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Dwarka Beneath the Sea: Literature, Culture, History and the Discovery of an Ancient Submerged city

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Abstract:

Dwarka is an important place in the literary heritage of India. It is said that Dwarka was the capital city where Lord Krishna had his kingdom, but when he left the city, the entire kingdom submerged under the Sea. Many ancient Indian literary works such as Mahabharata, Bhagavata Purana and Harivamsha mention the name Dwarka. These texts refer to Dwarka as a flourishing coastal city that was eventually submerged into the sea. The stories about Dwarka have been traditionally perceived as mythological tales passed down orally and written within religious literature. However, underwater excavations carried out on the coastal areas of Gujarat in the latter half of the twentieth century led to the resurgence of academic interest in the possibility that these myths might be rooted in reality. The present research focuses on the connection between literature, culture, history and archeology in the study of the submerged city of Dwarka. The research also discusses how these literary myths formed the cultural memory of Dwarka and contributed to religious rituals related to pilgrimages. In addition, it reviews some of the major findings made in underwater excavations around Dwarka, such as stone structures, anchors, walls and Artifacts. Such discoveries have sparked significant discussion among scholars in the field of history and archeology about the age and authenticity of the underwater ruins. This research is based on an interdisciplinary perspective which emphasizes the relationship between mythological stories and physical evidences in the reconstruction of ancient Indian civilization. In particular, the research claims that Dwarka is not only a mythical city but a representation of Indian culture and civilization as well. The discovery of underwater ruins around Dwarka signifies the potential of archaeological excavations to reinterpret Indian literature and understand its coastal and urban civilization.

Keywords: Dwarka, Literature, History, Culture, Submerged, Underwater.

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INTRODUCTION:

As one of the few cities that coexist in mythology, literature, religion, archaeology and history debates, Dwarka possesses a unique position in Indian civilization. In accordance with Hindu belief, Dwarka is perceived as the kingdom of Krishna, a legendary deity whose actions are mentioned in various religious scriptures including Mahabharata, the Harivamsha and Bhagavata Purana. In these ancient writings, Dwarka is described as an impressive coastal town that was established by Krishna following his departure from Mathura. According to the religious belief the city ended up being submerged under the water after Krishna's death.

Despite having existed for thousands of years, the myth about a submerged city did not receive any scholarly interest until the end of the twentieth century when marine archaeological investigations were conducted on the shore of modern Dwarka in the state of Gujarat. Stone structures, anchors, pieces of ceramic and even remnants of an ancient city found in the waters surrounding modern Dwarka have sparked a discussion among researchers concerning the relationship between literary traditions and empirical evidence.

Thanks to its symbolic meaning, Dwarka is now regarded as an interesting subject of interdisciplinary research combining elements of archeology, history, literature, religion, marine science and cultural studies. The city represents the junction between myth and history where old stories are analyzed scientifically. On the other hand, the city of Dwarka is still regarded with great cultural and religious importance as it is one of the four char dham pilgrim places in Hinduism.

In this study, Dwarka will be discussed from the literary, cultural, historical and archaeological perspectives. The investigation of these aspects will allow determining whether the discovered structures correspond to the stories told by ancient Indian literature or not.

Moreover, Dwarka carries enormous cultural and religious significance in today's India. It is regarded as one of the most sacred places in the country known as char dham and attracts millions of devotees each year. Traditions related to temples, rituals, folklore and mythology preserve the image of Dwarka as the holy city of Lord Krishna and give it the value of being a living historical and cultural legacy. Thus this city plays an

important role in the continuity of spirituality between India's ancient and modern cultures.

This research will examine literary sources, cultural aspects, historical analysis and findings of underwater archeology in order to determine the connection between myths and reality of Dwarka as the lost city submerged in the sea. Studying myths about Dwarka mentioned in ancient texts and comparing them with facts provided by underwater archaeology this paper will try to analyze whether there was any historical reality underlying the myths about the divine city of Krishna. Besides, the study will show the role of underwater archeology in researching ancient maritime culture and history of the country.

Research Question

1. What role does literature, culture, history and underwater archeology play in establishing the presence of the sunken city of Dwarka?
2. How is Portrayed in ancient Indian literature such as the Mahabharata and Purana?
3. What is the importance of Dwarka in Indian culture?
4. What are the historical and archaeological records of the sunken city?

5. How much do the findings from underwater archeology align with the description of Dwarka in literature?

Research Objective

It should be stated that the main aim of the current research is to investigate the literary, cultural, historical and archaeological characteristics of the city of Dwarka as well as the myths concerning its submersion in the sea. In particular, the research intends to identify how the city of Dwarka has been perceived in Indian literature, including Mahabharata, Harivamsha and Bhagavata Purana. Dwarka is described there as the great kingdom of the divine king Krishna. It should be noted that the investigation into literary sources will help the researcher to explore how myth, religion and history affect the image of the city in Indian civilization.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that Dwarka can also be considered an important site because it is one of the most sacred places for pilgrimage among the Hindus. Therefore, another goal of this paper is to explore the cultural significance of Dwarka in terms of its religious characteristics. In this regard, Dwarka has been perceived by many researchers as an eternal holy place in the heart of Indian civilization.

Moreover, the study will seek to understand different interpretations and scholarly debates surrounding the existence of Ancient Dwarka. Scholars have debated for a long time whether ancient texts actually refer to a mythical location or a historic one. Hence, the study will seek to assess different historical perspectives on the issue and try to understand the way in which literary traditions could preserve memories about ancient civilizations.

Another goal of the research is to analyze marine archaeological discoveries from the area around the modern Dwarka and the surrounding parts of Gujarat. Underwater excavations in the region have unearthed stone anchors, submerged buildings, pottery, walls and many other things which indicate the existence of an ancient port town. Consequently, the research will attempt to analyze these Artifacts and find out what they have in common with descriptions provided by literary sources. As such, the research will try to discover possible links between the literary traditions and reality.

The study will also aim at finding out how marine archeology can help us better understand the history of India's interactions with its seas. Dwarka is a unique site from the

point of view of ancient trade routes, development of coastal cities and adaptation.

Lastly, the research will seek to investigate the effects that the discovery of the sunken city has had on the contemporary perception of Indian mythology, history and heritage. The discoveries made about dwarka have gained great interest in the general population, academic and the broader cultural field. This has led to debates on the connections that exist between belief, literature and science.

Research Methodology

For the research about the literary, cultural, historical and archaeological aspects of Dwarka, the methodology used is interdisciplinary and qualitative. The methodology comprises textual analysis, interpretation of history, study of culture and archeology in order to gain a thorough understanding about Dwarka and its importance in Indian civilization.

The main source of information will be secondary sources. Data will be extracted from ancient literary works, historical documents, archaeological reports, books, research articles, journals and trustworthy online sources. Some important sources of literature for the research include the

Mahabharata, the Harivamsha and the Bhagavata Purana that contain detailed accounts about Dwarka, its creation by Krishna, and its submersion into the sea.

The historical methodology is applied for analyzing diverse views about the existence of the ancient city and tracing the development of the relevant scientific discussions about Dwarka. Historical sources, inscriptions and previous works by scholars in this field are considered to find out whether literary legends might be historically true. This methodology will help to separate the mythological aspect from the real events concerning Dwarka.

It is also necessary to apply the archaeological methodology that can be realized through the study of marine archeology carried out at the site of the ancient city. The results and reports prepared by the Archaeological Survey of India and the National Institute of Oceanography are studied in more detail. Special attention is paid to underwater findings including walls, stones, anchors, pottery and other Artifacts located under water near the site of Dwarka.

Comparative analysis is used as another analytical tool for comparison between literary and archaeological data. By means of such an analysis, the research attempts to

discover the similarities and dissimilarities between descriptions found in literature and the archaeological finds to establish whether the archaeological finds prove the mythological stories about Dwarka.

Moreover, in its investigation into Dwarka's role in modern day India, the research employs the cultural approach. Pilgrimage culture, temple culture, folklore and other aspects of modern day life serve as sources for the investigation.

Therefore, through a combination of literary analysis, historical research, archaeological findings and cultural research the methodology strives to give a well-balanced investigation of Dwarka both from mythological and historical points of view.

Result and Discussion

This paper finds that Dwarka represents a unique combination of mythology, history, religion and archaeology. Based on the analysis of various literary sources like the Mahabharata, the Harivamsha and the Bhagavata Purana, it becomes clear that Dwarka was always depicted as a highly developed, strategically located coastal city created by Lord Krishna. These literary sources feature descriptions of the magnificence of this place, its fortified

buildings and ports, as well as its sinking into the ocean after Krishna's departure from the world. Thus, it can be concluded that the mythological aspects of Dwarka have been preserved for centuries.

Moreover, the research has shown that Dwarka still plays a major role in modern Indian culture. Being one of the Char dhams sites, this ancient city serves as a sacred destination for numerous visitors. In particular, it retains its religious image because various religious practices, temples, legends and folklore contribute to this city's reputation as Lord Krishna's kingdom.

According to the results obtained through this research, it can be seen that the ancient city of Dwarka holds a very unique place in the realm where mythology, religion, literature, history and archeology meet. The analysis of ancient literary works like the Mahabharata, Harivamsha and Bhagavata Purana shows that Dwarka was always represented in them as a splendid coastal town that had been created by Krishna. In these texts, Dwarka was referred to as an advanced city that was prosperous, well-fortified and developed from the architectural perspective since there were ports, palaces, markets, gardens etc. Moreover, it should be pointed out that in the waters was mentioned after Krishna left it.

Another finding made through this research proves the fact that today, Dwarka still keeps its great cultural and religious significance in India. One of the Char dham places of pilgrimage, Dwarka continues being a spirituality important location in India, with numerous legends, religious beliefs, temple rituals, festivals and folklore stories maintaining the idea of it as the kingdom of Krishna.

The data gathered from the archaeological excavations presented above provides strong evidence to support the theory of the existence of an ancient coastal settlement in what is modern day Dwarka. In particular, marine archaeological studies performed along the Gujarat coast have led to the discovery of various stone structures and walls, stone anchors and fragments of pottery. Such archaeological findings suggest the existence of an advanced maritime settlement at the location in question. Furthermore, these findings prove that the ancient communities located in the vicinity had developed trade routes and skills in navigation.

At the same time, the findings of the study under review highlight the fact that there continues to be a discussion within the scientific community concerning the possible link between the aforementioned remains and

the Dwarka mentioned in ancient texts. Some scholars claim that the collected archaeological data confirms the historical foundation of the legendary city, while others do not find sufficient evidence for such conclusions. It seems that different dating techniques and interpretations of artifacts contribute to the ongoing scholarly discussion.

A comparative analysis between literary description and archaeological evidence shows that there are some common features, including a coastal position of the city, its active use of shipping, as well as submersion under the water. Thus, the idea of Dwarka being described not only in literary works but also in archaeological findings proves that ancient traditions might preserve real historical facts related to certain cities or their submersion under the water because of geological changes such as rising sea level. A comparative analysis of the descriptions provided in the literary sources and archaeological discoveries shows several similarities. The importance of Dwarka as a coastal city with a focus on seafaring and its association with the sea is highlighted in both cases. It may be assumed that ancient literary traditions contain descriptions of historical cities and their decline caused by some environmental issues including rising sea

level, coastal erosion and other natural processes. On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that mythological stories tend to combine facts with symbolism and religiosity and thus cannot be fully separated from history.

At the same time, it becomes clear that discoveries concerning the history of Dwarka contribute to the rising role of marine archaeology in the study of ancient India. In particular, recent developments draw more attention of researchers to the subject and make them reconsider India's maritime legacy, ancient Indian seafaring and coastal cities. The discovered Artifacts encourage scholars to consider ancient Indian civilization in a different way since it allows them to gain new insights into the culture and economy of the region at the time.

Moreover, the research also emphasizes the importance of underwater archeology in terms of learning about ancient civilizations. Since the discoveries related to Dwarka became a reason for further investigations concerning the maritime history of India, it is possible to state that these sites are significant not only as a part of a culture but also as objects of scientific interest. In general, the findings of this investigation reveal that the understanding of Dwarka cannot be confined

either to a myth or only to an archaeological site. Rather, Dwarka can be viewed as a mixture of literary tradition, religious belief, historical facts and material reality. The ongoing controversies in regard to Dwarka emphasize the difficulty of researching ancient civilizations, where the line between faith and archaeology becomes blurred. However, the underwater city of Dwarka is considered one of the most intriguing topics in studying Indian history to date.

As a conclusion, it is necessary to mention that Dwarka cannot be considered a mythological city or an archaeological one. The object combines literary description, belief and history and thus should be studied from different perspectives since it can be used in various researches concerning the past of Indian civilization. It is important to notice that comparing literary descriptions and archaeological evidence reveals similarities which include a coastal location of the city, usage of its shipping capabilities as well as the submersion under the water of the object. Hence, a comparison between the literary tradition concerning Dwarka and archaeological data allows us to prove that ancient traditions do reflect real facts in the history of certain cities and submerging them under water due to geological processes such as rising sea levels. Furthermore, it is also

worth saying that Dwarka provides us with an interesting example in relation to the field of underwater archeology. Taking into account the fact that the research on Dwarka led to the discovery of other historical sites on the coast of India, we can conclude that these objects cannot be treated just as a part of culture but rather as scientific objects of study as well. Finally, to conclude the paper, it is important to say that Dwarka cannot be considered either mythical nor purely archaeological object. It represents the mixture of literature, beliefs as well as history, and therefore needs to be studied using different methods.

Conclusion

Analysis of the case of Dwarka proves that this city has a special status in the civilization of India, where mythology, literature, religion, history and archeology intersect. The works of ancient literature, including the Mahabharata, the Harivamsha and the Bhagavata Purana, depict Dwarka as a wonderful kingdom of Krishna, whose downfall was doomed to be buried under the waters. Such literary descriptions have been essential to preserve the myth about the city for many centuries and form the cultural background of India. As a result, the research proves that the study of Dwarka is not limited to its status as a sacred destination but

represents the object of both history and archaeology. Marine excavations near the coast of Gujarat have helped find submerged structures, stone anchors and pottery confirming that there was a coastal community with maritime activity that existed in the past. In this way, this discovery can offer information about the development of trade, urban-ism and coastal life in India. However, as far as the analysis of the problem is concerned one should note that scientists cannot prove that the remains belong to the mythological city of Dwarka. Though parallels between written literature and archaeological evidence are crucial, the findings can still be open to interpretation. This shows the challenges inherent in researching ancient civilizations, where legends and history become intertwined. Summing up, it should be mentioned that the study of Dwarka, on the other hand, is another illustration of the significance of the intersection between literature and archeology in studying history. Although ancient literature becomes a repository of cultural symbols and memories, archaeology allows researchers to provide evidence and reconstruct historical situations based on this evidence. Both disciplines thus contribute to developing a broader understanding of the maritime culture of ancient India. Lastly, it should be noted that the importance of

Dwarka cannot be reduced to the possibility of proving its historicity. Instead, its long-standing literary tradition, religious significance and cultural symbolism emphasize the immense value of Dwarka in the development of Indian civilization.

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