



History and Beyond

Romila Thapar

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These four books are on seemingly discrete and different aspects of early Indian history, yet they are interconnected. Historiography links many facets, concerned as it is with interpretations of the past. In recent years historical interpretation has drawn on other disciplines and this is evident in *Interpreting Early India*. The subject is history, but the discussions in this work move beyond history to provide a glimpse of explorations of new historical territories relating to early India. *Time, it is argued in Time as a Metaphor of History*, is an essential component of a historical perspective. Societies have varying forms of time, depending on function and perceptions. Conventional attempts to assign these particular forms of time- either cyclical or linear- have now been questioned. The most meaningful understanding of time and history is to view time at the intersection of the cyclic and the linear within the same society. *Cultural Transaction* suggests alternative ways of assessing the early Indian tradition. Using more recent concepts of culture and tradition, it distances itself from the static notion of fixed traditions and exclusive high cultures. *From Lineage to State* discusses the history of north India from about 1000 to 400BC. Moving away from the conventional treatment of this period, it attempts to locate the processes of state formation and social configuration. The evidence, both literary and archeological, is linked, using a comparative framework, with studies of similar societies from other sources in order to suggest a multifaceted reconstruction of this history.

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