



Brutality, Language and Curriculum: A History of Knowledge Production in Academic World

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ABSTRACT:-

In this paper, it will examine the historical description of brutality. Every section of the society is affected by some kind of cruelty or brutality. Therefore, it will do historical writing while explaining brutality in a wider perspective. Brutality¹ is a behaviour that is very cruel or violent and shows no feeling for others. In this paper, we will focus on the brutality done by the 'civilized society of Europe' on the native inhabitants of the so-called 'uncivilized American society' i.e. Red Indians, how all the limits of barbarism are broken by the so-called 'civilized society'. And further it will analyze the curriculum of important universities of India and the world in this context.

Keywords: Brutality, Red Indians, Columbus, Curriculum.

Introduction:-

The arrival of Columbus in 1492 was a watershed incident in the history of America as it witnessed colonization after a long independent history. Unique world ascendance of European civilization, their wealth trading systems, science and cultural influence started expanding which destroyed the individuality of other civilizations. Steve J Sterns argues that other civilizations were emerged and developed in their own way with their own

¹ Cambridge Dictionary, Brutality means behaviour that is very cruel or violent and showing no feelings for others.

golden ages for example the civilizations in Asia, Africa, the middle east, and in the same way America. Alejandro Tatsuo Moreno Okuno and Daniel Ventosa Santaularia's work shows that The relationship established between the Spaniards and the Indians was very different from the one that emerged several centuries later between the slaves and their owners on the cotton plantations in the south of the United States.² This paper aims to examine nature and kind of brutalities that have taken place in the American continent especially Hispaniola and the city of Mexico and the impact of conquest which led to depopulation in America. According to Cook and Borah, the population of Hispaniola, where Columbus arrived in 1492, has decreased to the extent that slaves were imported to the Hispaniola to repopulate it in the upcoming two decades. The debate of reasons behind the decline of population is still a hot potato. But at the same time, the study of brutalities and atrocities committed by Europeans gives an important tool to revisit American history from a different point of view.

1. Nature of Brutalities

When Columbus reached Hispaniola sickness broke out in which many natives, as well as Spaniards, died. Even then, Columbus asked his companions to search for gold mines. Many historians such as Carl Sauer, Eliot Morison, and Kirk Patrick speculated various reasons for this much death rate such as dysentery, intestinal infection or drinking water of well, etc.

Recent studies have shown high mortality and the extraordinary contagiousness was the result of influenza carried by canary island pigs. Columbus himself claims that natives of the island are so innocent that they handled the sword from the sides of the blade and get injured by swords. While Spanish forces were forcing natives to provide food supplies, women and slaves, etc.

For a while when Columbus fell ill whatever control he has over his troops was lost and the result was that troops started stealing, killing, raping, and torturing natives. Although Indians retaliated but very soon they realized, it is better to flee away from here for the fear of disease and attack of Spaniards. One of the migrant natives brought gold to Cuba and presented it in front of those who came with him as a reason of killing and death at Hispaniola. Therefore he disposed of that gold into the river but it did not work for them. Spaniards burnt him alive and captured his followers. More than 50000 death were recorded after these encounters.

When Columbus recovered, he with his military forces entered the countryside and started slaughtering them in thousands. Bartholome de las Casas recalled that Spaniards were extremely cruel so that this cruel treatment would prevent Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings. Las Casas describes brutalities such as They would cut Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin implicitly proposing "Go now and spread the news to your chiefs."

² Okuno, A., & Ventosa-Santaulària, D. (2010). Fall in the Indian population after the arrival of the Spaniards. Diseases or exploitation? *Investigación Económica*, 69(272), 87-104

Spanish Launched a kind of token system, those with insufficient tokens, which means they have not paid tribute, had to cut off their hands. Since speculation of Spaniards regarding gold in Hispaniola were very high.

There is an example reported in a Spanish source that Spanish tore babes from their mother's breast and dashed their heads against rocks. In another instance, to compare the sharpness of swords, they ripped open the bellies to cut and kill those folks. Surprisingly this incident took place in a village where these conquistadors were welcomed through a feast of cassava.

Las Casas portrayed that although the population of Hispaniola was decreasing during the advent of Columbus after 1496 population decline accelerated due to such brutalities and atrocities committed by Spaniards. The Spanish were simultaneously importing slaves from the surrounding islands. But death rate was too high to maintain the population. Which ultimately resulted in the eradication of most of the indigenous inhabitants of Hispaniola.

Carl sure posed that a new institution of repartimiento (Indian grants) was imposed by Spaniards. This system not only divided the land but also the people or communities among various Spaniard masters. These masters were free to use the people as per their wishes, without limit or benefit of tenure. This institution magnified the intensities of cruelties and brutalities.

Those who tried to escape were died either by hunger or forced to return or captured by Spaniards. These people were trailed in public to set an example. The result of such atrocities was that American Indians had only a few options -some of them surrendered, few committed suicide, few refused to give birth to new children. Las Casas wrote how they were squeezed without any offense. They were crushed to earth by horses, cut in pieces by swords. After a time when natives found ways to become reunited, they were exhausted and depressed to a level that they had no mind for marital communication and this way ceased to procreate.

In Mexico, Cortes was greeted and welcomed by Montezuma. But western scholars look at it as the foolishness of Aztec leaders by ignoring the fact that indigenous traditions and ways of welcoming can be different. As David Stannard argues "Mesoamerican political traditions had always dictated that war was to be announced before it was launched, and the reasons for war were always made clear well beforehand."³ Cortes pretended to be a peace ambassador rather than announcing any warlike condition. This was also a breach of trust which does not concern western scholarship rather they consider it a wise step of Spaniards. Spaniards attacked at the celebration of the feast of God Huitzilopochtli, assaulted the innocent Indians. "Army of Montezuma also retaliated after a while and after two weeks of struggle, Cortes ordered a retreat from the city under a cover of night", according to the Sahagun. But Cortes left fearsome killer smallpox in the city during the retreat. Indians were unaware of the cure of the disease which resulted in the deaths of many.

Cortes again attacked after two months and this time he was so merciless that he cut off the food supplies to the capital and even after this he destroyed the great aqueduct that brought fresh water to the city.

³ Stannard, David. E, AMERICAN HOLOCAUST The Conquest of the New World
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS New York Oxford, p 76

Inga Clendennen observed that the metropolis that the Spanish had described, just a month ago, as the most beautiful city on earth, so dazzling and beguiling in its exotic and brilliant variety, became a monotonous pile of rubble, a place of dust and flame and death. Stannard argued, "In a single city about a third of a million was killed in the center of Mexico and still it was a beginning." Although it becomes difficult to assess how many were killed, or how many died of disease before the conquistador got there, but Las Casas wrote that Aand his troops by themselves "advanced killing, ravaging, burning, robbing, and destroying all the country wherever he came. Alvarado, one among many engaged in this genocidal enterprise, was followed by Nono Beltran, Cornado, etc countless conquerors, and marauders. Stannard cites data of reduction in population up to 90% among the regions of serrano culture.

In the south, the same kind of brutalities took place and in a more worse manner. Stannard poised, " The gratuitous killing and outright sadism that the Spanish soldiers had carried out on Hispaniola and in central Mexico was repeated in the long march to the south. There are instances where we find how Spanish used their dogs for entertaining purposes and forced them to perform the activity such as:

The Spaniards cut off the arm of one, the leg or hip of another, and from some their heads at one stroke, like butchers cutting up beef and mutton for the market. Six hundred, including the cacique, were thus slain like brute beasts. Vasco ordered forty of them to be torn to pieces by dogs.⁴

The tradition of stamping on the faces of Indians was carried out to categorize them. During the selling of slaves, a replacement brand was made on their faces again. There were also the slaves carrying three to four marks on their faces. As per the ideology of catholic machismo, the Spanish celebrated the purity of their own women. For instance this piece from Italian nobleman Michele de Cuneo:

While I was in the boat I captured a very beautiful Carib woman, whom the said Lord Admiral gave to me, and with whom, having taken her into my cabin, she being naked according to their custom, I conceived a desire to take pleasure. I wanted to put my desire into execution but she did not want it and treated me with her fingernails in such a manner that I wished I had never begun. But seeing that, (to tell you the end of it all), I took a rope and thrashed her well, for which she raised such unheard of screams that you would not have believed your ears. Finally, we came to an agreement in such a manner that I can tell you she seemed to have been brought up in a school of harlots.⁵

The kind of language Cuneo used expresses an attitude toward raped women that soon would become a staple of violent pornography and male sadistic fantasy. while a report from Caribbean king's report provides a different demonstration. there is also evidences that native women were gambled and came under the category of trade commodity and stables of them were rented out to sailors who desired sexual accomplishment during their travels. Modern historians argue that those women who refuse to be concubines were forced to do back-breaking work. These instances accurately explain why the married couple were having no children at all or only one or seldom more than two. After the conquest of the Antilles, a

⁴ Stannard, David. E, AMERICAN HOLOCAUST The Conquest of the New World OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS New York Oxford, p-82

⁵ Ibid pg 84

labor institution, *encomienda* was introduced. Las Casas stressed regarding this system, "that Charles could do a great service for those Christians living in the Indies. If the monarch abolished the *encomienda* system, he would, "free [the Spanish] from the great sins of tyranny, robbery, violence, and murders which they commit every day, oppressing and robbing and killing those people."⁶ According to Garcia Rivera, " an *encomienda* concedes the right to use the work of Indians without granting the property neither of indians nor their land. L.B. Simpson arguing about the nature of this institution says that the Crown established the *encomienda* in order to (i) ensure that the Spanish residents could be maintained, and; (ii) obtain an exportable surplus of goods usable in Europe for the benefit of the homeland. Simpson's definition of the *encomienda* is a "delegation of the royal power to collect tribute from, and to use the personal services of the King's vassals (the Indians)" This mechanism enacted Me facto² forced labor was constantly revised modified in order to improve the conditions of the indigenous population, but never to the extreme of annihilating "the foundations of its wealth the Indies."⁷ even from Europeans own writings, the kind of brutalities they committed can be assessed if we reading between the lines. Pedro de Cieza, a conquistador, a man who believed in the superiority of Spaniards and accepted that natives were meant to be subordinates of Spaniards, describes the wholesale slaughter of Inca's natives.

The early studies of Cook and Simpson consider the epidemics of 1540, 1570, and 1590 as the prime factor for depopulation. But later studies of Cook and Borah further explored reasons such as soil erosion and the spread of grazing animals. There are two different arguments in recent studies regarding this phenomenon.

1. The population decline was the result of epidemics brought up by Spaniards and the native population was unaware of the cure of the same.

R.E. christ argues that "The disruption of the Indian way of life and the unaccustomed work in the mines and on the plantations were no doubt significant factors, but a large part of the decrease was in all probability due to deaths from the diseases brought by the conquistadores, such as measles and smallpox, to which the Indians had not acquired immunity."⁸

1. Secondly, the mistreatment of the Indians and their overexploitation was the reason for such a high death toll. Sempat Assadourian in favor of the second argument advances the possibility of fertility rate decline due to drastic changes in the economic organizations of the society.

Since there is evidence that shows that Indians had access to their own parcel and that there was an institutional mechanism for collecting and redistributing food, before the arrival of

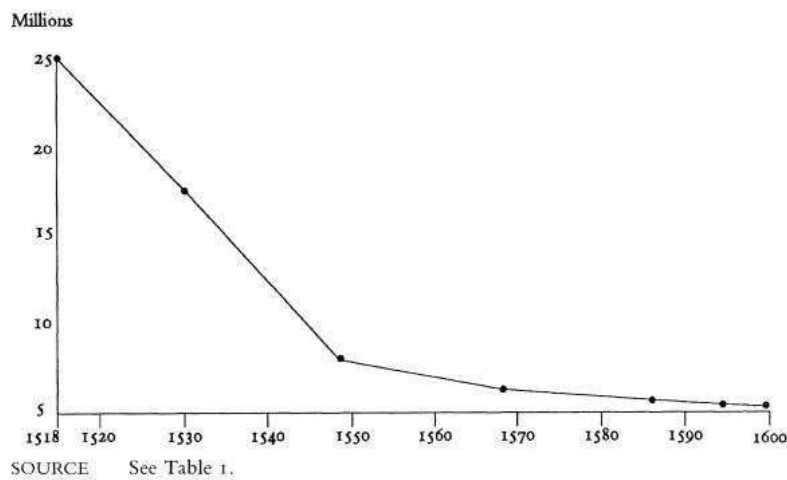
⁶ Vickery, P. (2000). Bartolomé De Las Casas: Prophet of the New World. *Mediterranean Studies*, 9, 89-102.

⁷ Stannard, David. E, AMERICAN HOLOCAUST The Conquest of the New World, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS New York Oxford,p-90

⁸ Okuno, A., & Ventosa-Santaulària, D. (2010). Fall in the Indian population after the arrival of the Spaniards. Diseases or exploitation? *Investigación Económica*, 69(272), 87-104.

the Spaniards. To a great extent, Both the argument seems to be convincing. the epidemics and mistreatment both contributed to this kind of depopulation.

Fig. 1 Extrapolation to 1518 of the Post-Conquest Population



SOURCE Woodrow Wilson Borah and Sherburne F. Cook, *Essays in Population History: Mexico and the Caribbean* (Berkeley, 1977), I, xiii.

This graph shows the decline in the population within a century. Massimo Livi-Bacci in his work "The Depopulation of Hispanic America after the Conquest" argues that there are three reasons behind the phenomenal decline in population. he named them "confiscation of labor" "diffusion of disease," and "Conquest's atrocities."

1. Confiscation of labor: conquest brought major socio-economic upheavals in the native population. Confiscation of labor led to a decline in the yield of agriculture which ultimately resulted in the famine. As Simpson argues that American Indians were by no means legal slaves of Europeans but they were forced to provide services.
2. Diffusion of Disease: Bacci argues that new diseases brought by Europeans were a major cause of the population collapse in America. The rate of spread of disease was high in densely populated regions and vice versa.
3. Conquest's atrocities: As we discussed above the kind of brutalities and atrocities committed by Spaniards over the native population such as killings, maimings, rape, abduction, and depredation. these all things are somehow related to the decline in the size of the population in America.

2. Impact of conquest

It is obviously evident that conquest brought many changes in the lifestyle of native Indians. But this impact was not uniform all over the continent as suggested by Massimo Livi Bacci.

2.1. Impact of conquest in The Caribbean Island

The Caribbean island was highly affected by the conquest. This was the place where the population was on the verge of extinction after the first attack of smallpox. At the same time, Caribbean island laid the foundation of black legend. Collectively all the negative factors of conquest applied full force. such as the direct killing of the natives in the process of subjugation; slavery and forced labor; destruction of communities and forced migration; a comparatively high ratio between conquerors and conquered; abduction of women of reproductive age. The quest of gold motivated Spaniards to these high rescue ventures, therefore, desire for the immediate compensation worsened the situation. which resulted in higher mortality and lower fertility rates. This type of situation was beyond the Antilles, the coast of the mainland, and other gold-yielding areas.

The impact of conquest was different at low lying coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico and the pacific coast of Peru. the major difference was of the rate of decline of population, here it was high. There were various reasons behind this.

1. The climatic and environmental conditions of these coasts.
2. for the Pacific Peruvian coast, centers on the vulnerability of the coastal valleys where the natives settled, and the destructive effects of the European intrusion, such as the appropriation of the best land and the system of irrigation, depriving the Indians of precious resources for survival.⁹

2.2. Impact of Conquest in Brazil

In the areas of Brazil, the impact of conquest was so rigorous that it involved violent expulsion of natives and they were forced to live in such type of conditions and habitats which were not suitable for their health. Which reduced their work efficiency and survival ability. The huge demand of laborers in the plantation and mining forced natives towards

⁹ Livi-Bacci, Massimo. "The Depopulation of Hispanic America after the Conquest." *Population and Development Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2006, pp. 199–232.

interiors from coastlines. **Bacci** argues " Enslaved or indentured Indians often did not reproduce themselves, and native women were drawn into the European reproductive pool. This type of expulsion and destruction of human resources was replicated in other areas of the continent."¹⁰ These cruel situations after a period of time became norms as **David Stannard** writes An unending rhythm of attack from slaving parties, punctuated by furious epidemic disease episodes brought by those same slavers, as well as by missionaries, and then military assault again became the norm of Brazilian Indian life for most of the next two centuries.

3. Curriculum of Universities based on ‘brutality in Latin America’:-

History is an important subject or part of social science. Under which we study the important events and changes that happened in a society, country or period in the past and its impact. E. H. Carr explains in his book 'What is History' that "History is a continuous dialogue going on between past and present which gives us proper direction to implement future plans or actions for the benefit of society and creatures."¹¹

But generally we see that in the syllabus of most of the important universities of India and the world like Kashi Hindu University¹², University of Delhi¹³, Jawaharlal Nehru University¹⁴, Harvard University¹⁵, University of Oxford¹⁶, Stanford University¹⁷, University of Cambridge¹⁸, Columbia University¹⁹, SOAS University of London²⁰ etc. many papers are based on social, political, economic, art and cultural history. Still, the atrocities committed by the Spaniards and Europeans in Latin America of the American continent are generally not deeply examine in the curriculum of most of the important universities in India and the world.

3.1. Curriculum of world’s universities based on brutality in Latin America

Social, political, economic, environmental and cultural history is studied on 100 plus themes under the Fall and Spring semesters by the History Department of Harvard University. Harvard University has always been one of the most prestigious universities in the world. Undergraduate and graduate are studied American Revolution, Archaeo-science, British Empire, China, Colonial Latin America, Founding Europe, German Empire, Greco-Roman Antiquity, Immigration, Middle East, Post-war U.S., Samurai Revolution, Soviet Union, Texts,

¹⁰ Livi-Bacci, Massimo. “The Depopulation of Hispanic America after the Conquest.” *Population and Development Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2006, pp. 199–232.

¹¹ E. H. Carr, “What is History?” *Penguin Books*, pp. 7-109

¹² Syllabus of Banaras Hindu University, B.A. and M.A. History

¹³ Syllabus of University of Delhi, B.A. and M.A. History

¹⁴ Syllabus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, M.A. History

¹⁵ Syllabus of Harvard University, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

¹⁶ Syllabus of University of Oxford, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

¹⁷ Syllabus of Stanford University, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

¹⁸ Syllabus of University Cambridge, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

¹⁹ Syllabus of Columbia University, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

²⁰ Syllabus of SOAS University of London B.A. and M.A. History

Ukraine, US Foreign Policy, US Occupation, World War etc in depth here. The main objective of the 'Colonial Latin America'²¹ paper are-

1. "What was it like to live in early modern colonial Latin America?"
2. "What was the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized? This course is an introductory survey of Latin American history spanning the 16th to the early 19th century. Organised chronologically and thematically, it will examine developments in Spanish and Portuguese America by reading both secondary and primary sources."

Similarly, hundreds of courses on social, political, economic, cultural and environmental history are studied by the History Department of University of Oxford, Stanford University, University of Cambridge, Columbia University, etc. This course studies British and European history from the fall of the Roman Empire to the present day. The geographic scope of history at this university is very broad, with an in-depth study of North American, Latin American, Asian, and African history.

3.2. Curriculum of India's Universities based on 'brutality in Latin America'

The study of history in Indian universities has been mainly political and power-oriented. But social, economic, cultural and environmental history has been made the main point of study in major central universities like University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Hyderabad²², Banaras Hindu University, Jamia Millia Islamia²³, University of Calcutta²⁴, Aligarh Muslim University²⁵, etc. Nevertheless, the study of history in these universities has generally been conquest or conflict or power oriented.

In the major universities of India, the history department studies social, political, economic, art, cultural and environmental history under hundreds of papers. The approach to the study of history in India is still generally conquest/ conflict/ power oriented, while major institutions have given pain, suffering, emotions a major place in the study of history after postmodernism.

In India, the history of America is studied under papers such as History of Europe or History of United States of America while in the American continent the extent of brutality was crossed by Europeans from 16th to 19th century AD. The curriculum of Indian universities is generally silent on this subject.

In total, more than 50 papers are offered by the Department of History in the University of Delhi for undergraduate and about 144 papers in post graduation, which are related to the history of the world and different periods of the history of India, such as ancient, medieval and modern times. The European Conquest of the Americas from the 16th century AD to the 19th century AD is studied by the Department of History, Delhi University, under the paper 'Conquest of America'. The objective is "This course examines history of America by revisiting Conquest and its impact from various perspectives. Revisiting existing European perspectives, this course explores the history of America with reference to "the vision of the vanquished". In

²¹ Syllabus of Harvard University, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

²² Syllabus of University of Hyderabad, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

²³ Syllabus of Jamia Millia Islamia, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

²⁴ Syllabus of University of Calcutta, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

²⁵ Syllabus of Aligarh Muslim University, Undergraduate and Graduate History Courses

such an endeavor we will adopt the insights and methods of a range of disciplines that would include semiotics, anthropology and intellectual history ." ²⁶

At the end of the course, university students are expected to gain an understanding of the different perspectives of conquest, the idea of different dimensions of history in terms of brutality, and the impact of 'cultural clash' and 'conquest' on America.

Conclusion

Based on analysis of kind of brutalities and mistreatment towards natives by Europeans, it becomes inevitable to accept the fact that exploitation by Europeans was also the major factor, apart from the disease brought by Spaniards, in the depopulation of the continent. There was a long-term implication of such massive depopulation. For instance **Francis J. Brooks' work** "Revising the Conquest of Mexico: Smallpox, Sources, and Populations" suggests that Diseases that caused massive mortality of indigenous peoples may have cleared the way for later Western European empires overseas.²⁷ The short-term impact, what we discussed above, was not uniform throughout the continent. But at the end of the day, it would be correct to argue that the impact of the conquest was not only on the size of the population but also on the political socio-economic organization of the natives of the continent.

So far, the writing of history and the understanding of history has been done keeping 'victory and power' in the center of the academic world, but in the study of history, we need to get out of the scope of a limited approach and keep in mind the 'common people'. The history of conquest and power promotes brutality, which is clearly visible in the context of Latin America, how 90% of its population ends up being victims of brutality in the course of European conquest, and there is population from other continents like Africa. Slaves are imported to increase the population. Thus it should be called 'Genocide of America' or 'Holocaust of America' instead of 'Conquest of America'. In fact, we should adopt an approach that promotes 'co-existence' in place of conquest and power in the curriculum of our universities so that brutality like America or brutality in the name of conquest does not happen.

²⁶ Syllabus of University of Delhi, MA History Courses, pp. 146-148

²⁷ Brooks, Francis J. "Revising the Conquest of Mexico: Smallpox, Sources, and Populations." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1993, pp. 1-29