

# Searching for 'historical truth'? Don't be selective

## SWAMINOMICS



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India celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence in 1997 by showing that a billion people could overcome multiple barriers of language, religion, caste, ethnicity, and cultural traditions to form a glorious whole upholding democratic values and human rights. As we approach the 75th anniversary, that old syncretic "idea of India" is getting replaced by a majoritarian version where other groups must live under a Hindu umbrella.

Politicians, media stars, and ordinary folk have become majoritarian to a degree unthinkable 25 years ago. Hindu festivals have become occasions for provocative processions. Petitioners have asked — and obtained directives from courts — for fresh archaeological surveys and investigations into how supposed 'shivlings' and stone blocks with Hindu markings have been found in mosques. Clearly the petitioners want

to revive the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation in a thousand new sites. Even the RSS thinks this excessive, but not TV anchors who demand that "the historical truth must come out." They challenge cooler heads by asking "Are those seeking the truth all bigots?"

The short answer is "yes," partly if not wholly. For most hate-stokers it is also a way of gaining promotions and keeping their families in prosperity, gaining influence, political clout, fame and headlines, and avoiding harassment of various kinds. Very few are pure bigots.

But let us take to its logical conclusion their noble pursuit of truth. Let them please launch media investigations, documentaries, commercial films and books highlighting the misdeeds of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh rulers as well as Muslim ones. A focus on Muslim misdeeds alone is bigotry, not truth.

Through history, rulers jailed and executed dissenters without mercy. They killed and conquered. The greater their loot and killing, the greater was their reputation, as in 'Alexander the Great'. War was the norm and peace a mere interregnum. Rulers were constantly in debt because of extravagant expenses and soldiers' bills, and so raided enemy treasuries and temples for financial profit. Truth-seekers can find amazing stories of the sins and depredations of a thousand rulers of all religions and castes.

Historical heroes galore can be crucified as sinful villains. Kalinga was only one extreme example of massacres. Hindu kings looted one another's temples for profit. Without doubt temples galore were demolished by Muslim rulers to make way for mosques. Without doubt too earlier Buddhist temples were razed to make way for Hindu temples. Historically, that was the normal behaviour of conquerors. But should we re-fight every ancient battle again today? That is a recipe for eternal strife, not truth.

Swami Vivekananda said plainly, "The temple of Jagannath is an old Buddhistic temple. We took this and others over and re-Hinduised them." Does anyone shriek with outrage at this? Not at all, because this truth provides no political fodder, and opportunity to gain revenues, headlines, and eyeballs. Much more profitable to shriek about Muslim invaders.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj, wrote in his book 'Satyarth Prakash' of the feats of Adi Shankaracharya, who led the Hindu revival to oust Buddhism. "For ten years he toured all over the country, refuted Jainism and

advocated the Vedic religion. All the broken images that are nowadays dug out of the earth were broken in the time of Shankar, whilst those that are found whole here and there under the ground had been buried by the Jainis for fear of their being broken." I do hope truth-seekers will embark on new TV serials highlighting Swami Dayanand's revelations.

Many BJP stalwarts cite historian Angus Maddison to show how India's share

of world GDP crashed under British rule. The same Maddison's historical tables show that India's per capita income was better and grew faster in the Muslim era than the preceding Hindu era. Lots of historical truths to be sought here by the seekers.

Shivaji is a hero to Marathas and the RSS. Yet historians have recounted in detail his actions and those of later Maratha leaders during their conquests of Bengal and Gujarat. Historian Jadunath Sarkar, for instance, says "The Marathas snatched away gold and silver, rejecting everything else. Of some people they cut off the hands, of some the nose and ear; some they killed outright." I really hope the truth seekers will highlight the truth behind such deeds. Of course, such truth seekers may find their offices stoned and mobbed by political goons. They may be boycotted by advertisers or lose their jobs. But surely, they will make the necessary sacrifices in their noble search for truth? ■



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