

Comments from Dr. Madhav Khandekar on the Live Science Himalayan Glacial retreat story

Dr Radhakrishnan who I understand is at present President of Indian Geological Society. Radhakrishnan refers to a recent paper and also provides some details of the Siachen Glacier second largest outside of the Arctic Or Antarctic region. He recently wrote the following note to Benny Peiser.

*"You may find the following abstract of paper on Siachen glacier which has appeared in the latest issue of the Journal of the Geological Society of India (Vol.70(1), July 2007, pp.11-16).*

*V.K. Raina and C. Sangewar write:*

*"The Siachen glacier is the second largest glacier known outside the polar and sub-polar regions and the largest in the Karakoram Himalaya. The glacier with a length of 74 km is an example of the nature and size of the glaciers that must have once existed in the Himalaya towards the end of the last Ice Age. This glacier, primarily, because of its size has remained an important topic of glacier study and survey. Observation of the glacier front from 1862AD till date has revealed that there may have been a rapid advance of 700 m or so between 1862 and 1909, which was subsequently neutralized by relatively faster retreat between 1929AD and 1958AD. The glacier along its snout front has since been in rest mode, a term used in glaciology to depict glaciers with very low or practically nil retreat."*

*Contrary to the general presumption that glaciers all over the world are rapidly retreating, the authors report that the Siachen glacier, Karakoram mountains, Ladakh is in a rest mode, with practically no observable retreat."*

I recall reading a Front-Page story in March/April 2007 when I was in India re: Himalayan Glacier shrinkage etc. The story appeared in the Times of India (one of the largest English daily newspapers in India) and referred to a study made by I think UNDP Or UNEP or similar UN Org.

I have felt very disappointed about these UN Org. many of them seem to be supporting each other by way of producing similar reports on environment/GW etc. To me it is like "you scratch my back & I will scratch yours" attitude. None of these agencies have done any in-depth assessment about the reality of Himalayan glaciers completely melting away (or significantly) in the next fifty years and what it could mean to rivers like the Holy Ganges etc. I do not accept this simplistic and once again a scare-mongering news story with a potential to affect 500 million people.

Allow me another view point, based on Hindu Mythology. I discussed this with some of my friends from Pune who are scholars of Hindu Mythology and history. There is a good documented history of India when Lord Rama ruled what is now

often referred to a Ram-Rajya a Ram-Kingdom, considered as the most law-abiding and a Golden period of Hindu history. According to most Indologists Lord Ram's birth was about 5100 years ago that is 5100 BP. After Lord Ram's time, there was the Great epic Mahabharat when Lord Krishna delivered the Great Hindu Epic Geeta at the battlefield between two rival families etc. Lord Krishna's time was probably 3500 yrs BP.

To make this long story short, during none of these Hindu epics, there was any reference ever about Himalayan glaciers changing OR the River Ganges depleting and becoming only a Monsoon-season River. The point I am making is that during the period about 5000 yrs BP, which was Late Holocene, a warm period in the earth's climate there was NO reference about Himalayan Glacier shrinkage, melting etc. Lord Ram's period was considered as a time of plentiful food, prosperity etc.

The news item by Lonnie Thompson is one more scare-mongering story.