹⁴⁴ who also authored *Mudrarakshasa*. According to the quotations in *Natyadarpana*,¹⁴⁵ Rama Gupta was an elder brother of Chandra Gupta II. In a battle with the Saka king Rudrasimha,¹⁴⁶ Rama Gupta was defeated, and agreed to surrender his wife Dhruvadevi to the victor. The royal house thought of many ideas to avoid this ignominy, and finally decided to send Madhavasena, disguised as the queen herself. Madhavasena was the courtesan, and Chandra Gupta II was in love with her. At the sight of his beloved in disguise, Chandra Gupta changed his plans, and instead disguised himself as the queen. He went to the Saka king's palace and killed him. Then, he returned to kill his brother.

This story finds a close parallel in an Arabic work,¹⁴⁷ dated to the 11th century AD¹⁴⁸. In that, says Dikshitar, Vikrama [Chandra Gupta II] becomes Barkamaris and Rama Gupta becomes Rawwal. According to that version, Barkamaris was originally in love with a woman [this is an allusion to Dhruvadevi], but when he came to know that Rawwal too loved the same woman, he sacrificed his love and instead took to a life of a scholar, until his brother was defeated by the Saka king, and ignominy descended on the royal house. Rest of the story is the same as in the *Natyadarpana* extract.

The question is: Is this story having some basis in history, or was it concocted to vindicate the “usurper” as Thapar alleges? Dikshitar draws¹⁴⁹ the attention of the readers to the Sajjan copperplate inscription of Amoghavarsha I that belittles Chandra Gupta II for marrying his brother's wife. Dikshitar also tells us¹⁵⁰ that rebuke of the same ignominious act finds mention in the Sangali and Cambay plates of the Rashtrakuta king Govinda IV. Such a marriage should have invited some rebuke, because, as Dikshitar points out the law of those times didn't allow such marriages. So, it turns out that the drama indeed was based on history, and was not a Brahminical attempt to vindicate the “usurper”.

Thapar also claims,¹⁵¹ that the discovery of the coins of Rama Gupta, indeed suggests that he was the ruler before the “usurper” displaced him. She cites no references, so one doesn't know which coins she is talking about. Dikshitar¹⁵² has addressed this issue in detail. There has been some scholarly debate as to who issued the coins that carry the name of Kacha Gupta, for history doesn't know of an Imperial Gupta king by that name. Some have

¹⁴⁴ Ibid pp. 44

¹⁴⁵ Ibid pp. 45

¹⁴⁶ Ibid pp. 47, Dikshitar says that according to some other sources, this king who fought Rama Gupta was Rudrasena II.

¹⁴⁷ *Mujmalu-t-Tawarikh*

¹⁴⁸ V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Gupta Polity*, pp. 48

¹⁴⁹ Ibid pp. 46, quoting *Ep. Ind.*, XVIII, pp. 235 ff

¹⁵⁰ Ibid pp. 46, quoting *Ep. Ind.*, VII, pp. 26 ff

¹⁵¹ EI pp. 287

¹⁵² V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Gupta Polity*, pp. 58 - 65

suggested that it was the formal name of Samudra Gupta, but there is no evidence for that. If Thapar is talking of these coins, then she hasn't given any basis for equating this Kacha Gupta with Rama Gupta. Dikshitar offers a better explanation. He points out that Samudra Gupta had issued coins commemorative of his father, Chandra Gupta I. Then he points out that Samudra Gupta's grandfather was Ghatotkacha Gupta, who was greatly known for his adherence to the Vedic sacrifices, and suggests that Samudra Gupta might have issued the Kacha coins in celebration of his grandfather's memory.

Throughout the book, she reduces the historic traditions of India to a mere class struggle. It was a struggle in which the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas "supposedly" colluded to aggrandize themselves. The Kshatriyas were all from "supposedly" inconsequential backgrounds, while the Brahmins "supposedly" invented a pedigree for the former, to "supposedly" elevate them in the eyes of the laity, of course in return for monetary considerations! Not even once does she corroborate this ridiculous theory with evidence. India had time and again witnessed one dynasty being replaced by another, often violently. Constant wars among the neighboring kingdoms were well known. If indeed a king had been bestowed a fake pedigree by the "manipulating" Brahmins, how come none of his enemies or their bards even make a mention of that?

The ancient Tamil Society

Thapar's observations on the Tamil society would have provided comic relief but for the fact that such insidious and blatantly false theories have been deployed by the missionaries and the Dravidianists¹⁵³ in the 19th and the 20th century Tamilnadu to spew hatred against the Brahmins and Non-Tamils. Thapar builds her theory as follows:

- There is no reference to the Varna system in the Sangam Tamil literature.¹⁵⁴
- Around 500 AD, references to the Brahmin settlements begin to appear.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ The terms *Dravidian* and *Dravidianist* must be distinguished. The former is a very benign term used in the geographical sense. It was originally used to denote the Brahmins of the South, the Pancha Dravidas, just as those of the North were called Pancha Gaudas. Later on, during the medieval times, this term was used to refer to all Southern people. In the mid 19th century, this term acquired a linguistic connotation when Bishop Caldwell classified the Southern languages as belonging to the Dravidian family. It was in the year 1886 AD that the upper caste non-Brahmin students of the University of Madras were told by a British governor, Mountstuart Grant-Duff that they belonged to the Dravidian race. That was when this term acquired racial connotation. The next 2 decades were spent in searching for a pedigree for this newborn race! V. Kanakasabhai Pillai proposed a Tibetan Homeland of the Dravidian race! This race was to include only the upper caste non-Brahmins and was to exclude the Brahmins, the Backwards and the Harijans.

Blended with the divisive AIT, the notions of the Dravidian race were used by E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, to further his political career by spewing hatred on the Brahmins. He often thundered that he would physically eliminate the Brahmins from Tamilnadu. He declared that the Brahmins were outsiders. To date, the Marxist historians feed such hate campaigns. So, the Dravidianists are those who usurped the term Dravidian, gave it a political and racist connotation, and used it for their hate agenda against the original Dravidians!

¹⁵⁴ EI pp. 232

¹⁵⁵ EI pp. 231

- The Brahmins introduce the Varna system around the 8th century AD, though with limited success.¹⁵⁶
- The Brahmins, upon settling in the Tamil country, had become vegetarians.¹⁵⁷
- While the Brahmins were hierarchy conscious, the other Tamil poets were egalitarian.¹⁵⁸
- The Bhakti movement was a rebellion against the Vedic religion; the Bhakti saints opposed the Vedic religion, the Brahmins and the Varna system; the Brahmins were opposed to the Bhakti tradition.¹⁵⁹

Even though she offers no evidences for any of these phenomenal claims, for several decades, the Dravidianists have eagerly lapped up such nonsense to advocate hatred. The likes of the unscrupulous E. V. Ramaswami Naicker have often made calls to take Tamilnadu back to the old times when the society was supposedly egalitarian, when there was supposedly no Brahmin, nor was there any of the appendages like the Varna system that the Brahmin supposedly brought in.

There are numerous references to the Varna system in the Sangam literature. The four Varnas were the norm as well as the ideal. One of the songs says¹⁶⁰ that even though a person may belong to a lower Varna among the four, if he were to acquire knowledge, then those born of the higher Varnas would respect him. Another song¹⁶¹ says that even if those of higher birth fell into poverty, the virtues of their higher birth wouldn't desert them, while yet another says that one's character could only be commensurate with what is befitting the Varna into which he is born.¹⁶² The oldest extant Tamil grammatical treatise prescribes under what circumstances men of each Varna can go on sabbatical or separation. It says that a Brahmin can go away for learning the Vedas or on diplomacy,¹⁶³ a king for matters of war and intrigue¹⁶⁴, and then adds that for the sake of establishing dharma and theistic life, men of all the four Varnas can separate [from their homes].¹⁶⁵ Elsewhere, the same book also lists what the duties of each of the four Varnas have traditionally been. It says that a Brahmin wears the sacred

¹⁵⁶ EI pp. 337

¹⁵⁷ EI pp. 381

¹⁵⁸ EI pp. 356

¹⁵⁹ EI pp. 350, 351, 355, 356, 362

¹⁶⁰ *Purananuru* 183:8 - 10

¹⁶¹ *Pazhamozhi* 21. Pazhamozhi means adage. It seems even in the early medieval times, this was considered a collection of older proverbs.

¹⁶² *Ibid* 310

¹⁶³ *Tolkappiyam Poruladhikaram* 28

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid* 29

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid* 31

thread, carries the kamandala and uses the tortoise shaped wooden plank as his seat [for studying the scriptures],¹⁶⁶ and he can also be a minister or the king.¹⁶⁷ A Kshatriya wears the sacred thread, uses the seat for reading the scriptures, and rules over the land,¹⁶⁸ but there is no mention that he ever carried the kamandala. A Vaishya trades¹⁶⁹ and a Shudra works in the agricultural field.¹⁷⁰

Tiruvalluvar categorically stated that while morality is the virtue of higher birth, immorality is to be found among those born low.¹⁷¹ The fact that he considered virtue a birth based inheritance is confirmed in the very next verse¹⁷² where he argues that a Brahmin who forgets the Vedas could learn them again, but should he ever cease to be moral, the virtue of his high birth is lost forever. He argues¹⁷³ that the mind that mistakes the unreal for the real is a sign of low birth. Elsewhere,¹⁷⁴ he argues that the scruples of a king are measured against his ability to safeguard the Vedic learning of the Brahmins.

In another Sangam song, we get glimpses, so as to speak figuratively, of the life in a Brahmin household, The poet says that having listened to the recital of the Vedic hymns even the parrot that the Brahmins keep, repeats those mantras!¹⁷⁵ Thapar's claim regards the appearance of the Brahmin settlements by the 5th century AD would imply that that there were no Brahmins in the Tamil country before that. If that were really the case, then what do we do with the following references [among several others], all of which from a period anterior to the one she proposes?

- Silappadikaram says that when Madurai burned because of the curse of Kannagi, the quarters where each Varna resided were destroyed except the ones where the Brahmins lived.¹⁷⁶
- The king, while laying siege to an enemy town, should first ensure that the Brahmins residing there move away to a safer place.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁶ Ibid 615

¹⁶⁷ Ibid 627

¹⁶⁸ Ibid 616

¹⁶⁹ Ibid 622

¹⁷⁰ Ibid 625

¹⁷¹ *Tirukkural* 133

¹⁷² Ibid 134

¹⁷³ Ibid 351

¹⁷⁴ Ibid 543

¹⁷⁵ *Perumpanarrupadai* 300 - 301

¹⁷⁶ *Silappadikaram* 22:109 - 114

¹⁷⁷ *Purananuru* 9:1

- A warrior in the barracks gets nostalgic about his lover, as he looks at the budding flowers at dawn, the appearance of which, he says, look like a conch shell that a Brahmin, who has taken to professions [in this case conch shell cutting and bangle making] other than the Vedic sacrifice, has left behind, after sawing portions off for making bangles.¹⁷⁸
- A Jaina saint considers it inauspicious when the Brahmins give up chanting of the Vedas and take to other professions. In *Silappadikaram*, the newly married Kovalan and Kannagi are dissuaded from entering a settlement where the Brahmins musicians reside.¹⁷⁹
- A woman suspects her man of infidelity, because of the new fragrance on his body, which she believes he acquired from a prostitute. He protests that he is innocent, takes a vow on the Brahmins [because they were revered in the society] and pleads that the fragrance on his body is due to his traversing the path full of groves where the wafting breeze carried the fragrance of the flowers that grew there!¹⁸⁰
- The grateful Brahmin poet has not forgotten his patron king; after the latter dies, he brings the king's daughters under his tutelage, declares them as his own, and proposes to an illustrious king who, the poet says, is the forty ninth scion of the dynasty that ruled Dwaraka once, that he marry them.¹⁸¹ His selfless gratitude must have been widely known during the Sangam age, for another poet praises¹⁸² him as the Brahmin without a blemish in his character, and alludes to the incident the previously quoted song talks about.
- The Vedic recitals and yajnas of the dvijas.¹⁸³
- The dakshina a king offers the sacrificing Brahmins who are well versed in the Vedas.¹⁸⁴
- The delicious vegetarian cuisine that a Panan¹⁸⁵ is served while he visits a Brahmin Household.¹⁸⁶

There is no evidence at all that the Brahmins in the Tamil country ever ate meat. The song quoted above indicates that they were vegetarians. Likewise, her claim that the Bhakti saints had opposed the Varna system, the Brahmins and the Vedic religion, is belied by what the saints themselves have written. The great Saiva saint Appar, one of the Nayanmars, praises

¹⁷⁸ *Akananuru* 24:1

¹⁷⁹ *Silappadikaram* 13:38 - 40. Adiyarkkunallar, the medieval commentator, says that even though music itself originated from Sama Veda, by the time of the epic in discussion, the orthodox society considered it a deviation on the path of the Brahmins if they turned away from Vaidiha lifestyle; and hence the notion of such musician Brahmins having been inauspicious.

¹⁸⁰ *Paripadal* 8:51 - 55

¹⁸¹ *Purananuru* 201:6 - 10

¹⁸² *Ibid* 126:11 - 13

¹⁸³ *Ibid* 367:12 - 13

¹⁸⁴ *Patirruppattu* 64:3 - 5

¹⁸⁵ Panans were a jati of people who played on their lute.

¹⁸⁶ *Perumpanarrupadai* 301 - 310

Siva¹⁸⁷ as the Lord of the Vedas. He declares that he was a Jaina ascetic once, during which time he was distracted [from pursuing the truth].¹⁸⁸ Sambantar, another great Saiva saint has written at length about the greatness of the Vedic sacrifices, and has sharp words for those [the reference here is to the Jainas and the other heterodox sects] that oppose the Vedic sacrifices.¹⁸⁹ Her claim that the Brahmins opposed the Bhakti tradition is belied by the very words of another great Saivite saint Tirumular who sings.¹⁹⁰

*Of crystal made is the Linga, the Brahmins worship
Of gold, the Kings worship
Of emerald, the Vaishyas worship
Of stone is the Linga, the Shudras worship*

In several songs, Siva is called The Brahmin.¹⁹¹ This is clearly indicative of the fact that the Brahmins, due to their austerity and scruples, to which we have allusions, were highly respected. The Brahmin woman is described as very chaste and shy, and is compared to the Northern star Arundhati,¹⁹² while another song says¹⁹³ that a Brahmin should never accept anything unless he earns it [by reciting the mantras or performing one of the duties prescribed to him]. Even between the Saivite and the Vaishnavite saints of the great Bhakti tradition, there was many a Brahmin.¹⁹⁴ All of this, in our historian's interpretation, translates into antipathy between the Bhakti tradition on the one hand, and the Brahmins, the Vedas and the Varna system on the other!

Thapar makes claims about the Tamil Bhakti tradition that would startle its traditional practitioners. She claims that the Bhakti saints tried to establish a parallel between the God and the king!¹⁹⁵ She then portrays the entire Bhakti movement as something that actually strengthened the institution of the king. Even a cursory knowledge of the Bhakti hymns would have told our author that the Bhakti saints didn't praise the king at all, let alone present

¹⁸⁷ Appar, *Tevaram*, "4th Tirumurai", "Namacchivayat Tiruppatigam"

¹⁸⁸ Appar, *Tevaram*, "4th Tirumurai"

¹⁸⁹ Tirujnanasambantar, *Tevaram*, "Alavai Patigam"

¹⁹⁰ *Tirumantiram* 1721

¹⁹¹ *Paripadal* 5:22 - 30

¹⁹² *Perumpanarrupadai* 302 - 304

¹⁹³ *Inna Narpatu* 1 - 3

¹⁹⁴ For example, Sambantar, Sundarar, Manickavasagar, Periyazhwar etc. were Brahmins.

Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan On Tamil Literature of South India*, pp. 192 estimates that thirty five percent of the Bhakti saints were the Brahmins. Not everyone agrees with this estimate though; but suffice to say that the Brahmins constituted a large number of the Bhakti saints.

¹⁹⁵ EI pp. 386

him as something divine. One of the Vaishnavite Bhakti saints, Poigai Azhwar, emphatically sings¹⁹⁶ that he wouldn't praise anyone but Vishnu.

Elsewhere,¹⁹⁷ Thapar claims that Tirukkural is a post-Sangam literature. One doesn't know how the author arrives at such fanciful claims. Barring a few pieces, it is difficult to date the Sangam literature with any accuracy. At best we can present a range of dates for their composition. In any case, her claim is false. A Sangam song¹⁹⁸ makes an unmistakable reference to Kural 110, while another¹⁹⁹ carries a paraphrase of Kural 134. This must tell any reader that the anthologies had a chronological overlap. She nonchalantly declares that most of the Sangam poetry describes raids, plunder and bride capturing!²⁰⁰ One doesn't know from where she gets this idea. This is not only contrary to the facts, but also insulting to the ancient Tamil ethos that considered it a virtue not to harm women, let alone "capturing" them as brides.

Conclusion

Now, the reader may be wondering why the Leftist historians take such a rabid anti-Hindu and anti-India position, often negating evidences while formulating their false notions of India's history. Part of the malice was inherited from the times of Macaulay, whose system of education was designed to destroy any reasonable pride the Hindus may derive from their past. This was coupled with the missionary zeal that aimed at undermining the Hindu religious belief, and thus help proselytize the Hindus to Christianity. Most importantly, most of the Leftist historians, as Dilip Chakrabarti points out,²⁰¹ hail from very affluent, urban, westernized, upper caste Hindu families. They have never been associated with the traditions that make Hinduism. They have rarely ever had a first hand experience of rural Indian life, where the Indian culture is nourished. Since most of them lack even a cursory knowledge of India's classical languages, and very little fieldwork or traditional learning to their credit, they are forced to fall back upon the 19th century Euro centric interpretations of India's culture.

As Chakrabarty again correctly points out, these historians also have a lot to gain materially by politicizing history. The material rewards come in the form of fellowships, lecture tours or even a faculty position abroad, if one is willing to sell oneself to propagating the Euro centric notions. The association of the Leftist historians with the Congress party over the past 3 decades is well known. The Congress party has been quite infamous in forging a vote bank of the Muslims, the Harijans and the upper caste Hindus, in furthering dynastic rule. So, it is only inevitable that the Leftist historians, who have been cozying up to the Congress party,

¹⁹⁶ *Nalayira Divya Prabhantam*, "1st Tiruvandadi", 11, 63 - 64, 88, 94.

¹⁹⁷ EI pp. 231

¹⁹⁸ *Purananuru* 34

¹⁹⁹ *Kurinchippattu* 15 - 18

²⁰⁰ EI pp. 231

²⁰¹ Dilip Chakrabarti, *Colonial Indology – Sociopolitics of the Ancient Indian Past*, pp. 2 - 8

should attempt to whitewash the uncomfortable aspects of the Islamic history, while at the same time denigrating Hinduism.

The prospect of unity among the Hindus creates panic amidst these Leftist historians and their allies, the fundamentalist Islamic organizations. An objective assessment of India's past, based only on factual evidences and not some conjured up theories, not only damages the prospects of the Marxist historians in landing rewarding positions abroad, but also undermines their political careers. As a result, they resort to negation of history, politicizing the academia and invention of lies, to keep alive their hitherto fiercely defended theories, which themselves manifested out of their ignorance of the primary sources that hold the key to India's past.

An objective reader, after reading the book under review, would be most disturbed to see the eulogy that graces the cover of the book.²⁰² For an informed reader this shouldn't come as a surprise, because a recent book that Metcalf has authored²⁰³, starts with the Islamic rule in India! The long history of India, the contributions of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jainas in the period anterior to the Islamic rule, have all been simply ignored.

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²⁰² In the jacket of EI, Thomas R. Metcalf, hails Thapar as *one of the world's most eminent historians of India!*

²⁰³ T. R. Metcalf and B. D. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*