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Title: Search for ancient river in contemporary India: heritage, history and politics of Saraswati

Authors: Yadav. Amisha.

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Abstract:

History plays an important role in defining nation and its appropriations. Contemporary India is facing ideological conflicts, especially for defining nation and its citizens (insiders). These ideologies are constantly trying to change the past either by recreating heritage structures or by changing history textbooks. The contemporary changes introduced are legitimized on the basis of imagined past. History has always played a role to bind the nation and create a sense of similarity among citizens. Political parties try to influence the names, history textbook writing and emotions of contemporary India. These political forces try to demonstrate their version of history so that they can inculcate a particular national identity among citizens, especially along the lines of religion and imagined majoritarian identities. This work is an attempt to understand the history and politics behind the recreation of Rigvedic river Saraswati in contemporary Indian state of Haryana and at the same time trying to relate other political stunts of renaming places, changing texts in history textbooks. This work will explore the meanings of varieties of imagined and at times invented pasts and its role in Indian politics.

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