



India as Golden Sparrow During Ancient Era

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ABSTRACT: Ancient India (from 3000 BCE to around 10th century AD) is the period when India was known as the Golden Sparrow. This era witnessed many popular dynasties like Maurya, Shunga, Kushan, Gupta, etc. This era witnessed cultural confluences and economic booms at many junctures yet the fabric of traditions never got destroyed. Even today people say ‘Jaha Daal Daal par sone ki chidiya karti hai basera’ (where the golden sparrow dwells on every branch of a tree).

KEYWORDS: India, ancient, era, golden, sparrow, economic, booms, cultural, confluences

I. INTRODUCTION

Here are some parameters that highlight the fact that Ancient India was the golden bird:

Knowledge

In ancient India, there were complicated subjects like metaphysics and philosophy explored in great details. Along with these subjects like Ayurveda, Public Administration, and Economics that flourished in Bharatvarsha. The different treatises like Arthashastra and Smritis that stand as the proofs for this. Knowledge was considered to be wealth and there were universities like Nalanda, Taxila, Vallabhi which were renowned worldwide.

Many foreign scholars came here to study and gain the unique knowledge passed down from generation to the next. The Gurukul system imparted knowledge which had to practice in day-to-day life rather than Macaulay’s rote learning system that we follow today.[1,2]

Economy

The biggest factor that made India the golden bird in the eyes of other countries is also the plethora of wealth that this land possessed. The Kushana and Gupta period deserve a special mention as there were gold coins issued. The currency and numismatics during the period are widely known for their efficiency and perfection. Agriculture, industries, and trade were given equal importance and all formed the part of the economy in the science called ‘Vaarta’. There was no absolute poverty and unemployment in this age. This is also because right earning also formed the part of Purusharthas- Artha i.e. wealth.[2,3]

Art and Architecture

From simple Stupas to magnificent temples, the architecture of Ancient India has stood the test of time and even today people are amazed by the excellence of the craftsmanship. The beginning of art and architecture can be seen at the Pre-historic paintings of Bhimbetka and the zenith of this would be the Chaul temples in Tamil Nadu.

Polity and Administration

Politics in India today is infested with corruption and nepotism. There is no denial of the fact that monarchy existed in Ancient India. But the most important point is that there were decentralization and division of labor as well. Welfare existed as a governing principle. The science of Public Administration held in regard to the concept of justice and human rights.[3,4]



II.DISCUSSION

Many of us are not overjoyed or pleased with the historical antiquity of our country. There is one philosophy. At present, the idea of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' is not to show any guest (white foreigners) a friendly gesture but is merely a role-play over the brown skin of our inferiority complex. Or maybe it's because our ancestors were so rooted in the European imperialist notion of taking on the burden of civilizing the wild Indians that we forgot what we had was far superior to what they had.

Why would the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British not work in a country that is still divided based on religion, caste, and class? Maybe it was way too busy for our ancient rulers to get over their grudges and battle the common intruder. Or they have themselves underestimated. One possibly has to travel in time to understand the exact cause of India's majestic riches. Since it has yet to be invented, let's look at the reports below that focus on India's past wealth.[4,5]

Sir Osman Ali Khan: The World's Richest Man in 1937

In 1937, he was proclaimed the world's richest man. He ruled over Hyderabad, which then consisted of present-day Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra (roughly covering the area of the United Kingdom). He was also referred to as His Exalted Highness or His Tired Highness in a mocking manner. The explanation for this was that he had seven wives and 42 concubines, giving birth to at least 149 children. During World War One, he gifted No. 110 Squadron RAF's complement of DH.9A aircraft to the British Empire and each aircraft had a Hyderabad Kingdom inscription.

The State Bank of Hyderabad belonged to him and managed the Hyderabad currency. In 1947, on the occasion of the Princess' marriage, a tiara and necklace made of diamonds were gifted to Princess Elizabeth by this last Nizam of Hyderabad. This gift is still ornamented on the Queen's head. He was a keen believer in education, so he donated a massive amount of money to institutions in India and abroad. He's the guy who purchased 50 Rolls Royce and used them to dump his garbage just to show off the richest Indians had when a British official ridiculed his ability to buy one Royce![5,6]

The Peacock Throne

This beautiful piece of artefact from ancient India was composed of 1150kg of gold and 230kg of precious stones. It was estimated in 1999 that the throne would cost 804 million dollars, or around Rs 4.5 billion. The cost of construction was twice that of the Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan started its building in the early 17th century. By constructing stairs that led to the throne, the intention was to give a God-like image of the emperor, creating an appearance of the ruler floating above ground and closer to heaven. The throne was to be located between two pillars, each with two peacocks with a collection of ruby and diamond laden plants, emeralds, and pearls.

There were 10 jewelled recesses for cushions, and the Emperor's seat was to be a 185 carat Kohinoor in the centre. A peacock tail made up of sapphires, turquoises and pearls had a pattern on the back of the throne. The throne was removed as a war trophy by the Persian emperor, Nadir Shah, in 1739. Later, to take the unbeatable role of The Peacock Throne, a dummy version of the throne was made.[6,7]

Diamond Kohinoor

Kohinoor's diamond is 106 carats and was once the world's largest diamond. It is said that the gem, called the Syamantaka jewel, is 5000 years old. But the early reference to the diamond of Kohinoor is when Babur conquered Gwalior in 1526. This diamond was owned by the Raja of Gwalior in the 13th century. Kohinoor's diamond is 106 carats and was once the world's largest diamond. It was passed into the possession of several rulers of India and Persia. It was installed on the Peacock Throne under Shah Jahan's command. Aurangzeb later took it to Lahore's Badshahi Mosque.



Nadir Shah, who brought it to Persia, had it stolen. The diamond returned to Punjab by returning to India when Shuja Shah Durrani, Afghanistan's king, made a bargain in exchange for help in winning back the Afghan Throne. Queen Victoria had her hands around this diamond in 1851, which was 186 carats at the time. Kohinoor's crown is especially worn by female rulers as there is a curse on the diamond that poses life threats to males who adorn it, it is believed. The diamond is now in the British government's custody.[7,8]

GDP

India's economy flourished between 1 AD and 1000 AD, making it the largest GDP-value economy at \$33.8 million, ahead of China's at \$26.6 million in 1000. It contributed 24.5% of the world's share in 1500 and became the second largest after China. The momentum of development began with the rise of the Mughals. With revenues of £ 17.5 million, India achieved its height in the 1600s, much higher than the entire £ 16 million treasury of Britain in 1800. India's overall share of world GDP decreased to 3.8 per cent with the advent of the rule of the East India Company in the 1700s.

Because of its plentiful raw materials and availability of precious stones, is one of the key reason why India was called a 'golden bird' was. Mauryan vessels sailed to Syria, Egypt, and Greece. Ancient India was a global trading centre on this land.

In the lands of India, gold was first discovered. There are a variety of references to the gold trade from India to other parts of the world. From India, the pearls which Julius Caesar presented to the mother of Brutus and the famous earring of Queen Cleopatra were exchanged.[7]

Ancient Commercial Activities

India was the first to do away with conventional bartering activities. This incorporated different currencies. Silver coins are said to be an early type of currency. In the Mauryan era, there was a form of the early constitution where Chanakya developed principles of law, politics, defence, and economy. These written texts are still important and commonly read by individuals to gain knowledge of the work of a specific sector of the world. There were many business companies in many ways. The 'scene' dating back to 800BC was one of the famous rituals, although many say it to be much older than that.

III.RESULTS

Hyderabad: The British Judge who was presiding over the trial of Shaheed Bhagat Singh asked him why he attacked the Britishers and not the Mughals who ruled India for 800 years.

Bhagat Singh's reply was: "Your rule is like a sponge which sucks the jewels and diamonds of Ganga and squeezes it at the Thames in England. You get rich by our wealth and progress. The Mughals ruled our hearts and unlike you, they did not take India's wealth outside. They spend it here, they enriched India, made monuments and died and got buried in its soil. They made India a Golden Bird opulence of which brought you here from across the seven seas."

There is a section on Social Media which tries to suppress historical facts and peddles fake news. They routinely try to present Muslims in poor light and distort the historical facts to present their rule as tyrannical and oppressive. Bhagat Singh's reply is enough to shut them up.

Dr. Kauser Osman, Professor King George Hospital, Mumbai in a viral video further mentions some of the major contribution of Muslim rulers to enrich India and its culture.[7,8]



Prior to the Muslim rule, India was not a unified country as we see it today. It was divided into many city states ruled by Rajas. It was the Muslims who unified the country from Bengal to Afghanistan. That was one of our great achievements, Dr. Osman says.

In warfare, Zaheeruddin Babar was the first King who introduced cannon to India, Dr. Osman says and adds that, “The first rocket made in India was by Sher-e-Mysore Tipu Sultan. In 1799 when Tipu Sultan was martyred, the British took his rocket/missile and researched it from 1801 to 1805 but they could not comprehend its system and its design. Tipu Sultan had described the use of this rocket in a book Fathul Mujaheden which is in Paris Museum. He described in the book how to use the rocket.”

Similarly, Dr. Osman says, the man who was behind Prithivi and Agni Missile system, is APJ Abdul Kalam, a Muslim who is known as “Missile-man” or “Father of Indian Missile”.

“The Revenue system being followed in India was introduced by Sher Shah Suri during his reign (1538 to 1545) who was one of the best administrator. He introduced police and postal systems and was the one to construct the first trunk road in India from Calcutta to Peshawar. He made caravanserais for the travelers comfort, planted trees and dug wells. He brought changes in monetary dealings and introduced Rupee as the currency in India,” Dr. Osman informs.

Dr. Osman further points out that the first Mutiny or freedom struggle was launched in 1773 which is known in the annals of Indian History as ‘Fakhir and Sanyasi Rebellion’. It resulted due to severe drought. The Muslim fakirs and Hindu sanyasis used to go together to British warehouses to loot the grains to distribute it among Hindus and Muslims and it went on for about 50 years.

“Allama Fazle Haq Khairabadi,” informs Dr. Osman, “was the first Muslim scholar to give a war fatwa in 1857 for Muslims to fight against the British Rule. Due to this Fatwa the Mutineers could chase the Britishers away from Delhi.”

The British Governor General received a letter in 1858 from England stating that the Muslim Ulemas (religious scholars) were chiefly responsible for the Mutiny. Consequently, tens of thousands of Muslim scholars were hanged without trial by the Britishers, says Dr. Osman.[8]

When the Britishers re-captured Delhi, their soldiers presented Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Ruler, the severed heads of his sons and grandson on a platter covered with red velvet cloth. Dr. Osman informs.

“The Muslims’ sacrifices in the independence of this country and in its progress are unmatchedable,” Dr. Osman says.

In short, Muslims left an indelible mark on every sphere of life be it culture, language, poetry, cuisines, architecture, landscaping and gardening etc. They came here, they loved the country, they stayed back, died here and got buried in its soil.

IV.CONCLUSION

India was under colonial rule for two hundred years. To understand better exactly how long a span of two hundred years is, America fought its very first war as a country roughly those many years ago; and two hundred years is more than enough time for even a country as bound by social traditions as India to end up with more than just a British footprint. [7]

The economic impact of the British Raj has been a matter of debate ever since India gained independence. To analyse this, we have to dissect the British-induced changes in the country. Before the British invasion, India had a premier standing in the global trade as exporters of manufactured goods and exquisite textiles. The colonial rule forced India to become an



exporter of raw material. It's no secret that this move was governed by Britain's selfish need to feed its way to industrialization. An increase in the number of established mills in Britain quite directly meant an increase in the need for raw materials. Eventually, this raised the standard of living in Britain significantly. However, it exerted pressure on India's resources, human as well as physical to match up to the standards Britain couldn't have met on its own.

India was, and still is, an agricultural country. The burden on lands to produce industry-standard crops and the burden on landowners to optimize harvesting impacted our society in ways more than one. British policies induced recklessness in landowners and moneylenders, which in turn cast its shadow upon their dynamic with the working class. India was a victim of regional and social divide even pre-Colonial rule; we were never all-prosperous for all of us. However, the British Raj went a long way in worsening the situation. A greater sense of authority towards the cause of production and profits was instilled into the minds of the landowner, who then used their means to ensure the same. This meant cruel treatment of the peasants and artisans, whose standard of living and independence from the British and the landowner is known to have decreased greatly. Eventually, the business class and the landowners merged themselves with the capitalist idea of profits that was taking form in Britain then. The cost of labour decreased with the advent of machines, and the labour class was then silently transferred to another class of citizens.

We must also take into account what the dependence of India's economy towards agriculture meant. Agriculture, due to its contingency on limited resources like land, cannot be developed infinitely. This meant that there is a set, and easy-to-reach optimal level, breaking beyond which is impossible. Once India produced to its maximum capacity, not only did it mean stagnation for its workers but it also meant that welfare was on a decline. India had, by now, lost its lead in the global trade game due to a two-fold reason. For one, we had lost the workers in other industries to the pressure of increased agricultural production. Beyond that, the West now had machinery and mills as leverage, and India had failed to catch up. Thus, the climbing up of the West and scaling down of India – both happened together between the years of 1860 and 1920.

However, it would be unfair to say that all of India suffered in the dark gloom of agricultural setbacks. Albeit for selfish reasons, the British advanced cities like the then Bombay and Delhi to match them up with the standards of cities abroad. They also gave us the railways, habitable hill stations, a unified legal code, and currencies. However, the exact economic benefit of these developments is difficult to put a finger on.[8]

It can safely be said that the economic growth that took place under the British Raj, did not improve standards of living, but led to an increase in population. This growth is termed as Malthusian growth and is known to happen in regions just before industrialization strikes. India was a land of 155 million people in 1750, and a land of over twice as many (355 million) in 1947. Living standards rise briefly, post which they are dedicated to ensuring the subsistence of the population increases that happens by the virtue of this very growth.

It is also an irrefutable truth that India has always had a divide, and people within the society have functioned as subclasses with contrasting lives. There has always been the picture of a brown peasant sweating in the fields struggling to make ends meet, and a wheatish man living a life of luxury based on the plight of the hardworking man. This difference was aggravated during the colonial period when most of our people were pitched against each other for subsistence. However, it would be a lie to say that our own economic policies post Independence has not furthered the divide. The balance of economic favours in India is still, in fact now much more so, tilted in the favour of those whose surnames happen to be names of conglomerates and multinational companies. The Environmental Impact Assessment Draft of 2018 is another testament to this. The COVID-19 pandemic has also brought to light, with more fervour than ever before, how less the once Golden Bird seems to care about those who sweat and build, with migrant labourers having to either walk back home or carelessly being put on trains. Small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures are suffering. Food is short, and the little that we agree to provide is contingent on the availability of official documents. India must decide to give back to its people now.[8]



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