

# The Communal Concern in Social Science Education

Shankar Sharan\*

A concern about 'communalism' gradually occupied more and more space since 1970s in social science education and discourse in India. The term itself was invested with a pejorative meaning which it did not have before. Earlier the word 'communal' had a decent meaning, related to affairs of a group of people.<sup>1</sup> English educated people in India used it the same way, for instance a 'communal kitchen', denoting a kitchen for an assembly of people.

However, the beautiful word was selected by some radical intellectuals in India to create a slur in academics and force it onto the general social, political discourse. The importance of such a happening and the result it ensued cannot be overemphasized today. With constant use for decades it became an established and justified term of abuse in academics. By early 1980s the entire academic and political class in India gradually came to use this, as a choice term of abuse towards differing writers, journalists, politicians and political parties. Even today in the Western countries no one can make out the meaning of such a statement that a writer or politician is 'communal'. It goes to the credit of a determined group of radical Indian scholars that a nice word is now a slur in the country.

The practice greatly harmed the natural growth of social science and humanities education in India. It effectively blocked genuine research and writings esp. in history, political science and literary studies. For many professors, journals and editors it became the touchstone to mark, classify, and judge all writings past and present. It reached to the point of obsession and remains so. Although it is now a bit waning, yet espoused by influential intellectuals in the country. The politico-academic concept of communalism was not only

artificial, but with a marked element of activism as well. The 'progressive' professors who popularized the term declared in their writings and lectures, that they have also the intent to defeat the 'communal forces'. Defeat it in academics and in politics also. Curiously, the entire exercise pinpointed to defeat and thrash what it named 'Hindu communalism', no other.

The process can be identified with the publication of a small, but celebrated book *Communalism and the writing of Indian History* (1969), published and distributed by a Communist Party of India press. It comprised three articles by then young academics: Bipan Chandra, Romila Thapar, and Harbans Mukhia. The book was pioneering in that it contained all the formulations the communalism discourse would later propagate over and over again. It continued to be published uninterruptedly ever since. The enthusiasm with which the Communist Party of India press kept printing it also indicates its more politico-ideological than academic intent.

The formulations made in the book, introducing the term 'communalism' with a new meaning in social sciences, elaborated almost all its features as its authors designed, were as follows:

1. Prior to the arrival of Islam here, India was not such a great civilization as it is touted.
2. There is nothing called Hinduism, it is Brahmanism which suppressed lower castes people.
3. Islam is a great philosophy of equality.
4. The period called 'Muslim rule' in India was a British concoction, there was no such period here.
5. Muslim rulers in medieval India were Indians. Calling them 'foreigners' is communalism. In fact, great cultural evolution in India took place under their rule.
6. Muslim rulers did not commit any atrocities on the Hindu masses that did not happen here earlier.
7. Considering Rana Sanga, Maharana Pratap and Chhatrapati Shivaji as 'national heroes' is communalism.
8. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>

\*National Fellow, IAS, Shimla, and a Professor, Political Science. He can be reached at [hesivh@gmail.com](mailto:hesivh@gmail.com)

century the likes of Lokmanya Tilak, SriAurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi started, if inadvertently, communal politics. Muslims only retaliated to it. 9. Therefore, Muslim communalism is not the main culprit but 'more justifiable' one. 10. Hence, thrashing Hindu communalism in India is a cardinal task for all modern, progressive, secular scholars and writers. 11. Nothing should be said or written which might be disagreeable to Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

These formulations in nutshell soon became the general theory of communalism, proposed to be applied in entire social science and humanities education in the country. Those espousing it arrogated for themselves the high-sounding labels 'progressive' and 'modern' historians, and to those who disagreed were one-sidedly branded as 'communal' and 'reactionary'. The three young historians soon joined the newly formed Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi as faculty members. With the exceptional stature and resources of the liberally Govt-funded prestigious university and of other important government institutions as the NCERT, ICHR, etc. they were able to propagate the theory as the cardinal requirement for 'secular' scholarship. How greatly it harmed the social sciences and humanities in India during the last five decades has not been properly examined so far.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, whenever questioned on the formulations for lack or inadequacy of evidences, the common refrain of the radical professors was that propagating such views is to fulfill the 'social responsibility' of the scholars. Thus, to them evidence and hard social realities of the past and present were secondary to the conclusions formulated beforehand. During an academic debate, in early 1990, about the Babri Masjid - Ram Janmabhumi controversy (Ayodhya), Prof Harbans Mukhia had admitted as much, that they would propagate their claims 'irrespective of the historical evidence'.<sup>4</sup> That the facts are of little importance to the politically desirable conclusions. One can gauge the damage done to the education of young generations by such audacious activism in the name of history teaching.

As to the formulations above, one can observe from the discourse in India during the last five decades, even today nothing much different could be added to it about 'communalism' and 'secularism' in India.

The eminent historians proclaimed that communal history is the source of communal politics. Consequently they assumed it as their duty to initiate new history writing. For which it became necessary to suppress and even obliterate many authentic accounts written by historians so far. Even first-hand accounts, such as eye-witness narrations or writings by historical figures were dismissed with various excuses. If not found in harmony with the above formulations, materials were belittled as

doubtful or tainted with 'communal' prejudices. Students and researchers were discouraged to read original sources and hitherto great Indian and Western historians. It deeply harmed the young, unsuspecting students and researchers, as they were led to believe and propagate some conclusions without studying best available material and sources of knowledge about the theme in hand.

In this way a grand project started to give 'progressive' direction to the social sciences. Incidentally, but not without far reaching consequences, the formulations were by and large suitable for the then ruling circle of the country. Being political in nature those formulations killed three birds with the stone of the communalism slur. First, the radical campaign constantly maligned the main opposition party as the embodiment and promoter of 'communalism'. So the party was made to remain always in defensive, explaining itself embarrassingly. Second, it tended to encourage a particular community, designated 'minority' but the most sizable in the country, to continue support the then ruling party as a vote-bank. Third, among the radical-progressive intellectuals the rulers found a resourceful and determined group, whom they readily obliged with additional means and patronage. The progressive propaganda disseminated through academia and universities was officially dressed as the proper educational texts. As a result some three generations of students, teachers, scholars, journalists, and lawyers were slowly, but continuously indoctrinated into believing a political cant as received wisdom.

Uninterrupted dissemination of a set of political beliefs within the educational curriculum from universities down to schools, for decades created a situation that we have today. Social science and humanities education, research and publication have largely turned into an arena of propagating fixed beliefs, sermons and condemnation rather than of authentic study, open enquiry and reflective thinking about the society past and present. It has become a standard practice to publish ready judgments & condemnations, largely on the line of the formulations above and its derivatives.

Accordingly, most social science professors and researchers in India rarely care about matter-of-fact assessment of the society, thoughts, texts and issues involved. Pre-decided conclusions are pushed and accepted even before properly studying a social event or phenomenon. Field studies and source materials are so suggested as to find convenient material or data to support the already determined conclusions. It has become such a normal affair that while assessing a social problem, anything appearing as positive about Hindu religion, or critical to Islam is *ipso facto* detested by the academic circles of the country. The force of established custom is

such that even today, as the erstwhile maligned party is in power for years, it is considered incorrect among the educated to be sympathetic to the party, irrespective of the matter under consideration.<sup>5</sup>

It is to the credit of Prof. Bipan Chandra, an avowed Marxist, and his comrades that they created a plausible but fallacious narrative of Indian history and enforced a habitual ridicule about everything Hindu. That it could be done in suitable academic forms was undoubtedly an accomplishment. For the same reason, however, they acted less as social scientists than as 'distortion experts', to use the term given by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn<sup>6</sup> for such academics.

As one can find from the corpus of radical scholarship so far, the notion of communalism was so formulated that it only targeted 'Hindu communalists'. Prof. Bipan Chandra was very particular about this concept. Hammering it insistently through his writings, speeches and projects till the end. Perhaps he hardly ever used 'Hindu' as a normative word. He always insisted to use 'Hindu communal' or just 'communal', so that no quarter be given to the forces he decided to fight all along. It is also a tribute, therefore, if we recall his views in some detail as a representative case to determine how social science in India suffered heavily in becoming a tool of political activism.

Let us begin with definition. According to Bipan Chandra, "Communalism or communal ideology has three elements or stages which are co-related. The first is the belief that the worldly interests - political, economic, social and cultural - of the followers of a religion is common. The second is that in a pluralist society such as India the worldly interests of one religious group is different from that of another. Communalism enters its third stage when it is believed that the worldly interests of different religious groups or 'communities' are in conflict with each other. ... So, basically communalism is the ideology upon which communal politics stands."<sup>7</sup>

This definition is circular as the three elements mentioned in it actually appear to be one and the same. Yet he kept repeating it in his writings in different ways. To take another example, "Communalism is an ideology in itself. In a sense it is politics which moves around that ideology"<sup>8</sup>. Thus, communalism moves around communalism. It remained his central thesis all along, "Communalism was, and is, a false consciousness of the historical process of the last hundred years. Later, as we shall see, under the impact of the contemporary communal politics, it also became, in the hands of historians, a false representation of the past."<sup>9</sup> Again, the two sentences become one round statement, any logical end of which is impossible to find.

Even some Marxist professors acknowledged the

fallacy. Prof. Namwar Singh, a renowned Marxist, observed, "Some friends from JNU using the Marxist jargon say that communalism is a false consciousness. If communalism is a false consciousness I would say nationalism is no less false"<sup>10</sup> Prof Dilip Simeon, another well known social scientist, professed, "Bipan Chandra's definition applies to nationalism as well and hence it does not add anything to our knowledge."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the most influential group of social scientists, with the support of state apparatus in education continued to propagate the theory.

As quoted above, Prof. Bipan Chandra also emphasized that communalism is an issue emerging in 'the last hundred years.' To him communalism is roughly a development after the Sepoy Revolt of 1857. This formulation, too, became a mental block. Because what he called communalism was much more pronounced centuries ago in Indian polity. But Prof. Bipan refused to admit it. As a result, what a political leader stated today is branded as 'communalism'; a similar pronouncement by a Mogul ruler or *sultan* centuries ago was not communal. If violence between Hindu and Muslim communities is called 'communal' clash in the twentieth century, similar incidents centuries ago<sup>12</sup> would not be called so. Because it has been already fixed by the professors that communalism is a phenomenon of the 'last hundred years'.

Despite frequently fudging the definition, at one place Prof. Bipan Chandra provided somewhat understandable explanation, "We have to distinguish between religion as a faith or system used by people in their daily life and the ideology of socio-political identity on the basis of religion which is communalism"<sup>13</sup>.

Now, on the basis of this description all basic texts of Islam (if its injunctions are considered valid today, which indeed is the case with the *ulema* and most Muslim leaders all over the world) are nothing but the source of communalism. Prophet Muhammad himself had pronounced, which his followers till today continue to believe and display, that Islam is an all encompassing principle, above all politics and law. That the followers of Prophet Muhammad are a political community, a world community, the *ummat*, with a common goal to conquer the world and establish the rule of Islam on the earth. This is a declaration found in countless contemporary and past political documents of influential organisations, including ruling ones, in many countries.

There is absolutely no difference of opinion among Muslim scholars that Islam is not merely the faith of an individual but a political ideology at the same time – *deen wa dawla* (religion and state). In fact, many Muslims leaders emphasized the political aspects more than personal piety. Ayatollah Khomeini, the President of Iran for long

time said, "Islam is a very political religion. Anyone who will say that religion is separate from politics is a fool; he does not know Islam or politics." Sayyid Hasan Mudarris, the renowned Iranian scholar expressed the same views much earlier, "Our politics is our religion and our religion is our politics."<sup>14</sup>

However, some academics claim that such postulates to be a recent development.<sup>15</sup> But the history of Islam demonstrates otherwise. Detailed directives as to the laws and regulations of an Islamic state and society were all given by Prophet Muhammad himself<sup>16</sup>. They are duly codified and regularly followed by millions of Muslims all over the world. Furthermore, those directives did not leave others alone. It contained detailed political directives and legal provisions about non-Muslims and how to deal with them if they do not accept the 'invitation' to embrace Islam.

After the passing away of Prophet Muhammad, the tradition of Caliphate also represented the inseparable status of Islam and politics. It was not a doctrine confined to a country ruled by the Caliph. We may recall the *khalifat* movement in India during the years 1919-22. It was the agitation of Indian Muslims to support the powers of the Caliph (*Khalifa*) of Turkey, then considered the guide of the Muslims of the world.

Even today almost all countries with Muslim majority officially call themselves 'Islamic' republic where Islam enjoys the official status of *the* ideological and constitutional guide. The status of Islam in those countries is directly comparable with the Constitution, law and political structures of non-Islamic countries. It would be quite clear that the political and non-political in the Islamic doctrine are inseparable. The differences in applications in various Muslim countries are a difference of degree, of circumstantial or practical difficulties, and not rejection of the Islamic directives for law and politics.

Thus, if we apply the formulation of 'communalism' given by Prof. Bipan Chandra 'the ideology of socio-political identity on the basis of religion', it fits squarely on Muslim community at large and their general history. It makes Islam by definition 'communal'<sup>17</sup> since its origin and throughout its existence. Therefore, various actions of Muslim rulers between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in India will have to be termed as 'communal', by the definition of radical professors in India today.

But Prof. Bipan Chandra never admitted that the political practices of the Islamic countries, and organisations are an example of 'communalism'. Nor, to him, the rule of Muslim rulers in mediaeval India was communal. It appears, either he had no idea at all of the Islamic theory and practice<sup>18</sup>; or he was so obsessed with the 'Hindu communalists' that he never took the trouble to check his definition with any other community.

Here it may also be noted that in comparison to the basic, classic Islamic texts and the pronouncements of authentic Islamic scholars and leaders, nothing comparable is found in the classic Hindu texts or in the writings of influential Hindu sages and scholars, past and present, which could be identified as 'communal' teaching or exhortation, according to the definition propounded by Prof. Bipan Chandra.

Yet, he and many other radicals presented an entirely contrary scenario. To this they employed various approaches, one of which was to have double standards at every step. For instance, they discussed the 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century India with one standard and terminology, while employed another standard and terminology in discussing the modern period and present situation. This is a point worth noting. To refuse the existence of a 'Muslim rule' period in India, they used the Marxian class terminology. As Bipan Chandra wrote:

British historians and, following them, Indian historians described the mediaeval period of Indian history as the Muslim period. The rule of Turk, Afghan, and Mughal rulers was called Muslim rule. Even though the Muslim masses were as poor and oppressed by taxes as the Hindu masses, and even though both were looked down by the rulers, nobles, chiefs, and zamindars, whether Hindu or Muslim, looked upon them with contempt [where did the author find this 'looking down'?<sup>19</sup>] and regarded as low creatures, yet these (British and Indian) writers declare that all Muslims were rulers in the medieval India and all non-Muslims were the ruled.<sup>20</sup>

This has been an oft-repeated argument, seemingly plausible from the viewpoint of contemporary realities. All radical professors maintained in the same vein that in mediaeval India the society consisted of rulers, landlords, farmers and exploited people who could be both Hindus or Muslims. Hence it is wrong to term only Hindus as the oppressed people and, therefore, it will be wrong to call that period a Muslim-rule period. This is the economic class based analysis of mediaeval India.

But as soon as the same professor comes to analyse the later period, their terminology transforms into a *communal* one.<sup>21</sup> He never employed the *class* terminology, used regularly for the 'medieval India', in describing modern period. In which a Sir Syed Ahmed and a Raja Shiv Prasad would make the class of exploiters, and a Jumman and a Horiram together be the exploited class. Instead, the same historians and social scientists always employ communal terms for describing the modern socio-political situation, always taking 'Muslims' as a separate entity irrespective of the economic class. For instance, describing the history of modern India Prof. Bipan Chandra gave the sub-title in one of his chapters: "The Role of Students, Women, Muslims, and the Masses."<sup>22</sup>

To take another instance, while discussing the issue

of foreign aggressors, Bipan Chandra rhetorically asked: "Why the Mughals were called foreigners? Because they were Muslims."<sup>23</sup> These kind of vehement presentations sidetracked historical facts and fudge the present Hindu-Muslim situations in the country. It leaves no scope to differ on the question. Even though for a fair treatment of the issue in hand a historian must present a verifiable reference to demonstrate that so or so called the Mughal rulers as foreign rulers *only because* they were Muslims. But radical professors frequently posited an imagined argument for the other side in order to demolish it, something which a rival writer has never said at all. All serious historians, Indian or Western, called Mughals foreign aggressors on the basis of many points, not what Bipan Chandra assumed and criticized.

In describing and analysing the Partition of India in 1947, to take yet another example, radical historians tried hard to downplay or even obliterate the Muslim League's 'two nation theory' and its Political Resolution (1940) for demanding the Partition, in which all official rationale were presented for demanding partition of India. In no book written by the Marxist historians one can find the text of such a significant document or a gist of it. Also, the resolution of the Communist Party of India, proclaiming the 'right to self-determination of Muslims' in support of the Muslim League's demand for the Partition is also missing in their books and articles. These cardinal facts of the contemporary history of India are missing in a most popular book of Bipan Chandra and others about the freedom struggle.<sup>24</sup> They mentioned it in a vague way that 'communal forces' were responsible for the Partition.

Presenting the past and present in such a manner, radical historians and their comrades in related disciplines assumed that there are no scholars with a different narrative. As a regular method, they always branded all differing voices as 'communal' and cheap, not worthy of consideration at all. Bipan Chandra took the stance even further, that in the entire academic scenario there is no other viewpoint except that of the 'BJP' and of the 'scientific and secular history'.<sup>25</sup> Even a foreign scholar like Koenraad Elst or the Nobel laureate such as V. S. Naipaul were disparaged in similar way, as if no one can write differently except those employed or encouraged by the BJP.

This Leninist attitude of compulsive branding of differing scholars has been a typical characteristic of all Marxist professors. One has to note and estimate its harmful consequences in social science education and discourse. More so, as with decades of such propagation and propaganda, it has become an accepted way in academic discussion to dismiss a scholar or interlocutor just on the basis of an arbitrary negative branding.

One must ponder, therefore, how great a harm has been done to social studies and general discourse in the country if even well-meaning writers and journalists regularly use this easy way to deal with uncomfortable facts, events and independent views. Many of them innocently come to believe there can be no good writing of history or political analyses other than 'scientific' and 'secular'. Therefore, they suppose, whatever else is being presented can be nothing but the trash peddled by some communal organization, especially the Hindutva ones. Any one saying different is communal, ignorant or irrelevant. This is the refrain employed by a large number of senior intellectuals, journalists and professors in India today.

This is a sorry situation. Many commentators, scholars and writers care little for ascertaining facts and collecting enough data before reaching a conclusion, and irrespective of which political forces it may help or harm. Instead, many start from the other end: which social or political force has to be helped or harmed? So that facts, events or data must be searched or suppressed accordingly and highlighted likewise. For the purpose entire themes and issues of importance, both national and international, have been either relegated into obscurity or given lowest priority.

Conversely a whole range of less important issues or false issues are also put to fore or invented to propagate regularly in academia and media. All such omission and commission to serve the same purpose: encouraging some political forces and discouraging others. In short, almost entire social science and humanities education, research and publishing in India is politicized, diseased by the strong virus of 'political correctness'. Under its heavy influence, the general education itself, beginning from school level up to university, stands corrupted in the country. As a result, it affected adversely the media, judiciary and political classes as well. Such professionals are largely the product of the same basic and standard education imparted in the country, and carry in huge doses various fabricated formulations given to them for long during their innocent years.

This sorry state of affairs is a product of decades of hammering of those formulations, made fifty four years ago. It were since propagated almost unhindered through all the authoritative, prestigious institutions and academic bodies of the country. Even those resourceful organisations and figures at receiving ends of this harmful practice did nothing to arrest the rot. The academics and intellectuals who understood it were not helped by any quarters to counter it systematically. Their individual efforts were subdued by the abuse and organized propaganda by just calling them 'communal',

'obscurantist', 'chauvinist' or 'lackey' of some party, etc.. Even great writers, poets, and scholars of yore or present were dismissed in similar way.

The state patronage to the 'secular and scientific' scholarship was the main lever to grow this enterprise. The scholarship, ability and even the high stature of the Marxists was not enough to peddle such artificial constructs in the country. Earlier we have mentioned the term 'distortion experts' by Solzhenitsyn for the Soviet historians. In India, too, due to similar reasons the Marxist historians were called as 'fifth rate academic politicians', 'courtier historians', 'academic gangsters', 'subverter of academic freedom', 'lickspittles of the Emergency regime', 'dedicated cliques' and 'symbols of non-freedom'. Such expressions were used not by any communal rag, but by the prominent, secularist sociologist like Prof. Ashis Nandy. He expressed it in the prestigious journal *Seminar*.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, the subject of discussion was, "Our intellectuals" and Prof. Nandy was writing in the year 1978 precisely on the issue of the *history textbooks* being taught in schools, written by the eminent Marxist historians.

Yet, due to favourable political alignments the harmful textbooks and same historians continue to rule the roost for next three decades. Even after, new history books and discourse followed largely the same politico-ideological pattern with little variations. As a result, for almost fifty years now, the bulk of social science and humanities publications and scholarly commentaries in India follow those formulations as if it were pious commandments, not to be violated irrespective of facts to the contrary.

The writings about party politics and ideological issues especially tuned into a regular badgering of Hindu leaders, scholars and texts in this country, past and present. Marxist historians devoted more time on this, though many well-known professors in other disciplines also joined them. Their writings, lectures and speeches about communalism mostly remained a regular harangue and sermons with an anti-Hindu spirit. The fixation can be readily perceived by just cursorily going through the huge number of books, articles and monographs. The message, arguments and even the details or examples also remained the same, whether written forty years old or more recent ones.

Such repetition of a preset conclusions, and exhortations, cannot be called education. It was de facto a propaganda and indoctrination. This did not create a conducive environment for healthy social sciences to grow. It encouraged more political disposition and activism than scholarship. It has been regularly seen in many famous universities' social sciences and humanities departments study materials. Most academic activities

in such subjects fell more into the category of agitation and propaganda, the 'Agit-Prop' department, to use the Soviet term. This was not a negative term in itself. Erstwhile Soviet academicians used to boast of their duties as propagandists. The situation of the Marxist professors in India has not been much different. They did not even refused such an image for themselves, at least up the 1980s when the powerful Soviet Union existed on the world scene.

For example, in the year 1974, as the Chairman of the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, Prof. Bipan Chandra had written as an avowed communist agitator. Full of emotion, involvement and confidence, pointing out to Indian Marxists their shortcomings, explaining the right methods of working and "the specific tasks before Indian Marxists... to organize the people for the overthrow of the existing social system; in other words, to make the Indian revolution".<sup>27</sup> This article equaled in temper & enthusiasm with any communist leader. So, just pause and think: was it possible to help grow genuine historical and social research when the top social scientists of the country were calling for political activism to create the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the country?

Notably, in the same article, published in the most respected journal *Seminar*, Prof. Bipan Chandra also asserted that there is no such thing as 'academic Marxism'. To him Marxist writing and active politics is inspirable, which was a correct statement.

Therefore, it is not incidental that many radical professors of social sciences and humanities in the country were more concerned for active politics<sup>28</sup> than educating, researching and writing standard study materials. Even later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and huge amount of suppressed information about communism coming to light, Bipan Chandra wrote, "nothing will remain if you remove 'class-struggle' from communism"<sup>29</sup>. Thus, to him 'involvement' in politics through education for helping 'class struggle' and supporting all kind of divisive, separatist movements were appropriate for 'bringing out revolution' by 'overthrowing the existing order'. Since such an avowed admission was made in writing, especially published by a semi-political NGO to propagate it; one can consider its damaging import for humanities and social science education in the country.

In this article we have taken into account the views of only one eminent historian. The views of many others can be seen to find the same spirit, a spirit which valued propaganda more than encouraging genuine study and scholarship. In fact, the writing of Prof. Bipan Chandra was more articulate and plausible than many other 'eminent' historians, even though they have had similar high positions. Yet it remained a permanent obsession

with Prof. Bipan Chandra. He was of the view that if we could remove all 'communal writings' the problem of communalism will be done away with in India.

One may recall a similar fixation in the erstwhile Soviet Union, where the rulers did exactly what Prof. Bipan Chandra wished for here. For seven decades, since 1920s to 1980s, the Soviet people were kept totally sanitized from the 'bourgeois literature' of the Western countries. But at the end the Soviet system collapsed, not the so-called bourgeois ideas.

It would be no different with the doctrine Prof. Bipan Chandra and his academic associates espoused. Like the Soviet leaders, they believed in censorship and distortion, that teaching truthful accounts of medieval or contemporary Indian history would be detrimental to the communal harmony in the country. So they willfully censored a whole lot of great literature, books, accounts, biographies, etc. in order to help build a 'secular and scientific' discourse for our society. Little did they realize that it helped a contrary purpose. Conscious people of both communities, Muslim and Hindu, knew many historical facts and current happenings. India being an old civilization and a robust liberal polity, there had been all kind of information and education channels open for the people to know the truth about a social, political or religious phenomenon, regardless the falsifying enterprise of the radical professors. Therefore, a considerable section of people felt unease with the artificial propaganda of 'composite culture' through the academic circles and media. As if India has had no culture worth respecting before the advent of Islam. As a result more distrust and suspicion was generated than trust among the people.

Had the historical truths and present realities were dispassionately taken into account and remained open for all to discuss, it might have been much easier to find a just and sensible social-political-literary discourse in academics. Especially so in this country, famous for centuries for its liberal attitude towards various sects and beliefs.

It remains to be seen how long the academic practices and institutions in India will continue to suffer from the deformities in social sciences and humanities education.

## Notes

1. Standard English dictionaries of the Western countries still have the same meaning: "belonging to or used by a community" as in the *Collins Compact English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2002).
2. All these formulations are a summary of the main propositions from Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra, *Communalism and the writing of Indian History* (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1969). All quotes from it henceforth is from the eighth re-print, 1999.
3. The only systematic analysis of the official directives for writing such a desirable history books, given to history books writers through an NCERT advisory document, was made by the historian Sita Ram Goel in his book *The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1982). It is a brief, but comprehensive critique of the formulations of the Marxist historians till date.
4. During an academic debate, in early 1990, about the Babri Masjid - Ram Janmabhumi controversy (Ayodhya), Prof. Harbans Mukhia admitted as much: "Finally, we would repeat what we have said often enough before, that the destruction or conversions of places of worship, if and when they have occurred in the past, were specific to the political culture of those times. We reject any attempt at repeating that political culture today, irrespective of the historical evidence." (A R Khan, "In the Name of 'History'", in Sita Ram Goel (ed.), *Hindu Temples What happened to Them: Vol I: A Preliminary Survey* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1998), p. 259-60. Emphasis added). It should be noted, also, that no interlocutor in the debate had proposed to 'repeat the political culture of those times'. Nor, also, the mindless destruction of temples was 'specific to the culture of those times'. It was and still is a part of a particular religious *faith*, which the world witnessed even recently in Bamyán (Afghanistan) and Syria-Iraq. It was perpetrated by the Taliban and the Islamic State rulers respectively.
5. Pawan Gupta, a well-known educationist, related an incident in Mussoorie, his home, when a group of young tourists was talking in such terms. Without even knowing the full name of a large national organization, they were sure that being sympathetic to it is a 'no, no' for trendy circles.
6. Solzhenitsyn coined this term for the Soviet academicians whose writings he observed for decades. But the similarities of traits with the Indian Marxists in social sciences and humanities are so close that the term can justifiably be used for Indian progressive professors as well.
7. Bipan Chandra, "*Sampradaiika ka uday aur vikas*" in Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and others. *Bharat ha swatantrata sangharhsa* (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 368-69.
8. Bipan Chandra, "Communalism, communal ideology and history" in *Rewriting of History and Sangh Parivar* (New Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, 2002), p. 29 (re-translated from the Hindi version of the publication).
9. Bipan Chandra, "Historians of Modern Indian and Communalism", in Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra, *Communalism and the writing of Indian History* (New Delhi, 1999 edition), p. 41.
10. Namwar Singh, "*Dharma nirpekshata banam dharmā*" in *Asli Bharat*, Hindi bimonthly, New Delhi, July-August 1990.
11. Dilip Simeon, "Communalism in Modern India: A theoretical examination", in *Mainstream*, New Delhi, 13 Dec. 1986.
12. German historian Dr. Michael Mann found that Hindu-Muslim riots were a problem for Delhi rulers even in the 18th Century. In his lecture in Delhi on 18 Dec. 2001 on 'Turbulent Delhi: 1803-1856' he mentioned it. In many official and non-official documents it is found that riots

- have been taking place in Ayodhya for over 250 years at the Ram Janmabhoomi site.
13. Bipan Chandra, *Aadhunik Bharat* (New Delhi: NCERT, 1998), p. 209.
  14. From *Message of Thaqaalayn*, A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies, Vol. 2, Nos. 2-3 (Tehran, n.d.), translated by Dr. A. N. Baqirshahi.
  15. Barbara Allen Roberson, "Islamic politics" in *Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (New Delhi: OUP, 2008), p. 277.
  16. For a study of the inseparable relations between Islam and politics, see Shashi S. Sharma, *Caliphs and Sultans: Religious Ideology and political praxis* (Delhi, 2004).
  17. This is the reason why there is no word for 'secularism' in the languages of Muslim communities. In Urdu, for example, they call it '*la-dini*', i.e., opposed to the religion (Islam). Confirming the situation that a socio-political life separated from religion is unthinkable for Muslims. For a scholarly study see Mushir-ul-Haque, *Islam in secular India* (Shimla: IAS, 1977).
  18. Shashi S. Sharma, who worked as Director of the National Book Trust, New Delhi when Prof Bipan Chandra was the Chairman of the Trust, related a conversation that once he asked if the professor has gone through the basic Islamic texts. He received a negative reply.
  19. This kind of class scenario envisaged by the Marxist historians in their writing is pure imagination, not supported by historical sources, literature or archaeology. This is their way of applying Marxist ideas or formulae by which such 'historical' narratives are created. Else some reference to a mediaeval writer, chronicler or record would have definitely been made to show that it was so.
  20. Bipan Chandra, *Modern India* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 251.
  21. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-52. The historian shows his double standards within two paragraphs. In the first he explains that it is wrong to call, in the context of the mediaeval India, the rulers as Muslim while the Hindus as the subject. But in the very next he uses the term 'minorities' for Muslims in entirety and goes to the extent of calling their concerns as 'natural'. That is, accepting a communal identity for being beneficiary or deprived. A identity refused for the medieval period.
  22. Bipan Chandra, *Modern India* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 242.
  23. Bipan Chandra in Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra, *Communalism and writing of Indian History*, op. cit., p. 58.
  24. Bipan Chandra, Amlesh Tripathi and Barun De, *Freedom struggle* (Delhi: NBT, 1989).
  25. Bipan Chandra "Historical blunders", in Mridula Mukherjee and others, *Communalisation of Education: The history text book controversy* (New Delhi, n.d.), p. 12.
  26. Ashis Nandy, "Self-esteem, autonomy and authenticity" in *Seminar*, no. 222, New Delhi, Feb. 1978.
  27. Bipan Chandra, "Total rectification", in *Seminar*, New Delhi, no. 178, June 1974.
  28. Babri masjid Ram janmabhumi (Ayodhya) controversy was a prominent example, during 1990-91, when dozens of Social Science professors from the JNU and Delhi University directly intervened and campaigned for the Muslim side. A recent example is the Lok Sabha election in 2014 when a group of Professors and students went to Varanasi to campaign against Narendra Modi, saying it was their duty to do so.
  29. Bipan Chandra, "Communalism, communal ideology and history" in *Rewriting of History and Sangh Parivar* (New Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, 2002), p. 31.