

[To Him, India's Problems Are History](#)

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To Him, India's Problems Are History

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Bhishma, the great hero of the Mahabharata, was renowned for his strength, courage, purity and wisdom. Today Bhishma is the name of a series of important new works on ancient India possessing similar qualities, 18 volumes on her history and 11 more to be a new translation of the Rig Veda. Now 80 years old, the Bombay-based general editor, Dr. S.D. Kulkarni, has already completed the history books and plans to finish the Vedatranslation within three years.

Dr. Kulkarni has marshalled a group of noted scholars of all kinds to aid him in his work, including associate editor Dr. Arun R. Joshi, and co-editors Dr. A.G. Javadekar, Dr. M.D. Paradkar, Dr. V.V. Gangal and Dr. Vijay V. Bedekar. His work has been given favorable reviews by newspapers and magazines throughout India and has received the blessings of many great saints and yogis.

The paucity of good books on the history of India from a Hindu perspective has long been a matter of concern to educated Hindus. The modern Indian educational system has followed Western, often Marxist, views, which, not surprisingly, are not

always accurate, much less sensitive to Hinduism. Western academic accounts of history generally see civilization--defined mainly as science and technology--as a Western affair and turn great Asian countries like India and China into support acts to the main event, seen as the rise of much smaller and more recent nations in Europe.

The History Project

Kulkarni's books provide an in-depth analysis of the Hindu view of time and history. He brings to light and organizes the knowledge hidden in Vedic and Puranic texts and correlates it with modern sources. He starts with the Puranic view that there were previous world-ages and cycles (yugas) of civilization before what we know of as history began. In this regard, Hinduism is the only religion that maintains knowledge of these earlier yugas, which present historical accounts do not yet recognize. This is because Hinduism defines itself as Sanatana Dharma or the Eternal truth universal in nature, arising with every world-age, rather than as an historical revelation for only a special group of believers. On this basis, Hinduism can embrace all forms of knowledge, taking within itself whatever reveals some aspect of universal truth.

For the ancient period the Aryan invasion theory--the idea that the Vedic people were intruders into India in the later ancient period (c. 1500 bce)--has been the basis on which a distorted view of Indian history has been built. It projected the idea that India has preserved no real indigenous culture of its own and has been used to make the history of India a chronology of foreign invasions rather than of internal flowerings.

During the classical period of India, modern historians have also made a number of errors. They have tried to trace much of Indian civilization, particularly science, to the Greeks, who had little influence in India, while largely ignoring the influence of India on Greece and the Middle East. The period of the Islamic invasions has also not been dealt with adequately in historical accounts of India. For one thing, it is a period of defeat for Hindus which they don't like to examine.

There was a considerable Hindu revival under the Marathas and Sikhs, prior to the ascendancy of the British in India. Indeed, the Hindus might have reconquered the whole country from the Muslims, had they not had to deal with the British.

Kulkarni explores all these historical issues. He does not avoid difficult matters, nor does he hide the facts to make a better story. He tackles the prevalent misinterpretations while providing a more accurate view of events. Yet he doesn't confine himself to outer historical issues. His work spans the entire field of Hindu culture.

For the ancient period, Kulkarni provides a unique view. Like proponents of the Aryan invasion theory, he places the early Vedic culture in Iran. However, he dates it in Iran back to 6000bce and has the Vedic people include northwest India as part of a culture spreading as far as Turkey. In other words, he recognizes a migration of Vedic people into India but places it at a much earlier period than modern speculations. This makes the Harappan-Indus culture Vedic in his view and shows its connection with the now dry Sarasvati river in India.

His ancient history (the first three volumes) will probably be regarded as the most speculative because he brings in occult lore that goes far beyond the accepted ideas of modern science. But such views we should remember are an integral part of Hinduism. His volumes on the more recent history of India include much excellent journalistic work that will be hard for anyone to dispute.

The Rig VedaProject

Bhishma's Rig Vedaproject plans to include the Sanskrit of the text, with a word by word breakdown (padapatha), followed by translation and copious notes. It looks at the Vedas as the root of the religious, social, cultural, political and economic thoughts of all mankind.

Most of the available translations and commentaries on the complete Rig Veda were done by nineteenth century European scholars who had no grasp of the texts' spiritual meaning. One of the most important issues of Hindu scholarship is to provide an alternative to these views, which are often outdated in terms of Western scientific, anthropological and archeological knowledge. Dr. Kulkarni's work goes far toward remedying this problem.

Sidebar: Meet the Editor

Hinduism Today:How did you decide to do this series?

Dr. Kulkarni:When I retired from economics, I rejoined my first

love--study of Sanskrit and its rich lore. After I wrote a biography of Adi Shankaracharya, I was summoned in 1984 to an audience with Sri Chandrashekhar, then Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. He gave me a command, "Beta itihash likho," "My boy, write history." My astonishment knew no bounds. I blurted out, "Swamiji, I am no historian." He said, "Mahaswami is God. You will do it." This is how destiny works.

Hinduism Today:What to you is the single greatest failing of the commonly accepted history books on India?

Dr. Kulkarni:They consider the 327 bce date of Alexander's coming to India as the basis of interpreting the history as opposed to the traditional Hindu view of the Bharata War of 3138 bce.

HT:Why have you chosen to use the Puranic accounts of early history, knowing that they conflict even more with the accepted understanding than do disputes over an "Aryan Invasion"?

Kulkarni:Modern historians accept Puranic genealogies but dispute Puranic chronology. The Vedas have come down to us without altering a syllable. It is not so with the Puranas. You have therefore to carefully read them. You will then find that the accounts are trustworthy.

HT:Who is assisting you on the Rig Veda project?

Kulkarni:I am consulting and seeking advice from many scholars for the translations, which however are mine. It will take three to four more years, and I have been working on it for the last two or three.

HT:How did you get the books financed?

Kulkarni:I initially requested donations, which met with some response. The government and some trusts have helped. I have put my personal resources into it. Lately some larger grants have come and over 250 subscribers have paid an advance price for the books. My real need now is the financing of the eleven volume Vedas project.

Sidebar: Bhishma: History of India Series

These eighteen volumes are an encyclopedia of knowledge, a veritable modern day Purana.Kulkarni's books are filled with many quotes and references from both classical and modern sources. They are a useful reference set for any Hindu temple, school or family (Our staff used his references in Volume One for the development of this month's four-page center section on the Origins of Man.) No doubt future generations of Hindu historians will build on Kulkarni's work. The first nine volumes are historical, the second nine cultural. The books are hardback and are quite long, ranging from 300-600 pages and are solid and well-produced. Marathi language editions are also available from India.

The Eighteen Volumes of Indian History and Culture:

1Beginnings of Life, Culture and History

2The Puranas: The Encyclopedia of India History and Culture

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18 Reconsideration and Trends

To Order: English edition, Rs6300 or US\$320; Marathi edition Rs4500. All 18 history books and the 11 volumes Rig Veda translation (delivered when completed) [see main story] can be purchased now for US\$400. In India write to Dr. S.D. Kulkarni, B 7-8, Shreepal Apts., Near Aradhana Talkies, Panchpakhadi, Thane, 400 602, India. In USA contact: Foundation for the Development of Arts and Sciences from India, c/o Prashant Joshi, 150-56 Melbourne Ave., Flushing, NY 11367, USA.