Twitter Thread by Leela



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Since the recent RTI "incident" with regards to lack of sources in the assertions of NCERT books, I decided to do some research.
Some initial findings:

In the VIII class text-book, chapter 8 titled "Women, Caste and Reform" the chapter starts with a section on Sati. ■
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I have said this before: Sati was not widely practiced in India. Don't take my word for it, read up Meenakshi Jain's seminal work on this topic: "Sati: Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse."
Or do this, ask people around you about their
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experiences with caste & you will observe that you will get multiple examples (while assertions of caste-based discrimination may be debated, almost everyone will acknowledge caste-consciousness). However, ask folks if they have heard stories of Sati within their own
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family history or in the histories of friends, acquaintances, & you will draw a blank.
NOTE1: Sati did exist, & women were (are) discriminated against. But wasn't the main challenge women faced. Or even the 10th on the list!
NOTE2: Hindu scriptures don't really celebrate
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Sati; in the Mahabharat, there's a reference to Sati - Madri immolates herself after Pandu's death in the forest - but neither is Madri an important character in the narrative neither is her sacrifice referred to in popular discourse on the two epics.
The point is, this
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could have been a footnote but colonized that we are, NCERT gives it the same (undue) emphasis that the British did.

Later in the chapter, there's a reference to Muslim Begums in Bengal opening schools for girls, while in contrast, Pandita

Ramabai's (a Sanskrit scholar)
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assertion about Hinduism's oppressiveness toward women. Sigh.
Also, the language on page 99 is telling: it says both "Hindu nationalists" and "orthodox Muslims" were worried about women adoption western ways.
Look at the equivalence.

Rest of the chapter is about
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the caste system, though only in the Hindu context. Casteism in other religions is completely ignored. The chapter ends with three blurbs.
One on Sir Syed Ahmad Khan - founder of Aligarh Muslim University.
One on the Singh Sabha Movement.
And finally, curiously,
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about Slavery in the US!

Now you know why young Indian minds always
conflate the two (racism & casteism); that's what they've been taught.
This was exhausting & frustrating.
Sigh. (9/9)

Source: https://t.co/gs5ksTCOYI
#Observations