



RESEARCH PAPER

Re-evaluation of History in Truschke's *Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth*, Postmodern Historiography Analysis

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ABSTRACT

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This article argues for the re-evaluation of the representation of history in Truschke's "Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth" by employing a postmodern historiographic lens. Historical facts are always distorted by using biased narration in historical works. In *Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth*, Truschke debunks all the allegations about Aurangzeb which were posed by traditional historians and presented him as a vile oppressor of Hindus. Traditional historiography differs from postmodern historiography in the representation of historical facts. Traditional historians replicate the history by repeating the same ideas and events from previous published historical books because nobody knows about the past and it is just accessible to us in the form of books so, in this way, history can neither true nor false while postmodern historiography points out the fact that history is always subjective in nature and it is written according to the historian's stance. The textual analysis of "Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth" by Audrey Truschke and comparison of Truschke's views with other historical narratives reveal different historical truths about Aurangzeb and she demystified all the myths by her strong understanding and employing the references of other historians and her history is so close to the level of historiography, maintained by Hutcheon having a good methodology and based on hermeneutics.

Introduction

This article revolves around the representation of history in Truschke's *Aurangzeb: the Man and the Myth* by employing a postmodern historiographic lens. *Aurangzeb: the Man and the Myth* is written about Aurangzeb in which she shatters all the misconceptions about Aurangzeb and epitomizes him as an authoritative and meticulous ruler who administered all the state matters efficiently. This research is grounded on a point that how traditional Indian historians present Aurangzeb as a vile oppressor and how does Truschke debunk all the false myths about Aurangzeb in the Indian history. His reign comprised of 50 years (1658-1707), and his era arose as a significant era in which many modifications were done in the constitution and former policies of the state, and after his reign, the decline of Mughals had been

commenced. Truschke's historical narrative familiarizes the reader with the concealed facts about Aurangzeb's life and presents two dimensions in front of the reader. She not only takes favour of Aurangzeb's policies but also condemns the negative aspects of his policies.

Before Aurangzeb, previous Mughal emperors facilitated the masses of the subcontinent irrespective of their religion and made their kingship more powerful. Asher (1992) posits that before Aurangzeb, Akbar had good relations with non-Muslim communities; he abolished Jizya and made many policies to facilitate the non-Muslim communities. Instead of all these favours, Hindu-Muslim unity gave him many advantages to rule over such a big dominion (Asher, 1992, p.39) while Aurangzeb imposed Islamic policies to make the subcontinent an Islamic state. In 1679, he reinstated Jizya, a tax that was charged by non-Muslims for their protection. He defied all the ancestral traditions, enacted Sharia law, and forbidden all musical and entertainment events. In this regard, Ikram (1964) states that Aurangzeb not only proved his orthodoxy by imposing his interests on the public, but he also took some significant steps for the betterment of youth. However, he enforced Sharia law and banned various events of entertainment but also prohibited all immoral activities and banned narcotics, gambling, and prostitution, which were harmful for society (p.189).

Literature Review

A brief overview of previous researches will introduce the reader to the framework of my research, and these researches will help out to find the unexplored dimension of my research area.

Singh (2019) tries to develop unbiased views about Aurangzeb by averting from general insight to personal belief. In common opinion, Indians hate the name *Aurangzeb* because of his malicious acts, but her opinion is different from all the previous narratives. According to her, the oppressive phase of non-Muslims had begun with the invasion of Turks while inequalities and tyranny of that era played a crucial role in igniting a spark against Muslim rulers. Many wars were fought between Hindus and Sikh groups and Hindus also desecrated each other's temples and she has a viewpoint that there is no strong evidence that only Muslim rulers destructed their temples rather Muslims also became a victim of Hindus' rivalry. Besides this, she points out that the Hindu army had always played a great role in the war of succession. When Aurangzeb started a war of succession against his brothers, in this war, 24 Hindu generals collaborated with Aurangzeb and Aurangzeb had good terms with Hindu and they also served on high administrative posts so, it is a wrong concept that Hindus faced oppression during Aurangzeb's reign rather they played their significant role in making policies and in the administration of the state.

Chetry (2018) explores the contrast between the representation of Aurangzeb in traditional historiography and postmodern historiography which presented many unexplored dimensions of Aurangzeb's life. Propaganda against Aurangzeb's oppression and his religious extremism became a solid reason for his downfall. He defied many ancestral customs and expressed his inclination toward Islam by restricting alcohol, gambling and different immoral activities which made him extremist and by fighting wars against different rebellious groups; he contributed to the expansion of the Empire and reached to the zenith. Some critics have a

standpoint that behind the imposition of Jizya there were certain political reasons. In his reign, Ulama had made religious lobby to keep an eye on the actions of Aurangzeb but Aurangzeb levied the tax and tax collection was the responsibility of Ulama and they were free to use the tax income for their interests so, indirectly Jizya was levied to make happy the religious parties of the state. The second controversial issue was the destruction of temples and there are different viewpoints on this issue. Some historians had a viewpoint that Aurangzeb destructed the temples and granted those pieces of land to the mosques but some historians had the different viewpoint that Aurangzeb always financially supported the Hindu sages and he granted land for the construction of temples and temples were destructed by extremist Hindus to put all the blame on the government. Only those temples were destructed at the command of Aurangzeb where Brahmins were manipulating ignorant people to spread anarchy in the state by teaching them false interpretations of religious scriptures and peace of state was the foremost concern of Aurangzeb so those temples were destructed for the maintenance of peace. These two were the most contentious issues related to Aurangzeb's reign and these issues were manipulated by the narrations of historians because history is transcribed according to historians' stance but some traditional historians replicate the history by narrating the same events and ideas but some modern historians try to remain neutral by interpreting past events or by comparing different viewpoints, they try to find out the truth. So, all the allegations against Aurangzeb are neither true nor false because our stance plays a pivotal role in narrating a history.

The purpose of this research is to highlight the neutral and unbiased facts about the well-renowned and highly misrepresented Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb and this research will be used as a reference for the readers who want to deepen their historical knowledge neutrally by studying facts about Aurangzeb. This research can be used for those who have a keen interest in postmodern historiography so that how different narratives about one case are compared and how does the representation of history varies in different historical works. This analysis can be used as a reference for the literature review to determine the research gap.

Theoretical Framework

According to postmodern historiography, there are multiple versions of history and so, postmodernism questions the authenticity of the existing historical knowledge so, all the myths about Aurangzeb are analysed in the light of postmodernism which negates the objectivity of truth. Being a theorist, Linda Hutcheon presented certain ideas about postmodern historiography and Doctorow (1975) says that history is like a fiction which is reconstructed and has an imaginative touch while writing it (as cited in Hutcheon, 1988, p.112). History is also multi-layered in the sense of interpretation and it is written according to the historian's stance. True and authentic historical facts can never be found but postmodernism challenges all the prior notions. Himmelfarb (1994) argued that "In history, it is a denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make it, and thus of any objective truth about the past" (p.133). Hutcheon quoted an idea of Brogger (1984) that in historical books, fictional facts becomes factual because of their existence in previously published books so, historiography is all about the multiple interpretations of existing historical knowledge. Postmodern historiography is based on the *Presence of the past*. Past exists but there is always an element of understanding the past by interpreting different events (Hutcheon,

1988.p.20). Intertextuality, a key aspect of postmodern brings innovation in re-writing the past and this done by linking different instances or ideas from different books and this intertextuality is responsible for the repetition of ideas in the text.

Analysis

Aurangzeb is like an enigma in history because so many myths are furlled around him and those myths played a key role in igniting a spark of hatred against Aurangzeb. In this way, he had become a mythical character and presented him in the role of villain in the history of India. "In India, people hotly debate his reign and often condemn him as a vile oppressor of Hindus who ruled by the sword" (Truschke, 2017, p.02). Contemporary Hindu historians wrote many vitriolic narratives about Aurangzeb and gave different stereotypical titles like "*Cruel Despot*" and "*Cultural dolt*" ("A much-maligned Mughal", 2017, para.2) and considered him an orthodox Muslim ruler who left no stone unturned in making Hindus, a servile community. Some Hindu historians like Jawahar Lal Nehru, Jadunath Sarkar, S.M Sharma and many other historians spread Islamophobic content about Islam and Aurangzeb and they tried to prove Islam as a fanatic religion which spreads anarchy in the world. Sarkar (1930) presented Islam as an extremist religion that allows its followers to murder non-Muslims, destruction of their religious buildings, and conversion of religion was done forcefully, and this religion is considered as a great hindrance in promoting peace in the world (p.152).According to Nehru (1946) "*Aurangzeb performed more as a Moslem than an Indian ruler and after his reign, the Mughal Empire began to break up*" (p.265). Truschke (2017) supports Aurangzeb that according to him, Islamic and Mughal norms have engaged him to take duty of the security of all temples and religious personalities irrespective of their religion (p.79). She took the benefit of abundant historical references to defend the contentious aspects of Aurangzeb's reign and wrote an unbiased narrative by emphasizing his virtues and flaws.

The first allegation against Aurangzeb was the enforcement of Islam in the sub-continent which created a lot of distress and tension among non-Muslim communities. Nehru called him an extremist Muslim ruler who could never fulfil his duties as a ruler and created a lot of tension and anarchy in the state and ruled by the sword. After his reign, the Mughal Empire will face the consequences of Aurangzeb's tyranny and oppression(Nehru, 1946, as cited in Truschke, 2017, p.07).Another historian, Jadunath Sarkar wrote in his book *A Short History of Aurangzib* that Islam is not in the favour of giving religious liberty to non-Muslims and all the followers of Islam are staunch enemies of non-believers (Sarkar, 1930, p.148). Aurangzeb was considered a conservative Muslim because of his policies and inclination towards Islam but despite his inclination towards Islam, he was found very much ambitious for the throne. He initiated a war of succession against his brothers to occupy the throne. The views of historians are common on this point. This point is also raised by Truschke that revolt against predecessors had become a tradition of Mughals. Aurangzeb initiated a revolt against his father and imprisoned him for sake of the throne while Aurangzeb's son, Akbar revolted against his father but Akbar exiled him to Iran. Another historian, Vashi Sharma writes in his book *The Naked Mughals* that all the Mughals are killers of their blood relations. They revolted against their predecessors for the sake of throne. He quotes an example of Aurangzeb that he killed his brothers and imprisoned his father for sake of the throne and it was such a

malicious act against the blood relations (Sharma, 2017,p.19-20). Richard (1993) wrote about Aurangzeb's interest in Islam that after becoming an emperor of the state he enforced Sharia law and followed the Sunni sect and this dedication had made him a more orthodox and stubborn ruler of the state (p.171-172).

The second allegation against Aurangzeb was the prohibition of various events of entertainment and Hindu festivals and but Sharma (1940) presented striking views about this allegation that he did not only prohibit the musical events and celebrations of Hindu festivals rather he also restricted the processions of Islamic events like Muharram and birth of PBUH because he gave preference to the peace of the state so he banned all the events and processions to avoid any bad circumstances (p.124) but he could not impose his strict laws and all the activities were done furtively by government officials and the public in small towns.

The third and the most important myth against Aurangzeb is the desecration of temples. Among all the Mughal emperors, Aurangzeb is considered a sole responsible of the plight of Hindus. From the very beginning of Aurangzeb's reign, there was a common perception that he had great hatred for Hindus and he did all the possible efforts to make them a servile community and the number of desecrated temples in Aurangzeb's reign is larger than any other emperor. Before Aurangzeb, Akbar and Babar also defiled temples and converted some mosques into temples and vice versa but these conversions were done on a very minor scale. Sarkar (1930) gave striking views about Hindu-Muslim animosity that construction of temples was restricted in Aurangzeb's reign and it is claimed that Hindus had an equal share in the Indian army and administration but they had no authority to resist against the government to stop all the inequalities and Muslim officials destructed many temples on the order of Aurangzeb. In the views of Sarkar, Islam is not a peaceful religion rather it's a religion of extremist people who spread anarchy in the world. (p.151-152). Further, Sarkar (1930) posits his views that Aurangzeb's religion had permitted him to demolish all the Hindu and Jain temples but stopped him to construct the new temples. He dispossessed the Hindu community financially and religiously having no jobs and no place for worship. The destruction of the Mathura temple is a great example of Aurangzeb's viciousness and all the temples were destructed under the consideration of *Muftisaib* of that town (p.155-156).

Another famous historian, S.R Sharma gave significant views about Aurangzeb's atrocious behaviour towards non-Muslims of the subcontinent. Sharma (1940) wrote in his book that in Gujrat, Jodhpur and Deccan, Aurangzeb destructed those beautiful temples which were considered as masterpieces of architecture and not only temples but also destructed the schools of Hindu children. He forcefully converted their religion to make them a submissive community. Some Hindus were murdered and some were forced to accept Islam and many wars were fought between the government and rebellious groups of Hindu and Jain communities against the inequalities of Aurangzeb and many Hindus and Jains lost their lives (p.139-140).

The fourth myth about Aurangzeb is to suppress the different rebellious movements against the government brutally which resulted in igniting a never-ending spark of hatred against Muslims and Muslim rulers in the minds of the public. Different historians explained different rebellious movements of Sikhs and Hindus in the context of Muslim atrocities and wrote a detailed account of Aurangzeb's

reaction or the way of suppressing those movements. Sharma (2017) wrote an account of the first revolt which was initiated by citizens of Mathura, the second revolt was started by Satnamis and the third revolt was initiated by Sikhs. Aurangzeb's son, Akbar also revolted against his father but Aurangzeb suppressed his revolt by exiling him to Iran (p.19).

Sarkar (1930) explained the background of all the revolts and their effect on the Mughal government. When Mughal officials crossed all the limitations of violence by maltreating non-religious communities socially, religiously and financially then people from different areas of the state started rebellious movements and processions against the government. Mathura revolt was started after the destruction of the Mathura temple which was one of the sacred places for Hindus and their god and goddesses were defiled by government officials. In 1669, when insurgency was started under the leadership of Golka against the government, Abdul Nabi, an official member of Aurangzeb's cabinet shot dead because he was appointed for the security of Mathura temple from Hindus. After this remarkable victory, Golka and his companion started to create rebellion in the adjacent area so, he became a symbol of horror for the Muslim government and when this revolt started to get out of control, Aurangzeb sent troops of the army under the command of expert combatants to stop the revolt and almost 9000 people lost their lives. This was the time when Hindu prisoners were forced to accept Islam and again their fundamental rights were subjugated but this revolt could not be crashed completely and after some years in that area, peasants initiated a revolt against the government (p.160-161).

The second rebellion described by Sarkar was initiated by Satnamis. Sarkar (1930) narrated that this revolt is started after the dispute between peasant and soldier but later on, this conflict resulted in the Hindu liberation movement. Hindus started processions against the Muslim government and tried to liberate themselves from the control of the Mughal government. Rebellious groups burnt various mosques, started the massacre of Muslims and rejected government administrators of their area. Although, this revolt was initiated by peasants so, this revolt affected agriculture badly and cultivators faced too much loss. The situation became critical when Aurangzeb tried to suppress this revolt by force and it brought massive destruction, thousands of Satnamis lost their lives and after a huge loss, Satnamis surrendered themselves so, in this way, Aurangzeb suppressed the rebellion.

English people got inspiration from Indian's agenda against Aurangzeb and attached various stereotypes by manipulating the facts and combining fiction with historical knowledge. In the historical books of Western authors, we can see the reflection of Indian history. After the reign of Aurangzeb, the subcontinent became the territory of Britain and the decline of the Mughal government had been commenced.

Richard (1993) described Aurangzeb as a warrior who contributed a lot to the expansion of the Empire by fighting wars in different areas of the state and took those areas under his control and suppressed different mutinous riot to avoid anarchy in the state. Richard considered that obsession with the throne was a major flaw of Aurangzeb's personality. For sake of the throne, he not only murdered his brothers but imprisoned his father to occupy the throne and he modified many ancestral rules and regulations because he wanted to make the subcontinent, a pure

Islamic state having no space for non-Muslims. He also applied different tricks to minimize the population of Hindus, also tried to convert their religion and some Hindus were also killed in different rebellions against Aurangzeb. He also made his succession legal by declaring his father physically unable to rule over the state and he took the help of Chief Qazi who supported Aurangzeb illegitimately. In his reign, a hold of Ulema had become strong on the state and all the matters of state were settled by Ulema and Islamic act (p.170-174). Richard (1993) presented a cosmic view of Aurangzeb's reign by highlighting all the positive and negative aspects of Aurangzeb's reign, and supported his views using the references of other Hindu historians. One fact, historians have insisted on is the suppression of the Hindu community by using different diplomatic policy in the subcontinent that places Muslims above other religious communities.

Dalrymple (2004) wrote an account on the Golconda-Mughal revolt. In this warfare, Aurangzeb victimized the Shia community and their prayer halls were converted into shelter rooms for horses of the Mughal army. By taking such steps, he tried to agonize Shias by considering them inferior to all sects of Islam and Hyderabad which was considered a centre of trade; it had started to present a picture of a destructed city having all the ruins of buildings. After this destruction, Nawab of Hyderabad started to construct the city, all the buildings were built again and Hyderabad gained the status of centre of trade and started to contribute to the economy of India.

Aurangzeb's hatred against Hindus and Shias could never be minimized because he was a staunch follower of the Sunni sect and his extremism did not let him accept other Islamic sects and religions except Islam and Sunni sect. His narrow-mindedness evoked Anti Hindu sentiments which made him unable to suppress those communities in one way or the other. Western views about Aurangzeb are similar to Indian narrations and somehow, Western historians got inspiration from Indian historians, it's a notion of traditional historiography that all the narrations seem a replica of each other by repeating the same history and this mode of transcribing history played a key role in spreading hatred against Aurangzeb.

Demystification of Aurangzeb by Truschke

Truschke's views about Aurangzeb are not biased rather she tried to portray a neutral image in front of the world. She supported her views with the references of different historians which facilitated her in bringing the true and neutral picture in front of the world and tried her best to unshackle him from all those above-mentioned myths.

According to Truschke (2017), Aurangzeb was the epitome of morality because of his attire and his lifestyle and he also had a strong association with Islam but as far as his actions are concerned, his duty was to maintain peace in the state so he took all those steps which were necessary for the maintenance of peace. Aurangzeb was a man of principles and he had equal rules for all the subordinates. He took steps for enforcement of moral laws in all the areas of the state to prevent society from all the evils like gambling, prostitution, alcohol etc. He made committees for enforcement of law in the state and this strategy brought good results and all the immoral activities had been controlled to some extent and Truschke quoted the

reference of many foreign travellers like Francois Burnier who also wrote about these rules and their implementations in their books (p.71).

A second myth associated with Aurangzeb was the prohibition of religious and musical events and this step was very much propagandized in the sense of religious fanaticism but Truschke (2017) debunked all those stereotypical concepts by giving a new dimension to these facts of history. According to her, he not only restricted Holy and Diwali but also prohibited the observance of the Eid and Muharram in the form of processions because he wanted to avoid any bad situation of anarchy in the state. He had a viewpoint that all the rivals can express their rivalry in the form of harming the public through bomb blast and in some other way. Before taking this step, some unpleasant happenings had occurred in the gatherings which resulted in the huge loss of lives (p.73) so behind this step, the safety of the public was the foremost reason.

Another issue that became a debatable issue was the forceful conversion of the public from Hinduism to Islam but according to Truschke's, this conversion was not done forcefully rather people used Islam as a ladder to acquire jobs on Muslim quota because the Muslim quota was more than minority quota and so many educated people converted their religion without any pressure and these conversions were done on a very small scale and state publicized the complete bio-data of converted people through newspapers and news bulletin (p.73). Another misconception is about the outlawing of music in the empire but Truschke (2017) had a viewpoint that he did not ban all types of music rather he just banned lyrical music and she quoted a reference of Katherine Schofield "Aurangzeb only limited certain types of music within the court" (p.76).

Truschke(2017) had a viewpoint that Aurangzeb had great concern for his public and he rebuked his son to not make sure the safety of the public and relegated his rank by saying that "if it had been an officer other than a Prince, this order would have been issued after an inquiry" (p.52). He controlled all the state matters efficiently and maintained his supremacy over the state. Hindus spread atrocious narrative against Aurangzeb that he had made them a servile community but the fact is Hindus were the most possessed community among all and there are certain facts which were not painted on the canvas of history and some of the Hindu nobles were very close to Aurangzeb because of their loyalty towards Aurangzeb. They were not much dispossessed as written in history. From the very start of the Mughal Empire, they had an equal share in administration and some of the Hindus were enjoying posts of higher rank. Truschke(2017) gave an example of Raja Ragunath for Mughal's affection, he was appointed as finance minister because of his intelligence, in the reign of Shah Jahan but after his death, Aurangzeb followed his footsteps to control the state affairs and gave much weightage to his advice. Aurangzeb also increased the minority quota for jobs from 22% to 50% which was very much greater than other Emperor's reign. It was the positive aspect of Aurangzeb's reign that all the communities get equal opportunities to serve the state and their religion did not cause any hindrance in their progress.

It is a common myth that Aurangzeb destructed several temples to satisfy his hatred but the reality is different but according to Truschke (2017), Hindus provided certain reasons to destruct the temples. Aurangzeb only destructed those temples in

which anti-Muslim activities were performed to spread anarchy in the state. Hindu Brahmins were utilizing their energies to manipulate the youth against Muslim (p.86) and not only Muslims but Hindu groups also occasionally destroyed each other's temples (Truschke, 2017, p.84). In this regard, Eaton also unveiled the truth of temple desecration that Hindus also destroyed almost 90 temples of different Hindu groups during warfare (Eaton, 2000). Aurangzeb was not only the desecrator of temples but he also protected many temples and granting vast lands for constructing temples and he also gave protection and shelter to Brahmins and gave them tax-free lands for the cultivation of crops for their good livelihood so, he preserved the custom of temple protection (Truschke,2017,p.80). Aurangzeb did not only support the Muslims for mosques but also provided all the facilities to the administration of temples.

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that there is always a clash between the interpretations of history. Representation of Aurangzeb by Truschke is based on different references of other historians and this analysis is based on the tenets of postmodern historiography which were postulated by Linda Hutcheon. Postmodern historiography had disparaged the concept of traditional historiography, according to which all the narratives are the replica of each other having the same content and these narratives are just an interpretation of existing knowledge. Traditional historians just rely on the existing concepts of historiography while postmodern historians follow logic and reasons and verify their perceptions by comparing them with other historians to find out the truth. As postmodernism had a viewpoint that objectivity does not exist so history is always subjective in nature. Hutcheon (1988) considers history "rethought as a human construct and existing past is accessible to us in the form of text" (p.16). Postmodernists want historians to be self-reflexive in the sense that historians must have an idea of their biases and prejudice and this element should be reflected in the text and the reader must know the writer's biases. Truschke debunked all the myths about Aurangzeb and presented her views by supporting them with different pieces of evidence. Facts which are presented by Truschke are very much different from extremist propaganda and opened a new way of interpretation of history so, historiography is a matter of interpreting history because history can never be objective but self-reflexivity is a key of postmodern historiography which compelled the historians to reflect their biases and prejudices in the text so that reader may aware of them.

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