

REWRITING OF HISTORY IN INDIA: An Anti-subaltern Project

Ambrose Pinto*

1. Introduction

The present project of rewriting history is basically an elite project meant to legitimize the rule of Sangh Parivar in the country. Modern History, after its liberation from kings and rulers was more engaged in common people and their struggles. There was a general acceptance that the role of great men and women cannot be overemphasized to the exclusion of the circumstances that create or throw them up and therefore it is masses that make history. Fictions were replaced with facts. Religious history was relegated to the dustbins and secular history gained importance. Myths, beliefs and dogmas were replaced by scientific facts and rationality. All of a sudden, with the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party to power, the writing of history has been politicized. The objective of all history writing at present is to serve the interests of the ruling elites and not to seek after truth or understand reality.

2. Ideology and History

It is the ideological element that has gained a lot of importance in history writing as a result of the rule of the Sangh Parivar. The impact of the ruling ideology on the writing of history is manufacturing of facts and data to serve the interests of the Hindutva brigade. Ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party with the support of the National Democratic Alliance took over governance, the political environment in the country has changed. So is history. We have moved from the Nehruvian era of commitment to secular polity and socialist economy to the Vajpayee times of communal politics and capitalist economy in the name of privatization and globalization; from the times when the freedom fighters presided over the country to the times those who opposed our freedom from the colonial powers have come to acquire power. Since independence, though the

*Dr. Ambrose Pinto, a committed activist involved in the uplift of the Dalits in India and the former director of ISI, New Delhi, is presently serving as the principal of St. Joseph's Arts and Science College, Bangalore.

Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) did not get a legitimate share in the resources of the country, there were, at least crumbs thrown at some of them during the Congress regime in the name of affirmative action or as compensation for the historical injustice committed against them. The radical social agenda of land reforms, compulsory primary education and empowerment of women may not have happened. But the social framework of secularism and socialism within which the country was premised at the time of independence did provide some solace and comfort to marginalized groups. In the process, the subaltern groups had come to assert their rights to equality and justice. The affirmative action of the state was an attempt to include, at least, a portion of the SCs/STs and the subalterns into the mainstream. The climax was the Mandal agitation of the nineties where the backward classes were becoming conscious of their contribution to the nation and were no more willing to play a subservient role in the project of nation building. A large amount of literature and social science work centered on the contributions made by these groups to the Indian heritage was made available. The task of the present project of history writing is to reverse the assertion of the subalterns and to revive the age-old social order centered on hierarchy, inequalities and injustice through promotion of communal politics and capitalism.

3. History and Elites

In the present project of history writing the total mass of people are presented as of no consequence. The elites or the upper castes have been presented as makers of history. Ideology is a complicated intellectual structure. The group in power is aware that masses cannot understand the implications of ideology. Being basically a party of the upper castes and classes who have had better opportunities for education, the group has been able to manipulate popular imagination through myths, beliefs and dogmas and thus exhibit preference for conservative history. That exactly is the difference in the project of history writing between the conservatives and the progressives. The masses support progressive history. They need immediate gratification of their economic needs and they do not support ideologies that do not address issues of food, clothing and shelter. The progressive historians have an organic relationship with the people. On the other hand, the elite prefers history that can be used as a weapon to

oppress and exploit the masses. At the core of all conservative history writing is the desire to control economic resources. The subalterns do not anymore desire that process of production and distribution be controlled by the wealthy few. The wealthy through recourse to ideology desire to regain their age-old unjust privileges. The elites understand the full implications of any policy far better than the subalterns. Naturally, they support the conservative position though some among them may assume the garb of friends of the poor. To legitimize their position, intellectual jugglery has to characterize their various theories to keep the common people away from understandings. This is really what is happening to the project of history writing.

4. Kinds of History

Nietzsche in his book *Use and Abuse of History* talked about three kinds of histories, viz., monumental, antiquarian and critical. "Monumental is the idealized, heroic, and didactic analysis of the past; antiquarian, the archaist preoccupation with the past as dissociated from the present and future; and critical, a sober and analytic corrective by which the distortions of monumental and antiquarian history are remedied and reality is seen in focus. But the historical vision itself must be supplemented by the super historical, a vision of the as yet unrealized potentialities of man."¹ The present project of history writing is basically monumental and antiquarian, glorification of the past for which there are no historical proofs or evidences. The partisan historians, instead of resisting the government attempts, have romanticized all national activity and given prominence to few departments like the department of human resource development, science and culture to the neglect of all other vital aspects of socio-economic development. The hindutva group has built its history on racial superiority of the Aryan race. It is an officially sponsored history to suit the viewpoints of the group in power. Such history is national propaganda defeating the very purpose of scientific history. The role of all social sciences should be emancipation of the masses from poverty, disease and fear. Sadly, that is not the purpose of the present project at all.

¹Majumdar and Srivastva, *Historiography*, New Delhi: Surjeet Book Depot, 1988, 402.

5. RSS and History Writing

To understand the designs behind the present project of history writing, it is important to realize the goals and objectives of Sangh Parivar, the ideological front of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The goal of the Bharatiya Janata Party along with its other affiliates is to establish a Hindutva State. The word hindutva is used intentionally to distinguish it from Hinduism. While Hinduism is a religion and a way of life of the majority of Indians who profess Hinduism as their religion, hindutva is a political project to construct a Hindu state and thus promote the interests of the upper castes and classes. The Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the group that provides the ideological support to the group, spearheads the project. All those who have been entrusted with the task of rewriting history at present are from the RSS. The group has a reputation for manufacturing facts and twisting historical realities to suit their ideology. Jaya Prakash Narayan had opposed the RSS in 1979 after associating for long with them and said, "I have always condemned the Hindu *rastravad* of RSS because it is a dangerous ideology and is contradictory to our ideology of composite, Indian nation."

He had four reasons for opposing the RSS: "(i) The ideology of the RSS is communal and therefore incompatible with secular nationalism and democratic polity; (ii) RSS influences politics through manipulations under the camouflage of being a cultural organization; (iii) it has resisted any change in its communal ideology and fascist manipulative character; and (iv) its philosophy undermines the basic philosophy of Indian nationalism."²

The goal of the Sangh Parivar is to establish a Hindu *rastra* in the place of the secular state by unifying the Hindu society. "Hindu society is a fragmented one primarily because of caste and due to class relations as well... The Sangh Parivar's basis for unification of Hindu society is *dharma* (religion) and *sanskriti* (culture)."³ By using terms like *dharma* and *sanskriti*, the group desires imposition of a classical brahmanical social order in society. Caste is a heritage of Hindu culture and for the forces of the Sangh Parivar, there is no culture apart from caste culture.

²Goyal D. R., *Politics by Proxy*, New Delhi: Quami Ekta Trust, 4.

³Goyal, *Politics by Proxy*.

That is why the Shankaracharya of Puri had no hesitation in advocating publicly low cost *swastika* temples for SCs/STs and converted tribals. Given their low status in society SCs/STs/OBCs and minorities cannot be treated as equals. However, the vicious designs of establishing a caste culture are never publicly promulgated.

J. A. Curran's observations are quite pertinent here: "The Constitution (of the RSS) gives no hint of a militant and intolerant advocacy of Hindu state. There is a basic difference between the formal profession of aims embodied in the Constitution and actual plans of the Sangh. The incompatibility of the pro-Hindu and anti-non-Hindu aims instilled in the membership is clear. The proclaimed philosophy is pale and even disruptive reflection of the real objectives of the Sangh. The camouflage is adopted in order to deceive public opinion and the government who are devoted to tolerance and basically opposed to fanatical hatred of any religion or community. In speeches, talks and discussions, the ideas of secularism are held to ridicule."⁴ By using the slogan "all rights for all and special rights to none" the Sangh Parivar is against the affirmative action of the State for SCs, STs and OBCs. The group has always opposed special rights to minorities to preserve and celebrate their culture. The argument of merit has been used against the policy of reservation while minority rights are termed as appeasement. In the three year's of its governance, the party is perceived as anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, anti-dalit and even anti-backward classes.

The sole object of the Sangh Parivar in propagating their ideology is to create hatred among different communities and reap political benefit. Muslims and Christians are painted as foreigners, a target of majoritarian chauvinism. Pramod Mahajan, in an address during the Rath Yatra procession in Ajmer, asked his audience: "Are you children of Babar or Ram, Akbar or Rana Pratap, Aurangzeb or Shivaji?" By juxtaposing foreign Mughal conquerors with indigenous Hindu heroes, it provides a clear-cut exclusionary definition of national citizenship. In the case of Christians, the Sangh Parivar has cleverly chosen the issue of conversions from Hinduism to Christianity. In this fashion, the Christians are depicted as aggressors, using force or strewing foreign money in their attempt to

⁴RSS: *How it Functions?* All India Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, 1.

overpower the Hindu community. By linking up Christians with Christian missionaries and, in turn, with foreign countries, the Sangh Parivar has attempted to strengthen the weak communal sentiment against Christians. According to Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Praveen Togadia, conversion to Christianity amounts to a change of nationality, conversion challenges our national unity. Conversions are termed as attacks on Hindu/Indian society. Such calls are not merely made by lower level functionaries. Even the Prime Minister Vajpayee and the other members of his cabinet have supported such statements.

The attitude of the Sangh Parivar forces is one of hatred towards minorities. How about their attitudes to non-Brahmins? Kancha Illaiah in his book *Why I am not a Hindu* says that the hindutva appeal is limited, and observes: "The Sangh Parivar harasses us everyday by calling us Hindus. In fact, the very sight of its saffron-tilak culture is a harassment to us... The question before me is not whether I must treat Muslims or Christians or Sikhs as enemies as the Hindutva school wants me to do. The question is what do we, the lower *sudras* and *ati-sudras* have to do with Hinduism or with hindutva itself."⁵ The Sangh Parivar's *hindurastra*, therefore, is a nation built on the Hindu caste order with power, position and wealth with the upper caste or pure Hindus.

6. Education and Hindutva

The ideology of the party has been disseminated through education. The architect of the conspiracy of transforming secular India into Hindu *rastra* should legitimately belong to Murali Manohar Joshi, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development. The Sangh Parivar claims that the country had an indigenous advanced system of education based on philosophy and religion. The system suffered a setback during the colonial rule. Indian education was alienated and a foreign education was imposed on the country. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education document observes: "Then the British introduced their educational system based on grant-in-aid to institutions to impart their kind of education to absorb the products in the civil services. In this scheme, very little of knowledge, attitudes and skills that the local people possessed was considered fit for educational use and therefore totally discarded. Thus

⁵Kancha Illaiah, *Why I am not a Hindu*, Kolkata: Samya, 1995, 26.

indigenous educational system suffered a setback and the new system alienated Indian education from the wisdom, the belief and the value system of the people who were uprooted from their tradition."⁵ Even in the post-colonial period, there were no attempts to Indianise the system. The national curriculum framework for school education developed by the national council of Educational Research and Training has been legitimized on the premise.

The limitation of the past is responded to, according to the Curriculum group that framed the National Curriculum Framework for School Education through strengthening national identity and preserving cultural heritage. The Framework notes: "Strengthening of national identity and unity is intimately associated with the study of the cultural heritage of India, rich with various hues... While, on the one hand, education should help in promoting a global world order, on the other, it should be seen as developing a national consciousness, a national spirit and national unity essential for national identity. At no point of time the school curriculum ignores the inclusion of specific content to forge national identity, a profound sense of patriotism and nationalism tempered with the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, non-sectarian attitudes, capacity for tolerating differences arising out of caste, religion, ideology, region, language, sex, etc. For strengthening the unity and integrity of the nation, it is essential that the cultural heritage, traditions and history of the different ethnic groups and regions of the country and their contributions are understood and appreciated in the right perspective."⁶

But the document at no point defines what the ancient Indian heritage was. If by heritage the document refers to the caste heritage no citizen of the country can feel proud. Instead of denouncing the caste order, what the document demands is tolerance. Any tolerance of India's oppressive caste structure is bound to perpetuate inequalities. One cannot think of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* without demolishing the unjust caste order. There are several other dichotomous statements in the document. The document wants to correct the erosion of moral and spiritual values during

⁵*National Curriculum Framework For School Education*, New Delhi: NCERT, 2000, 2.

⁶*National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, 12.

the last five decades of independence by teaching value education through recourse to religion considered as the major source of value generation. The past experiences and the experiences of three years of governance of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP has provided the people of the country, the way the Sangh Parivar forces have handled education and inculcation of values. In 1999, an attempt to "Indianise, spiritualize and nationalize" education failed due to the opposition of several Education Ministers.

The Framework gives a key role to culture. The Sangh Parivar has provided a key role to culture in the revival of the party itself. The party that had just two seats in the Parliament of 1988, through manipulation of the Ram temple and demolishing the mosque at Ayodhya, was able to increase its tally to 88 and able to lead the coalition politics of India from 1998. The culture they have highlighted ever since in power is the hindutva culture, radically opposed to the secular ideology of India. Rewriting of history and doctoring of textbooks have been a part of their agenda. Though not a part of the freedom struggle, the chapter dealing with the freedom movement in the NCERT document provides respectability to the RSS and its leader, Sarvarkar. The orientations are blatantly communal. Medieval history is painted black. Stories from the epics, mythology and history have been prescribed to help students to understand culture, India's heritage and national identity. The hidden conspiracy to poison the minds of the students can be further elaborated by referring to an article on religions, written by K. K. Kaw, Secretary to the Human Resource Minister, Murali Manohar Joshi, that appeared in the November 2000 issue of the NCERT's journal of value education. With a view to undermine the egalitarian concepts in education and to further the brahmanic hierarchical ideology, Kaw attacks Islam, Christianity and Sikhism by stating that "greater damage to our intellectual freedom has been caused by traditional religions, especially by those which have a single book." For Kaw and his coterie, the Vedic philosophy that does not have the artificial distinction between religion and philosophy, penned in the style of scientific treaties is the only valid inspiration for cultural heritage.

In the name of Indianisation, nationalization and spiritualization, the proposal is to make Sanskrit, the language of the ancient religious texts,

compulsory for all. It is claimed that considering the contribution of Sanskrit to the development of Indian languages and its unique contribution to the cultural unity of the nation and ancient wisdom, it may be made a compulsory subject from class 3 to 10.⁷ But why Sanskrit and whose language is it? In a globalized world why not German, Spanish or French? In the curricular reforms the girls are to be trained in home management and after the primary stage their curriculum may include training in home keeping. *Sati* is glorified in the ninth standard textbooks of Gujarat. Tributes are paid to the caste system for maintaining the age-old social harmony. The whole educational system in keeping with the heritage of Sangh Parivar is to strengthen Brahmanic hold over state and society by inculcating hatred against minorities, women and non-Brahmanic groups. It is a set of dogmas, beliefs, myths and traditions legitimised by religion that has ensured power in all its dimensions to the Brahmanic class and has marginalized the SCs/STs and other subaltern groups.

7. Gujarat as Hindutva Laboratory

Gujarat is a Sangh Parivar state, known as the laboratory for experimentation of Sangh ideology. The textbooks of Gujarat are a good example to show how education is used to perpetuate the Brahmanic hold over society in Gujarat. The Social Studies textbook of 9th standard has stated caste, an oppressive institution that has destroyed the self-respect of millions of people in the country as a precious gift, demonized Christianity and Islam and glorified *sati*. Here are some of the examples:

The Varna System: "The *varna* system was a precious gift of the Aryans to mankind. It was a social and economic organization of the society built on the basis of the principle of division of labour. Learning or education, defence, trade and agriculture and service of the community are inseparable organs of the social fabric. The Aryans divided the society into four classes or *varnas*... In the beginning there were no distinctions of high and low. The *varna* or class of a person was decided not on the basis of birth but on the basis of his work or *karma*... In course of time, however, the *varna* system became corrupted and birth rather than vocation came to be accepted as the distinguishing feature of the *varna*

⁷National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 54.

system... Yet, the importance of the *varna* system as an ideal system of building the social and economic structure of a society cannot be overlooked.”⁸

In the same textbook, the causes for the poverty and backwardness of the SCs and STs are placed on them and not the age-old structure of caste. “Of course, their ignorance, illiteracy and blind faith are to be blamed for lack of progress because they still fail to realize importance of education in life. Therefore, there is large-scale illiteracy among them and female illiteracy is a most striking fact.”⁹

Demonizing Christianity and Islam: In a chapter titled “Problems of the country and their solutions,” the same text-book labels Muslims, even Christians and Parsees, as foreigners. “But apart from the Muslims, even the Christians, Parsees and other foreigners are also recognized as the minority communities... The Priests of the Catholic Church had accumulated plenty of wealth through unjust taxes, illegal fees, ownership of large tracts of land, selling miracles and indulgences. They spent this money on worldly pleasures and immoral behaviour... Christian Church was a part and parcel of this integrated feudal system. Almost half of the land and other property belonged to the Bishops or the heads of the parishes. The Pope who was the head of the Roman Catholic Church was himself a big landlord. The Church received sumptuous gifts of land from the king as well as the lords. Thus the Church had amassed great wealth. The Pope, Archbishop, bishops and other priests lost their heads, forgot their duties and lived a life of luxury and sensual pleasures.”¹⁰

In the textbook of history recommended for the third year B.A. students of Maharashtra, the chapter on Mahmud of Ghaznavi reads: “The advent of Islam might have been a boon to the Arabs who got united under its banner, and were enthused by it to carry on conquests in Asia, Africa and Europe but it has been a curse for the people outside Arab world because wherever the Islamic hordes went, they not only conquered the countries, but killed millions of people and plundered their homes and

⁸*Social Studies Text of Gujarat State Board, Standard IX.*

⁹*Social Studies Text of Gujarat State Board.*

¹⁰*Social Studies Text of Gujarat State, Standard X.*

places of worship and destroyed their homes, places of worship and above all their artworks.”¹¹

Sati as a virtue: In a chapter titled “Rajput Contribution,” the New ICSE History and Civics, edited by Hart and Barrow, Part I states that “The Rajputs respected their women. The women too had their self-respect. They would burn themselves in the fire of *jauhar* rather than fall victims in the hands of their enemies... Rajput women were deeply religious. They spent most of their time listening to pious stories from religious books like the Ramayana and Mahabharata... The rich and the ruling class practised polygamy, though one of the wives was treated as the chief wife... It was considered a virtue to perform *sati*, that is, to immolate oneself at the funeral pyre of one’s husband.”¹²

Scant respect for womanhood is a part of hindutva culture. In 1987, the Vice-President of the BJP Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia justified widow immolation. The President of the party’s Mahila Morcha, Mridula Sinha had justified wife beating and dowry.

Fascism and Nazism: Two extracts on Fascism and Nazism that are quoted from the 10th standard social studies books of Gujarat: “the views regarding the state administration adopted by the topmost leader of the Fascist Party, Mussolini, came to be known as the ideology of Fascism. According to this ideology, the state is sovereign. An individual exists for the state. An individual does not have freedom over and above the state. Here, everyone is absorbed within the state. Since the party firmly believed in militant nationalism, it opposed internationalism. National interest and progress were its basic aim...”¹³ “Like fascism, the principles and ideologies for governing a nation, propounded by Hitler, came to be known as the ideology of Nazism. On assuming power, the Nazi party gave unlimited, total and all embracing and supreme power to the dictator. The dictator was known as the Führer. Hitler had strongly declared that the Germans were the only pure Aryans in the entire world and they were born to rule the world. In order to ensure that the German people strictly

¹¹ *History of Maharashtra*, Text book for 3rd B.A.

¹² Hart and Barrow, *The New ICSE History and Civics*.

¹³ Social Studies Text Book of Gujarat.

followed the principle of Nazism, it was included in the curriculum of the educational institutions. The textbook said, "Hitler is our leader and we love him. Hitler lent dignity and prestige to the German government within a short time by establishing a strong administrative set up."¹⁴

It is a frighteningly uncritical presentation of both Fascism and Nazism. Not a word is said about the violent, uncivilized and brutal results of the politics of exclusion practised both by the Nazis and the Fascists. Similarly, the presentation on Christians, Muslims, Women and Dalits is far from being objective.

Hindu Culture: On the other hand, ancient India is presented as Hindu in all recent books of the National Council of Educational Research and Training. The conflict between the Dravidian and the Aryan worldview is not presented at all. It is mentioned that the ancient age begins with Vedic times. There is no attempt to develop any sense of historical enquiry. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education depicts Indian culture as inherently superior to any other. In the books of Saraswati Shishu Mandir, India is presented as the original home of world civilization.

8. Higher Education

At the level of higher education, the project of rewriting of history has been more direct and vulgar. The entire academic world has been tuned to spread the ideology of the Sangh Parivar through blatant means. Those opposed to the Sangh ideology have been denounced and replaced as bad historians and those who do the biddings of the Sangh Parivar have been promoted. Several of them have hardly any academics to their credit. The only criterion for appointment for teaching posts or to head institutions is loyalty to the Sangh ideology. In the whole process, the attack has been on reason. By developing large number of myths, dogmas and beliefs as facts and by manufacturing several other stories, history has been used as a tool for the promotion of the privileges of the already privileged. The following are some of the reprehensible measures that have been used to promote the ideology of the party in power.

¹⁴Social Studies Textbook of Gujarat.

9. Appointment of Ideologues

Soon after assuming power in 1998, the Vajpayee government installed their own men as heads of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). B. R. Grover who dug up the archaeological evidence on Ayodhya favourable to the Sangh Parivar was appointed Chairman of the ICHR. Professor Sondhi, a member of the RSS was made the Director of ICSSR. There were several other appointments in the HRD Ministry and the States ruled by the BJP. Murali Manohar Joshi, an RSS ideologue was made the Minister for Human Resource Development. K. G. Rastogi, a retired professor and RSS *pracharak* who had claimed in his autobiography that during the partition riots he had shot dead a Muslim woman from being raped by a group of Hindu fanatics was nominated to a high power selection committee of National Council of Educational Research and Training, a body that recruits professors and readers for NCERT. In the hindutva ruled states, all Vice-chancellors and other major functionaries have been from the RSS background.

10. Rewriting of History Books

Rewriting of history has been a passion for RSS wherever the BJP has come to power. In the BJP ruled states of Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat history textbooks were extensively rewritten to project the hindutva viewpoint. In Uttar Pradesh, during the Kalyan Singh regime, the history text was changed to include references to the RSS and its founder in chapters dealing with the history of the freedom movement meant to provide respectability to and legitimization of the role of Hindu communal organizations and their leaders. The fact is that RSS not only did not join the freedom movement but also even supported the British against the movement. In references to medieval history, there are plenty of historical falsehoods. During the Sultanate period, it is stated that the Hindus were merely paying taxes and were persecuted. The book that came out at the height of the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 was intended to inflame Hindu passion.

11. Attack on Secular and Progressive Historians

Simultaneously, there have been attacks on secular historians. The books

written by noted historians like Romila Thapar, R. S. Sharma, Bipan Chandra, Satish Chandra and Arjun Dev have been specially targeted. The reason offered is to remove the leftist bias in education. The two volumes of the freedom struggle entitled *Towards Freedom* written by K. N. Panikkar and Sumit Sarkar were withdrawn through an authoritarian government order. No secular historian is a part of the Indian Council of Historical Research today. One might ask for reasons for the attack? The reason is that secular historiography interferes with the RSS version of Indian tradition and nationhood. Besides, history is not merely the past of a nation but the crucible for building the nation's future.

12. Introduction to Hindutva Programme

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education observes: "Today, even more than ever before, there is a world-wide recognition of India's indigenous value systems. *Ayurveda* is being increasingly recognized as a holistic system of health and Indian psychology as a more complete discipline than the Western. In this context, it may be relevant to point out that there are domains of knowledge, which could be called 'parallel', indigenous, traditional, or civilisational knowledge systems. These belong to societies in the developing world that have nurtured and defined the systems of knowledge of their own, relating to such diverse domains as geology, ecology, agriculture, health and the like ... it may be reiterated that along with the contributions of other countries, the contribution of India to the world wisdom also needs to be brought to general notice explicitly. Paradoxical as it may sound, while our children know about Newton, they do not know about Aryabhata, they do know about computers but do not know about the advent of the concept of zero or the decimal system. Mention may also have to be made, for instance, of yoga and yogic practices as well as the Indian systems of medicine like the *Ayurvedic* and *Unani* systems which are now being recognized and practised all over the world. The country's curriculum shall have to correct such imbalances."¹⁵

What does the above text mean? The objective may be to inculcate national pride. But there cannot be a completely uncritical view of Indian culture. It looks as if India has nothing to learn from the West. Vedic

¹⁵*National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, 13.

mathematics and Vedic astrology mark the entry of hindutva forces into the world of science education in universities. Astrology has been declared as science along with *jyothir vigyan* and *karmakand* as vocational courses. The University Grants Commission justifies the introduction of such courses by stating in its circular that "Vedic astrology is not only one of the main subjects of our traditional and classic knowledge but is the discipline which lets us know the events happening in human life and in the universe on time scale." What is shocking is that the highest educational body in the country has been unable to distinguish between science and superstition, or between science and rituals.

13. Conclusion

The objective behind all that is planned and implemented in the project of history writing by the forces of Sangh Parivar is to check the forces of modernization and restore pre-modern social hierarchies of caste, class and gender. The whole ideology is opposed to reason and premised on faith. Whether it is astrology or the exaltation of Vedas and ancient education, the purpose is to promote the upper caste Hinduism around the politics of Sangh Parivar. The faith based knowledge system demands subservience to the authority of the clergy and the Holy Scriptures. Dissent, if any, is seen as a threat to the descent-based hierarchies. In other words, the whole exercise is to produce conformist and uncritical citizens. It is the caste society that strengthened the hold of the Brahmanical ideology and clergy on Hindu society. The system discouraged reason and logic. The hindutva group had always opposed any emancipatory doctrine. In fact, even in the pre-independence era, it was the Brahmins and Banias that spearheaded the reaction to secular politics. When the freedom struggle opened up the rational and critical space the hindutva politics premised itself on Brahmanism. The objective of the Indian National Congress was to strive for secular democratic India while the *Hindutvavadis* desired a theocratic Hindu state. The battle lines were between reason based ideology and faith based knowledge. The ideological base of hindutva is pre-modern hierarchy based caste order, which aims to break the process of social transformation in the country. "This ideology, on the one hand, makes use of communal politics to create an external enemy for internal suppression of rights of the weak and, on the other, wants to impose the faith based knowledge systems to prepare the ground for the conformist society where

the pre-modern values and social dynamics can be passed off as the Hindu alternative to the modern/western values of liberty, equality and fraternity."¹⁶ There is hardly any doubt that the modern trends of Indian historiography are inspired or at least influenced by the ideology of the Sangh Parivar to a large extent, deliberately seeking to utilize history for the spread of ideas which they have elevated to the rank of national policy to their own satisfaction.

We have been accustomed to see our past as a composite culture, integrating many streams. Such a plural framework is anathema to the RSS. We need to have an accurate presentation of our past. Fiction and myth cannot be made a part of history. So can we permit historians to divide this nation on the basis of religion, caste and gender? That is why the RSS project of rewriting of history needs to be a concern to the country as a whole. The Sangh Parivar has been scuttling the country's democratic process eroding the country's pluralist socio-cultural ethos with its divisive agenda. It has been involved in suppression of the rights of the marginalized, especially the dalits, minorities and women. We need to be on guard. The need is for all concerned citizens to rally round the banner of secularism and denounce communal history that negates the legitimate social and economic space for the subalterns.

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¹⁶Puniyani Ram, *Saffron Agenda in Education*, New Delhi: Sahmat, 2001, 61.