

THE ‘FRAGMENT’ AND THE ‘WHOLE’ – BRIDGING ‘INDOLOGICAL STUDIES’ AND IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

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The last two decades of the twentieth century have seen a number of debates about, and critiques of, the ‘Indological discourse’ dominating the academic scene. In this paper the challenges posed in the teaching and researching of India’s early past against the background of these debates will be juxtaposed with the context of the contemporary Indian scenario, from the perspective of the region and the locality, emphasizing small and fragmentary sources of information. They need to be looked at in terms of networks, each dynamically interacting with the others, in order to retrieve from the religious, the material and the cognitive texts, the textures of history about marginal social and regional groups who asserted difference while at the same time being linked to a larger whole. The emergence of these networks, their sustenance, mutation and transformation, should become the central focus of Indian studies in our times.

SETTING THE STAGE AND LOOKING BACK – THE BACKGROUND

... philology provides the data. In order to give the fullest possible voice to the views of classical Indians – of all social classes –, we must carefully and thoroughly edit their texts. ... It is on such philology that Indological studies are built. (Lariviere 1994)

This case being made for the re-entry of philology as the basis for a deep understanding of ‘Indological studies’ during the last decade of the twentieth century is indeed one of conviction and resolute commitment. We share with Lariviere the concern to write about the social history of early India, as that has been our chosen theme for research, but we do so by redefining the understanding of sources and entities that we write about from the perspective of the region and the locality. By focusing on the history of localities and, by default then, of traditions known through small and often fragmentary pieces of information, it is suggested that we need to get away from the notion of meta-histories of the nation state based on apparently pan-Indian sources. This dual shift in emphasis enables us to bring into the historical fold marginal social groups, women and regions that hitherto have been a silent part of the nebulous entity called ‘Ancient India’.

It is a fact that the ‘modern’ study and interpretation of early India was built on a deep study of philology, particularly comparative Indo-European philology to which Sanskrit was central. The construction of what is popularly known as ‘classical India’ owes much to these early endeavours of Philologists and Orientalists, beginning with the eighteenth century. However, our present concern is not to delineate a history of how ‘Indological

studies' came into being. Nor are we concerned with narrating the successive critiques of it that Lariviere made the focus of his 1994 Gonda Lecture.¹ Rather, given this background, our present aim is to engage with the implications of these debates during much of the twentieth century and then suggest the necessary direction towards which Indian studies should veer during the twenty-first century. It is our contention that we can no longer compartmentalise the various seminal traditions of the Indian sub-continent. They need to be looked at in terms of networks, each dynamically interacting with the others in order to retrieve from the religious, the material and the cognitive texts, the textures of history that must now include women, marginal social and regional groups who represented difference but, at the same time, were linked to a larger whole. The emergence of these networks, their sustenance, mutation and transformation should become the central focus of Indian studies in our times. This is a necessity in the contemporary situation for teaching in classrooms in India and in so-called 'South Asian studies' or 'Indology' departments abroad, since increasingly, (1) and for some time now, the seekers of this knowledge in class/caste/ethnic terms have expanded far beyond the limited educated elite of the early twentieth century. (2) In the various regions of the sub-continent new histories of their respective distant pasts have come to be written in large numbers from a regional perspective and (3) outside India, because of a changed political and economic context, the so-called 'Indian' diaspora now seeks to grapple with its ancient roots – sometimes at tandem with what Indians in India see as theirs!

There is an increasing realisation today that we are not all talking of history within the same framework, where understanding its purpose and intentions is concerned. This is what Ankersmit pertinently draws our attention to in the words: "The modernist historian follows a line of reasoning from his sources and evidence to an historical reality hidden behind the sources. ... In the postmodernist view, evidence does not point towards the past but to other interpretations of the past..." (Ankersmit 1990, pp. 145–46) In our present concern to address questions around the basic strategies and structure of Indian studies, we must necessarily take cognisance of recent interpretative strategies. They advocate that the 'source' is generated in modern historical interpretations from time to time. Irrespective of theoretical orientation, it has often been emphasised that Ancient India lacked 'proper sources'. A commonplace assumption within the dominant discourse of colonial times was: "the department of ancient history in the East is so deformed by fable and anachronism that it be considered an absolute blank in Indian literature" Hence the view is articulated that the aim is to rescue "from oblivion (its history) before it should be lost forever..." (Wilks 1817, p. xxv; p. xix). This was of course not the view of the later Orientalists, some of whom patiently and with diligence edited, translated and explained ancient Indian texts to modern educated Indians, whose now colonised minds permanently condemned them to a lack of identity for themselves and a limited sense of their past.

¹ The lecture is available at the web page mentioned in the references. The web version which I read in 2010, gives a shorter title (cf. below). The printed version gives the full title of the lecture: Richard W. Lariviere, Protestants, Orientalists, and Brāhmanas: reconstructing Indian social history. Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Amsterdam 1995, 18 pp. (cf. e.g. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/7844628>).

Apart from the construction of sources, history as an academic discipline also came to India as part of the cultural baggage of colonialism. As aptly put by Chakrabarti (2000): “The model of the Indian past...was foisted on Indians by the hegemonic books written by Western Indologists concerned with language, literature and philosophy who were and perhaps have always been paternalistic at their best and **racists** at their worst.” In the post colonial world, therefore, we cannot talk about our past without the essential and immediate history of the last two hundred years. This has resulted in a set of complex conjunctures, wherein Indians have now lost the sensibility of identifying the difference between ‘India’s essential past’ and ‘its historical connection to the empire’ (Dirks 1990, p. 28). The early endeavours not only perpetuated certain types of interpretations and viewed ‘India’ as a monolithic whole, but they also did so by unearthing only textual traditions and creating this as an object of study that was highly ‘spiritual’ and ‘exotic’ and bereft of any political or economic agency. The Nationalist writings were wholeheartedly indebted to the sources constructed by the Orientalists, as they provided fodder for their major thrust to depict India in glorious terms. For the Nationalist school this bind of history only solidified their attempts at writing about the past from the perspective of the dominant ‘Self’. Our attention is drawn to Bankim Chandra who according to Ravinder Kumar (1991, p. 11) sought “to graft the discourse of history on a structure of feeling indigenous in character” and by relying only on the high culture of Hinduism to retrieve this essence, the other diverse traditions on the Indian sub-continent were lost sight of.

The course of the twentieth century saw Indian historians mastering the methods and techniques of a scientific writing of Indian history. This ranged from the positivist framework of analysis guarding history’s individuality to more radical approaches that grappled with inter-disciplinary studies. It was concomitant with a growing interest in using epigraphy, archaeology and numismatics to study India’s past. Despite this shift in ‘source’ base most historians continued to play within given “rules of the game” (Ravinder Kumar 1991, pp. 5–10), which meant using a ‘scientific’ method. Thus the post-independence dilemmas for the Indian historian have not been only of generating the ‘source’ for writing about the past, but also how the ‘discourse’ of history could be made more inclusive. However, as pointed out by Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992, pp. 18–19) the muse of ‘Indian History’ was caught in an impossible situation, being able only to mimic “a certain ‘modern’ subject of ‘European’ history” and was thus “bound to represent a sad figure of lack and failure”.

DESTABILIZING THE STABLE – HISTORY, POWER AND REPRESENTATION

Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978 changed the way ... historians must write about European researches into ‘the Orient’ ... Said made explicit ... the deep connections he perceived between European ‘rule’ and European ‘scholarship’... (Dodson 2007, pp. 1–2)

The post-modern turn in the writing of Indian history began with the painful process of first providing a critique of the ‘Indological’ discourse. This was to lay bare the intimate collusion between writing about the ancient past in all its hues and

the power of those who controlled knowledge generation. It projected the picture of history writing in crisis. It became pertinent to note that earlier endeavours based on a synthesis of opportunistically chosen indigenous texts/inscriptions, often translated by the well-known Orientalists, were suddenly shaken from their stupor by right-wing interpretations that used the same methodological tools of historical authentication and tried to suggest an 'Indian' monolith based on Hindu cultural nationalism. The so-called conservative, reactionary or 'nativist' historians, who used positivism to the hilt to generate an unquestionable, apparently indigenous version of the ancient past, ironically did not talk the language of 'history', which was embedded in Indian idioms, but of 19th century Rankean positivism.² The latter defined both conservative and liberal historicised notions of social totality and projecting grand narratives, without even recognizing that there was a historical discourse of imposition going back to the genesis of 'Indology' as an academic discipline.

There have been several interventions during the last three decades of the twentieth century that have raised questions about this binding method of doing historical research on pre-modern India in contemporary India, which has been strangled by the power of the methodological avenues unleashed by the 'Indological' discourse. Of these three important markers were: (1) the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2) the focus of Ronald Inden's *Imagining India* and (3) writings of Sheldon Pollock on the nature of Sanskrit and vernacular literary traditions of India. Edward Said (1978) set the stage by arguing that the notion of the 'Orient' was "created" and that it had no basis in reality. Though direct insights concerning India were few, his larger argument that European scholarship produced a powerful representation of the Orient that enabled it to appropriate it, speak for it and rule over it, held true for India as well. Ronald Inden (1990) used some of these insights and suggested that the knowledge of ancient India was draped in "essences", especially those that characterised it only in 'caste' and religious terms. In not highlighting its political and economic agencies it distorted the picture of Indian society while at the same time denying Indians agency in their own history. Sheldon Pollock's³ recent writings have had a deep impact on interpreting how the study of Sanskrit and its culture had largely been done without keeping the subject's meanings intact. He threw up questions surrounding the history and study of Indian literatures, which made him state (Pollock 1995, pp. 112–13): "the study of literary history in South Asia may help us fill one of the key desiderata in a postcolonial South Asian studies: the reorientation of method, whereby our informing questions no longer presuppose European primacy ..."

We began with a quotation by Richard Lariviere asserting the pre-eminence of philology-inspired 'Indology' as a science. His larger aim was to denounce what he called the 'Orientalist' (Said), the 'Essentialist' (Inden) and the 'Distortionist' (Pollock)

² Its impact was seen in the redefining of school curricula and textbooks in some States of the Indian Union during the 1990s in an endeavour to impose a cultural monism on the Indian past and displace a more liberal view of Indian culture that had been prevalent in the decades immediately after Independence (Abraham 1992, p. 8).

³ In one of his articles (Pollock 1993, pp. 80–96) he even argued that German 'Indology' had laid the foundations of national socialism during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

critiques of the foundations of 'Indology'. Lariviere (1994) agreed with some of the points raised in these critiques, but concomitantly he also justified 'Indology's' foundational basis by arguing that the contemporary criticisms can be met effectively only "if we return to the philological techniques and values that have been exhibited with such consistency in the study of Greek and Latin classics, and that were once an important part of Sanskrit philology, but seem, in recent years, to have fallen out of favor" (Lariviere 1994). Essentially Lariviere (1994) pointed out that scholars have strayed away from "hard-core, philological work that is necessary to reconstruct what ancient Indian society must have been like". The pertinent question to put here is how one can write about ancient Indian social history without escaping the question of the depiction of power in an 'Indological' discourse that was almost entirely based on the textual traditions of ancient India.

To highlight the disparities and inequalities that were present in ancient Indian society is something that Lariviere tries to address in the Gonda Lecture cited above. However, there is a deeper question of representation and agency that has not been touched upon by him and others who continue excessively to draw only upon ancient texts. Today, in most social science and humanities research, there is unanimity that to retrieve a single 'truth' in the garb of absolute objectivity is next to impossible, since power operates to define the relationship between classes, castes, peoples and countries. Concomitant with this are questions of oppression, violence and justice. The historiographical trend in the 1970s and 1980s towards retrieving a scientific history with an emphasis on socio-economic history could not be escaped from. There was also the unfettered notion of dealing with India as a whole. Regional angularities were to be explained and brought to order within the larger logic of pan-Indian sources. The growing concern in the last twenty years to focus on those silent in ancient India has gained ground. But initial attempts to merely read the texts against the grain and cut out as much as possible of the hitherto silent actors of history were not enough. So the moot question remained: how could ancient Indian sources enable us to find a more varied representation of the past and, so textured, could bring in the voices of those such as women, subordinate groups and marginal peoples who were apparently passive recipients of the written word?

Beyond looking for new sources, the question had also to be handled at a methodological level. Anthropologists (Gupta 2000, pp. 2–9) and social historians brought in oral narratives and, for instance, reported on the origin myths of the *śūdra* and the so-called 'untouchable' communities that explained their respective origins as being the opposite of the Brahmanical textual versions of the origin of these castes. Thus, a *śūdra* account "represents the *śūdra* servitude in the *varṇa* system as unsanctioned, as based on a mythic historical act of injustice and betrayal" (Converse & Sharma 1994, p. 644) and, a recent account of the 'untouchable' (here a cobbler), explains the rather pragmatic circumstances that according to Jadhav (1995, p. 712) help to "deny the family's low caste origins; ..." Another alternative reading of the history of ordinary subject peoples in terms of their long-term and everyday activities, rather than only in terms of sudden rebellion, was methodologically put forth in the writings of

James Scott and Michael Adas (Haynes & Prakash 1991, pp. 1–22). They advocated that we should not see the dominant and the subordinate occupying two autonomous spaces. Power and resistance, they argued, were so entangled that to separate them and analyze one without the other would be very difficult. Accordingly, it was possible to see the resistance of ordinary people as disturbing the agendas of power, not only in periods of dramatic confrontation but also in the spheres of the everyday. Therefore, in order to recover the lost histories of the subordinate it was important to highlight how new forms of domination and power became articulated from time to time.

THE 'FRAGMENT' AND THE 'WHOLE' – RECONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL IDENTITIES

There was a notion of space in terms of place, locale, region and country and the universe. There were different spatial orders (*loka*) as there were different temporal (*kala*). The two together provided the basis of multiple identities and local distinctiveness. (Vatsyayan 2005, p. 42)

A multidisciplinary thrust began to impact a form of historical research that tried to move away from understanding the past only from the perspective of the empowered. In the changed political and social contexts of contemporary India we emphasise that historians need to break the impasse by writing a more nuanced and inclusive social history. This can effectively be done by emphasizing fragments of information as sources. Though they do not present a continuous narrative account, they forcefully throw up data that tends to question the world view of the dominant. This kind of research on ancient India would enable a shift from 'text' (literary) and 'India' (the totality) to 'scripts' (epigraphic) and 'material' (archaeological) as objects of study in a 'region' or 'locality'. I strongly submit that "in keeping with any culture of pluralism where multiple contradictory worlds co-exist as central features of everyday life" (Jadhav 1995, p. 712), the denial of the 'Other' cannot be a norm.

Below we take three illustrative examples of fragmentary data provided by inscriptions, art historical material and stories embedded in memory from the ancient and early medieval history of the Deccan. This enables us to go beyond a binary approach of 'Us' versus 'Them', recover the past of shared social spaces and contextualise meanings and incidents in more open ways. These endeavours are not only built on new sources but have also entailed a revisit of narrative traditions that sometimes contest, and at other times concur with, the meta-narrative. The intention is not to replace one set of authoritative images for India as a whole with another set from the regional data. It is, rather, to question the contemporary approach to creating autonomous subjects of enquiry. The study of the textual and the epigraphic has hitherto been treated in compartments limiting our abilities to have a comprehensive view of a dynamic and ever-changing regional social milieu, far removed from the didactic and normative traditions that have been encapsulated as the apparently pan-Indian social fabric within the Orientalist and 'Indological' discourses on early India.

The first example illustrates a shared social space of the early centuries AD Deccan when social groups/individuals participated in intersecting ideological and economic

transactions (Parasher-Sen 2007, pp. 47–90). Fragmentary label inscriptions provided names of travellers, preachers, traders and so on. In an analysis of how these names occur at the various sites/locations it was noted that, cutting across caste lines, many lay followers of Buddhism acting as donors, as builders, as scribes, as a variety of craftsmen, as traders and as merchants only recorded their personal names. In the western Deccan, amidst several references to names of elite groups, there were names of gardeners, garland makers, goldsmiths, ironmongers, ploughmen, etc. who asserted their identity in terms of the places they hailed from. Though being less privileged sections of society, they gave donations to the Buddhist Sangha and in the process asserted their individual identity. In the eastern Deccan, however, the emphasis on kinship identity was more apparent. Thus even in the context of an example from Amaravati where the craftsman belongs to the lowly caste of leatherworker, the kinship identity was asserted. This example refers to a gift by Vidhika, son of the *upajhāya* (teacher) Nāga belonging to the ritually impure *caṃmakāra jāti*. It draws our attention because he gave the gift of a slab with an overflowing *pūrṇaghaṭa*, literally “full vessel” or auspicious vase, along with his mother, his wife, his brothers, his son, his daughters and other relatives and friends.⁴

Here, apart from getting a proper name for a member of the outcaste leather workers group, this inscription points to the fact that these communities were now taking to teaching within the confines of the new intellectual order provided by Buddhism – it was a *caṃmakāra* called Vidhika, the son of a teacher called Nāga who presented this slab with an auspicious vase. Clearly this data is found in the form of a fragment in association with a Buddhist ethos and highlights a history hitherto forgotten. We get the sense of a low caste person having the power to donate and participate in the normal activity of what other social groups at the same time were involved in. Today, very few know that the symbol of this *pūrṇaghaṭa* is found as an emblem on the letter head for official correspondence by the Government of Andhra Pradesh where the Buddhist heritage site of Amaravati is located. With an increasing number of Dalits now being drawn to Buddhism and, more importantly, because of the impact of the reservations policies of the Government of India, we see a concrete and gradual increase of their numbers in our classrooms. To highlight this kind of information is all the more necessary. I have learned that a replica of this *pūrṇaghaṭa* is being made by the Tourism Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to highlight the significance of this historical artefact for a larger number of people and thereby create greater scope to present a more inclusive history.

In the second example we unravel a history of peoples, not based on caste, but who had distinctive identity not spoken about in the so-called pan-Indian textual traditions in any specific way. The focus here was also on trying to bridge the gap between the

⁴ *caṃmakārasa nāgaupajhayāputasa vidhikasa samatukasa sabhayakasa sabhatukasa putasa ca nagasa samadhutukasa sanatinītabaindhavasa deyadhama. Puṇaghaṭakapato*. J. Burgess, *The Buddhist stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta in the Krishna district, Madras Presidency*, surveyed in 1882 (Archaeological Survey of Southern India, Reports. New Series), London, 1887, p. 46; *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X, H. Lüders' List, Ins. No. 1273, pp. 151–152.

written word and oral traditions, between apparently monolithic identities and those that were particular to ethnic groups. We took up Puranic narratives of sectarian 'Hindu' beliefs, but we did so in terms of how these got transformed at the regional and local levels during the early medieval period in the Deccan. Our concern was with explicating that a continuing dialogue between the 'self' and the 'other' enriched the former but without destroying the core of its ideological system. In an elaboration of the Narasimha *avatāra* of Vishnu and his enigmatic relationship with Chenchu Lakshmi (Sitapati 1982, p. 1), a daughter of the Chenchus, an autochthonous tribe of the Nallamalai forests in the context of the proliferation of his temples at Ahobilam in southeast Andhra Pradesh (Parasher-Sen 2001, pp. 28–49), an attempt was made to connect the memories of the Chenchu tribes, their oral traditions as recorded during the colonial period, with art-sculptural representations of this relationship on medieval Hindu temples at Ahobilam. This historical juncture of contact also survives in contemporary enactment rituals to define the particularity of the worship of Vishnu here by staunch Vaishnavites, among whom are also the Chenchus. Thus, from contemporary practice to memory of the local inhabitants as recorded in eighteenth and nineteenth century surveys, we moved back in time to the literary, inscriptional and archaeological evidence that threw light on the historical association of this relationship.

The fragment in this case is sculptures of Lord Narasimha with Chenchu Lakshmi at Ahobilam. None of these sculptures, however, has any sanction from the *Āgama Śāstras*. They are also not in the main shrines of these temples. At Upper Ahobilam the God Narasimha is seen wooing Chenchita in a sensitive sculpture on one of the central four pillars of the *mukhamanḍapa*⁵ of the main Narasimha Swamy temple built by Harihara II of the Vijayanagara dynasty in 1395 AD. The Lord and Chenchita are shown standing on a platform while Narasimha has his palm in between her neck and breast in an attitude of wooing Chenchita who is seen looking straight ahead. Both of them are seen holding bows in their hands. Another fascinating sculpture is found in Lower Ahobilam on a pillar in the *raṅgamanḍapa*⁶ of the Narasimha temple, dating from Vijayanagara times. Here the Lord is seen in a particularly beseeching mood and Chenchita is seen in an outwardly angry and adamant mood. Lord Narasimha's mouth is open and he is seen holding her chin trying to appeal to her, while she does not seem to be affected by this. She is seen holding a bow in her left hand (Narasimhacharya 1989, pp. 395–96). The apparent anger of Chenchu Lakshmi depicted in these sculptures indicates the fact that the incorporation of the Chenchus into the dominant religious ideology was not a smooth process. That this anger continued to be embedded in the oral narratives recorded of these non-literate hunting gathering communities is of some significance in unfolding the history of the locality. Some of the Chenchus succeeded in becoming part of the whole while keeping their individual identity alive. Today, the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh find mention in the list of 'tribes' that seek affirmative

⁵ The front portion of a temple which is a pillared hall, usually having a raised platform, square in form, sometimes with its ceilings carved with beautiful paintings.

⁶ An open assembly hall in front of the central shrine in a temple, which is usually used for performances and gatherings in the temple.

action in education and employment through the Government of India policy and constitutional guarantees. Presenting this portrayal of their history in the classrooms not only provides value to their way of perceiving reality, but also emphasises that their skills and cultural inputs in the past were of great relevance for the advancement of society and defining the whole of what we understand as Indian civilisation today.

In the third example we take a closer look at the Jaina tradition and its transformation in the context of early medieval Karnataka, but squarely within the parameter of how the most central of Jaina beliefs became furthered in the hands of women. It is not only the spatial and temporal contexts of this example, but also the way the institutional basis of the Jaina faith underwent change, that is central to our argument. My recent paper (Parasher-Sen 2011) highlights a close intertwining between gender, text and history, wherein we analyzed the way strictures on women in Jaina canonical literature on the one hand, and their deep belief in the faith as manifested in their actions recorded in fragmentary inscriptions on the other, impacted the evolution of Jainism in a regional context. In perusing the textual citations of the early Jaina thinkers, one finds that there is a deep seated discussion on the nature of the female body, especially its reproductive aspects that ironically become the main reason why women allegedly could not achieve spiritual liberation or *sallekhanā* (Jaini 1991, p. 34; pp. 142–42). There is, in fact, considerable anxiety about this issue in the texts of the two main sects of Jainism. However, in the context of the early centuries Deccan and, especially from around the 10th century onwards, the Yāpanīyas as a regional sectarian tradition emerge to have an influence upon the ruling elite of the times. From their perspective the argument is carried forward to emphatically make the basic point that those wishing to take to voluntary death by fasting (*sallekhanā*) in any case give up all attachments. Therefore nothing can be an obstacle for a nun desirous of *mokṣa*, so that the argument that clothes are an impediment to doing so is a false argument (Jaini 1991, pp. 63–66).

We contrast this with empirical evidence from fragmentary commemorative inscriptions on stone that permit us to suggest that textual norms were at best ignored, especially when the sectarian affiliation of the concerned *sanghas* consciously moved away from such strictures and fundamentals. We have looked at several examples from inscriptions, with a focus on those belonging to the Ganga family at two important centres of the Jaina faith, namely Koppala, and Shravanabelgola, in order to illustrate this point. While the former had a major concentration of material related to the Yāpanīyas (Hampa 1999, p. 4), the latter, as is well known, was the renowned Digambara Jaina centre. Irrespective of the sectarian affiliation, there is data from monuments at both these sites concerning individuals, both men and women, as Settar (1986, p. 8; pp. 66–69) puts it, “Inviting Death” by taking the sacred vow and noble act of *sallekhanā*. Reading texts and inscriptions together in this paper provided us with a more complex picture of the way an ideology of excluding women from the path of spiritual liberation and freedom underwent changes, through its necessary contact with regions, away from its origin and initial articulation. At another level, we also wanted to emphasise that the trajectory of how a faith evolves has much to do with its practice and, most importantly, how its institutional base has developed. This could only be done by taking a deeper look at the

regional and local dimensions of religious history. A large number of women – both nuns and lay-women – could undertake these vows. In doing so did they rebel against the strictures laid down in the texts cited above? A more pragmatic answer is possible if we move beyond the textual bibliocentric view of looking at Jainism within the prism of only two sectarian visions. In a changed socio-economic and ideological environment, those drawn to Jainism in the localities made valiant efforts not only to deepen their individual faith in the religion they had inherited, but also to further expand its base – a necessary reminder for both the laity and monks that the ultimate goal of renunciation was the right of both men and women in society. With this example one can conclude once again that fragments as sources provide a valuable avenue towards a better understanding of the whole. In this case the symbolism of ritual attached to the ideal of penance, asceticism, and renunciation in the Jaina ideology not only motivated people to act in the way they did, but also helped reinforce this ideal, an essential feature of the ‘whole’, in changed local socio-economic and cultural circumstances.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF INDIAN STUDIES

Our effort in this presentation has been to:

1. position the study, research and teaching of ancient Indian history to:
 - a) recognise that the so-called ‘Indological’ studies inherited by us had a particular socio-political and intellectual context, which privileges a monolithic view of ancient Indian civilisation rooted only in the classical,
 - (b) move beyond a crude positivism to study and teach ancient India, for that can lead to the destruction of the past and create conflict between communities,
 - (c) elaborate on the nature and notion of ‘history’ from within the ‘Indian’ tradition(s) to recover collective pasts and
 - (d) adopt an inter-disciplinary perspective so as to have more inclusive histories in order to create intellectual space for women, excluded groups and the marginal to visualise their own historical pasts.
2. move beyond existing methodological avenues so as to:
 - (a) factor in the small and fragmentary to the historical narrative,
 - (b) not reject the textual but read it from the perspective of how the ‘other’ is represented,
 - (c) stand on local ground and connect various local entities to create an integrated space of the Indian sub-continent and finally,
 - (d) bring in the oral tradition and cultural practices of communities that did not have major textual traditions that we continue to observe in action even today.

It is well-known that writing about this past is deeply entwined with the way we perceive and live our present and so history needs to be positioned as an enabler to retrieve and recover horizontally an expansive, vertically a deeper and socially a more inclusive past.

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