

DESTRUCTION OF HISTORY BY RIGHT-WING FORCES: A CASE STUDY OF RSS

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ABSTRACT

"Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present controls the past" George Orwell in 1984 wrote.¹ Past has a changing impact on our lives and to shape our minds to behave properly in the future. The past is mediated to us through our parents and community by the ways through which they bring us to adulthood. Political, economic, social, and religious institutions inherited from the past provide the context within which we live. Primary and Higher education is an important part of our life which guide us to behave in a certain manner. It is this experience of formal education which has the greatest influence upon our ideas, not only about the past but also about how the past is to be studied.² Fundamental principles are more important than knowing the historical facts. When trying to identify the mechanisms and practices responsible for shaping peoples' perceptions of the past, we tend to think about highly nationalised institutions such as the education system, state-supported museums, monuments, and exhibitions, state rituals (e.g., remembrance days), and the state's cultural politics.³

Keywords: RSS, Political, Economic, Social, Higher Education.

Introduction

Culture is one of the most important part of the past which we inherit. Culture is more important to people in general than politics and economics because it is directly related to the person. It is important to understand that revision in history is usually done with cultural history which then percolates into political and economic history. To understand the essence of culture, we have to distinguish among different kinds of cultural history.

Peter Burke quotes Burckhardt, "Cultural history is a vague concept'. The term culture used to refer to the arts and sciences. Then it was used to describe the popular equivalents to the arts and sciences - folk music, folk medicine, and so on."⁴ So according to this definition, the aspect of culture changes for the people from time to time. And here the role of history and historian comes, how we present facts, exact facts or with modification. A historian must do justice with their profession and act wisely before presenting any facts. We understand culture through historical sources or the practices and then we differentiate between the culture practised in the past and present. Peter Burke in his book, *'What is Cultural History?'*, says, "to distinguish between learned culture and popular culture within a given society is another obvious alternative to the assumption of cultural homogeneity."⁵ We can think here that culture can be different in the past and present. And people can also practice two types of culture at the same time like it was happening in eighteenth & nineteenth-century Western Europe and in the context of Medieval India, we can trace the same to Mughals who were simultaneously following the Hindu and Muhammadan culture. Burke further says that "sometimes construction of history has been done from the point of view of a fraction of society, historians who might belong to some school construct a particular kind of history."⁶ But governments when revising history usually try to keep in mind the social base of its vote bank and this is the reason right-wing regimes try to polarise.

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¹ George Orwell, *1984*, Original Publications, London, 1949, p. 143.

² Ibid, p. 2.

³ Nissim Otmazgin, 'Introduction: Manga as Banal Memory', eds. Nissim Otmazgin & Rebecca Suter, *Rewriting History in Manga*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 8.

⁴ Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 29.

⁵ Ibid, p. 27.

⁶ Ibid, p 96. We can also look at the *Making of the English Working Class* of Edward Thompson as example which attempted to present the past from the perspective of common people.

In this paper, I have studied five primary sources to find out the tempering which has been done by people associated with a right-wing and right-wing government. First, two books have been written by RSS ideologues, M.S. Golwalkar and V.D. Savarkar. Both are famous personalities in current times. Two other works have been written by P.N. Oak. These works are used by right-wing groups present in the country to substantiate their arguments. And the last work was the social-science textbook of class seventh of Rajasthan State Board of the year 2016, ruled by the BJP government then. The study of such topic is important because readers for such books have been increased especially in North India. In a personal interaction with a manager of a prestigious book shop in Lucknow, the manager told that we have to put a separate section of books by P.N.Oak because he has been in demand for few years.

A Scenario in the World

History reflects what happened and memory reflects history. Burke says that “the historian’s function is to be the custodian of the memory of public events which are put down in writing for the benefit of the actors, to give them fame, and also for the benefit of posterity, to learn from their example.”¹ And we have so many instances like Prathiviraj Raso and Prathiviraj Prabhandh where memories were created to enhance the fame of the king. If we talk about medieval history with the perspective of Right-wing historians, they try to demean the Muslim rulers and their culture. Burke quotes Halbwachs, “those memories are constructed by social groups. It is individuals who remember, in the literal, physical sense, but it is social groups who determine what is ‘memorable’ and also how it will be remembered. Individuals identify with public events of importance to their group.”² This is exactly (construction of statues and renaming the cities and streets) happening in India, where events which are not seen in a positive light by Right-wing forces are being erased from the history books and memories and now it has become a habit for Right-wing forces to present history with moulded facts. When someone is looking into the memory, they have to be careful because social memory is selective and to transform it into history one has to be careful about it. Memories can be transmitted through oral narratives, images, records, transfer of skills from one person to another, and the importance of some space (which could inherit a memory of past).

In the late twentieth century, we saw the rise of radical Right-wing in Europe. Either it is Norway or Germany, where right-wing governments came into power and the main reason for their emergence was the insecurity of native people from migration by countrymen from underdeveloped countries and getting jobs there. The education sector was destroyed by these forces. Betz says that “this is particularly pronounced about education. In a post-industrial society, the higher levels and longer duration of education have increasingly come to be seen as the prime road to social mobility. Expanded educational opportunities have accentuated the importance of individual effort and merit. “For it is after all only possible to pass through formal education by *individually* succeeding by way of assignments, examinations, and tests. Formal education in schools and universities, in turn, provides individual credentials leading to individualised career opportunities on the labour market”. However, the spread of formal education has heightened the sense that qualifications are inter-changeable., thus forcing individuals to advertise the individuality and uniqueness of their accomplishments”³ They also asked for priority in jobs which was the case in Norway. In the Fascist regime of Italy, working-class became the supporter of government because of their hatred for Jews and jobs which were taken by the outsiders. In India also, usually, people with low education are easy to polarise and fill their minds with hatred for other community. Right-wing forces usually say that these groups(usually minorities or people who are refugees in a country) are a threat to the culture of their country which is being destroyed by them. Betz further says “We would expect to find prejudices and hostility toward foreigners to be particularly pronounced among persons with lower levels of education, among older generations, and perhaps also among blue-collar workers.”⁴

National populists⁵ prioritize the culture and interests of the nation, and promise to give voice to a people who feel that they have been neglected, even held in contempt, by distant and often corrupt elites. National-populist leaders, like Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, speak of creating a new form of ‘illiberal democracy’ that have raised concerns about the democratic rights of immigrants for they are continuously being demonised. National populists questions the priority in employment over

¹ Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1997, p. 43.

² *Ibid*, p. 44.

³ Hans-George Betz, *Radical Right-wing Populism in Western Europe*, Macmillan, London, 1994, pp. 28-29.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 97.

⁵ National Populists rejects many mainstream ideologies and is seen by many as reactionary towards both liberalism and socialism. They believe in absolute monarch, dictator or even a religious leader for the guidance of a country.

immigrants¹ but in India, there is immigration within-country like from U.P. and Bihar to Maharashtra and Gujarat & Right-wing forces put their question on the same priority issue (like it happened in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, where ministers said that employment has been taken up by outsiders and no job left for the people of the state). The government in South Korea also thought that textbooks were left-leaning and hence wanted to replace it with its version. They wanted to glorify themselves and the fast-developing economy but did not mention the atrocities of government.² In Japan, the massacre by Japanese soldiers on Chinese People was removed from History textbooks and it was replaced with 'advancement' on Chinese territory. Right-wing forces are not only tempering with history in India but around the world. We have to understand that Right-wing forces try to propagate their religious agenda and they don't ask people to come in support of religion directly but for the sake of culture. Dirks defines Culture as, "Culture, in other words, is never an autonomous or a stable category of analysis. Culture as well as other key terms politics and history, exist as supplements."³ Renaming a city, for the sake of culture and historical values, is one way to show the supremacy of particular sect over others. We have one such instance where populist rewriting took place. Right-wing historians changed history according to the audience which made them feel good. Estera Flieger wrote in *the Guardian* that The Gdańsk Museum of the Second World War opened in 2017 to some fanfare; its distinguishing and unconventional features were to be its special focus both in the global context of the war and on the fate of civilians in the bloody conflict. But the populists who had come to power in Poland's elections two years earlier found this unbearable, preferring to promote a version of events that would airbrush real history and glorify the nation instead.⁴ This is the trend that can be seen in every place where Right-wing forces are in power, "glorify the nation".

We have an instance of Manga which is considered an effective tool to promote the political agenda in Japan. According to Nissim Otmazgin, in the field of social memory have typically dealt with the ways in which national sentiments are tied to memorializing collective suffering, mobilizing traumas for political purposes, and the inability of nations to think and act beyond the narrow confines of ethnic nationalism.⁵ Revision in the Manga books was done by Japanese society to bring a sense of pride in being Japanese. Nissim further writes that the 1960s onward, sociologist Eldad Nakar identifies a "hegemonic" war meta narrative that developed in the postwar period, which depicts Japan's dreadful wartime past and is highly critical of the horrors of war. He argues that while much mass-produced manga series of the time depict violence, they nevertheless reflect a desperate collective mood regarding the war.⁶ In the revised version of the manga history, China and Korea have been presented as enemies to infuse the nationalistic tendencies and ask the Japanese to be proud of being Japanese. It is also there that to support the myth they give scientific reasons for its validity is also done in India. There is a manga which portrays Japanese democracy as a success story without dealing too much with controversial issues (*Gakushū Manga Shōnen Shōjo Nihon no Rekishi*), others which are more critical of Japanese politicians' opportunistic behaviour (Saitō Takao's *Sōriseries*, (*Prime Minister*)), and also manga which completely ridicules the state and its politicians (*Saru demo Wakaru Teitaisaku*).⁷ In one version of the manga, history war has shown as devastating and in another one as heroic. So, different narratives were created through the Manga stories for the political benefit in Japan.

History as a Tool of Political Propaganda for RSS

RSS tries to prove the legitimacy of its leaders in their own published books (like *Peheli Agni Pariksha*, *Why Hindu Rashtra*) and awarding them prestigious awards like Bharat Ratna (Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madan Mohan Malviya). This is done to prove their nationalism of which they call themselves champion. Jawaid Qaddus says "their (RSS) intent is not to glorify Hinduism or unify Hindus but to demonize the non-Hindus and to convert India into their version of a Hindu *Rashtra*."⁸ The Right-wing forces are always discouraging women's education (directly or indirectly) and oppressed class

¹ Ibid, p. 16.

² It happened during the reign of President Park Geun-hye who was the daughter of former president Park Chung-hee. Geun-hye tried to blame North Korea for the war.

³ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Autobiography of an Archive*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, p. 75.

⁴ Estera Flieger, *The Guardian*, 17 Sep 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/17/populist-rewriting-polish-history-museum-poland-gdansk>

⁵ Nissim Otmazgin, 'Introduction: Manga as Banal Memory', eds. Nissim Otmazgin & Rebecca Suter, *Rewriting History in Manga*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 5.

⁶ Ibid, p. 7.

⁷ Ibid, p. 9.

⁸ Jawaid Qaddus, 'Hindutva and Indian Diaspora', eds. Ram Puniyani, *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times*, Sage India, New Delhi, p. 154.

growth, they are a hurdle in the mobility of these people. Thus the girl suffers double discrimination. While Dalits and the downtrodden are struggling to become literate, the Hindutva forces are busy saffronizing education i.e. to construct the education structure which is more inclined to Hindutva ideology, which would further deny social mobility among them.¹ Louise is saying this because girls not only face financial barriers to reach school but also societal stigma and saffronization of education will make efforts to implement the rule of Manu and rules of Manu is not only problematic for women because those rules asked women to serve their husbands even they are cruel but also for Dalits who are not allowed to study. Louis further adds a para from the manifesto (1996) of Bhartiya Janta Party (currently ruling Right-wing Party) which reads, "Hindutva or cultural nationalism, shall be the rainbow which will bridge our present to our glorious past and pave the way for an equally glorious future; it will guide the transition from *swarajya*, that is, self-rule to *surajya*, that is, good governance".² They don't have any concrete agenda like gender equality, class equality, or economy so that a poor child can study well hence they uplifted the religion and cultural nationalism. Fundamentalists everywhere, in Somalia, Kuwait, LTTE in Sri Lanka, Christian Fundamentalists in Latin America, Afghanistan, and RSS in India have always questioned the education of women.

Now, we should look into the aspect of narratives, what are reasons to change a narrative and how these shape the society. The change in the narratives can be observed in the study of Prithviraj Raso, Prithviraj Vijay, Prithviraj Cintamani, and Prithviraj Prabandha. Prithviraj Raso is an important text to understand the history of Chauhan ruler of Ajmer and about the invasion of Muhammad Ghauri. The role of Prithviraj glorifies the Rajput community. Text puts emphasis on war and superiority of their patron but we also have evidence that there was an interaction between Turks and Rajputs which we can see through coins and monuments. Prithviraj Vijaya describes Chahaman's Muslim foes as social deviant or others, describe them as "rakshasa", "pichasas", and various other untouchables like "matanga" and "chandala"³ They were considered "demonic" just because they did not follow the Hindu culture. Without considering their culture important, they considered Turks and Arabs as totally inferior and Prithviraj as a saviour of the land who fought bravely against all enemies.

While Taj ulMashir of Nizami, a Persian source says that Ghauri wanted to drag his sword in the blood of wicked King i.e. Prithviraj Chauhan and also say that Raja was defeated and Killed by Sultan because he chooses the path of arrogance.⁴ Prithviraj Cintamani shows Prithviraj as a heroic king who was killed by a barbarian king and says that he was betrayed by a minister whom Prithviraj Punished. Minister of Prithviraj helped Ghauri during the battle and ultimately Ghauri won. Hamira Mahakavya is dedicated to Prithviraj who was an ancestor of patron Hammira, Chauhan King of Ranthambore.⁵ Prithviraj Prabandha in which story says that Prithviraj was generous to Ghauri but Ghauri was assisted by Prithviraj's treacherous minister Kaimbasa. All three texts in a way or other showed Prithviraj as an efficient leader but he was cheated.

We can assume that Prithviraj was an ignorant king as is mentioned in Indo Persian texts it is because Persian texts are contemporary of Prithviraj while other texts have been written in later centuries and his importance increased only after the thirteenth and fourteen centuries. The reason could be that he was the ancestor of some ruling kings who wanted to show their forefathers as a tragic hero. In the modern period, his importance increased further as in British colonial rule Rajput states also wanted an independent nation and they had figures like Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Sanga, and Maharana Pratap. In the current political climate as identity, politics has important significance and political parties want some issues which can be converted into political gains so they try to find out the different heroes from different backgrounds who fought against foreign powers especially Muslims.

Research and history are central to the politics in India. History as a political factor was important to Savarkar and Golwalkar, and it is important today to the Hindu right-wing because a historical narrative makes a powerful statement about the identity and unity of the nation. The ideas that India was always a Hindu nation, that this Hindu identity encompassed all India's diverse elements with considerable coherence from an early date, and that this identity is linked with glorious achievements, power, and insight these ideas are of profound importance to the politics of Hindutva today.⁶ This is the

¹ Prakash Louis, 'Hindutva and Weaker Section', eds Ram Puniyani, *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times*, Sage India, New Delhi, p. 161.

² Ibid, p. 164.

³ Cynthia Tablet, *The Last Hindu Emperor*, Cambridge University Press, London, 2016, p. 41.

⁴ Ibid, p. 44.

⁵ Ibid, p. 52.

⁶ Martha C Nassbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, USA, 2009, p. 213.

reason, Savarkar and Golwalkar misled the readers by misrepresenting facts for the political benefits, what they started half a century ago has seemed successful because the government is doing the same with textbooks by presenting a *Sanatan* cultural history of this country. It is interesting to note that Nassim in his book, *Clash Within Society*, show that all the negative parts of RSS' history writing but in one place he mentions, "Disaster struck with a heavier hand, however, when Babur swept through the north of Hindustan early in the sixteenth century, vandalizing Hindu temples, stealing sacred objects, building mosques over temple ruins. For two centuries Hindus lived at the mercy of the marauders until the Maharashtrian hero Shivaji rose against the aliens and drove them back, restoring the Hindu kingdom. His success, however, was all too brief."¹ It is not sure whether he is writing about his perspective of medieval Indian history or he is quoting someone but forgot to mention. But this is the type of history which is encouraged by RSS in the country through their speeches and schools (from the presence of stem cell in Mahabharat to plastic surgery of Hindu God Ganesha, all was said without authenticity by current Prime Minister Narendra Modi)².

Early education is very important to shape the mind of a child and what they learn in their childhood gets imprinted on their mind for life. Having good knowledge i.e. scientific, progressive and rational, through good textbooks is the essence of a well-established education system. National Democratic Alliance government after coming into power in 1998 started to propagate agenda through school textbooks of NCERT. In his article, 'Pushing in The Parivar View', Arjun Dev talks about how only those countries were mentioned in the new textbooks of class VI which were neighbours of India and some have been mentioned which were not mentioned before. They changed the meaning of civilization to show the Indian civilization is the oldest.³ They also distorted the history of the Roman Empire, provided wrong chronology and statements without facts. Arjun Dev says that they proved that zero was known to Vedic people and mentioned that you have learned Harappan settlements found on the bank of Saraswati river (without referring where).⁴

Social science is an important discipline for a human being and according to Prof Kumkum Roy, "ideally a good social science course can equip our children to understand diversity. This can be in terms of environment, it can be in terms of culture, including differences in language, religion, gender, it can also be in terms of social practices."⁵ They have shown that early civilization was prime and supreme and also they brought out the concept of nationalism during that period only. They have just mentioned facts without giving any significant aspect for those. They tried to rewrite the history according to their political agenda of the present time. They have shown themselves superior and concepts are missing from their logic. Prof Roy says, "While agriculture is certainly important in Later Vedic literature, it seems to be relatively unimportant in the Rigveda, where the hymns, by and large, represent the concerns of a pastoral elite. But for reasons best known to themselves, the writers of the book (NCERT books) believe that the predominance of pastoralism has to be denied."⁶

It is important what kind of sources we are using for history writing. We have secular sources, religious sources, or epics, and poetry. Nayanjyoti Lahiri mentions, "the specific Indian sources that are named are mainly textual and generally examples of religious literature."⁷ There is always an objective behind doing a thing. Changing history in school textbooks also have one, that is to propagate the hatred against Muslims by writing that they destroyed Indian culture and secondly to improve the vote bank of the party. Lahiri gives us another motive that is for the NCERT a major objective has been to discredit the earlier textbooks in order to malign left-wing and secular historians, rather than to update books.⁸ They propagate nationalism through these books which are done by Right-wing forces elsewhere in the world. Nationalism often equated with cultural nationalism and tacitly identified with the rejection of anything of foreign origin.

RSS spread its propaganda through its various affiliated organizations. One of them is Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) which founded Saraswati Shishu Mandirs (schools) for providing high-quality value-based education that was started much earlier in 1952, though a formal structure of working under

¹ Ibid, p. 212.

² Maseeh Rahman, The Guardian, 28th October 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/28/indian-prime-minister-genetic-science-existed-ancient-times>

³ Arjun Dev, 'Pushing in The Parivar View', *Saffornised and Substandard*, Sahmat, Delhi, 2002, pp 10-11

⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

⁵ Kumkum Roy, 'Where Do We Go From Here', *Saffornised and Substandard*, Sahmat, Delhi, 2002, p. 25.

⁶ Ibid, p. 27.

⁷ Nayanjyoti Lahiri, 'Twisted Tales', *Saffornised and Substandard*, Sahmat, Delhi, 2002, p. 46.

⁸ Ibid, p. 56.

a parent body of Vidya Bharati took form much later.¹ Walter K. Anderson, in his book *The RSS*, writes that there are over 13000 schools with around 32,00,000 students and 1,46,000 teachers and 15,00,000 students in Ekal Vidyalaya with 54,000 teachers.² We can see how many young minds they influence every year with their distorted and tempered history and fill the signs of sectarianism in their minds. According to Ratan Sharda, "The schools follow NCERT syllabi, but apart from this, they also provide education on moral and nationalist values to turn them into duty conscious citizens."³ But he did not mention what kind of moral education. Although the Government prescribed syllabus is followed, frequent lectures on the necessity of dying for one's religion, assembly and mealtime prayers on the same theme, patriotic and devotional music and an overpowering visual display of the armed Ram, the future Ayodhya Temple, and of Hindu figures fighting Muslims, ensure the projection of a different and stronger message.⁴ They use to teach books like *Bharat Ke Mahan Vayktiva*, *Gaurav Gatha*, and small pocketbooks based on the teachings of RSS ideologues. In these schools, every year a new song is sung daily which is ordered by the particular province of RSS Shakha and on the name of 'baudhhik' preaching of RSS is taught. Ratan Sharda further added in *RSS 360* that Ekal Vidyalaya is a unique project which the author has mentioned in another chapter describing it as an associate or sister organization of RSS. Some organisations run mobile laboratories for schools in remote villages as also vans that educate children and expose them to science education in an innovative way.⁵ But Sharda did not mention how they collect money from students and their guardians for the sake of Hinduism. They have considered secular education deviating from the moral and ethical grounds. Cultural education should be given to school children and that is important for the growth of the nation but it should not be biased. Although they tried to present that they established schools in every corner of the country to provide education to the marginalised section of the country but real motive behind this was to promote their agenda of Hindutva and Hindu Rastra.

Mukherjee said, "What better place to start than by poisoning the tender formative minds of young children with hatred and distrust about other (non-Hindu) communities."⁶ This book also mentions the passages from the textbook 'Gaurav Gatha' which was taught in Saraswati Shishu Mandir in the class sixth, passage states as follows:

'On the rise of Islam: Wherever they went, they had a sword in their hand. Their army went like a storm in all four directions. Any country that came their way was destroyed. Houses of prayers and universities were destroyed. Libraries were burnt. Religious books were destroyed. *Mothers and sisters were humiliated*. Mercy and justice were unknown to them. Delhi's Qutb Minar is even today famous in his (Qutbuddin Aibak's) name. This had not been built by him. He could not have been able to build it. It was built by emperor Samudra Gupta. Its real name was Vishnu Stambha.... This Sultan got some parts of it *demolished* and its name was changed.'⁷

Temple demolition was not totally about proving religious superiority but of establishing political legitimacy. According to Eaton, "royal temples were understood as highly charged political monuments, a circumstance that rendered them fatally vulnerable to outside attack by Hindus or Muslim invaders. Therefore, by targeting for desecration those temples that were associated with defeated kings, conquering Turks, when they made their bid for a sovereign domain in India, were subscribing to, even while they were exploiting, indigenous notions of royal legitimacy."⁸ Statement about Qutub Minar is false although there is a controversy that whether there was a Vishnu temple or Jain temples earlier (before the construction of Qutub Minar). Another statement about Islam which *RSS, School Texts and the Murder of Mahatma Gandhi* carries from *Gaurav Gatha* "About Islam, one of the statements is as follows: Thousands of opponents of idol worship, the followers of Islam, go to the pilgrimage centre of the Islamic community at *Kaaba to worship "Shivalinga"*. In Muslim society, the greatest wish is to have a darshan of that black stone (Shivalinga)."⁹ This statement has no historical fact for its support, it seems like fake news or messages which are common now, can be seen in RSS textbooks twenty eight-nine years ago only.

¹ Ratan Sharda, *RSS 360*, Bloomsbury, New Delhi, 2018, p. 148.

² Shridhar D. Damle and Walter K. Andersen, *The RSS: A View to The Inside*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 64-65.

³ *Ibid*, p. 160.

⁴ Tanika Sarkar, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flag*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993 p. 46.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 194.

⁶ Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee and Sucheta Mahajan, *RSS, School Texts and the Murder of Mahatma Gandhi*, Sage India, New Delhi, 2008, p. 18.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 23.

⁸ Richard M. Eaton, 'Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States', *Frontline*, 2001, p. 77.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 27.

P.N. Oak: A Historian for RSS

P.N. Oak was a revisionist who was guided by the Hindu nationalism. He wrote many books on Indian history. We will see in the following section how he distorted with facts in his books. In his book, *'Who Says Akbar was Great'*, he writes that the palace in which Humayun lies buried has the Hindu Shakti Chakra emblem or interlocked triangles, with a stone flower in the centre, depicted on all sides. According to Glenn D. Lowry, "Humayun's body was first entombed in his palace at Delhi, but shortly after it was disinterred and taken by Khanjar Beg to Sirhind in the Panjab, where Jalal al-Dinn Akbar, the emperor's son and successor, saw it in 1558."¹ The double dome of Humayun's tomb is a typical style of Timurid architecture. Regarding the construction of Humayun's tomb, we have a chronicle of Badayuni who says, "And in this year (977 A.H.) the building of the tomb of late Emperor, which is heart-delighting, paradise-like, was completed. It is at Dihli on the bank of the river Jumna and took Mirk Mirza Ghiyaz eight or nine years to build."² Six Pointed stars, which are called Hindu Shakti Chakra by Oak are a feature of Islamic architecture that is found in India and outside India as well.

Oak has also misquoted statement, one such example is, Vincent Smith says, Kamran's only son (who was Akbar's cousin) was privately executed at Gwalior in 1565-by the order of Akbar, who thus set an evil example, imitated on a large scale by his descendants Shahjahan and Aurangzeb.³ But he did not mention the real reason behind this. Akbar went to suppress the rebellion of Uzbek nobles and Abul Kasim Khan was his competitor for the throne.

Oak mentions in his book that Raja Bhagwandas one of Akbar's most senior courtiers, brother in law, and generally also stabbed himself in disgust because he found life in Akbar's court intolerable, humiliating, degrading and vicious.⁴ But we do not find any such incident mention in contemporary chronicles of that period. Oak quoted Monserrate and father Monserrate narrates how when Akbar invited the Jesuit fathers to see a gladiatorial contest, they replied that they could not comply as it was absolutely contrary to the Christian discipline and moral standard to organize, or even to look on at human carnage.⁵ But father Monserrate further writes that Jesuits fathers advised Akbar to provide gladiators breastplates, small shields, and helmets, of which Akbar approved.⁶ This mimic war was an old old practice to amuse emperors which Akbar improved with few changes and stopped inhuman practices.

According to Oak, "One of the chief motives of his wars of aggression against various rulers was to appropriate their harmes."⁷ But this is not true at all, the main reason for conquest was the consolidation of the Mughal Empire. One of the main stipulations in treaties forced on vanquished foes was to surrender such of their women as Akbar or his officials wanted.⁸ Again he did not mention any source for this statement. He has interpreted anything in any sense according to his ideology. Like one instance, he quotes Abul Fazal who says that Akbar does not drink much, but pays much attention to matters. Both at home and on travels he drinks Ganges water. Probably Abul Fazal means that strong liquors passing down Akbar's throat became transformed into sacred Ganges water.⁹ Theirs were all plunder economies based on multiple usurious and spurious taxes, bribes in cash and kind at every stage, confiscations, acquisitions of all his property on the death of any noble even if he had heirs, and frequent military swoops for organized dacoity and plunder under imperial auspices.¹⁰ The Mughal empire's economy was in good condition during the reign of Akbar. Agriculture was prosperous, new Persian techniques helped in agriculture, and also it created new occupations. The economy was not based on the looting and plundering other state but it was the rule whichever state was won, its treasure went with winning state.

According to Oak, "there was no administration as such to talk of during Akbar's reign. It was free for all and like a style of wrestling "catch as catch can" was the general rule."¹¹ Various chronicles of the period can be presented against this statement. The administration of Akbar was divided into so many levels with responsibilities on various officers. Oak says that the compulsory branding of all horses

¹ Glenn D. Lowry, 'Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function, and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture', *Muqarnas*, Vol. 4, Brill, 1987, p. 133.

² Badayuni, *Muntakhabu-T-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, eds. George S.A. Ranking, Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, p. 135.

³ *Ibid*, p. 71.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 80.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 94.

⁶ Father Monserrate, *The Commentary*, eds J.S. Hoyland, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1922, p. 61.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 94.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 104.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 123.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 153.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 160.

in the realm to whomsoever they belonged with the royal mark. This was not the only usurpation of all horses in the realm but it automatically enslaved every person who owned a horse.¹ It is not the case, the muster of Horse was required due to their qualities. Abul Fazal mentions two types of Horse; one *Khasa*, horses of this kind belonged to the Princes and courtiers, and of second class belonged to ordinary nobles.²

Apart from all these statements and quotes, Oak has mentioned several times in his book that Akbar was a womanizer who used to keep so many women in his harem for his gratification. It was not the case, although it is true that there used to be so many women in Mughal Harem but they were not all for Akbar's gratification. Their work was divided accordingly in the harem. It was not only the Mughal empire which had women captives during wars but also other empires. For instance, in the Chola empire, women were usually brought in the velams as war captives, and kings used to have many matrimonial alliances due to political strategies. According to Daud Ali, "Many of the lower-ranking men and women who served the royal household, mentioned in inscriptions, are said to be attached to institutions called *velams*, denoted a collection of palace servants."³ So many facts and statements are given here (Oak's work) have some historical authenticity but they are incomplete. This puts the reader in illusion and a new reader can make different interpretations which would have no link to history. Oak has quoted so many historians, contemporary and modern, but sometimes he doesn't even care about giving proper citations.

Oak in his another book *Tajmahal is a Temple Palace* that says "We would like to record emphatically here that however much it may please Western sentiment, the notion that the Taj Mahal is a marble phantom of the love that Shahjahan bore for Mumtaz, is simply silly. It never happened in medieval India and probably never happens anywhere else in the world."⁴ For his statement, I am citing two examples here, of two monuments that were constructed for the memory of love. First is Dobroyd Castle in Todmorden, it is said that when Ruth (a landlord) and John were courting, Ruth had said to John, "Build me a castle and I'll marry you" whatever the truth, he did build her a castle.⁵ Second is Kodai-Ji Temple, Japan, it was established in 1606 by the nun Kodai who was the widow of Toyotomi Hideyoshi to pray for her late husband. The principal image is a statue of Shaka.

According to Oak, "It should be noted that Raja Mansingh's mansion (by mansion he meant Taj Mahal) does not necessarily mean one built by him. It only means that during Jaisingh's times it was known as Mansingh's mansion because Mansingh was its last famous occupant. That was an ancient Hindu building that had ultimately devolved on Mansingh, and then on Jaisingh. Here it must also be remembered that the Taj Mahal did not necessarily devolve on Mansingh through the direct line of descent. Such mansions like any other piece of the property changed hands by transfer, sale, gifting away, dowry, conquest, or exchange. From time to time that ancient Hindu building passed into various hands and was at times under the occupation of the Muslim conquerors too as we shall explain hereafter."⁶ But Ebba Koch quotes Shahjahan's early historian Muhammad Amin Qazwini who explains the greatness of architecture when it was being built, "And a dome of high foundation and a building of great magnificence was founded-a similar and equal to it the eye of the ages has not seen under these nine vaults of the enamel blue-sky, and of anything resembling it the ear of time has not heard in any past ages."⁷ This statement clarifies that the building was being constructed during the time of Shahjahan Shahjahan only and it was not a Hindu Temple or Temple palace. Oak is not even sure about the death of Mumtaz Mahal but Lahori says, "On the 17th Zi-1 ka'da 1040, died Nawab 'Aliya Begam, in the fortieth year of her age, to the great grief of her husband the Emperor."⁸ Tempering with facts seems like a game for Oak. Website of Archeological Survey of India (Agra Circle) reads, Taj Mahal, the pinnacle of Mughal architecture, was built by the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan, grandson of Akbar the Great, in the memory of his queen Arjumand Bano Begum, entitled Mumtaz Mahal.⁹

Oak mentioned in his book that the word *Tasimacanis Taz-i-Macan*, i.e. royal residence, which is synonymous with Taj Mahal. That is to say, the Hindu palace was known as *Tasimacanalias* Taj Mahal

¹ Ibid, p. 257.

² Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, eds. H. Blochman, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1927, p.141.

³ Daud Ali, 'War, Servitude, and the Imperial Household', *Slavery & South Asian History*, eds. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton (ed.), Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 45.

⁴ P.N.Oak, *Tajmahal is a Temple Palace*, New Delhi, 1966, p. 38.

⁵ Freepages.rootsweb.com/~todmordenandwalsden/genealogy/johnfielden.html

⁶ Ibid, pp. 46-47.

⁷ Ebba Koch, 'The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism, and Urban Significance', *Muqarnas*, Vol. 22, Brill, 2005, p. 128.

⁸ Lahori, *Badshahnama*, eds Henry Miers Elliot, Hafiz Press Lahore, 1875, p. 29.

⁹ Asiagraticircle.in/tajmahal.html

even before Mumtaz's burial.¹ And he also mentioned the letter of Aurangzeb, in his letter Aurangzeb refers to the garden of the Taj Mahal as Mahatab garden, i.e. a Moon Garden. From this, we conclude that the original Sanskrit name of the garden surrounding the Taj Mahal alias Tejo-Maha-Alaya must have been Chandra Udyan.² In both the statements which he had included, he has just translated the Persian and Urdu words into Hindi in his version to prove that the Taj Mahal was a Hindu building. According to Ebba Koch, "In Shahjahan's reign waterfront garden was given its canonical form as a perfectly symmetrical composition and became the main garden pattern of period. The actual form of the component parts could, however, be changed without disturbing the organization. At Agra, the pattern residential gardens, but also, in a monumental version, the funerary gardens of the Taj Mahal."³ This makes it clear that the waterfront garden is of its type which did not have any resemblance from preceding structures.

RSS Ideologues and their Writings

Second Sarsanghchhalak of RSS, M.S. Golwalkar in his book *Bunch of Thoughts* has talked about so many things and he did mention some historical facts which were tempered to present in RSS way for the readers.

According to Golwalkar "the main features that distinguished our society was the Varna-vayavasta. But today it is being dubbed casteism and scoffed at. The feeling of inequality of high and low, which has crept into the varna system is comparatively of recent origin. On the other hand, the Gita tells us that the individual who does his assigned duties in life in a spirit of selfless service only worships god through such performance."⁴ It is untrue, the caste system was always about discrimination of one from another. Even the mythologies like Ramayana have an instance in which Ram killed a shudra Shambhook, who was a learned person because he thought of him as a danger for his empire. He further added, "There is no instance on record to show that caste distinctions were at the root of our national disunity that helped the invaders to conquer us."⁵ The rural revolution theory of Mohammad Habib shows that lower caste people adopted Islam and choose a new occupation because of caste distinctions in Hinduism. He says that we know as a matter of history that our northwestern and northeastern areas, where the influence of Buddhism had disrupted the caste system, fell an easy prey to the onslaughts of Muslims. But the areas of Delhi and UP, which were considered to be very orthodox and rigid in caste restrictions, remained predominantly Hindu.⁶ Here, we can again see the distortions of fact. Delhi was among the earlier cities which were captured by the Turkish invaders and Muslim rulers reached Northeast quite later.

Regarding the condition of women, he said that Muslims had desecrated our Hindu womanhood, demolished temples and places of pilgrimage, and converted large numbers to their faith at the point of a sword or with the lure of material pleasures. The new converts too having lost their national moorings.⁷ I have already mentioned the motive behind temple discretion above. He tried to say in his book by citing many instances that Muslim invasion could be possible only due to the support of Hindus to Muslims. He considered only Rajput as flowers of Hindu society but ignored the role of lower castes in the daily functioning of social activities and territories were more important to him and his counterparts rather than reforms and progress in the social structure. He did not mention how Rajput discriminated lower caste people and the role of common masses in nurturing society.

Savarkar, an RSS ideologue, is infamous for his apology letters to the British during the Indian freedom struggle. Savarkar in his book mentions that the moral victory was won when Akbar came to the throne and Darashukoh was born.⁸ But the moral victory of what? He didn't answer that. "The enemies hated us as Hindus and the whole family of peoples and races of sects and creeds that flourished from Attock to Cuttack was suddenly individualized into a single being."⁹ This statement by Savarkar is not true, India was always divided based on sects and castes. And he is using the term enemies for Muslims, and it is quite clear that medieval states were imperial states which did not conquer other states based on religion but for the territorial gain. If religion would have been the case, there would have been a single Muslim

¹ Ibid, p. 59.

² Ibid, p. 67.

³ Ebba Koch, 'Mughal Palace Garden from Babur to Shah Jahan', *Muqarnas*, Vol. 14, Brill, 1997, p. 148.

⁴ M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Vikrama Prakashan, Bangalore, 1968, p. 107.

⁵ Ibid, p. 108.

⁶ Ibid, p. 109.

⁷ Ibid, p. 201.

⁸ V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, Hindu Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, 2017, p. 54.

⁹ Ibid, p. 55.

empire in Deccan but not five. People choose Islam due to rigidities in Hinduism. He further states, this one word, Hindutva, ran like a vital spinal cord through our whole body politic and made the Nayars of Malabar weep over the suffering of the Brahmins of Kashmir.¹ It seems highly doubtful, rulers used to kill saints of other sects (and those sects which later on become part of Hindu religion). While reading writings of Right-wing ideologue, you can find exaggeration. They write their books in a manner like writing fiction novels.

Textbooks by Right-Wing Governments

Tender age is the best time to shape the mind of a person. During the school days, a child can learn about the past and can learn how to connect it with the present and future. But, the facts and past which they would learn should have truth in them. The right-wing government does not allow so, either in India or in other countries. Seventh standard textbook of social science which also includes a section on history and was taught to Rajasthan state children has so many problems. It has so many misleading information either it is wrong or does not have any authenticity. In the Social Science textbook of Rajasthan, it is written that:²

When in the fort logistics supplies were ending and whatever was left, Allauddin Khilji made it unholy after mixing powder of bones in it. (regarding the battle of Ranthambhor in 1301)

In the syllabus of the school textbook, there is no information about the political structure, society, and economic history of the Delhi Sultanate era. The cultural transformation of the period, trade, and commerce which shaped the economy at that time has no place in the textbook. So many chronicles were during this period but not the name of a single chronicle you will find in the book. It seems like an attempt to erase the history of Delhi Sultanate from the books and minds of the young generation and prevent people from getting to know about the art and architecture of the period.

Further added as follows:

The belief of people became strong after the victory of this battle of Haldighati and seeing the leadership of Maharana Pratap. This war broke the illusion of being invincible. Mughal to face defeat the first time in India.³

While Abul Fazl wrote, "On the day of Mah the 12th Tir, Divine month, the news of the victory reached the august hearing. He returned thanks to God, and raised the rank of loyal and devoted."⁴ In one other contemporary it is mentioned under the heading *Defeat of Rana Kika by Kunwar Man Singh*, "Kunwar Man Singh wrote an account of his victory to the emperor. The next day he went through the pass of Haldeo and entered Kokanda. He took up his abode in the house of Rana kika and again returned thanks to the Almighty."⁵ In both the contemporary sources event has been narrated in a totally different manner. Akbar won the battle of Haldighati which was fought in 1576. What can we understand from the false statement which has been included in the textbook? It seems that they want to glorify Rana Pratap by tempering with history and want to propagate their agenda of cultural nationalism by demean Muslim rulers. Even in the literature of medieval Rajasthan Akbar has portrayed as a brave ruler. According to B.L. Bhadani, "sometimes both Akbar and Rana Pratap were praised for their loyalty to their respective religion (Dharam). The celebrated capture of Chitor got a full appreciation from a bardic poet though purely from the military point of view."⁶

Conclusion

If this kind of education prevails in the country not only hatred for minorities would increase but restrictions on women education can also be put because right-wing minds are guided by a particular patriarchal ideology. By introducing their version of history, they try to propagate their ideas of Hindutva. Even in the prayer sessions of RSS schools, they try to preach their own ideology which I witnessed for almost ten years during my school days. It creates a long-lasting impact on the mind of a child because she or he knows only their part of historical evolution in the society. Whatever sources I read, I reached to the conclusion that if the process of giving and receiving systematic instructions especially in school

¹ Ibid, p. 55.

² Social Science Text Book, Class 7th, *Rajasthan Rajya Shaikshik Anusndhanevam Prashikshan Sansthan*, Rajasthan Rajya Pathyapustak Mandal, Jaipur, 2016, p. 134.

³ Ibid, p. 141.

⁴ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol III, eds. H. Bevredge, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 2000, p. 247.

⁵ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, eds. The History of India as Told by Its Historians Vol. V, H.M. Elliot, Turbner and Co., London, 1873, p. 399.

⁶ B. L. Bhadani, 'The Profile of Akbar in Contemporary Rajasthan Literature', *Social Scientist*, Vol.20, Social Scientist, 1992, p. 48.

and colleges, an enlightened mind cannot be produced. If citizens of a country do not have good education then they might be not as much critical to the government which would be beneficial for government in the last. Secondly, books by right-wing ideologues or people who are guided by the same, harm the society at large. Because they don't just not try to reshape the history but social structures as well because when they show that Hindu culture was destroyed by Muslim invaders that would disturb the present scenario, the culture which is being practised for centuries by all communities of the country. It is necessary to present philosophy behind writing a historical fact and that lacks in the writings which I have studied for my research work. By presenting a nationalist discourse through these kinds of books, they have produced such youth which supported right-wing governments. History is a witness of such incidents in Italy and Germany, and now repeating it in India. It is necessary to understand that history is not to establish loyal countrymen but producing critical citizens.

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