



History, Lies and Ignorance: The Rise of 'Saffron' Education in India

It won't be an exaggeration on my part, if I chose to call India an idiocracy. With Modi at the helm, the BJP establishment controlling the levers of power at the Centre, is plunging India into abysmal ignorance. This self-proclaimed harbinger of Hindu Nationalism, dream to implement Manusmriti as an ideology – a code of conduct notorious for its inhuman and callous treatment of women and lower caste people. To push their agenda, the perjurers of hindutva is molding malleable young minds.

The BJP regime is re-writing history the hindutva way – replacing historical facts with Hindu mythology. For example, endorsing that airplanes existed in India since ancient times as Ram flew from Lanka to Ayodhya. Sushruta, the 'father of surgery' practiced over 300 surgical procedures including the process of stitching intestines by using 'ant-heads as stitching material'. And cosmetic surgery was also an indigenous secret! How?? Hindu God Ganesha has an elephant trunk for nose!!

And if this wasn't disturbing enough, know it's time to unlearn the history classes too. Did you know, Taj Mahal, Holy Kaaba, Vatican City and Westminster Abbey were once the abode of Shiva? Zapped??.... These are not the views of Hindutva zealots alone, but children attending schools run by RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) are acquiring saffron hues too.

Its ideological fountainhead, RSS, is a right-wing organization actively providing character training through Hindu discipline to unite the community and to form a Hindu nation. It is highly inspired by Hitler's Nazism which decimated millions in Germany, and in its hate-minority bid, hopes to cleanse India of lower caste people, Muslims and Christians. The Hindutva brigade romanticizes with the idea of 'saffron India', even before BJP rose to power in 2014. Illiteracy and bigotry, which is congenital to the RSS, has hyper-communalized text books, tampered with National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) books, and its ideologues rewriting an imagined and exaggerated past. States where, the BJP has strong foothold, have seen pernicious effects. Gujarat, has so far introduced nine new textbooks authored by Hindu ideologues. And introduction of Gita and Mahabharata into the school curriculum, while upholding the Sanskrit language.

We know very well that the system of education in any state serves as a tool to ensure that the 'model citizen' is developed through the building of thoughts and values fundamental to the prevailing system. This immensely important organ of the education system has not been overlooked by the Hindutva brigade to ensure that those attending educational institutions are indoctrinated with the values of Hindu nationalism.

Let's have a peek into some 'saffron pearls' of wisdom imparted in Vidya Bharati Schools and Shishu Mandirs:

- **Iran was first settled by Indians (Aryans).**
- **Homer adapted Valmiki's Ramayana into an epic called Iliad.**
- **Greek philosophers like Herodotus and Aristophanes were influenced by the Vedas.**

- The Egyptian faith was based on Indian traditions according to Plato and Pythagoras.
- The language of the Native American Indians evolved from ancient Indian languages.
- The cow is the mother of us all, in whose body Gods are believed to reside.
- Jesus Christ roamed the Himalayas and drew his ideas from Hinduism.
- In the text books distributed in Vidya Bharti schools, the map of India is shown as including not only Pakistan and Bangladesh but also the entire region of Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet and even parts of Myanmar ("punnya bhoomi Bharat")

A SAMPLE FROM THE HISTORY TEXTS:

These texts are being used in Shishu Mandirs and Government Schools in BJP-controlled states.

Ancient History

- *Rama and Krishna took birth here to destroy evil and defend justice, religion and Sarasvati, and god took birth here many times to make this land pure. India is referred to as Sone ki chidiya and jagadguru (p. 4, Gaurav Gatha)*
- *Our land has always been seen with greedy eyes by the marauders, barbarous invaders and oppressive rulers. This story of invasion and resistance is our 3000 year long Gaurav Gatha. When this proud tradition actually began is difficult to say because no books were written at that time but we believe that the first man was born in this land. (p. 8, GG)*
- *Bacchus and Dionysis, among the earliest invaders, suffered such a defeat that feelings of terror ran in Greece (p. 9, GG). Darius had to face such a defeat that never could Iran raise its eyes towards India. (p.10, GG)*
- *About 2200 years ago, India's trade was spread far and wide; foreign markets were filled with goods made in India. Heaps of gems and jewels and gold and silver filled the treasures. People of the entire world used to look to India with greedy eyes (p. 12, GG)*
- *Mahapadma Nanda had so much wealth that if divided among the population, every person would get Rs. 50 lakhs each (p. 13, GG)*
- *Alexander's army was defeated at the hands of Puru and Alexander himself had to seek forgiveness (p.15, GG)*
- *Pushyamitra destroyed the Greeks. After this, the people of Greece could not attack Bharat. Later they came only as refugees. As beggars they begged for their lives but never dared to look with proud eyes. The great man who destroyed the Greek power from its very roots was emperor Pushyamitra. India is proud of him even today. Every day we remember his name. (p. 35-37, GG)*

Medieval History

- *Islam spread in India solely by way of the sword. The Muslims came to India "with the sword in one hand and the Quran in the other. Numberless Hindus*

were forcibly converted to Islam on the point of the sword. This struggle for freedom became a religious war, Numerous sacrifices were made in the name of religion. We went on winning one battle after another. We did not let the foreign rulers settle down to rule, but we were not able to reconvert the separated brothers to Hinduism." (Itihaas Gaa Raha Hai)

- *Mohammad Ghorī killed lakhs of people, Visvanath Temple and Bhagwan Krishna's birth place were converted into mosques. In turn he was killed by Prithviraj Chauhan. (p. 67-68, GG)*
- *Qutb Minar was constructed by Samundragupta, and its original name was Vishnu Sthambha. (p. 73, GG)*
- *When Peshava Madhav Rao came to the throne no one could raise his eyes. The English, the French and the Portuguese shivered; they presented gifts in homage in his court with their heads bowed. Delhi's emperor was his puppet. Moghul power had ended. Nizam and other Muslim states with bowed heads sought his (Peshava's) refuge. The entire country was in a sense independent (p. 111 GG)*
- *Child marriage, jauhar, sati, purdah, jadu-tona and superstition were all due to the fear of the Muslims (p. 284 HSIB 1)*
- *The Babri Mosque was constructed after destroying a temple, which in turn stood on the exact spot where Rama was born. (High School Itihaas Bhaag 2, p. 146)*
- *Destruction of temples and schools attached to them and the building of mosques in their place was a general policy with Aurangzeb. (HSIB 2 p. 120)*

Modern Indian History

- *The Muslims are solely blamed for the partition of India.*
- *The RSS as an organisation is presented as central to the Freedom Movement. Dr. Keshavrao B. Hegdewar is one of the tallest leaders of the freedom struggle. Statements of a large number of national leaders have been quoted in praise of the RSS.*
- *Although there are 60 pages on the entry of the British and establishment of British rule, there is nothing that would promote an understanding of colonialism (HSIB 2)*
- *The book is full of factual errors, inconsistencies, and chronological lapses.*
- *The Shishu Mandir text book is worse on all these counts, and the RSS and its leaders are said to have removed the evils which hundreds of years of slavery had given. This Sangathan (organization) became an object of pride for the country (p. 86)*

(Courtesy: Teesta Setalvad)

The imagined narratives don't stop here: there's a long list of anti-Muslim rhetoric of hate. The epithet intolerant is used to refer to Muslim rulers like Aurangzeb and Shahjahan; it is taught that every single ruler of Mughal Empire was anti-Hindu, and how they on the point of

sword, plundered the wealth of India, humiliated Hindu women, demolished temples and promoted Islam.

The magnitude of this hindutva 'hate-wave' is such that prominent academicians, writers and historians are either being asked to resign, or replaced by some ignorant RSS worker. Educational bodies such as NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training), National Book Trust, ICHR and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library are being infiltrated by Hindutva advocates.

The dawn of intolerant and regressive era of Modi is here to stay for two more years, and it seems before the regime runs out of course, the venom of hindutva would swamp the whole country with benightedness.

To serve their not-so-hidden interest, they have declared a holy war against Islam from all quarters – militarily, economically, intellectually, socially and educationally. They have been portraying Muslims as traitors and state enemies. This creation of the atmosphere of Islamophobia has seen a steep rise in hate crimes against Muslims.

And who in their right minds, would allow it to happen? We need to put an end to this divisive political card, being played unabashedly. Is it not time for us introspect, is there some fault in our understanding that drives us to continually maintain instead of challenging the status quo? Is there any possibility for us changing fundamentally, before we too shrink into a few pages of history as cowards?

The pertinent question giving us a cold stare is – how? By voting again for Congress in the next general elections? This is precisely what we have been doing for decades –either fooled by Congress or BJP. The BJP would saffronize education and the Congress would secularize education... a two-edged sword for Muslims.

Think... It's not illegal yet!

If only we have known, if only we have understood the callousness and treachery of the political class, if only we have applied our brains, if only we have identified that oppression is something innate to this system -- our kids won't be learning the wrong lessons; our kids won't be acting Ram or Sita in school plays; our kids' won't be celebrating Diwali in neighborhood; our kids won't be learning Allah sent the first prophet to India!!

Whether it's saffronization or secularization, education would continue to be an albatross under this system.

The children today will eventually take over the affairs of the world. They will be the torch-bearer, and will make policies and decisions on war and peace. And if we want to have a just and peaceful society, we need to strike their intellect... make them think and culture them the correct way – the way their and our Creator want and not according to how a few individuals trick us into believing a certain way.

As Muslims living in India, we must never view ourselves as 'Indian Muslims', but rather as Muslims who happen to reside in India. The term 'Indian Muslim' is not a simple description of a Muslim who happens to speak Hindi and eats vegetarian. Rather, the term denotes a distinct identity that is the personification of the supposed blend of Islam and Hinduism. The teachings of Gita and Ramayana, or partaking in Republic or Independence Day celebrations are those to be embraced by the 'Indian Muslim'. So, the Indian Muslim is the one who professes the 'Shahaada' of Islam but simultaneously lives in conformity to Hinduism or Secularism.

First and foremost, Muslims in India must discard such labels and assert themselves only as Islamic identities. It should be clear to all that the call for integration is a direct assault upon the Islamic identity and is an invitation to the Muslim to abandon his reference to Islam. Muslims must not fall prey to the 'identity crisis' as their identity has been determined by their Deen. Preserving the identity of Islam means to ensure that Islam alone determines every thought, viewpoint and opinion. Every thought alien to Islam and the hindutva/secular repackaging of Islam is rejected. It is also imperative that Muslims are aware of the propaganda, the styles and means used to assimilate them, or to instill fear in them whether these are via government policy, education or by the participation in Kufr politics.

Secondly, Muslims must maintain their commitment to Islam in every aspect of their life. Islam must be the source of guidance for every matter and not only the ibadat, as this would only enable the Kufr plans to secularise/saffronize Muslims. The halal and the haram must remain the measures for action, regardless of where a Muslim lives or what problems they might face. So as the Muslims in India remained bound to the Muslims of Pakistan, or elsewhere. This desire required Muslims to undertake political actions, those that have been defined and permitted by Islam.

Thirdly, as the Indians are being attacked from two sides -- the true nature of both the capitalist system and hindutva must be understood. Their foundation, which contradicts the Islamic Aqeedah, gives rise to way of life that leads to nothing but misery and discrepancies. Thus, Muslims in India must expose the failings of the systems, while presenting Islam as the alternative. Rather than integrating, Muslims should interact and engage with those around them, explaining and exemplifying Islam in both word and deed.

Fourthly, Muslims living in India must remain linked to the global Muslim Ummah. The concern and sentiments for Muslims all around the world and their plight is something the Kuffar work tirelessly to eliminate. This concern must never be diverted so that Muslims at a particular place become indifferent to the sufferings of the Ummah as a whole. This unique bond amongst the Muslims must generate a sense of responsibility within those living in the East.

Finally, Muslims in India should be at the forefront of engaging in the obligatory work to resume the Islamic way of life in the Islamic lands through the re-establishment of the Khilafah Rashida. Muslims must engage in the Islamic political actions aimed at bringing to task the corrupt rulers in the Muslim world and replacing their systems of Kufr with the system of Islam. It is the Islamic Khilafah that will implement all that the Islamic identity embodies; all that the Shar'iah commands and will physically unite the global Ummah of Islam. The Muslims in India must safeguard their identity, remain steadfast upon the Deen and work for its return.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Nilofar Shamsi**