

TEACHING OLD HISTORY IN NEW INDIA: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

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Abstract

This paper critiques conventional pedagogical approaches to teaching history in India, which prioritize rote memorization and conformity over creativity, while perpetuating Orientalist and Eurocentric assumptions. The shortcomings of the recent UGC document on the Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF), 2021 framework for education in history and previous forms of history education are examined in light of their changing nationalistic sensibilities, which have sought to erase alternative experiences of the past. To address these issues, this study proposes a new creative and decolonial approach that goes beyond colonial norms and teaches students to read like historians, thereby upending traditional classroom dynamics. The goal of this pedagogical shift is to foster a deeper understanding of historical events and a more nuanced appreciation of the subcontinent's rich, connected cultural heritage. The paper concludes by emphasizing the practical implications of this approach and considering the challenges that educators may experience in implementing it.

Keywords: *Pedagogy, History, Orientalism, Eurocentrism, Nationalism, Decolonization*

Introduction: Problems with our Pedagogy and the Limitations of Traditional Narratives

A nation's understanding of its past is fundamental for its functioning, as it provides a sense of perspective and contextualizes contemporary issues, often intertwined with historical events. To comprehend the roots of a nation's problems, a thorough comprehension of its history is necessary, including its lessons. History remains a critical

component of a well-rounded education, not only for developing critical analytical skills but also for fostering cultural awareness and perspective.¹ However, this cannot be achieved if history is misused by the nation-state's fluctuating nationalistic sentiments, which prioritize conformity over creativity, and overlook the potential for students to develop a profound comprehension of the past. In the Indian academic context, the teaching of history is heavily influenced by nationalist sensibilities, whether secular or non-secular. This approach distorts our comprehension of cultures by creating artificial boundaries that divide individuals into natives and foreigners, thereby fracturing our understanding of a much more multifaceted, open, and fluid history.²

The Myth of an Untouched Ancient India: Re-evaluating Historical Interpretations of Invasions and Conquests

The recent undergraduate history education framework proposed by the UGC³ intends to produce students capable of global competitiveness. However, a careful analysis of the document's recommendations and suggestions reveals that it would achieve the opposite. The recommended pedagogical approach and readings in the recent history framework neglect some of the most exceptional Indian historical works, and instead, rely heavily on the Indologist's contributions.⁴ While the framework seeks to cultivate critical thinking skills in students, it also promotes the notion of a pristine *Bharat*, a historically novel entity that supposedly existed for a long time, untouched by invasions. This contradicts the stated aims of the framework, as a historical education that is influenced by sensibilities of nationalism ultimately fractures our understanding of history.⁵ It is a historical fact that the idea of a unified Indian nation, defined by shared language, history, and culture, was not widely held before 1947. Instead, people identified more closely with local communities, such as their villages, towns, castes, or religious groups. According to Sudipta Kaviraj, in the pre-colonial period, people belonged to fuzzy communities, lacking clear boundaries, with their collective identity being multiple layered, and context-dependent. This allowed them to coexist in a world that was unmapped and un-enumerated, fostering non-aggressive proximity. Therefore, a pedagogical approach that prioritizes conformity and anxious homogeneity would not effectively develop students' understanding of the ever-evolving diversities and histories of their societies.⁶

When teaching any topic of Indian history, it is imperative for teachers to exercise caution with regard to specific scholarly works that may lack appropriate contextualization. Failure to do so can result in

misinterpretations, potentially exacerbating our pedagogical challenges. For example, Indo-Islamic history is often taught in decontextualized and contradictory settings. Without proper context, students may immerse themselves in specific scholarships, resulting in a backfire. Even teachers have been known to make decontextualized statements about the Islamic aspects of history, especially regarding medieval Muslim kings' stories of temple destruction, which lack historical context. The presentation of Indo-Islamic history is often decontextualized and filled with contradictions, leaving students confused. For instance, the story of Aurangzeb's temple destruction lacks much-needed context, which is not available in the books recommended by the current governing framework.⁷ The general view in our history classrooms is of disconnected histories, assuming that separateness is an innate feature of Indian society that began with the arrival of Muslims and resulted in the termination of the earlier 'glorious' period of 'Hindu' rule.⁸ Often, history is taught in black and white, endorsing extreme fictitious figures like the idea that 60,000 such structures were destroyed by Muslim conquerors and replaced with mosques built on their foundations. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that texts of this nature fail to shed light on the actions of individuals who share the same identity, such as Harsadeva (r. 1089–1101 CE), the ruler of Kashmir, who, for various reasons, also engaged in the destruction and looting of temples.⁹

To foster critical thinking in students, it is essential to provide multiple perspectives, including how the Mughuls facilitated participation and dialogue across religious and social boundaries at their imperial court and invested in traditional Hindu and Jain knowledge, especially Sanskrit literature. A prominent example is the Mughul emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707 CE), who is often portrayed as the most fanatical and terrible of India's Muslim rulers. However, his story is more complex and fascinating than these simplistic characterizations. While it is valid that he ordered the destruction of some Hindu temples, mainly as punishment for political opposition, he also granted tax exemptions to various Hindu groups and employed more Hindus in the imperial administration than any of his predecessors. Hindu and Muslim communities found ways to coexist and learn about each other's perspectives in the courts of Akbar (r. 1556-1605 CE), Jahangir (r. 1605-1628 CE) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658 CE). Despite being largely unknown, these stories are critical to defusing India's current shared tensions. It is essential to teach medieval India with criticality to understand that Hindus and Muslims have not always been at odds and that a rich historical tradition of relationships among them can replace animosity.¹⁰

The characterization of medieval Indian history as “Muslim history” with invasions, oppression, and destruction of Hindus is due to colonial and present-day political and cultural dynamics in India.¹¹ This trend of separating communities into distinct nations and periods emerged during the colonial period, which separated the ancient Hindu-dominated period from the medieval period, characterized by the rule of ‘barbaric Muslim rule’ and the spread of Islam. Though there was religious intolerance between Hindus and Muslims in the precolonial period, it was also characterized by a complex interplay of cultural synthesis. Critical scholars have emphasized that the medieval period was marked by diverse influences and a dynamic interplay.¹² To provide a good historical frame to students, factual events must be contextualized and understood from various perspectives.

History taught through a nationalist lens presents a paradox because it necessitates identities beyond the national one, such as the Muslim identity in India, which is reinforced by emphasizing their foreignness and promoting a limited understanding of the country’s past.¹³ Galtung’s concept of foundational violence can be applied to how the Muslim aspects of India’s history are typically presented in classrooms and textbooks, as it perpetuates a narrative of superiority and inferiority between the Muslim and Hindu communities. This narrative, which blends facts with fiction, has caused systemic violence, both epistemic and physical, against minority communities.¹⁴ By promoting a particular narrative, critical thinking cannot be developed among students, as it reinforces power structures that exclude and marginalize minority groups that do not fit into the narrative. This perpetuates harmful stereotypes and discrimination against these communities, leading to the marginalization and dehumanization of individuals based on their cultural or religious identity.¹⁵ Therefore, a more inclusive and equitable approach to the teaching and learning of history in India is necessary. Recognizing and addressing these issues is integral to the pursuit of social justice and inclusivity across all communities. To achieve this goal, it is imperative to undertake a critical examination of dominant historical narratives that have been traditionally taught in history classrooms, including those preceding the year 2014.

Moving Beyond Binary Constructs: Redefining the Relationship between Medieval Muslims and Secular Civilization

The recent framework and its recommended readings omit some of the finest writings in Indian history and rely heavily on the works of Indologists, suggesting a problematic pedagogy. However, this does not imply that previous forms of history education had no blind spots. One

fundamental issue concerns the scheme of secularizing Indian medieval history. Post-1947, Indian historians of a secular disposition endeavoured to dismantle the depictions of the South Asian past, with a particular focus on the portrayal of Muslim barbarians. These depictions had been constructed under the influence of both colonial and communal sentiments. Nevertheless, the scholars' secular-Marxist approach to evaluating accounts related to *Medieval, Muslims, and Islam* was not neutral either.

For instance, in the scheme of the secularization of Indian medieval history, they tend to take those legends and gossip at face value that were compatible with their secular sensibilities, and at the same time consider the contrasting ones as either fiction or an exaggeration.¹⁶ Even serious historians fall into the trap of imposing secular and centralized perspectives on pre-modern South Asian (Muslim) polities, which not only are inappropriate (western) categories but also overlook and marginalize alternative experiences of the past.¹⁷ However, a critical scholarship has emerged in the last two decades that has really challenged our preconceived notions of the idea of 'secular', 'political', and 'religion'. It is important to note that concepts like 'secular', 'religion', and 'political' are relatively new and already imbued with meaning, shaping our opinions and sensibilities. For example, Asad¹⁸ and Hallaq's¹⁹ works discredit the belief that pre-colonial Islamic empires were "secular" in the modern Western sense. Rather, the application of these concepts is anachronistic and Eurocentric, failing to consider the unique contexts in which these societies existed.

Secularist historians argue that these polities were pragmatic (secular) political entities rather than religious, but this is flawed and tied to a secular political theology. Asad argues that secularism is not solely about separating religion or religious commitments; it is also about creating and closing down certain religions.²⁰ Similarly, Mahmood argues that secularism generates new concepts of religion and politics and creates natural categories that people cannot help but think in these terms.²¹

The politico-legal system that characterized these polities was much more flexible and pluralistic in nature and was influenced by a range of traditions that cannot be classified using western concepts and categories²². Therefore, to understand these pre-modern polities, we must approach them on their own terms and attempt to understand the complex interplay of diverse factors where the lines between religion, culture, and politics are fluid and ambiguous. It is essential to avoid reducing them to a simple Eurocentric label. The oversimplified portrayal of medieval

Indian history between Muslim barbarism and secular civilization is a politically motivated interpretation that overlooks the diverse and complex history of India.²³ To facilitate a more comprehensive and precise comprehension of the past among students, it is imperative to convey the perspectives and contributions of a diverse array of communities and cultures that have shaped their nation's history. This approach enables a more nuanced portrayal of historical events, one that acknowledges the varied experiences and voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups. Consequently, such an approach fosters a more inclusive and equitable learning environment that values the experiences and contributions of all members of society.

Deconstructing the Dominance of Congress: Exploring Alternative Historical Narratives

In modern Indian history, the Indian National Congress has been the centre of attention in the curriculum, and elite secular historiographies have tended to characterize any alternative (subaltern or minority) phenomenon as either pre-political, apolitical, or an appendage of the Congress.²⁴ This approach reflects their preference for identifying political consciousness with their own political ideals and norms. These elitist historiographies persistently claim that the only patrimony of the political was Congress.²⁵ Consequently, Congress' history has become the *de facto* model for all of the modern history of the subcontinent, which created an idea of people with and without history. This idea implied that the Muslim, Dalit, or other subaltern movements were not involved in historical developments, and the only historical development was the one that happened in Congress. As a result, all judgments about historical factors are made based on Congress's criteria. It is essential to question why other movements and traditions of South Asia do not receive similar coverage as Indian nationalist actors or those actors who may be more aligned with the Congress and are presented in a particular kind of way.²⁶ Therefore, it is highly critical not to look at this historical arena through the prism of modern politics, which is an impoverished way of interpreting this tradition.

Through a critical assessment of the intellectual journeys of Indian nationalist historians, the subaltern school has demonstrated how these academic endeavours have been complicit in obscuring Congress's dark aspects.²⁷ Additionally, they have consistently attempted to cleanse Gandhi's reputation by portraying him as a proponent of non-violence and an emblem of equity and impartiality. Nevertheless, Gandhi's history of derogatory remarks against Africans during his stay in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, as well as his exploitation of religion to serve the

interests of the upper caste, his call for the beheading of Muslims who did not comply, and his promise of communal violence to Viceroy Wavell's face, reveals an uneasy overlap between his idea of India and that of V.D. Savarkar.²⁸ As such, it remains unclear where the line between Gandhi's and Savarkar's India lies, as there is evidently a significant convergence between the two.²⁹ Thus, fostering a sense of critical thinking and analysis among students of history require acquainting them with the multifarious perspectives on Indian nationalism that transcend the antiquated and conventional official narratives. It is essential for them to recognise that the fervent assumption of Indian nationalism as a homogeneous construct has long dissipated among erudite historians.³⁰ Such awareness is pivotal in enabling a comprehensive grasp of the present-day political and societal milieu in India.

Although India's distinctive and well-defined national culture is often viewed as a self-contained entity, it is, in fact, the product of exchange with others beyond the borders of the nation-state. However, the current approach to history tends to obscure these cosmopolitan foundations of cultural development by overemphasizing internal factors and nationalistic discourses. This approach fails to acknowledge the crucial role played by cosmopolitan cooperation and exchange in the emergence and evolution of India's national culture.³¹ Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of India's cultural identity requires a nuanced appreciation of the cosmopolitan interactions and influences that have shaped the shared past. It also requires decentring congress from the discourse because it has been the centre of focus in modern Indian history for far too long. It is now necessary to shift the focus towards what happened to marginalized groups such as Dalits, Muslims, tribal groups, etc.³² This shift will ensure that no one is left out of the centre and enable students to think in flexible ways. For example, if they want to understand the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan, they must realize that their preconceived notions may not be accurate. Thus, the curriculum should remove Congress from the centre of modern Indian history and place the rest of the subcontinent in the centre. The goal should be to enable students to think critically about South Asian history.

The Possibilities: Embracing Alternative Approaches and Encouraging Critical Reading and Analysis

Teaching history from a critical perspective presents formidable obstacles, as the state, far from being a neutral entity, resists accommodating such approaches. These alternative approaches not only challenge the ideological assertions of the state but also have the potential

to impede the cultivation of preferred subjectivities among governable individuals.³³ In addition to handpicking textbooks that align with its own ideological interpretation of history, the state possesses an array of remarkable governance technologies that are unparalleled in their scope. These technologies enable the state to mold the interiorities, subjectivities, epistemologies, and ontologies of its constituents.³⁴

Despite these challenges, a sincere teacher can still strive to equip students with a critical understanding of the past that will enable them to make informed decisions about the future. This can be achieved by supplementing traditional sources with other critical sources, exposing students to a range of voices, opinions, and perspectives, introducing archaeological artifacts and coins, and taking students to monuments and museums.³⁵ This chapter will focus on two underrated but highly effective and creative approaches that can be integrated into pedagogy, which would turn the traditional approach to history teaching on its head.

Navigating Complexity: Reading Beyond the Obvious

In order to overcome the current pedagogical challenges faced by history teachers, it is necessary to cultivate fundamental core skills that can aid in this endeavour. One such skill is critical reading, which involves the rigorous dismantling of written works with a comprehensive understanding of their composition and mode of production. By promoting this essential habit of critical reading among students, educators can impart a critical lens that facilitates a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of historical sources. Encouraging students to read critical books is one of the most effective ways to expand their intellectual horizons and encourage new ways of thinking. However, the recent framework of the UGC encourages students to read outdated colonialist, Indologist, and nationalistic histories, which would limit their ability to think critically and engage with complex ideas. These works are often presented in a prepackaged way that reinforces Orientalist perspectives and simplistic WhatsApp forwards. This approach would make them stuck in the same ways of thinking and the same sort of ideas, and students are going to be limited towards kind of picking up things from their interpersonal reactions. These works couldn't give potential benefits to the students of history, as they didn't have any robust, complex engagement with the past. The other thing is, what do the students read? It's not that they don't read anything at all. But they prioritize a different type of medium. Students prioritize social media over reading books, and it's usually a medium that privileges shorter, communal, and black-and-white texts over something that takes more space and time to think about. While some students are able to use social media in a way that actually

pushes their boundaries of thinking, most students don't. Therefore, it's important for teachers to supplement students' reading with critical sources and expose and encourage them to a range of voices and perspectives to help them engage with history in a nuanced and complex way.³⁶

Students of medieval history often arrive in classes with their preconceived notions about the period. The books recommended in the recent document may only confirm these beliefs rather than challenge them. Encouraging students to read critical books that are not necessarily influenced by nationalistic sensibilities can stimulate their thinking and expand their knowledge. It is important to recognize that academia has moved beyond the outdated Orientalist approach. To achieve LOCF goals, students should be encouraged to read books that challenge their assumptions, allowing them to engage critically with the texts. Students should also be encouraged to explore different types of books rather than relying solely on orientalist or communal works. Reading is like food, and just as students need a balanced diet of vegetables, fruits, healthy fats, and protein, they also need a diverse range of mediums and ideas. However, the texts recommended by the new policy can be considered junk food for the mind, similar to WhatsApp forwards, Facebook posts, and Twitter threads.³⁷ Students require a healthy diet of varied sources to expand their intellectual horizons and acquire immunity against present follies. Encouraging students to read critical works from the past is essential for challenging their assumptions and developing a critical perspective. By doing so, students will be able to engage with a variety of perspectives and avoid limiting themselves to a narrow range of sources.³⁸

Engaging with Primary Sources: Developing the Historian's Skills in Students

Let us now address the central point of our discussion. Merely providing students with textbooks is unlikely to foster their interest in the subject matter. However, by equipping them with the necessary skills to read like historians, educators can revolutionize the traditional classroom environment. This approach shifts the focus from rote memorization of dates and names to a more active form of inquiry, encouraging students to become historical investigators and utilize the analytical skills of professional historians to explore the past. Historically, students have been assigned traditional textbooks, often characterized by a nationalistic bias, for an unknown duration. It is imperative that we now equip students to question these texts. The first step in doing so is to expose them to a variety of primary sources, such as diaries, government promulgations,

and memoirs, which offer diverse perspectives on historical events. By doing this, we can shatter the dominance of textbooks and encourage students to engage with history in a more critical and nuanced manner.³⁹

This approach represents a significant departure from the memory training model that often reduces learning to the rote memorization of isolated facts. Instead, this new approach entails a departure from a single, dominant historical narrative. Each class should center around a legitimate historical question, which students explore by analyzing original documents and encountering the voices of historical actors. This approach prioritizes critical thinking and inquiry over memorization. Students will be given the opportunity to examine different perspectives and ask questions, with historical evidence guiding their exploration. They can approach historical events with a preconceived notion, but by analyzing the documents with the teacher's guidance, they can construct a more nuanced understanding of the past. By adopting this method, students can obtain a comprehensive view of historical events from multiple angles.⁴⁰

To begin with, the teacher should deliver an introductory lecture that provides students with background information and contextualizes the topic they will be studying. Afterward, the teacher would pose a question for the day, such as "*Was Aurangzeb a barbaric king?*", "*Was Gandhi a racist?*" or "*Was Peshwa Baji Rao truly an undefeated general?*". This approach encourages students to develop critical thinking skills and to engage with the material on a deeper level, allowing for disagreement and debate. Given the prevalent literacy issue in our schools and colleges, the adoption of this approach would undoubtedly result in students spending more time studying the text. What sets this approach apart is its emphasis on the reading skills used by expert readers and historians, as demonstrated by research. Rather than presenting history as a collection of predetermined answers, it encourages students to ask questions and seek out primary sources to investigate them. In a collaborative environment, students would work together to analyze documents and consider questions such as "*How was this written?*" and "*What additional information would be necessary to make an informed judgment?*". This approach promotes critical reading and active learning, creating a dynamic classroom environment where students can engage with the material and gain new perspectives. Rather than passively absorbing information, they would delve into history in a meaningful and profound way, exploring the facts, dates, and personalities involved.⁴¹

This approach proposes a new way of teaching history that emphasizes critical thinking and evaluating information. Instead of just memorizing facts, students would engage in a series of questions and explore primary source documents to analyze historical events from multiple perspectives. This approach challenges teachers to teach history in a way that is not settled and requires training to implement effectively. The success of this approach could be assessed based on student's ability to think critically, their mastery of factual knowledge, and their reading comprehension skills. Ultimately, this approach aims to equip students with the skills they need to better understand the past in its contextual complexity⁴² and make sense of historical events beyond binary categorizations.

When incorporating primary historical documents into the curriculum, institutions must consider several key factors. One such factor is ensuring that the documents chosen are relevant to the topic or period being studied, allowing students to connect with the material and understand its significance. Another important factor is ensuring that the documents are accessible to students. Additionally, it is crucial to choose primary historical documents that are diverse and representative of a range of perspectives and experiences to provide a well-rounded view of history. To enhance students' comprehension of the past and avert reinforcement of prejudicial attitudes, it is essential to provide them with guidance and support in interpreting primary historical documents. This assistance could entail providing background information, historical context, or analytical tools. In addition, creating meaningful and genuine assessment tasks that allow students to demonstrate their grasp of primary historical documents is vital.⁴³ Such tasks could comprise written analyses, presentations, or group projects that enable students to connect with the material in a significant way. By taking these aspects into consideration and establishing an environment that fosters inclusivity and support, educators can assist students in cultivating a more profound understanding of the past and nurturing a passion for history that will be beneficial in both their academic and personal lives.

Conclusion

History classrooms should foster community-building rather than division. Here, students should transit from being uninformed learners to knowledgeable individuals. An effective history teacher should possess not only knowledge but also sincerity, good intentions, and wisdom to truly benefit their students. Conversely, a teacher with ill intentions and a hateful heart could manipulate students to further their own agenda or harm other communities. As students embark on their journey through a

history degree, they should aspire to become independent thinkers rather than mere mouthpieces for any political affiliation.

It is crucial to acknowledge that knowledge transcends the mere acquisition of information, as the Western paradigm of knowledge suggests. In Islamic epistemology, knowledge serves as a means of transformation. Students must not only gain knowledge but also become better individuals through its application. The aim of teaching history is not solely to accumulate information but to instill wisdom in students. Wisdom, or *'hikmah'* in 'Arabic, entails placing everything in its appropriate context. The point is that knowledge of the past is not inherently good, as it can either benefit or harm individuals depending on its proper usage.

Therefore, knowledge must be transformed into wisdom and applied appropriately by considering the context and timing of information dissemination. Not everything that aligns with political correctness is suitable for every circumstance. A teacher may possess technically accurate information, but its presentation at the wrong time or place can render it useless or even harmful. According to Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī,⁴⁴ the purpose of education extends beyond the mere acquisition of degrees and credentials. Education should foster the development of wisdom, enabling individuals to effectively manage and positively impact the entire creation.

Notes and References

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² For more, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Minority histories, subaltern pasts", *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1998), pp. 15-29; David Ludden, "History outside civilisation and the mobility of South Asia", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (1994), pp. 1-23; Anubhuti Maurya, "The Mythical Medieval: Periodization, Historical Memory and the Imagination of the Indian Nation", 25 June 2019, In T. Maissen, B. Mittler, & P. Monnet (Eds.), *Chronologies: Periodisation in a Global Context*, <https://chronolog.hypotheses.org/1263>; Romila Thapar, "Politics and the rewriting of history in India", *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 1-2, (2005), pp. 195-203.

³ The University Grants Commission (UGC) is a legal entity operating under the aegis of the Indian Ministry of Education. Its inception in 1956 was aimed at the advancement and synchronization of university-level education, the establishment of benchmarks for pedagogical and scholarly endeavours, the formulation of suggestions for the augmentation of higher education, and the facilitation of directives to both Central and State Governments in matters concerning the evolution of higher education paradigms.

⁴ Anubhuti Maurya, "Indian history and distorted narratives", *The Hindu*, 30 March 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indian-history-and-distorted-narratives/article34193380.ece>

⁵ Ludden criticizes the use of civilizational history to understand South Asian history. This approach creates artificial boundaries and portrays South Asia as closed and unchanging, which does not reflect its reality as an open and dynamic region. Moreover, civilizational history obscures the complex interactions between cultures and civilizations, reinforcing simplistic ideas about identity and cultural differences. Consequently, it has led to the problematic notion of defining who is indigenous or foreign to India. This has resulted in a complex interplay between secular and non-secular nationalisms that use the idea of civilisation to control history and promote their own interests. See, David Ludden's "History outside civilisation and the mobility of South Asia." (*idem*)

⁶ Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 187-20.

⁷ See, Anubhuti Maurya's "Indian history and distorted narratives", *The Hindu*. (*idem*)

⁸ Romila Thapar, Bipin Chandra, & Harbans Mukhia, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History*, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1969).

⁹ Romila Thapar, "The Tyranny of Labels", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 24, No. 9/10, (1996), pp. 3-23.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Audrey Truschke, "What We Can Learn from India's Medieval Past", *The Wire*, 20 September 2015, <https://thewire.in/history/what-we-can-learn-from-indias-medieval-past>; *Aurangzeb: The Man and the Myth*, (Penguin Random House India, 2017); *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of A Muslim Past*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019) (*idem*); Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

¹¹ Daud Ali, "The idea of the medieval in the writing of South Asian history: contexts, methods and politics," *Social History*, Vol. 39, No. 3, (2014), pp. 382-407; Ram Puniyani, "Modi govt looks to rewrite Indian history to justify Hindu nationalism", *National Herald*, 22 March 2018, <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/opinion/modi-govt-looks-to-rewrite-indian-history-to-justify-hindu-nationalism>

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¹³ M S S Pandian, "Nation Impossible", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 10, (2009), pp. 65-69.

¹⁴ Johan Galtung, "Violence, peace, and peace research," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (1969), pp. 167-191.

¹⁵ Presently, assertions of Indian historical decolonization have emerged, yet these efforts often exhibit (neo) colonial characteristics. Irfan Ahmad demonstrates that these endeavours essentially reframe Western Orientalist perspectives within the realm of Hindu Orientalism, consequently moulding India. This process marginalizes Islam and Muslims, not only within Indian historical narratives but also across various social sciences, such as political science, anthropology-sociology, and competitive resources designed to prepare students for civil service positions. Irfan Ahmad, "Recognizing Hindu Orientalism." *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2023. Also see, Omar Khalidi, *Indian Muslims since Independence*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1995).

¹⁶ Brown offers a perceptive analysis in which he convincingly argues how Western historians have excessively invoked the "Principle of Dissimilarity," originally proposed by Dutch classicist Jakob Perizonius, to categorically assert the veracity of any statement

that appears to contradict conventional beliefs. See, J A C Brown, “Blind Spots: The Origins of the Western Method of Critiquing Hadith,” *Yaqeen*, 31 January 2019, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/blind-spots-the-origins-of-the-western-method-of-critiquing-hadith>. Also see, Sarjeel Imam, “Harbans Mukhia’s Khilji & the Image of Muslims in Indian History”, *The Quint*, 03 February 2018, <https://www.thequint.com/voices/blogs/harbans-mukhias-alauddin-khilji-padmaavat-muslims-in-history>.

¹⁷ See, Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “Minority histories, subaltern pasts”; Anubhuti Maurya’s “Indian history and distorted narratives”, (idem); Pratyay Nath, *Climate of Conquest War, Environment, and Empire in Mughal North India*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019).

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²³ See, Omar Khalidi’s *Indian Muslims since Independence*; Ludden, D’s “History outside civilisation and the mobility of South Asia.” (idem)

²⁴ Ranajit Guha, (Ed.), *Subaltern Studies-I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).

²⁵ G Aloysius, *Nationalism Without a Nation in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Ranajit Guha’s *Subaltern Studies-I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. (idem)

²⁶ Sher Ali Tareen, *Defending Muhammad in Modernity*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020).

²⁷ G Aloysius’s *Nationalism Without a Nation in India*. (idem)

²⁸ We find many such references in M K Gandhi’s Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: Volume 90. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1984. For background, see Perry Anderson, *The Indian Ideology*, (London: Verso, 2013); Faisal Devji, “Gandhi’s Racism: It’s time for the Mahatma to become a properly historical figure with all his flaws”, *Scroll*, 28 October 2019, <https://scroll.in/article/939623/gandhis-racism-its-time-for-the-mahatma-to-become-a-properly-historical-figure-with-all-his-flaws>.

²⁹ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) emerged as a resolute proponent of Hindu nationalism during the 20th century, notably formulating the conceptual framework of Hindutva.

³⁰ Perry Anderson’s *The Indian Ideology*. (idem)

³¹ David Ludden’s History outside civilisation and the mobility of South Asia (idem); Thapar, R. *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History*, (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2014).

³² Dipesh Chakrabarty’s Minority histories, subaltern pasts, (idem); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nations and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Ranajit Guha’s *Subaltern Studies-I: Writings on South*

Asian History and Society. (idem); G Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³³ In a captivating display, the present BJP government has embarked upon a disconcerting path, wherein they not only seek to distort the Muslim medieval period but display an unwavering determination to obliterate it entirely. See, for instance, Shoab Danial, "What will be the impact of erasing the Mughals from Indian history", *Scroll.in*, 10 April 2023, <https://scroll.in/article/1047085/what-will-be-the-impact-of-erasing-the-mughals-from-indian-history>; Obaid Mir, "To edit Muslims out of India's history is to deny them a future", *Aljazeera*, 4 May 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/5/4/to-edit-muslims-out-of-indias-history-is-to-deny-them-a-future>

³⁴ For more on the critique of nation state, see Wael b. Hallaq's *Impossible State*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

³⁵ See, A Maurya's Indian history and distorted narratives; "Rewriting 'old history' for a New India", *The Hindu*, 27 June 2022. (idem) <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/rewriting-old-history-for-a-new-india/article65567906.ece>

³⁶ P Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968); *Education for Critical Consciousness*, (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1973) (idem); E W Said, *Orientalism*, (Penguin Books, 1978); *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) (idem).

³⁷ The proliferation of this ersatz historical narrative is presently conspicuous within educational institutions across India, manifestly fulfilling its political aspirations by seeking to retroactively superimpose their subjective contemporary perspective onto historical contexts.

See, Rohan D'Souza, "The Risks of Looking at India's History Through the Eyes of Pseudo-Historians", *The Wire*, 20 October 2021, <https://thewire.in/history/india-history-pseudo-historians-risks>

³⁸ E W Said, *Covering Islam*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth*. (University of Chicago Press, 2015).

³⁹ K C Barton & L S Levstik, *Teaching history for the Common Good*, (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004).

⁴⁰ M M Krug, "Primary sources in teaching history", *The History Teacher*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (1970), pp. 41-49.

⁴¹ R E Keohane, "Using primary sources in teaching history", *The Journal of General Education*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (1950), pp. 213-220. Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History*, (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2014).

⁴² Ibn Khaldun, the renowned sociologist, emphasized this point very clearly in his *Muqaddimah*.

⁴³ A Bahde, H Smedberg, & M Taormina, *Using Primary Sources: Hands-On Instructional Exercises*, (2014), Retrieved from <http://publisher.abc-clio.com/A4130E>

⁴⁴ Al Raghīb Al Isfahani, an eminent Islamic philosopher of the 11th century, is often overlooked despite his significant contributions to Islamic thought. However, he played a pivotal role in the development of Islamic ethics. To gain a deeper understanding of his ethical philosophy, Yasien Mohamed's book, *"The Path to Virtue: The Ethical Philosophy of Al Raghīb Al Isfahani,"* is highly recommended.