Shared History of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: How to Overcome the Controversies?

In the historiography of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, state ideologies:

‘...got a mythological interpretation in a cluster of images, symbols, slogans that express the inner agendas of the respective governments to peoples for which politics is too complicated to grasp’ (Malkova 2001).

One of the dark sides of this interpretation is manifested through visible distortions of history in the books written in these countries to create an ‘enemy’ image (Khan and Dasgupta 2000). Subjective and state-oriented historiography ‘plays a major role in generating hatred and animosity between these countries. Indeed, history books have become victims of the official ideologies and foreign policies’ (Ibid.). Government institutions established for historical studies, universities, or most independent historians portray state-ideology as a tool to create hate images.

‘Distortions in the presentation and interpretation of history have contributed to the spread of communalism’ (Khan and Daudpota 2000), intolerance and violence in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while successive governments with a soft corner for the rightist groups and ideologies have ‘reinforced it through the government's patronage’ (Ibid.). Hence, a ‘highly distorted version(s)’ of ‘national history is preached’ by the religious extremists...

‘...who have been wallowing in mindless infatuation with history trying to control the singular (Indian) past and future...Their sociological scheme is communal, divisive and hateful. Their peculiar philosophy of history gives rise to a unique historiographical genre that is exclusivist, vituperative and deceitful’ (Khan and Daudpota 2000).

It has been pointed over and over again that history in these countries is ‘loaded with crass communal overtones. Clearly, the sole purpose of this reinterpretation of historical facts is to indoctrinate and poison people's (young) minds with a prejudiced vision of the past’ (Hindustan Times 2000).

This panel will discuss the issues of shared history of this region. Abstracts with the following specific sub-themes are invited: Muslim era, particularly Muslim invasions; killings of the Sikh Gurus; Akbar vs Aurganzeb mindset; issues surrounding the Somnath Temple and Babri Mosque; the colonial period, with special reference to the British conquests; Hindu-Muslim controversies during the freedom struggle and the Partition; post-Partition days; Indo-Pak wars; the creation of Bangladesh; and the issues of minorities in the three countries.

References


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