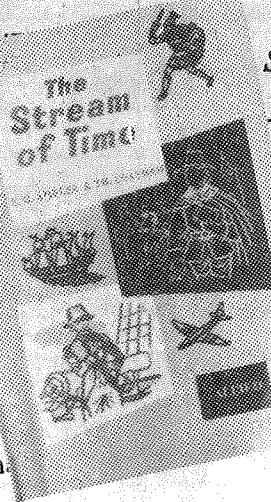


FOREWORD TO THE TIME

The sales of this series of books has shown that they meet a demand and the many appreciative colleagues have been most encouraging.

Now in a new edition, with illustrations and with the subject recast, we hope they will be more useful. Do you know what place that people used order to pray.



Stream of Time

...the first people to have... We British people are very... too have a little Mother... daughter countries across the...

...which are the birthright... and the reading of other... of chapter exercises.

The cover of and extracts from The Stream of Time

The Telegraph (Sunday) July 22 - 1984.

Be Indian the British way

The *Stream of Time*, seemingly an excellent title for a history text book, has been prescribed for junior classes in some of the most prestigious schools of Calcutta. The title captures at once the continuity as well as change that is intrinsic to the process of history. However, very few parents and educational authorities seem to have paid much attention to what lies between the covers of these text books.

'Do you know what a temple is? It is the place that people used instead of a church in order to pray.' 'The Greeks were the first people to have colonies... We British People are very much like them, for we too have a little Mother country and big new daughter countries across the seas.' The emphasis is ours; the extracts are from *The Stream of Time*.

While "colonial hangover" is a phrase much in vogue today, one wonders how many people are aware that colonial culture is being imbibed by impressionable young children in India today, through the pages of such books.

Written by S. O. Ambler and T. H. Coatman, *The Stream of Time* is really a series of four books published in India by Allied Publishers which, by 1982, had gone through 12 reprints after its first publication in 1971. It is clear, therefore,

that despite all the glaring shortcomings, there is considerable demand for the books.

The perspective of the series is clear from the foreword itself, which states, "Some of the well known stories which are the birthright of every British child have been told," while, "the third and fourth books tell the story of our land."

Throughout the books, 'our land' and 'our country' refer exclusively to Great Britain. As a result, thousands of children are growing up fairly confused as to what their land, their history and their heritage really is.

The foreword, meanwhile, goes on to eulogise this 'new' edition which, apparently, has "subject matter brought in line with recent events." Ironic indeed, for the one aspect of these books which is blatantly obvious is the fact that they are far removed from contemporary Indian reality and "recent events."

While there is much in the contents of these books which is not objectionable *per se*, their Anglocentric bias makes them highly unsuitable for study in schools in India. There are chapters on "The Greeks (or Romans) and Ourselves." In order to make children understand why they are studying the Greeks, the authors explain: "We ought to be

very much interested in the Greeks because many things that we do in England today are done because the Greeks used to do them." In addition, children are treated to such irrelevant examples such as: the architectural similarity between St George's Hall, Liverpool and a Greek temple; the Greek origin of the game of rounders; and the Roman influence in the names of cities such as Chester or Leicester. How many children of class V in India, have seen St George's Hall or Liverpool, played rounders, or even heard of Chester?

The only reference to India in the first two books is made when writing about sun-baked bricks of ancient civilisations. There is an accompanying photograph of an obscure looking "native" standing beside his bricks along with the caption: 'Bricks are still made in this way in India'.

These books are culturally too alien for Indian children to identify with and, more significant, they create confusion in the minds of children. History is the study of the past, but not merely the past for its own sake; we study history to understand the present which is relevant to us. These books contribute nothing toward this end.

Sanjay Joshi