



Assault on Science and History
--*Amar Farooqui*

Ancient Science and Hindutva
--*Prabir Purkayastha*

On Distorted Periodisation of History
--*Dr. R.P. Bahuguna*

RSS Takeover of Institutions
--*Prof. P. Gopinath*

"Take Over"--The RSS Way

Cartoon on Front Cover: Courtesy *The Hindu*

Introduction

The CPI(M) is bringing out a series of six booklets entitled RSS Against India.

The booklets contain essays written by eminent intellectuals, political leaders and activists which have been grouped together to bring out different aspects of the retrograde and divisive role the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has played throughout its history and continues to do at present.

They include (1) The RSS role in India's freedom movement and its communal role in independent India (2) the RSS concept of Hindu Rashtra and its approach to caste, gender and adivasis (3) The "beef" politics of the RSS (4) the RSS understanding of neo-liberal economic policies and of the working classes (5) the RSS distortion of Science and History (6) speeches of General Secretary Sitaram Yechury and Polit Bureau member Md. Salim in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha respectively during the debate in Parliament in November 2015, on "Constitution Day" and on "Growing Intolerance."

Several of the essays in these booklets quote from the published writings of RSS founders particularly from the writings of M.S.Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghchalak of the RSS. It may be asked what relevance do these writings have to an analysis of contemporary activities of the RSS. These are texts which remain the fountainhead of RSS ideology, and continue to determine its world view and practice. Three quarters of a century may have passed since Golwalkar's *We—or our Nationhood Defined* and a *Bunch of Thoughts* were written, but

their toxic concepts have been articulated by RSS Chiefs throughout this period including the present RSS Chief, Mohan Bhagwat's statement that Hindustan is for Hindus. In all these years not in a single statement, writing or text in any of the publications of the RSS or its political wing the BJP has there been even a semblance of a distancing, leave alone a rejection, of any of the formulations made by RSS founders. On the contrary, the present Prime Minister has written a biographical profile of Golwalkar in his book "Jyotipunj" describing Golwalkar as one of his inspirations. Therefore the quotations used in the booklets to illustrate RSS ideology, some repeated, are relevant to an understanding of the "core" of this organization, which has been inspired by videshi fascists--Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Blackshirts.

The question may also be raised that are these exposures of the RSS at all necessary and do they not inadvertently enhance its importance? The RSS, as many of the essays in these booklets show, appeals to the lowest denominator in human behavior in inciting violence against "the other." In doing so it seeks to exploit religious feelings and utilises traditions and beliefs based on social and gender inequalities that still influence a substantial section of our people. Hindutva as preached by the RSS is a political concept coined by V.D.Savarkar, far from the world of ordinary Hindu believers. Those fighting against the utilization of religion for political ends need to be conscious of the dimensions of the battle.

Religion as a political tool is used by fundamentalist forces of various hues and in the name of various religious faiths. The role of Muslim fundamentalist forces who are increasing their reach among sections of Muslim youth are a matter of deep concern and they need to be isolated and fought back.

These forces are encouraged by majoritarian Hindu fundamentalists who falsely claim to represent the nation. These apparently opposing forces strengthen each other and divert attention from the basic problems of the people.

With the advent of the BJP Government led by Narendra Modi at the centre, the RSS not only has free access to the levers of power, which it also in large measure enjoyed during Atal Behari Vajpayee's time, but

it actually is in a position of control in this Government. When a roll call of Ministers is taken for the presentation of a report card to RSS leaders, it is clear who is calling the shots. It is therefore necessary to expose the RSS, its links to the Government and the extra constitutional power it wields today.

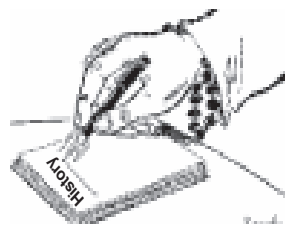
Further, Narendra Modi was a pracharak, a full time worker of the RSS owing total allegiance to its ideology, its theories and practice. For a pracharak to become the Prime Minister of India is a big step forward in the RSS project. Gujarat 2002 was a result as well as an experiment of the Hindu rashtra project under his leadership in which he was fully backed by the RSS. In 2013-2014, when differences arose in the BJP as to who should lead the party's bid for power in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it was the RSS which not only backed Modi's candidature but directly intervened to silence the opposition of L.K.Advani and other senior leaders. The Prime Minister's refusal to take any action against those who are his colleagues in the RSS and are now in positions of power in the BJP in spite of their repeated communally provocative actions and statements is a reflection of his loyalty to the RSS. For India's Prime Minister it is RSS first.

It is thus necessary to provide the facts, the deeds and the analysis of what the RSS actually represents. We hope this series will be useful in the struggle to safeguard and strengthen the principles of secularism, democracy and equality.

On behalf of the central publications team we express our gratitude to the authors of these essays, and to the comrades and friends of the Party who helped bring out this series. We also thank the cartoonists for permission to use their work.

Brinda Karat

Polit Bureau Member



Assault on Science and History

Amar Farooqui

The Chief Minister of Haryana and veteran RSS pracharak M.L. Khattar recently made the statement that river Saraswati was an article of faith for Hindus (*Indian Express*, 16 October 2015). Without going into whether he has authority to speak on behalf of all Hindus or whether his views are indeed representative of their beliefs, we should note that it is also being claimed that the Saraswati flowed through Haryana and Rajasthan; that the existing river Ghaggar is a remnant of ancient Saraswati; and that the Saraswati continues to flow underground. Resources of the state are being used to assert spurious *historical evidence* for this claim.

For instance, when in the first week of May 2015, the presence of underground water was found during the course of digging (under the MNREGA scheme) at the village of Mughalwali in Yamunanagar district of Haryana, it was promptly declared by state functionaries that this was proof of the subterranean existence of the sacred river Saraswati. Opinion of historians or the Archaeological Survey of India was not even sought. Professional criteria were set aside to serve the divisive political agenda of the Sangh Parivar.

The supposed breakthrough in Yamunanagar district was achieved barely two weeks after the Haryana government formally launched a Rs 50

crore project for establishing the historicity of the sacred Saraswati river! A reference might be made here to the Saraswati Nadi Shodh Samsthan, in existence since the late 1990s and headed by well-known RSS functionary, Darshan Lal Jain, to 'revive' the sacred river.

Two interconnected issues are at stake here, both vital to the Sangh Parivar. The first is an unease over the association of India's earliest civilization, the Harappan civilization (also known as 'Indus valley civilization'), with the river Indus. A substantial portion of this river now lies in Pakistan, rendering an area in 'enemy territory' as the most important site of the most ancient urban cultures of the subcontinent. The Sangh Parivar has, therefore, been intervening to formally rename the Harappan civilization as 'Saraswati civilization' (or, 'Saraswati-Sindhu civilization').

The political boundaries separating India from Pakistan were artificially demarcated only in 1947 and are really quite irrelevant for the early history of the subcontinent. The Harappan sites, a small proportion of which have been excavated and studied, are spread over a very wide area, which includes Sindh, Punjab (west and east), Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. At one end in the west, a site has been discovered in northern Afghanistan (Shortughai, on the river Oxus Amu Darya), while the eastern extremity of the settlements is a site Alamgirpur in Saharanpur district, Uttar Pradesh. Sites over this vast zone display a remarkable uniformity. Hence scholars now prefer to go by the archaeological convention of labelling all these sites as 'Harappan', since Harappa (located in Sahiwal district, Punjab, Pakistan) was the first excavated site of the civilization to be identified in terms of its distinctive historical features. For the same reason some scholars use the label 'Indus civilization': many of the initial ones were to be recognized, in the early 1920s, as providing evidence of the existence of a highly developed ancient urban civilization in the Indian subcontinent were located in the Indus valley (e.g., Mohenjodaro).

The second issue is more complex since it also wreaks havoc with historical chronology. It is asserted that the course of the sacred Saraswati (through what is now Haryana) was the nucleus of the 'Saraswati' civilization that extended from the Indus in the west to

the Ganga in the east: the discovery of several Harappan sites, many located close to the Ghaggar, is cited as evidence. A connection is also made between the Saraswati and the Yamuna (supposed, over centuries, to have shifted eastwards) to assert that present-day Haryana and parts of western Uttar Pradesh were the core area of the civilization. Its most coherent presentation is by David Frawley, an American self-proclaimed Sanskrit scholar, honoured with a Padma Bhushan in 2015 by the present BJP government and invited by the chairperson of the Indian Council of Historical Research (Y. Sudarshan Rao, an ardent advocate of the Sangh Parivar's 'vision'), to deliver its prestigious foundation day lecture. The work of Frawley, of no standing among professional historians anywhere in the world, is being officially celebrated: an American's endorsement seems useful for a semblance of respectability!

In his book, *Gods, Sages and Kings: Vedic Secrets of Ancient Civilization*, Frawley asserts that Saraswati is the most important of the rivers mentioned in the *Rig Veda*, 'the central and the greatest of the rivers'; and that 'it is clear from the *Rig Veda* and the Vedic tradition that the homeland of its people is the Saraswati river'. Of the Yamuna, he says it 'first flowed west and only later flowed east into the Ganges as it does today'. And the Ganga too was a tributary of the Saraswati: 'Yet earlier in the prehistoric era the Ganges also appears to have flowed west into the Saraswati, like the Yamuna'. In other words, the *Rig Veda* was composed by Vedic-Sanskrit speaking people inhabiting the banks of the mighty Saraswati. Frawley then takes a leap: 'Indus valley culture must be post-Vedic. The Saraswati stopped flowing about the time of the end of the Indus valley culture', he says (all quotations in this paragraph are from Part I: Chapter 2 of Frawley's book). His argument is: if the *Rig Veda* was composed after the decline of the Harappan civilization, by which time the Saraswati was no longer a mighty river, there would have been no reason for the sacred text to glorify it in the way that it does. His conjecture is completely at odds with the chronological framework that professional historians have worked out after decades of study: that the Vedic age began a few centuries *after* the end of the Harappan civilization.

His intellectual subterfuge then demands that the date of the *Rig Veda*

be pushed back by hundreds, if not thousands, of years, since considerable amount of time is required for transition from an early pastoral and agrarian society (of the kind reflected in the *Rig Veda*), to an urban society of the type represented by the mature Harappan civilization.

Reference may be made to a state-funded 'national seminar' organized by the Department of Sanskrit, University of Delhi, in September 2015, on the theme 'Vedic Chronology: A Reassessment'. In his keynote address, the head of the department declared that the *Vedas* are nearly five thousand years older than the generally accepted date for their composition. Some speakers pushed the date back further, to around 7500 BC, which means that the revised date for the *Rig Veda* would be almost six thousand years earlier than the generally accepted date! Again, this is put forth not as a matter of faith: we are told that the date is an established and verifiable historical fact, based upon some astronomical data in the *Rig Veda*. The assertion is not entirely original.

In 1994, Subhash Kak, a computer engineer based in the US, had published a book entitled *The Astronomical Code of the Rig Veda* challenging the accepted chronology. Citing information of an astronomical nature (supposedly encoded in the *Vedas*, in the design prescribed for fire altars) he contended that the *Rig Veda* belonged, according to his calculations, to the period circa 4000–3000 BC. The 'national seminar' mentioned above took even greater liberty with dates, adding another three to four thousand years!

Historians often have differences of opinion, resulting in scholarly debates, about chronology; yet, on such an issue, when a broad consensus has evolved through a long tradition of historical scholarship on the subject, the debate may be about a few hundred years at the most—not thousands of years. One is reminded of the writings of the Swiss author Erich von Däniken who in his entertaining (and that is about all) bestseller *Chariots of the Gods* (1968) suggested that the pyramids, among other ancient monumental structures, were built by extra-terrestrial beings rather than humans! But what the Sangh Parivar is trying to do has sinister motives and serious repercussions: Govind Pansare and M.M. Kalburgi, both engaged in campaigns to propagate

a rational and historical understanding of India's past, were murdered in cold blood, and history is being used for furthering a cynically divisive agenda.

The 1990s were critical for the ideological onslaught on historical scholarship, coinciding, as it did, with aggressive political mobilization by the Sangh Parivar. An active role was played in this by sections of the Indian diaspora in USA: in 1995, Kak co-authored a book with David Frawley, *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*, which seeks to rubbish most of the existing historical scholarship on Mesopotamia by asserting that India was 'the cradle of civilization'. These amateurish formulations are not sustained by well-recognized protocols of the discipline.

To put India's ancient past in perspective, it needs to be underlined that the earliest food-producing societies emerged around 9000 BC in Palestine. It took another three thousand years for early food-producing cultures to spread to northern Iraq, and yet another 2500 years for urban settlements to emerge in southern Iraq, i.e., by circa 3500 BC. Within two to three hundred years a mature urban civilization, the Sumerian civilization, was flourishing in southern Iraq. This chronology is based upon very extensive archaeological evidence, which can now be dated with much precision using extremely advanced scientific techniques. In the case of southern Iraq this evidence can be combined with literary evidence, from the large number of clay-tablets on which are preserved written records in the decipherable 'cuneiform' script of the Sumerians. It took nearly six thousand years for the transition to be made in West Asia from early food-producing societies, which used stone tools (these are designated 'Neolithic cultures'), to metal using societies.

In the Indian sub-continent, the shift to food production took place around 7000 BC. The evidence for this comes from Mehrgarh, a Neolithic site located in Baluchistan. Besides, some early Neolithic sites have been found on the periphery of the Vindhyas, a few of which are contemporary with Mehrgarh.

The Harappan civilization evolved around 2600 BC and entered its

mature phase by 2500 BC. The mature phase lasted till 2000 BC, and the civilization came to an abrupt end between 2000 and 1900 BC. In the generally accepted history of the subcontinent, in the way in which the international community of professional historians understands this history, the end of the Harappan civilization was marked by the disappearance of urban centres, and many other prominent features of the civilization: for instance the use of standardized bricks. This was followed by another historical phase in the north-western part of the subcontinent, for which evidence comes from the *Rig Veda* as well as archaeology: this phase is designated as the Early Vedic Age (1500 to 1000 BC). It was an entirely rural society, combining pastoralism with some agriculture. Linguistically, this was predominantly a society of people who spoke Vedic-Sanskrit, the language of the *Rig Veda*, though it might have included other linguistic communities as well.

The horse, to which there are constant references in the *Rig Veda*, is the distinctive signature of the Vedic-Sanskrit speaking communities. There is no evidence of the domesticated horse in the Harappan civilization. Not surprisingly, attempts have been made to 'manufacture' this evidence, now completely discredited — much to the discomfiture of the likes of N.S. Rajaram who made this claim in his *The Deciphered Indus Script* (2000). Incidentally, the script remains undeciphered, if it is a full-fledged script at all. An illustration in this book purports to be the depiction of a horse on a Harappan seal. It was shown to be a hoax, and Rajaram had to admit that the illustration was a 'computer enhanced image'. Rajaram, whose training is in mathematics, and who worked with the NASA in USA as an engineer at some stage of his career, co-authored a book with David Frawley in 1995 on the 'origins of civilization'.

As evident, much of the impetus for the assault on history is coming from non-historians, usually people with training in natural sciences or mathematics, and based in the United States; and it is no 'cutting-edge historical research'.

We should bear in mind that as the pastoral and agrarian economy of the Vedic era was evolving in north-west and northern India with its own specificities, subsistence patterns based upon food gathering and

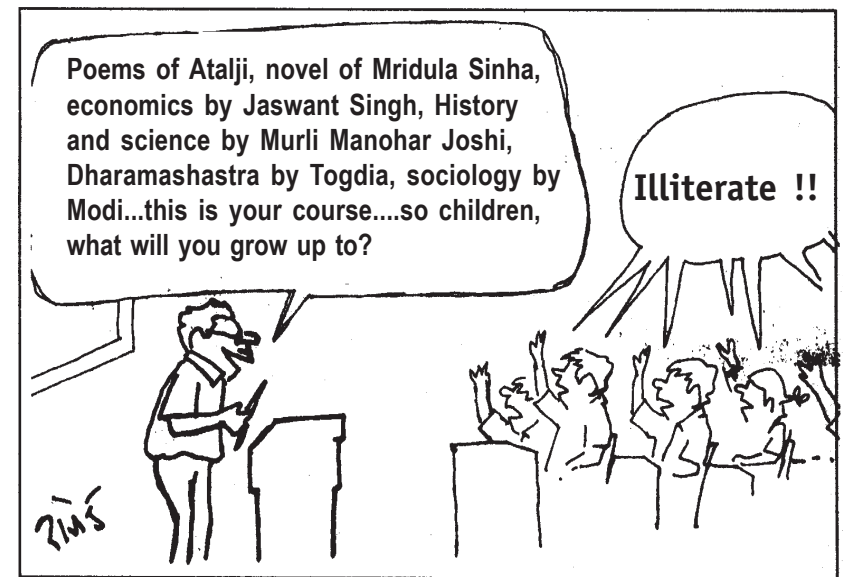
hunting, or on food production, or a combination of the two, continued to evolve in other parts of the subcontinent. The chronology for Neolithic cultures and the transition to metal use is slightly different for central India, south India, eastern India and the north-east. In Manipur, for example, the Neolithic settlement at Napchik has been dated to circa 1700 BC. Neolithic tools have been found in Meghalaya (Selbalgiri), Assam (Sarutaru) and Nagaland, but have not been adequately excavated or studied. These need to be accorded priority for a more comprehensive understanding of the early history of the subcontinent. The focus on northern India has deprived these regions of state support for historical research, resulting in gaps in our knowledge that could become more glaring given the political agenda of the BJP government.

Needless to say, the obsession with the early history of northern India and the chronology of the *Vedas* is ultimately about the 'Aryan' ancestry of the Indian nation, which in turn has its origins in the colonial notions of the Aryan *race*. For the Sangh Parivar, those who are descended from the Aryans, the people of the sacred *Vedas*, are the original and ancient inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, and have superior claims: non-Aryans can only live on sufferance. During the nineteenth century colonial ideologues had advanced the idea that the Aryans were a *race* (rather than a linguistic group, which is the sense in which philologists had initially used the term), and stood at the top of the racial hierarchy constructed by them. This notion was refined, reinforced and fine-tuned by the end of the century, and given a scientific garb. It was asserted that Aryan biological characteristics (as well as characteristics of other 'races') could be determined with mathematical precision, through, for instance, anthropometry, which involved, among other procedures, the recording of the shape and measurement of the nose of individuals of a 'racial type' and a working out of these averages. Arranging these averages in ascending/descending order was supposed to indicate 'scientifically' the status of a race in the racial hierarchy, with the Aryans (Aryans of north-western Europe, particularly) at the top. The main 'racial' characteristics of the Aryans were: a very fair complexion, tall stature, broad forehead, narrow high-built nose, and relatively thin lips. In the context of India, colonial ethnographers such as H.H. Risley (who directed the census operations in 1901) linked race with caste.

Since upper castes strictly adhered to endogamy, it was assumed, they had retained their 'Aryan' racial purity.

Assertions about the Aryan racial supremacy reached their climax in Nazi Germany. Hitler enacted a law (April 1933) by which all 'non-Aryans' were excluded from employment in government institutions, and eventually from German citizenship, leading to mass killings of Jews and Slavs, accompanied by historical brainwashing of the German people. In the India of today such extremes are not possible and will not be allowed, but we need to guard ourselves against the dangers to our democracy that could result from the wiping out of our secular traditions from popular memory and their replacement by a hate-filled view of our past.

It is a mistake to suggest that the Sangh Parivar's ahistorical assertions about India's past are alternative 'interpretations': they have little validity in terms of historical evidence. More importantly, these assertions are increasingly being made in a language that is abusive, intimidating and vicious, intended to incite violence. Such a massive assault on history, actively supported by the state, can only be resisted through political mobilization.



On Distorted Periodisation of History

Dr. R.P. Bahuguna

Question - 1

In what ways is RSS's understanding of the medieval period of Indian history influenced by the colonial scheme of periodization. Is it wrong to characterize this period as the period of 'Muslim rule'?

Answer - 1

Colonial historians since the beginning of the 19th century identified the ancient period of Indian history as 'Hindu India' and the medieval period as one of 'Muslim Rule'. RSS ideologues and RSS- influenced historians have adopted this scheme of periodization because it suits their communal agenda. Like colonial historians, the RSS also believes that the medieval period began with Muslim invasions and Muslim conquest of northern India. To the RSS, the period between the 13th and 17th centuries is a period of Muslim rule because the Sultanate and the Mughal rulers of this period were followers of Islam. However, this interpretation of medieval Indian history is completely false and is based on misrepresentation of facts and a narrow understanding of the concept of periodization. This becomes clear if we consider the following facts and arguments:

- The Religion of the rulers cannot be the basis for periodization.

Transition from one period of history to another does not occur merely due to change in the religion of the rulers. Not all the rulers of the ancient period were Hindus. Ashoka, the greatest of them, was not a Hindu but a Buddhist. Transition from ancient to medieval was the result of far-reaching socio-economic, political and cultural transformations that began during the post-Gupta period of the 7th to 12th century and not after the coming of the Turks. These changes included growth of regional states, societies and cultures and also transition from pastoralism to agriculture in many areas. There were also important changes in the patterns of internal and external trade and commerce, and in money economy. Buddhism gradually declined and Brahminical religion began to reassert itself. It was during this period that the Bhakti movement began to take concrete shape, particularly in South India. Many Muslim communities came to India as traders, Sufis, travellers and settled peacefully in different parts of the country which were being ruled by Hindu rulers. Turkish invasions of the 11th and 12th centuries and the subsequent Turkish conquest only accelerated this process of socio-economic and political change in new ways. The establishment of the Mughal Empire represented yet another stage of medieval Indian history.

- Even if it is assumed that the religion of the rulers is an important marker of periodization, it is important to note that not all the rulers of the medieval period were Muslims. The rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, regional sultanates and the Mughal Empire were Muslims. But the rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire, its successor states, various Rajput, Maratha, Sikh and Jat kingdoms were non-Muslims. Moreover, after the initial period of military conflict and conquest came to an end, Hindu ruling elites became part and parcel of the state system established by various sultanates and the Mughal Empire. Since Akbar's reign, Rajputs became an integral part of the Mughal ruling class and some of the Rajput chiefs occupied the highest positions in the military and administrative hierarchy. At the end of Akbar's reign, Raja Man Singh was the highest ranking Mughal noble with a rank of 7000 *zat*. The number of Hindu *mansabdars* continued to increase during the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, and was the highest during the reign of Aurangzeb. Contrary to RSS propaganda about Hindus being excluded from Mughal administration, they occupied some of the top positions in

the imperial hierarchy. Since Shahjahan's reign, even Marathas began to enter the ranks of Mughal nobility. In 1595 (during the reign of Akbar), out of a total of 98 nobles of the rank of 500 and above, 22 were Hindus, thus constituting 22.5 percent of the Mughal nobility. During the second part of Aurangzeb's reign (1679-1707), the number of such Hindu nobles rose to 105 out of 486 (31.6%). Most of the zamindars, which constituted the ruling class at the village, local and regional levels, were Hindus.

Question - 2

Does the RSS's portrayal of medieval Indian history as a period marked by perpetual Hindu-Muslim conflict constitute falsification of history?

Answer - 2

The image of Hindu-Muslim conflict in medieval period as presented by RSS is deeply flawed because:

- Hindu-Muslim communal conflicts are a phenomenon of the modern colonial period and they cannot be projected back into the medieval past because the historical conditions that made such conflict possible in modern times did not exist in the medieval period. At the political level, there were conflicts between the Rajputs and the Turks, between Rajputs and the Mughals, between the Mughals and the Marathas, and between the Mughals and the Sikhs. However these conflicts were caused primarily by political and territorial ambitions of the ruling groups and religion did not play any significant role in them. The Sultanate and Mughal rulers were equally ruthless in suppressing their Muslim enemies and rebels. This is evident from the way Aurangzeb annexed the Bijapur and Golkunda Sultanates whose rulers were Muslims.
- Initial periods of political and military conflicts always gave way to periods of political integration and cooperation. Hindu chiefs began to be incorporated into the Sultanate ruling class from the Tughlaq period. Many Rajput chiefs occupied important positions in the ruling class of regional Sultanates. The Marathas were appointed on military and administrative posts by the Deccan kingdoms. Rajputs

formed such an important part of the Mughal ruling class that the Mughal state can be called a class alliance of two ruling groups - the Mughals and the Rajputs.

- At the level of the ruling classes, we come across instances of both conflict and cooperation between Hindus and Muslims, and these acts were guided by political and military considerations. But at the level of the ordinary people, which included peasants and artisans, the religious identities of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' did not even exist and therefore there was no question of Hindu-Muslim conflict. These identities became universal and all-embracing only in modern times leading to the possibility of occurrence of large scale communal conflicts.
- Many Hindu rulers of the medieval period adopted administrative and revenue policies that were influenced by the Sultanate and Mughal polities. The court culture and court etiquette of most of the Hindu rulers and ruling elites were shaped overwhelmingly by Persianate and Islamic norms. On the other hand, the Mughal emperors incorporated many Indian practices, symbols and rituals in their state system and political culture.

Question - 3

Why is the RSS wrong in portraying the image of Hindu victimhood and Muslim atrocities on Hindus in medieval India?

Answer - 3

This perception is not borne out by facts which are as follows:

- So far as destruction of temples is concerned, it is true that some Sultanate and Mughal rulers damaged or demolished temples in the territories of rebel chiefs. Particularly those temples were targeted which were patronized by their enemies and which were politically and symbolically important. But we also have instances of patronage being extended to many temples and Brahmin priests by the Mughal rulers, including Aurangzeb. Large number of documents throw light on Mughal patronage to the temples of the Braj region. Many Vaishnava and Nathpanthi shrines were patronized by the Mughal

rulers. The Bijapur sultans extended patronage to the temple of Lord Vithal at Pandharpur in Maharashtra. Desecration of temples is a complex phenomenon which cannot be explained only in terms of anti-Hindu attitude of the Muslim rulers. Aurangzeb, who was responsible for the destruction of some prominent temples in the north, did not follow this practice in the Deccan and South where he stayed for the last 26 years of his reign. Most of the ancient temples are still standing there. There is also evidence to show bestowal of grants by Aurangzeb on temples like the Someshwar Nath Mahadev temple in Allahabad, Jangum Badi Shiva temple in Banaras, and Umanand temple in Gauhati. Both his actions- of destroying temples and giving grants to some other temples-had more to do with cynical political calculations rather than any communal motivations.

- There is not much evidence of Delhi sultans imposing Jizya tax on non-Muslims during the pre-Firoz Tughlaq period. Akbar abolished Jizya finally in 1579 AD. Aurangzeb re-imposed this tax in 1679 which means that it was not collected during the first 22 years of his reign. Jizya was abolished in the post-Aurangzeb period and was never imposed again.
- So far as the issue of forcible conversion to Islam is concerned, all serious-minded historians now agree that the number of such conversions was very small. Most of the Muslim rulers and nobles did not take much interest in converting Hindus to Islam. It is wrong to say that a large number of Hindus were forced to convert. It may be pointed out that a large number of peasants and artisans in different regions of the country who underwent the process of Islamization were not 'Hindu' in the modern sense of the term. It is wrong to argue that most of the people who ultimately became Muslims were originally Hindus. In most cases, it would be more appropriate to use the word 'Islamization' rather than 'conversion'. The process of Islamization was not state-sponsored. It was a slow process of acculturation into Islam caused by complex socio-economic and ecological factors. One of them was transformation of tribal pastoral communities into peasants. One may say that during the periods of such transformation, the areas and communities which came under the influence of the Bhakti movement became

'Hinduised' and those that came under the influence of Sufi and other Muslim shrines became 'Islamized' in the long run. The Medieval period of Indian history was as much a period of 'Hinduisation' as it was of 'Islamization. The historical processes of the rise and growth of large Muslim communities of peasants in Punjab and Bengal and other parts of the country may be explained in this manner.

- The role of the oppressive caste system in conversions cannot be underestimated. A large section of peasants and artisans belonged to the so-called lower castes that bore the brunt of caste oppression. It is hardly surprising that they were attracted towards Islam which, at least in theory, made no distinction between one believer and the other.
- The religious denomination of peasants and artisans did not qualify the degree of exploitation faced by them. Muslim peasants and artisans had to pay the same land revenue and tithes to the Mughal state and its layers of feudatories ranging from the jagirdars to zamindars and chaudharis or village headmen. It must be emphasized that all the medieval states of India - the Rajput kingdoms of early and later periods, the Chola Empire and its successors, the Delhi Sultanate and its successors, the Vijayanagara Empire, the Mughal Empire, the Maratha, Sikh and Jat kingdoms - were based on naked use of military force which they regularly used to appropriate the surplus produce of the peasantry. None of these states - whether ruled by a Hindu king or a Muslim king-was a benevolent or a welfare state. The contradiction of medieval Indian society was not between Hindus and the Muslims, but between the surplus-extracting state and the Hindu-Muslim ruling classes (supported by their religious elites) on the one hand, and the oppressed and toiling mass of peasants and artisans, on the other. It is the peasants and the artisans who were the real victims of the oppression let loose by the rulers, whether Hindu or Muslim. The RSS narrative of Hindu 'victimhood' is a figment of its communal imagination and has no basis in historical reality.
- Lastly, as has been mentioned above, many Hindu ruling groups were beneficiaries of Mughal rule and played an active role in the

consolidation of the Mughal Empire. The commander of the Mughal army that fought against Rana Pratap at Haldighati in 1576 was none other than Raja Man Singh of Amber. It was Raja Man Singh who was responsible for the construction of Krishnaite temples at Vrindavan during Akbar's reign. While Rana Pratap spent his last twenty years after his defeat in the Battle of Haldighati resisting the Mughal power from the hills and forests of Aravali, it was Raja Man Singh, as a leading Mughal noble and military general, who emerged as the most powerful Hindu chief of his time, and his patronage to Vaishnava preachers and shrines became the subject-matter of much glorification in contemporary Vaishnava hagiography. Many Rajputs and their bards looked upon the Battle of Haldighati as a conflict between the two rival Rajput kingdoms of the Kachhwahas and the Sisodias. The Rajput political culture of the period was based on notions of rank, chivalry, hierarchy, attachment to land and loyalty. Conflict with Muslim kings could be as much justified in terms of these cultural values as cooperation and matrimonial alliances with them. Religion hardly played any significant role in determining the issues of conflict and cooperation. During the reign of Aurangzeb, Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber was the governor of the Deccan and the commander of Mughal armies against Shivaji. He was assisted by Raja Jaswant Singh of Marwar who was also the governor of Gujarat and Malwa and commanded Mughal forces in the North West frontier.

- Far from being the victims of 'Muslim rule', many Hindu religious elites and Hindu ruling groups prospered under the Mughal rule. For instance, the Braj and Awadh regions, situated right in the heartland of the Mughal Empire, became the centers of Vaishnava Bhakti.

Question – 4

Why is RSS wrong in depicting the medieval period as a 'dark' period characterized by the decline of Hindu culture under 'foreign' Muslim rulers?

Answer - 4

Relying heavily on the colonial school of historical writings, the RSS

ideologues ignore, deliberately suppress and distort a wide range and variety of evidence about the growth of composite culture and religious syncretism in medieval India. The ignorance of the RSS and its perverted sense of history in this regard would become clear from the following facts:

- The notions of *desh* (country) and *pardesh* (foreign) were fundamentally different in pre-modern India from what they stand for in today's world divided into nation-states based on the modern idea of nationalism. Invasions, military conquests, violent territorial conflicts, growth of regional and local identities, formation and dissolution of kingdoms and empires, means of transport and communications, and other developments continuously shaped and reshaped the notions of belonging to a territory. Sense of patriotism did exist in different forms but it was different from the nationalistic patriotism of modern times. Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Mongols and Mughals entered the country in different periods as traders, travellers, Sufis, intellectuals, craftsmen, and particularly as invaders. The 'invasions' could also be seen as violent migrations of central Asian tribal peoples whose societies were undergoing transformations. Once they settled on the Indian soil and made India their home, they ceased to be looked upon as foreigners. It is during the periods of political and military conflicts that negative cultural images of adversaries developed. Peacetime representations of the Muslims by the Indian ruling elites and court-writers were assimilative in nature. The Muslim rulers and groups also gradually adopted Indian customs, languages, and cultural practices.
- There occurred gradual growth of cross-cultural interactions in the fields of religion, art and architecture, language and literature, and court culture. Many Sanskrit inscriptions of the Sultanate period heaped praise on the reigning sultans. In Sanskrit and vernacular writings, we come across instances of medieval Muslim rulers being equated with Brahminical gods.
- On the other hand, roughly from the Tughlaq period onwards, we begin to come across examples of religious interaction. Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq (r.1325-1351) played Holi and engaged in religious conversations with Jain monks and the Nathpanthi Jogis. Such interactions increased under the regional sultanates and the

Mughals. Amir Khusrau in his literary work titled *Nuh Siphir* showed his patriotism by praising India, its climate, languages especially Sanskrit, its people and even animals. It may also be pointed out that the use of the term 'Hindu' for the inhabitants of India is a gift of the Arabs and the Iranians. It is they who first referred to people of these area as *Hindu*. Gradually, first the Rajputs and other regional non-Muslim rulers and then other upper castes began to call themselves *Hindu*. It could not have been possible without cultural interaction between the Hindu and the Muslim ruling classes.

- Syncretistic trends began to emerge in architecture, music and literature in the Sultanate period but they became more pronounced under the Mughals and the regional sultanates. In the field of music, Amir Khusrau made the initial contribution. The practice of *sama* or musical assemblies among the early Chishti Sufis flourished in the Indian milieu. From the late Sultanate period began the practice of translating Sanskrit works into Persian. Akbar established a translation bureau and got many Sanskrit works including Mahabharata translated into Persian. Abul Fazl devoted a large part of his Ain-i-Akbari to a description of Hindu religion that is sympathetic and objective. One important example of cultural synthesis is the growth of Urdu language during the Mughal period.
- Last but not the least, religious syncretism was an important feature of interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Sufi and the Bhakti movements reinforced each other and a common meeting ground was found. Sufi shrines attracted both Hindus and Muslims. On the other hand, folk deities like Goga Chauhan came to be venerated as Guga Pir. Many Sufis interacted with Nathpanthi Jogis, Sants and Vaishnavas. The authors of Hindavi Sufi romance narratives chose local languages, themes and religious myths to propagate their ideas. Akbar's concept of *sulh-i kul* and the attempts by Dara Shikoh to develop a synthesis of Islamic mysticism and Upanishadic philosophy were remarkable contributions to the growth of a composite religious culture.
- It is these as the path of history which the RSS seeks to obliterate today.

Ancient Science and Hindutva

Prabir Purkayastha

The development of a scientific temper is a directive principle of the Indian Constitution. The Indian Constitution, in Article 51 A (h), demands, that as a part of the fundamental duties citizens, '*...develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform*'.

Recently 107 leading scientists in the country joined an increasing number of intellectuals to protest against the "environment of growing intolerance and suppression of dissent. In their statement they had pointed out that contrary to the Directive principles "*...what we are witnessing instead, is the active promotion of irrational and sectarian thought by important functionaries of the government.*"

The RSS and its camp followers in their eagerness to promote the "greatness" of what they consider Aryan India, promote the vedas as the ultimate in science, take the imagination of mythology, and present it as matter of fact history. They fall back on the totally bogus claim that we having nothing new to discover, as all of it has been already done by our sages in the past. This is the Batra version of science.

Dinanath Batra runs the RSS off-shoot *Ithihas Bachao Andolan*. In his book, *Tejmoy Bharat*, which is now a part of the Gujarat school syllabus, he writes, "...America wants to take the credit for invention of stem cell research, but the truth is that India's Dr. Balkrishna Ganpat

Matapurkar has already got a patent for regenerating body parts.... You would be surprised to know that this research is not new and that Dr Matapurkar was inspired by the Mahabharata” (pp 92-93). He continues that the birth of 100 *Kauravas* from one egg of Gandhari, was an example of stem cell research in ancient India, and not a myth! Batra’s text goes on to claim the existence of television in the time of Mahabharata; Sanjay describing the Mahabharata War remotely to Dhritarashtra is seen as a proof of television. Similarly, transferring an elephant’s head to Ganesh in Indian mythology, is seen as cosmetic surgery.

This Batra view of science is also endorsed by PM Narendra Modi. In his speech while opening a new wing in the Reliance Hospital last year, Modi claimed genetics and organ transplants were available in ancient India. He said, “What I mean to say is that we are the country which had these capabilities. We need to regain these.”

No science required, just study Sanskrit. No developments, only regaining of “ancient” knowledge. No wonder the science budget is continuously being cut under the Modi regime.

No wonder that in the BJP scheme of things, Sanskrit Departments are now pronouncing “authoritatively” from science to Ancient Indian History. It was the Sanskrit Department in Mumbai University that organised a special session during the Indian Science Congress on ancient Indian science and pronounced Rig Veda to be 5,000 to 10,000 years old and that Aryans are not migrants into India.

What the Hindutva forces propagate, is substituting “belief” in place of evidence. Myths and fantasy then become the “real” past, based on belief. This is what the current Head of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), YS Rao advocates, that only Vedas, Ramayana and Mahabharata, should be used as evidence; all other evidence — of linguistics, archaeology and texts — are to be disregarded if they contradict these texts. If, for example, carbon dating of artefacts shows that the Vedic Age is 3,500 years old, that evidence is to be dismissed, as the oral tradition claims a past of 10,000 or 20,000 years.

For a scientific understanding of history, it is an exercise of carefully

sifting through evidence, building a coherent narrative of how people lived and how society developed. Text – written or oral – must be validated by other evidence. History is as much a subject of scientific enquiry as any other discipline. It is not a glorification of the past, but a critical examination of all the developments – negative as well as positive. This is anathema to a Dinanath Batra, or a YS Rao, in whose scheme of things, reason has no purpose unless it endorses belief. And belief is only for the glory of a mythical Hindu past.

Such a view, in which myth masquerades as reality, is not only damaging to history, but also science and mathematics. It simply destroys the history of science and mathematics, not as the great discoveries that living, breathing Indians did, but merely fragments of ancient knowledge re-discovered by studying ancient Sanskrit texts.

The Real History of Indian Science

There is enough evidence to show how ancient India had made major advances in astronomy, mathematics, logic, medicine and linguistics. It had made major advances in metallurgy, creating the famous *wootz* steel, known in Europe as the Damascus steel, superior to what Europe could produce then.

The great contribution of Indian mathematics is to use zero like another number, and perform mathematical operations with it. Aryabhata, born in 476 AD, clearly formulated the place value notation, “*Sthanam sthanam dasa gunam*” meaning from place to place, multiply by 10. The Bhakshali manuscript, found near Peshawar, has been dated to the 2nd to 4th century AD for its knowledge, though the actual manuscript is held to be a copy of older texts. It shows use of the place value notation.

Varahmihira, a younger contemporary of Aryabhata, was the first to use zero in mathematical operations. However, we owe to Bramhagupta the formulation of the mathematical rules for the use of zero as a number. While he correctly formulated rules for addition, subtraction and multiplication by zero, he ran into problems with division by zero. Modern mathematics has “solved” this problem by banning the operation itself.

It is also interesting to note that India also gave the current symbols of the numbers themselves. These are derived from numerals used in the Bramhi script. Brahmi script was widely used to write Prakrit, in which the major Jain mathematical texts were composed.

Eurocentric versions of discoveries underplay the role of other societies such as those made in India.

The Pythagoras Theorem

The Pythagoras theorem is one such claim. Pythagoras was a Greek mathematician who is credited with the discovery of the theorem. In its most popular version, the theorem states that in a right angled triangle, the square on the hypotenuse (the side opposite the right angle) is equal to the square on the other two sides. However other societies also knew of this concept, though in different forms. In India, this relationship is available in the *Sulba-sutras*, the texts that tell us how to make different kinds of altars or *vedis* for religious purposes. There are four important *Sulba-sutras*, that of Baudhayana (c 800 BCE), Apastamba (c 600 BCE), Manava (c 750 BCE) and Katyayana (c 200 BCE).

The *Sulba-sutras* gives us a different formulation of the theorem, using rectangles instead of triangles. It is clear from the texts of the *Sulba-sutras*, that the authors knew the geometrical relationships between the three sides of a right-angled triangle, and also knew a set of numbers – known as Pythagorean triples – that satisfy this relationship.

The Pythagoras theorem was known not only in India and Greece but also in Babylon, China and in Egypt and used for land measurement, construction of religious structures (pyramids in Egypt and the fire altars in India) and for constructing canals (Babylon). There are Babylonian tablets used for teaching scribes that predate the *Sulba-sutras* – they date to 1800 BCE — and show a knowledge of Pythagorean triples and the Pythagoras theorem. It is also known that Babylon and Egypt routinely exchanged goods, knowledge and texts. Egypt, either independently, or from Babylon, also knew about Pythagoras theorem. It is also known that Pythagoras spent a considerable part of his early life in Egypt and learned mathematics from the Egyptians. The Chinese

also knew about the Pythagoras theorem; in China it was known as the *kou-ku* theorem.

Scholars agree that the Pythagoras theorem was known in various cultural areas. The point here is that different societies were simultaneously making new discoveries similar to each other, sometimes through exchange and others independently. While we claim pride in the great discoveries made by scientists in ancient India, to build theories that India alone was the fountain head of all knowledge and that all that has to be done is to teach vedic mathematics and other branches of knowledge is to go against the very spirit of scientific discovery and change which marked the work of scientists in ancient India.

Vedic Mathematics and the spirit of learning

There are also claims being made by Swami Bharati Krishna Tirthaji, the Shankaracharya of Puri regarding what he calls “Vedic” mathematics. Professor SG Dani and others have shown that this has nothing to do with ancient mathematics or the Vedas, but just a set of tricks or gimmicks for some specific calculations. They have nothing to do with mathematics as we know it, and in the age of calculators and computers, have very little value. Though claiming for itself the antiquity of *Atharvaveda*, no such text in the *Atharvaveda* has been found in the existing literature on the Vedas.

For the Hindutva lobby, the mythical past was the repository of all knowledge all known history is the attempt to recover this lost knowledge. The actual history shows continuous developments. The four versions of *Sulba-sutras* are not identical – they show clear development of methods, accuracy of results, and theoretical formulations with time. Similarly, mathematics shows advances, from a place value notation based on 10, the use of zero as a place holder and finally, with Varhamihira and Brahmagupta, treating zero as a number.

The Pythagoras theorem and the development of the number system also shows how the history of science and mathematics is not one of who did what first, but to see the broad sweep of development and what have been the contributions of each cultural area. It is very different

from cultural supremacist claims of any specific cultural area.

What a contrast to the Hindutva supremacist view of history

Unlike the current Hindutva propagandists, Indian science then also had no hesitation in acknowledging what it had borrowed. Varahamihira (6th century AD), in his compilation of astronomical knowledge, *Panchasidhantika* (Treatise on Five Canons), attributes two of them to outsiders – Paulisa (Greek origin, probably Alexandria) and Romaka (Roman or Greek origin). Similarly, older astronomical and mathematical knowledge shows the influence of Babylon.

Later on in the medieval period, the Arabs took Indian mathematics, astronomy and medical texts to West Asia. Just like our scientists in ancient India, the Arabs too had no hesitation in acknowledging from where they had acquired knowledge. In astronomy, Indian methods were introduced in West Asia by Fazari, in the 8th Century, who compiled the knowledge of Brahmagupta's *Bramhasphutasiddhanta*, in *Sindhind*. Al Khwarzmi wrote a treatise on the Indian system of numerals — *Kitâb al-Gam' wa-al-tafrîq bi-? isâbal-Hind*, translated in Latin as *Algoritmi de numero Indorum* (al-Khwârizmî on the Hindu Art of Reckoning). Leonardo of Pisa popularised the Indian system of numbers in Europe through his book, *Liber Abaci* (Book of Calculations).

In the medieval period major advances were made in Indian technology but these advances are ignored by the Hindutva supremacist school of thought. The interaction with Central and West Asia, brought into India many new aspects of architecture, the ability to make arches and domes, the true arches and domes, the popular use of paper, brought in stitched clothes, metal inlays, the Persian wheel for deep well irrigation and new type of looms for weaving cotton.

Indian Contributions to Aeronautics and Rocketry

Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan are two pioneers in advancing rocketry. They used such rockets effectively against the British in the Anglo-Mysore wars. Roddam Narasimbha, one of the doyens of Indian aeronautics, in a paper in 1985, discussed Tipu and Hyder Ali's contributions to the development of rocketry. Abdul Kalam, who according to the current

Culture Minister, Mahesh Sharma, was a “nationalist” “despite being a Muslim”, accorded high praise in his autobiography, to Tipu Sultan and Hyder Ali for their contributions to rocketry.

Roddam discusses the discovery of gunpowder and early rockets in China in the 11th century, how they travelled to other parts of the world including India. Rockets fell into relative disuse after the discovery of the cannon in the 13th century.

Roddam analysed Tipu and Hyder Ali's major contributions to rocketry. He noted that they used metal casing for the rockets, instead of the then prevalent bamboo and paper casings. With such metal casings, rockets could travel up to 2 Km's, a huge increase in their range. These rockets also had a much greater carrying capacity. They also used sword blades tied to the rockets, to stabilise their flight, much in the same way we use a long stick in our Diwali rockets. Such swords served as weapons, when they landed among the enemy soldiers.

Tipu had built a huge number of rockets and used massed rocket attacks in his battles against the British. In Tipu's 1780 battle in Pollilur (Second Anglo Mysore War), such rocket attacks played a decisive role in the defeat of the British.

After Tipu's defeat in the 4th Anglo Mysore War, the British carried away a large number of unused rockets to England, where William Congreve subjected them to a scientific study. It was Congreve's research – reverse engineering as we would call it today — and further development that led to the use of rockets by the British against the French in the Napoleonic wars, and later against the Americans.

As opposed to the actual contributions in aeronautics and rocketry, we have the fraudulent claims of the Hindutva lobby. In the 102nd Indian Science Congress last year, a session titled “Ancient Sciences through Sanskrit” was organised by the Sanskrit Department of Mumbai University. This had a paper on ancient Indian aviation technology, presented by two speakers, one of whom was Captain Anand J Bodas, a retired pilot. He stated to the press such gems as, “modern science is unscientific”, and in Vedic or ancient Indian times, an aeroplane traveled

“through the air from one country to another, from one continent to another continent, from one planet to another planet ... and could move left, right, as well as backwards...”

Bodas’s claims are based on *Vaimânika Shâstra*, a Sanskrit text written by Subbarya Shastry. Shastry lived from 1866 to 1940, while Bharadwaja lived at least 2,000 years before. The only “evidence” of antiquity of the text is Shastry’s claim that Rishi Bharadwaj came to him while he was in “psychic trance” and dictated the entire text to him!

The text, *Vaimânika Shâstra*, was extensively studied by a team of 5 professors from the aeronautical and mechanical engineering departments of Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore. Their conclusions are telling. *Vaimânika Shâstra* was not an ancient text. It was written in modern Sanskrit in the early 20th century, and not in Vedic Sanskrit. They also concluded that it was bad science, and nothing that was built as described in the above text could have ever flown.

In contrast, Roddam’s study shows us how history of science is to be treated. Not the vain glory of a mythical past, claiming aeroplanes 2,000 years back (now extended to 5,000 years) that go forward and backward, but meticulous research and analysis of what it really was. He also shows that such advances that took place in India were not in isolation, but built on the advances of others, and how such advances fed into the larger body of aeronautic knowledge, and are very much a part of what we are doing even today.

Indian Medicine

Indian medicine also shows a decisive break with use of rituals and practical medicine, as available in the *Atharvaveda*, to an evidence based system in the *Charaka Samhita* and *Susruta Samhita*. DP Chattopadhyaya has written about the clear materialist and scientific basis of both these medical texts that make it very different from what was available earlier. Recent research has shown the influence of Buddhist medical practice in the monasteries and its link to what emerges later as the *Charaka* school.

How Not to Study Science

The Hindutva advocacy of “creating” knowledge by studying only ancient texts was practiced extensively in India and Europe in the medieval period. It meant learning by rote all old texts, while relegating all experiments and examination of nature, as the task of “lower” classes, or in India, “lower” castes. The monasteries in Europe privileged ancient knowledge over what developed in the living practice of societies; just as the Gurukuls did in India. This was the same method of study which had destroyed all knowledge of India’s past in the so-called centres of Indian learning. The Gurukuls of Benares, on being shown the Ashoka Pillar in Saranath, had no knowledge of what they were; their “learned” texts had no information on Ashoka, whose edicts were then turning up all over India. The Brahminical texts had destroyed all knowledge of Buddhism in India, and therefore in their books, Ashoka’s reign never existed!

It is also interesting to trace the impact of Jain and Buddhist practices in the history of Indian science. Both were anti-Brahminical and therefore rejected the authority of the Vedas. They were similar to the *Lokayata* school, who also rejected the received wisdom of the Vedas. It is not surprising that all these helped to put Indian science and mathematics on a foundation of reason and evidence unlike the so-called Vedic school that only believed in the ancient and received wisdom of the Vedas.

The Hindutva lobby would like us to create a fraudulent history of Indian science, which will damage the development of science and technology in the country and take us only backwards.

RSS Takeover of Institutions

Prof. P. Gopinath

Institutions established to nurture the idea and practice of cultural plurality, equity and scientific inquiry are systematically being targeted since the BJP government assumed office. National institutions play an important role in furthering the declared agenda of the nation state. The BJP government now seeks to align them with the sectarian agenda of the Sangh Parivar headed by the RSS.

Hindu nationalism and its political organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS, have consistently argued for a Hindu India where Muslims and other minorities should be relegated to a subordinate status. This position is repeatedly found in the writings of Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwarkar. They provided the rival idea of India — an India based on a dominant Hindu identity. And each time the political forces that broadly represent the idea of a plural India have suffered setbacks, the demand for a Hindu India has grown stronger. For the first time in 1998, when the BJP led National Democratic Alliance came to power at the Centre with the support of some regional parties, the RSS-linked government began to focus its energies on twisting the agenda of institutions of higher research and school education to further the Hindutva agenda. Under this dispensation the institutions that faced considerable damage were the ICHR, the University Grants Commission and the National Council of Educational Research and Training, among many others.

The NDA- I had packed institutions with RSS-BJP appointees and others not associated with the Hindutva cause, but willing to cooperate and collaborate. With the coming of the present NDA-II government wherein the BJP has a majority on its own in the Lok Sabha, the Hindutva strategy has changed. Now fellow travellers can be dispensed with. Instead active members of various organisations with declared commitment to the RSS vision are being placed in institutions of importance, without reference to academic or professional credibility: for example, Yellapragada Sudershan Rao to the ICHR or Gajendra Chauhan to the Film and Television Institute of India. In fact, only RSS members or those who publicly swore allegiance to Modi are being accommodated.

The first historical institution to have been disbanded was the Planning Commission. Here Modi's predecessors in the Congress played a crucial role in preparing the ground for the Planning Commission's formal demise by systematically eroding and attenuating planned economic development seduced by the promises of the free market.

Continuing with the NDA-I's agenda the new government has again targeted institutions associated with history, culture and education.

Institutional mutation began with the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR). The ICHR along with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS), the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) and the National Council for Rural Institutes constitute the autonomous Independent Councils of Research (ICR) funded entirely by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Of these five institutions the ICHR and to a lesser extent the ICSSR have borne the brunt of the Sangh Parivar's interference.

History is crucial to the RSS agenda for legitimising both its own role and well as its agenda to transform India into a Hindu nation. Unfortunately for them their historical claims have repeatedly failed when subjected to standard protocols of historical inquiry and verification. Under NDA-I, the ICHR had attempted to "correct" the "distortions" in Indian history by recalling from the press the volumes of the *Towards Freedom* series edited by professors K.N.Panikkar and Sumit Sarkar, and put the entire project on hold. They had also initiated a project on

the Saraswati that failed to pass scholarly muster subsequently.

These decisions were reversed by the new Council, after the end of the NDA I regime.

With the coming of the NDA-II, the Council was reconstituted within 3 months. None of the eight sitting members who were eligible for a second term, found a place. The eighteen historians on the Council, except for three or four, are now affiliated to the Akhil Bharatiya Itihaasa Yojana, the RSS' Kerala based Bharatiya Vichara Kendra, the BJP or think-tanks supportive of the BJP.

Indian historians criticised the government for selecting a Chairperson and members who were largely unknown to their peers but to no avail.

The newly constituted ICHR emphatically reiterated that the task at hand was to remove “distortions” from Indian historiography by resort to an Indian approach and emphasise ancient Indian history. They also demanded a change in the constitution of the ICHR which *inter alia* states that the ICHR should promote writing of scientific history shorn of superstition while promoting secularism and the plural identity of India.

Accomplishing these tasks began with inviting scholars and *gurus* who by no stretch of imagination could be considered professional historians. One was a Belgian professor who rubbished Indian historians and the other an American yoga *guru* who strongly felt that we should return to the Vedas and “take the red out of Indian history”. Any academic disagreement was countered by heckling from imported RSS goons.

Step two was to dismiss Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, a renowned historian, from the post of Editor of the Council's internationally reputed journal, *The Indian Historical Review*. Step three was to disband the entire Advisory Committee of the journal that had some of the best historians from around the world - by no means were they all Marxists. In June, the Member Secretary of the Council resigned after he was not allowed to register his disagreement over the disbanding of the journal's Advisory Committee.

Rao and the new Council all shared a commitment to debunk extant research and produce an “undistorted” account of India's past. Of

course, this “authentic” view of the Indian past had to be Vedic in its historical record and narrative. Therefore the study of early India was emphasised. Although themes such as religion and caste have been subjects of debates for many years and innumerable academic works of repute have been published on them, these themes are now to be sponsored keeping in mind the RSS perspectives.

The next move was to sanction a research project to write the history of early India using Sanskrit sources. This project was first unofficially granted to the Sanskrit Department of the University of Delhi in the presence of Subramanian Swamy who demanded there that the books of Bipan Chandra and Romila Thapar should be burnt. Sanskrit is a very rich classical language and most historians of early India have used Sanskrit sources. It is indeed ironic that members of the ICHR Council who argue that Indian history must be seen through the prism of ancient India are themselves illiterate in Sanskrit.

The ICHR at present does not have a regular Member Secretary whose functions have been arrogated by the Chairman himself. Minutes of meetings of the statutory committees of the Council no longer appear on its website. Probably, the distortions of Indian history writing can only be corrected in secrecy.

The ICSSR (Indian Council for Social Science Research), founded in 1969, has outsmarted the government agenda for change. By getting its constitution amended, it made sure that, unlike the ICHR, wholesale changes could not be implemented by administrative fiat. Under the changed rules, nominations for membership to the Council have to come from present Council members and present and past ICSSR national professors. Orchestrating nominations from this large group of academics is difficult for the BJP. Thus the ICSSR continues without any major change, except for not having a regular Member Secretary. The present Chairman is not a BJP appointee. Unlike the ICHR, the RSS and BJP are less directly invested in the ICSSR, which coordinates research in disciplines ranging from commerce to geography and economics. These disciplines, unlike history, do not have a direct and immediate impact on the politics of the Hindu Right.

The NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) set up in 1961 is another institution that has attracted the attention of

the BJP-RSS. The NCERT was established by amalgamating seven education related institutions to provide a new holistic, national perspective on education that would free it from the elitist colonial pattern of school education. By being responsible for the formulation of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education and also being involved in the training of teachers, the NCERT is seen as a crucial vehicle of indoctrination by the BJP. During their last stint in power the NCERT school textbooks had been changed. These changes were undone after the BJP regime ended. The BJP and the RSS are today in a hurry to again get the NCERT to do their bidding. Professor Pravin Sinclair, the Director, was forced to resign after the Ministry levelled allegations of financial irregularities against her. Interestingly, her exit happened when the NCERT was in the middle of reviewing reports of 21 committees set up as part of the review of the National Curriculum Framework. Dina Nath Batra of the RSS had earlier criticized the NCERT for undertaking the review in haste without consulting the government. Curiously, the institution is still without a Director. Meanwhile they have appointed Amba Charan Vashishth, a septuagenarian, as consultant to the NCERT's publication department and to handle public relations. Vashishth was earlier part of the editorial team of the BJP's *Kamal Sandesh* and is an editor of a book that attacks Teesta Setalvad.¹

The National Book Trust (NBT) is another institution funded by the Ministry of HRD. Jawaharlal Nehru had established the Trust in 1957 to promote the culture of reading in India by making available good quality literature at affordable prices in the various languages of India. The duly appointed Chairman, A. Sethumadhavan the noted Malayalam writer and Sahitya Akademi award winner, was gently asked to leave before his tenure came to an end. His replacement came predictably from the RSS, with Mr Baldeo Sharma, a former editor of the RSS' *Panchjanya* being appointed the new Chairman. Not content with this, Rita Chowdhury, wife of an Asom Gana Parishad leader who had recently joined the BJP, has been appointed as Director, after she, along with all the other candidates for this post, had been found not suitable in an earlier interview.

The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) is headed by eighty-seven year old Lokesh Chandra who has described Modi as the

reincarnation of god. Chandra will seek to develop relations between India and south-east Asia via programmes based on the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The ICCR organised a conference on "Sanskrit and Indological Studies in India, Russia and Neighbouring Countries: Past, Present and Future" in Moscow at the end of October 2015. One of the aims of the conference was to explore "ways and means for utilization of the ancient Indian wisdom pooled in the academic world of Russia and neighbouring countries". The Indian coordinator of the conference is the Head of the Department of Sanskrit of Delhi University, who is also being supported by the ICHR in writing a revised history of early India using Sanskrit sources.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has played a crucial role in the BJP-RSS politics of inventing convenient histories. The ASI came in for a lot of flak for the unprofessional way in which it conducted excavations in Ayodhya, and for 'finding' a temple under the Babri Masjid, where none existed. Each time the BJP has been in power the ASI that comes under the Ministry of Culture sets off to find the Saraswati river. While the search for the lost Saraswati was called off after the NDA-I government was voted out, the present government has once again set the ASI to renew the search. The BJP-RSS enthusiasm to find the river is so great that while the ASI is excavating the Hakra Ghaggar basin in the north west, the Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has ordered the Central Ground Water Board to test the water of a well, located inside the Allahabad Fort, in an attempt to trace the source and route of the lost river.²

The Ministry of Culture is also the nodal ministry for the National Archives of India and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. The National Archives is still without a head while the NMML Director has been forced to resign. The head of the Lalit Kala Akademi was also unceremoniously removed and the apex body is without a Chairperson.

The government brazened out the protracted agitation against it for appointing a B-grade actor known only for his role in a mythological television serial as the head of the country's prestigious Film and Television Institution of India. The four month old strike by the students against Gajendra Chauhan's appointment has only been recently

suspended after all negotiations with the government's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting failed.

The government's blatant attempts to take control of institutions to make them serve the cause of Hinduisng India has dangerously reached a stage where these institutions established for nurturing a plural national culture informed by scientific inquiry are faced with the real prospect of institutional annihilation or total mutation. The cultural, intellectual and educational institutions of India are today being reduced by the State to agencies that churn out simple, scientifically limited propaganda, convinced as Hitler was that it should cater exclusively to public sentiment and "not the approbation of a small group of intellectuals or artistic people."³

The funds at the disposal of these institutions, taken together, are enormous and they cover a range of activities and concerns – school and higher education; research in humanities, social sciences and sciences; grants for publications; cultural activities and heritage and preservation of monuments; maintenance and expansion of libraries, museums and archives; funding of NGOs on a host of issues; student stipends and fellowships; subsidies to publishers for specific publications; bulk purchases of books for public libraries in India and the embassies abroad, youth activities and sports, women and child welfare, and much more.

A shift in priorities and policies and the takeover of institutions connected with this range of activities would decisively shift many aspects of knowledge production in favour of the Sangh Parivar's agenda and away from the constitutional mandate of secularism, scientific temper and safeguards for the minorities, the oppressed and the marginalised. With this huge patronage it would also create a stake in the BJP government for thousands of professionals, educationists, cultural practitioners and intellectuals.

¹ (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/70-year-old-with-links-to-BJP-magazine-now-NCERT-consultant/articleshow/47607959.cms>)

² <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/bjp-government-saraswati-asi-river-renews-search-ancient/1/394971.html>

³ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, <http://www.greatwar.nl/books/meinkampf/meinkampf.pdf>

"Take Over"--The RSS Way

Central Board of Film Certification

Pahlaj Nihalani, author of the slogan 'Har Har Modi, Ghar Ghar Modi' before the 2014 general elections, was appointed Chairman of Central Board of Film Certification in January 2015. His predecessor Leela Samson resigned because various Hindutva groups were unhappy with her.

Prasar Bharti

A Surya Prakash, consulting editor of the pro-BJP paper Pioneer and a fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation, a Delhi-based pro-RSS think tank, was appointed head of Prasar Bharti, the autonomous body that runs Doordarshan and All India Radio.

National Council for Teachers' Education (NCTE)

This key body in charge of all teachers' training colleges in the country is being manipulated by RSS backed groups. As a first step, they are pressing for Sarangapani and Virginius Xaxa because they are progressive liberals.

NCERT

Parvin Sinclair, the director of this top educational body, which determines school curricula, resigned in October 2014, two years before her term was supposed to end. It was alleged that there were irregularities. As a result of her ouster, the last stage of updating the National Curriculum Framework 2005 had to be aborted. The search is on for a 'suitable' candidate.

Universities

The Chancellor of Nalanda University in Bihar (run by the Centre), Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, resigned because of BJP pressure on him. In an open letter he said that the Board wanted him to continue but the government didn't.

In Rajasthan, vice-chancellors not openly allied with the Sangh Parivar are facing the heat. Dr Dev Swarup from Rajasthan University has publicly complained of excessive RSS interference in running the university. The search committee to pick his successor is headed by an RSS-backed vice-chancellor, Kailash Sodhnani. Two members of Rajasthan University's Syndicate are part

of the RSS-backed Akhil Bhartiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh.

Girish Chandra Tripathi, an RSS functionary, was appointed the Vice-chancellor of Banaras Hindu University on 24 November 2014. His name was recommended by a search-cum-selection committee headed by Justice (retired) Giridhar Malviya, grandson of Madan Mohan Malviya and a proposer of Narendra Modi's candidature from Varanasi. Malviya and Tripathi are old associates, according to media reports.

In Haryana, the BJP government has scrapped all literary academies constituted by the previous government and will be appointing its own chosen persons shortly.

NIT, Nagpur

Vishram Ramchandra Jamdar, a professed RSS swayamsevak, was appointed as the head of Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology, Nagpur even when he was not among the four shortlisted candidates for the post.

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)

The Prime Minister's Office earlier this year rejected the appointment of theoretical physicist Sandip Trivedi at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) on "technical grounds", making it the first time that a director's appointment has been vetoed by the PMO. Trivedi is a front-ranking theoretical physicist and recipient of prestigious awards. Bharat Ratna recipient and renowned scientist Dr CNR Rao sought PM Narendra Modi's intervention in the matter, but there was no response. Rao alleged that something similar happened in the appointment of the head of the Bangalore-based Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR).

IIT

Nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar resigned from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay's governing body in March 2015, following reports of differences with the HRD minister over the selection of directors for IITs at Ropar, Bhubaneswar and Patna. The HRD ministry's decision to trash the earlier selection process and recall all 37 candidates for interviews was considered by many in the search-cum-selection committee as interference and an attempt to get the ministry's favourites short-listed.

Indian Institute for Advanced Studies, Shimla

Gopalkrishna Gandhi resigned as chairperson of IIAS soon after the BJP's electoral victory in May last year. Media reports say that HRD Minister Smriti Irani got Chandrakala Padia appointed to the post. Padia's name wasn't part of the panel of probables that had been prepared earlier.



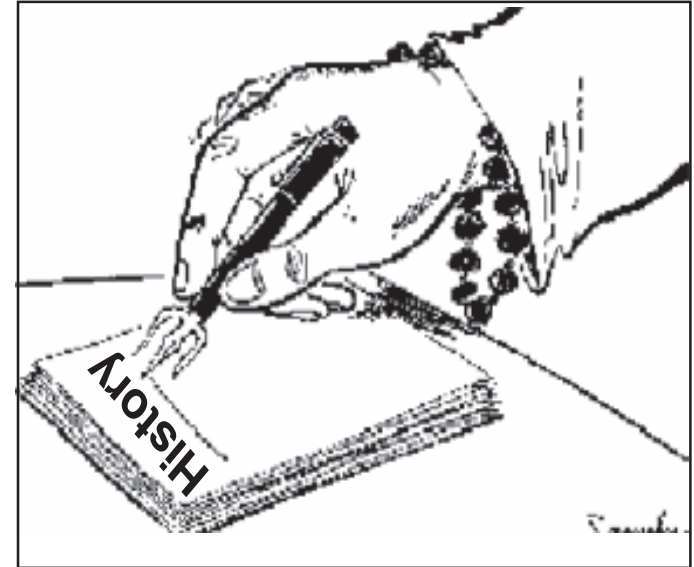
December 2015

Price : 10/-

Published by Hari Singh Kang from AKG Bhawan, 27-29 Bhai Vir Singh Marg, New Delhi-110001 on behalf of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Printed at Progressive Printers, A-21, Jhilmil Industrial Area. G.T. Road Shahdara, Delhi-110095 (Phone : 22119770)

RSS Against India

5



Courtesy: The Hindu

Assault on Science and History in India

CPI(M) PUBLICATION