

The Constitutional Mandate and Education



■■■■ A Report on the ■■■■

(i) Impact of Pedagogy of the Approach, Teaching Textbook and Curriculum being followed in some of these non-governmental *and governmental* schools;

(ii) Spread of the RSS/VHP Network in the Field of Education,

(iii) Spread and Reach of Madrassa Education,

(iv) State and Private Funding of These Institutions/Networks

Presented to the CABE sub-Committee on “Regulatory Mechanisms for Textbooks and Parallel Textbooks Taught in Schools Outside the Government System”

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NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS

PART I

1. **Chapter III & IV of the Constitution:** It is imperative that basic notions of Constitutional rights and values, and universal human rights be made a compulsory part of the school curriculum even in private-run institutions. An effective and realistic mode of monitoring this is a must. Regular and publicly published reports of the State's Monitoring in this direction should be published to ensure adherence and transparency. Individuals and groups must have a right to complain to state authorities if they find that what is happening in schools runs contrary to the Constitutional Mandate.
2. **National Commission for Minorities Annual Report 1998-99:** The Indian State at all levels needs to publicise regular data on what it is doing and has done to further education and employment for religious minorities, women, tribals and Dalits. It is this abdication that needs to be corrected.
3. **RSS-VHP run schools:** It is imperative that the functioning of these schools in remote tribal areas is brought under national scrutiny and co-related to the rise of the incidences of violence targeted against religious minorities in the specific region that they are located.
4. **Ekal Vidyalaya 5-day preliminary training (Prathamik Varg):** It would be important for the Indian state to examine how these orientation sessions actually work out from a district to district basis.
5. **Ekal Vidyalaya 5-day preliminary training (Prathamik Varg) and 10-day (Abhyas Varg) for training coordinator:** It would be important for the Indian state to examine how these orientation sessions actually work out from a district to district basis. What for instance does this monthly syllabus contain? Is preparation for violence against sections a part of the training?
6. **Ekal Vidyalaya's Curriculum:** It would be important to co-relate these avowed ideals of the Ekal Foundation with the activities of its activists, teachers etc on the ground in the various states that it operates. What are the stories told? What is the historical authenticity of the curriculum?
7. **Ekal Foundation (Ekal Vidyalaya) website (www.ekalvidya.org):** Contrary what is claimed on the website, to suit international standards and draw funds, the functioning of Ekal Vidyalayas to date shows in fact a tendency to "Brahminise" or "Sanskritise" local tribal culture. It would be interesting for the CABE committee to be informed whether or not there has been *any* state monitoring of the curriculum transaction in Ekal Vidyalaya schools.
Comment: What can be immediately seen from the section on Moral Values is that there is no mention of **engendering any Constitutional Values: no mention of respect for the Equality of One and All, Equal Respect for All Religions, Belief in Common Property and Sharing, Equal Status for Men and Women and between Different Castes and Communities, the Engendering of a Rational Outlook etc.**

Comment [2]: In fact all available published data shows that in fact there is a concerted attempt to in fact wean, often with inducements, tribal peoples from their local indigenous cultures and in fact bring them to an 'all-Hindu' fold

- 8. Schemes and funds allocated by the union government for modernisation of *madrassa curriculum*:** Madrassa curriculum needs to be rationally examined. National stock and monitoring needs to be taken of the scheme announced by the government every year *to modernise madrassa education* and it's effective implementation. These need to be publicised.
- 9. Curriculum of the network of schools under the RSS Akhil Bhartiya Shikhsa Sansthan:** The content of the curriculum, texts and transaction in the classroom on moral and spiritual education needs to be brought under scrutiny. At no stage have the RSS run schools being subject to any such scrutiny
- 10. RSS-run Vidya Bharati schools:** Vast private funding is one source behind these institutions. Much of this money comes from abroad. But as figures related to Ekal Vidyalayas below show, State Funding has helped them grow in both Rajasthan and private corporate funding in Karnataka.
- 11. Gujarat RSS run schools and their role in post 1999:** The country knows the story of Gujarat post-1999. Whether it is Dangs, the Panchmahals or other tribal areas, the curricular transaction in the RSS Shishu Mandirs and Ekal Vidyalayas needs to be monitored and publicised.
- 12. Ekal vidyalayas Funding:** An inquiry needs to be made on a) Grounds on which Funds are sought by these various organisations; b) What they are actually used for
- 13. Funds allocated by Central Govt to National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation:** Reports of how these monies are disbursed and used need to be publicised. Does the State encourage liberal and modern elements within the religious community that further secular, Constitutional values?

PART II

- 1. 'How textbooks teach prejudice', Communalism Combat, October 1999:** In April 2000, months after Communalism Combat had published this report, a Parliamentary committee with 42 members went into examining some of the contents of the Gujarat text books. Months later, finding these sections objectionable, the Gujarat government was directed to delete these portions. To date this has not happened.
- 2. National Council for Educational Research and Training Report:** There needs to be greater transparency in the *constitution* of State and National Textbook Committees. Even at more progressive times, the fact that historians with one or the other worldview heavily dominated state positions and filled committees has further ensured that a uni-dimensional, dry pedagogy in history and social studies has resulted.
- 3. Portrayal of caste in Indian Textbooks:** Even progressive interpretation tends to exclude *any treatment of caste* within the curriculum and text-book. It is either as if the inequities and brutal discriminations caused by caste do not exist any more. Where it is treated, there is an attempt to

justify the origin of the caste system. Similar the systemic denial of basic dignity and human rights to the Indian indigenous tribal populations is deliberately excluded from the social studies curriculum.

4. **A chapter in history, final year Bachelor of Arts students in Maharashtra:** The subtle and not-so-subtle exclusion and ‘othering’ of religious minorities is starkly visible in Indian texts, even state ones. There is no attempt to explain how faiths travelled to different lands, the synthesis, fusion and then sometimes conflict that took place.
 5. ***Manu Smriti*, an ancient Indian Brahmanical text:** Gender receives similarly reluctant and uneasy treatment in Indian texts. Work and women, women’s contribution to politics, thoughts, artisanship etc can hardly find mention.
 6. **Indian Textbooks deal with the history of RSS, Muslim League and other organisation:** While the Muslim League receives separate chapter treatment in *almost all texts*, there is a shrouded secrecy in explaining to the growing mind the existence of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh {RSS} who had similar *exclusionist ideals of a HINDU NATION STATE*. *Starkly therefore we find almost no mention in Indian texts of the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Gandhiji*. Nor is there any attempt to explain to the growing mind why this assassination took place.
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PART - ONE

THE CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE AND EDUCATION

One of the major issues before the Indian state in the arena of education concerns both the access to free primary and secondary education to *all* Indian children regardless of caste, community and gender, to ensure that the *quality* of this schooling represents in the transaction between school-teacher and student an adherence to notions of parity for all Indian children, and as importantly as the above, *the adherence to basic Constitutional norms in the content of the school curriculum.*

The first and basic issue of providing free and fair primary education between ages 0-14 of every child as well as the second of parity in quality is mandated in the Constitution in Chapter IV, known to all as the Directive Principles of State Policy. Articles 14 to 31, i.e. the Fundamental Rights Chapter, Chapter III ensures equality and non-discrimination before the law, in matters of public employment, freedom of movement, expression, faith and so on. Put together, both chapters should have already, after nearly six decades of Independent and Democratic functioning ensured the eradication of illiteracy, basic and good quality education, and education moreover that is free of race, caste, community-driven or gender bias.

The realisation of the first would have meant that every region and every child was by now literate, the second that this would or could have been ensured only through the shift to a common school system where all children have access to the same quality and intensity of education and third, that formal schooling through state textbooks or books or teaching by private agencies would follow a commitment and endurance to the basic Constitutional Mandate. That is, the content of the curriculum, syllabus and finally the textbook would follow a rational and modern paradigm in keeping with the trust made by India on August 15, 1947 and thereafter on January 26, 1950.

Instead, the situation on the ground looks grim. UNICEF figures shamefully record how we have failed, having as we do 370 million illiterates (1991), half a century after we became independent. Latest census figures do not show a marked improvement in the pattern. What is equally worrisome is the fact that patterns of education related to employment show that the maximum of our unemployed youth are those that have completed graduation, raising serious questions of the thrust of our education in connection with agricultural work, labour, art and artisanship.

Within this overall scenario and the onset of globalisation, the state that has a fundamental duty in the field of education especially in reaching it on par to the have-nots, is in fact withdrawing from this sector making room for private funding and running of educational institutions, even schools.

Should this withdrawal of the state from this sector take place without adequate national debate? Should it in fact take place when those that suffer most from this withdrawal are sections of the Indian population who on account of marginalisation on account of caste, class, tribe, community or gender are also being simultaneously being rendered voiceless in the debate.

In this scenario, where the deeply marginalized are being denied their basic constitutional right by the state, in step organisations with wide organisational skills and ideological purpose, who wish to penetrate into the area of primary and secondary education, so as to be able to transform those populations *not into adolescents or adults raised with democratic and secular ideals* but instead, into masses of people armed with thoughts that can be turned and used for violence against sections of the people. This is not ideal or hysterical speculation. This paper is aimed at documenting in detail how this has been done.

Note: It is imperative that basic notions of Constitutional rights and values, and universal human rights be made a compulsory part of the school curriculum even in private-run institutions. An effective and realistic mode of monitoring this is a must. Regular and publicly published reports of the State's Monitoring in this direction should be published to ensure adherence and transparency. Individuals and groups must have a right to complain to state authorities if they find that what is happening in schools runs contrary to the Constitutional Mandate.

For a few hundred years, the only major private enterprise in the area of education was the Church with its schools, colleges in far-flung parts of the country. Giving the data on the institutions run by the Church, the CMCI in 2001 had said, ¹ "The Catholic Church runs more than 7000 Primary schools, 3000 Secondary schools, 150 Colleges, 1500 Technical and Training Institutes, 2 Engineering colleges and 2 Medical colleges, 1700 Hostels and Boarding Houses and over 1000 Orphanages. In addition, about 3500 community-centred Service Institutions like hospitals, rehabilitation centres, homes for the aged, for destitutes, for the handicapped are also directly under the care of the Church".

The Constitution and Shishu Mandirs/ Ekal Vidyalayas

Over the past decade, the major private player in the area of education has been what is widely known as the *sangh parivar*, that is organisations affiliated to the Rashtra Swayam Sevak Sangh [RSS], and its affiliate, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The organisations and foundations that these two ideological affiliates run their schools is wide and disparate but it would be safe to say that they have entirely eclipsed any other organisation in terms of spread and reach all over the country. On the flip side, the failure of the Indian state to reach education (as also employment) to the largest religious minority, thirty to forty thousand *madrassas* all over the country also cry for an injection of constitutionally-driven curriculum.

Furthermore, when the state withdraws or is rapidly withdrawing from this sector and no other secular democratic political outfit sees primary and secondary education as a priority, vast regions of this country who's children are being denied this basic Constitutional right, the right to free primary and secondary education will undeniably gravitate to the only available option. Can the State thus turn away from the grave consequences of this situation?

Come to the situation for India's largest minority, the Muslims, the state's abdication of its primary duty towards this section can be seen from national literacy and other figures. This trend for over 60 years, coupled with intense violence directed against them and a conservative thrust from within, scrutiny in private education must also encompass the Indian *madrassa*, that—with the bright exception of a few states—is furthering a curriculum that is not in necessarily consonance with the Constitutional Mandate.

The Constitution and Madrassa Education

Lack of modernisation in the curriculum of *madrassas* with the noteworthy exception of states like Tripura, West Bengal and even Kerala where state governments have encouraged secularisation of the curriculum is evident from absolutely no inclusion of issues like Modern Indian history, or even civics or science in the curriculum, leave alone mathematics.

The Indian state needs to ask itself serious questions regarding its contribution to the development of marginalised sections like the tribals, dalits, women and the minorities. Today, Deobandi clerics run several thousand of India's some 30,000 *madrassas*. Most of these schools are just a room in the back of a local mosque with fewer than 100 students. But many Muslim parents see a free *madrassa* education, funded largely by religious donations, as the only option for their children. ²

Though education between the ages of 6 and 14 is compulsory in India, and largely free, government schools are often severely underfunded - and often unavailable in impoverished Muslim neighbourhoods, where literacy lags well behind the national average of 55 percent. Madrassas, on the other hand, are pervasive in Muslim areas, and always free. It was in 1986, that the Indian government initiated a project to modernize madrassas by bringing in subjects like science, math, English, and Hindi. But many madrassas refused to cooperate, wary of the state's interference. The reason behind this wariness of many institutions stems as much from an innate conservatism as a sharp reaction to the public discourse about *madrassas* that tends to relegate them to the realm of 'terrorist-launchers.' In fact, on May 6, 2002, the Government of India wrote a secret letter (Memo No F3-5/99-D.III (L) to all Chief Secretaries and Education Secretaries of the State Governments and Union Territories to verify the antecedents of the madrassas applying for financial assistance from the Government. "While forwarding the application", the letter stated, "the State Government may ensure that the applications of the madrassas it is forwarding are not indulging, abetting or in any other way linked with anti-national activities. The State Governments may categorically certify that the applicant madrassas are free from security angle (sic)." The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Digvijay Singh, had this to say in his reply on July 22 (No. 2026/CMO/02): "It appears that institutions being run by one community are being singled out and the sense that is sought to be conveyed is that these are potentially anti-national. This in my opinion does grave harm to the secular fabric of our country... By singling out institutions of one community alone, a grave disservice has been done to sow in a suspicion about this community itself as prone to anti-national activities. May I request you to kindly correct this perception and make the application of such institutions general in nature instead of making it discriminatory to institutions of one particular community."

The failure of the Indian secular state to reach primary education to this section of the population has contributed to its continued relegation to a poor socio-economic status. That combined with systemic and violent attacks against the Muslim minority has further seriously hampered a modern outlook, wedded to constitutional rights and values, entering and growing within the *madrassa*.

This is also supported by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) data, which shows that while 70.3 per cent of Hindu children in the age-group of six to 14 go to Government schools, the percentage of Muslim children in the same age group going to these schools is only 49.5 per cent. The Studies in Educational and Socio-Economic Problems of the Minorities in India (1998) by James Massey and some sample surveys to show that the literacy level among Muslims is, on an average, 10 per cent lower than the national average. In its annual report for 1998-99, the National Commission for Minorities had also observed the malaise and said, "The presence of Muslims in general education institutions of the country is much below their population ratio - and is often found to be nil." It, too, had put the blame on Government apathy, saying that the "educational backwardness is both the main cause and the inevitable effect of their (Muslims) under representation in public employment and resource generating bodies."

Note: The Indian State at all levels needs to publicise regular data on what it is doing and has done to further education and employment for religious minorities, women, tribals and Dalits. It is this abdication that needs to be corrected

The literacy rate and the rate of enrolment for Muslims is below that for Hindus, not only at the all-**India** level but also at the state-level. Comparing the literacy rate and the rate of enrolment in government schools in the five states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal and Karnataka, the NCAER report says the Muslim literacy rate is lowest in Uttar Pradesh (35 per cent) and highest in Kerala (86.9 per cent). In fact, the male literacy rate of Muslims in UP (47.1 per cent) is less than that of the Scheduled Castes (48.1 per cent). And it is in UP that the presence of madarsas is the highest. The enrolment rate in Government schools for Muslims is lowest in UP (49.7 per cent), indicating a substantial preference for madarsas in this state. In Kerala, where the enrolment rate for Muslims in Government schools is 97.7 per cent, the preference for Madarsas is almost nil.³

Pedagogy and Curriculum

Education falls on the concurrent list under the education, and therefore has both Central and State government interventions, through Boards of education and institutions. So far however regulatory mechanisms that have existed on schools in various area –with regards to basic requirements of the institution, structural and otherwise have been guided by the various state governments. Regulatory mechanisms have come into play on issues of structure and functioning of these schools, but while the wide networks of the organisations run by RSS and VHP affiliates have ensured the spread and growth of their institutions, there have been little or no attempts by state governments, regardless of their political affiliation to examine the pedagogy and content of curricular approach and/or teaching followed within the four walls of these schools.

Despite more than a few reports that have documented how the very existence of these schools has, at grass-root level furthered an un-Constitutional outlook where over a period of a few years, people who once lived in poverty but relative peace are suddenly,—after the existence of these schools—becoming the vocal proponents of hate propaganda. Violence against sections of the population, namely the religious minorities has erupted severely endangering the local fabric of the region.

Five years back, in August 2001, a detailed analysis and study of the Gujarat state text-books (made in July-August 1999) outlined how the existence of these texts since 1989 and re-printed since 1993 has seriously altered the social fabric of the state; resulting in the carnage of 2002. That paper is attached here as

Annexure-1 .⁴

Similarly in tribal Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and even Andhra Pradesh, sustained attempts are afoot to increase the outlay of these institutions into the rural, especially tribal hinterland.

This report is aimed at giving a wide overview into the

(i) Impact of Pedagogy of the Approach, Teaching Textbook and Curriculum being followed in some of these non-governmental *and governmental* schools;

(ii) Spread of the RSS/VHP Network in the Field of Education,

(iii) Spread and Reach of Madrassa Education,

(iv) State and Private Funding of These Institutions

Impact of Pedagogy of the Approach, Teaching Textbook and Curriculum

Under a fascist, un-Constitutional outlook much emphasis is put on extra curricular activities [for some early work see Kandel 1935; Mann 1938; Minio-Paluello 1946]. The school curriculum involves an active manipulation of historical evidence in order to foster hatred for and violence against minorities.

Rajasthan

Journalist DK Singh has been conducting extensive research on the spread of many such institutions in the tribal regions of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Chhatisgarh.⁵ In his interim report, he has analysed the manner in which such schools are run in Rajasthan.

‘From August 2004, following orders from the Rajasthan state social welfare minister, Madan Dilawar, over 21,000 scheduled tribe and scheduled caste students staying in the 527 government-run hostels started

chanting *mantras* before meals and reciting *Vande Mataram*. Spiritual reasons aside, the purpose behind introducing the *mantra* was that all children should eat together, the minister explained. The hostels would be converted into ‘*Sanskar Kendras*’ as part of the hostel improvement programme. Students from Class VI to Class XII would be given a “model and patriotic” education.

‘The manner of mobilisation is through *bhajan mandalis*, an assembly of Bhagats, the practice of which is attributed to the Baneshwar Dham sect. They call this *Shradha Jagaran Kendra/ Satsang Kendra* (literally, faith-awakening centres). The Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, an RSS affiliate, runs over 4,100 such centres that organise weekly or fortnightly *bhajan mandalis*.

‘In a society where village assembly provides the only means of entertainment and relaxation from hard and monotonous routine, these nightlong programmes of singing are fast gaining popularity and slogans like “*Jai Shri Ram*” shouted by the RVKP activists in between the religious songs are rather well received by the *ganja-smoking* audience.

What pedagogy and curriculum do the schools affiliated to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) through the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram or the Shishu Mandirs affiliated to the RSS’ Seva Bharati and other affiliates follow? States have laws and guidelines that should ensure that state or CBSE or ICSE texts ought to be used. However extensive field-level research and documentation shows that while the official texts may be formally followed, local literature churned out by these organisations dominates the discourse and teaching in these schools and, moreover *additional literature is supplied to students and teachers within the four walls of the schools that needs to be studied and monitored carefully*.

Within the wider context of this mobilisation, local literature distributed through the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, questionable propaganda is dished out and liberally shared with the youth who then become the teachers in the schools set up by these outfits. To satisfactorily deal with the issue of curriculum creation and laundering in farflung areas, it is important for the State to take a stringent view of literature dished out and used, often to engender violence, in these regions.

Some examples:

Bapparawal, a bimonthly Hindi magazine published by the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad (RVKP) and freely circulated in tribal Rajasthan. Bappa Rawal was the name bestowed on Rawal Kalbhoj (AD 734-753), founder of Rajasthan’s Mewar dynasty. In its January-February 2004 edition, *Bapparawal* carried an article titled “Misuse of the Innocence of Tribals and Endeavour Required to Awaken One’s Self”, by a Dr. Kashyapnath. Here are some extracts from the writer’s conclusion about Christian missionaries, supposedly drawn from interviews of ‘converted tribals’:

“1. Missionaries convert tribals (to Christianity) forcibly and by exploiting their greed and temptation.

2. The basic objective of education and health-related Christian institutions, which they term as welfare services, is conversion.

3. By instigating separatism, Christian missionaries want to create a separate Christian Homeland like Pakistan.

4. Conversion of religion leads to conversion of the nation – meaning that a person gets away from the culture of the country because after conversion –

a. Christian children are forbidden to have Hindu names.

b. Wearing *mangalsutra* (a thread worn by a married Hindu woman around her neck as a sacred representation of her marital status and loyalty to husband) is prohibited.

c. *Rangoli* (a ritual) in the house is banned.

- d.** Prohibition on (consumption of) beef (of the cow) is exempted.
- e.** Taking bath before going to a temple is discouraged but going for prayers/churches encouraged.
- f.** Visiting astrologers is forbidden.
- g.** Taking part in Hindu festivals is forbidden.
- h.** The custom of marrying in the courtyard of one's own house is discouraged and marriage at churches encouraged.
- i.** Following customs like piercing ears...wearing garlands in hair...is discouraged.
- j.** Beliefs in reincarnation... salvation termed baseless.
- k.** Hindu gods are declared 'Satan'.
- l.** Priests preach against worshipping statues.
- 5.** Evil attempts are made to hurt the faith of Hindus by getting false stories published.
- 6.** They talk like 'if you want to do a job, become a Christian, or quit the job'.
- 7.** Christian girls are deployed to entice good and intelligent Hindu youth.
- 8.** They spread propaganda like in Christianity lies your salvation, sins can be gotten rid of only with the mediation of Christ and all your good works are futile without coming under Jesus.
- 9.** They blend superstition to convert innocent tribals."

It needs not too much knowledge of the Indian Constitution to state that the circulation of such material contravenes the basic tenets of the Indian Constitution. Yet tragically, neither the previous Rajasthan government nor the present one have done anything to monitor or control the climate in these regions.

Dr. Kashyapnath's presentation of what happens after conversion addresses the section of people who have already been initiated into Hindutva or those that are aimed to be brought in.

The writer dishes out some hate filled instructions:

- 1.** There is a need for a system to cleanse Christianity of its criminal tendency to make sinful and intolerable interference.
- 2.** A law should immediately be enacted in India according to which there should be freedom to be an atheist at personal level but criticising the god worshipped by others should be a punitive crime.
- 3.** Christian missionaries are culpable of so criticising God. There should be some arrangement to punish them. Leaving them unpunished is not liberalism...
- 4.** There should be a ban on Christian educational and health related services that are used for conversion.
- 5.** Propagation of religion by foreign priests should be banned.
- 6.** Government should make arrangements for orphan children and elderly people so that they could not be exploited by institutions engaged in conversion activities.
- 7.** A clear and stringent law should be enacted to stop conversion.
- 8.** Government officers should inquire into the grants given to Christian missionaries by the government.
- 9.** Donations from foreign countries should be banned.
- 10.** Our educational institutions should be shielded from the dominance of foreign missionaries. Schools should never be allowed to be a means for conversion.

11. There should be an intensive survey of Christian families and agencies by the police who should look into the number of converted members, the circumstances in which they were converted and the agencies which were involved in it.

12. We should guide our own conduct and also create an atmosphere in the society to ensure that our children are not enrolled in Christian schools.

13. Missionaries convert tribals by force and enticement; by encouraging separatism they want to create a situation like 'Christian Homeland' as had happened in case of Pakistan; they refuse to give Hindu names to converted children; and, they declare Hindu gods as 'Satan'."

'And, this was just one chapter of *Bapparawal*! Given the sheer ludicrousness of what was presented as the supposed results of interviews (as mentioned above) one need not discuss this further. But these extracts do help in understanding how much the *sangh parivar* is indebted to Nazi ideology and operational strategy.

Conversion may not be an issue for poor tribals, but such slanderous allegations against the Church are apt to create doubts in impressionable minds, especially when they came from people who have been running schools, providing seeds, digging *anicuts* and who are with them on all occasions, be it birth, marriage or funeral.

'Slander campaign aside, the Hindutva brigade seems to have no qualms about attributing their own ideas to tribal icons who are no longer around to refute or rebut them. Take for instance the appropriation of the late Baleshwar Dayal, a much-revered socialist leader in the tribal belt. Popularly known among tribals as Mama, Baleshwar Dayal played a great role in the political awakening of the masses after Independence. He mobilised the Bhil tribals to rise against exploitation, encouraged them to give up drinking and discouraged superstition, polygamy and bride price. It was thanks to his tireless and selfless endeavours that tribals were drawn to the Socialist Party. He made such an indelible mark on tribal consciousness that more than a decade after his death, political parties still swear by his name. The Janata Dal, inheritor of his political legacy, has remained a formidable force in tribal Rajasthan.

'Given the tremendous respect and influence Mama Dayal enjoyed among tribals for his commitment to their uplift, the *sangh parivar* has now set out to appropriate him, while the alliance between the BJP and the JD (United) accords some sort of legitimacy to *sangh* claims. The Hindutva family has suddenly become an ardent admirer of Mama Baleshwar, who had opposed all sectarian philosophies throughout his life. They are now making blatant attempts to cash in on his popularity among tribals, claiming that he was opposed to the conversion activities of Christian missionaries.

'Father Narsing Nagu, 80, one of the first missionaries to set foot in Banswara in 1948 and a bitter critic of today's "money-driven" missionaries, recalls how Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj activists had attempted to create trouble for him in the past. "But Mama Baleshwar Dayal never opposed us. Once, I had the opportunity to spend a few hours with him at Bamandia. He was so cordial with me. He asked me to teach people. He always respected us for our efforts in the fields of education and health. Who says he was against Christian missionaries?" says Father Nagu.

'But, the Hindutva brigade continues to cite Mama Baleshwar to confuse the largely illiterate and apolitical masses. The JD, the Congress and all other smaller parties have only been paying lip service to Mama's cause, citing his name to garner votes and making no efforts to counter the *sangh parivar*'s claims about this tribal icon. The *sangh* propaganda seems to be working with a large section of tribals, especially youth, who have inherited loyalty to and respect for the socialist leader from their elders.

'And it is not Mama Baleshwar alone. The exponents of Hindutva have thus usurped several tribal heroes and socialist thinkers, superimposing Hindu myths and legends onto tribal landscape and history. About 30

km from the Banswara district headquarters is Ghotia Amba Dham, a temple with statues of two women and five men – said to be the five Pandava brothers and their mother and wife, protagonists of the Hindu scripture, *Mahabharata*. Annual five-day fairs are held here, in which Bhils gather to take a holy dip in a tank near the temple. The place finds no mention in any history book or in the rich tribal mythology. The temple structure does not look more than a few decades old and the statues of the two women and five men also look fairly recent.

‘But over the past decade the temple and its environs have come to be known as the place where the Pandava family spent one year, incognito, following their agreement with the Kauravas, as described in the *Mahabharata*. However, according to popular belief and available literature, the legendary Pandavas had, in fact, spent the thirteenth year of their exile (incognito) in the city of Virat in ancient Matsya Desh, which fell in Alwar district, a few hundred km from Ghotia Amba.

‘According to Dr. Narendra Gupta, who has been working in the tribal belt of Rajasthan for about two decades, with the spread of education and exposure to urbanisation, tribals have now started aping what they think gives them a bigger identity – i.e. prevalent Hindu customs and practices. “This is what you call the process of Sanskritisation in which the backward, oppressed and illiterate community of tribals starts aping the practices of supposedly superior Hindus for upward social mobility.” The *sangh* has apparently been preparing the ground and playing catalyst to encourage this process, as is evident above. Propaganda though misleading representation of history has been an effective tool to this end.

‘The BJP regime in Rajasthan, which took over in December 2003, has been of great help to the Hindutva brigade. Shortly after it took over, the ministers in the new regime were shooting their mouths off, declaring their intention to hold yet another inquiry into the activities of the Immanuel Mission in Kota, making *Vande Mataram* mandatory in prayers at hostels run by the state social welfare department and vowing to further the Hindutva agenda. A declaration concerning tribals was bound to be in the offing. And it came barely a month after the BJP took charge. Presiding over a meeting with senior government officials, state tribal area development minister, Kanak Mal Katara issued instructions that some steps had to be taken to exclude the converted Christian tribals from the list of Scheduled Tribes. An official press release stated as much.

Note: It is imperative that the functioning of these schools in remote tribal areas is brought under national scrutiny and co-related to the rise of the incidences of violence targeted against religious minorities in the specific region that they are located.

Orissa

‘In recent years, as *Hindutva* consolidates its position in Orissa, the RSS has actively declared its affiliation with these schools. *Rashtra Deepa*, the RSS Oriya weekly, regularly chronicles some of the academic aspirations of the Sangh Parivar. Most RSS run schools are affiliated with the State Board of Education and adhere to the state approved curricula. As the Sangh infiltrates into regulatory bodies and actively leads the rewriting of textbooks and reorganisation of the curriculum, the classroom transforms into an agent of spreading an un-Constitutional ‘us versus them’ ideology that seeks to teach children about internal enemies.⁶

‘In Orissa, egregious infringements of human rights are taking place with the disintegration of Adivasi and other non-Hindu cultures through their hostile incorporation into dominant Hinduism. Sectarian education campaigns undertaken by RSS organisations demonise minorities through the teaching of fundamentalist curricula. There are 391 Shishu Mandir schools with 111,000 students in the state, preparing for future leadership. Training camps in Bhadrak and Berhampur aim at Adivasi youth.

Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram runs 1,534 projects and schools in 21 Adivasi districts. The *sangh* has initiated 730 Ekal Vidyalayas in 10 districts in Orissa, one teacher schools that target Adivasis. The primary purpose

of the schools is to indoctrinate villages into Hindutva. The teachers are offered Rs. 150-200 per month as honoraria, no salaries. The schools are free, supported through donations from organisations like the India Development Relief Fund. For Adivasi peoples, this facilitates cultural genocide that imperils self-determination movements struggling against a violent history of assimilation. The *sangh* asserts Adivasi political emancipation is a process of ‘tribalism’ that jeopardises the nation.

‘The *sangh* drives spiritual centres that use religious scriptures to incite sectarianism among Hindus. Vivekananda Kendras and Hindu Jagran Manch are active in Orissa together with Harikatha Yojana centres in 780 villages and 1,940 Satsang Kendras. There are 1,700 Bhagabat Tungis in Orissa, cultural reform centres run by the *sangh* that aim at Hindus and Christians. Another line of attack is to forcibly convert Christians into Hinduism. Churches and members of the Christian clergy are apprehensive. In Gajapati and Koraput, Christians have sought state protection in the past.

‘In Gajapati district, RSS and BJP workers torched 150 homes and the village church in October 1999. A Dalit Christian activist said, “RSS workers tell me that Christianity brought colonialism to India, and I am responsible for that legacy. How am I responsible? Feudalism, imperialism, post-colonial betrayal. That is written across our bodies. How am I responsible?” In June 2002, the VHP coerced 143 tribal Christians into converting to Hinduism in Sundargarh district. The Dharma Prasar Bibhag claims to have converted 5,000 people to Hinduism in 2002.

‘The vigorous assertion of Sanskrit provides for the erasure and Hinduisation of minority languages. History, science, geography, literature, religious texts are interpreted into Hindutva. These texts, written in Oriya, are taught in schools and available in bookstores. The texts weave disparaging and malevolent fictions about minority groups, inciting Hindus to revenge history. The curriculum is censored and obscurantist, interpreted to legitimate the sanctity of a ‘Hindu worldview’ in India and the assembling of a Hindu state. It enables Hindu nationalism in advancing ‘righteous’ violence for ethnic cleansing. The RSS broadcasts this education as ‘holistic’, patriotic and accessible. These schools are financed by individual donations and contributions from various charitable organisations such as the Mumbai based Bhansali Trust.

In class, students are “subtly indoctrinated into the RSS Hindutva ideology,” said Sudarshan Das, president of Agami Orissa, an umbrella organization of nongovernmental organizations working with tribal peoples. Hindutva, or “Hinduness” is a nationalist ideology that asserts history, science, politics, economics and other subjects should be viewed from a Hindu perspective. Hindutva proponents say Islam and Christianity have divided India and caused its decline from its glorious past. Subash Chauhan, the Orissa state secretary of a group that runs hundreds of shishu mandirs, concedes the schools’ goal is to “make sure the Hindutva mood is created in Orissa.” Paramdara Pillay, a teacher at Juang’s school, says his colleagues in Gujarat were “forced to send their students to fight or else they would have lost their jobs and funding for their schools.”⁷

Training for a Teacher in Ekal Vidyalaya⁸

‘The teacher is instrumental in the success of the Ekal Vidyalaya and the inspiration of tribal India. He or she is expected to make a firm commitment to the village children. The strength of the teacher’s commitment to service and to education has direct correlation to the success of the school.

‘As the average Ekal Vidyalaya teacher has graduated only from the tenth grade in a formal classroom setting, teachers are further prepared to run an Ekal Vidyalaya through various trainings. Teachers are reminded that education is not just about filling children with (often useless) information, rather education is about life-building, man-making, character-building assimilation of ideas. Teacher trainings are on-going and include the following:

1. A 5-day preliminary training (Prathamik Varg) gives teachers a glimpse into Ekal Vidyalaya and its curriculum. It empowers teachers with knowledge of the curriculum, the Ekal concept, initial lesson plans, his or her

responsibilities, and future training dates. This five-day training sets the tone for the Ekal Vidyalaya and gives the teacher direction before he/she starts the test phase of setting up an Ekal Vidyalaya school.

Note: It would be important for the Indian state to examine how these orientation sessions actually work out from a district to district basis.

2. A 10-day 'Abhyas Varg' is held by the anchal (270 schools) training coordinator after the first three months and every six months thereafter. It provides teachers with new games, stories, and teaching methods. Furthermore it serves to recharge the teachers through interaction with neighbouring village teachers.

Note: It would be important for the Indian state to examine how these orientation sessions actually work out from a district to district basis.

3. Every month, the sanch team (30 schools cluster) conducts a one-day 'Masik Abhyas' workshop to allow teachers to discuss issues and problems, share experiences, update his or her lesson plan, and refresh what they learned at the Abhyas Varg. Teachers are also trained to collect data, maintain attendance records, understand and follow the teacher's guide, and publish a monthly syllabus.

Note: It would be important for the Indian state to examine how these orientation sessions actually work out from a district to district basis. What for instance does this monthly syllabus contain? Is preparation for violence against sections a part of the training?

Curriculum: Daily Schedule -Children and Community Friendly Approach

Whereas the state run village school in India often does not function because teachers do not want to live and teach in villages, the concept of the Ekal Vidyalaya school that draws resources from within the local community ensures a sense of accountability and empowerment. Unfortunately, coupled with this is a whole worldview that is both intolerant, undemocratic and one that celebrates violence.

The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation insists that the Ekal Vidyalaya schools run six days a week for three hours each day. School timings vary by village, and often by season. They account for the village livelihood, harvest and monsoon seasons, as well as local holidays. The Ekal Vidyalaya teacher, with approval from the school committee, determines the school schedule and the teaching methods.

The daily schedule generally runs as follows:

- School cleaning and Opening Prayer
- Arithmetic and Language Practice
- Songs and short stories
- Handicraft
- General Knowledge and Health care
- Physical Training
- Conclusion

Curriculum: Literacy

"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity...Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential." - Kofi Annan, UN⁹ Such inspiring words used on the website draw many a corporate and individual into donating generously. However it has been the experience of grass root activists working in tribal Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa and Madya Pradesh that in fact the curriculum transaction in these schools engenders feelings of 'otherness' and simply put does not inculcate Constitutional values of equity and non-discrimination.¹⁰

The language on the Foundation's website suggests a sensitive, modern and humane approach to education. For example: 'Ekal Vidyalaya's baseline focus is for the Indians of India to use literacy as a tool to reach their full potential. Ekal Vidyalaya believes that literacy is the cornerstone to the development of an individual and of the country.¹¹ In their first year at an Ekal Vidyalaya school, children learn to read and write in their local language. The local language is taught for a variety of reasons; some of which are to facilitate understanding, to gain acceptance, and to retain the tribe's individuality.....

"After 6 months, local language training gradually shifts to the state language. In matured schools, tribal children are taught the national languages of Hindi or English.... "The goal of the language curriculum is for a child to be confident in his or her ability to read and write in the local and national languages. The three-year language curriculum gives children the ability to understand and present oral and written information."

Note: It would be important to co-relate these avowed ideals of the Ekal Foundation with the activities of it's activists, teachers etc on the ground in the various states that it operates. What are the stories told? What is the historical authenticity of the curriculum?

Curriculum: Creativity

"Given the right kind of teachers, our children will be taught the dignity of labour and learn to regard it as an integral part of and a means of their intellectual...The core of my suggestions in that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils." - Gandhi

Ekal Vidyalaya's non-formal curriculum aims to foster an interest in education by approaching learning from different angles, one of which is handicrafts. Like Gandhi, Ekal Vidyalaya has a tremendous respect for the value of the arts and thus handicraft is a valuable part of the Ekal Vidyalaya curriculum.

Curriculum: Moral Values

One of Ekal Vidyalaya's objectives is to help preserve village culture. Thus, many of the value-based concepts imparted to the children are respectful of local customs and follow traditional Indian heritage.

The values taught to the children include things such as:

- Respect for one's mother, father, and teacher
- Respect for elders
- Discipline and obedience
- Local religious prayer
- Basic health habits
- Patriotic songs
- Pride in one's nation
- Care of a tulsi plant

“Ekal Vidyalaya understands and treasures the importance of India’s diversity. Ekal hopes to contribute to that diversity by helping the various rural and tribal villagers maintain their unique traditions and core value systems. As tribal India is the heart of our nation, Ekal Vidyalaya desires to keep the local culture intact. Ekal Vidyalaya plays an important role, however, in strengthening moral and cultural values that are relative to an area and in encouraging the positive upbringing of our children.”

Note: Contrary what is claimed on the website, to suit international standards and draw funds, the functioning of Ekal Vidyalayas to date shows in fact a tendency to “Brahminise” or “Sanskritise” local tribal culture. It would be interesting for the CABE committee to be informed whether or not there has been any state monitoring of the curriculum transaction in Ekal Vidyalaya schools.

Comment: What can be immediately seen from the section on Moral Values is that there is no mention of engendering any Constitutional Values: no mention of respect for the Equality of One and All, Equal Respect for All Religions, Belief in Common Property and Sharing, Equal Status for Men and Women and between Different Castes and Communities, the Engendering of a Rational Outlook etc.

Comment [2]: In fact all available published data shows that in fact there is a concerted attempt to in fact wean, often with inducements, tribal peoples from their local indigenous cultures and in fact bring them to an ‘all-Hindu’ fold.

Curriculum in the average Madrassa

The general curriculum followed in a madrassa is based on theology known as Dars-e-Nizami running for about 15-17 years. In **India**, there are about fifteen pivotal seats of learning with the supreme one being Darul Uloom Deoband. The present curriculum includes fiqeh (jurisprudence), mantiq (logic), falsafa (philosophy of religion), hi’yyat (trigonometry and geometry), balaghat (linguistics), aqeedah (faith), faraiz (duties), tafseer (interpretation of Quran), Hadees (Prophet Mohammed’s dictates) and Hikmat-e-Shariah (personal laws).

The scope for a student who has passed out from a madrassa is quite limited as he is oblivious to the world around him. He can either become an imam, a katib (calligrapher), a muazzin (one who recites azaan from the mosque), a wai’iz (sermonizer), a khateeb (preacher) or an aalim (theologian).. Over the past 300 years, the Dars-e-Nizami has become anachronistic since there are no alterations to accommodate the changing needs of time. ¹²

There are schemes and funds allocated by the union government for modernisation of *madrassa* curriculum

Note: (1) Madrassa curriculum needs to be rationally examined

(2) National stock and monitoring needs to be taken of the scheme announced by the government every year *to modernise madrassa education* and it’s effective implementation. These need to be publicised.

The content of the syllabus of the Deoband madrassa represented a firm commitment of the founders of the school to the classical Hanafi tradition. The Dars-i-Nizami of the early eighteenth century Mulla Nizamuddin continued almost intact, except for the excision of certain “rational sciences” (maqulat) such as Greek philosophy, which were deemed to undermine faith in the divine nature of the Quranic revelation. In addition, more books of Hadith (narrations about the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) and fiqh were introduced. The overwhelming focus of the curriculum was on Islamic jurisprudence, so much so that, in the minds of the Deobandis, Islam was seen almost as synonymous with the shariah, while the rich

tradition of classical Islamic theology (*kalam*) was almost completely ignored. Unlike the Muslim modernists of their time, as represented by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school, the Deobandis saw no room for *ijtihad* or interpreting the demands of the shariah in the context of modern conditions. The “gates of *ijtihad*” (*bab-ul ijtihad*), were, they insisted, “firmly closed”.¹³

Following 9/11, several nationwide seminars on *Madrasa* education were held where papers were presented in the context of the efforts to malign *madrasa education*. The acute need to modernise the curriculum as well as the need for institutions like the Aligarh Muslim University, the Jamia Millia Islamia and the Jamia Hamdard to make special efforts to spread education among the Muslims as well as to assist madrasas to modernise their syllabi and methods of teaching was made strongly by former AMU Vice Chancellor Dr Saiyed Hamid.

The Firanghi Mahal madrasa, established in the late 17th century in Lucknow, played a leading role in the development of madrasa education in India.

The syllabus prepared by the founder of the madrasa, Mulla Nizamuddin Sihalwi, and named as the *dars-i-nizami* after him, is still used in the vast majority of Indian madrasas. In his paper, Dr. Mohammad Tazeem of the Jamia Millia Islamia traced the history of this madrasa, noting the great stress that the syllabus that it taught placed on the ‘rational sciences.’ This syllabus was essentially geared to the training of *qazis* and *muftis* and other administrative officers in the Mughal court.

However, since the times have changed and the traditional ‘rational sciences’ included in the *dars-i-nizami* are now of little relevance, Dr. Tazeem suggested the need to replace them with their modern equivalents while placing greater stress on the understanding and teaching of the Qur’an and the Hadith. He criticised the tendency in many madrasas of teaching commentaries upon commentaries of old books, and suggested the need for developing a new understanding of Islamic jurisprudence in accordance with the times.¹⁴

Even where the madrasa authorities are open to change, issues of implementation remain. Maulana Muazzam Ali Khan, principal of Madrasa Darul Uloom Rehmania in Sangam Vihar, Delhi, says no one came to him with the madrasa modernising scheme. “The 1994 scheme for modernising madrasas failed because the officials never consulted the madrasas — the people concerned — for ground realities and basic requirements”, he says.¹⁵

Spread of the RSS/VHP Network in the Field of Education

As of March 2002, Vidya Bharati had 17,396 schools (both rural and urban), 2.2 million students, over 93,000 teachers, 15 teacher training colleges, 12 degree colleges and 7 vocational and training institutions.¹⁶ The teachers (in the *Shishu Mandir*) get between Rs 1,250 – Rs 1,800 per month as basic pay, depending on whether they are primary or higher secondary school teachers. The managing committee for each locality decides on how much it is able to pay.

Created by the RSS in 1978, the Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan network focuses on moral, extracurricular and physical education for “mind, body and spirit.” The Vidya Bharati system supervises over 18,000 schools across India, with 1.8 million students and 80,000 teachers. A shared curriculum is used across the country. The Vidya Bharati operates 60 graduate institutions. About 5,000 Vidya Bharatis are endorsed by education boards primarily in states where the Bharatiya Janata Party is in power.

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are endorsed by Education Boards primarily in states where the Bharatiya Janata Party is in power.. Known as Shiksha Vikas Samiti, Vidya Bharati directs 391 Saraswati Shishu Mandir schools with 111,000 students in Orissa. The RSS has constructed a network of educational institutions across the state.

More details are available about the complex spread of these institutions wedded to un-Constitutional Values:

Vidya Bharti is the main body of the RSS.

Akhil Bhartiya Shiksha Sansthan was set up in 1978 and has 13000 schools, 74000 teachers and 17.5 lakh student (as in 1998). To develop the total personality of the child, Vidya Bharti has prescribed a national syllabi of five subjects- Physical education, yoga, music, Sanskrit, moral and spiritual education.

Note: The content of the curriculum, texts and transaction in the classroom on moral and spiritual education needs to be brought under scrutiny. At no stage have the RSS run schools being subject to any such scrutiny

Bhartiya Adhyapak Parishad: An offshoot of Vidya Bharti has trained teachers on the ideology of Hindutwa.

Samanvit Medhavi Vidyarthi Kalyan Parishad: Established in 1986 with the objective of coaching students appearing for competitive exams like Civil services, NDA, SSB etc.

Bhartiya Itihas Sanklan yojana: was set up in 1973 to re-write Indian History of the past 5000 years to prove the ‘Aryans’ are indigenous people not the invaders.

Samskar Bharti : established in 1982 with aim of preventing western influence on Indian culture has 900 branches.

Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad: Founded in 1948 was registered in 1949. Its sole objective is to channelize the energy of the students in the task of National reconstruction. Out of 30 Central Universities, it captured 15. Its activists played major role in 1992 demolition of Babri Masjid.¹⁷

Vidya Bharati (RSS)

Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) (Hostels for tribal children)

Sewa Bharati (for Dalits)

Ekal Foundation (Ekal Vidyalayas)

The first Saraswati Shishu Mandir was set up in 1952 in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, although a Gita school had been established by Golwalkar in 1946 at Kurukshetra, Haryana. As the number of schools grew in different states, an all-India co-ordinating body, called Vidya Bharati, was set up with its headquarters in Delhi. The Vidya Bharati educational mission is founded on the objective of training children to see themselves as protectors of a Hindu nation:

The child is the centre of all our aspirations. *He is the protector of our country, Dharma (religion) and culture..... To relate the child with his land and his ancestors is the direct, clear and unambiguous mandate for education.* We have achieve the all round development of the child through education and sanskar, i e, inculcation of time honoured values and traditions.¹⁸ (sic) (emphasis added)

The Vidya Bharati schools are funded through fees and private donations from rich trading families or other wealthy sympathisers, including NRIs.¹¹ The RSS claims to take no government aid in order to maintain the spirit of voluntarism and avoid government restrictions. However, periods of RSS expansion certainly seem to show a correlation with having a BJP government in power.¹⁹

Note : Vast private funding is one source behind these intuitions. Much of this money comes from abroad. But as figures related to Ekal Vidyalayas below show, State Funding has helped them grow in both Rajasthan and private corporate funding in Karnataka.

Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation

According to the official website of the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, there are currently 13, 902 schools run by it with a total of 39, 6956 students (as of June 2004). The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India (EVFI) is one such concept that hopes to empower young tribal children in India through education. The premise of EVFI is “Ek Shikshak, Ek Vidyalaya”, which means “one teacher for every school”. Founded 15 years ago, by Shyamjee Gupta, EVFI focuses attention on tribals and tries to bring non-formal education within their reach. Currently EVFI is running over 8,000 schools in remote and tribal villages all over India and hopes to reach a target of 100,000 schools by the year 2010.²⁰

The state-wise break up is as follows:

State	State Code	Current School				G.Total	Proposed		Grand	
		Established	Open	Total	Process		Apr. 05	Oct. 05	Total	
<u>North East</u>	NE	1478	144	1622	30	1652	538	720	2910	
<u>West Bengal</u>	BG	600		600		600	120	90	810	
<u>Orissa</u>	OR	930		930		930		180	1110	
<u>Jharkhand</u>	JH	1390		1390		1390	390	230	2010	
<u>Bihar</u>	BH	583		583		583	167	60	810	
<u>Uttar Pradesh</u>	UP	780		780	30	810	270	120	1200	
<u>Uttranchal</u>	UT	180		180		180	120	60	360	
<u>Himachal Pradesh</u>	HP	300		300		300	150		450	
<u>Haryana</u>	HR	50		50	10	60	150	30	240	
<u>Punjab</u>	PB	90		90		90	120	60	270	
<u>Jammu Kashmir</u>	JK			0		0	60	30	90	
<u>Rajasthan</u>	RJ	320	10	330		330	360		690	
<u>Gujarat</u>	GJ	420		420		420	120	270	810	
<u>Maharashtra</u>	MH	840		840		840	480	120	1440	
<u>Madhya Pradesh</u>	MP	2124		2124		2124	636	390	3150	
<u>Chhattisgarh</u>	CH	1170		1170		1170	510	210	1890	
<u>Karnataka</u>	KN	480		480		480	60	270	810	
<u>Andhra Pradesh</u>	AP	800	23	823		823		257	1080	
<u>Tamilnadu</u>	TN	270		270		270	60	210	540	
<u>Kerala</u>	KR	330		330		330	30	180	540	
India Total		13135	177	13312	70	13382	4341	3487	21210	
Nepal		826		826		826		174	1000	
	Grand Total		13961	177	14138	70	14208	4341	3661	22210

State-wise distribution of EVFI schools

State	August 2001	March 2002 (Est)	August 2002 (Est)
North East	660	690	960
West Bengal	325	325	540
Orissa	510	510	600
Bihar	270	450	450
Jharkhand	720	970	1060
Uttar Pradesh	420	715	1150
North Zone	120	450	600
Rajasthan	240	480	780
Gujarat	300	390	570
Maharashtra	450	630	930
Madhya Pradesh	1140	2370	2880
Chhatisgarh	660	1260	1530
Andhra Pradesh	540	1000	1080
Karnataka	60	240	360
Tamil Nadu	180	240	270
Kerala	90	180	240
Total	6685	11100	14000

(Source: Ekal.org)

EKAL VIDYALAYA YOJANA- ONE TEACHER SCHOOLS (OTS)

AT A GLANCE

In Bharat	AS IN March 2000'		PLANNED BY March 2001	
	Prant	Schools	Prant	Schools
By Zones				
East	6	894	6	2,110
West	5	475	6	1,560
North	4	150	8	510
South	5	1,192	7	1,680
Centre	3	439	3	1,500
Total	23	3,150	30	7,360

By Seva Organisations

Vishva Hindu Parishad & allied organisations	2,200	4,770
Seva Bharati	950	2,500
Vidya Bharati	0	90
Total	3,150	7,360

By Funding Agency

		School	School	
Calcutta (F.T.S.)	6	1,014	6	2,110
Mumbai (F.T.S.)	4	796	4	1,650
Hydrabad Trust	2	560	2	810
Vadodara Trust	1	210	1	600
Delhi Trust	3	0	6	300
B. K. P.	7	570	7	890
Foundation	0	0	4	1,000
Total	23	3,150	30	7,360

(Source: vhp.org,)

Non government organisations (NGO) that have been identified to help set up more EVFIs are the Birsa Seva Prakalpa in Bihar, Bharatiya Jan Seva Sansthan in Rajasthan and Swami Vivekananda Cultural Society in Tamil Nadu.

Some 3,000 schools are being run by NGOs like the Friends of Tribal Society, Bhartiya Kalyan Pratishthan, Bhartiya Lok Shiksha Parishad, Bhartiya Jan Sewa Sansthan and Janhitay in the states of Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal.

At present, the EVFI enjoys the status of a charitable trust. Donations to EVFI are 50 per cent tax exempt.

It has even received Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act (FCRA) permission to receive donations in foreign exchange on actual receipt basis. Funds from the US are obviously a big asset for the group. In fact, the mission of the ECFI and the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA is to set up 100,000 Ekal Vidya Mandirs in the remote tribal villages by the year 2010.²¹

As part of the Ekal Vidyalaya Movement, Seva Bharathi in the Western Andhra Pradesh has already reached 200 Tribal Hamlets the remotest of the remotest and started 151 Single Teacher Schools. A number equal to 4,020 kids in 8 Districts of the far off hamlets and villages are testing the childhood. As many as 91 teachers the First generation literate in the hamlet/ Village.

Details of Single Teacher Schools

District	STS		Acharayas		Students		
	Male	Female	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Anantapur	7	5	2	7	104	87	191
Kurnool	6	6	-	6	40	20	60
MahaboobNagar	19	19	-	19	170	130	300
Adilabad	20	18	2	20	405	224	629
Nalgonda	5	5	-	5	90	70	160
BhagyaNagar	4	3	1	4	30	20	50
Cudapah	1	1	-	1	10	2	12
RangaReddy	6	5	1	6	90	60	150
Warangal	53	41	12	53	1300	860	2160

(Source: Sevabharti website, http://www.sevabharathi.org/ekal_e.htm)

The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India (EVFI) is an independent umbrella organization that facilitates the development of one-teacher schools throughout the rural and tribal regions of India. The movement is spreading with the assistance of various education-based field organizations (local Non-Governmental Organizations) active in different regions. These NGOs have long believed in the Ekal Vidyalaya concept and have a firm understanding of the local area. Thus, rather than competing with these organizations for funds and local loyalty, Ekal Vidyalaya has joined hands with regional teams to build a stronger, nationwide, tribal education program.

There are essentially two types of organizations under the Ekal Vidyalaya umbrella -

1. Support Organisation (SPO): Supporting agencies that help fund the work and connect donors to the education movement.
2. State Volunteer Organization (SVO) : Field organizations that have expertise with education in a particular region

Some of the field organizations through which Ekal works are:

1. Friends of Tribals Society - Kolkata .
2. Bharat Lok Shiksha Parishad - Delhi
3. Bharatiya Janseva Pratishthan - Rajasthan
4. Bharatiya Janseva Sansthan - Gujarat
5. Swami Vivekananda Cultural Society - Kerala
6. Swami Vivekananda Rural Development Society - Tamilnadu
7. Janhita - Andhra Pradesh
8. Uttar Purbanchal Janjati Seva Samity - Assam
9. Arogya Foundation of India - Delhi
10. Purbanchal Janjati Shiksha Samity - Assam
11. Seva Bharati, Bhopal - Madhya Pradesh
12. Seva Bharati, Raipur - Chhattisgarh
13. Keshav Seva Kendra - West Bengal
14. Birsa Sewa Prakalp - Bihar, Jharkhand
15. Yoga Khsem Trust - Rajasthan
16. Bharatiya Seva Trust - Gujarat
17. Utthan Nyas - Orissa
18. Vikas Bharati - Ranchi
19. Gram Vikas Foundation - Delhi²²

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh has woven an intricate network through its numerous affiliates to reach out to the tribal villages of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to promote 'Hindutva.' The Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams are spread over 32 districts, covering 32,295 villages and 68,252 families.

The VHP and the RSS and the VHP decided to provide the four As through a network of 'social organisations'. The political results are there for all to see. This Hindukaran (Hinduisation) of the tribals includes celebration of the Ganesh festival, Ramlilas and Geeta Paath besides making them use 'Ram Ram' to greet each other. Even in Ekal Vidyalayas — run by the Friends of Tribals Society — some time is devoted for education on culture and religion. Begun four years ago, over 600 Ekal Vidyalayas are now functional in the tribal districts and are expected to churn out "totally Hinduised products who will be nationalists to the core." It has been planned to open 10,000 Ekal Vidyalayas across the country. As many as 4,000 schools are already functioning in the tribal belts and the target is 50,000 schools by 2005. Chhattisgarh has been chosen for the VHP's activities due to the large number of alleged conversions here²³.

Orissa

The RSS has fashioned an institutional umbrella that is having a damaging impact on education at the grassroots. The RSS has established Vanvasi Kalyan Parishads, Vivekananda Kendras, Sewa Bharatis and other groups to advance the ideological agenda of Hindu nationalism. The RSS administers 93,000 Ekal Vidyalayas in adivasi areas. For the diversity of cultures allied under the rubric of adivasi, the ongoing reality of Hinduisation offers evidence of their gradual and brutal incorporation into this caste system.

Known as Shiksha Vikas Samiti, Vidya Bharati directs 391 Saraswati Shishu Mandir schools with 111,000 students in Orissa. The RSS has constructed a network of educational institutions across the state. Initially the RSS maintained a public distance between the Sangh and Vidya Bharati. In recent years, as Hindutva consolidates its position in Orissa, the RSS has actively declared its affiliation with these schools. Rashtra Deepa, the RSS Oriya weekly, regularly chronicles some of the academic aspirations of the Sangh Parivar. Most RSS run schools are affiliated with the state board of education and adhere to the state approved curricula. As the Sangh infiltrates into regulatory bodies and actively leads the rewriting of textbooks and reorganisation of the curriculum, the classroom transforms into an agent of Hindutva.

'The RSS holds month long training sessions across Orissa during summer vacations to attract students and young children. From these sessions, the RSS recruits for the Officers Training Camps (OTC). Held twice a year, the OTC provides schooling in self-defense and leadership. Around 500 people attend each year. On completion, approximately 100 join the organisation as campaigners. Graduates take an oath, "I will devote my body, mind, and money (tana, mana, bhana) to the motherland." For about 10 recruits, this develops into a lifelong, intense and full time commitment. Each December, the RSS organises the Sita Shibir, a 7-10 day winter camp. The families of attendees finance the camps. The growth of the RSS testifies to the success of these camps. The RSS boasts of 50,000 shakhas in India, 2500 in Orissa with a 100,000 strong cadre.²⁴

But human rights organizations in the eastern state of Orissa say the school and others like it are political tools in the hands of India's foremost Hindu nationalist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

In the past several years, the RSS and its allies, collectively called the Sangh Parivar, have built a network of more than 30,000 Hindu religious schools, called shishu mandirs or "temples of learning." Most are located in remote tribal regions where government schools are few. Using the promise of free education and housing, the shishu mandirs have enrolled more than 5 million impoverished youths, including many orphans. In class, students are "subtly indoctrinated into the RSS Hindutva ideology," said Sudarshan Das,

president of Agami Orissa, an umbrella organization of nongovernmental organizations working with tribal peoples. Known as Shiksha Vikas Samiti, Vidya Bharati directs 391 Saraswati Shishu Mandir schools with 111,000 students in Orissa.

Tamil Nadu

Presently 114 centers are functioning in 4 Districts of Tamilnadu with nearly 3500 students. The Ekal Vidyalaya movement has been extended to two more Districts from 1st of September 2000. The 13 Ekal Vidyalaya teachers from Rameswaram and 9 teachers from Tuticorin District have undergone 5 days intensive residential training at Rameswaram from 16th to 20th August 2000. Most of the teachers belong to scheduled caste, cobblers, fishermen and other most backward communities. 50 other teachers from Kodaikanal Hills & Cuddalore District joined the training to refresh their past training.²⁵

In Kodaikanal, the Swami Vivekananda Rural development Society has established Ekal Vidyalayas (One Teacher Schools), in 37 remote Tribal and other villages. The Ekal Vidyalaya (One Teacher School) Foundation, paid for by Indians across the globe, including many in Westchester and Rockland counties, provides non-formal education to 400,000 children in far-flung tribal areas of India that the government-run school system does not reach. Bolstered by its exponential growth — 10,000 schools in four years — it hopes to increase the number to 100,000 schools with 4 million students as part of its ultimate aim to bring literacy to every village in India.²⁶

Gujarat

The VHP's 'ekal vidyalaya' project was launched in tribal areas of Dangs and Surat after anti-Christian violence in Dangs in December 1999. During the last four years, the VHP has opened nearly 400 such schools where nearly 12,000 children are imparted basic education apart from teachings in the tenets of Hindutva. These schools are being run through the VHP-backed Bharatiya Jan Seva Sansthan (BJSS) which was established after the Dangs violence. Children are taught lessons from 'Ramayan' and 'Bhagvad Gita' apart from the regular syllabus. The students are also exposed to Hindu symbols and deities, saints and patriots.²⁷

Note: The country knows the story of Gujarat post-1999. Whether it is Dangs, the Panchmahals or other tribal areas, the curricular transaction in the RSS Shishu Mandirs and Ekal Vidyalays needs to be monitored and publicised.

Today, Deobandi clerics run several thousand of India's some 30,000 madrassas. Most of these schools are just a room in the back of a local mosque with fewer than 100 students

State and Private Funding

The State as an institution is becoming a tool in the hands of the *sangh parivar*. In fact, the Rajasthan government has been allocating up to Rs. 50 lakh per annum to the Vanwasi Kalyan Parishad, an NGO affiliated to the *sangh parivar*, to run hostels for tribals, which are nothing but training camps for Hindu extremists. (A Bangalore-based weekly maintained that ironically, this budgetary allocation continued through the years of Congress rule.)²⁸

“Take a look at one such VKP-run hostel at Timerabara in Kushalgarh block of Banswara. The single room hall is made of mud and roofed with tiles. Pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses adorn the walls. A large carpet spread out on the floor serves as a bed for poor tribal students. This ‘hostel’, aided by the state social welfare department, has 25 inmates studying in different classes – from Class VI to X. The department pays Rs. 1.5 lakh per annum to this travesty of a hostel.

Although the money was to be utilised for students’ food, uniforms, soaps and beds, there was nothing in the room to suggest it. Bharat Kumawat, who introduced himself as in-charge of the hostel and district organisation secretary of the VKP, escorted probing visitors out when questioned about the source of funds and their utilisation. “It is none of your business,” he said.

Meanwhile, so-called secular parties like the Congress, the Left and the Janata Dal have all chosen to remain detached from the *sangh parivar*’s ‘business’.

“A few weeks after the BJP came to power in Rajasthan, the state tribal area development minister, Kanak Mal Katara issued a press statement that a survey would be conducted to identify Christians. Following an uproar over this by some NGOs, he backtracked. But the government appeared to have made up its mind. In the first week of August 2004, Christian missionaries and NGOs in Banswara district came under the scanner. District collector Gayatri Rathore ordered an inquiry into the sources and utilisation of their funds and their activities. She justified her action saying that she had received a delegation complaining against these (Christian) institutions for “misutilising” the funds given by the government of India and agencies from abroad. She did not remember the name of the organisation that led the delegation.

“As per the directions of the government of India, I am supposed to be looking into the utilisation of funds by organisations registered in my district,” Rathore explained.

“According to VHP leaders in Banswara, the memorandum was submitted to the DC by an organisation called Adivasi Ekta Chhatra Sangh (AECS); the delegation included VHP activists as well. Christian organisations were “misutilising” the funds to convert innocent tribals, they are said to have complained.

Christian community leaders remained unfazed, however. “It’s good that an inquiry has been ordered into the funding of Christian organisations. The final report would shut the mouth of the *sangh parivar* for ever,” said Udaipur-based Father Jaswant Singh Rana, founder patron of the Tribal-Christian Welfare Society of India and joint secretary of the Philadelphia Fellowship. “The district administration’s action is in keeping with the *sangh*’s strategy to marginalise and prosecute Christians,” believes Dr. Narendra Gupta, a social activist based in Rajasthan.

Activists questioned the administration’s action, saying that if utilisation of funds had to be inquired into, all organisations, regardless of the religious affiliation of their managers, should have been put under the scanner and not Christian institutions alone.²⁹

Note: An inquiry needs to be made on a) Grounds on which Funds are sought by these various organisations; b) What they are actually used for

“40,000 \$ raised to spread literacy in tribal villages—Organizers: \$1 a day can educate dozens³⁰ read a headline from Meriden, Connecticut (February 2003).

”All it takes is a \$1 a day” to educate 30 to 40 children, said Madhu Reddy, a key organizer of the Connecticut event. There are now over 8,000 of these one-class schools operating in India, the charity said. Ekal Vidyalaya’s goal is to keep expanding.”The Ekal Vidyalaya foundation targets the most neglected areas by providing a lifetime opportunity to underprivileged children, who otherwise will not have the opportunity to get basic education,” said Dr Prakash Patel, a retired orthopedic surgeon who is now an

entrepreneur. Patel donated one-third of the money raised by the Connecticut event. “The money is going to the right place, the goal is noble and profound one,” he said. For more information on Ekal Vidyalaya, contact Madhu Reddy at (860) 328-1681 or indiansofconnecticut@yahoo.com or visit www.indiansofct.org or www.ekalvidya.org.

Another banquet in Houston collected \$230,000 in donations.³¹ But this recent report of March 2005 raises concern about the close inter-linkage between the hate and violence driven ideology of the VHP and the EVFI and especially the consequence of this for peace, harmony and Constitutional values.³² Corporations will give money thinking they are [for instance] supporting underprivileged children to receive education,” said GCIC National Convenor > Sajan K. George in an interview with BosNewsLife. “But, the truth is that these [Hindu] organizations use the money not for [normal] education but to spread hate against Christians and to harass and kill them,” he added. George said as recently as Saturday, March 6, corporations sponsored what they believed was a dance performance to raise money for under privileged children. But during the show in Bangalore, Karnataka state, it became clear that there was a hidden Hindu agenda, said the GCIC official. “The Indian dancer, Sonal Mansingh, performed a Rhapsody to give tribute to the Hindu goddess of learning and wisdom, Saraswati,” he said. The evening was organized by the Friends of Tribals Society, which is linked to the Hindu fundamentalist group Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) or ‘World Hindu Council’. “The VHP will nearly double the number of its branches from the current 50,000 branches and set up 25,000 more one-teacher schools to cover as many as 75,000 tribal hamlets,” United News of India quoted VHP’s International General Secretary, Praveen Togadia, as saying.³³

Funding of Madrassas

In India, the number of madrasas is now estimated at some thirty to forty thousand, with a similar figure for Pakistan and probably a slightly smaller number in Bangladesh. Most madrasas share a common system of administration. At the apex is the *sadr mudarris* (the head teacher), who is assisted by a team of fellow *ulama*. The teachers are themselves products of madrasas, few having had any access to modern education. Funds for the running of the madrasas generally come from public donations, from earnings from properties controlled by the madrasas, from endowments (*awqaf*), from sale of skins of animals sacrificed on the day of Bakr Id, and, in some cases, from organisations based in Arab countries. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, several madrasas also get funds from the government.³⁴

Government Schemes and Failure to Monitor Fund Disbursal

The Central government allocated Rs 9,568.68 crore in the ninth five year Plan (1997-2002) for the ‘empowerment’ of the 145.31 million Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians. The ministries of human resources development and social justice and empowerment also administer a number of welfare schemes for them. The Maulana Azad Foundation, with a corpus of Rs 30.01 crore, exists for promoting education, so does the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) for providing concessional finance for setting up self-employment ventures.

Note: Reports of how these monies are disbursed and used need to be publicised. Does the State encourage liberal and modern elements within the religious community that further secular, Constitutional values?

If you are prepared to introduce sciences and mathematics in your curriculum, apply for government funds for modernising your ‘maktab’ and ‘madarsa’. If you live in one of the 41 minority-concentrated districts, take advantage of the community polytechnics and the industrial training institutes. If you require pre-examination coaching, look out for the 380 NGOs that would train you to compete for various jobs.

The news is that 27,770 candidates are said to have already benefited from this scheme. The NMDFC, for example, claims to have disbursed credit worth Rs 114.70 lakh, but nobody knows whether the funding has been extended fairly and judiciously. It would appear that government agencies are keen to dole out monies and not monitor the impact of various development measures on the minorities and suggest remedial measures.

Notes

¹ Dr. George P. P., Secretary of the CBCI's Commission for Education said in a press release opposing the former NCERT's attempts to significantly alter the curriculum in a press release issued on December 7, 2001

² 'Progressive interference', Dharendra Jha, November 25, 2001, Pioneer)

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Teesta Setalvad*, Gujarat Situating the Saffronisation of Education, SAHMAT, July 2001

⁵ Research is for Sabrang Communications and Xaviers Institute of Communication, Mumbai in (*'Lost Tribes'*, **D K Singh, Communalism Combat, October 2004**)

⁶ **Orissa- A Gujarat in the Making**, *Angana Chatterjee, Communalism Combat, October 2003 and Learning In Saffron: RSS Schools Orissa, Angana Chatterji*, Asian Age, 12 November, 2003)

⁷ San Francisco Chronicle, 'Hinduness' with vengeance Schools offer Indians way out of poverty, lessons in religious bias Jehangir Pocha, Chronicle Foreign Service

Friday, April 16, 2004

⁸ Ekal Vidyalay website

⁹ Ekalvidyalay website

¹⁰ Interactions with representatives of Bal Hakk Abhiyan, NAFRE, People's union for human rights, Voice iof the Exploited etc. Interactions were conducted between September 2004 and March 2005.

¹¹ Ekalvidyalay.org

¹² 'Madrasas need a helping hand', Firoz Bakht Ahmed, October 27, 2002, Source: Hindustan Times

¹³ Lessons of the past: Madrasa education in South Asia, *by Yginder Sikand, November 2001*)

¹⁴ <http://www.islamicvoice.com/december.2002/IFocus.htm>

¹⁵: 'Madrasas need a helping hand', Firoz Bakht Ahmed, October 27, 2002, Source: Hindustan Times)

¹⁶ www.vidyabharati.org

¹⁷ <http://www.ambedkar.org/News/hl/RSS.htm>

¹⁸ EPW, April 17, 2004, 'Teaching to Hate, Nandini Sundar

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ 'The Gift of Education', Radhika Sharma, India Currents, December 2, 2002

²¹ The Tehelka, January 29, 2002 'Ekal schools: morality classes in tribal India')

²² www.ekalvidyalay.org

²³ The Hindu, 18 March, 2004, 'Making inroads into the tribal belt')

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Source: vhp.org,

²⁶ <http://www.nyjournalnews.com>. Local Indians contribute to mass education program in India ,The Journal News, May 27, 2003

²⁷ VHP to counter missionary activities in south Gujarat, Anil Pathak, Times News Network,June 06 2003)

²⁸ Research is for Sabrang Communications and Xaviers Institute of Communication, Mumbai in (*'Lost Tribes'*, **D K Singh, Communalism Combat, October 2004**)

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ <http://www.indianewengland.com/news/2003/02/01/Connecticut/40000.Raised.To.Spread.Literacy.In.Tribal.Villages-362383.shtml>

³¹ <http://www.newsindia-times.com/2002/09/20/dias34-top.html>

³² India's Hindu Militants Use Corporations for "Hate Campaign" against Christians, group claims, Bos News Life, March 7, 2005

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ Lessons of the past:Madrassa education in South Asia, by *Yginder Sikand, November 2001*)

PART - TWO

IMPACT OF PEDAGOGY OF THE APPROACH, TEACHING TEXTBOOK AND CURRICULLUM—STATE TEXTS

Note: In April 2000, months after Communalism Combat had published this report, a Parliamentary committee with 42 members went into examining some of the contents of the Gujarat text books. Months later, finding these sections objectionable, the Gujarat government was directed to delete these portions. To date this has not happened.

What we learn and teach about history and how the process of this learning has been crafted or developed, shapes our understanding of the events of the past. This understanding of the past influences our ability to grapple with the present and therefore also the future. Such knowledge, if both rich and varied, can also make and break convictions of both the teacher and the taught.

In 1947, India made a historic tryst with destiny. Independent yet partitioned, after extensive and careful deliberation, we opted for a democratic structure outlined in the Indian Constitution. Whether state – directed or autonomously ensured, education in such a democratic polity should have been committed to free enquiry, fair and equal access to knowledge, both quantitative and qualitative, inculcation of the right to debate and dissent. The only restrictions and limits to when and at what junctures what kind of information could be shared with the child should have been pedagogical.

In short, the equality principle in any democracy simply must extend to education. In quantitative terms, this means the right of every Indian child to primary and secondary education. UNICEF figures shamefully record how we have failed, having as we do 370 million illiterates (1991), half a century after we became independent.

But qualitatively, too, the equality principle within the Indian education syllabus, especially related to history and social studies teaching, in state and central boards, is sorely wanting.

Wedded to the equality principle, the democratisation of our history and social studies syllabus should have meant a critical revision of both the periodisation, approach and content of the material taught because, pre-Independence, history writing under the British was infested with colonial biases. This has not happened. As a result, in most of our texts and syllabi we continue to perpetuate the colonial legacy of portraying ancient India as synonymous with the Hindu and the medieval Indian past with the Muslim. We have, over the years, further accentuated the colonial biases with sharp and more recent ideological underpinnings linked with the rapid growth in the political sphere of the Hindu Right.

Hate language and hate-politics cannot be part of history teaching in a democracy. But, unfortunately, prejudice and division, not a holistic and fair vision, has been the guiding principle for our textbook boards and the authors chosen by them.

Over the years, our history and social studies texts, more and more, emphasise a prejudicial understanding and rendering of history, that is certainly not borne out by historical facts. Crucial inclusions and exclusions that are explored through abstracts from state board texts, ICSE textbooks and college texts as well, quoted extensively in stories accompanying this essay, bear this out.

What the RSS and other rabid organisations with a clearly political objective would have us believe about history has been succinctly summed up by the accompanying abstract of an NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) report. The report enumerates instances that clearly reflect the bias of the organisation that has sponsored them.

What is far more worrisome and needs careful and equally studied examination is how the textbooks in use in most of our states under the ambit of the state textbook boards, as well as the texts of prominent national boards, echo the same historical precepts, misconceptions and formulations. Sometimes in a diluted or scattered form, but more often with the same resultant damage.

The dangerous patterns woven through the syllabus in general and the history and social studies curriculum in particular, for the young mind, need to be traced carefully. They reveal how the average Indian text looks at the historical and present question of caste-based discriminations, community-driven stereotypes and, as significantly, what we teach students about the status of women, then and now.

These patterns, distorted and prejudicial as they are, will open our eyes to the process that has actually contributed to mainstream secular space being dominated by the discourse dictated by the Right. We will then begin to understand how certain manipulated discourses and imageries that have been pulled out for public consumption over the past decade—and-a-half find instant and widespread resonance in civil society.

What am I referring to? How come the crude allusions to Muslims as '*Babar ki aulad*' in the mid-eighties and the charge of 'forced' conversions against Christians in the late nineties finds a silent acceptance in the marketplace of popular ideas, and even dominates the media? This is because many of post-Independent India's textbooks have been unable to offer a clean, holistic, rational and multi-dimensional vision of the past that includes a historically honest portrayal of how different faiths arrived on the shores of this sub-continent. Our textbooks are, similarly and suspiciously, silent on the motives behind thousands of Indians converting to different faiths over generations. Instead, through allusions and exclusions, they strengthen the false claim that in a vast majority of cases these conversions happened under force.

Are we, as citizens, concerned about whether our education system encourages the creative and thought processes, develops the quality of thinking in our young, whether our attitude to learning and teaching engenders the processes of inquiry? If yes, we need to examine whether our school textbooks tackle the question of free inquiry, dissent and debate. We need also to pay attention to specific inclusions and exclusions within the content of these texts.

Note: There needs to be greater transparency in the *constitution* of State and National Textbook Committees. Even at more progressive times, the fact that historians with one or the other worldview heavily dominated state positions and filled committees has further ensured that a uni-dimensional, dry pedagogy in history and social studies has resulted.

Other crucial questions also need to be raised. How do Indian texts specifically deal with the fundamental question of race, origin, culture and faith on the sub-continent?

It is surely impossible to speak about apartheid in the world context without linking it to the birth of South Africa under Nelson Mandela as an independent nation. or to understand slavery in the modern context without knowledge of the role of colonial powers in Africa or, equally pertinently, the whole phenomenon of the American War of Independence and Abraham Lincoln. But do Indian textbooks reflect the

ability to examine social inequality, specifically the caste system, as it emerged and was legitimised historically and how it continues to exist today, perpetrating an exploitative and unjust social order?

Can a young student of social studies really seek to understand the caste system without, first of all, being informed of modern-day social and economic apartheid that 16–17 per cent of the Indian population continues to be forced to live under today? There is hardly any Indian text that honestly and candidly sketches out the indignities that continue to be perpetuated on Indian Dalits today.

The life-sketch of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar is restricted to his contribution as the ‘architect’ of the Indian constitution. The serious challenges he posed to the pre-Independence struggle and the Brahmanical order, or his radical conversion to Buddhism as a method of ‘social and political emancipation’ (10 lakh Dalits converted to Buddhism on October 14, 1948) find scant or no mention at all in ‘secular’ Indian textbooks.

This blinkered vision of Indian social disparity extends to the fashion in which Dr. Ambedkar is portrayed for the young and the struggles that he led are depicted. On December 25, 1925, Ambedkar burnt copies of the *Manu Smriti* at Mahad village in Maharashtra. This was a strong political statement against the domination suffered by Dalits, epitomised in this Brahmanical text that has laid down the code of a social order which regards ‘shudras’ and ‘women’ together as deserving of no rights. The incident finds no mention at all in any Indian school textbook, revealing a sharp upper caste bias that has excluded real inquiry into these events and movements. There is no attempt at a critical look at texts like the *Manu Smriti* that have, since their being written several centuries ago, reflected the attitudes of vested interests. In fact this Brahmanical text itself receives favourable mention in Indian school textbooks.

Note: Even progressive interpretation tends to exclude *any treatment of caste* within the curriculum and text-book. It is either as if the inequities and brutal discriminations caused by caste do not exist any more. Where it is treated, there is an attempt to justify the origin of the caste system. Similar the systemic denial of basic dignity and human rights to the Indian indigenous tribal populations is deliberately excluded from the social studies curriculum. Why?

As extension of the same argument, some of our average Indian textbooks continue to label Christians, Muslims and Parsees as ‘foreigners,’ and moreover depict Hindus as “the minority in most states of the country”. They selectively speak about the “immoral behaviour of Catholic priests in the middle ages” while exonerating the Brahmins and the Indian ruling classes. What is the message that we send out to the growing child with these factual misrepresentations and deliberate exclusions of some historical events and modern day social realities when it comes to the conduct of the Brahmanical elite?

The same college textbook in Maharashtra that speaks at length, and with a fair degree of venom, about Islam and its violent nature is silent on what many ancient Indian kings did to Buddhist ‘monasteries’ and *bhikus* during the ancient period. (King Sashanka of Assam is reputed to have destroyed several monasteries). What then are the conclusions that a critic needs to draw about the motivation behind these selective inclusions and exclusions?

Exclusion is a subtle but potent form of prejudice. If, therefore, the average Indian textbook is silent on the motivations of many a ‘Hindu’ king who employed officials to raid and destroy temples in the ancient and medieval periods, simply because he could be certain to find wealth there (King Harshadev of Kashmir is one such, referred to by Kalhana in his *Rajatarini*), is there a not-so-subtle attempt to allow the popularly cherished belief that temple breaking was the ‘Muslim’ rulers favoured prerogative, to fester and grow?

Rabid observations on Islam and Christianity are overtly visible in excerpts of the books conceived by the RSS and used for ‘teaching’ in the Shishu Mandirs. For discerning observers and educationists, this com-

mitment to indoctrination that pre-supposes injecting small yet potent doses of poison against an ‘enemy other’ is not really surprising when we understand the true nature of the ideological project of these outfits.

The content of RSS texts has invited sharp criticism by the NCERT committee (see accompanying document). To find blatantly damaging statements within the texts of schools run by the RSS is one thing. But to have ‘secular’ Indian textbooks — ranging from those produced by some state textbook boards, to recommended texts for the study of history at the graduation level, as also some ICSE texts — containing discernible strains of the same kind of caste, community and gender prejudice reflects how mainstream Indian thought has not only swallowed a biased and uncritical interpretation of history but is cheerfully allowing this myopic vision to be passed down to future generations.

Take, for instance, a textbook recommended for the final year Bachelor of Arts students in history in Maharashtra. The chapter titled ‘Invasion of Mahmud of Ghaznavi’ is cleverly used by the author to launch a tirade against Islam itself. The content of this textbook could compare favourably, chapter and verse, with sections of Shishu Mandir texts that, are in other parts, far more direct, having nothing positive to say about Islam or Christianity.

Note: The subtle and not-so-subtle exclusion and ‘othering’ of religious minorities is starkly visible in Indian texts, even state ones. There is no attempt to explain how faiths travelled to different lands, the synthesis, fusion and then sometimes conflict that took place.

As critically, how do our history and social studies’ textbooks approach the complex question of gender? What is the underpinning of analysis on critical gender issues within these books? How do our textbooks explain notions of ‘*pativrata*’ (worship of the husband), *sati* (widow burning), child marriage, burning of women at the stake (called ‘witch hunting’ during the medieval ages), polygamy, polyandry etc. to the child?

There could be no more derogatory references to women than those contained in the *Manu Smruti*, an ancient Indian Brahmanical text. But it receives uncritical and passing mention in most Indian textbooks.

There is no attempt to outline the oppressive ‘Brahmanical Hindu’ code contained within the *Manu Smruti*. The code outlined in this text has significantly influenced how women have and continue to be treated within the family structure and in society, as also the base fashion in which treatment to ‘shudras’ has manifest itself in Indian society.

What were the variegated facts, and, therefore, what is the multi-layered truth behind the emergence of different faiths on the sub-continent? The historical account is not an over-simplified one of *Babar ki aulad*, armed with swords, forcing reluctant victims to convert and smashing down their temples in the bargain. Unfortunately for proponents of a hate-driven history, facts tell a different story.

Note: Gender receives similarly reluctant and uneasy treatment in Indian texts. Work and women, womrn’s contribution to politics, thoughts, artisanship etc can hardly find mention.

The tale of the often-ruthless methods that Portuguese Christians took to effect conversions in Goa may be more recent but it is by no means the whole story of how Christianity arrived on the shores of the sub-continent and found deep and abiding routes. That is an inquiry that is more complex, more varied and far richer in detail.

The record of persons opting to convert to different faiths, be it Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity Islam or Sikhism, is a worthy exploration in itself. Honestly told, it could offer vital insights on the impulses of ideas and motives as they have driven humankind over the ages. It is, however, a subject that has been significantly ignored except through banal references to ‘syncretism’ and ‘synthesis’ that are left thematically and conceptually unexplored.

The subject of shifts and changes to different faiths is educative, simply because if fairly approached, the process will throw up different sets of reasons and varying motivations for these actions, these changes of faith that persons opted for. The differences and variety would depend upon the period when the change took place, the region within India that we would be looking at and, finally, the method employed for the conversion itself.

None of the mainline Indian textbooks really do justice to this subject. We often find a single sentence reference to the fact that Islam first came to the shores of the Malabar coast through the regular visits of Arab traders who enjoyed a long-standing relationship of trade and commerce with India. But the next sentence immediately shifts gear to the other way that Islam came to the Indian sub-continent — through the ‘invasions’ in Sind. From thereon our children are told in graphic detail of the numerous ‘invasions’ but nothing of the coming of Islam through trade and the formations of living communities that resulted.

Many conversions to Islam or Christianity in the modern period of history have also coincided with the passage of emancipatory laws liberating bonded labour. This allowed oppressed sections the freedom to exercise choice in the matter of faith. These sections, then, exercised this choice, rightly or wrongly, perceiving either Islam or Christianity to be more egalitarian than Hinduism’s oppressive system of caste.

There were several instances of conversions during the second half of the 19th century in Travancore, for instance. Educational endeavours of missionaries and the resultant aspirations to equality of status encouraged many persons of ‘low’ caste to change faith and through this to a perceived position of equality. For example, the first ‘low’ caste person to walk the public road near the temple in Tiruvalla in 1851 was a Christian. Around 1859, many thousands converted to Christianity in the midst of emancipatory struggles that were supported by missionaries in the region: for example, the struggle of *Nadars* on the right of their women to cover the upper part of their body, a practice opposed by the upper castes!

There are so many fascinating examples. Large-scale conversions to Islam took place on the Malabar coast not during the invasions by Tipu Sultan but during the 1843-1890 period. These were directly linked to the fact that in 1843, under the British, slavery was formally abolished in the region. As a result, large numbers from the formerly oppressed castes, bonded in slavery to upper caste Hindus moved over to Islam, which they perceived, rightly or wrongly to preach a message of equality and justice.

Trade and commerce finds dry and peripheral treatment in our texts as do the impact of technological developments through history. Religious interpretations and explanations often pre-dominate, with little attempt to explain how ideas and thought-processes travelled across continents and borders; the means and modes of communication etc. are hardly explored.

Within the Indian sub-continent, this century saw the emergence of different streams of thought that contributed significantly to the struggle for independence against the British. It also saw the emergence on the sub-continent of processes, fully encouraged by the British, of exclusivist and sectarian trends within the broader national movement that chose to articulate their worldview in terms of narrow religious identities.

Within a few years of each other, we saw the birth of organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, as also the Akali Dal and the Rashtriya Sayamsevak Sangh. This process of the emergence of different communalisms that contributed in no small measure to the final vivisection of the sub-continent, with all its attendant stories of vengeance and horror is extremely selectively dealt with in Indian textbooks.

Put simply, all these texts speak at length about the birth and misdemeanours of the Muslim League, the Muslim communal outfit that contributed significantly to the politics of the period. No mention is at all made to the birth around the same time of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, both Hindu communal outfits that contributed in no small measure to the sharp polarisations and schisms at the time.

Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is fleetingly mentioned without the ideology that drove Godse to kill him being mentioned, leave alone explored. The fact that the RSS had to face a ban on the question, too, is blotted out to the young student of modern Indian history.

Note: While the Muslim League receives separate chapter treatment in *almost all texts*, there is a shrouded secrecy in explaining to the growing mind the existence of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh {RSS} who had similar *exclusionist ideals of a HINDU NATION STATE*. *Starkly therefore we find almost no mention in Indian texts of the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Gandhiji*. Nor is there any attempt to explain to the growing mind why this assassination took place.

With these kinds of interpretations and inclusions of historical facts in our regular texts, coupled with the repetitious discourse within civil society that has, in recent times, taken a vicious form—and which selectively heaps the blame for partition squarely on the Muslim—is it any wonder that communities and citizens of the country continue to carry the burden of being dubbed ‘traitors’ and ‘anti-national?’

The young student of history in India, therefore, can without compunction put the entire blame of the partition of the sub-continent on the Muslim League and Mohammed Ali Jinnah's shoulders. The bias does not end here. While the Muslim League receives detailed treatment in the average Indian text, it does not give a single line to Hindu communal outfits.

In furtherance of the same theme, there is no attempt to either explain or detail that the Muslim League enjoyed a limited hold over only sections of the Muslim elite and landed gentry; that many hundreds of thousands of Muslims participated actively in the struggle for Independence against the British; that the idea of Partition was backed by a miniscule section of Indian Muslims; that the artisan class which constitutes a large section of Muslims demonstrated actively against Partition.

In short, if you read an average Indian text, be it from the state or central boards, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS bear no part of the historical blame for Partition. The crime is worse compounded by the fact that Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is glossed over, often receiving no more than one sentence in explanation.

The *ICSE History and Civics textbook, Part II for Std. X*, devotes a whole chapter to the ‘Formation of the Muslim League’. But there is no mention at all of Hindu communal organisations.

And to top it all, here is what the same ICSE text has to say about Mahatma Gandhi's assassination: “Mahatma Gandhi toured the hate-torn land of Bengal, trying to put a stop to the communal frenzy and salvage the people from ruthless communal slaughter. While celebrations and riots were still going on the architect of the nation was shot dead on 30th January by Nathuram Godse”. There is no further comment on the assassination, or the ideology that drove the assassin. Neither is there any mention of the fact that the government of India banned the RSS following Gandhi's murder because of Godse's close association both with the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha. There is no information on the trial of the assassins of Gandhi, the justification by Godse of his act and so on.

Similarly, the Social Studies text for standard VIII of the Gujarat State Board, has a tiny sub-section titled, “The Murder of Gandhi”. This reads thus: “After Independence there were severe communal riots in India. Gandhiji tried his utmost to suppress it. Many people did not like this. Gandhiji was murdered at the hands of Godsay on 30th January 1948.”

Again, no words of explanation of the ideology that was responsible for the murder of Gandhi though painstaking efforts are made in this and other texts to explain the ideology that partitioned the sub-continent.

It appears logical and inevitable for the stated political project of the RSS and its Shishu Mandir-style education to offer such an immutable approach, a series of unquestionable absolutes, to the young mind. How else can the RSS organisation, whether it be at the *shakha* or the Shishu Mandir level, create a social and political atmosphere where selectively half-truths and blatant falsehoods dominate all discourse? How else does one create an environment where critical questions are never asked, leave alone answered? And, worst of all, prevailing social inequalities, indignities and humiliations are left unaddressed. In short, leave the social and economic hierarchy unchallenged?

But the fact that independent and democratic India's 'secular' texts reflect, with sometimes uncanny similarity, the very same disregard for a growing and inquiring mind, apart from being laced with a series of questionable formulations that hide gender, caste and community-driven bias is what requires urgent and specific attention. And remedy.????

Teesta Setalvad

(This article has relied heavily on the research work that the writer has undertaken as the Co-ordinator of KHOJ, a secular education project).

'Caste is a precious gift'

THE caste system receives generous treatment in Indian textbooks. Even the section in the text book of the Gujarat state board that seeks to explain the constitutional policy of reservations makes remarks about the continued illiteracy of the 'scheduled castes and tribes.'

So, for instance, the same textbook pays lip service to political correctness through a fleeting reference to the fact that the *varna* system later became hierarchical, but in the same chapter, a few paragraphs later, literally extols the virtues of the intent of the *varna* system itself.

There is also no attempt nor desire, either in this text or the ICSE texts to explain the inhuman concept of 'untouchability' (based on the notion, "so impure as to be untouchable") that Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar made it their life's mission to challenge, socially and politically. In understanding and teaching about caste, both this text and other ICSE texts display a marked reluctance to admit or link the ancient-day *varna* system to modern-day Indian social reality.

"The 'Varna' System: The Varna system was a precious gift of the Aryans to the mankind. It was a social and economic organisation of the society built on the basis of the principle of division of labour. Learning or education, defence, trade and agriculture and service of the community are inseparable organs of the social fabric. The Aryans divided the society into four classes or '*varnas*'. Those who were engaged in the pursuit of learning and imparted education were called 'Brahmins or Purohits (the priestly classes).

Those who defended the country against the enemy were called the Kshatriyas or the warrior class. Those who were engaged in trade agriculture were called the Vaishyas. And those who acted as servants or slave of the other three classes were called the Shudras. In the beginning, there were no distinction of 'high' and low. The *varna* or class of a person was decided not on the basis of birth but on the basis of his work or *karma*. Thus a person born of a Shudra father could become a Brahmin by acquiring learning or by joining the teaching profession...In course of time however, the *varna* system became corrupted and 'birth' rather than 'vocation' came to be accepted as the distinguishing feature of the *varna* system. Thus society was permanently divided into a hierarchy of classes. The Brahmins were regarded as the highest class while the

Shudras were treated as the lowest. These distinctions have persisted in spite of the attempts made by reformers to remove them. *Yet, the importance of the 'Varna' system as an ideal system of building the social and economic structure of a society cannot be overlooked*". (Emphasis added).
(Social Studies text, Gujarat State Board, Std. IX)

The only reference in this standard IX text to the indignities of the caste system as it exists today is through an attempt to blame the plight of the untouchables on their own illiteracy and blind faith.

"Problems of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes: Of course, their ignorance, illiteracy and blind faith are to be blamed for lack of progress because they still fail to realise importance of education in life. Therefore, there is large-scale illiteracy among them and female illiteracy is a most striking fact. (Emphasis added)."

(Social Studies text, Gujarat State Board, Std. IX)

The ICSE texts are similarly non-critical and evasive.

The *New ICSE History and Civics*, edited by Hart and Barrow, Part 1 has this to say.

"The Caste System: The division of society into four varnas (classes) had its origin in the Rig Vedic period. Members of the priestly class were called brahmins; those of the warrior class, kshatriyas; agriculturists and traders, vaisiyas; and the menials, sudras. It is said that the caste system in the Rig Vedic times was based on occupations of the people and not on birth. Change of caste was common. A Brahmin child could become a kshatriya or a vaisya according to his choice or ability...

"Varna in Sanskrit means the colour of skin and the caste system was probably used to distinguish the fair coloured Aryans from the dark coloured natives. The people of higher castes (brahmins, kshatriyas, and vaisiyas) were Aryans. The dark skinned natives were the sudras, the lowest class in society, whose duty was to serve the high class.???"

Demonising Christianity, Islam

IN a chapter titled, 'Problems of the Country and Their Solutions', the Social Studies, Std.IX text of the Gujarat Board has a section with a sub-heading, 'Minority Community', that labels Muslims, even Christians and Parsees, as 'foreigners'. It also states that Hindus are in a minority in most states. It reads:

"But apart from the Muslims, even the Christians, Parsees and other foreigners are also recognised as the minority communities. In most of the states the Hindus are in minority and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are in majority in these respective states".

The same text also selectively denigrates the Catholic priesthood of the middle ages

which may be legitimate but is suspicious when similar exacting criticism is not accorded to the Brahmin religious hierarchy. Monetary exploitation and persistent sexual harassment by the caste hierarchy in India which was not merely historically legitimised by caste but brutally holds Dalit women to ransom even today.

"The priests of the Catholic church had accumulated plenty of wealth through unjust taxes, illegal fees, ownership of large tracts of land, selling miracles and indulgences. They spent this money on worldly pleasures and immoral behaviour. (SS, Std.IX).

"The Christian Church was a part and parcel of this integrated feudal system. Almost half of the land and

other property belonged to the bishops or the heads of parishes. The Pope who was the head of the Roman Catholic Church was himself a big landlord. The Church received sumptuous gifts of land from the king as well as the lords. Thus the Church had amassed great wealth. The Pope, archbishop, bishops and other priests lost their heads, forgot their duties and lived a life of luxury and sensual pleasures.” (SS, Std. X)

The following extract is from a recommended third year B.A. textbook for the student of history in Maharashtra. The chapter on Mahmud of Ghaznavi is used blatantly by the author to launch a tirade against Islam itself.

The opening para reads: “The advent of Islam might have been a boon to the Arabs who got united under its banner, and were enthused by it to carry on conquests in Asia, Africa and Europe but it has been a curse for the people outside Arab world because wherever the Islamic hordes went, they not only conquered the countries, but killed millions of people and plundered their homes and places of worship and destroyed their homes, places of worship and above all their artworks”.

The author continues: “The general Islamic belief that political power can be claimed by anyone who can wield power goes not only against the legality of inheritance to throne but encourages intrigues, plots rebellions and assassinations of father by his son, brother by his brother, ruler by his military commander or minister and above all master by his servant, nay, even by his slave. There might have been some killings of such a type among the people of other religious faiths like the Hindus or Christians but those were exceptions while in the Islamic people these have occurred as a rule, not as exceptions”.

The author makes his orientation more and more plain as we read on. The question, however, is how did such a text past muster and how does it continue to be one of the recommended texts at the graduation level in Maharashtra. “The king of the Ghaznavides, Subuktigin, who started raids on India in the last decades of 10th century A.D. was a slave of Alptigin, who himself was a slave of Samanid ruler of Khorasan. So it is the slave of the slave who set in process, the Islamic invasion from 10th century A.D.”

This is how the concluding para reads. “*Why these atrocities? Because Islam teaches only atrocities. Have not Islamic invaders done so wherever they had gone, be that India or Africa or Europe?*” (Emphasis added). Mahmud returned to Ghazni with a large booty.” ???????????

‘Sati was a virtue’

THE authors of Indian textbooks retain an extremely ambivalent position when it comes to describing the status of women in ancient India Gujarat state social studies’ texts have no critical comment on the *Manusmriti*. “The *Manusmriti* or *Manava Dharma Shastra* has helped in the forming of the Hindu code while the Puranas besides being religious books are a treasure of Indian history.” How equitable or inequitable was, or is, the Hindu code? What was the status accorded to women under it? There is a suspicious silence in the text on the issue.

There is, however, clear-cut statement on the ‘low’ position of women in the Ancient civilisations of Greece in the same Std. IX social studies text in Gujarat. “Women occupied a very low position in Athens and other city-states of Greece. They were denied the right to participate in public life or to get education. Home was considered to be the best place for them. They hardly ever appeared in public places. They were denied the right even to vote. The references to women in the literature of that period can be regarded as derogatory.”

Students studying the ICSE course are given a novel understanding of how Rajputs translated into practice “their respect for women”. The text starts by telling us how Rajputs had a deep respect for their women. But a few paras later we are told: “*The birth of a female was considered as a bad omen in the family. Very often, such a child was killed immediately after its birth.* (Emphasis added).

In a chapter titled, “Rajput Contribution”, the *New ICSE History and Civics*, edited by Hart and Barrow, Part 1, accords special place to the Rajput period. The authors state that this period has a special importance in India. Why? “It is noteworthy that the Rajputs were the last Hindu kings in Indian history,” state the authors going on to extol the uniqueness of the period under the heading of “Rajput Custom.” Here we are told of the Rajputs’ “Respect for Women”:

“The Rajputs respected their women. The women too had their self-respect. They would burn themselves in the fire of *jauhar* rather than fall victims in the hands of their enemies”.

“*Position of Women.* The Rajput women enjoyed freedom in society. They could choose their husbands in *swayamvara*. They were educated, they could read and write Sanskrit. They took part in public life. Re-marriage of widows was not allowed. Rajput women were deeply religious. They spent most of their time listening to pious stories from religious books like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata”.

“*Polygamy and Female Infanticide:* The rich and the ruling class practised polygamy, though one of the wives was treated as the chief wife. The birth of a female was considered as a bad omen in the family. Very often, such a child was killed immediately after its birth”.

“*Child marriage:* The daughters of the family were married off at an early age in order to safeguard their honour. Once married, the Rajput women were very devoted to their husbands. They would sacrifice their lives to safeguard their honour.

The same Rajputs we are also told, with no critical comment, abhorred untouchables.

“*Caste System:* While the Rajputs held the Brahmins in high regard, they despised the untouchables who were even forbidden to live within the town or the village. The Rajputs considered that it was their exclusive right to fight battles and no other person could raise arms in the battlefield. The rigidity of the caste system led to the narrow-minded attitude among the Indians during this period.

“*Sati and Jauhar:* It was considered a virtue to perform *sati*, that is, to immolate oneself at the funeral pyre of one’s husband. The *jauhar* was performed when the Rajput women burnt themselves to death to escape dishonour at the hands of the Muslim invaders. It is said that Rani Padmini, with 16,000 Rajput women did *jauhar* in Chittorgarh by walking into fire when their men marched into the battlefield to fight to the finish instead of surrendering themselves to their enemy” .????????????????

On Fascism and Nazism

THE textbooks of the Gujarat State Board, apart from the inherent contradictions mentioned above, commit another grave folly. For the student of Std. X, in the section that deals with the period in world history between the two world wars, we have a section on the “Ideology of Fascism”.

There is a positive ambivalence in the treatment of this political phenomenon, an ambivalence that stands heightened in later paragraphs that deal with “Nazism”.

“*Ideology of Fascism:* The views regarding the State administration adopted by the topmost leader of the Fascist Party, Mussolini, came to be known as the Ideology of Fascism (Principles of Fascism). According to this ideology the State is sovereign. An individual exists for the State. An individual does not have freedom over and above the State. Here, everyone is absorbed within the State. Since the party firmly believed in Militant Nationalism, it opposed Internationalism. National interest and progress were its basic aim. The Party believed that the total power of the nation should be wielded by a leader endowed with Divine power. This party was a staunch opposer of democracy and individual freedom and also of communism. Thus Fascism was totally opposed to Democracy”.

(Gujarat state social studies text for Std. X)

This text-book while attempting an explanation of the political phenomenon of fascism and nazism gives a frighteningly uncritical picture of both. The strong national pride that both these phenomena generated, the efficiency in the bureaucracy and the administration and other ‘achievements’ are detailed, but the violent, uncivilised and uncritical result of the politics of exclusion – of Jews, of trade unionists, of migrant labourers, of any section that did not fit into Mussolini or Hitler’s definition of rightful citizen – just do not find any mention. The systematic extermination of six million Jews in concentration camps, the Holocaust that is, simply does not figure in these texts.

“Ideology of Nazism: Like Fascism, the principles or ideologies for governing a nation, propounded by Hitler, came to be known as the ideology of Nazism. On assuming power, the Nazi Party gave unlimited total and all embracing and supreme power to the dictator. The dictator was known as the ‘Führer’..Hitler had strongly declared that ‘the Germans were the only pure Aryans in the entire world and they were born to rule the world’. In order to ensure that the German people strictly followed the principles of Nazism, it was included in the curriculum of the educational institutions. The textbooks said, ‘Hitler is our leader and we love him’.

“Internal Achievements of Nazism: Hitler lent dignity and prestige to the German government within a short time by establishing a strong administrative set up. He created the vast state of Greater Germany. He adopted the policy of opposition towards the Jewish people and advocated the supremacy of the German race. He adopted a new economic policy and brought prosperity to Germany. He began efforts for the eradication of unemployment. He started constructing Public buildings, providing irrigation facilities, building Railways, roads and production of war materials. He made untiring efforts to make Germany self-reliant within one decade. Hitler discarded the Treaty of Versailles by calling it just ‘a piece of paper’ and stopped paying the war penalty. He instilled the spirit of adventure in the common people.?????????????? (Gujarat state social studies text for Std. X)??????????????

Ancient India as Hindu

THERE is a clear and underlying assumption that the popular faiths and beliefs of the vast majority of people who lived here before the ancient period were ‘Hindu’ as we understand the term today. The conflict or convulsions between the Dravidian and Aryan cultures and beliefs are not merely glossed over, they are presented as non-inimical to each other in the desire to substantiate the claim that ‘Hinduism’ was able to absorb contradictions and conflicts “peacefully”. By implication or actual assertions the textbooks also state that the real conflicts came with the interaction with other faiths.

In this context, it would be educative to look closely at the prescribed textbooks for history and social studies teaching in Gujarat, with virtually no alterations since 1991, many books prescribed by the ICSE national board among others, and even some college level texts that contain these problematic formulations.

The state syllabus detailed in the texts being currently used by the Gujarat state board, outlines clearly for the teacher and student of history that when the author(s) of the text-book write about India they use the term for the modern nation as synonymous with “Hindu”. The student is instructed that the idea of studying social studies is to develop a true understanding of ancient India. The political implications of this assumption are significant and dangerous, because, immediately for the history learner paradigms have been drawn. It is only within these that adjustments are subsequently made for ‘synthesis’ or ‘syncretism.’

The syllabus for the standard five social studies text printed by the Gujarat State board, outlines the objective of the syllabus that has been laid out for the ten-year-old child:

‘Towards understanding the Indian Cultural heritage in a proper perspective’.

This ‘perspective’, as described below in detail, outlines erroneously that the ancient age begins with Vedic times. It becomes clear from this introductory social studies text for the fifth standard child that no perspective of world ancient civilisations is given through the syllabus; that the desire is not just to begin and end with India, but ancient India has been made synonymous with the Vedic; and that values like ‘respectable status of women in Indian culture’ are rooted in the characters depicted through stories taken from the Vedas. There is no attempt to develop any sense of historical enquiry that could lead to a student understanding the quality of life and civilisations that existed pre-Vedas; the exchanges that took place between ancient peoples through river and sea routes etc.

Not only is this kind of social studies self-limiting and restrictive, it is an approach that is set to stifle free thinking and enquiry. Here is how the objective of the syllabus is outlined:

- Ancient Age (From Vedic times to Harshavardhan)
- Is introduced to Vedic literature which is an expression of Indian Culture.
- Knows about the respectable status of women in Indian culture.
- Gets acquainted with the basic truths of life against a backdrop of Indian Culture.
- Learns for himself the truth; that in the context of Indian culture a person acquires a high status not by right of birth but by merit.
- Knows about how in the Indian Cultural context the rules were oriented towards the subjects.
- Imbibes the basic values of Indian Culture expressed by the narratives of the epics, Ramayana, Mahabharat, and by the main characters in it.
- For instance, the importance of 1) The purity of domestic life 2) Steadfastness in adhering to truth even at the cost of suffering.
- Moulds the character which makes one abide by one's duty when there is a conflict between personal relationship and a sense of duty.

(Social Studies text, Gujarat state board, Std. V)

Apart from the stated objective of portraying ancient Indian culture as synonymous with the Vedas, the Gujarat board texts also proceed to depict Indian culture as inherently superior to any other.

In the chapter titled, ‘The Cultural Heritage of Ancient India’, the child is told: “Ancient Indian history covers a period of about four thousand years. It can be divided into the following periods: The Indus valley civilisation period, the Vedic period, the post-Vedic period, the Epic period, the Age of Buddha and Mahavir, the Maurya and the Post-Gupta periods and the Early Muslim period.” The same text goes on to assert that from the beginning of the Indus valley period to the ‘end of Hindu supremacy’ the contribution of Indian civilisation was unique, implying that, thereafter, with the ‘Muslim period’ the contribution could not be measured in a similar fashion.

“Right from the coming of the Aryans to India (around 2000 B.C.) to the end of the Hindu supremacy (around 1200 A.D.). The Indian civilisation made a unique contribution in many different fields of life, a contribution which includes certain high moral values. It is because of this reason that the ancient civilisation of India has survived today in the form of Indian culture while other ancient civilisation like those of Egypt, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and China have disappeared from the world. These countries do not have the continuity of culture, which is found in the Indian culture.”

The same, Std. IX text, that selectively excludes historical details like the Shaivite-Buddhist conflicts, oppression of women and the shudras, the state of Dalits even today, is however emphatic that “the inherent peace and tolerance of Indian culture” is one of its characteristics. This is one of the recurring myths that have been repeated ad nauseum about India and her ancient culture, the fact that it is “the most non-violent,

peace-loving and tolerant”, a myth that is essential if the ‘Hindu’ is to be pitted as the quintessential Indian, a myth that sits well with the ‘others’ being labelled both ‘invaders’ and ‘foreigners’. It is also a myth that seeks to justify present-day violence against the country’s minorities, seeking justification for this in ‘the wrongs of yore.’

In a section titled ‘Tolerance and urge for peace’, the fourteen- year- old is told: “Tolerance and a strong desire for peace are two distinct features of Indian culture. Brahminism with its two main functions namely Shaivism and Vishnavism. Buddhism and Jainism were the main faith followed in ancient India. These faiths adopted a policy of tolerance towards one another. For examples the Satwahanas and the Guptas were followers of Brahminism. But they showed tolerance towards Buddhism and Jainism and gave financial grants to their places of worship.???????????????”

TS

Breeding Bigotry

The NCERT’s National Steering Committee on text-book evaluation found that the RSS-run Vidya Bharati schools are being clearly used for the dissemination of blatantly communal ideas

We reproduce below extracts from National Steering Committee on Textbook Evaluation, Recommendation and Report II, NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training).

Publications of Vidya Bharati (Section VI of the report):

TE Committee shares the concern expressed in the report over the publication and use of blatantly communal writings in the series entitled, *Sanskriti Jnan* in the Vidya Bharati Schools which have been set up in different parts of the country. Their number is reported to be 6,000. The Committee agrees with the report that much of the material in the so-called *Sanskrit Jnan* series is “designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of inculcating knowledge of culture in the young generation”. The Committee is of the view that the Vidya Bharati schools are being clearly used for the dissemination of blatantly communal ideas. In its earlier report (January 1993), the Committee had commented on publications which had been brought out with similar objectives by the Saraswati Shishu Mandir Prakashan and Markazi Maktaba Islami and had recommended that they should not be allowed to be used in schools. The *Sanskriti Jnan* series are known to be in use in Vidya Bharati schools in Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere. The Committee recommends that the educational authorities of Madhya Pradesh and other states should disallow the use of this series in the schools. The state governments may also consider appropriate steps to stop the publication of these materials which foment communal hatred and disallow the examinations which are held by the Vidya Bharati Sansthan on the basis of these materials.

Appendix:

The Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan is stated to have been set up in 1978. It has been producing materials which are used in Saraswati Shishu Mandirs and other schools which have been set up by this Sansthan in different parts of the country. A large number of these schools have been set up in Madhya Pradesh. The Vidya Bharati schools in Madhya Pradesh had earlier been permitted to have their own examinations up to class VIII as well as to have their own teacher training programme. These schools are used for the propagation of blatantly communal ideas. Some of the textbooks used in Saraswati Shishu Mandirs in Uttar Pradesh had been evaluated in 1993.

A series of booklets which is being used in the Vidya Bharati schools has been published under the general title of *Sanskriti Jnan Pareeksha* and *Sanskrit–Jnan Pareeksha Prashn–ottari* (Culture–Knowledge Examination and Culture–Knowledge Examination Questions–Answers). These books are in the form of

questions and answers which are meant to be taught by teachers and memorized by students. They are also used for assessing children in an all-India examination which is conducted by the Sansthan. The Sansthan claims that during 1993–94, 3,55,282 students appeared in the examination based on this question–answer series. The total number of schools run by the Sansthan is claimed to be 6,000 with 12,00,000 students and 40,000 teachers.

The Vidya Bharati Sansthan claims to be engaged in providing to the young generation education in religion, culture and nationalism. The catechistic series is part of the Sansthan’s effort in this direction.

Each booklet in the series comprises questions and answers on geography, politics, personalities, martyrs, morals, Hindu festivals, religious books, general knowledge, etc. Much of the material in these books is designed to promote blatantly communal and chauvinist ideas and popularize RSS and its policies and programmes.

Some examples of the kind of ‘knowledge’ of *sanskriti* these booklets are disseminating are given below:

1. The booklets include information and questions and answers on the ‘geographical and political boundaries of India’. Besides Pakistan and Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and ‘Brahmadesh or Myanmar’ are all supposed to have been earlier parts of India. There is a question on Sri Lanka which reads, “What is the name of the island in the south which touches the feet of Bharat Mother, and which reminds us of Sri Ramachandra’s victory over Ravana and which was a part of our country at one time?” Arab Sagar, according to these booklets, is supposed to be also known as Sindhu Sagar and Bay of Bengal as Gangasagar. These names are also used in the map of India which is printed as the back cover of many of the booklets under the caption *Punjabhoomi Bharat*. In this map, Indian Ocean is mentioned as Hindu Mahasagar.

2. India is presented in extreme chauvinist terms as the ‘original home of world civilisation’. One of the booklets (No.IX), for example, says, “India is the most ancient country in the world. When civilisation had not developed in many countries of the world, when people in those countries lived in jungles naked or covering their bodies with the bark of trees or hides of animals, Bharat’s *Rishis–Munis* brought the light of culture and civilisation to all those countries.” Some of the examples of the “spread of the light of Aryatva by Bharatiya Manishis” given are the following:

- (i) “The credit for lighting the lamp of culture in China goes to the ancient Indians,
 - (ii) India is the mother country of ancient China. Their ancestors were Indian kshatriyas...
 - (iii) The first people who began to inhabit China were Indians.”
- “The first people to settle in Iran were Indians (Aryans)”.

“The popularity of the great work of the Aryans — Valmiki Ramayana — influenced (Yavana) yunan? (Greece) and there also the great poet Homer composed a version of the Ramayana”.

“The Languages of the indigenous people (Red Indians) of the northern part of America were derived from ancient Indian languages”.

3. Many of these booklets have a section each on ‘Sri Ramjanma-bhumi’. They present RSS–VHP propaganda in the form of catechisms to be memorized by the faithful as absolute truths. Some of the questions – answers in these sections are as follows;

Q. Who got the first temple built on the birth place of Shri Ram in Ayodhya?

A. Shri Ram’s son Maharaja Kush.

Q. Who was the first foreign invader who destroyed Sri Ram temple?

A. Menander of Greece (150 B.C.)

Q. Who got the present Rama Temple built?

A. Maharaja Chandragupta Vikramaditya (A.D. 380–413).

Q. Which Muslim plunderer invaded the temples in Ayodhya in A.D. 1033?

A. Mahmud Ghaznavi's nephew Salar Masud.

Q. Which Mughal invader destroyed the Rama Temple in A.D. 1528?

A. Babur.

Q. Why is Babri Masjid not a mosque?

A. Because Muslims have never till today offered Namaz there.

Q. How many devotees of Rama laid down their life to liberate Rama temple from A.D. 1528 to A.D. 1914?

A. Three lakh fifty thousand.

Q. How many times did the foreigners invade Shri Ramajnanma-bhumi?

A. Seventy-seven times.

Q. "Which day was decided by Sri Ram Kar Sewa Samiti to start Kar Sewa?"

A. 30 October, 1990.

Q. Why will 2 November 1990 be inscribed in black letters in the history of India?

A. Because on that day, the then Chief Minister by ordering the Police to shoot unarmed Kar Sewaks massacred hundreds of them.

Q. When was the Shilanyas of the temple laid in Sri Ram Janmbhumi?

A. 1 November 1989.

Q. What was the number of the struggle for the liberation of Ram Janmbhumi which was launched on 30 October 1990?

A. 78th struggle.

Some other questions which have been included along with answers are:

"When did Ramabhakta Kar Sewaks unfurl the saffron flag on Shri Ramjanmabhumi?"

"Mention the names of the young boys who laid down their life while unfurling the saffron flag".

4. In one of the books in the series (No.12), there is a section on the saints of the world and the sects/faiths founded by them. The statements made in this section are designed to promote contempt and blind hatred against other religions. One statement on the followers of Christianity reads as follows: "It is because of the conspiratorial policies of the followers of this religion that India was partitioned. Even today Christian missionaries are engaged in fostering anti-national tendencies in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Bihar, Kerala, and other regions of our country because of which there is a grave danger to the integrity of present day India".

About Islam, one of the statements is as follows: "Thousands of opponents of idol worship, the followers of Islam, go to the pilgrimage centre of Islamic community at *Kaaba* to worship '*Shivalinga*'. In Muslim society, the greatest wish is to have a *darshan* of that black stone (*Shivalinga*)".

In another question, children are asked to fill in the blanks 'rivers of blood' as the means by which Prophet Mohammad spread Islam.

5. There are special sections in some of the booklets on RSS, its founder and its other leaders. In one booklet (No. 11), RSS, which is mentioned along with Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission etc. as a social reform organisation, is given the status of divine power. It says, "Some divine power, whether it was Bhagwan Ram or Bhagwan Krishna, has always emerged for the preservation of the greatness of Indian culture. The Hindu organization Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh has arisen to end the present miserable condition and for the defence of the greatness of *Bharatiya Sanskriti*."

6. The ‘knowledge’ imparted in the booklets includes such facts as Meghnath Saha, being the author of History of Hindu Science. Punjab University being located in Jalandhar, Jammu–Kashmir University located in Jammu, Annamalai University in Madras, and Andhra University in Hyderabad.

Much of this material is designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of inculcating knowledge of culture in the young which should be a matter of serious concern.????????????

Catching them young

The Hinduisation of ostensibly secular, state–run schools in BJP–ruled U.P. is in full swing

That Hindutva is determined to ensure that its hate ideology infiltrates institutions in states where they rule is evident from the direction in which the education ministry in Uttar Pradesh has moved since March this year. The attempted saffron-isation of the education system became even clearer last month when the state’s education minister, N.K. Gaur, a former RSS man, introduced a new scheme in schools for the ‘moral and physical development of the child’. Named *kulp*, the scheme is compulsory for all primary schools in the state. Through it, schools have been directed, especially in rural areas, to involve RSS *pracharaks* in ‘*naitik shiksha* (moral education)’.

There can be little doubt that the intention is to reorient all state–run schools in Uttar Pradesh along the lines of the RSS–run Saraswati Shishu and Bal Vidya Mandirs. While announcing the scheme in Uttar Pradesh, the minister said that *kulp* was being introduced ‘to enhance the qualitative standard of education’ in schools and to ensure that ‘teachers are an intermediary between school, family and society’.

Under the new scheme, schools and their students will necessarily have to celebrate Hindu religious festivals — *Raksha Bandhan*, *Guru Dakshina*, *Ram Navami*, Dussera – and observe the birth and death anniversaries of stalwarts of Hindutva such as Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamevak Sangh) and Shayma Prasad Mukherjee (a protégé of the RSS who was at the helm of the initiative to launch the Jana Sangh). The singing of the national song, ‘*Sare Jahan Se Achcha*’ has been abandoned in favour of ‘*Vande Mataram*’ and ‘*Vah Shakti hamein do e daya nidhan*’.

Government schools have also been told to form committees of local voluntary organisations. This is apparently a covert move to facilitate and legitimise the selective involvement of the RSS and its activists in the education process.

It all started with education minister Gaur issuing a directive in March this year that all government schools start their day with the singing of *Vande Mataram* and bowing before the statue of goddess Saraswati. The *firman* had created an uproar among various sections — religious minorities, Dalits, backwards and progressive elements from the upper castes — who saw in it an obvious move towards saffronisation of the education system in the state.

The result of the protests has been that some minority institutions have been ‘exempted’ from this directive. This exemption raises its own problems as this will lead to further ghettoisation of an already alienated Muslim community. Secular activists engaged in grassroots work also feel that such directives could push the Muslim community towards the much–maligned *madrassas* in the state.

To buttress their bid to infiltrate and prejudice the education system, Muslim children are being enrolled into the RSS–run Bal Vidya Mandirs and Saraswati Shishu Mandirs. Exaggerated claims are being made about the number of Muslim students who have enrolled in such schools in the recent period. This writer was told, for example, that currently around 30,000 students from the families of “*Rastra-bhakt*” (Nationalist) Muslims are studying in Shishu and Bal Vidya Mandirs. The claim notwithstanding, there is little evidence of mass Muslim participation in RSS–run schools.

Meanwhile, students from the minority communities studying in government-run schools are feeling increasingly alienated. A direct fall-out of the *Vande Mataram* directive in March this year has been the dropout of a large number of Muslims students from government-run schools in Moradabad, Saharanpur and Meerut. Muslims form a sizeable chunk of the population in these districts.

There have been several cases of Muslims being refused admission in colleges managed by Hindus, while the attempt of some members of the minority community to start their own educational institution is being deliberately thwarted. In Morad-abad, Muslims own two intermediate colleges and one degree college out of a total 19 intermediate and four degree colleges that exist. Muslims find it very difficult to get admission in colleges managed by Hindus, ostensibly for lack of seats.

This township, renowned for its brass-work, has a sizeable number of Muslim businessmen who are ready to invest in new schools for the community. But the state- government through raising legal disputes in court has blocked every such attempt. In Meerut, the situation is even worse, especially in the old city area. Unable to finance their own institutions, the community has frequently expressed the need for educational institutions, especially for girls. However, successive governments have turned a deaf ear to the demand.

Children in UP's schools are already being indoctrinated with the saffron version of history. Progressive thinkers from the past are either being reinterpreted and appropriated or kept out altogether. Kabir, for example, has been banished from most state textbooks. Lord Buddha has been converted into the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, completely masking in the process the fact that Buddhism was a virtual revolt against the castiest *Varnashram dharma*. *Hamare Poorvaj*, a school textbook, is full of legends from Hindu mythology. There is no trace of any Muslim, Christian, Dalit or tribal influence or personage in the book.

Thanks to the narrow-mindedness and ostrich-like attitude of earlier Congress regimes, important national leaders like Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Subhash Chandra Bose had found little or no mention in the textbooks on modern history. Such leaders have now been conveniently appropriated by the *sangh parivar*. The tragedy is that they are being projected as heroes who fought for the greater cause of Hindutva!

Children are thus being denied knowledge of the historical fact that Bhagat Singh, for example, was neither a champion of Hindutva, as the *sangh parivar* projects him, nor a mere terrorist, as the Congress would have it, but a revolutionary, an atheist and a firm believer in cultural pluralism?

That Uttar Pradesh has become a laboratory for testing out the pernicious ideology of the *sangh parivar*, especially through the penetration of educational and other institutions can be deduced from the increasing influence the RSS and its leadership is exercising over government institutions and personnel.

In early August, the RSS *sarsanghchalak*, Rajinder Singh (a former teacher by profession) visited Lucknow and gave sermons behind closed doors to a large number of his former students from the Allahabad University who today happen to be highly-placed officials in the UP government. Dalit and Muslim bureaucrats from the same Allahabad University were deliberately kept out of the meeting. How a person from an organisation with no official status can be invited to address a secret meeting of government officials only the BJP can answer.?????

V.B. RAWAT

(1998, *The writer is a social activist from the Rashtriya Jagriti Manch in UP*)

GUJARAT : SITUATING THE SAFFRONISATION OF EDUCATION

The state of Gujarat in western India, has time and again been referred to as the ‘laboratory’ of the experiment in a Hindu rashtra, a Hindu nation. Since February 1998, when the present, BJP-led Keshubhai Patel government was sworn in, sustained administrative measures by the state have been operational –and are in place even today —that are in actuality measures that directly militate against the egalitarian and secular principles of the Indian Constitution. It is within these broader parameters that the measures to give a distinct slant to the *content* of education, within Gujarat need to be located. These measures have been critiqued and challenged but continue with a brazen disregard to recommendations by a Parliamentary Committee on the subject. *1

The measures implemented by the state of Gujarat under the current political dispensation are not restricted merely to the content of the Social Studies textbooks (incidentally first published by Gujarat state textbook board in 1991). They also include measures within the arena of education that point to distinct attempts to impose a *slant* and colour on educational institutions, stifle the basic rights of children belonging to the religious minorities and teachers and managements of minority institutions and impose hegemonic cultural pretexts and values. The fact that this state of affairs continues without adequate reflection, condemnation, outrage and correction within either the local or national legislative wings of the Indian state (Gujarat state assembly or Parliament) is a sorry and dangerous reflection of the implications of such insidious measures when they continue for a prolonged period, unchallenged.

So, while this paper will offer a detailed analysis of many of the steps taken by the Gujarat state in the field of education, it will also attempt to locate them within other premediated and organised attempts to terrorise and stifle the basic democratic rights of minorities living in that state.

Before we go into a detailed critique at the *contents* of the Gujarat textbooks here are some of the attempts made by the Gujarat Board to give a distinct and sectarian slant to education.

On January 19, 2000 the Gujarat state education department sent out a GR directing *all* schools to subscribe to the RSS magazine, *Sadhana*. *Sadhana* is a monthly printed by the Gujarat unit of the RSS. When principles of institutions, especially minority institutions protested at the outrage, the circular was not put into effect. Directly sectarian righting not borne out by examination and research is a distinct feature of the publication. It thrives on halftruths and misconceptions especially about minorities, women and Dalits.

Another circular brought out in December 2000 has insisted on teachers of all schools compulsarily sending their teachers to **sanskrit training camps** in preparation for the move to make the subject mandatory learning and teaching in schools. *2

Worse than even these administrative measures is the intensely divisive atmosphere in many of Gujarat’s town that have experienced brutal ghettoisation and schisms. Members of the Muslim minority find it next to impossible to purchase property in ‘central and mainstream’ parts of the town. Whenever individuals from the community have moved out or couples who have inter-married have chosen to move into these parts of the town, they have –often brutally taught a lesson. *3 &4

This is the situation what has made us describe Gujarat as a ‘lived experience with fascism’.*5

Today, at the Hindu-managed V.R. Somani and Bhakta Vallabh school, where 95 per cent of the students are Muslim but teachers are Hindu, the teachers have discovered a unique way of paying back the students:

they just do *not* teach. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (had between Feb 1998 and August 2000) cancelled most non-Hindu holidays. It was forced to restore Good Friday holiday last year after an outcry from the Christian community. Muslim students studying in several schools in Ahmedabad city – Vishwabharati, Naujeevan, Karmasheela, J.P.High, B.R. Somani, Prakash High Schools and the Asia and Udgam High school are compelled to give examinations on Ramzan Id or Bakri Id. *6

Last year's examinations set by the centralised board for students studying in stds V and VI at the AMC schools had contained a particularly derogatory reference to Muslims "What is the basic difference between *miyas* (a term that has replaced Mohammedans or Muslims and one in Gujarati has a abusive connotation like *landya* in Marathi) and others?" was the question that a student reported to the mother. The mother an activist at the grassroots was outraged but then felt too insecure to register a formal protest.

Gujarat Texts

The Social Studies Text Books of the Gujarat state Board are a sorry examples of where a narrow and sectarian ideology can take us. At the start of the std five text book where the **curriculum is outlined**, Indian Culture is portrayed as Hindu culture. There is a clear and underlying assumption that the popular faiths and beliefs of the vast majority of people who lived here before the ancient period were 'Hindu' as we understand the term today. The conflict or convulsions between the Dravidian and Aryan cultures and beliefs are not merely glossed over, they are presented as non-enmical to each other in the desire to substantiate the claim that 'Hinduism' was able to absorb contradictions and conflicts "peacefully". By implication or actual assertions the text books also state that the real conflicts came with the interaction with other faiths. *7 There is a clear and underlying assumption that the popular faiths and beliefs of the vast majority of people who lived here before the ancient period were 'Hindu' as we understand the term today. The conflict or convulsions between the Dravidian and Aryan cultures and beliefs are not merely glossed over, they are presented as non-enmical to each other in the desire to substantiate the claim that 'Hinduism' was able to absorb contradictions and conflicts "peacefully". By implication or actual assertions the text books also state that the real conflicts came with the interaction with other faiths.

The state syllabus detailed in the texts being currently used by the Gujarat state board, outlines clearly for the teacher and student of history that when the author(s) of the text-book write about India they use the term for the modern nation as synonymous with "Hindu." The student is instructed that the idea of studying social studies is to develop a true understanding of ancient India. The political implications of this assumption are significant and dangerous, because, immediately for the history learner paradigms have been drawn. It is only within these that adjustments are subsequently made for 'synthesis' or 'syncretism.'

The syllabus for the standard five social studies text printed by the Gujarat state board, outlines the objective of the syllabus that has been laid out for the ten year old child:

'Towards understanding the Indian Cultural heritage in a proper perspective'

This 'perspective' as described below in detail, outlines erroneously that the ancient age begins with Vedic times. It becomes clear from this introductory social studies text for the fifth standard child that no perspective of world ancient civilizations is given through the syllabus; that the desire is not just to begin and end with India, but ancient India has been made synonymous with the Vedic; and that values like 'respectable status of women in Indian culture' are rooted in the characters depicted through stories taken from the Vedas. There is no attempt to develop any sense of historical enquiry that could lead to a student

understanding the quality of life and civilizations that existed pre-Vedas; the exchanges that took place between ancient peoples through river and sea routes etc.

Not only is this kind of social studies self-limiting and restrictive, it is an approach that is set to stifle free thinking and enquiry. Here is how the objective of the syllabus is outlined:

- Ancient Age (From Vedic times to Harshavardhan)
- Is introduced to Vedic literature which is an expression of Indian Culture
- Knows about the respectable status of women in Indian culture
- Gets acquainted with the basic truths of life against a backdrop of Indian Culture
- Learns for himself the truth; that in the context of Indian culture a person acquires a high status not by right of birth but by merit
- Knows about how in the Indian Cultural context the rules were oriented towards the subjects
- Imbibes the basic values of Indian Culture expressed by the narratives of the epics, Ramayana, Mahabharat, and by the main characters in it.
- For instance, the importance of 1) The purity of domestic life 2) Steadfastness in adhering to truth even at the cost of suffering
- Moulds the character which makes one abide by ones duty when there is a conflict between personal relationship and a sense of duty.

(Social Studies text, Gujarat state board, Std. V)

Apart from the stated objective of portraying ancient Indian culture as synonymous with the Vedas, the Gujarat board texts also proceed to depict Indian culture as inherently superior to any other.

In the chapter titled , “The Cultural Heritage of Ancient India,” the child is told: “Ancient Indian history covers a period of about four thousand years. It can be divided into the following periods: The Indus valley civilization period, the Vedic period, the post-Vedic period, the Epic period, the Age of Buddha and Mahavir, the Maurya and the Post-Gupta periods and the Early Muslim period.” The same text goes on to assert that from the beginning of the Indus valley period to the ‘end of Hindu supremacy’ the contribution of Indian civilization was unique, implying that that thereafter with the ‘Muslim period’ the contribution could not be measured in a similar fashion.

“Right from the coming of the Aryans to India (around 2000 B.C.) to the end of the Hindu supremacy (around 1200 A.D.). The Indian civilization made a unique contribution in many different fields of life a contribution which includes certain high moral Values. It is because of this reason that the ancient civilization of India has survived today in the form of Indian culture while other ancient civilization like those of Egypt, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and China have disappeared from the world. These countries do not have the continuity of culture, which is found in the Indian culture. “(emphasis added)

The same, Std. IX text, that selectively excludes historical details like the Shaivite-Buddhist conflicts, oppression of women and the shudras, the state of Dalits even today, is however emphatic that ‘the inherent peace and tolerance of Indian culture’ is one of its characteristics. This is one of the recurring myths that have been repeated ad noseum about India and her ancient culture, the fact that it is ‘the most non-violent, peace-loving and tolerant’, a myth that is essential if the ‘Hindu’ is to be pitted as the quintessential Indian, a myth that sits well with the ‘others’ being labelled both ‘invaders and foreigners’. It is also a myth that seeks to justify present-day violence against the country’s minorities, seeking justification for this in ‘the wrongs of yore.’

In a section titled 'Tolerance and urge for peace', the fourteen year old is told,

“Tolerance and a strong desire for peace are two distinct features of Indian culture. Brahminism with its two main functions namely Shaivism and Vishnavism. Buddhism and Jainism were the main faith followed in ancient India. These faiths adopted a policy of tolerance towards one another. For examples the Satwahanas and the Guptas were followers of Brahminism. But they showed tolerance towards Buddhism and Jainism and gave financial grants to their places of worship. (emphasis added).

HOW THE TEXT-BOOKS PORTRAY THE ARYANS *8

The Aryan race is depicted as superior and truly Indian. This is true in the Gujarat state texts but a similar approach is also depicted in an ICSE text. It extolls the virtues of the Aryan race saying that they 'were the most illustrious race in history,' adding worth to this qualification saying that 'they were tall, fair-complexioned, good-looking and cultured people.' The book remains ambivalent on the issue of the Aryan-Dravidian interactions/conflict. Instead of attempting to offer an honest explanation of exchanges, migrations, shifts and changes that have taken place throughout the various periods of history, even between the Aryans and Dravidians, sometimes motivated by political and economic domination, at other times driven by other considerations, the text is selective.

The New ICSE History and Civics, edited by Hart and Barrow, Part 1 states,

“In Sanskrit, the word 'Aryan' means a noble man. Aryans were the most illustrious race in history. They were tall, fair-complexioned, good-looking and cultured people. Groups of Aryans are said to have settled in different countries and developed some of the most remarkable civilisations of the world. (emphasis added). People take pride in calling themselves descendents of the Aryans. The Indians, the Persians, the Germans, the Greeks, the English and the French claim to be the descendents of the Aryans.

The Aryan-Dravidian intermingling of conflict is glossed over never mind the critical cultural changes and dominations that overtook large numbers of people especially after the caste system consolidated its hold over the population becoming a form of domination and control of the ruling and elite classes. Future medieval 'wars'

especially those between Rajput kings (who we are told were 'Hindus') and the Mughals are treated in great detail in these texts, however.

The long-standing controversy over the theory and origin of the Aryans remains unresolved and the text offers a historically unsound hypothesis confusing the origin of the Aryan race on the basis of the common language spoken.

“The Original Home of the Aryans : Different views prevail among scholars about the original home of the Aryans. There is some similarity among some of the words used in the main languages used in Asia and Europe namely Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Persian. There is unanimity of opinion among the scholars that all the Aryan races must have had a common origin and they must have been using the same language.”

“This land was inhabited by the Dravidians, who migrated towards the South and the East after the arrival of the Aryans. Aryans set up new colonies in areas which were vacated by the Dravidians. They went beyond the land of the rivers and spread over the banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna. Aryans fought not only against the Non-Aryans, but they also fought among themselves for the establishment of supremacy over the other groups. Rigveda tells us about the 'Dasharanga' war i.e. the war among ten kings and about the wars that the various tribes, of Aryans namely the Bharats, the Manus, the Tarvasus, the Purus, the Yadus and others. The Bharats were victorious in these wars and became the supreme rulers of 'Aryavatra'. The country acquired its name 'Bharata' from this tribe. The Ramayana was composed by the great poet

Valmiki. It contains nearly 24000 verses depicting the story of Rama. From the historical point of view, *Ramayana describes the triumphant march of the Aryans towards the South also tells us about the conflict between the Aryan and non-Aryan cultures and their reconciliation. The Aryan supremacy could not have been established without the co-operation of the non-Aryans. The Ramayana effectively represents this fact.*” (emphasis added)

There is heavy stress on the moral superiority of Indian culture too in this text as opposed to other world cultures.

(*Social Studies, Gujarat board, Std. IX*)

The caste system receives generous treatment in most Indian text books. Even the constitutional policy of reservations makes remarks about the continued illiteracy of the ‘scheduled castes and tribes.’ So, for instance, the same text book pays lip service to political correctness through a fleeting reference to the fact that the *varna* system later became hierarchical, but in the same chapter, a few paragraphs later, literally extolls the virtues of the intent of the *varna* system itself.

There is also no attempt nor desire in either this text nor the ICSE texts to explain the inhuman concept of ‘untouchability’ (based on the notion of being ‘so impure as to be untouchable’) that Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar made it their life’s mission to challenge, socially and politically. In understanding and teaching about caste, both this text and other ICSE texts too, display a marked reluctance to admit or link the ancient-day *varna* system to modern-day Indian social reality. But the Gujarat state board text goes several steps further. The ‘Varna’ System : *The Varna system was a precious gift of the Aryans to the mankind.* (emphasis added) It was a social and economic organization of the society built on the basis of the principle of division of labour. Learning or education, defence, trade and agriculture and service of the community are inseparable organs of the social fabric. The Aryans divided the society into four classes or ‘varnas’. Those who were engaged in the pursuit of learning and imparted education were called ‘Brahmins or Purohitas (the priestly classes). Those who defended the country against the enemy were called the Kshatriyas or the warrior class. Those who were engaged in trade agriculture were called the ‘Vaishya’s. And those who acted as servants or slave of the other three classes were called the Shudra’s. In the beginning, there were no distinction of ‘high’ and low. The varna or class of a person was decided not on the basis of birth but on the basis of his work or karma’. Thus a person born of a shudra father could become a Brahmin by acquiring learning or by joining the teaching profession.... In course of time however, the varna system became corrupted and ‘birth’ rather than ‘vocation’ came to be accepted as the distinguishing feature of the varna system. Thus society was permanently divided into a hierarchy of classes. The Brahmins were regarded as the highest class while the Shudras were treated as the lowest. These distinctions have persisted in spite of the attempts made by reformers to remove them. *Yet, the importance of the ‘Varna’ system as an ideal system of building the social and economic structure of a society cannot be overlooked.*(emphasis added)

(*Social Studies text, Gujarat state board, Std. IX*)

The only reference in this standard nine text to the indignities of the caste system as it exists today is through an attempt to blame the plight of the untouchables on their own illiteracy and blind faith.

Problems of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes : *Of course, their ignorance, illiteracy and blind faith are to be blamed for lack of progress because they still fail to realise importance of education in life. Therefore, there is large scale illiteracy among them and female illiteracy is a most striking fact.* (emphasis added). No doubt, they are the people who have been exploited and intentionally avoided by the society, therefore, most of their miseries are also partial product of such deprivation. So our constitution has offered special protection and some provisions are also made to improve their conditions.

(*Social Studies text, Gujarat state board, Std. IX*)

‘Muslims, Christians and Parsees are foreigners: Gems from the Gujarat Board Social Studies, Std. IX, Gujarat board:’9

In a chapter titled, ‘Problems of the Country and Their Solutions’ one text of the Gujarat Board has a section with a sub-heading ‘Minority Community’ labels Muslims, even Christians and Parsees as ‘foreigners.’ It also states that Hindus are in a minority in most states. It reads:

“But apart from the Muslims, even the Christians, Parsees and other foreigners are also recognised as the minority communities. In most of the states the Hindus are in minority and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are in majority in these respective states. (*emphasis added*).

The same text also selectively denigrates the Catholic priesthood of the middle ages which may be legitimate but becomes suspicious when similar exacting criticism is not accorded to the Brahmins religious hierarchy. Monetary exploitation and persistent sexual harassment by the caste hierarchy in India brutally holds Dalit women to ransom even today.

“The priests of the Catholic church had accumulated plenty of wealth through unjust taxes, illegal fees, ownership of large tracts of land, selling miracles and indulgences. They spent this money on worldly pleasures and immoral behaviour. (SS, Std.IX)

“The Christian Church was a part and parcel of this integrated feudal system. Almost half of the land and other property belonged to the bishops or the heads of parishes. The Pope who was the head of the Roman Catholic Church was himself a big landlord. The Church received sumptuous gifts of land from the king as well as the lords. Thus the Church had amassed great wealth. The Pope, archbishop, bishops and other priests lost their head, forgot their duties and lived a life of luxury and sensual pleasures.” (SS, Std. X)

In five widely attended and much publicised workshops from July 1999 till January 2001, Khoj (education for a plural India along with Shanti, IFIE and MSD) have been conscientising history teachers in Gujarat on the contents of the textbooks. This campaign that received national publicity led some cognisance of the Gujarat state texts to be taken by the Parliamentary Committee on Education.

In a fax message dated March 27, the Union HRD ministry, taking cognisance of the parliamentary committee report, had sought an explanation from the state education department on the saffronisation charge. The message specifically quotes instances to prove how fascism and nazism are glorified in the standard 10 social studies textbook. In the standard 9 social studies textbook, Muslims, Christians and Parsees have allegedly been labelled “foreigners”.

The Gujarat state board representative had accepted the gross anomalies but taken recourse to the defence that they had been published before the BJP took over! “We entirely agree that there are major mistakes in not just these textbooks but also others,” conceded a highly-placed official. “But to say that these mistakes were introduced in the last two years is a travesty of the truth. We have conveyed to the Union HRD ministry that fascism and nazism shouldn’t have been glorified. We agree that there should be a clear-cut condemnation of Mussolini and Hitler. These changes will be introduced when we start preparing new textbooks.”

The parliamentary standing committee objections attached with the Union HRD ministry fax says there is a “frighteningly uncritical picture” of fascism and nazism in the 10th standard textbook. It says, “The violent, uncivilised and uncritical result of the politics of exclusions of Jews, trade unionists, migrant labourers, or any section that did not fit Mussolini’s and Hitler’s definition of rightful citizens does not find any mention.” The objections also say there is no mention of the “extermination of six million Jews in concentration camps”, while the administrative and bureaucratic “achievements” of fascism and nazism have been mentioned, including Mussolini and Hitler’s “successful attempts” to end illiteracy and unemployment, and have a disciplined society.

The official said, "The state government letter sent to the Union HRD ministry agrees with the criticism." However, as for the observation that Muslims, Christians and Parsees have been qualified as "foreigners", the official said, "This is a mistake resulting from the convention so far followed of translating the basic book in Gujarati into English."

Despite these measures the textbooks exist in Gujarat. The local situation in the state grows worse. The latest on the question was the gross neglect of Dalits and minorities when it came to distribution in earthquake relief after January 26, 01 when the earthquake hit.

What are the other steps that have been taken in Gujarat that are direct violations of the Indian Constitution?

GUJARAT :TWO YEARS OF HINDU RASHTA IN OPERATION

The story of the Keshubhai Patel government in Gujarat is a long list of blatant and defiant violations of the Indian Constitution. Since February 1998 when the BJP government took over fundamental rights of citizens have been violated, the rule of law flouted and the security of the life and property of citizens, particularly the religious minorities and Dalits is consistently threatened. No action has been taken in any of the cases.

It is clear that the writ of the organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and their outfits, Hindu Jagran Manch and the Dharma Raksha Samiti that are anti-democratic and authoritarian runs freely in the state. Not the rule of law.

The sectarian and divisive politics of the Gujarat government that have gone unchallenged were evident last month when the state government gave an open chit to government servants to join the RSS after lifting the ban on the organisation and the state convention of the organisation that openly espouses its goal of a Hindu rashtra was allowed in the full public gaze. Photographs of union home minister, L.K. Advani blessing the gathering accompanied by the chief minister in the RSS uniform (khakhi shorts have been published all over the country.

On January 11 2000, following the RSS convention, the RSS heaped lavish praise on the state government for the "free services" provided at the three day "Sankalp Shibir" of the RSS. *Pucca* roads were laid overnight especially for the event, free drinking water provided and sanitation features provided. The Gujarat state transport corporation stationed 260 new buses at the venue to facilitate transportation by the participants.

This amounts to a blatant misuse of government and semi-government machinery.

VHP boards all over Gujarat say, "Welcome to Hindu Rashtra." The study of Gujarat state is a study of **Hindu Rashtra in operation. Terror and violence against the minorities and complete complicity or silence from the police force is normal.** The ruling BJP proudly says that what happens in Gujarat today happens in India tomorrow.

Articles 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, Articles 21, 22, 25 **all stand violated**

On February 8 2000, a hoard of people ransacked the homes of Muslim families who had bought homes in Paldi, a predominantly Hindu-dominated locality. The families who had just bought a flat there were terrorised, their belongings destroyed.

We demand compensation from the Keshubhai Patel government to these families and all others who are victims of communal violence. Two elected representatives of the BJP led the mob shouting 'Jai Sri Ram'. One senior VHP leader was also present. The motive was to terrorise them to move out of a pre-dominantly Hindu locality. What happened in Paldi is becoming more and more common all over Gujarat state.

None have been arrested. The police merely recorded their statement and released them. Naved Siidique a young Muslim builder has run from pillar to post for redressal, met MPs from the Opposition and the BJP. He is today a depressed and saddened man. Pressure continues on him to sell this prime property at a huge loss. **Does this not violate Article 14 (equality before the law) Article 15 (Non-Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, gender, caste) Article 16 (Equality of opportunity in matters of employment) Article 19 (protection of the freedom of speech, expression and Movement), Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty Article 22 (protection against arrest and detention) Article 25 (freedom of conscience and freedom of religion) ?**

This is not an isolated incident. Social and economic boycott enforced through terror and violence is happening every other day in Keshubhai Patel's Gujarat run by the RSS.

It is well known that general secretary of the VHP, Praveen Togadia runs the Keshubhai Patel government by remote control. On August 1, 2000 when Amarnath yatri were tragically killed by alleged militants belonging to the Lshkar-e-Toyba, Togadia gave a call that was televised widely "The reply to this crime will be given in Gujarat". What followed was saffron squads on the rampage in Surat, Khed Brahma Lambadiya, Rajkot and Ahmedabad for five days with police watching on. Muslim businesses and shops were targeted. The total loss was Rs 1500 crores to the community. *10

➤ **Other dangerous indicators from Gujarat:**

➤ In early December, Keshubhai Patel takes the lead in lifting the ban on government servants joining the RSS. This is followed by a massive RSS meet in Ahmedabad attended by L.K. Advani and Keshubhai Patel proudly donning khaki shorts.

On December 15, the liberal mask of the *sangh* assures the Lok Sabha that there is **no question of army or government officials being allowed to join the RSS.**

On February 6, 2000 the liberal mask falls away and the same Vajpayee announces that he sees nothing wrong in the move since the RSS is a cultural organisation.

➤ The whole of 1998 and 1999 saw a spate of attacks especially on Christians and Christian religious persons in remote areas of the state as well in cities like Rajkot and Ahmedabad. **No action was taken by the Gujarat government against the violent offenders.**

➤ What happened at Dangs during the Christmas of 1998 is a shocking shame on India that proudly calls itself a secular country where the writ of a constitution espousing notions of equity and justice rules. In December 1999 too, though Christmas passed off 'peacefully', it was a peace where terror reigned.

➤ In many parts of Gujarat, the police visited Christian institutions at Christmas asking how many people attended Christmas mass. Can this be allowed in a country that calls itself both secular and democratic?

➤ Each act of violence over the past two years has been preceded by hate-mongering and vicious and spurious stuff through pamphlets signed by Janubhai Pawar of the Hindu Jagran Manch. No action was taken until a year later when in December 1999 Janubhai Pawar was arrested before Christmas at Dangs.

➤ A private members Bill, to "prevent conversion by coercion or force" but which does not consider conversion to Hinduism an offence is attempted to be rushed through the state legislature in November-December 1999. It has to finally be put aside because of the outcry by local groups. The campaigners point out that existing provisions within the Indian Constitution could already be used to prevent conversions by inducements and coercion.. The maximum number of conversions, post-Independence have been of tribals to Hinduism.

➤ The Gujarat government has also taken a series of administrative measures that directly violate the Constitution.

These are:

- A selective census specially directed at Christians and Muslims in the state
- A selective census of SCs and STs initiated last month to as ‘when they converted to Islam or Christianity.’
- A directive to the state police asking them to ‘investigate’ every case of inter-religious marriage. This followed spurious propaganda by the RSS-VHP_Hindu Jagran Manch combine that Muslims and Christians achieved conversions through marrying Hindu girls.
- Inter-community marriages between couples are frowned upon by the state. Recently a Christian groom was forced to convert to Hinduism even after his marriage to a Hindu girl took place in a civil ceremony before the Courts.

This is grim reminder to the rest of the country as to the situation of Gujarat, the laboratory of a Hindu rashtra.

Teesta Setalvad

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Notations for the paper

*1 *The Times of India*, April 5, 2000

*2 Deliberations at a KHOJ workshop on Gujarat Texts and Implications of the New Curriculum Framework for Value Education, January 16, 2001, Baroda

*3 & *4 Teesta Setalvad in *The Business India*, July 1991 and *The Sunday Observer*, August 1991. One Mr Khan, a resident of Kerala staying at Narangpura was pulled out of his home and flung down four floors to his death by a mob egged on by middle class Hindu women in July 1991. The message was clear: stay out of the cosmopolitan localities. It worked. Many of these areas are ‘purged’ of Muslim residents today; in the past two years Christians have slowly started facing similar problems

*5 *Face to Face With Fascism, Communalism Combat*, April 2000

*6, 7, 8,9 *How Textbooks Teach Prejudice, Communalism Combat*, October 1999 that relied on the author, Teesta Setalvad’s research undertaken for Khoj.

HISTORY – THROUGH THE PRISM OF CONSTRUCTED IDENTITY

Teesta Setalvad

The singular failure of the Indian elite, post Independence to handle our past, our history honestly or creatively has been today taken to extreme proportions in the NCERT's brazen attempts to delete those portions of History texts that 'harm or hurt community sentiments.' Individual and collective histories are to be subject to the prism of community identity alone and the decisions in that regard to be taken by the vociferous brokers of that identity in the public sphere.

Maharashtra, a region with a vibrant and strong radical and reformist tradition and writing, especially that which has historically challenged deep caste hierarchies and barriers has been unfortunate victim of a narrow parochialism for over two decades, now.

A curious dichotomy prevails here with fairly radical publications including the Complete Works of Jyotiba Phule, Sahu Maharaj and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar being officially published by the publications division of the Maharashtra government and, on the other hand, a rigid reluctance to allow the state government textbooks to reflect open and non parochial ideas and writing.

Hence, one area that wings of the Indian state have always maintained strong clutches of control over is what may or may not transpire within the classroom, especially related to the sensitive subject of history.

Khoj, —education for a plural India programme has been working in the area of alternate curricular content of history and social studies for over seven years now. As part of this research, is an experiment being applied through some private schools in Mumbai that entail re-writing and enhancing many parts of the SSC (Maharashtra State Secondary School Syllabus).

The handbook for history teachers –worked out in collaboration with teachers from the Don Bosco Schools – traces the entire period of local history to world history and also deals with regional history powerfully. The section on Shivaji is deal with in a balanced and rational manner. The section on Shivaji also dealt with, among other things, the caste background of Shivaji and his rise to control and glory despite these restrictive factors. Besides, the handbook also deals with the character of Afzal Khan in a balanced manner These are the sections that have raised the hackles of the self styled guardians of public morality.

While the entire country has been privy to an intense debate on the issue of the partisan and narrow readings and interpretations of the past *1Maharashtra in western India –at present ruled by the 'secular' Congress-NCP combine but shackled by the rabid Shiv Sena – saw the outburst of intimidation and unreasoned rhetoric over the introduction of an alternate handbook for history teachers that deals with Shivaji in a balanced and rational manner.

Shivaji, a Maharashtrian figure has been selectively valorized by a parochial and downright communal elements in Maharashtra, especially over the past two and a half decades. These elements have consistently used threat tactics, bullying and intimidation on any efforts to change the orientation in the official text, even towards the Maharashtra State Text Book Board to that attempted re-working of history in tune with the 1986 Education Policy. (see accompanying box –Deshpande Interview)

The narrow worldview that these forces represent would prefer to forget the bitter struggle this ruler had to undertake with the entrenched Brahmanical hierarchy at the time. The story of his coronation (detailed by eminent historians, see boxes, Sardesai and Sarkar) is a sorry tale of how even a man who saw such tremendous success and popularity in his lifetime, had to hunt down a Brahmin priest from Benaras to perform the ‘purification’ and thread ceremony) that could effect a legitimacy on his coronation. Moreover the services of the Brahmin priesthood that consented to the exercise had to be compensated with significant monetary largesse.

Sectarian and divisive outfits like the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS and the Shiv Sena have used their intimidation to gloss over these historical facts, periodically. A rich alternate tradition in Maharashtra has, through the works of Jayant Gadkari, N.R.Pathak, Govind Pansare and Sharad Patil periodically resurrected the real Shivaji. Veteran trade unionist, S.A.Dange’s famous lecture *Tyanche Shivaji, Aamche Shivaji* (delivered to workers) protested as far back as the late fifties against the manipulation of Shivaji into a ‘Hindu’ ruler, deliberately ignoring significant efforts made by him within his kingdom to give equal status to persons of different religious persuasions.

For the Shiv Sena, through its crude but popular audio cassettes of Marathi *povadas* (folk songs), the battle between Shivaji and Afzal Khan is a metaphor for (and justification of) their current politics – demonisation of the Muslim minority and legitimization of the violence used against them. Every so often individuals and groups have challenged this parochial rendering of the past to suit crude present-day political ends, intimidation and threats have been used to squash any attempts in the bud.

In the light of this background, it is particularly educative to see how the organs of the state – both the police and the state education department—functioned after the SS doled out its threat to the school management.

On the morning of September 17, 01 –after one or two parents had failed to intimidate the school into withdrawing the handbooks—a Shiv Sena Board outside the school displayed the outfit’s intention of bringing a protest march (morcha) against ‘derogatory remarks against Shivaji by calling him a Shudra’ and hurting religious sentiments! The moment that the school contacted the author of the handbook and writer of this article, I said we should offer to refer the ‘controversial’ part to a committee of experts but that intimidation and threats to the school should be withdrawn. We made vain attempts to get protection for the school, given the violent antecedents of the SS, from the police.

However, instead of supporting this stand for dialogue and rationality taken by the school management, the local police played a proactive role in demanding an apology from the school before the protest. The result: the morning of the protest on September 19, 01, local Shiv Sainiks assembled and dispersed having achieved a ‘victory.’ Even more interesting is the role played by the state education department under a ‘secular’ combine on that day. Representatives of the department approached the school management and extracted an assurance that the book would be withdrawn.

Three major issues related to the conduct of public servants arise from the controversy and both have become the subject matter of complaints by the management and the author before the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission and Maharashtra State Minorities Commission.

One is the conduct of the police, both visibly and behind the scenes. Second, is the question of the state education department in seeking to control alternate and dynamic renderings of history as also experiments in creative history teaching. Thirdly and critically is the deep-rooted caste bias or hegemony evident in the interpretation of all Indian history and that affects the factual position regarding Shivaji’s caste background, the barriers that he faced that are well-documented historical research. It is taboo however to bring them before young and inquiring minds and hertein lie the issue of state controls on independent historical thought and research.

Firstly, through all of Monday, September 17, 01 despite repeated efforts by the school management to contact the local police station for protection from the Shiv Sena, the DCP S.S.Khemkar arrogantly refused to respond. The matter cannot be seen in isolation without considering the fear and terror that an outfit like the SS generates in Mumbai.

Only weeks before this incident, Shiv Sainiks had displayed their political character by destroying (burning down and killing two patients on life support systems) the Singhanian hospital in Thane, north of Mumbai. The provocation? Their leader, Anand Dighe had died there! The police had watched silently as the mob proceeded with its agenda of complete destruction—the hospital has, since closed down and its employees rendered jobless.

These were the antecedents of the outfit, the Shiv Sena that was threatening Don Bosco, Borivli, with its agitation. In the week of this agitation, women Shiv Sainiks had stormed into the chambers of Mumbai Municipal Commissioner and roughed him up. Yet what does the police do in these circumstances to reassure a school where young children go, of protection?

Despite it being made clear, repeatedly by the school management and the author that the issue was open for dialogue and discussion, the police through the local DCP S.S.Khemkar repeatedly pressurized the school into completely withdrawing the said handbook. Section 142 (order against assembly with weapons) was in force due to the tensions following the events in the USA. In spite of this, the police, instead of prevailing upon the SS to stop their demonstration, that—given their proclivities—could turn violent the Commissioner, through the DCP, S.S.Khemkar used his physical presence at the school, threats and intimidation to simply make the school ‘apologise’ to the Shiv Sena and promise to ‘withdraw’ the book.

Serious questions on the rule of law and duties of both the police and the state education department are raised here. One, the intimidation/threat/protest was declared by the SS (with its well known background) against its target, a school, albeit a minority institution with impeccable standards. What does the police do? Instead of controlling, through lawful means, the offenders, the institution (that is facing intimidation) becomes the target of the police.

The same approach was followed by the second state functionary, the state education department. Under law and the codes governing the SSC school board, there is nothing to prevent schools from using material to enhance the syllabus; yet the state government responds to the SS intimidation with suspicious promptness.

Maharashtra, like other states in different parts of the country have seen the mushrooming of several thousand institutions run by the RSS/VHP that freely introduce supplementary texts that simply put, spread hatred and division. Does the state government, under ‘secular’ dispensations ever ‘dare’ to send them an investigatory note? Why is it that efforts to rationalize history learning, cleanse it of the cobwebs of bigotry and hatred are such a challenge to our institutions and not those that blatantly promote bigotry and stereotypes?

The matter presently lies before the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission. Meanwhile, in a parallel move, the Borivli police station has instituted an investigation under section 153 c (hurting the religious sentiments of a section) against the author of the book. The police also claims to have approached the state government for sanction to prosecute the author for ‘outraging communal harmony.’!

Now according to the Code that binds schools in the state the section on **Curriculum-Syllabus—Regulation 42 says:** “Schools shall follow the syllabuses laid down or specifically permitted by the Department for use in classes V-VII and by the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education for classes VII-X and F.Y.J.C. - S.Y.J.C. or by the Council for I.S.C. Examination as the case may be, from time to time.” The restriction is to simply adhere to the guidelines in the syllabus.

There are special regulations under the Code that allow for “**Adoption of Variations or of Alternative Curricula. Rule 43.1:** “The managements of schools may have the freedom, within the general framework of the curriculum, to adopt variations so far as the syllabus for classes V-VII is concerned, provided that such variations are brought to the notice of the Deputy Director and are duly approved by him. All such cases will be fully reported by the Deputy Director concerned to the Director.

43.2.Managements of schools may adopt alternative curricula for standard V-VII with the previous sanction of the Director, provided the curricula conform generally to the main objectives underlying the curriculum prescribe by the Department.

Text-Books Rule 44.1: “Schools shall not use text-books, copy-books or atlases other than those sanctioned by the Department, Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education or the Council for Indian School Certificate Examination, as the case may be. Heads of schools are free to prescribe any suitable books for supplementary reading, subject to the general instructions, if any, of the Director. For subject and standards for which there are no books on the sanctioned list, schools may use any suitable books with the previous approval of the appropriate authority.”

International law, too encourages, individuals and organizers to have free access to independent research and material. Both the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and International Covenant of Civic and political Rights accord these rights to a citizen.

The International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is fairly explicit in this regard.

“Article 13. 1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. 2. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of this right: (a) primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all; (b) secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education; (c) higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education; (d) fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education; (e) the development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued, an adequate fellowship system shall be established, and the material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved. 3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions. 4. No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph I of this article and to the requirement that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State. Article 14. Each State Party to the present Covenant which, at the time of becoming a Party, has not been able to secure in its metropolitan territory or other territories under its jurisdiction compulsory primary education, free of charge, undertakes, within two years, to work out and adopt a detailed plan of action for the progressive implementation, within a reasonable number of years, to be fixed in the plan, of the principle of compulsory education free of charge for all. Article 15. 1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right

of everyone: (a) to take part in cultural life; (b) to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications; (c) to benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author. 2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture. 3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity. 4. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and cooperation in the scientific and cultural fields.”

In essence this covenant of international law gives citizens, groups and educational institutions the inherent right to pursue ideas and thoughts with freedom of conscience, unshackled by restrictive national regulations and standards. It is not only evident Indian statutory law lags reluctantly behind. More importantly attitudes regarding free thought and free association —guaranteed as they are in the very formation of National and State Human rights Commissions — are sorely wanting. Governments are reluctant to create such bodies, and thereafter grant them adequate powers. Wings of state find them yet another encumbrance to be accountable to.

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Deshpande: Reason, emotion and history

In March 1994, as part of Communalism Combat/KHOJ's campaign to track the parochial processes that deter even 'secular' governments from fair explorations into history, we had interviewed Dr Arvind Deshpande, then chairman of the Maharashtra State Text Book Board. In that interview he had told Teesta Setalvad of the failure of the board to effect changes. Excerpts:

Since its inception in 1980-81, the main objective before the Maharashtra State Text Book Bureau that we were part of was that the "secular element should be jostled up in our history books... Shivaji, for example, has always been depicted as a Hindu hero. But the moment you do this, unknowingly, unconsciously, the bias creeps in.

For the first four to five years we were extremely conscious of this. So we did our utmost to remove these biases in order to prevent their creeping into the curriculum. Soon enough, we were faced with the consequences — opposition either from the minority or the majority community.

This was our bitter experience with a Std. IV textbook. In 1986, with the introduction of the New Education Policy, the entire syllabus was revised. In history, too, new elements were added: Regional History, Indian Culture and Civics. In preparing and publishing textbooks, we are severely restricted by the cost factor. As it has to be affordable for lakhs of SSC students throughout the state, the books are restricted to 96 pages. Now, while looking at the Std. IV history textbook, we found that 80 of these 96 pages dealt with Shivaji alone. This left little room for any other element that we wanted to introduce.

In keeping with our objective of introducing a new value system, in the revised draft we had to rewrite portions of it, reduce the section on Shivaji. Professor Bhosale (RR Bhosale, another bureau member) also agreed. Paragraphs were changed, some re-drafted. Meanwhile, someone leaked information to the press. Even before the re-drafted book was released or published, merely on surmises and guesswork, we had to face a vicious media campaign, led by *Kesari* (Marathi daily). We were charged with "removing the inspiring part of history and making it insipid." Until then, we had only had a trial reading of the book for three days with 60 teachers, two from each district in Maharashtra. During this no one seemed to have any objection. But suddenly, after the vicious campaigns in the press, the same government that had entrusted us with the task of "jousting the secular and humanist element in history" completely backed out.

This was in 1991 when the Sudhakar Rao Naik-led minority government was in power. Defending our work, the state education minister on the floor of the house said that we were only trying to de-individualise history, that all of Indian history had been personality-oriented, that history should focus attention on the social forces at work and not only on individual personalities. But the chief minister succumbed and promised the agitated legislators, who cut across all party lines, that not one word in the 25-year-old textbook would be changed. As a result, the communal overtones remain; the incitement to violence is still there. All the work that we had put in for the revised draft is lost forever. We were all asked to surrender our copies to the government."

*1 Teesta Setalvad in *COMMUNALISM COMBAT*, August September 2001, January 2001, October 1999

The Evils of Caste

Teesta Setalvad has researched Shivaji extensively. Here are excerpts from the work of one of the oldest authorities on the Marathas, historian Jadunath Sarkar. In two books on the issue, the historian has dealt with the ticklish issue of caste that did affect Shivaji's acceptance as a formal ruler.

“A deep study of Maratha society, indeed of society throughout India, reveals some facts which it is considered patriotism to ignore. We realise that the greatest obstacles to Shivaji's success were not Mughals or Adil Shahis, Siddis or Feringis, but his own countrymen. First, we cannot be blind to the truth that the dominant factor in Indian life —even today, no less than in the seventeenth century — is caste, and neither religion nor country. By caste must not be understood the four broad divisions of the Hindus which exist only in the textbooks and the airy philosophical generalisations delivered from platforms. The caste that really counts, the division that is a living force, is the sub-division and sub-sub-division into innumerable small groups called *shakhas* or branches (more correctly twigs or I should say, *leaves*, they are so many!) into which each caste is split up and within which alone marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking together take place...

And each of these smallest sub-divisions of the Brahman caste is separated from the other sub-divisions as completely as it is from an altogether different caste like the Vaishya or Shudra, e.g., the Kanyakubja and Sarayupari Brahmans of northern India, the Konkanastha and Deshastha of Maharashtra.

Personal Jealousy Hindering Shivaji

Shivaji was not contented with all his conquests of territory and vaults full of looted treasure, so long as he was not recognised as a Kshatriya entitled to wear the sacred thread and to have the Vedic hymns chanted at his domestic rites. The Brahmans alone could give him such a recognition, and though they swallowed the sacred thread they boggled at the *Vedokta!* The result was a rupture... Whichever side had the rights of the case, one thing is certain, namely, that this internally torn community had not the *sine qua non* of a nation.

Nor did Maharashtra acquire that *sine qua non* ever after. The Peshwas were Brahmans from Konkan, and the Brahmans of the upland (Desh) despised them as less pure in blood. The result was that the state policy of Maharashtra under the Peshwas, instead of being directed to national ends, was now degraded into upholding the prestige of one family or social sub-division.

Shivaji had, besides, almost to the end of his days, to struggle against the jealousy, scorn, indifference and even opposition of certain Maratha families, his equals in caste sub-division and once in fortune and social position, whom he had now outdistanced. The Bhonsle Savants of Vadi, the Jadavs or Sindhkhed, the Mores of Javli, and (to a lesser extent) the Nimbalkars, despised and kept aloof from the upstart grandson of that Maloji whom some old men still living remembered to have seen tilling his fields like a *Kunbi!* Shivaji's own brother Vyankoji fought against him during the Mughal invasion of Bijapur in 1666.

Shivaji's religious toleration and equal treatment of all subjects

He stands on a lofty pedestal in the hall of the worthies of history, not because he was a Hindu champion, but because he was an ideal householder, an ideal king, and an unrivalled nation-builder. He was devoted to his mother, loving to his children, true to his wives, and scrupulously pure in his rela-

tions with other women. Even the most beautiful female captive of war was addressed by him as his mother. Free from all vices and indolence in his private life, he displayed the highest genius as a king and as an organizer. In that age of religious bigotry, he followed a policy of the most liberal toleration for all creeds.

The letter which he wrote to Aurangzeb, protesting against the imposition of the poll-tax on the Hindus, is a masterpiece of clear logic, calm persuasion, and political wisdom. Though he was himself a devout Hindu, he could recognise true sanctity in a Musalman, and therefore he endowed a Muhammadan holy man named Baba Yaqut with land and money and installed him at Keleshi. All creeds had equal opportunities in his service and he employed a Muslim secretary named Qazi Haidar, who, after Shivaji's death, went over to Delhi and rose to be chief justice of the Mughal Empire.

There were many Muhammadan captains in Shivaji's army and his chief admiral was an Abyssinian named Siddi Misri. His Maratha soldiers had strict orders not to molest any woman or rob any Muhammadan saint's tomb or hermitage. Copies of the *Quran* which were seized in the course of their campaigns were ordered to be carefully preserved and then handed over respectfully to some Muhammadan."

(From Jadunath Sarkar's book, '*House of Shivaji*').

The Story of Shivaji's Coronation

(Apart from Jadunath Sarkar, historian Govind Sakharam Sardesai's New History of the Marathas, too, notes the ticklish issues surrounding Shivaji's coronation).

The Coronation ...

“By the beginning of 1673 the idea of a public coronation began to materialize, and when preparations were fully completed, the event took place at fort Raigad, on Saturday 5 June 1674, the day of the sun's entering the constellation *Leo*.

The orthodox Brahman opinion was not favourable to Shivaji's claim to be recognised as a Kshatriya by blood, although he had proved this claim by action. More than a thousand years had passed since such a ceremony was last performed, and on that account men's memories had been entirely dimmed. All ancient learning of the Deccan had migrated to Benares after the invasion of Ala-ud-din Khilji and the Muslim conquest of the Deccan.

Ancient families noted for hereditary learning like the Devs, the Dharmadhikaris, the Sheshas, the Bhattas, the Maunis, had left their hearths and homes at Paithan, with all their sacred books, and opened their new university of letters on the bank of the holy Ganges. The ignorant unthinking folks of Paithan had now no voice of authority left in them. Benares now began to dominate Hindu thought and learning. So Shivaji had to negotiate with Gaga Bhatt of Benares, a learned representative of that school of Hindu law-givers. He was invited to Raigad to arrange the details in such a way as to suit the needs of the present moment as much as to conform to the ancient usage.”

(New History of The Marathas, Govind Sakharam Sardesai).