

# ANCIENT INDIAN DYNASTIES

By Vishnu Swaroop Misra, 2007

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## SYNOPSIS

- 1. While there is no dearth of publications on the history of ancient India, the coverage of its political aspects has, so far, been comparatively neglected. The scholars attribute this mostly to lack of recorded history on the Greek or Roman pattern. Many of them do, however, accept the authenticity of Vedic literature in such matters but not being history oriented, these offer only scant and some disjointed material for writing the political history of that period. The comment generally, barring a few exceptions, on the traditional source of history in India viz. Puranas, has been that the material contained therein, besides being based on traditions, is contradictory not only within individual Puranas but also between different Puranas and is not in harmony with Vedic and Buddhist evidence though the grounds on which the latter – also based on traditions- has never been disclosed.**
- 2. Several scholars have made efforts to rectify these shortcomings but apart from some notable exceptions, they relied almost wholly on one source or the other. There has been no attempt so far to synchronize the testimony of all sources i.e. Vedic, Puranic, Buddhist, Jain, classical Sanskrit works, archaeology etc. The Project in hand is an endeavor to achieve the same objective and the conclusion emerging so far is that the task can be accomplished.**
- 3. Bearing in mind the circumstances in which the works coming under different classifications mentioned above were composed,**

**examination of more than twenty dynastic lists mentioned in the Puranas indicates that though the Puranas describe them as a continuous lineal succession, most of them and specially the major ones such as Ikshvakus, Purus, Yadus etc. are a mixture of several independent branch lines – some collateral, some genuine successors and some which in reality ruled only after a gap as a consequence of the original line coming to an end. The other problems such as wrong origins, divergences between the accounts appearing in different Puranas, internal contradictions within individual Puranas etc., wherever they occur, can be sorted out. As a sample, the annexure to this Note provides some details of the final conclusions on one of the Aila dynasties.**

- 4. After rectifying the dynastic lists of the Puranas, it is possible to synchronize them with Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and classical Sanskrit literature testimony carrying out such adjustments as may be necessary since the latter also suffer from identical aberrations caused by almost the same environment and conditions which affected the Puranas. Major findings of this research are listed below.**
  
- 5. The number of generations between Manu Vaivasvata and the Bharata battle would be approximately 50 as against 91 mentioned in the existing Puranic texts. Rectified Aila dynasties covering Purus, Bharatas and Kurus also indicate almost the same number of successions. The total number of successions in the dynasty established by Yadu is also the same after rectification.**
  
- 6. The dates of Nirvana of Buddha-and Mahavira, which have been the subject of controversy for centuries- has been worked out in a manner which satisfies Puranic, Buddhist and Jain traditions as also the evidence emerging from archaeological discoveries. These revised dates are 514 B.C. and 527 B.C.**
  
- 7. After rationalizing the post Bharata War reign periods of the kings of Barhgratha dynasty of Magadha keeping in mind the dates of the Nirvana of Buddha and the coronation of Ashok Maurya, the date of Bharata War has been fixed in 1157 B.C. Similarly, the date of**

Parikshit I has been estimated as 1328 B.C. and the Battle of the Ten Kings can be fixed as 1360 B.C. The time of Dasharatha and Rama has been worked out as 1378 B.C. and 1328 B.C. respectively.

8. More than 30 major synchronisms have been identified on the basis of the evidence contained in the Puranas, Vedic, Buddhist, Jain texts and classical Sanskrit literature to help reconstruction of the political history of ancient India.

### ANNEXURE

Major Puranas like Va, Vs etc. contain nearly 23 dynastic lists. At this stage it would, perhaps, be appropriate to illustrate the application of our methodology by picking up a dynasty dealt with in the Puranas- say Puru dynasty, as it is termed by the historians.

Puru was the sixth descendant of Manu Vaivasvata. After Puru, the Puranas record a continuous line of 50 successions up to the times of Mahabharata War. On the other hand, three collateral lines were established immediately after him by his sons but the Puranas have merged all three of them and presented it as a continuous line of succession. Later, it is again a mixture of three independent dynasties established by the Purus, Bharatas and Kurus. All the three dynasties were not founded simultaneously though, after a certain stage, all three of them were in existence. One of the three lines established by the sons of Puru was replaced by the Bharatas who continued to rule until they were displaced by the Kurus. The remaining two Puru lines became dormant but after some time one of them resurfaced and displaced Kurus who had earlier routed the Bharatas. Purus managed to set up two dynasties one of which was suppressed by the Kurus but the second one continued to rule till the days of Mahabharata war . Further, Kurus were an independent tribe and they were not related either to the Purus or the Bharatas. Similarly, Bharatas were also very distinct from the Purus. In fact, two of them namely, Purus and Bharatas took part in the “Battle of Ten Kings”. The most revealing feature of the incessant wars between these three tribes was that at the time of Bharata Battle all three were in existence and all of them participated therein- Purus and Bharatas joined hands and fought against the Kurus. Another interesting finding is that all the three tribes after founding their kingdoms went into oblivion after some generations as a

**consequence of their defeat at the hands of one of the remaining two but they reappeared also at a later stage at the expense of the tribe which had defeated them earlier. While the details of these developments are given in the chapter titled “ Purus, Bharatas and Kurus”, the findings in respect of other dynasties narrated in the Puranas are no less revealing as the sequel would show.**

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