



## Upholding Indian philosophy, historiography and sociology: A study of Rajiv Malhotra's corpus

Prof. (Dr.) Jagdish Batra

Professor Emeritus of English, SRM University, Sonipat, India.

Email: [drjagdishbatra@gmail.com](mailto:drjagdishbatra@gmail.com)

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Prof. Jagdish Batra

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### Abstract

Among the present-day Indologists, Rajiv Malhotra has a special place in that he is not an armchair philosopher but a cultural activist also – an intellectual *kshatriya* – as he prefers to be called. Giving up the temptation of multinational business that he owned in America, he has plunged himself into the project of upholding and disseminating Indian heritage – its dharmic culture through forceful writings and public interactions. His works show a deep understanding of the complexities of Indian philosophy bringing to the fore the integral cultural unity underpinning Indian society at a time when fissiparous tendencies within and outside the country are striving hard to tear it apart and lead it once again to politico-cultural subjugation. Malhotra rues the lacklustre response of Indian intellectuals and scholars to the ulterior propaganda unleashed in the western academy – mainly American – to denigrate the civilizational values and cultural texts of India. This expository essay also takes a critical look on the views put forth by Malhotra and his co-writers in their books.

**Keywords:** Indology, Colonial Mindset, Indian Knowledge System, Western Appropriation, Indian Culture.

### Introduction

Indian history and culture have fascinated people around the world since times immemorial. It is well-known that soon after the East India Company achieved its dominance in parts of India, Christian missionaries flocked in to 'save souls', i.e., to convert people to Christianity. They started studying the lives of the Indian people and their culture by reading

our ancient books. In order to understand the texts, the knowledge of Sanskrit was required which many scholars did acquire. Apart from the Christian missionaries like William Carey, Nathaniel Halhead et al, officers of the Company like William Jones and Charles Wilkins too learnt Sanskrit – each category for its own advantage. While there were some genuine scholars who studied these texts with

an open mind and their translations are valued even now<sup>1</sup>, there were others who could not dissociate themselves from their religious identity as Christians and tried to impose the biblical structure on to the Indian epical tales. Likewise, when in 1857, the reins of power got transferred from the East India Company to the British crown, the bureaucracy showed a more rigid attitude because of the First War of Indian Independence which they called the Mutiny. Their ruler-mindset was solely riveted on gaining knowledge of the ancient Indian scriptures in order to gain control of their subjects. This tendency was later termed Orientalism by the postcolonial theorist Edward Said.

There was a brief phase in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Romantic movement was catching on in Europe and America. We find poets like Walt Whitman and Thoreau in USA or William Blake and P.B. Shelley in England; scholars and philosophers like Goethe and Schopenhauer in Germany who were impressed by the Indian knowledge texts. Many scholars of the post-Romantic era approached the Indian classical treasure with a different agenda. In present times, one can see prejudices against Indian culture, even in the academia in America. Our ancient history and classical Sanskrit texts are being appropriated by them and a distorted version is then shared with the Indian intellectuals. It appears to be the same colonial era Christian prejudice against Hindu dharma. Challenging them is an onerous task due to the immense resources and clout in the world at their command. It goes to the credit of Rajiv Malhotra, a long-time settled Indian in America, who has taken up the cudgels in an admirable manner.

Malhotra was born in Delhi, where he studied in Delhi University. After that he went over to the US to study computer science. After finishing studies, he started business and through his business acumen, he came to head a sprawling business spread over many countries. However, destiny wanted him to trace a

different course in life. So, after forty years of business life, he gave it all up and plunged into the academic field in 1994. He was dismayed by the manner in which Indian culture was being projected in American academia. He took a bold stand to oppose this trend and enlighten the American and western people about the true worth of Indian knowledge texts – so called to fit into the nomenclature ‘Indian knowledge culture’ given by the renowned Indologist Kapil Kapoor (Kapoor). Malhotra set up the Infinity Foundation through which he has given more than 400 grants for various conferences, scholars, chairs, etc. in different universities. His razor-sharp logic, deep reservoir of knowledge and experience, and elephantine memory have helped him write scores of books and deliver lectures as a public intellectual. So far he has published fourteen books which have stirred a lot of interest and debate among intellectuals worldwide.

This paper focusses on some key propositions from amongst the plethora of issues taken up by Malhotra in his books which counter the raging Hinduphobia in the West. Indeed, this antipathy is evident in the Muslim world also, but while this is overt there, that coming from the Christian world is camouflaged in innocuous arguments and theories and needs intellectuals of calibre to expose them. Our social structure is constantly attacked without giving its history a serious thought; our itihasa or the epics are criticized because of their insistence that these be interpreted as per parameters set by the west; and there is seen a total ignorance of the deeper philosophical concepts of Hinduism. The books authored by Malhotra and his associates taken up for study here are: (abbreviations used for them in the paper are also mentioned alongside):

1. *Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines* (2010) = BI
2. *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* (2011) = BD,

3. *Indra's Net* (2014) = IN,
4. *The Battle for Sanskrit* (2016) = BFS,
5. *Sanskrit Non-Translatables* (2020) = SNT,
6. *Artificial Intelligence and the Battle for Power* (2021) = AI
7. *Snakes in the Ganga: Breaking India 2.0* (2022) = SG
8. *Varna, Jati, Caste* (2023) = VJC.

The main burden of these books is to present the true picture of Indian civilizational core, i.e., Hinduism. The core of Hinduism is its philosophical unity which binds together the people of India despite their diverse sub-cultures. Malhotra discusses philosophies underpinning the Indian as also the western epistemologies in a comparative mode so as to make his point clear. Besides, he exposes the Hinduphobia wrapped in innocuous theories and postulates of the west.

#### Purva Paksha

It must be said to Malhotra's credit that his books are based on evidence in ample measure. In order to judge dispassionately the opposing viewpoint, one has to understand it thoroughly and correctly. This is like our ancient *shastrartha* tradition – where each argument presented by one was logically answered by the other party.

Secondly, Malhotra's steadfastness in following up on any aspect that comes to his knowledge is admirable. An idea that forms a minor part of a book haunts him till the time he has researched it in detail and put it in the form of another book as early as possible. The idea of Sanskrit words not amenable to perfect translation formed a chapter in the book *Being Different*, but then the study expanded and took the book form with the publication of *Sanskrit Non-Translatables*. Again, the idea of social consciousness touched upon briefly in *Indra's Net* had actually been bothering Malhotra for a long time. The book *The Battle for Consciousness* was released only in 2024. We learn that he had

been working on this theme for the quarter of a century, which indeed shows his commitment to the ideal of projecting Indian culture in the right manner. Needless to say, the books published by Rajiv Malhotra singly, or in association with a co-author/s, are based on intensive research and the facts marshalled by them are strong, even if not irrefutable in toto.

Malhotra goes back to the time when Swami Vivekananda's lecture at the World Religions Conference in Chicago became – using the current lingo – viral. But the present-day western ideologues have sought to present it in an imaginary recension, terming it 'Neo-Hinduism'. Malhotra demolishes this artificial concept ascribed to Vivekananda. He calls the advocates of this concept the Neo-Hinduism Group. A member of this group, American scholar Paul Hacker, propounds the thesis that Vivekananda believed – and he cites many Hindu scholars like Dr Radhakrishnan – that the traditional Hinduism was very weak which led to the downfall of India" (IN 68). Hacker says this realization made people like Vivekananda to formulate a new Hinduism in order to fill with pride the Indians who had been suffering from inferiority complex vis-à-vis Europe. (IN 68). However, this is a clever strategy to bring about a break between the age-old Hinduism and the post-Vivekananda Hinduism.

On the other hand, promoting Christianity as the ur-religion and the Bible as the ultimate bench mark, the Christian missionaries and scholars mapped Indian history and cultural texts on to the biblical narratives. Manu was identified as Noah, Ram as Raamah, Kush as Cusa (Noah's great grandson), and so on, based on the tenuous similarity of names. (BI 43). British author Chamberlain interpreted Lord Krishna's promise in Bhagvadgita as the indication of the arrival of Jesus Christ! (BI 33). Since the Hindu yuga-s spanning millions of years did not fit into this framework, they were declared myths or illusory. People like Hacker alleged that Hinduism digested the ideas of service and

humanism from Christianity! Many such absurd theories were advanced to prove the supremacy of Christianity. (IN 69).

The book *Being Different* by Malhotra is an attempt to look at the west through non-western eyes. The title of the second chapter 'The audacity of difference' tells it all. While the West refers to the Puranas as myths, Malhotra locates the origin of the word 'myth' in the Sanskrit word 'mithya' – generally understood as false. It was used as 'myth' by western scholars and applied to our ancient scriptural texts. However, Malhotra corrects the perception by pointing out that the traditional scriptures depict the world as mithya, which actually means comparatively less real. "Conception of reality in Vedanta is always comparative" (IN 185), therefore, "When we say that universe is mithya, we mean it is unreal when seen as an independent reality. [It can't exist on its own]; however, it is surely real when seen as caused by Brahman and dependent upon Brahman" (IN 186).

### Elucidating Indian philosophy

Malhotra takes the opportunity to delve deep into certain concepts like the chaos theory, which have been so far unacceptable to the West. The entire endeavour of the western intellectuals has been to simplify natural phenomenon to comprehend it but, in the process, reductivism has prevailed. They try to subsume all that they cannot understand in the rest of the world under western paradigms and emphasize sameness that becomes tempting for those enamoured of the West or those suffering from inferiority complex. According to Malhotra, "Chaos is entrenched in the Vedas, the Puranas and Hinduism in general for a reason: its role is to counterbalance and dilute any absolutist tendencies as well as provide creative dynamism through ambiguity and uncertainty" (BD175). Indeed, Hinduism does not hinge on any absolute position when it comes to spiritual paths even as it takes the presence of the supreme spirit or God as a given.

A unique belief in Hinduism is that both the good and the bad co-exist and manifest under certain circumstances. One must always endeavour to defeat the evil. The struggle between the two brings out the best in man. The example of *devasur sangram* (the war between devas and asuras) is relevant here wherein the churning of the ocean through cooperation brought out the nectar. Besides, "The myth points the way to the transcendence of both order and chaos, which are brought into delicate equilibrium and ultimately subordinated to spiritual realization" (BD 185). This is a profound philosophical statement which is unique to Indian thought system. Two important conclusions presented by him are as follows: (a) Indian knowledge system locates integral unity of mankind at a deeper, hidden level, while the western epistemology strives for only synthetic unity that is visible outside; and (b) The linear progression theory which explains the phenomenal world only in specific circumstances is sought to be universalized to prove the superiority of the western epistemology.

Malhotra's valuable book *Indra's Net* identifies eight misconceptions about India, starting with the doomsday forecast of the country's balkanization at one stage, to the commonly-mouthed belief that Hinduism considers all religions as the same. There is also another misnomer that Yoga copies western science and Hinduism was not an organic growth but manufactured, which idea is in sync with the Marxist view of culture as production. They could not have completed this list without referring to the oft-heard allegation that Hinduism is founded on oppression and even sustained by it. Some of these may sound as explosive statements even though domestic politics in India has made it a cliché by now, but Malhotra proves the hollowness of these postulates like a scientist which he is, literally and substantially, since he has founded and chaired IT multinationals. Then, every entity in the cosmos is in a state of flux and not



permanent, according to Hindu philosophy. The permanence seen through worldly eyes is relative only. So, even the line dividing worldly from spiritual and the humans from gods is blurred. (BD 108). There couldn't be a better example of deconstruction!

Malhotra gives in easy-to-comprehend tabular form the differences between the Dharma and Judeo-Christian metaphysics with regard to the ultimate reality, the human and the world (BD112). He opines that ethics and even Dharma are contextual in the Indian knowledge system; Hindu Dharma as a "dynamic portfolio of ideas, practices and traditions that come with a toolbox for customizing creative expression, personalization and sub-group formation" (IN 21). This is a very different kind of take on the concept of Dharma but certainly has deep resonance with how Dharma is practiced in India. He underlines the scientific base of Indian philosophy: "Science is now changing under the influence of Indian adhyatma vidya [spiritual knowledge], and the experiences in meditative states are being included as empirical evidence" (IN 255). To substantiate the point, he comments: "According to many interpretations of quantum mechanics, consciousness plays a role as the observer in 'creating' (by collapsing into) the state of the object that is observed" (IN 256). One feels wonderstruck by this statement but Malhotra quotes authorities to buttress his averment. Future developments will probably prove this understanding of Dharma.

Malhotra takes head on the western scholars like Sheldon Pollock who malign the Indian knowledge system even though he was appointed as the Founding Editor of the Murty Classical Library of India, established by Narayana Murthy family. Pollock objects to the injunction that the king must provide security to Brahmins and ascetics in particular as per *Manusmriti*. In reply, Malhotra quotes Kautilya's *Arthashastra* – a Niti Shastra (book of ethical code) – which ordains the king to look after the welfare of all subjects. Pollock, though revered by many worldwide for his knowledge

of Sanskrit, shows biased approach in making a sweeping statement: "The Ramayana is profoundly and fundamentally a text of 'othering' [...] Outsiders are made other by being repressed as deviant-sexually, dietetically, politically deviant [...] the Ramayana with its demonizing imagery, provides, as does no other Indian text, a conceptual instrument for the utter dichotomization of the enemy" (BFS 195). The fact is that he superimposes the European model on to the Indian situation in a bid to reach a negative conclusion about Indian epic.

An important pathway to project Hinduism correctly lies in avoiding translation of each and every Sanskrit term in another language because translation is never perfect. In Sanskrit, there is the added issue of pronunciation which makes all the difference to meaning. Malhotra and Babaji, in their joint work, *Sanskrit Non-Translatables* have pointed out inadequate or mistranslations of 54 Sanskrit terms like Kavya, Dharma, Rashtra, Akasha, Devta, Ahimsa, and Itihasa which are generally translated into English as poetics, religion, nation, space, gods, non-violence, and history respectively. Take, for example, the word Ahimsa which is wrongly equated with non-violence. While non-violence suggests total abstinence from violence, Ahimsa means "minimizing *himsa* or violence and not complete absence of violence" because the prefix /a/ has six meanings in Sanskrit, one of which is 'less' or 'small'. Choosing the right meaning depends much on the calibre of the translator. The shastras recognize that "total elimination of violence is impossible and unnatural, and that the only pragmatic solution is minimization of violence".

Critics may call it overstretching but we know that Lord Krishna justified *himsa* (violence) in the dharma-yuddha (the battle for Dharma) at Kurukshetra, even though Gandhi, in our times, "mistranslated the word ahimsa into non-violence" (SNT 122-23). Again, it is common knowledge that the distinction

between *karma* is being used for *karmaphala* in English which means the result of one's action. The author-duo suggest that we Indians should use the non-anglicized spelling and pronunciation of words like Ram, not Rama, Yog and not Yoga, to retain the purity of Sanskrit language. However, the writer of these lines believes that one has to take into account the lexical rules of English language wherein the end consonant in a word has to be followed by a vowel to qualify for pronunciation. While in English, the end consonant requires additional 'a' to enable /m/ sound to be pronounced, in Sanskrit, the end sound for Ram can be denoted by 'muh'.

### Indian historiography

While the lexical rules of a language depend on the native speakers of that language, the rule must also apply to methodologies like history writing. The Indian approach to history, as stated in *Breaking India*, has been totally different, and for that matter, it would be instructive to differentiate between 'history' and 'itihāsa' as it is known in India. Etymologically, even though the word history comes from the Greek 'histor' (a wise man) or 'historia' (inquiry, narrative, account), post-Enlightenment, it has come to mean an account of past events based on causal nexus. But in the Indian scheme of things, approaching history as explanation of the cause or why it happened is replaced by the way it happened or 'this is how it happened' as denoted by the word itihasa when etymologically dissected. The stress in history on chronology shifts in itihasa to the moral lesson that history brings out for mankind. And it has worked so well: our epics have indeed helped Indians to remain calm and composed in turbulent times, and evolve as an accommodating society. The stories from epics have been told and re-told innumerable times by poets. Itihasa combines not only history with its various versions (and still our history is open to more interpretations) but also mythical imagination. As such, while the westerners are anxious to prove their myths like Bible as

history, Indians "are under no pressure to present their myths as history" (BD 66), asserts Malhotra. They are content to accept these epics as itihasa, and not history.

Our epics have existed since millennia through speaking and listening, or in other words, through katha style, and this free-flowing narration also makes contribution to itihasa. Malhotra describes the narrative style in the following words: "The precise story of Rama can never be reproduced, and each attempt involves a combination of reproduction (by supplier), re-narration (often interactive), and re-perception (by audience). Thus, itihasa changes, evolves and adapts to circumstances as per the prevailing consensus" (BD 68). This is a vibrant and ever-living module that updates the moral requirement of itihasa. It is another matter that the Indian authors writing in English use this liberty to create tantalizing stories to sell well in the western market<sup>2</sup>.

Malhotra adds here a rider. He does not mean to say that there is no historical evidence behind the events mentioned in epics, and these are all fictitious. He only means that "the dharma Indians have is a long tradition of historical memory – though the dharma is not contingent upon history." He cites the example of the river Sarasvati and of the city of Dwarka which satellite imagery and modern geology have verified. (BD 65). The numerous sites strewn all across the Indian subcontinent related to the events provide an undisputable proof of the veracity of Ramayana. The acceptability of the epic in countries of South-East Asia is another indicator of the reality of what the Western scholars call the pre-historic times.

In his scholarly book *Being Different*, Malhotra notes the key difference between Abrahamic religions and Dharma (the word 'Hindu' is a later addition whereas Dharma is autotelic term since the time of the Vedas), under the broad categories of "God-ordained top-down history" responsible for the non-negotiable grand narratives vs. "Human

bottom-up potential independent of history" that blossoms into an open architecture spiritual ecosystem" (BD 100). What follows as the result is also the integral unity of the Dharmic school vs. synthetic unity of visibly disparate elements in the world and cosmos as understood in the Western religions. (BD 101). The integral unity mentioned by Malhotra is best explained through Vedanta but with the subtle difference that the divine manifests itself in parts in the cosmos since He is "simultaneously transcendent [...] and imminent", whereas western pantheism takes cosmos as God "but without any eternal God" (BD 107). Subtle demarcations as this description contains, yet it is clear that Dharma is contextual and universal like swadharma is contextual -contingent upon the age and profession (*varnashrama*) and samanya dharma is universal. (BD 201).

### Explicating Social Structure

Casteism in India is one big issue on which our society gets lectured by the erstwhile colonizer-cum-present-day politico-economic imperialists. Malhotra and Vijaya Viswanathan in their book *Varna, Jati, Caste: A Primer on Indian Social Structure* point out the west's ascription of all modern Indian ailments to the institution of caste which is said to have been in existence since Vedic times. It is a fact that the Indian society had since ancient times been functioning on the basis of the 4-Varna system, which worked efficiently in a self-governing manner. It helped local economy through demarcation of productive role which allowed it to flourish without centralized control, besides providing skills from one generation to the other so that fear of unemployment did not bother them. The writers are not blind to the flip side of the system and mention the apathy of one caste towards other castes and the lack of competitive spirit needed to improve products. (VJC 123). During the British rule, this social structure was discredited intentionally and dismantled so that it could be hegemonized by centralized bureaucracy and exploited. (VJC 116-125).

The writer-duo lambast the western academy's attempt to equate varna with jati and jati with race. They point out that the three are entirely different concepts. While varna facilitated adoption of a profession in a secure manner, and there was no hierarchy built in it, Jati "originated due to intermarriage between different varnas. This shows that different varnas did intermarry" (VJC 29). The colonizing Englishmen could not understand the concept and tried to impose the western concept of race on to the jati and used it to create division among the Indians. Jati is also different from caste as understood commonly. It is a malleable term that can denote a business guild, a varna sub-divisions or the wider Hindu society. The writers also refer to Shudra kings, warriors, saints and scholars to prove that the Shudras performed Vedic rituals and even wrote Vedic texts like the Aitareya Brahmana. It is also true that globalization and urbanization are making caste obsolete even as the structural biases remain in the Indian academia.

Tracing the history of caste, the writer-duo present in graphic form, starting from Early Vedic period, when varna, and not caste existed. In the following Itihasic period, varna and jatis were referred to in fluid form and so no hierarchy was implied. In the next Dharmashastra period, jatis were formalized and yet there was no "rigid hierarchy". It was only during the oppressive Muslim period that the jatis degenerated into a rigid hierarchical structure due to various constraints put on the Hindu society. Now the jatis were declared based on birth. This continued during the English period with further formalization through official censuses. Lord H.H. Risley, ethnographer, who later became the Home Secretary in British India, is known for the formal application of the caste system to the entire Hindu population of the country in the 1901 census, of which he was in charge and used anthropometric data to divide Indians into seven races. He was also the one who went by the size of the nose to categorize people!

Again, it was Lord Risley who introduced the element of hierarchy in caste structure, labelling some castes as criminal and some as martial races. Despite the initial resistance “gradually by the twentieth century, with repeated censuses and persistent inquiries from strangers [...] the Indian community leaders became schooled to give suitable answers that would be acceptable to the British” (VJC 76). The writers particularly quote the Maharaja of Baroda who toed this line and preferred the term ‘untouchableness’ to the ‘depressed classes’. Ambedkar used ‘caste Hindu’ for the Hindu community but later called them ‘Hindu’ as the ‘other’ of the untouchable millions. (VJC 80). The later developments saw the dichotomy of victim/oppressor infused into this structure. (VJC 82).

Finally, what was initially a theoretical structure, crystalized into substance at the ground level. This was incorrectly projected backwards to define the characteristic of ancient Vedic society. Alongside, by 1920, untouchability which was confined to certain groups undertaking unhygienic work was applied to all the depressed classes. (VJC 80-84). This made the untouchability official. This is how the Schedules Castes (earlier called Depressed Classes) were invented; starting with discussion on terms, then becoming structured formally by the British censuses, and subsequently being adopted by Indian nationalists and reformers. In independent India, caste has become a vote bank. Presently, the Woke movement in the west equates caste with race (SG 34). Deplorable as it is, yet this is the situation on the ground today. However, the writers clarify that there has been no central authority to enforce caste rules in Hindu society as it is in other faith, and casteism is not synonymous with Hinduism. All of which means that Hinduism can sustain without casteism. (VJC 125-129).

There are many eye-opening findings, as for example, the 1825 survey by the British

Indian government showed that Shudra boys studying in schools in Madras outnumbered, by a big margin, the students from Brahmin and Vaisya castes. (VJC 61) There was no manual scavenging in pre-British times simply because there were no toilets in homes. (VJC 64) As for the Vanvasis (forest dwellers), the book disputes the modern-day assertion that the vanvasis were always non-Hindus. Some 97% people of SC communities identified themselves as Hindus when the Anthropological Survey of India conducted ‘People of India’ project in 1985-92, which presented impressive facts: 91% SC people visit shrines of other communities and participate in traditional Hindu festivals. (VJC 63). The writer-duo clarify several doubts about linkage of casteism to Hinduism and also map the castes in other religious communities. (VJC 44). These facts go to show the political nature of the current discourse about Dalit community.

The western propaganda about Dalit community in India has taken a sophisticated form. Malhotra has ruthlessly exposed the western academy’s efforts to indoctrinate budding Indian scholars luring them with scholarships and then brainwashing them at universities like Harvard or Oxford. In 2004, for example, an Indian scholar Devakala published *India is a Thomas-Dravidian Christian Nation...How?* The following year a conference on Re-imagining Hinduism as St. Thomas Dravidian Christianity was held in New York. (BI 129). Malhotra comments: “One must wonder if the vulnerable third world ‘minorities’ could end up as unwitting agents for imperialism and as the new global ‘coolies’ and ‘sepoys’. [...] should the ‘minorities’ perhaps be reclassified as branch offices of a multinational enterprise?” (190). Such sentiments lead him to redefine minority: “If a minority is working for, funded by, appointed by, or trained by a foreign global nexus, then it is not really a minority. It is part of a bigger enterprise” (191).

The Indian Americans are also clubbed with the ‘white racists’ by advocates of



Wokeism, which is shaping up like a church, as Malhotra and Viswanathan explain. According to Woke philosophy, the white ancestors (in case of India, it is the Brahmins) committed the original sin of creating oppressive structures based on race and all paraphernalia – language, knowledge institutions etc. The Critical Race Theory is a dogma that has to be obeyed. While Church appoints high priests, Wokeism has also self-appointed authorities with absolute power which does not allow free speech under ‘cancel culture’. Dissenters are labelled racists. So, the oppressors, like infidels, can be saved by confession and unconditional submission! (SG 31). Surprisingly, it does not brook logic or meritocracy – that America prided upon – and promotes equity i.e., equality of outcome, rather than equality in terms of calibre.

### Misuse of technology

Artificial intelligence has transformed the global scenario in a revolutionary manner. In the context of the issue being reviewed here, we note that the levers of AI are controlled by forces outside India who are using it as a tool to malign Indian culture and civilization. Malhotra’s book *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Power*, underlines his worry about the centralization of power at Silicon Valley. The think-tanks and the social media use AI to reach out to millions of people and to influence them. The human-generated algorithms are becoming smarter and decide who will speak what, and therein lies the scope for a particular agenda to be enforced by interested parties - housed in the West, giving rise to data capitalism. While speaking at a conference on postmodernism at an Indian university, Malhotra remarked:

“Algorithms know a whole lot about you. In some ways, they know even what you do unconsciously which you may not be aware of yourself. [...] This algorithm is becoming a big boss even inside these big companies, even their own employees cannot override the algorithms. [...] I’m surprised that the

people in literary theory and critical theory have not discovered this and they have not made a noise about it because your whole purpose is to look for biases and look for how to deconstruct narratives and figure out what's hidden in hidden messages in them, hidden points of view that are not normal” (“Rajiv, 2023”).

Protests by Blacks as also women groups are raging in the US against the biased stuff put out by AI which is controlled by big companies and acts as a tool of colonization. Surprisingly, while the AI is tutored about the Christian and the Muslim points of view including taboos, there is no mention of the Hindu point of view, rues Malhotra in the address cited above. There is need for India to invest in the development and deployment of AI to ensure it is in consonance with the Indian traditional knowledge system. He concludes that the data rights ought to be under India’s own control rather than under foreign governments. This data localization is important from the point of view of national security also. The leading multinational Nivida CEO Jensen Huang visited India in October 2024. The newspaper report read: “As Huang underlined in Mumbai last week, the country should not export data to import intelligence” (“Aiming”). This indeed is a very important caution.

### Conclusion

Way back in 1926, while delivering a series of lectures on Hindu Mysticism at North-Western University in England, renowned philosopher S.N. Dasgupta had said: “The British in India have understood as much of the country as is necessary for policing it, but no foreigner has ever adequately understood our land. Those of you who see India through newspapers and the strange tales and stories of tourists who “do” India in a month, can hardly hope to go right to the place where the heart of India lies” (151). We have come a long way but the understanding of India by the West, even

though deeper is fraught with biases on account of self-interests, which present-day Indologists like Rajiv Malhotra are ruthlessly deconstructing, and laying bare the nefarious colonial agenda before us.

We are witness to strange theories being floated by the adversaries of Hinduism. The social media is agog with such new-found postulates like Aurangzeb's time was the pinnacle of Indian economy, or the Indian Brahmins burnt the Nalanda library as it was the Buddhist icon. (Thakur). There is no denying the fact that since the stress laid by the present government in India on highlighting the Indian heritage, the anti-Hindu forces abroad have been actively opposing it. The 'Dismantling Global Hindutva Conference' held in 2021 at Harvard and supported by many American and European universities, with active participation of some Indian litterateurs is just one example. (Batra). The problem should ideally be addressed by Indian scholars of Vedic Sanskrit, but, as pointed out by K.S. Kannan, a former Director of Karnatak Samskrit University, Bangaluru, in his comment (blurb) on *The Battle for Sanskrit* "the Sanskrit pandits are often ignorant of nuanced English and the Western frameworks and paradigms; and the modern westernized Indians are culturally illiterate and lack the competence to respond." That sums up the malady on this front.

It can be said that the movement initiated by Malhotra is succeeding gradually. It is heartening to note that he was successful in weaning away Sharda Peetham from bequeathing Adi Shankar's legacy to Harvard University. (BFS 67). By and large, the people are becoming aware of the games being played by the colonizing foreign powers and of the importance of returning to their roots. Many a myth are getting shattered, as for example, at the recent Mahakumbh held at Prayagraj, one could mark the presence of highly qualified young people who have taken sanyasa. It was the largest ever gathering of mankind with approximately 45 crore devotees taking the holy

dip at the confluence of the three holy rivers over 45 days. Nobody worried about the caste of the fellow-pilgrim there. How one wishes that this mindset percolates down into the daily life of Indians in villages to give a lie to the concept of birth-related caste system and deprive the critics of Indian society of their ammunition.

#### Notes

1. Take, for example, the translations done by Albert Weber and A.H. Griffith which are depended upon by the Arya Samaj scholars Swami Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidyalkar in their own translation of the Vedas, published as 22-volume set in 2011 by DAV Publications Division, Delhi.
2. For detail in this respect, kindly refer to my paper "Portrayal of Indian Cultural Icons in Contemporary Retellings: Envisioning Impact on the Millennial Generation": <https://www.boletindeliteraturaoral.com/index.php/bdlo/article/view/759>

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