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Reviewed Article:

Taking Archaeological Concepts outside the Social Science Class in Indian Schools

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In Indian classrooms, social sciences receive disproportionately less attention than natural sciences and mathematics (Dahiya, 2003; Lall and House, 2005; Roy, 2017). History features within the social science textbooks in India, and is perceived as boring and uninteresting by school children (Roy, 2017; Dahiya, 2003); archaeology is taught as part of the history lessons and is most often not seen as different from history.

History and Archaeology in School Textbooks in India

> " There is however a growing interest in ways to disseminate archaeology outside the school classroom. Centres such as the Sharma Heritage Centre based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Bangalore chapter, Karnataka, have been carrying out workshops, lectures and hands-on exercises, reaching out to various sections of society, including children.

Neither textbooks nor schools are homogeneous; amongst the various affiliations a few are described below. They can be privately funded English-language schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), English-language government-aided schools affiliated to state level examination boards, or government-run municipal schools (Lall and House, 2005). The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) "…though an autonomous body, draws up the national curriculum framework and publishes textbooks which are used as models by most state governments" (Lall and House, 2005, p.9). There are variations in the content of history lessons in different textbooks, as well as in how teaching is carried out in the classroom in these various schools (Roy, 2017). The government-aided and government-funded schools form a majority, and in these the history curriculum is outdated. Students find it boring because of the memorizing of events, dates, etc. they are asked to do (Nair, 2005).

A widely read contemporary Indian historian, Romila Thapar (2009, pp.87-88), describes her own journey of writing two history textbooks for NCERT, and she discusses how even 15 years after independence (1947), she was persuaded to write the class VI textbook as a way to help the national cause. She also talks about how this endeavor by NCERT emphasized the need to communicate a secular and rational view of the past, not one based on myths. Subsequently, allegations were made by right wing governments that the textbooks were written by communists, giving examples of historians like Thapar, who had written about beef consumption in India (Thapar, 2009, p.94); similar articles have suggested the inclusion of Hindu religious views by right wing governments (Roy, 2011). Due to limited space, this article will not be able to do justice to these aspects; rather it aims to concentrate on how archaeology is taught in schools and how this affects research in the field of archaeology.

While most of these articles discuss the history textbooks, little mention is made of archaeology, although Thapar (2009, pp.93-94) does discuss the importance of archaeological data in history textbooks as a means of reflection regional cultural differences. For example: the NCERT class VI history textbook prepared in 2004/2005 talks extensively about prehistory and archaeologists, but it hardly discusses the methods or concepts used in archaeology. It does refer to the idea of superimposition using diagrams, but this is not connected with how

they affect the way the past is understood. Dahiya (2003, p.300) says that the historians who are instrumental in setting up the curriculum of NCERT history textbooks may not seem like they are interested in archaeology; however, they do advocate the inclusion of archeology in history textbooks. In recent times though, more archaeologists like Prof. Jaya Menon (NCERT class VI history textbooks, 2004/2005) and Prof. Selvakumar (Kerala and Karnataka board textbooks on history) have been more involved, and this may be seen from the inclusion of archaeology as more than a source for history.

There is however a growing interest in ways to disseminate archaeology outside the school classroom. Centres such as the Sharma Heritage Centre based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Bangalore chapter, Karnataka, have been carrying out workshops, lectures and hands-on exercises, reaching out to various sections of society, including children. Similarly, the author affiliated to the Heritage, Science and Society program at National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in collaboration with Bharath Gyan Vivgyan Samhiti (BGVS) conducted a workshop for children from Government funded schools class VI and VII, as a means to explore different ways of exposing children to archaeological concepts and methods. We also wondered if it matters whether archaeology is distinguished as a discipline independent of history when teaching schoolchildren.

A Case Study: Disseminating Archeology Workshop at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore

The workshop was envisaged to focus on students from government funded (three) and government aided schools (one); a total of four schools were selected, located within the neighborhood of NIAS where the workshop was held. In three of the schools, the medium of instruction was the regional language, Kannada, and in one it was English. The workshop was conducted for 45 students, who were divided into five groups which were divided randomly so that they would be mixed both in terms of gender but also each group would include students from different schools. The idea was that this would help the students from different schools interact, with each group being lead by one resource person. Resource persons belonged either to NIAS or BGVS, and some of them were experienced teachers (over 20 years' experience teaching various subjects in schools in Karnataka) from outside Bangalore. One teacher from each school was invited to observe the workshop, but was asked not to participate since they tended to get anxious over the performance of the children. The teachers who attended the workshop taught social science and science. The workshop was conducted over two days. On the first day, a series of activities was conducted to introduce students to basic concepts in archaeology, such as the nature of archeological records, context in archaeology, typological classification of artifacts and connecting objects to events in the past, with a break between the activities.

An example of an activity conducted at the workshop is as follows: photographs taken from the immediate neighborhood were projected on a screen, and these included meat, flower and vegetable markets. They were all located very close to their schools and the children were given 25 minutes to discuss these images (See Figure 1). The instructors were asked to encourage the students to think about what traces would be left behind in these places to help us reconstruct the activities that have taken place in that location. The resource persons were asked to bring up the following questions:

1. What would be the material remains of the meat market left behind over time, for example: bones or butchery marks?

2. Vegetable market: for example, what would remain of it?

3. The images included a photo of a backyard with a grinding stone. What can archaeologists understand from such material remains of a place? How do you interpret discards and rubbish from this house?

4. The flower market: what here would help archaeologists, for example, understand ritual activities that happen in this community/area? Example: the coconut leaf is twinned (See Figure 2) and used in death ceremonies.

On the second day the students were taken on a tour of an archaeological site, and met an archaeologist who had excavated at the site (See Figure 3). This site was that of a Jain monastery which had recently been excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India, who were very supportive and deputed one of the excavators at the site to talk to the students. During this visit, children were given an introduction to the site. An interactive session proceeded whereby they asked the excavator various questions. He also spoke to them about the importance of context to archaeologists, and why removing artifacts from sites is problematic. The workshop was planned to facilitate interaction between children of different schools; however, we found that language played a major role in how children interacted with each other and with the resource persons. Children from the government-aided school were largely English speaking and tended to be more confident, to the point where they admonished children from other schools for incorrect answers. At the same time, their answers also tended to reference strongly to the history they had learnt in school classrooms or textbooks.

On the third day of the workshop, held at NIAS, we had a meeting with the teachers to get their feedback on the activities and their view on archaeology being taught in schools. Overwhelmingly, the response was that while they found the activities extremely useful, they felt constrained by the amount of content that had to be completed in a short amount of time and by the fact that they could not take the time to explore concepts in the classroom. The social sciences include multiple subjects such as history, geography, political sciences etc. As Roy (2011, p.21) also notes, even teachers' manuals tend to place emphasis on content over concepts in many ways, going back to the notion of memorizing or route learning. Nair (2005,

p.1589) and Roy (2017, pp.126-127) discuss how concepts or even content in history is not only derived from the history textbooks, but also through language textbooks which discuss history, or various other sources. In short: when history is marginalized, how much can archaeological concepts be taught in schools when they remain a marginalized part of history? As Dahiya (2003, p.305) says however, archaeology is a great way to talk about the past in a more hands-on and interesting manner. She further draws an outline of how this can be achieved in the school curriculum; initially as a part of history, but for older children as an independent discipline. Including archaeology in schools could also be done through workshops like the one conducted at NIAS. A way that does not burden schoolteachers by adding to their existing syllabus, but at the same time helps to explore a different dimension of the past.

Archaeology in Colleges and Universities

This brings us to the question of why is it important that archaeology is taught as not only a source of history, but rather through history. One of the debates that Indian archaeologist are familiar with is the question of archaeology being placed within the Department of History in Universities, and whether the methodological differences between these disciplines make this problematic. Almost all archaeology is taught within the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, with the two exceptions being at Deccan College and the University of Calcutta (See Table 1). Most of these departments do not offer a Bachelor's degree, which means that most people will not study archaeology until their Master's degree. All these universities and colleges also have a Department of History; this implies that the syllabus taught in the Ancient History and Archaeology departments is focused mainly on archaeology for the prehistoric (deep time) or pre-medieval (and therefore ancient) period.

Name of Dept.	Name of University	Location	Date of Est.	Degrees offered	Dept. of History	Date of Est.
Ancient History and Archaeology	University of Mysore	Mysore	1958	M.A., M.Phil. PhD and PG diploma*	Yes	
Archaeology and Ancient History	M.S.Baroda	Baroda	early 1950s	B.A, M.A., PhD	Yes	1949
Archaeology	Deccan College	Pune		M.A., PhD	No	
Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management	Affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University	Delhi		M.A.		

Ancient History and Archaeology	University of Madras	Chennai	1959	M.A., M.Phil. PhD	Yes	
Institute of Archaeology	ASI	Delhi	1958	PG diploma	Yes	
Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology	Vasantrao Naik Government Institute of Arts and Social Sciences	Nagpur	1962	M.A.	Yes	1885
Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology	Allahabad University	Allahabad	1955	B.A., M.A., PhD	Yes**	
Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology	AP Singh University	Rewa	1984	M.A.***, M.Phil. PhD	Yes	
History & Archaeology	Andhra University	Vishakhapatnam	1931	M.A. MPhill, PhD		
Ancient Indian History, culture and Archaeology	Banaras Hindu University	Varanasi	1957	M.A., PhD, PG diploma	Yes	
U.G. Vocational Course-Archaeology and Meuseology	Bangalore University	Bangalore			Yes	
Ancient Indian History, culture and Archaeology	Dr.Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya	Sagar, MP		BA, M.A., Mphill, PhD	Yes	
Ancient Indian History,	Kurushetra University	Kurukshetra	1962	M.A, Mphill	Yes	1961

culture and Archaeology						
Ancient Indian History, culture and Archaeology	HN Bahuguna Garhwal University	Srinagar	1976			
Ancient Indian History, culture and Archaeology	Osmania University	Hyderabad	1975	M.A., Mphill, PhD and PG diploma	Yes	1919
Ancient Indian History and Archaeology	Patna University	Patna	1950	M.A.	Yes	1910
Archaeology	University of Calcutta	Calcutta	1960	M.A., PhD	Yes****	1918+1919

TABLE 1. ARCHAEOLOGY IN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA OUT OF 18 DEPARTMENTS THAT HAVE ARCHAEOLOGY AS A PART OF THEIR NAME, ONLY TWO ARE CALLED DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY; IN ALL OTHER CASES THEY ARE MERGED WITH, OR A PART OF, ANCIENT HISTORY.
* M.A., MPHIL, PG DIPLOMA IN EPIGRAPHY AND PG DIPLOMA IN MUSEOLOGY, HERITAGE AND TOURISM, PHD
** DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN HISTORY
*** M.A. IN TOURISM ADMINSITRATION
**** INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE AS WELL AS DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

This, in turn, affects the way research is done. For archaeology, it means limited resources for fieldwork and more emphasis on archaeology as a source for certain periods such as Ancient History, rather than being seen as a discipline that frames its own questions, researches various periods and carries out its own analyses. The reasons and ramifications of this are not directly relevant to this paper; however, it provides a background to the space given for archaeology as a discipline, and this is reflected in schools as well. School syllabi also refer to archaeology as a source for history. This means that children are not aware of archaeology as a discipline, or, since it is located within the social science textbooks, see it as a form of history or of social sciences within the history section. Disciplinary configurations are clearly different between schools and colleges/universities; the obvious example is that History is located within social sciences in the former, and within the humanities in the latter. Whether this does in any way change how it is taught is a complex question to answer. Workshops or such courses may be a good way to bridge the gap between teaching archaeological concepts in schools and learning archaeology at an undergrad level, but how archaeology is to be taught in colleges remains to be addressed.

Acknowledgments

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FIG 1. RESOURCE PERSONS AT NIAS CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES TO EXPLAIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS TO CHILDREN.

FIG 2. MARKET NEAR NIAS USED IN ACTIVITY.

FIG 3. VISITING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AND INTERACTING WITH THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS.