

Motivated by their zeal to civilize India, the British unravel the exploration of its past.

To their surprise, the country's history, its cultural diversity was beyond their estimate.

When Wakankar, an archaeologist was roped in by the British to excavate old, dilapidated sites, the uncovered the gold mine of Bhimbhetka. These caves had paintings from time when writing did not even exist.

What was awe-inspiring was the

fact that the paintings had been painted over in each age - palaeolithic, mesolithic, neolithic over each other at some places. Yet the original work was revealed, studied - patterns observed, truly understanding the civilizational change.

The hues of red, green, ochre used across ages may have remained same but their meaning, significance altered.

Therefore, the study of history is not just a study of past but study of change.

In this essay, we shall first see how history is often understood as chronology of past. Then we shall delve into realizing the broader nature of change revealed by history across space and time. Then, we see how certain values and ideas may have metamorphosed but their core remains same. Finally, we conclude by a cautionary tale on subjectivity of history and lessons for present.

PIECING THE PAST TOGETHER

History is seen as the investigation and interpretation of past. Let us Professor EH

Cave states, it is not a static collection of facts, rather it is a dynamic process of interaction between historian and past.

Positivists sought to establish objective, scientific history in 19th century - 'revealing things as is.' The memoirs of kings, court chronicles, evidences from non written sources - all interpreted and written down by historian.

Yet, these file of facts have been carefully curated by historian. They reveal not just facts of past but how there is

progression of ideas, thoughts, systems over time. Study of Indus valley civilization or rig vedic period to present day 'modern states' is not just objective fact of things that 'existed' but subjective interpretation of things that 'changed'. Let us understand this in detail.

CHANGE AS THE ONLY CONSTANT

Man is a social animal, says Aristotle. Throughout history we see how human beings have socially grouped for protection, love, belongingness. In pre-historic times, a group of people would live together, hunt, share food.

As technology progressed, the groups became more concrete into families, clans. At a broader level, villages, kingdoms and finally nation state. We see this in early rig vedic period (1500 BC onwards), how groups evolve over time from kula (clan) to jana (group) to janpada (kingdom)

Compare this to modern day, where there are nuclear families in a city which is a part of a state - which in turn is under a nation. The forms of organization have changed throughout. Same has been the sharing of power.

Once human began to progress, quest for power share began. Earlier the most influential one would become leader. Later gains accumulated and they held power akin king. Mahajanpads in India, followed by mighty Maurya, Guptas, south Indian kingdoms then Islamic conquests showed constant power struggle.

This was postulated at global level through colonialism in 18-19th C. World saw bloodshed through two world wars. This led to the birth of United Nations and collective resolve to peace and human rights. Thus, history shows evolving

nature of peace, sovereignty & control.

However, historical inquiry is not only limited to political affairs. It also permeates progression of laws and culture. We have come a ^{long} ~~fast~~ way from the time when Manusmriti banned sight of upanayana for sudras [wearing sacred thread], to constitutional guarantee to equality under Art 14 and 17. Similarly, women has evolved from passive child bearer to active bread earner, as their global labour force participation reaches over 50%.

As we have seen through various examples, history gives us a glimpse into 'changes' we shall now see how some things

remain constant even if exterior is changed.

UNDERLYING CORE VALUES

We have moved past from discovery of iron ploughshare to drone based precision farming. Similarly,

India's space history shows how from carrying parts of rocket on cycle to reach the moon and Mars - ISRO has transformed.

Yet, it finds mention that we understand that not all change is not a complete break from past. When India achieved independence, we acknowledged how lessons from past are invaluable and may still

remain applicable. Be it Arthashastra's, righteous king or seva (duty to serve) of Bhakti saints or truth and non-violence by Gandhi - they are our core values, which shape us and history reveals that change in them may be catastrophic.

~~also~~ On the other hand, some things may have changed prima facie yet core prejudice may still be alive. For instance, transgenders who were earlier revered in ancient India, were criminalized by British. While laws and court ruling in NALSA vs UOI may protect them, public attitude, at its core, remain to be of hatred.

History - lies the eyes of Beholder

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Just like beauty lies the eyes of its beholder, so is understanding of historical progress and 'change'.

As cautioned in the beginning of essay, history is subjective, depends on who is choosing what facts to interpret. The history of vulnerable groups, tribes, aboriginals often get lost under the weight of dominant narratives. Thus, their progression is seen as static.

Therefore, to understand change and take lessons from it

NEXT IAS

Roll No.

Test Name & No.

we need to be inclusive, respectful and mindful. Historical change when viewed holistically present us invaluable lessons. For administrators, the forms of control and election may change but 'yogakshema' principle or welfarism is constant. Moreover, ~~is~~ the shortcomings of our past when studied gives us chance to rectify errors just like modern medicine does over AYUSH.

Therefore, in this ever changing world while vision and intuition for future are critical, a reverence to historical sensibility is key to give us an all-round perspective.

Don't let someones else opinion of you
become your reality.

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NEXT IAS

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Page 63

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38 year old, immigrant,
hungarian scientist katalin kariko
moved to United states in the 1990s.
Her vision? To do extensive
research and produce m-RNA based
vaccines.

Yet she was ridiculed,
her ideas considered wasteful and
a scientist of her stature was
demoted 4 times at Upenn. she
still did not stop. Every pay
cut to her was a motivation to
begin anew.

Her 'silliness' finally bore results and she was awarded Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2023 - for mRNA vaccines which came as elixir during COVID-19.

Thus, Katalin's story showed that she did not let someone else's opinion of her become her reality. In this essay, we shall see how opinions can be often limiting in their scope and they do not decide one's course of life.

First, we shall understand the nature of opinions and their consequent shortcomings. Second, we analyze why often we succumb to outside 'noise'; doubting our reality. Third, how do we cut the clutter and define our reality. Then we pause and understand, how sometimes feedback may be important. Finally, we chart our future course of action to become our best self.

YOUR OPINION OF ME IS A REFLECTION OF YOU

Opinions are our per-
disposition or views about a
person, place, thing etc. They

are based on beliefs, perception and intuition. Prima facie or outward open appearances often play a critical role in shaping opinions. A monk in tattered clothes might appear poor to lay eyes.

However, more important is conditioning which shapes our mind. often what we have seen growing up, is how we perceive the world. It is for this reason that men are still not comfortable with the idea of equal burden sharing with women. As walls of ghare-baire (home and outside) crumble,

NEXT IAS

their opinion of submissive, docile wives is tested.

often prejudices and self interest are the culprits behind opinions. When Thomas Alva Edison's teacher found him a slow learner, she asked his mother to withdraw her 'addled' child from school.

Similarly, it was in self-interest and benefit of Western powers to call African continent 'dark' and its people as barbaric, uncivilized & uncouth.

Thus, opinions are often a figment of one's interests and limitations.

NEXT IAS

Roll No. Test Name & No.

OPINIONS: INDELIBLE INK ON IMPRESSIONABLE MINDS

Often when opinions are loud, authoritative and repetitive - they start to decieve as reality. A child constantly decided as weak, poor in subjects - end ~~o~~ up developing aversion to subject.

Our brain is wired in a way that it reacts to negative beliefs more quickly than positive ones. When negative opinion is reinforced it becomes self doubt.

This is exacerbated by echo chambers of social media today. When olympian simone Biles, withdrew from Paris

olympics 2020, the negative comments did not let her move for the next 2 years.

They also act as conformatory bias. When soldiers of Alexander heard of the mighty Nandas, they refused to move. These opinions were ^{self} serving for a tired, low-morale army.

Thus, opinions can have a far reaching impact.

RISE FROM ASHES LIKE PHEONIX

So the question then arises — how do we not let opinions decide our reality? First off, we need to be mindful of what our

NEXT IAS

Roll No.

Test Name & No.

reality truly is: It is the cum total of what we are, what we want to do and what we can achieve.

so to understand, what we are, we need to deep dive within ourselves and examine our goals with sincerity. Per Neitzche, 'he who has a 'why' can survive any 'how'.' When APJ Abdul kalam failed to become an astronaut, he defined his reality by becoming an aeronautical engineer.

Further, one must work with single minded devotion and chalk out tangible plans. ISRO was laughed at by NASA scientists when it proposed Mangalyaan mission at 10th

NEXT IAS

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cost and old workhorse PSLV. Yet, it was their meticulous execution and never die attitude - that they became the first country to do it in first attempt.

our reality sometimes even overshadows our imagination because we are unaware of our potential.

The mighty US army and the outnumbered North Vietnamese forces never thought that latter could win

But adversity and courage of conviction can alter your reality.

This is not to say that the path is easy. It is to go against the grain is full of challenges. For the members of

LGBTQIA+ to change opinion &

NEXT IAS

Roll No.

Test Name & No.

about them being 'unnatural sex'
 - is still an ongoing battle. Likewise,
Mohammadi Narges from Iran who
 spoke of women's rights faces a life
 long ^{jail} term. Yet, as Churchill said →
success is not final, failure is not
fatal, it is the courage to continue
that counts.

BUT PAUSE... AND LISTEN

Even though it is true that
 we can define our own reality,
 we can often be zoomed in by
mental biases, lack of perspective and
guidance.

Bona fide opinion of others
 based on experience can prevent us
 from making repeated mistakes. samarth

NEXT IAS

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Yuvraj Ramdas prevented Shiraji from committing tactical mistakes. Similarly feedback helps us know our flaws and improve.

India, for instance, takes its citizen feedback on services, laws and rules, as was done for data protection law. Finally, opinions can sometimes, humble you preventing conceitful attitude. Opinion of Ashoka after Kalinga war, made him question his 'reality'.

THEN, HOW DO WE PERCEIVE OUR REALITY?

Adi Shankaracharya in Vivek Chudamani mentions that power of our 'viveka' lies in discerning real from myth.

NEXT IAS

Roll No.

Test Name & No.

Thus, we need to use our knowledge, intelligence coupled with self belief to master our reality. India showed the way by achieving VPI revolution in 6 years, what would ordinarily take 50 years. Who would have imagined that a nation of mystics and snake charmers would be a global front runner in space, tech and economy.

Just like Kariko had self believe belief, showed perseverance

and did not give up, we too must instil courage to shape our reality.

In words of Martin Luther King Jr:

I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul!