

Determining Relations: Memory, History and Politics

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I

Memory is a tool of mass mobilisation.¹ It has very effective communicative power. Memories work through myths because myth is one of the vehicles of collective memory.² Myth lies in the popular memory of people and contains symbolic power which is frequently used by the political forces for political communication.³ The forces involved in the power game understand this potentiality of memory and use it to serve their political ends. That is why the language of the contemporary political discourse is dominated by myth, memory and the past. This paper focuses on the memory of Jhalkari Bai of Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, which was used by the Bahujan Samaj Party (involved in Dalit politics) in the election campaign for the legislative assembly in 1996.⁴

The manifestation of memory in the actions of social groups— that is, as 'collective memory'—links the distant past with the present and emanates from 'remembrance' beyond personal recollection. It has the characteristic of looking for similarities between the past and present, rousing emotions by depicting the past in vivid images conforming to its present conceptions. It thus reconstructs the past in terms of the present. History, therefore, is no longer just facts. Even the facts it seeks, namely facts about the past, are not always establish-able. The facts which endow the past with elements of the present are mediated through imagination and are enclosed in the ongoing process of creating attitudes, perspectives and values.⁵ That is why memory contains a contesting terrain in which selectivity acts as a major determining factor.

II

The myth of Jhalkari Bai is located within the ambit of the narrative of 1857, the first great war of Indian independence. The myth is narrated

as follows. There was a *dasi* (maid servant) named Jhalkari Bai in the palace of Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi. She was a low caste woman. When the British besieged the fort of Jhansi and started firing from all sides, Jhalkari Bai suggested that the Rani should leave the palace after securing the child (who was the heir apparent) to her back. She, on her part, would hoodwink the British by assuming the appearance of the Rani. The Rani accepted this advice and made good her escape with the child. The ruse worked and for a long time the British were uncertain about the true identity of Jhalkari Bai who was posing as Rani Jhansi. It was much later that they learnt that the 'Rani' was in fact the maid Jhalkari Bai. But by then it was too late and the Rani had already covered a considerable distance.

This myth is a part of the popular memory of the people of Bundelkhand region and is narrated in several versions. The various castes and interest groups remember, narrate and re-create it in their own way.⁶ Jhalkari Bai was a real historical personality who emerged as a legend over a long period of time. In the written record, such as the diary of General Rose (leader of the British troops which attacked the Jhansi fort) and the gazetteer of the period, one finds no reference to Jhalkari Bai although the book *Majha Pravas*, written by Vishnu Rao Godse, mentions her as 'Jhalkari Korin'.⁷ The eminent litterateur Brindaban Lal Varma interviewed Jhalkari Bai's grandson during the period he was writing his book on Laxmi Bai.⁸ The present generation of her descendants still lives in Jhansi. She, herself, is said to have died sometime after 1890.

But Jhalkari Bai survives in the memory of the people, and is discussed often; the source being folk stories and discussions at the *chaupal*.⁹ That Jhalkari Bai was a real person is indisputable, but the memories about her vary in the case of different communities. They are in a continuous process of reconstruction and modification, especially among the lower caste communities. This is so because it helps these communities revise their identity and juxtapose it against that of the other communities. The memory of Jhalkari Bai has become a theme of political contention.¹⁰ The multiple contesting versions of the memory of Jhalkari Bai might briefly be mentioned here.

A. In Kachnara village in Hamirpur district of Bundelkhand, one of the old, illiterate inhabitants, Ram Narayan Shukul,¹¹ remembers that 'Jhalkari Bai *koi khas nahi thi* (Jhalkari Bai was not very important). She was just a Korin and a maid servant of Rani Laxmi Bai. The two resembled each other physically. When the Rani came out of the fort with her army to face the British, Jhalkari Bai dressed herself as the Rani and confused the British about her true identity.' Ram Narayan,

addressing Jhalkari Bai as a 'Korin', reflects an upper caste apathy and neglect towards her, as the Chamars, Doms and Bhangees have traditionally occupied the lowest position in the social hierarchy of Bundelkhand.¹²

B. A different version of Jhalkari Bai is available in Brindaban Lal Varma's book, *Jhansi Ki Rani*. Brindaban himself belonged to the Bundelkhand region. He also, while depicting her character, addresses her as a 'Korin' resembling Laxmi Bai in physical form. He narrates the story as follows: '*Wahan ek Jhalkari Korin thi. Nak, naksh, aankh, roop rang sab Rani jaisa. Usey Rani bahut chahti thi...*'¹³ (There was a Jhalkari Korin. Her features, the contours of her nose, the colour of her eyes, her complexion and physical stature all resembled those of the Rani. The Rani liked her very much.) Her husband's name was Poonam Koree. She was not a servant of Laxmi Bai's but was very close to her. She learnt archery, wrestling and shooting from the Rani and, later, became a member of the female army created by the Rani. Jhalkari inspired her husband to fight for the Rani and die for the country. Subsequently, he became a *topchee* (canon operator) posted at the main gate of the fort. When Laxmi Bai proceeded to fight the British, the British chased her. Jhalkari, dressed as the Rani, approached the British commander General Rose, who mistook her for the Rani and arrested her. Laxmi Bai was thus saved from being captured. The confusion continued for a week and it was only after it was revealed that Jhalkari Bai was not the Rani that she was released.

In this text, Jhalkari is always addressed as a 'Korin' and as an ordinary soldier in the army of the Rani. Her name is not suffixed with 'Bai'. Other female soldiers of the army, namely, Moteebai, Mundari and Sundari et. al. are accorded greater significance, although their rank was equal to that of Jhalkari's. In the second version, Jhalkari is depicted as chivalrous but not as an extraordinary person.

C. Among the Korees, Sonars and Lohars a different image of Jhalkari Bai prevails.¹⁴ To them Jhalkari Bai was as brave as Laxmi Bai and possessed an equally sharp insight into the events of the period. A resident of Nagara village remembers as follows:

She was the wife of Poonam Koree. The Koree *jat* (caste) had participated in the war against the British along with Laxmi Bai. The main gate of the palace where Jhalkari Bai's husband was posted was guarded by soldiers of the Koree caste. Jhalkari Bai was as chivalrous as Laxmi Bai and her closest favourite on account of which the upper caste employees in the palace despised her and conspired against her. Jhalkari Bai was an expert in wrestling and

other physical exercises. She was trained by the Rani herself in horse-riding and shooting and was the chief of the *Durgavahini*, a women's battalion of the Rani's army. It was Jhalkari Bai who advised the Rani to go out of the fort with her adopted son Damodar and conceived the plan of confusing the British. As a consequence, without caring for her life, she went up to Dantia fighting bravely against the British army. But here she was arrested and imprisoned for a long time and subsequently released.¹⁵

This is what most of the members of the Dalit community also believe. According to them she was an incarnation of 'a goddess' who had descended upon earth to serve the country. '*U to Durga rahin*' (She was Goddess Durga), says Raj Kumar Koree, in the *Jababi kirtan* which is a very popular cultural performance in this region. The *kirtan mandali* sings of her brave deeds:

Jai Jhalkari! Durga, Kali
Jai, Jai, Ma!
Angrezon ka garab tune
chur, chur kiya.

In the last narrative, Jhalkari Bai is placed on the same pedestal as Rani Laxmi Bai who, like her, excelled in martial arts—the only difference being that Laxmi Bai was a Rani and Jhalkari Bai a Korin. According to this version, the Rani's military strategies were planned by Jhalkari Bai and she was treated by the Rani as her *vahin* (sister). It was on account of Jhalkari Bai's closeness to Laxmi Bai that the conspiracies of the upper castes could not concretise. She was arrested because of the treacherous role of a Thakur, Dulha Ju. She is projected in this version as a greater patriot than any other person belonging to another caste.

The upper strata of society find such an interpretation unacceptable because on the one hand Jhalkari Bai is depicted as an equally significant a strategist as Laxmi Bai while on the other hand a Thakur is characterised as a traitor. Here a depressed caste is represented, by the logic of facts, as being more patriotic. Not a single low caste member, in this version, is shown to be a fifth columnist.¹⁶

The memory of Jhalkari, as it is prevalent today amongst the depressed castes, has been erected after much modification, i.e., additions, subtractions and manipulations. Brindavan Lal Varma made arduous efforts to depict Jhalkari Bai as she had existed in the memory of these castes before the 1950s. But that it has undergone many

modifications is evident from the writing of Ramchandra Heran during 1950-60.¹⁷ Brindavan Lal Varma, depicted her as courageous, chivalrous and a favourite of the Rani, but not as superior to Laxmi Bai in diplomatic or military skills.

But in the literature of the 1950s, her closeness to Laxmi Bai is attributed more to her abilities and competence. The jealousies of the higher castes, too, have been exaggerated in an artistic but vitriolic manner. Among the dramatists, local literary figures and dance groups, this articulation acquired a new dimension and amplification in the 1960s. In the dramas, she was being shown as equivalent to Laxmi Bai. This was due to the dominant number of low caste artists in the drama groups. They worked under a strategy instrumentalised by the depressed castes to reconstruct their history, namely, to establish an equivalence between heroes of the lower and higher castes. Many other factors also played roles of significance in the formation of their identity and a new consciousness. The communist parties saw considerable potential in them for carrying out the revolutionary transformation of society. The help of political parties provided the lower castes with an even greater propelling force for engineering their identity in an assertive manner. Secondly, during the 1970s many low-priced texts of plays were published in Calcutta on Laxmi Bai. To make these plays more attractive, romantic and accessible, surrogate characters were highlighted.¹⁸ As these plays were repeatedly performed in this region and are still performed very frequently, it is possible that they helped in the construction of a new memory of the people. Conversely, the reflections in the minds of the people would have been collected by the writers and incorporated in these plays. Such a reciprocal relationship between literature and society has been amply discussed.

In the contemporary period, efforts are being made to re-write and re-read Jhalkari Bai with the avowed objective of placing her on an equal footing with Laxmi Bai. This can be seen from the lines below composed by Archana Varma:

*Macha Jhansi mein ghamasan, chahunaur machee kilkari thee,
Angezon se loha lenein, ran mein kudee Jhalkari thee.*

Amidst the sound and fury of battle at Jhansi,
Plunged Jhalkari to confront the British.¹⁹

This is an attempt to upstage Subhadra Kumari Chauhan whose famous poem on Rani Laxmi Bai is well known and frequently recited. In other words, Jhalkari Bai is placed in the same form of poetry in

which Laxmi Bai was placed earlier. An epic on Jhalkari Bai has been composed by Chokhe Lal Varma, and Bhawani Shankar Visharad has come up with a new biography of Jhalkari Bai. Recently, Mata Prasad, (then the governor of Arunachal Pradesh) composed a drama on her. This further corroborates the line of argument that reconstruction of history is the driving objective of the depressed castes. Two important features of this process are clearly visible. Firstly, literature has been reinterpreted and recreated to reconstruct the identity of the depressed castes. Secondly, literature is being made the entry point of a grand history which the lower castes propose to write.²⁰ Thus castes, communities and groups, while exploring their identity, re-invent and re-imagine myths, memories and the past.²¹ Here is the space where contesting political forces enter the arena of interpreting the past.

III

Post-colonial India had reposed its aspirations in the nascent welfare state. But the compression of time in history leads to traumatic changes and impacts. The notion of 'development' is both symphonic and cacophonous. With the Green Revolution making steady progress, Indian agrarian social structure underwent multiple changes and their impact was visible on the political and cultural scenario as well. The welfare state had given birth to a 'demand state', but the scarcity of resources also needed a 'command state'.²² The politics of consensus was losing its ideological weight and Indian society was now pregnant with new political equations which surfaced equivocally after the defeat of Congress party at the centre in 1989.

The middle peasantry asserted itself in politics after the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in 1990 and captured power in Uttar Pradesh where it had gained substantially in the previous elections also. Its assertion was now transformed into aggressiveness. The anti-Brahmanical movement that was witnessed in south India and Maharashtra was lying dormant in the Hindi belt where the Bhakti movement had spread vertical consciousness among the untouchables. But the successful land reforms and protective discrimination had increased awareness amongst the depressed castes in U.P. Unlike in Bihar, the Communist parties had failed to recruit them into their fold. The untouchables in Uttar Pradesh found their identity being sculpted by Kanshi Ram who launched a political party namely, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Earlier he had launched an anti-upper caste movement through a pressure group known as DS 4.²³ BSP emerged as a third force in the politics of U.P.²⁴ The middle castes aligned

themselves with the Samajvadi Party, a breakaway group of the Janata Dal, and with the decline of Congress, the upper castes moved towards the BJP which projected itself as the cultural and moral vehicle of society, using Lord Rama as the symbol.

The BSP, being aware of the historical backwardness of scheduled caste consciousness, urged them to learn lessons from certain historical personalities like Ambedkar, Shahuji Maharaj and others. A Periyar *mela* was also organised to transplant the southern experience onto northern India but with little success, evidencing the fact that an organic link was absent between the middle class intellectuals of the party and the members of the community living on the fringes of communication and lacking a sense of history. The linkage between Ambedkar and Buddha would not arouse popular receptivity. Hence the mythicisation of historical figures was the strategy adopted for the regions such as Bundelkhand where the demographic balance tilts in favour of scheduled castes. The character identified for the purpose was Jhalkari Bai who had a hegemonic presence in the memory of the local population. It was now the task of the BSP to arouse this memory in a mythical form²⁵ so that an organic solidarity emanates horizontally between the members of the community and vertically with the elites of the community. 'The privileged critical moment' to accomplish this task was the 1996 election in U.P. in which Shivcharan Prajapati was the BSP candidate.

In traditional theories of myth, the historical hero is paralleled with the mythical hero.²⁶ Here also a parallelism was devised between the present candidate and the valiant woman of the past, Jhalkari Bai, in the manner given below:

Similarities between Jhalkari Bai and Shivcharan Prajapati²⁷

<i>Jhalkari Bai</i>	<i>Shivcharan Prajapati</i>
1. Dasee	Poor
2. Member of depressed caste (Koree)	Member of depressed caste (Kumhar)
3. Fought against the British	Fighting against the oppressive, hegemonic Brahmanical order.

The symbolism of myth and its meaning and the rituals associated with it were generally privileges of the members of the upper echelons

of the society. The BSP discovered Jhalkari Bai and imbued her with many mythical attributes. This was aimed at revising the historical consciousness of the depressed communities. It showed that mythical articulation was no more a prerogative of the upper classes. Moreover, if articulated by the communities to which the myth and memories are related organically, the scope for their reconstruction, mystification and manipulation increases. Conversely, myths and memories are distorted to satisfy the current aspirations and political interests of communities. This may create tensions and oppositions between the communities. For, symbolic power erected on fabricated memories has an inherent tendency to adopt an authoritarian colour. The BSP's desperate move to erect a pyramid of historical personalities and revise their images reveals a long term strategy of constructing a new historiography. At the apex of the pyramid is Ambedkar and at the middle of the structure, personalities like Shahuji Maharaj and Periyar. At the base, one finds Jhalkari Bai and others, whose details are given below:

Subaltern Myths Identified for Memorialization²⁸

<i>Name</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Districts</i>
1. Chhaur	Yadav	Baghelkhand	Rewa, Satna (M.P.)
2. Jhalkari Bai	Koree	Bundelkhand	Jhansi, Hamirpur, Lalitpur and Banda
3. Bijli Maharaj	Paasee	Avadh	Lucknow, Bahraich, Barabanki and Allahabad
4. Daldev Maharaj	Paasee	Purvanchal	Rae Bareli, Jaunpur and Allahabad
5. Baaledeen	Paasee	Purvanchal & Avadh	Kausambi and Allahabad
6. Mahamaya	Buddhist	Purvanchal	Varanasi, Ghazipur, Ballia, Basti and Deoria
7. Ravidas	Chamar	Purvanchal	Varanasi, Jaunpur, Allahabad and Azamgarh
8. Beera Passi	Paasee	Avadh	Pratapgarh, Sultanpur and Allahabad

9. Uda Devi	Paasee	Avadh and Central U.P.	Allahabad, Pratapgarh and Sultanpur
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Source. Compiled from *Jansatta*, 28 July, 1997 and other sources.

Four consequences flow from this:

(a) In the new political milieu, there has been a flood of caste identity formation, and in order to establish their self-respect and relocate their place in society, these communities are recreating history.

(b) Once these communities gained ascendance in political power, a reformation of their identity was necessary to retain their share in power. Historical memory constitutes ethnicity, and this memory may be real or imagined. Whatever the case, its role in the new scenario is tremendous.²⁹

(c) Memory transposes the past into the present, a phenomenon which has a significant role in historiography as acknowledged by many scholars. It helps in the task of 'digging under the rubble of history so as to recover those pearls of past experience—with their sedimented and hidden layers of meaning—that can orient the mind of the future'³⁰

Repeated evocation of the memory of local and national personalities in the political arena is a strategy of the BSP with three latent objectives:

(a) To consolidate the identity of the depressed castes and sub-castes so as to enable them to be an effective entity in caste-based competitive politics.

(b) To convert these personalities into mythical figures, i.e., to perpetuate their remembrance so that effective mobilisation of the depressed castes is facilitated.

(c) By constant reference to the events related to these personalities, the BSP's provocative political language for electoral gains is materialised.

A question pertinent to this new scenario is as to how the BSP thought of and adopted this new strategy to mobilise the scheduled castes and to elicit a positive response from the allied sections of Indian society. The space for such an operational design was provided by the historiography as it developed during the colonial time. Historiography was given a vertical framework and thus become elitist. On account of its indifference towards the horizontal framework, we find such an historiography lacking in multiple substantial facts. Three main schools that developed after 1857 were: Colonial, Nationalist and the Marxist. Colonial history-writing is represented by Malleon and Kye in *History*

of the Sepoy War in India and P.B. Minturn in *From New Europe to Delhi*. To Malleon, the failure of the revolt of 1857 was due to the moral lassitude of the Indians and conversely the moral rectitude of the British. The British could crush the revolt on account of their superior ethics. The meaning of the mutiny of 1857 underwent serious modifications in the writings of the Nationalist historians such as S.B. Chaudhry, R.C. Majumdar and in the specialist monograph of Eric Stokes. In them we find the history of *zamindars*, kings and *taluqdars* along with an exalted narration of the role of the sepoys in the mutiny. The historians of the Marxist school like R.P. Dutt primarily view the scenario as being immature due to the lack of industrialisation and the subsequent class formation and birth of class-consciousness. Even Marx sees the mutiny as an act of 'peasants in uniform'. Thus the voices of the people at the base of the pyramid went unheard, or were neglected.³¹ With the development of subaltern historiography, attempts were made to capture the layers beneath the surface but these layers, in this heterogeneous society, are too many to be captured. This was then one of the major factors behind the neglect and alienation of the oppressed castes; their aspiration to find a place in history remained unheard. Jotiba Phule, Ambedkar and others were aware of this but lacked a strategy to remedy the situation. However, the BSP has been successful in initiating this task, although it is difficult to predict a smooth sailing for it due to the hidden counterpoising elements in the society. In the absence of history, mythicisation of personalities and invention of a counter-history dependent upon memory became an easier and more rewarding task as was visible in the U.P. assembly election of 1996. Every image requires an idea. Exhibitve and demonstrative techniques lead to the formation of ideas. These ideas became the source of remembrance of a common origin, common suffering, common objectives and the common identity as well as a common enemy of a group. BSP has adopted this paradigm of mobilisation.

Among the five planning divisions of U.P., Bundelkhand region has the largest scheduled caste population (80.6 per cent) whereas Uttarkhand has only 18 per cent. Before the 1996 elections, the BSP had an alliance with the Samajvadi Party which has deep roots in the Yadav community (12 per cent) and the Muslims (20 per cent), and had 67 seats in the U.P. assembly. After its disenchantment with the Samajvadi party, it formed an alliance with the Congress which had lost its base in the state.

Despite breaking away from the Samajvadi Party, the BSP retained all of its assembly seats in 1996. Interestingly, in the Bundelkhand

region it won 47.61 per cent of the seats whereas the percentage in Uttarkhand was nil. In other regions, its performance varied in accordance with the percentage of the scheduled caste population. As is shown in the table below, the revised version of the Jhalkari Bai myth was instrumental in mobilising votes for the BSP. Secondly, as told by many upper caste respondents, whereas parties like the BJP, Samajvadi Party and Congress spent fabulous amounts on exhibitions, banners and other modes of election publicity, the BSP spent the minimum amount and yet carried the majority of the votes. The memory of Jhalkari Bai was a determining factor here as is evident from the responses shown in the table below:

Memory as a Factor in Consolidation of Vote Bank of BSP³²

District	Brahmins		Thakurs		OBCs		SCs		Muslims	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1 Banda	18	12	38	22	28	32	15	15	32	28
2 Hamirpur	36	24	42	18	32	28	49	11	35	25
3 Jalaun	41	19	40	20	43	26	54	06	34	26
4 Lalitpur	46	14	39	21	37	23	52	08	38	22
5 Jhansi	51	09	47	13	41	19	58	02	40	20
TOTAL	222	78	206	94	172	128	258	42	179	121
	74	26	68.66	31.34	57.33	42.67	86	14	59.66	40.34

The BSP has created a wealth of symbols (this can be seen in the creation of new districts and naming them after such personalities as Shahuji, Mahamaya, Ravidas *et. al.* during the six month regime of Mayawati in U.P. in 1997) and capitalising on these, arrogates to itself the exclusive role of ameliorating the condition of the Dalits in the state.³³ The symbolic language becomes a source of solace for those who have seldom found a place at the threshold of the social history of India. The Bundelkhand region, marked by greater inequality due to the large landholdings of the upper castes and demographic balance in favour of the Dalits, has become a battleground between two sets of symbols and language: the one connected with Laxmi Bai articulated in one set of literature and the other with Jhalkari Bai which is still in the process of construction via the resurrection of the living memories.

The organisation of various *melas* like Periyar *mela* and Ambedkar *mela* in Lucknow and Shahuji *mela* in Kanpur is aimed at reviewing the received memory of the Dalits which serves the interests of the rulers. However, speaking of Jacobins, Hutton reminds us as to how in history

festivals and ceremonies have also been used to legitimise political power. Similar appears to be the role of the statues which have been put up in large number throughout U.P. by the BSP.

The efforts of the BSP towards the glorification and mythicisation of Jhalkari Bai in a reconstructed framework can also be perceived as the politicisation of an already existing memory. It aims at the mobilisation of the bearers of this memory to subserve the political ends of the party. To accomplish this three modes of articulation have been implemented:

(a) *Orality*: The political ends are communicated in the form of an oral transmission, a mode popular in the region and practised from very early times.

(b) *Visualization*: Pamphlets, dramas and other kinds of literature sketching out their identity is circulated amongst them. The statue of Jhalkari Bai in Jhansi built under the BSP patronage during the regime of Mayawati, represents her face and features as similar to those of the Rani, but in a much larger size.

(c) *Ritualism*: Ritualism is observable in the organisation of festivals and functions around the personality of Jhalkari Bai. Such a commemoration has been a repeated instance in the past.

It is noteworthy that Jhalkari Bai was brought into the historical memory by an upper caste litterateur, namely Brindavan Lal Varma, but contemporary constructions of her memory are presented in the form of a reaction against the earlier representations. These representations have now become victorious and have a greater presence in the memory of the people, but have been tailored to the demands of political interests. In order to ensure the permanence of the memory of Jhalkari Bai many alluring features have been added to her personality. Authority depends upon legitimacy and legitimacy, in turn, depends on mass support. This support is elicited through the reconstruction and invocation of the past. Repetitive thrusts strengthen memory and for this both folk and modern mediums are being used.

IV

In India memory has always been aroused within the framework of tradition which originated in the past and continues to affect the present. Tilak's celebration of Ganesh Utsav in Maharashtra, Gandhi's promise of establishing Ram Rajya in post-independence India and his use of the *Bhagavad Gita* were the symbols through which the present

was being inspired and enthused. For the next about forty years these symbols became dormant on account of the so called scientific temper that was sought to be cultivated. This changed when the symbol of Ram was used by the BJP. Simultaneously, the Mandal Commission was instituted to compensate the OBCs for their deprivation in the past. The Bahujan Samaj Party plunged into the past to collect as many symbols as possible. When it came to propagate and popularise the past, contemporary mediums were used showing the comedy of modernity. The BSP made arduous efforts in an assiduous manner to discover historical personalities and imbue them with mythic power to immortalise them in the memory of the community. Attempts are now being made to launch a new historiography which would help it capture and retain political power. That the language of the past is replacing the language of the present is evident from the slogans and statements of politicians. The Samajvadi Party in Uttar Pradesh desires to unite Raghuvanshis and Yaduvanshis instead of implementing social justice which is an amorphous notion in political sociology and incapable of articulating the designs of the party. A person, group or society has a deep memory of an event but with the passage of time it is transformed into ordinary memory. Shaped by immediate imagination, it is more sharp-edged and hence more provocative. Are the memories propagated through various modern mediums going to form the quintessence of contemporary politics? This question is likely to haunt the present and future generations, and those sections of academia that believe in the unquestionable march of Science over myth.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Halbwachs has shown that memory is the basis of social order, its solidarity and cohesion. Individual memories and collective memories are closely knotted and intermixed. Thus memory serves the philosophical need of both the individual and the collective. Memory should be recorded by the historian as a social phenomenon and not as an individual remembrance of the past. Hence Halbwachs pleads for selectivity in investigation of memory. See Daniel Gordon's review of Patrick H. Hutton's, *History as an Act of Memory* in *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, 1995.
2. The relationship between myth and memory is discussed in detail by Jeffrey A. Barash, in 'The Sources of Memory', *Journal of History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 4, October 1997.

3. For more details about symbolic power, see Pierre Bordieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, 1991. Jung also believes that 'symbolic active imagination', which is reflected in the myth and ritual, is more powerful than ordinary active imagination. See Michael A. Milburn and Sheree D. Conrad, *The Politics of Denial*, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, 1996.
4. The BJP's use of the myth of Ram may be part of this phenomenon. The symbolic language full of myths provided a larger mass base to the BJP.
5. H.L. Seneviratne (ed.), *Identity, Consciousness and the Past*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997. P. 10.
6. Mythos: Word as authoritative pronouncement perceived as logos (word as demonstrable truth. See Peter Hees, 'Myth', *History and Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1994. Howard Zinn, in *The Politics of History*, Boston, 1970, suggests that there can be no single representative account of any given phenomenon.
7. Quoted in Brindavan Lal Varma's *Jhansi Ki Rani*, compiled in the *Brindavan Lal Varma Samagra*, Varanasi, 1975.
8. *Ibid.* p. 225. *Jhansi Ki Rani*, a historical novel by Brindavan Lal Varma, was originally published in 1950.
9. For a detailed discussion on as to how 'conscious ignorance' of history lies in the orality by the written world, see Lal Bahadur Varma, *Understanding History*, Allahabad, 1995.
10. '... memory must be conceived in terms of its repetitions as well as its recollection....Places of memory are sources of inspiration. They contain threats of the commitment of historical actors, not to mention those of the historians who have sought to describe them.' Patrick H. Hutton, 'The Role of Memory in the Historiography of the French Revolution', *History and Theory*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1991, p.64.
11. Recorded in the Kachanara village, in Hamirpur district of U.P. Oral cassette n. J-1. This reflects the psyche of denial of the role of the lower castes by the upper castes. See also Michael A. Milburn and Sheree D. Conrad, *The Politics of Denial*, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, 1996.
12. The hierarchical character of the society in Bundelkhand region is as follows in descending order:
(1) Brahmin (2) Bhat (3) Rajput (4) Kayastha (5) Bania, Aheer (6) Kurmee, Kunbee, Bhar, Banjara (7) Kalwar and Kal (8) Dhanuk, Dusadh, Koree, Passee
13. Brindavan Lal Varma, *Jhansi Ki Rani*, *op.cit.*, p.225.
14. When one member of the community was narrating the story, the others were in full agreement with the narrative and the feeling involved in the entire exercise.
15. Ramesh Bundela of Hamirpur, a folk poet of the region composed this popular *kirtan* of Jhalkari Bai. It is interesting to note that Ramesh Bundela is a Koree by caste.
16. Here the past is a contested terrain, selectively remembered or conveniently forgotten and sometimes invented. See John Soronson, 'History and Identity in the Horn of Africa', *Dialectical Anthropology*, No. 17, 1992, pp. 227-52.
17. Ramchandra Heran is a story writer of the Bundeli language. In his novel *Maati*, (Banda, 1951) Jhalkari Bai is depicted as a chivalrous and valiant fighter for the nation.
18. *Jhansi ki Rani Natak*, written by Piyush, Lok Nath Publication, Calcutta, 1972.
19. Poetry of Archana Verma as quoted in the news capsule on Jhalkari Bai in *Jansatta*, 5 August, 1997.

20. The recent movement demanding a separate Bundelkhand region has also used the myth of Jhalkari Bai in order to give a particular colour and greater prestige to their political language. The Bundeli identity, forming the quintessence of the movement, relates itself with the myth of Jhalkari Bai from a political standpoint, i.e., to organise the women of the area around their demands. Myths are being placed in the movement not in a hierarchical but rather in a parallel manner. This is a political imperative of mobilisation on a larger scale. Here also, the myth of Jhalkari Bai has acquired a political dimension and her image is being reconstructed in accordance with the demands of the social situation.
21. *Identity, Consciousness and the Past*, ed., H.L. Seneviratne, Delhi, 1997, examines many case studies where myths and memories have been used for identity formation of the communities. Identity does not happen to be a static and rigid structure. It contains 'constructed nature' in the process of its formation. See also P. Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in Pyrenes*, Berkeley, 1989, pp. 270-78.
22. L.I. Rudolph and S.I. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Laxmi*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1987.
23. The slogan of the DS4 in the early 80s was: 'Brahman, Bania, Thakur *chhod*, *Bakee sab hain DS4*'. This was an explicit message of an alliance between various castes in society excluding the upper caste. With the success of alliance formation in U.P., the BSP came forward with an aggressive slogan: '*Tilak, Taraju aur Talwar, Enko Maro Juta Chaar*'. Here the symbols of the upper castes were attacked, but economically the OBCs and SCs were not homogenous groups nor was there any cultural rapport between them. The alliance proved to be a short lived one.
24. DS4, i.e., Dalit Soshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti, preceded the emergence of the political party, namely, Bahujan Samaj Party. The process, in fact, started with the formation of the Backward and Minority Communities Employees Association (BAMCEF) which was succeeded by the establishment of Buddhist Research Centre (BRC) before the DS4 came to exist.
25. For the significance of myth in society see, Mercea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Penguin Books, pp. 34,48.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
27. The tendency to show a similarity between BSP activists and historical personalities is a usual technique for political propaganda suiting their tailored logic. For other similar examples and details, see Shyoraj Singh's article, 'Dalit literature in Uttar Pradesh', (Hindi Monthly) published by Information Department of Uttar Pradesh, October, 1977, pp. 39-43.
28. Except Mahamaya, the mother of Lord Buddha, and Ravidas, the eminent saint of the medieval period, all other names have been introduced and glorified mystically so as to penetrate into the memory of people. The name of Mahamaya is included due to Ambedkar's relation with Buddhist religion. Every depressed community is reconstructing its memory to make its history and consequently a rift is also discernible among various communities. Paasees present themselves as kings in medieval times and as soldiers in the army of some of the Rajput kings, protecting their sovereignty. Among the kings were Maharaja Bijli Paasee, Raja Trilok Chand, Raja Madari Paasee and Raja Satan. Among the soldiers were Jhalkari Bai, Madari Paasee, etc. According to authors belonging to the Paasee community, Paasees in the medieval period fought valiantly against the Muslim

rulers. The profession of piggery was institutionalised among the Paasees as a strategy against the Muslim invaders. During the British rule, their bravery is manifested in their fight against the British. Jhalkari Bai and Uda Devi were martyrs of the freedom movement. They quote *Bhagvat Puran* the writings of Anant Priye and Amritlal Nagar, historians Yogesh Praveen and Neelkant Sastri and the folk ballad of Allha in which Allha and Udal were defeated. Paasees as they see themselves in history, can be divided into three categories as shown below:

<i>Rulers</i>	<i>Founders of Places</i>	<i>Commanders of Sates</i>
Barabanki	Lucknow	Kalakankar
Sitapur	Bijnor	Bhadri
Unnao	Satankot	Pratapgarh
Lucknow	Malihabad	Kaithola
Faizabad	Sandila	—
Bijnor	—	—
Ayodha	—	—
Hardoi	—	—

Source: Smarika, Veerangana Udda Devi Smarak Sansthan, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 16 November, 1997.

29. See Michael Novak, *The Rise of Unmeltable Ethics*, New York, 1972.
30. Sycela Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, Sage Publications, p.87.
31. Ranjit Guha, 'The Small Voice of History', lecture delivered in Hyderabad, 11 January, 1993.
32. (a) Figures in the last row denote the percentage of respondents among different caste categories in various districts of Bundelkhand.
- (b) OBCs include Yadavas, Kurmis, Lohars, Sonars and Kevats whereas the category of scheduled castes is inclusive of Chamars, Doms, Bhangees and Paasees.
- (c) Sample size consisted of 300 persons in each district of Bundelkhand region in the age group of 18-40 years, having the educational status of high school and above. The respondents were selected randomly and asked a single question: Is it the recollection of the memory of Jhalkari Bai which has helped to consolidate the vote bank of the BSP in the region?
33. Cultural language consists of myths, symbols, signs, history, beliefs and values etc. Political language, on the other hand, contains within it language of political identity, political consciousness and political power. This is a transition from the normative plane to the pragmatic plane. Politics has become a significant tool in identity formation of caste groups. The correlation between caste and politics has already been studied by Rajni Kothari. In history, one comes across in the writings of Jotiba Phule and Ambedkar encouraging schedule caste self-respect movements. The BSP, drawing from them, has moulded those stands into the framework of democratic state formation. See Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Vision*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1995.