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Ancient Indian Hindu historiography: Decoding the roots of non-linear and fragmentary historical narratives

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ABSTRACT

This research paper seeks to critically examine the underlying factors that contributed to the non-linear nature of ancient Indian Hindu historiographical traditions. The historiographical traditions of ancient India are deeply complex, shaped by multiple factors that distinguish them from the Western models of historical writing. Traditionally, India has been characterized as an "ahistorical" civilization, a claim rooted in the lack of continuous, linear historical records similar to those found in the Greco-Roman or medieval European traditions. It traces the roots of this non-linearity by examining the influence of India's decentralized political landscape, diverse regional scripts, and varying calendrical systems, which collectively hindered the creation of a unified historical narrative. The paper also illustrates how history in ancient India was ritualized, with ceremonies serving as vital repositories of collective memory. By drawing on Michel Foucault, the study critiques Eurocentric historical methodologies that impose linearity and totalization on the understanding of history. It demonstrates that India's fragmented historiographical traditions are not indicative of a lack of historical consciousness but rather a reflection of its unique epistemological stance, which values diverse narratives and the intermingling of the sacred and secular. Ultimately, the paper argues for a re-examination of how ancient Indian historiography can enrich contemporary historical discourse by emphasizing its complexity and depth.

KEYWORDS

Ancient Indian; Historiography; Non-Linear; Sacred-Secular; Ahistorical; Chronology

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Introduction

This research paper seeks to critically examine the underlying factors that contributed to the non-linear nature of ancient Indian Hindu historiographical traditions. The historiographical traditions of ancient India are deeply complex, shaped by multiple factors that distinguish them from the Western models of historical writing. Traditionally, India has been characterized as an "ahistorical" civilization, a claim rooted in the lack of continuous, linear historical records similar to those found in the Greco-Roman or medieval European traditions. Instead, ancient Indian historical narratives were largely embedded in religious texts, mythological epics, royal inscriptions, and regional chronicles that did not conform to Western expectations of history as a factual, secular record of events. India, when scrutinized through the lens of British Orientalist frameworks, was often portrayed as an ahistorical entity, ostensibly due to its perceived inability to engage with its precolonial past in a manner that conformed to British standards of historiography. Ancient Indian Hindu historiography was indicted for its alleged lack of chronological coherence, its fragmented, disjointed narratives; and for the incorporation of mythical elements into the secular domain of history. This reinforced the notion that India's intellectual culture was incapable of producing refined historical knowledge. This characterization served as a tool for legitimizing British colonial rule, reinforcing the narrative of Indian inferiority. Alberuni's (1914) critique epitomizes this view:

> Unfortunately, the Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things… and when they are pressed for information, and are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling. (pp. 10-11)

In his assessment, the Hindu engagement with history was marked by a distinct disregard for chronological precision, with the recounting of royal dynasties often embellished or distorted through anecdotal flourishes when pressed for details. James Mill (1975) further perpetuated this colonial critique, dismissing the epic narratives of Indian literature, such as *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, alongside the *Puranas*, as the products of a nation too "rude" to grasp the importance of historical inquiry. He contended that this literary output, while poetic, reflected a failure to appreciate the intellectual value of documenting the past for the guidance of future generations (Mill, 1975, pp. 198-199). Furthermore, Mill's critique was echoed in broader philosophical discourses on history, particularly those of Michel Foucault and G. W. F. Hegel. Hegel (1956), in turn, argued that the absence of a rational, self-conscious understanding of history rendered Hindus incapable of true historical writing:

> …History requires Understanding-the power of looking at an object in an independent objective light, and comprehending it in its rational connection with other objects. Those peoples therefore are alone capable of History, and of prose generally, who have arrived at that period of development (and can make that their starting point) at which individuals comprehend their own existence as independent, i.e. possess self-consciousness.... This makes [the Hindoos] incapable of writing History. All that happens is dissipated in their minds into confused dreams. What we call historical truth and veracity-intelligent, thoughtful comprehension of events, and fidelity in representing them-nothing of this sort can be looked for among the Hindoos. (pp. 161-162)

F. E. Pargiter (1992) in *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, similarly critiqued the ancient Indian historical record, noting that:

> The evidence in the Rigveda, whether contemporary notices or matter concerning the past borrowed from tradition, consists of statements more or less isolated; they are merely allusions and make up no connected account. Even the contemporary notices, though having all the trustworthiness of first-hand evidence, yet fix little or nothing definitely of themselves, because they have no certain chronological setting with reference to other events. The same remarks hold good for the brahmanical literature later than the Rigveda. (p. 2)

These interlinked critiques coalesced into a broader colonial discourse that served to delegitimize India's historical tradition, casting it as a culture mired in myth and disconnected from rational, chronological historiography.

However, this assumption of India's "ahistoricity" has been challenged by contemporary scholarship, which recognizes the rich and pluralistic nature of Indian historiography. The historiographical traditions of ancient India have sparked much scholarly debate, with prominent historians such as Romila Thapar, Upinder Singh, David Shulman, Sheldon Pollock, Partha Chatterjee, and Ranajit Guha contributing significantly to this discourse. Despite their varied focuses and methodologies, these scholars are united in challenging the colonial assertion that India was an ahistorical nation. However, their approaches to addressing this issue—ranging from philosophical critiques of time to examinations of regional historical narratives—diverge, reflecting the complexities of India's historical consciousness. Romila Thapar's work is foundational in refuting the idea of India's ahistoricity. In *Time as a Metaphor of History*, Thapar (1996) discusses how time is conceptualized in Indian thought and challenges the perception that India lacked a historical consciousness because it did not adhere to linear, chronological time. She argues that ancient Indian traditions viewed time in cyclical terms (as seen in Hindu cosmology) and that this affected how Indians thought about history, but did not mean that Indians were ahistorical. In fact, cyclical time allowed for a different kind of historical understanding that revolved around continuity and cosmic order, which can be considered a valid historical perspective. In *The Past Before Us*, Thapar (2013) offers a detailed study of the historical traditions of early North India, focusing on literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources. She systematically refutes the argument of Indian ahistoricity by demonstrating that various Indian texts, inscriptions, and oral traditions functioned as forms of historical writing, though they do not always conform to Western expectations of empirical accuracy or linearity. Upinder Singh, in contrast, emphasizes material evidence in her detailed reconstruction of India's political history in *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India* (2009). While Thapar focuses on philosophical frameworks, Singh offers a more empirical approach, using inscriptions and archaeological records to challenge the notion that ancient India lacked historical consciousness. The two scholars are similar in that they both challenge Western models of history, but Thapar's work leans towards the conceptual, while Singh's is grounded in materiality. David Shulman (2016), in *Tamil: A Biography*, focuses on South India, where Tamil literary traditions provide an alternative historical model. Shulman's work aligns with Thapar's in recognizing the role of oral traditions and regional diversity in India's historical consciousness. However, while Thapar looks broadly at the epics and Sanskritic traditions, Shulman emphasizes Tamil's literary culture, showcasing the diversity within Indian historiographical practices. Shulman's analysis of the blending of myth and history in Tamil culture parallels Thapar's argument about the North Indian epics, though his regional focus adds a layer of specificity absent from Thapar's broader approach. Sheldon Pollock (2006), in *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, presents yet another perspective by examining the role of Sanskrit in shaping India's intellectual and cultural history. Like Thapar, Pollock contends that Sanskrit literature played a vital role in preserving historical narratives, but his focus is more on language and intellectual history than on the philosophical conceptions of time. Pollock's argument complements Thapar's and Shulman's in that all three acknowledge the importance of literary traditions in India's historiography, yet Pollock's emphasis on language as a vehicle of historical transmission stands out as a more linguistic approach compared to the mythological and regional focus of Thapar and Shulman.

On the political front, Partha Chatterjee and Ranajit Guha engage with the colonial legacy of historiography, offering critiques of the ways in which European historians misrepresented India's past. Chatterjee (1993), in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, critiques the Eurocentric model of history imposed on India, while Guha (2002), in *History at the Limit of World-History*, extends this critique to challenge the very foundations of Western historical thought. Both scholars share a common goal of decolonizing Indian historiography, yet Guha's philosophical critique is more radical, questioning the applicability of Western historical frameworks to non-Western contexts altogether. Chatterjee focuses more on the political dimensions of this imposition, examining how

colonialism shaped the nationalist re-imagining of history. While Thapar, Singh, Shulman, and Pollock focus on India's indigenous historical traditions, Chatterjee and Guha highlight the political dynamics of historiography under colonialism, offering complementary but distinct critiques. Together, these works provide a multi-faceted view of India's historiographical traditions, uniting in their rejection of the simplistic claim that India was an ahistorical nation but differing in their approaches to how India's history was recorded, transmitted, and distorted.

The novelty of my work lies, firstly, in going beyond merely rejecting linearity and secularity in historical writing. By focusing on the non-linear, cyclic, or fragmentary nature of India's historical record, the study delves deeper into the reason behind the untenability of a fully secular, unified, linear historical record. It attempts to comprehend the overarching frameworks of thought and the enabling conditions for the production of a nonlinear, decentralized, and chronology-agnostic history. The primary research question driving this study is: How did the decentralized political landscape, diverse scripts, and non-standardized calendar systems of ancient India, combined with the blending of religious and secular motifs, shape the fragmented and pluralistic nature of its historiographical traditions? The paper examines the influence of decentralized political structures, diverse scripts, and non-standardized calendrical systems, the concept of cyclical time as seen in Hindu cosmology and the ritualization of history. The methodology also draws on Foucault's critique of linearity and totalization in historical narratives. This approach allows the study to argue that India's fragmented historical records are not a sign of deficiency but a reflection of a unique, culturally embedded epistemology that challenges Western historiographical norms.

It is important to clarify two points at the beginning. Firstly, the use of the term *India* in this discussion requires clarification. While this paper challenges the nationalizing tendencies of modern historiography—particularly the colonial and postcolonial desire to organize history within the bounded framework of the nation-state—the term *India* is used here not as a geopolitical or homogenizing label, but as an epistemological category. It refers to a longue-durée cultural sphere within which multiple regional, linguistic, and religious traditions interacted to produce distinct ways of engaging with the past. In this sense, *India* designates a discursive and performative space, not a nation in the modern sense. Recognizing this complexity allows the paper to speak to the contradictions inherent in postcolonial scholarship: we must often employ the very language of the nation to reveal the limits of its epistemological reach. By naming this tension rather than suppressing it, the analysis situates ancient Hindu historiography within a broader conversation about how categories of identity, geography, and power shape what counts as "history."

Secondly, that the critique of continuity and totalization in historical narrative offered in this paper does not imply that Western historiography is a uniform or static tradition. A number of influential Western thinkers have themselves resisted nationalist and linear constructions of the past. Hayden White (1973), in *Metahistory*, argued that historical writing is structured by narrative emplotments and rhetorical choices rather than by an objective recovery of facts—an argument that undermines the claim of coherent, singular history. Joan Scott (1986), in her essay *"Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"*, showed how nationalist histories efface gendered subjectivities and depend on supposedly universal narratives that silence women's experiences. E. P. Thompson's (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class* and Eric Hobsbawm's (1983) *The Invention of Tradition* further revealed how class ideologies and invented rituals actively produce the illusion of historical continuity. My critique, therefore, is not directed against Western scholarship in its entirety but against the dominant positivist, empiricist, and nationalist modes that arose from Enlightenment rationalism and nineteenth-century historicism. These traditions privileged chronology, factual verification, and the unification of the past into a seamless narrative—features that became the epistemic norm for "proper" history. What I seek to question are these inherited assumptions of coherence and linearity, not the rich body of Western self-critical thought that has already interrogated them.

The decentralized political landscape of ancient India

The decentralized political landscape of ancient India, characterized by a constellation of regional monarchies and localized centres of power, presents a significant challenge to the idea of a unified national historical record. Ancient India was not a monolithic political entity but rather a dynamic tapestry of kingdoms, republics, and tribal confederacies, each with its own cultural and historical priorities. This diversity makes the creation of a single, continuous historical narrative difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. Instead, historical records from ancient India reflect the particular concerns and identities of various regions, complicating attempts to construct a cohesive national history. Ancient India was marked by a variety of political systems, including monarchies, oligarchies, and republics. Well-known kingdoms such as Magadha, Kalinga, and the southern Tamil dynasties (Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas) operated largely independently, often competing with one another for territorial control and political supremacy. During the later Vedic period and through the Mahajanapada period, roughly between 600 BCE and 300 BCE, India was divided into 16 major kingdoms "either having a monarch or a governing council called the Sagas" (Ramesh, 2023, p.137). This fragmentation was a consistent feature of early Indian political history, which prevented the emergence of a centralized empire until the Mauryan period. As Romila Thapar (2012) observes, the:

> Mauryan system attempted to incorporate the diversity, but the degrees of assimilation in the region were not similar as is particularly evident from the diverse cultural patterns that emerged on the disintegration of the empire.
> (p. xvi)

Thapar's observation points to a key issue: without a centralized political authority, there was no overarching institution capable of producing a unified historical record. In fact, the existence of localized political structures also meant that historical writing—when it did occur—was region-specific. Each kingdom, republic, or tribe would prioritize its own achievements, victories, and rulers, producing accounts that celebrated local histories rather than national ones. Furthermore, many ancient Indian rulers commissioned court poets or bards to produce historical accounts that glorified their reigns, leading to a proliferation of royal chronicles that were more mythological or hagiographical in nature than factual. The political fragmentation of ancient India naturally led to the fragmentation of its historical narratives. Unlike ancient Greece or Rome, where centralized city-states or empires could maintain official records, India's regional monarchies produced historical texts that were often limited to the scope of a single kingdom. The *Rajatarangini*, for instance, written by the Kashmiri historian Kalhana in the 12th century CE, recounts the history of Kashmir from ancient times but does not provide any insight into the broader history of India. Similarly, the inscriptions of Ashoka, while crucial for understanding the history of the Mauryan Empire, predominantly emphasize the emperor's religious doctrines and territorial expansions, offering scant insight into the concurrent histories of other regions. Rock Edict V mentions officials tasked with promoting dhamma or dharma even among the Greeks, Kambojas, and those residing near the empire's borders. Similarly, Rock Edict XIII recounts Ashoka's triumphs over the Greek King Yavanaraja Antiyoka, as well as over other rulers on the empire's frontiers, including Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas, and Alexander (Ray, 2021, p.199).

The emergence of the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka (circa 268–232 BCE) and the later Gupta Empire (circa 320–550 CE) represent two key moments when attempts were made to unify large parts of the Indian subcontinent. Under Ashoka, the spread of Buddhism led to the establishment of a more coherent ideological framework across regions, and his rock and pillar edicts serve as some of the earliest pan-Indian historical documents. Similarly, the Gupta Empire is often referred to as a "Golden Age" due to its cultural achievements, which were disseminated widely across the subcontinent. However, even during these periods of relative political unity, the regional nature of Indian society persisted, and the historical records produced still tended to reflect local interests and cultural contexts rather than a unified national narrative. The decentralized political landscape of ancient India made the creation of a unified national historical record an untenable

proposition. The diverse political entities that governed various regions, the absence of a sustained tradition of historiography, and the regional focus of historical texts all contributed to the fragmentation of Indian historical narratives. While moments of political unification did occur, these were the exception rather than the rule. The rich, multi-faceted history of ancient India can thus only be understood through the lens of its diverse and often localized historical records, which resist the imposition of a singular national story.

The diversity of scripts in ancient India

The diversity of scripts and regional linguistic practices in ancient India, compounded by the decentralized political landscape, significantly impacted the continuity and linearity of historical narratives. The constant evolution of scripts, the regional fragmentation of historical records, and the localization of administrative and inscriptional practices played a central role in shaping the fragmented and episodic nature of India's historiography. This section delves deeper into these three interconnected factors, using specific case studies and examples to highlight the challenges that diverse scripts posed to the creation of continuous historical accounts.

One of the critical factors contributing to the fragmentary nature of ancient Indian historiography is the evolution of scripts over time. Ancient India saw the gradual development and adaptation of various scripts, with one of the earliest decipherable scripts being "Brahmi," which dates back to the 3rd century BCE during the Mauryan Empire under Emperor Ashoka. The Brahmi script, used to inscribe Ashoka's famous "edicts," was a critical medium of communication across his vast empire. These edicts, spread across modern-day India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, were inscribed in local dialects like Prakrit, demonstrating how the same script was adapted to suit different linguistic contexts. However, the Brahmi script was not static. Sharma (2002) observed that the development of the Brāhmī script is traced across several centuries, with its first phase covering from the 3rd century BCE to the 4th century CE. Initially known as Aśokan Brāhmī, it later evolved into Gupta script during the 4th and 5th centuries CE. By the 6th century, it was renamed Kuṭilā script, and up to the 9th century, similar features prevailed. Subsequently, new scripts like Śāradā, Nāgarī, and Gurmukhī emerged (pp. 8-9). He furthers:

> Bühler recognised one more stage there and according to him, the first phase of the script is represented by the records of first three early centuries, while second one appeared with the advent of the Kushāṇa rule and thus the three stages of Brāhmī script were named after the prominent rulers of the time and thus we got three stages as (1) Aśokan Brāhmī, (2) Kushāṇa Brāhmī and (3) Gupta Brāhmī. (Sharma, 2002, p.9)

In southern India, Brahmi evolved into "Tamil-Brahmi," which later developed into the "Grantha" script, used predominantly to write Sanskrit in Tamil Nadu. This constant evolution created challenges for the transmission of historical knowledge across generations. For example, Ashoka's edicts were written in Brahmi script, but by the time of the Gupta Empire, the script had changed, making it difficult for people in later periods to access and understand the original inscriptions. This evolution of scripts created a disconnection between different periods of Indian history, as successive generations had to learn new scripts or depend on translations of earlier texts. Moreover, the "Kharosthi script", another ancient script used primarily in the northwest of India (modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan), presents a striking case of linguistic and scriptural divergence. Kharosthi was used alongside Brahmi in this region, primarily for writing Gandhari Prakrit. The use of Kharosthi for inscriptions during the "Indo-Greek" and Kushan periods (2nd century BCE–3rd century CE) demonstrates the diverse linguistic landscape of ancient India. However, Kharosthi eventually fell out of use and was largely forgotten until it was rediscovered in the 19th century. This discontinuity meant that entire swathes of history, inscribed in Kharosthi, remained inaccessible for centuries, leading to significant gaps in the historical narrative of the northwestern regions of the subcontinent. The challenge of translating and deciphering these scripts was compounded by the fact that many historical texts, inscriptions, and administrative

records were written in regional languages and dialects. For instance, while the Guptas used Sanskrit for their official inscriptions, regional kingdoms in southern India, such as the Pallavas and Cholas, used local languages like Tamil for their inscriptions. The Chola dynasty (9th–13th centuries CE), in particular, left behind a wealth of inscriptions written in Tamil on temple walls, pillars, and copper plates, documenting everything from land grants to military victories. However, these records remained localized, both in terms of language and script, making it difficult to integrate them into a pan-Indian historical narrative.

The decentralization of political power also affected administrative and inscriptional practices, which varied significantly from one region to another. In many cases, royal edicts, land grants, and religious endowments were recorded in the local language and script, reflecting the linguistic diversity of ancient India. For instance, the Gupta dynasty primarily used Sanskrit for its inscriptions, which were written in the Gupta script. However, in the southern kingdoms of the Cholas, Pallavas, and Pandyas, inscriptions were often written in Tamil or a combination of Tamil and Sanskrit. The famous Uttiramerur inscription (9th century CE), from the Chola period, is a detailed record of the local administrative procedures of a Chola village, written in Tamil script. This inscription highlights how regional languages and scripts were used for administrative purposes, further reinforcing the localization of historical records. In the western Deccan region, the Satavahanas (1st century BCE–3rd century CE) left behind inscriptions in Prakrit, using the Brahmi script. These inscriptions, primarily recording religious donations and land grants, were localized in both content and language, making it difficult to create a cohesive, continuous historical record that could integrate the history of other regions. This localization extended to religious inscriptions as well. For example, the Kadamba dynasty of Karnataka used both Kannada and Sanskrit in their inscriptions, often inscribed on temple walls and pillars. The use of Kannada reflected the local language spoken by the people, while Sanskrit was used for religious and official purposes. This duality of language in inscriptions reflected the blending of local and pan-Indian cultural elements but also contributed to the regional fragmentation of historical records. Even in cases where a common script, like Brahmi, was used across different regions, the inscriptions often focused on local concerns. Ashoka's edicts, while spread across the subcontinent, were inscribed in local dialects and adapted to the specific linguistic context of each region. For example, in the northwestern parts of Ashoka's empire, the edicts were written in "Kharosthi," a script derived from Aramaic, while in other regions, they were written in "Prakrit" using the Brahmi script. This localization of language and script, even within a single empire, underscores the challenge of creating a unified historical narrative across diverse regions. The evolution of scripts, regional fragmentation of historical records, and localization of administrative and inscriptional practices played a significant role in shaping the fragmented and discontinuous nature of ancient India's historiography. The constant development of scripts like Brahmi, Kharosthi, and Tamil-Brahmi, along with the regional focus of historical records, made it difficult to create a linear, centralized historical narrative. Each region documented its own achievements in its own language and script, leading to a rich but fragmented tapestry of historical accounts. These factors, when combined with India's decentralized political landscape and cultural emphasis on religious and philosophical knowledge, contributed to the episodic and fragmentary nature of its historical record. As a result, ancient India's historiography reflects the diversity and complexity of the subcontinent, but also its challenges in maintaining a continuous historical narrative across time and space.

Diversity of calendars across regions

Ancient India was a vast and culturally diverse region, divided into various kingdoms, dynasties, and regional states, each of which often used its own system of dating events. A universal calendar was never imposed or enforced across these regions. As a result, historical records, inscriptions, and texts from different parts of India were often dated using distinct local eras or regnal years, which made it difficult to synchronize events across different geographical locations. One prominent example of this diversity is the coexistence of the Saka Era and the Vikrama Era, two

of the most widely used calendrical systems in India, but each dominant in different parts of the subcontinent. These two calendars were not synchronized with each other, and historical records in each region referred to events according to their respective dating systems. Fleet (1916) observes that epigraphic records reveal that by the ninth or tenth century CE, the era beginning in 58 BCE, the principal chronological system of Northern India, came to be referred to by various appellations such as Vikrama-kāla, signifying "the time or era of Vikrama," Vikrama-samvat, meaning "the years of King Vikrama," or "the years established by Vikramaditya." These titles indicate the elapsed years since the reign of King Vikrama. Similarly, later records document that the Śaka era, originating in 78 CE, though also rooted in northern traditions, became the predominant era in Southern India. This period was designated by names like Śālivāhana-Śaka, meaning "the Śaka or era of Śālivāhana," or "the era of the illustrious and victorious King Śālivāhana," denoting the years inaugurated by him (p. 809). These divergent systems meant that even when events occurred contemporaneously in different parts of India, they were recorded using different calendars, making it difficult for historians to create a continuous and synchronized narrative.

In addition to these larger calendrical systems, many Indian kingdoms used regnal years—the number of years since a king's ascension to the throne—as a method of dating events. This practice was common across dynasties and regions and was reflected in inscriptions, edicts, and official documents. However, the use of regnal years posed significant challenges for historians attempting to reconstruct a continuous chronology of ancient Indian history. For instance, the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, a king of Kalinga in the 2nd century BCE, records his achievements and conquests using the regnal year system. It records the "activities of the King in a biographical manner from his childhood to the 13th year of his reign" (Pandey, 1964, p.132). Pandey refers to the interpretation of Dr. K.P. Jayaswal and Prof. R. D. Banerjee of the 6th line of the inscription: "Now in the fifth year he brings into the capital from the road of Tansuliya the canal excavated in the year 103 of the King Nanda" (p.132). While this provides a clear description of Kharavela's activities, it lacks reference to a standardized era that could align it with other contemporary events in India or abroad. While this system was useful within the context of a single kingdom, it becomes problematic when trying to compare events across different dynasties or regions, especially in cases where different kings from various kingdoms reigned simultaneously. The lack of a standardized frame of reference means that cross-referencing dates across dynasties requires painstaking reconstructions based on contextual clues or external sources, such as foreign travelers' accounts.

Moreover, there were lunar and solar calenders. Lunar calendars do not align neatly with the solar year, which means that the same event might occur on a different date each year according to a solar calendar. This divergence between lunar and solar time-reckoning contributed to the difficulty of establishing a standardized and continuous chronological system. The Hindu Panchanga, a traditional calendar based on both lunar and solar cycles, is an example of a sophisticated but regionally varied system. While this calendar was highly accurate for determining religious dates and agricultural seasons, it was not universally standardized across India. Different regions adopted slightly different versions of the Panchanga, and the alignment of lunar months with solar years differed from one region to another. Sewell and Dixit (1896) observe that

> A period of twelve lunar months falls short of the solar year by about eleven days, and the Hindus, though they use lunar months, have not disregarded this fact… In all parts of India luni-solar reckoning is used for most religious purposes, but solar reckoning is used where it is prescribed by the religious authorities. For practical civil purposes solar reckoning is used in Bengal and in the Tamil and Malayalam countries of the Madras Presidency; in all other parts of the country luni-solar reckoning is adopted. (p.11)

They also write:

> I find from a Tamil solar panchang for Saka 1815 current, published at Madras, and from a Telugu luni-solar panchang for Saka 1109 expired, also published at Madras, in which the solar months also are given, that the rule observed is that "when a sankranti occurs between sunrise and midnight the month begins on the same day, otherwise on the following day" [This rule varied from the four other rules which Sewell and Dixit observed in this book]… This varying fifth rule again is followed for all solar months of the Vilayati year as given in the above-mentioned Bengal Chronological Tables for 1882, and by its use the month regularly begins one day in advance of the Bengali month. I find a sixth rule in some Bombay and Benares lunar panchangs, viz., that at whatever time the sankranti may occur, the month begins on the next day; but this is not found in any solar panchang. The rules may be further classified as …the midnight rule (Bengal), …any time rule (Orissa), …the sunset rule (Tamil), …the afternoon rule (Malabar). (Sewell and Dixit, 1896, p.13)

Different regions of ancient India adopted different rules for beginning the month (as mentioned in your earlier example), with solar reckoning used in some places (like Bengal) and luni-solar reckoning in others. These regional variations made it difficult to maintain a unified chronology across the subcontinent. Stories, records, and historical narratives developed under these systems would naturally reflect this temporal fragmentation. Additionally, the reliance on astronomical phenomena—such as solar eclipses, equinoxes, and solstices—as time markers further complicated historical record-keeping. Many ancient Indian inscriptions, for example, record significant events with references to eclipses or the position of certain planets. While such astronomical references can provide valuable clues for modern historians attempting to date events, they do not offer a continuous or systematic chronology and were used sporadically rather than as part of a larger, consistent dating system.

The diverse calendrical systems and dating methods are evident in ancient Indian inscriptions, some of which are invaluable sources of historical information but also illustrate the fragmented nature of Indian historiography. The absence of a universal calendar system in ancient India, combined with the use of diverse scripts, region-specific dating methods, and the influence of religious and lunar calendars, contributed to the fragmented and episodic nature of Indian historical records. While Indian kingdoms and dynasties maintained detailed records of local events, these records were often dated using regnal years, local eras, or astronomical phenomena, without reference to a larger, standardized timeline. This made it difficult to synchronize events across regions and dynasties, creating a historiographical tradition that is rich in local detail but lacks the coherence and continuity found in other ancient civilizations. The diversity of calendars and scripts in ancient India reflects the broader cultural and political diversity of the subcontinent, but it also presents significant challenges for historians attempting to reconstruct a unified and continuous narrative of India's past.

The sacred-secular nature of ancient Indian Hindu historiography: Historiography as ritual and the ritualization of history in ancient India

Another important reason for this divergence of the historiography of ancient Hindu India from the linear and empirical frameworks established by Western historicism, particularly post-Enlightenment, is that it prioritized philosophical and metaphysical truths over empirical knowledge. This philosophical orientation made history less a matter of recording empirical facts and more a matter of uncovering deeper, cosmic meanings behind events. History, in this sense, was not seen as a purely human affair but as part of a larger spiritual journey. As a result, Indian historiography often appears fragmented and disjointed, largely because it operates on a different epistemological model that emphasizes cosmic cycles, ritual enactments, and metaphysical narratives over linear, empirical chronologies.

Consequently, just as India possesses, what Lata Mani (2009) terms a “sacredsecular” form of religiosity (pp. 1-4), India possesses a similarly “sacredsecular” form of historiographical

paradigm, wherein religious motifs intertwine seamlessly with mundane affairs. In religious texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, for instance, history and myth are not easily separable. These epics serve as historical texts in the sense that they provide frameworks for understanding social structures, kingship, and ethics but at the same time, these epics are considered *dharmic* texts. The historical dimension of these texts is not diminished by their mythological or spiritual content; rather, it is enhanced, illustrating the "sacredsecular" nature of Indian historiography. Moreover, in the epics and the *Puranas*, history is framed within the larger context of cosmic cycles (*yugas*), with the events of human history being secondary to these grand, mythic patterns. These texts often prioritize moral and spiritual lessons over factual historical reporting. As a result, historical events are often presented in a mythological or allegorical framework, rather than as factual chronicles. This philosophical approach to history led to less emphasis on precise dates, rulers, or events. Thus, there was less motivation to produce chronologically ordered historical records.

The "sacredsecular" religion or history offers a "vision of life which combines the human, the divine and the material" (Mukhopadhyay, 2018, p. 13). Aiyar (1962) observes that the Itihasas and *Puranas* are literary works crafted by insightful seers who skillfully blend historical and religious traditions into narratives reflecting life's attitudes. *The Ramayana* emphasizes spiritual kings alongside ascetics who wield significant influence in societal affairs. Central to its themes is the concept of Dharma, serving as the primary force shaping human existence. Meanwhile, the *Mahabharata* goes beyond a mere depiction of conflict, delving into human motivations and serving as a repository of secular and religious wisdom (p. xxiii). These texts recorded the secular events and were also a part of "vast compendium of ritual texts" of precolonial India (Thapar, 2013, pp. 87-91) Therefore precolonial Indian historical texts, including the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *dana-stutis*, and other literary works, straddle the realms of sacred and secular, blending historical, religious, and societal narratives. Thus, these texts serve as both historical records and components of a broader ritualistic tradition in precolonial India.

Other than the dominance of religion, the 'sacred' nature of ancient Hindu historiography resulted from the fact that ancient Hindu India engaged with its past through a performative and symbolic process in which memory and history are enacted, not merely documented. In ancient Hindu society, rituals and religious ceremonies served as repositories of historical memory and were central to both the religious and political life of the people. These rituals served multiple functions: they maintained religious continuity, reinforced social and political hierarchies, and acted as conduits for transmitting historical memory. Scholars such as Maurice Halbwachs (1992), Pierre Nora (1989), Paul Ricoeur (2004), and Jan Assmann (2012) have drawn firm distinctions between "memory" and "history," the former being subjective, lived, and collective, and the latter institutional, archival, and oriented toward objectivity. While this separation is central to modern Western epistemology—emerging from secular, nation-centered historical consciousness—it becomes less meaningful in the Indian context. In ancient Hindu traditions, remembrance was simultaneously ritual, cosmological, and historical; to *remember* was to *recreate* the past. Thus, what in Western frameworks are considered distinct categories were, in India, deeply entangled dimensions of the same epistemic act. One prominent example of this is the *Ashvamedha Yajna* (horse sacrifice), a highly significant Vedic ritual performed by kings to assert their sovereignty and extend their territorial authority. The *Ashvamedha* was not merely a political or military event but also a sacred ritual that reinforced the king's divine right to rule. It symbolized the king's dominion over the land and his ability to conquer, which was ritually enacted through the release and capture of a consecrated horse. The ritual, therefore, served as a way of performing history: while it did not generate historical records in the form of texts, it immortalized the king's reign and conquests within the cultural memory of the people. The Ashvamedha ritual was repeatedly performed by various kings across Indian history—from the Mahabharata's Yudhishthira to Samudragupta, and even later rulers such as Pusyamitra Shunga—each iteration acting as a historical re-enactment of political power. According to David Gordon White (1991, p. 74), many of the festivals, rituals, and ceremonies in India are closely tied to mythico-historical cycles, wherein the actions of kings and dynasties are celebrated not in a purely chronological or factual

manner but in a way that merges them with the ongoing cycles of cosmic time and divine will. This ritualization of memory helps explain the fact that what was historical in ancient Hindu India was ritualistic and what was ritualistic in the ancient Hindu Society was ultimately historical.

The fragmentary nature of ancient Hindu India's historical records can be partly understood through the lens of ritualized memory. Rather than adhering to a tradition of linear, empirical documentation, history in ancient India was often performed through rituals, festivals, and temple constructions, each of which preserved historical memory in a cyclical, symbolic, and religiously infused manner. As a result, the history we have inherited is fragmentary not because of a lack of historical consciousness but because of a different epistemological framework—one that privileges ritual, memory, and cosmic cycles over written, linear chronologies.

The idea of "fragmentation" in ancient Hindu historical/religious context

The non-unified "fragmentary historical tradition" (Thapar, 2013, p.127) of India is considered the sacrilege of history. Therefore, it is very likely that Indian historical narratives "will be denounced for attacking the inalienable rights of history and the very foundation of any possible historicity" (Foucault 1972, p. 14). In this context it may be pointed out that what is true of the religious texts or the what is true of the religious sagas is also in some way for the historical texts or events. Anway Mukhopadhyay (2018) while dealing with the "fragmentation generated and underpinned by Sati's corpse" in his book *The Goddess in Hindu Tantric Traditions,* points out that Sati's scattered body parts remain dispersed throughout the subcontinent, defying attempts to consolidate them into a singular, nationalistic representation of "India." Rather than spawning a cohesive body politic or nation-state, Mukhopadhyay asserts, Sati's dismemberment engenders a profound pluralization of the sacred, emblematic of a radical acceptance of fragmentation in Indian theology. Mukhopadhyay furthers that to uncover the full theological significance, one must not focus solely on the myth's purported sacred geography, but instead delve into the enigmatic essence encrypted within the fragmented remnants themselves. Hence, the notion of resurrecting Sati's dismembered sacred body through the political embodiment of Bharat Mata remains an inconceivable feat (Mukhopadhyay, 2018, p. 79). In the context of Indian historiography, the invocation of Sati's fragmentation may initially strike one as incongruous; however, upon closer examination, its pertinence emerges with clarity. Mukhopadhyay's scrupulous inquiry into the dismemberment of Sati's corpse reveals that it transcends the realm of mere anatomical disjunction. Rather, it constitutes a profound interrogation of established paradigms of unity and coherence, resolutely eschewing endeavours to impose a monolithic narrative upon variegated and discordant constituents. Sati's narrative embraces the inherent multiplicity endemic to fragmentation. Ultimately, fragmentation emerges as an indispensable catalyst, propelling scholarly discourse into the intricate dialectic between homogeneity and heterogeneity within the matrix of religious and cultural discourse.

> The body of Sati does not give rise to a body politic, a nation-state that would imply a metaphoric re-assemblage of Sati's dismembered body. The most radical implication of this myth lies in its acceptance of the expansive pluralization of the sacred body facilitated by its dismemberment, the theo-aesthetics of fragmentation. (Mukhopadhyay, 2018, p.79)

Now, if we delve into the methodological underpinnings of ancient Indian historical writings, it reveals a fundamental divergence from conventional teleological historiography, even if in a hypothetical scenario an exhaustive compilation of historical records from across the nation is undertaken, the resultant narrative resists coalescing into a singular, totalizing framework akin to the dispersed nature of Sati's fragmented remains across the subcontinent that steadfastly resist consolidation into a singular, nationalistic portrayal of "India," echoing the broader theme of fragmentation within the historical and cultural landscape. Fragmentation within this historiographical and religious milieu in India does not connote disjointed narratives bereft of causal cohesion, rather, fragmentation assumes a nuanced significance, denoting a deliberate

embracement of pluralism that resonates harmoniously with the multifaceted secular and sacred traditions permeating the fabric of Indian society. Thus, the refusal to construct a monolithic historical narrative stems not from an absence of coherence, but rather from a conscious recognition and celebration of the diverse and multifarious tapestry that constitutes the historical landscape of India.

Michel Foucault and the defence of non-linearity of ancient Indian Hindu historiography

At this juncture, it would be beneficial to draw on the theoretical assumptions of Michel Foucault (1969/1972), and his critical scrutiny of "teleologies and totalizations," as expounded in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, to undertake a decolonial disquisition upon Eurocentric contentions regarding the purportedly irrational methodologies inherent in the historiographical construction of oriental nations, most notably India. Archaeology of Knowledge delves extensively into critiquing the principles of traditional historiography (of which the British history was a part and on the basis of which they criticized Indian historiography) persistently avoiding the purposive pursuits of conventional historians, and compelling a rejection of historical narratives rooted in seamless continuity. After 1945, a new wave of philosophers emerged in France, heavily influenced by Nietzsche and critical of prevailing Hegelianism and phenomenology. Led by figures like Foucault, this generation challenged the dominance of "philosophies of the subject" and the linear, dialectical approach of "philosophies of history" (Revel, 2014, p.187). Foucault, in a 1978 interview (originally published in 1980), credited Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Bataille for freeing him from the influences of Hegel and phenomenology (Foucault, 1980/2000, p. 246). He sought to break away from the notion of a rational, teleological, continuous history, instead advocating for an alternative representation that acknowledges the ruptures of war and the present's fault lines. Nietzsche's ideas helped deconstruct the unified narrative of "antiquarian history," emphasizing the contingency of events over a self-contained totality (Revel, 2014, p.189). Foucault forbids us to construct a monolithic version of a given period but rather trace the discontinuities and multiplicities beneath the overarching continuities of intellectual discourse, beneath the cohesive, homogeneous expressions of individual or collective mentalities. For Foucault (1969/1972) "…history… is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality", instead, it encompasses the diverse realms of its formation and validity, "several pasts, several forms of connexion, several hierarchies of importance, several networks of determination, several teleologies, for one and the same science" (p. 4). Foucault's theorization of discontinuities and multiciplities which characterize any given period renders the notion of chronological linear history superfluous. Linear chronological history, in this process nothing other than a covering up of the contradictions and gaps of one's time and place. Foucault freeds history from the shackles of linearity chronology and facts/truths which are absent in ancient precolonial historiography and because of which it is repeatedly criticized. What Foucault (1969/1972) dismantles is "the search for a total history, in which all the differences of a society might be reduced to a single form, to the organization of a world-view, to the establishment of a system of values, to a coherent type of civilization" (p. 13). Foucault's post-structuralist idea of history and historiography considers 'discontinuity' and non-linearity, as one of the significant weapons for the insertion of difference into the continuum of time:

> It is, rather, as its name suggests, a search for processes of descent and of emergence (Foucault, 1984a: 80–86).14 The idea is not to connect the present-day phenomenon to its origins, as if one were showing a building resting on its foundations, a building solidly rooted in the past and confidently projected into the future. The idea, instead, is to trace the erratic and discontinuous process whereby the past became the present. (Garland, 2016)

In addition to this, the decrying of the lack of continuity and linearity in precolonial Indian literary tradition has also been because of the fact that the West has been anthropological in nature.

According to Foucault, the urge to make historical analysis concomitant with "continuous" narrative, the demand for the "whole" and "uninterrupted continuities" is the prerogative of those who consider "human consciousness" to be the main actors of historical development:

> Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject – in the form of historical consciousness – will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought. (Foucault, 1969/1972, p.12)

According to Foucault, the veneration accorded to the human subject, coupled with apprehensions regarding potential decentering and a fervent yearning for narrative coherence, engenders an ardent demand for holistic and linearly chronological historical renderings—a phenomenon Foucault categorizes as "total history" (1969/1972, p. 9). Drawing on Foucault we may say that the non-linear, non-unified non-totalized, chronology-less and non-verifiable Indian histories engendered a dissonance within the psyche of the Western individual self. The conventional sense of temporal continuity and narrative coherence is subverted, leading to a destabilization of the self's perceived unity and coherence. In essence, these histories compel individuals to confront the fluidity and contingency of their own identities, unsettling established notions of selfhood and subjectivity. In this connection, one may also theorize that ancient India's freedom from the ultimate bastion of anthropological thought produced the fragmentary and non-chronological historical writing or what Foucault calls "general history" (1969/1972, p. 9).

Yet employing Foucault to critique the Western tradition that produced him inevitably re-centres European thought. It is therefore necessary to clarify that Foucault is used here not as a final authority but as a point of resonance. His emphasis on discontinuity finds meaningful parallels within Indian epistemological and cosmological traditions, where knowledge and time are rarely conceived as linear or total. The conception of discontinuity as a fundamental ontological and epistemological condition is deeply embedded in ancient Indian philosophical thought. The Jain logicians, beginning with *Umāsvāti* in the *Tattvārthasūtra* (c. 2nd century CE) and expanded by *Haribhadra* and *Akalanka*, developed *anekāntavāda* (many-sidedness of truth) and *syādvāda* (conditional predication), insisting that every statement about reality is partial and perspectival. From this standpoint, multiplicity and fragmentation are not epistemic flaws but the natural structure of truth itself. In the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā schools, knowledge is always mediated by perception, inference, and context; truth (*pramā*) is provisional, emerging within pragmatic conditions rather than through universal closure. India believed in the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* enshrined in the Maha-Upanishads: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam advocates a non-bifurcated and non-dualist worldview, encapsulating the notion that the entire world constitutes an indivisible familial unit.[1]

This idea of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' not only stress the equality of humans and non-humans on this earth, but also and what is rather more important in this context is, the idea of non-domination and non-discrimination among the members of this world. It not only transcends but actively challenges the ingrained tendencies of acquisitive, oppressive, and dominating propensities endemic to anthropocentric worldviews. In this context one may say the non-propensity of India to believe in the superiority of the human self to bring back under his sway whatever has slipped from its grasp and reassemble it into a coherent whole resisted the creation of totalizing narratives. Moreover, the absence of a unified and totalizing historical narrative challenges the hegemonic impulses of imperialist agendas. In the context of India, where colonial powers sought to assert mastery and control over distant lands and epochs, these unconventional histories pose a formidable obstacle. Though they conquer India's lands but not India's ancient Time and therefore termed a "rude nation."

Foucault's insistence on the imperative of tracing historical discontinuities therefore can be extended to mean that "discontinuity" as a historical methodology is equally important. Non-linear and non-chronological historical narratives of India are not indicative of an absence of historical consciousness, but they rather exhibit post-structuralist tendencies. This post-structuralist inclination within precolonial Indian historiography, wherein the quest for historical veracity transcends linear chronicles, mirrors Foucault's emphasis on surpassing totalizing historical accounts. Foucault's critique of "teleologies and totalization" rather puts Western linear historiographies at a disadvantage and rescues India from the accusation of being an ahistorical nation, because of its ahistorical methods of constructing history and "attacking the inalienable rights of history" (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 15). Rather, it positions India as a nation unafraid to abandon the illusory comfort of definitive historical narratives, thereby eschewing the seductive allure of rest, certainty, and reconciliation. This stance contests teleological narratives and overarching totalities, fostering a more nuanced, inclusive, and contextually sensitive comprehension of the past.

Comparative perspectives: India and other Asian and non-western traditions

Placing ancient Indian historiography within a broader non-Western context reveals a constellation of parallel epistemologies that likewise resist linear and totalizing narratives. Across much of Asia, historical consciousness was articulated through cosmological, performative, and ethical frameworks rather than through empiricist chronicle. In Chinese historiography, for instance, texts like Zuo Zhuan treat history not merely as record but as moral instruction, embedding temporal recurrence within the cyclical Mandate of Heaven—a structure of renewal and decline comparable to India's yuga cycles. Similarly, Buddhist historiography in Southeast Asia, as seen in the Mahāvamsa of Sri Lanka or the Burmese Glass Palace Chronicle, integrates mythic time with royal genealogies, producing sacred histories where continuity serves soteriological rather than factual ends. In Japanese and Korean traditions, particularly the Nihon Shoki and Samguk Sagi, the intertwining of myth and polity mirrors the Indian fusion of cosmic and dynastic narratives. African oral historiographies, such as the griot traditions of Mali or the Ashanti court chronicles, similarly embody performative remembrance where truth is dynamic, reconstituted through recitation.

In each of these cases, historical practice privileges repetition, moral exemplarity, and ritualized recall over linear progression. The Indian case stands out for integrating these patterns within a sophisticated philosophical discourse on temporality and cognition. Its conceptions of cyclical time, epistemic pluralism, and ritualized memory constitute a theoretically self-conscious historiography that both parallels and transcends comparable traditions in Asia and the non-Western world. Recognizing these affinities allows for a genuinely comparative historiographical science—one that does not measure other cultures against the template of modern European history but rather situates Europe as one among many regional experiments in ordering the past. By repositioning Indian historiography within this trans-civilizational framework, the paper affirms the necessity of a plural, dialogic, and discontinuous global history of historiography.

Contribution to historiographical methodology

This paper attempted to contribute to the development of historiographical methodology by re-conceptualizing "historical knowing" as a culturally contingent practice rather than a universal epistemic form. Modern historiography, derived from Enlightenment empiricism and nineteenth-century nationalism, has long privileged linear continuity, documentary evidence, and causal coherence as the hallmarks of valid historical work. Such assumptions have shaped the disciplinary identity of history itself. By excavating the epistemological foundations of ancient Indian historiography—where ritual, myth, and memory perform historical functions—this study

sought to challenge those methodological orthodoxies and proposes a plural model of historical reasoning. Drawing on both indigenous philosophies of discontinuity and post-structuralist critiques of narrative coherence, the paper develops what may be termed a performative-epistemic model of historiography. In this model, history is not a transparent record of what "happened" but a cultural act of remembrance and re-enactment that generates meaning through repetition, transformation, and selective ritualization.

The paper contributes to the evolving global discourse on "decolonizing historiography." It argues for a more reflexive and intercultural methodology, one that considers discontinuity and multiplicity as analytical resources rather than as impediments. This reconceptualization not only broadens the empirical field of historiography but also destabilizes its epistemic centre, suggesting that history as a discipline must accommodate alternative ontologies of time and narrative. In doing so, the paper aimed to contribute to comparative historiographical theory by demonstrating that the non-linear, fragmentary mode is neither a postmodern innovation nor a non-Western anomaly, but a recurring possibility within the global history of historical thought itself.

The historiographical traditions of ancient India challenge the dominant paradigms of historical writing by resisting the linear, secular, and empirical frameworks that have long defined Western historiography. Instead, ancient Indian historical consciousness emerges as a complex, pluralistic mosaic shaped by decentralized political landscapes, diverse scripts, and non-standardized calendars. This non-linearity is not a flaw or a deficiency but rather a reflection of India's unique epistemological and cultural systems, where cosmic cycles, ritualistic practices, and sacred-secular intersections shaped how the past was remembered and recorded. The intertwining of myth, religion, and historical memory defies the rigid boundaries imposed by Western standards of historical accuracy and chronology, presenting a model of history that prioritizes spiritual and philosophical truths over empirical documentation. Through this study, it becomes clear that the so-called "fragmentation" of India's historical record is a deliberate and meaningful departure from the linearity that has often been considered synonymous with historical sophistication. The plurality of narratives, the decentralization of authority, and the incorporation of cyclical time in Indian thought contribute to a historiographical tradition that is deeply intertwined with the nation's spiritual fabric. Far from being ahistorical, ancient Indian historiography represents a vibrant and rich alternative to conventional models of history. It invites us to rethink the very nature of historical inquiry, moving beyond the Eurocentric obsession with factual continuity toward a more inclusive understanding of time, memory, and meaning. Moving forward, it is crucial for scholars to further decolonize the study of Indian historiography by critically engaging with the inherent pluralism and non-linearity of its traditions. This involves not merely refuting the colonial charge of India's "ahistoricity" but also embracing the diversity of its historical narratives as valid and essential to understanding the past. The challenge is to develop new methodological frameworks that can account for this complexity—one that acknowledges the importance of oral traditions, ritual performances, and regional diversity without imposing the artificial coherence demanded by Western historical models. Further interdisciplinary research could examine how different regions and religious traditions in ancient India developed their unique approaches to history, perhaps comparing Indian historiography with other non-Western models, such as those from East Asia or indigenous cultures. By integrating insights from postcolonial theory, anthropology, and philosophy, future scholarship can expand our understanding of how ancient India perceived time, memory, and history, offering valuable lessons for contemporary debates on the global diversity of historical thought. This research not only opens new pathways for interpreting India's past but also challenges global historiographical practices to accommodate multiplicity, non-linearity, and alternative temporalities. The goal should not be to "correct" Indian historiography to fit Western standards, but rather to elevate its distinctiveness as a legitimate and profound way of engaging with the past, one that respects the cultural, religious, and political fabric of ancient Indian society.

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Endnotes

[1] *Ayam Nijah Paro Veti Ganana Laghucetasam Udaracaritanam Tu Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (Chapter 6 *of Maha Upanishad*, 71-73.) Meaning: This is mine/this is my own and that is my other, reckons the narrow mind/the intolerant mind. The generous-minded considers the whole world as a family.