

Chapter 1 : Ancient India by V.D. Mahajan

Ancient Indian history has always been mystical; more so a virtual utopia for historians and researchers. This scholarly text narrates the ancient Indian history from the genesis of civilisations to the early middle ages.

Deities in particular were spoken of, not in Indian but in Greek terms and called by Greek names. In a passage of the Rig Veda, Vac is praised as a divine being. Vac is omnipotent, moves amongst divine beings, and carries the great gods, Mitra, Varuna, Indra and Agni, within itself. The doctrine of Vac teaches that "all gods live from Vac, also all demi-gods, animals and people. Vac is the eternal being, it is the first-born of the eternal law, mother of the Vedas and navel of immortality. The Greek barbaroi had the same meaning. The brisk intercourse between India and Greece is attested by the fact that a special rule was inserted in the great grammar of Panini to distinguish three feminine forms of yavana: There is also a striking similarity between the social life described in the Homeric poems- the Illiad and Odyssey- and that found in the Vedas. Homeric gods, like the heroes who believed in them, often rode in the horse driven chariots. Horse-chariotry was a feature of the life of the Indo-European people. Some scholars, like Fiske, have even asserted that elements of the Trojan war story are to be found in the war between the bright deities, and the night demons as described in the Rig Veda. It is clear from Homer that even they used articles of Indian merchandise which were known by names of Indian origin, such as Kassiteros Sanskrit, Kastira , elephas Sanskrit, ibha , and ivory. Alain Danielou , son of French aristocracy, author of numerous books on philosophy, religion, history and arts of India, remarks that: So going to India was an effort to improve his moral education. He followed the road of Alexander the great to India, probably entering the country through the Khyber Pass and going to Punjab, where he met the wise men of India on a forested hill not far from the Ganges River. He delighted in their company and their lengthy discussions. He spent four months with them. They lived exemplary lives very close to the gods. They ate what he ate and shared his love for the natural world. But what impressed Apollnios the most was the Indians contact with Hellenic culture. The Indian wise men spoke Greek, and were well versed in the Greek philosophical tradition and Greek culture. Both the Indian philosophers and Apollnios worshipped the gods and a supreme god, a divine being like Zeus, who was the father of the gods and humans. The wise men, however, described themselves as gods in the sense of being good. Strangely, this event, so significant to Western historians, seemed to have entirely escaped the attention of Sanskrit authors. India Discovered - By John Keay p. British historian Vincent A. Our knowledge of the facts is so scanty and fragmentary that it is difficult to make any positive assertions with confidence, but it is safe to say that the influence of Buddhist ideas on Christian doctrine may be traced in the Gnostic forms of Christianity, if not elsewhere. The notions of Indian philosophy and religion which filtered into the Roman empire flowed through channels opened by Alexander. In Search of The Cradle of Civilization: Even more than the Vedas and the Epics, Sindh figures very prominently in, of all places, the annals of Sikander that is Alexander. Alexander fared badly enough with Porus in the Punjab. Indeed, Porus put him on the spot when he told him: As for other riches and possessions, as they are accounted in the eyes of the world, if I am better provided of them than you, I am ready to let you share with me; but if fortune has been more liberal to you than to me, I have no objection to be obliged to you. Instead, with the obstinacy of a bully, he said: Writes Plutarch, the great Greek historian: Alexander not only offered Porus to govern his own kingdom as satrap under himself but gave him also the additional territory of various independent tribes whom he had subdued. However, what was to befall him in Sindh, was even worse. In his wars in Iran. Afghanistan, and north-west India, Alexander had made so many enemies that he did not dare return home by the same route he had come. He had, therefore, decided to travel via Sindh. But in Multan the Mallas gave him hell. According to Indian historian Dr. From the Indian point of view, there was nothing to distinguish his raid in Indian history. It can hardly be called a great military success as the only military achievement to his credit were the conquest of petty tribes and States by installments. He never approached even within a measurable distance of what may be called the citadel of Indian military strength, and the exertions he had to make against Poros, the ruler of a small district between the Jhelum and the Chenab, do not certainly favor the hypothesis that he would have found it an easy

task to subdue the mighty Nanda empire. It had no decisive influence on the destinies of India, for its results were short-lived. Rawlinson, refers to the invasion, " had no immediate effect, and passed off like countless other invasions, leaving the country almost undisturbed. She was never Hellenised. She continued to live her life of splendid isolation, and forgot the passing of the Macedonian storm. No Indian author, Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain, makes even the faintest illusion to Alexander or his deeds. Ancient India - By V. It was more of a raid across the border, and not a very successful raid at that. If a small ruler on the frontier could fight thus, what of the larger and more powerful kingdom further south? Probably this was the main reason why his army refused to march further and insisted on returning. Another myth is propagated by the Western historians that Alexander was noble and kind king, he had great respects for brave and courageous men, and so on. The truth is other-wise. He was neither a noble man nor did he have a heart of gold. He had meted out very cruel and harsh treatment to his earlier enemies. Basus of Bactria fought tooth and nail with Alexander to defend the freedom of his motherland. When he was brought before Alexander as a prisoner, Alexander ordered his servants to whip him and then cut off his nose and ears. He then killed him. Many Persian generals were killed by him. The murder of Kalasthenese, nephew of Aristotle, was committed by Alexander because he criticised Alexander for foolishly imitating the Persian emperors. Alexander also murdered his friend Clytus in anger. The Indian soldiers who were returning from Masanga were most atrociously murdered by Alexander in the dead of night. Alexander, the Ordinary - By Prof. Unable to make headway into India, as the Indian Brahmins had helped and influenced Indian princes to organize and support the Indian war against Alexander. Since Indian texts were completely silent about the very existence of Alexander, colonial Western historians had a free run. Using hagiographic Greek texts as the base, Alexander became the conqueror of the world. The Alexander mythos - 2ndlook. The religious scripture of ancient Iranians was the Avesta. The Avesta available today is only a fraction of what existed thousands of years ago. When Alexander captured Iran Persia in B. Another cruel legacy of Alexander. It had reached a stage which could have been arrived at only after long and arduous philosophical quest. Jainism and Buddhism, the latter enormously influential in Indian and neighboring cultures, had emerged by this time. But even before their advent, the philosophical reflections of the early Upanishads B. It is perhaps necessary to point out that there has often been a wide divergence between Indian and Western interpretations of Indian thought. Coomaraswamy once even declared that a true account to Hinduism may be given in a categorical denial of most of the interpretation that have been made by Westerners or Western-trained Indians. The tradition of Indian philosophic thought is as complex as it is long. The complexities of Indian philosophy have arisen through centuries of deep reflection on the many aspects of human experience, and, in the search for some reality behind the external world, various methods have been restored to ranging from experimental to the purely speculative. It is the oldest philosophical tradition in the world is to be traced in the ancient Vedas. Although the religious and philosophical spirit of India emerges distinctly in the Rig Veda, the Upanishads are its most brilliant exposition, for the Vedic civilization was naturalistic and utilitarian, although it did not exclude the cosmological and religious speculation. They have inspired not only the orthodox system of Indian thought but also the so-called heterodox schools such as Buddhism. In profundity of thought and beauty of style, they have rarely been surpassed not only in Indian thought but in the Western and Chinese philosophical traditions as well. The Upanishads have greatly influenced Indian culture throughout history and have also found enthusiastic admirers abroad. Schopenhauer was almost lyrical about them. India, is the home of philosophy. Certainly India is a country where philosophy has always been very popular and influential. An American scholar has stated that teachers of philosophy in India were as numerous as merchants in Babylonia. The sages have always been heroes of the Indians. Indian Inspiration of Pythagoras The similarity between the theory of Thales, that water is the material cause of all things, and the Vedic idea of primeval waters as the origin of the universe, was first pointed out by Richard Garbe. The resemblances, too, between the teachings of Pythagoras ca. It was Sir William Jones, the founder of comparative philology, who first pointed out the similarities between Indian and Pythagorean beliefs. Later, other scholars such as Colebrooke, Garbe, and Winternitz also testified to the Indian inspiration of Pythagoras. Almost all the theories, religions, philosophical and mathematical taught by the Pythagoreans, were known in India in the sixth century B. Legacy of India , p. Professor Maurice

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Winternitz is of the same opinion: It is also the view of Sir William Jones Works, iii.

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V.D. Mahajan: He is a renowned historian. He is noted for his contributions to the study of history. He has written several books on history which include Ancient.

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