



TEXTBOOK REGIMES

a feminist critique of nation and identity



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This report is part of a larger study on school textbooks visualised and undertaken by Nirantar, in partnership with Women's Studies units and research organisations in Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh. In addition to the four state-specific studies, textbooks produced by national-level institutions, including private publishers, have been analysed by Nirantar. These five reports, as well as the main findings of the study, are available as separate publications.

The Women's Studies Research Centre (WSRC) at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda was established in July 1990. The Centre is now a permanent and integral part of the university system. Various dimensions of women's lives, such as health and nutrition, economic status, education and training, environment, housing, energy and the law have formed the terrain of its activities. The objectives of the WSRC M S University include:

- Incorporation of gender perspectives in mainstream disciplines through courses, seminars, workshops, and curriculum development programmes with different departments of the University.
- Gender sensitisation workshops for government agencies like the police, judiciary, health workers.
- Policy research for/with government agencies at the state and national levels has been a priority for the Centre.
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INTRODUCTION

Learning India, Learning Gujarat: Texts in Context

Nandini Manjrekar

In this study, we explore representations of gender and national identity in school textbooks used from Classes 1 through 10 in Gujarat. The sample covers books in Social Studies, Gujarati, Health and Physical Education, and Value Education, as well as textbooks and educational tracts published by the Vidyabharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan, the education wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which runs several schools in the state.¹ All except the last two categories are publications of the Gujarat State School Textbook Board, which has a monopoly over textbook production in the state. The large majority of schools in Gujarat are affiliated to the Gujarat Secondary Education Board. So school knowledge for children across a wide range of socio-economic groups—in government-run, private aided and non-aided schools—is the knowledge made available by these state-produced textbooks.² Textbooks are largely developed in Gujarati and translated into other languages. We have included both Gujarati and English books in our sample.

The sample of books analysed were published between 1993 and 2006, representing two rounds of textbook revision in the state. Revisions have generally been driven by bureaucratic considerations and centrally derived frameworks.³ While books dating to the late 1990s were based on the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, revised textbooks introduced in 2004 follow the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2000. At the time of the latest revisions, there was ideological convergence in the political agenda of education of the state and the Centre which was ruled by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led alliance under whose aegis the NCF 2000, based on the premise of ‘indigenising, nationalising and spiritualising’ education, was framed.

1 In 2002, Vidya Bharati was running 345 schools with 1,334 teachers and 34,655 students in Gujarat. Vidya Bharati Gujarat is recognised by the National Institute of Open Schooling to conduct examinations for Classes 3, 5 and 8 (*Vidya Bharati: Ek Parichay*, 2002). They are also involved with training of teachers, Vidya Sahayaks (para-teachers) and yoga teachers in Gujarat. Many of the books analysed are produced at the state level by Vidya Bharati, Gujarat.

2 A recent trend is for private aided and non-aided schools, mainly English-medium schools, to use books produced by private publishers in addition to the government textbooks, but these are generally more in the nature of supplementary books.

3 Vijaya Sherry Chand. P.G. and Geeta Amin-Choudhury (2004). *Reformulating the Early Primary Curriculum: Implementing a ‘Progressivist’ Approach*.

Gujarat is an interesting site for the study of how identities are constructed in school textbooks, given its history of identity politics based on the Hindutva worldview. In particular, it is significant to examine how, within the espousal of a narrative based on the conception of the Hindu nation, the hidden curriculum of gender is embedded within and mediated by dominant constructions of nation and national identity.

As Yagnik and Sheth (2005) have shown, the growth and influence of organisations affiliated to the Sangh Parivar in Gujarat is related to the social and political upheavals the state has witnessed since it came into being in 1960.⁴ Rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and struggles for status and political power among different castes and communities resulted in political instability and acted as a matrix for the consolidation of Hindutva politics. By the time the BJP came to power in the state in the mid-1990s, in the wake of considerable violence around caste-based reservation, communal riots, the Ramjanmabhoomi movement and the post-Babri Masjid demolition violence, Hindutva politics had become embedded in the social fabric of the state. Intensive mobilisation by right-wing Hindutva organisations prepared the ground for the grotesque violence against the minority Muslim community over the many dark months of 2002. Education came to be a recurring motif in narratives of communal violence, both before and during the carnage of 2002. Schools and colleges served as sites for mobilisation of sympathisers and cadre, circulation of rumours and threats of violence, and monitoring by the state and local organisations affiliated to the party, chiefly the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal.⁵

Textbooks in Gujarat have long been a site of contention between the state and women's and human rights activists. Pioneering studies and campaigns by the Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG), focusing on the representation of women in textbooks since the early 1980s, brought out the invisibility and exclusion of women and girls within school knowledge. For two decades, AWAG consistently lobbied with the State Textbook Bureau, expanding the debate in the public domain on women's representations in the curriculum through studies, articles in journals and the press, seminars and workshops with academics and activists.⁶ By the late 1990s, political developments in the state, primarily the emergence of a militant Hindutva presence supported by the newly elected BJP, saw a more intense engagement with school textbooks on the part of human rights groups, who viewed education as a site for the creation of communalised identities. In 1999, a study

4 Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth (2005), *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond*, pp. 252-275.

5 See *The Next Generation: In the Wake of the Genocide: A Report on the Impact of the Gujarat Pogrom on Children and the Young* July 2002, Submission by Prashant to UN Special Rapporteur On Freedom Of Religion Or Belief, 9 March 2008.

6 Some of AWAG's studies and writings include: 'Textbooks and Feminism' (1983); Shah, 'The Image of Self-employed Women in Gujarati Textbooks' (1987); 'An Assessment of the School Textbooks Published by Gujarat State School Textbook Board under NPE' (1988). Bakula Ghaswala, a women's activist from Valsad, also carried out a study (n.d.) on 'Portrayal of Women in Sanskrit Textbooks in Gujarat'.

by *Communalism Combat* showed how textbooks in Gujarat reflected a distinct Hindutva politics through, among other aspects, mythologisation of history, an exclusionary idea of India as a Hindu nation with non-Hindus being represented as others/foreigners, and valorisation of varna/caste.⁷ Prashant, a human rights group in Ahmedabad, brought to public attention the sharpening of these themes through comprehensive analysis of the revised (post 2004) textbooks. These reports and studies have been extensively used in national and international campaigns against the 2002 violence to illustrate how textbooks are promoting the political project of Hindutva in Gujarat.⁸

Several statements and positions in the Social Science textbooks that have been critiqued in these reports predate the coming to power of the BJP in the state. Examples include the depiction of ancient Indian culture as essentially Hindu (Class 5) and of Muslims, Parsis and Christians as ‘foreigners’, the valorisation of caste as the greatest gift by Aryans to mankind (Class 9), and the glorification of Hitler for lending dignity and prestige to the German government and instilling the ‘spirit of adventure’ in the common people (Class 10) – all from books published between 1993 and 1997. Although a more comprehensive understanding of the genealogies of these representations awaits more systematic study, it is deeply troubling that they reflect an ideological continuity among curriculum planners. A cursory look at the contents of earlier government Social Studies textbooks (since the 1970s) shows that a pool of chapters has been drawn on through repeated publications, with the content being spread over Classes 5 to 10 in different ways. Nonetheless, deeper analysis of the revised Social Studies (or, in the new nomenclature, ‘Social Science’, a science about the world that is to be ‘practised in life’, according to the Class 8 2004 text), shows a far more comprehensive attempt to recast Indian history within a decisively Hindu right-wing frame, closely reflecting the aims of the NCF 2000. For example, references to terrorism are strident and, even while pointing to insurgency in the Northeast and Naxalism as terrorist threats, these references unmistakably stereotype Muslims as terrorists and anti-national. Within this larger framework of cultural nationalism, cultural and developmental ideals are harmoniously married at the altar of the nation’s inexorable progress.

In a state proudly proclaimed by the BJP as the ‘laboratory of Hindutva’, one would have expected books revised after 2002 to promote aggressive communal positions, mirroring the politics of the everyday in contemporary Gujarat. However, in this study, we found the shifts to be, as

7 Teesta Setalvad (1999) ‘How Textbooks Teach Prejudice’, *Communalism Combat*, In April 2000, a Parliamentary committee examined the contents of Gujarat textbooks based on the study by Communalism Combat in 1999. Finding certain sections objectionable it directed the Gujarat government to delete these; this, however, was not done. See ‘The Constitutional Mandate and Education: A Report presented to the CAGE Sub-committee on ‘Regulatory Mechanisms for Textbooks and Parallel Textbooks Taught in Schools Outside the Government System’, 6-7 April 2005

8 <http://humanrightsindia.blogspot.com/2008/05/gujarat-textbooks-promoting-communalism.html>

the Vidyabharati proclaims, ‘*sukshma* (subtle) but also *sthula* (tangible)’.⁹ There is continuity in imagining the nation and its identity within an exclusionary and non-accommodative framework. It is apparent from the earlier study of Gujarat textbooks by Communalism Combat as well as this study that a communalised narrative of the nation has been a dominant perspective in school textbooks in the state.

Shadows of the Present

Our analysis reveals certain themes that illustrate how gender, class, caste, religion and nation tessellate and interweave in these books to construct a body of normative knowledge about one’s identity in the social, historical, political and economic entities called Gujarat and India. Common to textbooks of all subject areas is the prominence of the idea of Nation and the way in which it is constructed. The nation—the Motherland—is divine, eternal and bountiful. This special character of the nation is rooted in ‘our civilisation’ and its unique values, the essence of which are spiritual/religious. These religion-based values (from which all morality is derived) are at heart ‘Hindu’ values. Within the framework of these constructions of the nation, nationalism and citizenship are readily defined not only as stemming from religious values, but are also imbued with a religious quality. The emphasis in Civics lessons is on the idea of the strong, centrist, regulatory nation-state, embedded in a unique value system bequeathed by tradition. Mythology and epic, ubiquitous in history lessons as signifying a system of shared ideals, values and traditions, find their place in the modern definition of the Indian nation as well. As early as Class 5, the ideal nation, maintained by dutiful citizens, is likened to Ramrajya.

Morality derived from religion guides the thought and actions of historical actors through the ages, constructing the national subject, or what it ‘means’ to be Indian, in unique ways. A continuous thread that runs through and indeed links the books is the significance of religion—in the lives of individuals, communities and the imagined nation. Religion and religious faith inform human qualities of simplicity, asceticism and social justice as well as action/resistance to injustice. The emotive appeal to nationalism is based on assertions and images that are spiritual/religious testimonies of ‘inner strength’, purity and religiosity, fired by a social consciousness drawn from religious faith. In the Std.7 Social Studies textbook, we see the territorial nation sanctified by patriotism—*punyatirth* as a land marked by a ‘special kind of holiness’ (p. 105). Nationalist history is imbued with religious imagery: thus, Jallianwallah Bagh is referred to as ‘a place of pilgrimage’ (p. 82); the Dandi March being reminiscent of Rama’s progress towards Panchavati (p. 87) is what justifies it being called a ‘yatra’.

The healthy mind-body is essential to the well-being of the Nation. In the Health and Physical Education books, and even more so in the

⁹ Vidya Bharati: *Ek Parichay* (2002), p.14.

Vidyabharati books, the body is the site and basis, physically and metaphorically, of the healthy mind. The healthy mind is defined in terms of morality—a clean and healthy body fosters a clean (morally pure) mind. Moral/spiritual power is greater than bodily power, and the body is ultimately the medium through which righteousness of action is to be attained. In striving for health, the good citizen is contributing to the nation, and is urged to emulate ‘great leaders’, who were ever ready to sacrifice themselves for the good of the nation. There is awe and respect for the body of the nationalist ‘leader’—a suffering body which may have been broken by incarceration, but emerges stronger in spirit.

The ‘ancient’, defined through epic, myth and legend, privileges *Kshatriyadharma* as the timeless tradition of an imagined collective Aryan past. Such a reading enables the glorification of caste as a unique, stable and uniquely ‘Indian’ invention of social order, referred to as the ‘precious gift of the Aryans’. It also allows for a continuous narrative involving ‘Vedic’ women as models of Indian womanhood. Mythical women, like Sita, Draupadi and Apala are drawn into the narrative of the nation, ennobled by sacrifice and a sense of duty. Rich in symbolism drawn from such models, women in history lessons emerge as models of fortitude within the family and society.

While there is token acknowledgement of gender equality, especially in the higher classes, in the actual representations of men, women, boys and girls, there can be little doubt about the ‘fact’ that social roles are gendered—representations that serve to essentialise gender inequalities. The social roles of women and girls are circumscribed by the boundaries of patriarchy, and there is no sincere attempt whatsoever to question these boundaries. In the public sphere, women are invisibilised through under-representation as well as the assignation of subsidiary roles.

The project of the nation that develops is one that naturalises and ennobles women’s reproductive roles, thereby granting women an irreplaceable role in moral reproduction. Mothers are the repository and pivot of emotional unity in the family, as well as being the primary transmitters and reproducers of morality and tradition. The mothers of ‘nationalist’ men are represented as crucial to their moral and patriotic development. For example, Jijabhai, Shivaji’s mother, brought him up as a ‘fearless, adventurous, self-respecting and patriotic youth by reciting to him stories of bravery from the Ramayana and Mahabharata and the Puranas’ (Class 8, 2004). Against this background, ‘Creative Nationalism’ (*krutisheel deshbhakti*) is posited as an educational ideal for the Hindu girl by the Vidyabharati books

While women are assigned inspirational roles as nurturers and reproducers of moral values, man retains the hegemonic role in history and the development of civilisation. From prehistoric to contemporary times, history is the saga of men—as cavemen, kings, warriors, sages, inventors, leaders, producers and consumers. There is little reference

to women outside the contexts of community and nation. In public institutions there is token depiction of women (as voters, for example). In representations of work and 'occupations', women are largely invisibilised in productive work, as well as in physical activities and sports. Women's empowerment is presented as a developmental ideal, but primarily restricted within the limits of their roles within the patriarchal family. The Class 10 (2006) Social Science textbook, for example, extols a 'harmonious partnership' to strengthen families and goes on to add that women 'have to be protected against sexual diseases: it is necessary to see that they do not fall victim to frequent abortions. Their husbands should help them during such situations' (p. 206).

Veneration of the ancient asserts the innate, organic and indisputable stability of the Indian nation. The nation is a metaphysical boia, capable of simultaneously absorbing all cultures and yet able to retain a robust unity due to its strong traditions. Ruptures in this narrative, such as the 'Muslim invasions' of the medieval period, are attributed to distortions in religious faith and practice, a period of decline within Hindu society that ultimately led to British colonial expansion and consolidation. What emerges through these narratives of subjugation and revival is the possibility of a stronger, unified Hindu society, made possible through reform from within to build spiritual unity for a stronger nation. It is interesting that even colonial rule is credited with enabling 'spiritual uniformity' in Indians, leading to the growth and spread of nationalism (Class 9, 2005).

The narration of the nation is a masculinist one. The national leader is the proverbial man of character, committed to building a strong State. Strength of character is to be admired and venerated in male leaders who can define and steer the destiny of a strong nation. The Aryans, Kshatriyas, Shivaji, Harshavardhana, nineteenth century British administrators and the strong leaders of the Indian nationalist movement are all cast as men who made it possible for the modern Indian nation to arrive. The strong male leader guiding the destiny of his times is a trope found in all the books, punctuated by the occasional presence of the heroic nationalist woman in all ages, most frequently as the mother of a heroic man. The association of morality with strong male leadership intersects with notions of righteousness towards women, making for selective representations of iconic men who respect and safeguard the dignity of women. Against the Muslim Other, Shivaji, described in glorious terms in history lessons as having come from a state that could counter the Mughals because of its religious traditions, is shown refusing the 'gift' of a Muslim woman captured by his subedar (Social Studies Class 6, p.72).

Integration into the national-civilisational ethos as represented in the Gujarat textbooks demands acceptance of sameness over difference and emotional, spiritual and physical allegiance to the national (implicitly Hindu) spirit. In History textbooks, Muslims, first identified as 'outsiders', are at various moments placed outside and within the

nation, depending on whether as individuals they are capable of being assimilated within the discourse of nationalism (like Ashfaqullah Khan), or stand outside it (Sir Syed Ahmed and Jinnah). In recent books, a conscious association is made between terrorism and Muslim identity.

However, despite—or precisely because of—the essence of Indian civilisation and nation being Hindu, it embodies the ideal ‘globalised’ nation, its transcendental and universal values conferring a tolerance which accommodates diverse ‘other’ cultures and influences, and guarantees peaceful coexistence with other nations. This open, all-encompassing nature of ‘Indian civilisation’, its unique global identity, is emphasised through repeated reference to ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’. This powerful—and uniquely Indian—metaphor of the family permeates discussions of India’s relations with other cultures, societies and nations. As mentioned earlier, breaks in this cultural/civilisational monolith, in the form of invasions, were only possible because of internal disunity and ignorance of tradition. The modern Indian nation-state is rooted in this ancient and enduring civilisational construct. The explicit conflation of this idealised civilisation with Hindu religious imagery and ‘Hindu’ values lends itself exceptionally well to mythologisation and the blurring of boundaries between history and mythology.

Present-day anxieties about identity, culture and the threats to these posed by modernity and global cultural influences surface repeatedly, and traditional practices, values and ‘the wisdom of our ancient sages’ are emphasised as a bulwark against, and antidote to, the ills of unchecked modernity. The authority of elders and the importance of respecting it is a recurring theme, and adult-centric prescriptions for the ideal (normatively male) child invoke both tradition and modernity. At the same time, modernity has to be accommodated and the shibboleths of the modern Indian State have to be acknowledged, and an uneasy and at times contradictory resolution is achieved. Thus, the normative harmonious extended family coexists with the bureaucratically sanctioned happy small family; there is a seamless merging of tradition (‘man embodies elements of the ancient age’) and modernity, and awareness of traditions enables modern nationalist consciousness. Veneration of the ancient as an organising principle of the present is matched by celebration of technology as a way of establishing India’s dominance in the post-globalised world economy. Nationalist discourse on development embodies the rhetoric of inexorable progress through material changes even as it constructs tradition as providing continuity and stability to the nation.

It is within the context of these constructions of the nation that we looked at representations of Gujarat. Gujarat’s identity is subsumed within the broader narration of the nation. In History and Literature lessons, the narrative of Gujarat as a region hinges on Hindu kingdoms, mainly through the iconic king Siddhraj Jaysinh. Children are introduced to an idea of Gujarat in Class 5 through the poem ‘Jai Jai Garvi Gujarat’. This quintessential paean to Gujarati asmita or pride, by

the nineteenth century social reformer, savant and litterateur Narmad, evokes an emotive nationalism through the depiction of a prosperous land sanctified and watched over by the gods. The reverence with which the river Narmada is referred to in the Gujarati textbooks transforms into nationalist pride in present-day Gujarat's Sardar Sarovar project, an icon of economic development and 'progress'.

There are references in the History and Literature books to Gujarat's location in nationalist history, mainly through lessons on Gandhi and Patel. Gandhi emerges as a venerated, if effete, spiritual rather than political leader of the masses, bringing morality into the nationalist movement. Patel is cast as more of a son of the soil—the *Lohpurush* from Gujarat who forged the territorial unity of the modern Indian nation. In the revised Social Science textbooks reviewed in this report, particularly the one of Class 8 which deals with the nationalist movement, there is a discernible shift towards privileging militant forms of nationalism, and a subtle displacement of Gandhi. While Gandhi emerges as the moral educator of the nation, embodying religious/moral virtue and spiritual strength, his role in positing a viable alternative politics to that of power and violence is not emphasised. Overall, aggressive nationalism is promoted as a model of anti-colonial resistance, as well as an imperative against terrorism in modern times.

The focus on Gujarat in the new textbooks is more conscious and deliberate than in the older ones, both in terms of Gujarat's place in these histories of nationalist engagement and its positioning as a state with a vulnerable geography. In the context of terrorism, the 'national' boundary of Gujarat is depicted as threatened because of its proximity to Pakistan. The Class 8 textbook asserts: 'Gujarat is a border state. Its land and sea boundaries touch the boundaries of Pakistan which is like a den of terrorism' (p. 94). A vigilant citizenry is posited as necessary to counter these threats to the nation.

These narrations constitute the matrix within which textbooks in Gujarat develop in students an idea of the nation, society and citizenship. The accommodation of 'traditional values' with the demands of modernity and the official positions of the Indian State is not always without contradictions, but the two are by and large reconciled within the framework of a great ancient civilisation coming to take its rightful place in the modern world.



THE REVERED NATION SOCIAL SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS IN GUJARAT

The Past in the Present Reading History Lessons

The lessons analysed here relate to History in the Social Studies textbooks of Classes 5 to 10. Both older books of Classes 5, 6 and 7 and revised versions, published since 2004, of Classes 8, 9 and 10 have been analysed here. A gap of around twelve years separates the older editions from the revised ones: an era of significant changes in the social, economic and political spheres of the country and the world, and of course, in Gujarat. In our analysis, we attempt to track some of the significant shifts in the new books.

The Classes 5-7 books, published between 1993 and 1998, claim to be competency-based books based on Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs). From 2004, with the publication of the revised Class 8 textbook, the

nomenclature has changed from Social Studies to Social Science. The underlying rationale for this change of nomenclature is not clear; however, the textbook for Class 8, based on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2000, incorporates ‘Social Studies and Social Reconstruction’ (p. 1). Indeed the first of the Social Science books to adopt this nomenclature, that of Class 8 (2004), states that ‘... the subject helps [the] young students to understand the changes that occur with the changing times in the society in which they live and ‘provide every citizen, systematic and scientific knowledge about the social organization, political structure and economic set up of a society ...’ (p. 1). In keeping with the earlier tradition of incorporating values within the study of History (preface to Class 7, 1999, p. v) and the idea of teaching History in a manner to inculcate feelings of love, pride, duty for country and respect saints (Class 6, p. vi), the first of the new textbooks speaks of producing citizens ‘of the world fit for the twenty-first century, keeping in mind the philosophy of education accepted by Gujarat, India and the World’ (Class 8, p. 1). It is interesting that this shift in terminology is also accompanied by the removal of Civics and Geography from Class 8 onwards.

The design of the History curriculum in the books follows a broadly chronological approach, with some sharp conceptual shifts between the earlier books and those revised and introduced in schools post 2002 (Classes 8-10 analysed here) which claim to follow the NCERT guidelines, specifically the NCF 2000. Broadly, ‘ancient’ History is taught in Class 5, ‘medieval’ in Class 6 and ‘modern’ from Class 7. The Class 8 book focuses on the nationalist and post-independence period, the Classes 9 and 10 books have chapters on ‘ancient heritage’ and also have chapters on India and the world. There is a focus on the contemporary in these books, particularly with regard to current issues like terrorism, but without losing the thread of a distinctive discourse of ancient and supreme glory that is brought into all discussions.

The Politicisation of Memory

What does the ‘politicisation of memory’ mean? Any account of the past that presupposes a ‘telos’, a ‘foundation’, and thereby erases all the differences and silences, all dissent, constitutes a basis for the politicisation of memory. In textbooks, this is not a linear or smooth process. While reflecting on extant political contexts and their anxieties, textbooks often draw from an available pool of earlier textbook lessons, and so the representation of history often becomes uneven and sometimes distorted, with newer political agendas co-existing with older ones.

Taking the 2002 carnage as a defining moment in the social history of Gujarat, we often use the term ‘post-2002 books’ as shorthand for underlying concerns about whether and how it has influenced the production of ‘official knowledge’ in the state. In the study of the Social Studies/Sciences books, both older (1992-1993) and revised (2004-2006),

we examine threads of continuity and concerns around constructions of national identity and how these constructions address gender. Was the telos of the nation different in the older and new (post-2002) books? Were there new imaginations of national identity and women in the nation? These were some questions that informed our analysis of the books.

Representations of the Nation

Two distinct representations of the nation dominate all texts. The first is the timeless, civilisational, all-encompassing, tolerant and compassionate nation, defined by antiquity and authenticity of tradition drawn from religious faith, strong in resolve and embraced by the world as a model of spiritual strength. The second dominant trope in discussions of the nation is of one that defines itself through the melding of unique traditions with a modernity principally directed towards achieving global economic and technological dominance. The approach echoes late-nineteenth-century claims to Indian superiority in the realm of culture and spirituality, the strength of which stemmed from women's roles as cultural reproducers of values and traditions. In the books we have analysed, the pedagogic project of teaching History is to present a harmonious, homogenised past, one that has resonance in the present through the presentation of Indian culture as essentially peace-loving, tolerant and assimilative. The marked absence of conflict between the two ideas in real and everyday forms elides the many questions that students may have based on experience and exposure in other arenas of their lives.

Students are socialised through History lessons into a consciousness devoid of any historical sensibility, that ascribes all lived and perceived realities as part of a continuous, uninterrupted flow from the ancient to the contemporary. As early as Class 5, the concept of democratic governance is introduced as having existing in the ganarajyas, which were the precursors to modern democracy in India. A constant parallel is drawn between these ancient ganarajyas and the Indian nation as it stands today. Broad principles of democracy, such as equality, the removal of all distinctions of caste and creed are also stated to be organising principles of the ganarajyas. 'The ganarajyas had a democratic set-up, where decisions were taken after due discussions among different sections of people. There was also voting' (Class 5, p. 66). The teacher is expected to stress that 'In the ancient ganarajyas, there prevailed a system of government which was similar to our democratic system' (teacher's note, p. 78). Students are expected to understand that a desired outcome of a democracy is not that it is beneficial to people in real terms, but that it is the basis of a strong nation: 'A state in which the administration is run according to the people's will, and the citizens abide by their duties, is always formidable in its strength. No other state can easily defeat it' (teachers' note, Class 5, p. 78).

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 Mahavira, the Maurya and the post-Gupta periods and the early Muslim period. Right from the coming of the Aryans to India (around 2000 B.C.) to the end of the Hindu supermacy (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 civilizations 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.

Pic. 1

noble, liberal and tolerant monarchies and the progressive democratic republics of Ancient India' (p. 75) (Pic. 1).

There is an understanding that Ancient History can only be told as stories to children. From the earliest Social Studies textbooks developed in the 1970s (some of which we have seen) to those that have come out more recently, all texts employ the story-telling mode to teach History. In the Class 5 text reviewed for this study, the chapters are written in a narrative form, many reading like parables. Virtues of self-respect, valour, sacrifice and repentance loom large in the lessons. This paints a picture of India that was glorious, and where men were ready to sacrifice their lives for the nation. The representation of life in those times—centring on kings and dynasties; ordinary peoples' lives receive no attention—makes ample use of hyperbole to inspire awe, wonder and also, in no small measure for a child of ten, stupefaction. Everything is perfect in the ganarajyas and the large empires. In the field of governance, welfare of the State and enhancing trade and commerce were given a central position in this age. Literature flourished, the ancient libraries of Takshashila and the learned men of the age were held in great regard; poets like Kalidas were given a respectable position. This is the valuable and precious heritage that India can proudly claim. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is referred to as a 'text on the principles of the art of governing [that] is regarded as the most valuable book even today in our country as also abroad' (Class 5, p. 98). This period was also considered as one when cultural development took place. The teacher of the text is told: 'There are many possibilities for cultural development within the framework of a large Empire' (teachers' note, p. 99).

The strong nation, able to withstand all assaults upon its sovereignty and integrity, is a persistent trope in representations of the nation in all the texts. Strong leaders are necessary to preserve the unity of the nation. In the Class 5 text, the valour and bravery of Ashoka, Chandragupta, Harshavardhan and Shatkarni—kings who fought external aggression to save their kingdoms—are described. The Kalinga war is noted, but not discussed; questions around Ashoka's renunciation on the battlefield remain unaddressed. It is significant that teachers are instructed to focus on the power of united forces to fight aggression. 'People realised

Similar examples are found in the Class 9 (1992) textbook. This notes that ancient India provided models of 'democratic systems as well as those of beneficent and benevolent monarchy. The "Samiti" and the "Sabha" of the Vedic period can be compared to today's Parliament and Gram Panchayats respectively ... Certain features of the Constitution of Independent India are borrowed from the

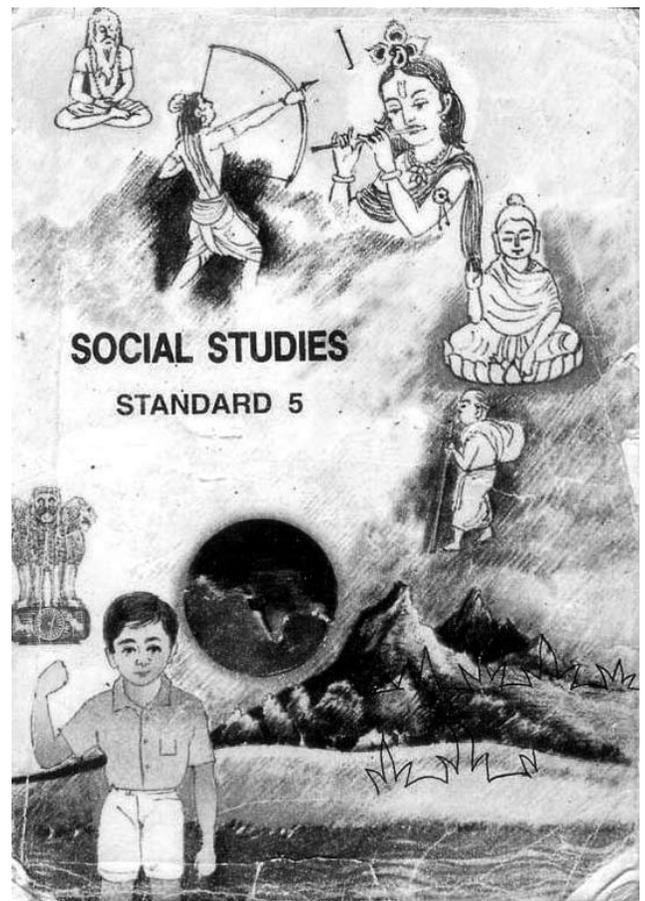
the need for having one unified large kingdom in place of these smaller states, in the wake of Alexander's invasion' (Class 5, 'Chandragupta and Chanakya', teachers' note, p. 99). 'The well-being of India as a nation lies in a united effort by the smaller states to fight foreign powers and in a joint endeavour for the welfare of the people. In this context, our culture has always opposed the notions that a large power hungry state could occupy another state by force, or could destroy the lives of innocent people' (Class 5, 'Emperor Ashok', teachers' note, p. 104).

Ancient India: Mythology as History

The ancient past is discussed in lessons in the Classes 5 and 9 (1992) textbooks. The Class 10 (2006) textbook also has antiquity at its core. The historical narration of the nation in the textbooks is one that is based on a normativised notion of mythology as history and 'culture' as the core of national identity. Conflating the 'early' with the 'ancient', and both with mythological pasts, is a conscious strategy to develop the idea of India as a nation that has progressed inexorably from a glorious past to an equally glorious present. With remarkable deftness, all the textbooks conflate categories of 'The Ancient', 'Vedic', 'Aryan' and 'Hindu', naturalising and thereby establishing as official school knowledge the idea of the cultural essence of the nation as Hindu (Pic. 2).

The Class 5 textbook explicitly aims to instill in students an appreciation of the legacy of Indian culture. Some of the objectives of the textbook are: 'introducing Vedic literature ("which is an expression of Indian Culture"), elucidating the respectable status of women in Indian culture, imbibing the basic values of Indian culture expressed by the narratives of the epics, namely, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and by the main characters in them, and learning the significance of non-violence and justice as a value in the Indian way of life' (p. iii). The preface to the book goes on to state that 'The aim in teaching history is to mould the character of the pupils as ideal citizens, to inculcate in them sense of respect for Indian culture, to make them feel proud of their country as a nation' (p. vii); and that this can be best achieved through the story-telling method that can engage the sympathetic attention of every

Pic. 2



child ‘... also the story-telling manner again underlines the values to be imparted through history more effectively’ (p. vii).

According to the textbook, the epics ‘are the most valuable works in our cultural tradition. They contain a wealth of insights into problems of truth, religion, and morality’ (p. 21). The Vedic Age represents the ancient national idyll of morality and justice, heroism, sacrifice and valour, where women were respected for their knowledge and spirited resistance to authority. Students are not provided any frame to understand the historical significance or place of the epics, apart from being told that the ‘Epic Age’ was approximately from 800 BC to 600 BC. Nine of nineteen chapters in the History section (of the Social Science books) are dedicated to stories from the epics: it is significant that the story of empowered Vedic women Apala and Maitreyi inaugurate the lessons in History. Other lessons include the stories of Nachiketa, Ram and Bharat, ‘Shri Rama: The Example of a True Kshatriya’, Vikarna, Karna and Kunti, ‘Shri Krishna and Arjun: The Teachings of the Gita’, and Krishna-Sudama (Pic. 3). The trope of good vs evil, spectacular divine interventions, demons and gods add to the charm of epic stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Blind faith and miracles also find place in the textbook within the narrative approach. The mythologised past presents heroes and heroines as worthy of emulation: belief supplants wonder as each chapter deals with superior moral judgement and universal, inviolable truth. Ram, Krishna, Laxman become the icons of heroism and valour; Sita, the ideal woman. The valorisation of Kshatriyas as models of brave and chivalrous manhood has specific implications for constructions of gender, as will be discussed in a later part of this report.

Pic. 3



At no point in the enchanting narration of epics and epic heroes is the distinction or disassociation made between legend and historical text, lending complete credibility to the notion of mythology as history. In doing so, moreover, the textbook serves to establish, at the very outset of children’s exposure to History as a discipline, the essential Hindu past of the Indian nation, the significance of religion as a mover of history, and the interchangeability of history with culture. The chapters on ancient Indian civilisation in the Class 9 (1992) text assume that Vedic Hinduism is the foundation of Indian civilisation, societal structure of Vedic Hinduism being its core constituent. The other noticeable aspect of these chapters is that they

homogenise the ancient period and Hindu identity: there is only one way of being in the world. Homeogeneity, respecting tradition and living life according to the prescribed norms is emphasised. The discourses engendered by such a framing of history are repeatedly seen in the textbooks analysed. A sentence from the very first page of the new Class 10 (2006) textbook makes this clear: ‘historians and thinkers believe that India is the country from where the ray of culture originated. It is the only culture in the world which spreads realization of “Sat” (truth), “Chit” (concentration) and “Anand” (pleasure)’ (p. 1).

Aryanisation of the Ancient

In all the textbooks, the nation is represented as having been built on the foundations of Hindu scriptural texts and myths. The ancient, the period from the dawn of humankind to the end of the Gupta period, is underlined by the moral cosmology of the ‘Vedic’, presented as a conflict-free space, unique and glorious, a quasi-utopia. Of particular significance is the positioning of Aryans, used as a racialised category throughout the texts, as original inhabitants of the region, the ‘ancient Indians’. When discussing ‘ancient Indian civilization’ these textbooks build a structure on the twin foundations of the Vedas and the Aryans. ‘Ancient India’ is presented as a conflict-free space and ancient Indian civilisation is described as a unique civilisation, a ‘metaphysical boar’ that swallows every tradition, culture and community.

The Classes 5 and 9 (1992) textbooks speak of the important contribution of Aryans to Indian civilisation; the arrival of Aryans, their colonies; Vedic literature, administration, social life and economic life. Aryans assume an unquestioned superiority through the construction of the non-Aryan as a vague, unidentified category: ‘During this [the Vedic] period, the Aryans kept themselves at a distance from non-Aryans and this led to conflicts between them. But later, the Aryans thought it was wise to establish friendly relations with the non-Aryans.’ Soon, ‘the Aryans spread out from Punjab to the plains of the rivers Ganga and the Yamuna. But they did not go beyond the ranges of the Vindhya Mountains’ (Class 5, p. 2).

In the Class 9 (1992) text, the *Ramayana* is described as the story of conflict and reconciliation of Aryan and ‘non-Aryan’ cultures. The Dravidians are portrayed as peace-loving and used to a life of comfort. It is this aspect, according to the text, that led to their defeat. Also, Aryans had different kinds of weapons, horses and chariots (p. 39). In a gesture towards Aryan domination by force and the curious acquiescence to this domination, the non-Aryans are said to have ‘cooperated’ with the Aryans (p. 50).

Aryans are presented as the founding fathers of all ancient civilisations. Even the Greek and Persian civilisations, according to the Class 9 text, belonged to ‘Aryan stock’ (p. 45). The text says, ‘the Vedic literature

The 'Varna' System : The varna system was a precious gift of the Aryans to the mankind. 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.

Pic. 4

principles of life' (p. 79). Vedas are presented as an integral part of Indian culture, implying that Vedic culture is Indian culture. This excludes many other groups and practices from the fold of Indian culture. The religious life of Aryans is presented as simple and pure. In the discussion on philosophy, the text asserts that 'worldly pleasures and happiness were no longer regarded to be important'. 'Moksha was the ultimate goal of life' (p. 49). The acceptance of yoga by Europe and America is presented as proof of the superiority of this ancient system. Apart from literature and philosophy, the Aryans bequeathed to India *varnashrama*, described as an 'ideal system' and a 'unique social structure based on a systematic study of human life' (pp. 29, 76) (Pic. 4).

is the oldest literature produced by the Aryan races anywhere in the world' (p. 40). The Vedas and Upanishads are 'the fundamental principles of Indian Culture ... which explain the eternal

The 'Indian' past was a repository of grandeur and this was solely because of the Aryans. Aryan culture is presented as the initiator of the process of a synthesis of cultures that continues to this day: 'Thus, "the typical Indian culture" was born' (pp. 45, 50). The lesson ends with the assertion that 'as time passes the barriers of differences between the Aryans and non-Aryans vanished from the Indian society' (p. 50). But at the same time, Indian culture is 'Aryanised', with the text attributing every worthwhile aspect of this culture, fraught as the category itself is, to the Aryans.

Collapsed Categories

If Aryans inaugurated the birth of Indian culture, the Kshatriyas represent its defenders. In the texts, these two categories, along with the 'Vedic', pre-empt all successive narrations of national glory, intersecting significantly with the idea of caste as a uniquely Indian system of social order. The Class 9 (1992) textbook asserts that 'the varna system was a precious gift of the Aryans to the [sic] mankind' (p. 75). Although the latter part of the lesson talks about the corruption that crept into the system, the lesson ends by reiterating the caste (although it uses the term 'class') hierarchy: 'The brahmanas were regarded as the highest class while the shudras were treated as the lowest class. These distinctions have persisted in spite of the attempts made by the reformers to remove them. Yet the importance of the varna system as an ideal system of building the social and the economic structure of a society cannot be overlooked' (p. 29).

Kshatriyas and the 'Aryans' are principal characters in the Class 5 text, mainly in the first two sections: the Vedic Age (1200 BC to 700 BC) and

the Age of the Epics (from 1000 BC to 600 BC approximately). The prologue to the section on the Vedic Age states that the Vedas are the oldest scriptures of the Aryans. The family system, it adds, was mainly patriarchal, but women also held respectable positions. 'During the Vedic era, the life of the Aryans was simple. Caste distinctions between Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras were not rigid. The religion was related to nature and was simple in character. In later times, however, the practice of yagna and other rituals increased' (p. 2).

Kshatriyas and the virtues of their caste dominate lessons in the discussion on epics. *Kshatriyadharmā* represents Indian traditions of the glorious past. Rama, the icon of Indian culture and a Kshatriya, is presented as the proud upholder of culture and a strong State, a symbol of the duties to be borne by members of his caste: 'I am a Kshatriya, a person of the warrior caste, and I consider it my duty to protect the lives of the rishis' (Class 5, p. 34) (Pic. 5). There is repeated mention of *vardan* (boon), *vachan* (promise), *parampara* (tradition) and *Kshatriyadharmā*. Values like respecting elders, respecting one's guru and other sages, friendship, love and sacrifice are represented continuously in the textbook.

Sitaji was, however, not convinced. "My Lord, I fully respect your high sense of duty, your code of honour as a member of the warrior caste, as a Kshatriya. But at the moment you are no longer a king. You are a dweller in the forest. How can you bear arms?"

Shri Rama again fell silent for a while on hearing the words of by Sitaji. He then said, gently but in a firm voice. "O daughter of King Janak, you are trying to dissuade me from my true path, because of your deep love for me. You are worried about me. But, O Janaki, a Kshatriya never retreats from his path of duty, even for fear of death. I find that it is my dharma, to free this Dandakaranya, which is the abode of so many rishis from all fear of the demons. The society is kept in a state of good health through the penances done by the rishis. To kill the demons who trouble these rishis, is not a sin on any count. On the contrary, it is the duty of the Kshatriyas. Yesterday I took the vow of going into exile and entering the forest. But our vow to protect the lives of those who come to us for help has been age-old. This vow is a part of our duty given to us from birth. For a Kshatriya, whether, he is seated on the throne or dwells in the forest, it's all the same for him. It is the duty of a Kshatriya to protect those who turn to him for help."

Self-Study

1. Answer the following questions :
 - (i) Housewives, help in upkeeping family traditions. Explain this through the character of Sita.
 - (ii) What were the vows made by Shri Rama in his role of a kshatriya ?
 - (iii) What does Shri Rama, who always loved his subjects, say on hearing the plea made by the rishis ?
 - (iv) What inspiration do you get from the example of the life of Rama as given in this lesson ?

Pic. 5

Encapsulated/Excluded Identities

The notion of India as a multicultural, all-accepting and tolerant nation is emphasised in the textbooks. The importance of religion and respecting it are treated as great virtues. A striking feature is the acceptance of different religious faiths, all of which are seen as derived from that essence of India, Hinduism, and encompassed by its tenets. The Class 5 section on ganarajyas introduces two important religious figures—Buddha and Mahavir—who are brought within the Hindu fold. The Class 9 (1992) book states: 'the two religions were established with the express intent of purifying the Hindu society' (p. 81). India is projected as the all-accepting nation with a generosity that is civilisational: 'India is the cradle of Buddhism. But the religion preached by Gautam Buddha spread to other countries including China and Japan' (Class 5, p. 71). Penance, perseverance and undertaking of hardship are qualities reiterated in the descriptions of Buddha's and

Mahavir's lives. 'The king [Shatkarni] himself followed the Brahmin faith, and yet was always tolerant towards all religions. King Shatkarni gave large donations to Buddhist monasteries and built rest houses or Viharas for Buddhist monks. He promoted the Buddhist faith with equal zeal' (Class 5, p. 108). Similarly, 'King Harshvardhana's father was a devotee of Lord Shiva. Prince Rajyavardhan, his elder brother, was a Buddhist. King Harshvardhan worshipped Shiva, the Sun and the Buddha' (p. 118).

In the Class 9 (1992) text, the discussion under religion includes Karma, rebirth, theory of incarnation, penance and celibacy. The central importance of the concept of Moksha is described. The Vedas and Upanishads, the textbook says, 'explain the eternal principles of life' (p. 79). Indian culture, according to the textbook, was completely soaked in religion. There is no space for atheists or non-believers. Not surprisingly, the Charak school of thought—a counter discourse—does not find mention.

Descriptions of different religions have always been a feature of the Gujarat Social Studies textbooks. Earlier books in Gujarat had chapters on all the major world religions. In the chapter 'Christianity and Islam: Rise and Growth', in the Class 9 (1992) book, Christianity has been discussed positively. The text takes note of the humanitarian role of the Church; conversion is alluded to, but in a benign way, 'particularly in the backward places, force was used in converting non-Christians to Christianity, but these were exceptions rather than the rule' (p. 69). In the discussion on Islam, Prophet Mohammed is described as 'religious minded and honest from his childhood' (p. 70). The rest of the chapter

Pic. 6a

deals with the Prophet's *hijrat* to Madina, the main tenets of Islam and the spread of Islam. Sufi saints are also discussed briefly: 'the Hindu saints and "Sufi" Muslims hold similar views' (p. 72).

The assimilative feature of Indian civilisation is consistently portrayed. Right from the Greeks to the Mughals, Pathans and Turks to the English—all are portrayed as assimilated and digested by Indian civilisation. This is how the problem of colonialism has been resolved. There is no mention of violence (overt/covert) used by colonisers. Muslims are not presented as the 'other', but at the same time their distinct identity is denied. It is clear that the text does have any intentions of providing

Exercises

1. Answer the following questions briefly :

- (1) Explain the importance of the Varna and the Ashrama systems as part of the cultural heritage of ancient India.
- (2) Give examples to prove that synthesis and tolerance are part of the cultural heritage of ancient India.
- (3) Explain the importance of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagwad Gita as part of the cultural heritage of ancient India.
- (4) Give a brief outline of the contribution made by ancient India in the fields of Science and Astronomy.
- (5) Write a brief note on the contribution made by ancient India to the fields of Sculpting and Architecture.

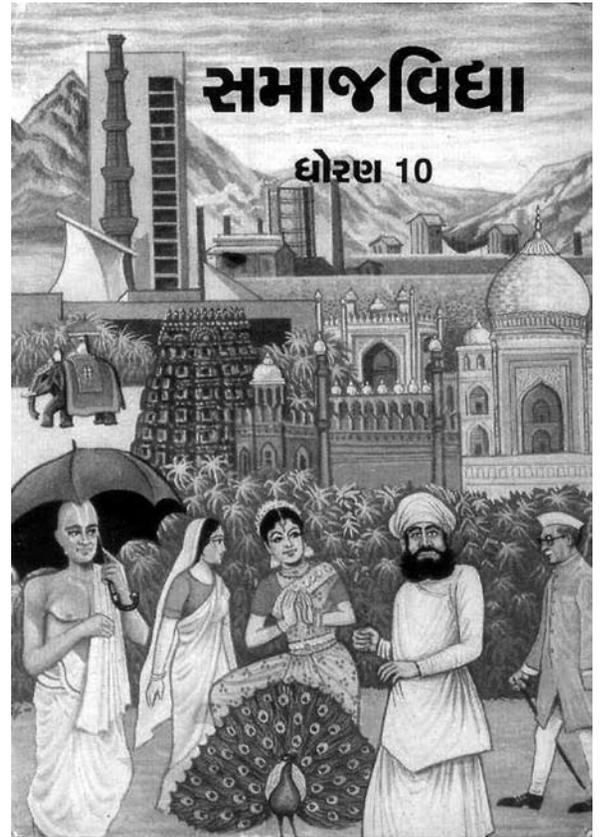
2. Put a tick-mark (✓) against each correct statement and a cross (×) against each incorrect statement.

- (1) There were only monarchies in ancient India.
- (2) Students studied at the Gurukuls in ancient India.
- (3) The Upanishads explain the eternal values of life.
- (4) The Bhagwad Gita preaches only the path of devotion.
- (5) Arya Bhatta was a great poet and a writer.
- (6) Tripitika is literature related to Hinduism.

space to competing narratives of other cultures; they are simply assimilated. The effects of such assimilation, or transcendent possibilities of syncretism, are not described (Class 9, 1992, chapters 3, 4, 5, 7). It is stressed that only Indian culture survives, while other ancient cultures (Egypt, Mesopotamia) have disappeared. The theme of this lesson is the assimilative tendencies of Indian culture which is 'peace-loving' and 'tolerant'. At the same time, it is pointed out, Indian culture has not lost its identity. Thus, Indian culture has assimilated different tribes or cultures (p. 78) and yet has not lost its 'unique' character. On Jainism, Hemchandracharya is mentioned as a great scholar, but curiously, he is not claimed as a Gujarati. After 'appropriating' and assimilating perhaps everything, the lesson ends with the following quote: 'the Indian culture therefore is a fine example of unity in diversity and a unique cultural synthesis' (p. 84) (Pics. 6a & 6b).

Antiquity and Greatness: Heritage as Rote

Heritage in the sense of collective ownership of histories is a powerful concept that drives nationalisms. In these books the idea of heritage is selective and so remote as to become a mere roster of names of people, places and things to be remembered for—as the books would have it—eternity. The 'ancient' as a historical period is understood as the period from the 'dawn of history' to the death of Harsha in 647 AD (Class 8, p. 4), or as marking a rupture in a narrative of otherwise smooth and faultless absorption of faiths, coincident with the coming of the Mughals: the Class 9 text, in a chapter on the cultural heritage of ancient India, defines ancient Indian culture as 'right from the coming of the Aryans (around 2000 BC), to the end of Hindu supremacy around (1200 AD)' (p. 75). The Class 8 (2004) textbook states that by the time of the death of Harsha, 'the development of Indian Culture had reached its pinnacle. World famous scholars in the fields of Literature, Arts, Science, Architecture ... Works created by them arouse a feeling of pride in the minds of Indians even today' (p. 4). Chapter 3 of the Class 9 (1992) book deals with the Harappan civilization. This chapter opens with a bold assertion: 'a unique civilization of another type was developing on the banks of the river Indus also' (p. 29). While claiming antiquity as the most significant factor in deciding greatness—'the ancientness [sic] and grandeur of Indian civilization has been proved beyond any doubt and Indian history has been traced further back by nearly 2500 years' (p. 29)—there is no effort to establish uniqueness; the only 'gift' of Harappa



Pic. 6b

is its town planning (p. 38). (Indeed, after the discussion on three great civilisations in a preceding chapter, the Harappan civilisation does not present itself as particularly unique.)

The Class 10 (2006) textbook, which, going by its factual and language errors on virtually every page, was brought out in a hurry to meet deadlines to satisfy the requirements of a refashioned Social Science curriculum in the post-2002 scenario in the state, obsessively dwells on antiquity as a justification for high status as a Hindu nation. In the very first chapter, 'Our Glorious Heritage', the textbook states, 'historians and thinkers believe that India is the country from where the ray of culture originated' (p. 1). In an attempt to brush all internal conflicts under the carpet, the text states, 'India is a country of people of great tolerance; there is no place for war, battle or strife in Indian Culture.' The lesson hurriedly goes through the rich heritage of India, natural heritages (landscapes, rivers, wildlife) etc. The chapter 'Cultural Heritage of India', which discusses language and literature, focuses on Sanskrit, which it routinely couples with the nation or projects as a language scientific enough for computer usage. The text says, 'the great Sanskrit grammarian Panini has given it a scientific shape. Today it is recognized as an appropriate language for computers' (p. 30). The text adds that 'Sanskrit became the language of science and knowledge during the Gupta period' (p. 31).

The heritage of knowledge is then at the core of national pride, strengthened and validated by western 'critical' acceptance. So, 'modern research has proved beyond doubts and the western critics too have accepted the fact that India has made outstanding contribution to the world heritage in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, astrology and "Vastu Shastra"' (p. 38). Continuing with this logic, acceptance by the west seems to validate claims with respect to the high standards of development of science and technology in India. The text argues, 'Hindu herbal science is enriched with minerals and medicines from plants and animals. The Europeans gained much knowledge from these mentioned above' (p. 39). Vastu Shastra is also claimed to be part of an ancient knowledge system, hence, "'Vastu Shastra" is an inseparable organ of astrology. India's Vastu Shastra is being recognized dignified [sic] and appraised even by the developed nations' (p. 41). 'The Sarnath Stupa (128 ft high) is the best example of Vastu art' (p. 41). Besides, "'Vastu Shastra" was explained with religions [sic] perspective in the east but now it has been looked in [sic] with a scientific perspective' (p. 41).

In the chapter 'Preservation of Our Heritage', students are told 'our heritage is not only vast and varied but also unique in several respects' (p. 52). Students are exhorted to preserve the natural heritage as 'the laws of our country have such a wide perspective that even the specific plant and animal species have also been included in it, so as to stop their destruction and killing' (p. 53).

Anxieties of the 'Medieval' and 'Modern'

History lessons in the Class 6 (1998) book deal exclusively with the Medieval Age. This is a period in the nation's history deliberately constructed around the themes of loss and revival. Dated between 648 AD (after the death of Harshavardhana) to 1818 AD, social and political life in the 'Middle' or Medieval Age, in the Class 8 textbook, is compared to the 'anarchy and disorder' of Europe's Middle Ages caused by 'fanatic tribes' and the 'rot' in religion that set in as a result. There is a passing reference to the mistaken 'belief' about Middle Ages in all countries being seen as Dark; the text notes that after the Ancient Age, the case was similar in India (p. 4). The assertion that Man is never 'completely modern', and embodies elements of the 'ancient' and 'medieval', establishes the case for studying these periods (p. 4).

Heritage in the Medieval

The Class 6 book aims to give children the following understanding of 'Indian cultural heritage in proper perspective' (p.iii) (Pic. 7).

Nationalism is explicitly addressed in terms of the following learning objectives: understanding 'the importance of the sentiment, the ideal of sacrificing everything to protect the people and the nation'; 'how the spirit of nationalism grew against religious narrowness (Sikhs, Marathas)'; (p. iii).

The introduction to the Class 6 book elaborates on some of these themes, first making it clear that there were 'many political, social, cultural and religious changes that took place' in the medieval period. 'Translation' of the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagwad Gita* (from Sanskrit) is mentioned as a major feature. It identifies the medieval period as one where 'Rajputs 'got' many big forts; 'Muslims built many mosques and minars ... During their rule there was a fashion of the Hindu and Muslim architecture' (p. 2). 'Synthesis' between Hinduism and Islam through Bhakti and Sufism is mentioned, as are the lessons of Bhakti saints: Tulsidas, Gnaneshwar and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Kabir and Guru Nanak are mentioned as prophets of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Women are also consciously included as historical actors, principally in their role as moral and spiritual guides to their sons: 'During this period in the history of India, some women

Pic. 7

Syllabus

Field of study	Std 6
1. Beginning to understand the Indian cultural heritage in proper perspective	1.6 Medieval age (from Harshvardhan to the battle of Plassey)
	1.6.1 Understand that the victory of the invaders was the result of self-ego, internal weaknesses, constant conflicts and want of unity during the Rajput era.
	1.6.2 Understand that in the south, the torch of culture and Hindu civilization kept on burning against foreign invasions and also the character and self-respect of the women of India of the medieval age.
	1.6.3 Know that the saints who came from the lower social strata tried to preserve the form of Dharmant Bhakti.
	1.6.4 Understand the policy of liberal outlook towards religion of the rulers like Akbar.
	1.6.5 Understand the importance of the sentiment, the ideal of sacrificing everything to protect the people and the nation.
	1.6.6 Understand how the spirit of nationalism grew against religious narrowness. (The Sikhs, The Marathas)
	1.6.7 Learn about the struggles of the whole Maratha race to preserve the independence in western India.
	1.6.8 Learn that the foreign traders became the power wielders due to the internal weaknesses of the rulers.

also played a very important role. The names of Minaldevi, mother of Siddhraj Jaysinh and the Queen Ahalyabai are in the forefront' (Class 7, p. 2). Chapters on Shivaji in Classes 7 and 8 focus on Jijabai's central role in instilling values of fearless patriotism in Shivaji by reciting to him stories of bravery from the scriptures (Class 8, p. 13).

With reference to non-Hindus, particularly Muslims, there is a contradictory tone of celebration and assimilation into a universal Indian identity. Medieval Islam's great achievements in the field of science are reduced to Arabs being treated as transmitters of Indian knowledge to the world. Thus for example, 'with the help of Indian scholars they obtained advanced knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, medicines in the Islamic world' (Class 9, 1992, p. 73). The text gives the impression that Arabs learned from Indian scholars but they had nothing to give back to them. In the discussion on medieval literature in the Class 10 (2006) book, there is reference to Amir Khusro and his works (p. 35). According to the textbook, he took great pride in being Indian and praised India as an 'earthly paradise', believing 'in many respects, the essence of Hinduism resembled Islam' (p. 35). Reference is made to art and architecture in the Mughal period. Interestingly, Babar is presented in positive light. 'Babar, the first Mughal ruler was one of the pioneers of Turkish poetry and also the author of a valuable autobiography in Turkish, "*Babarnama*", which was later translated into Persian' (pp. 35-36). Also, 'Urdu prose also developed in the early 18th century when the translation of most of the historical works from Persian and Sanskrit into Urdu began. Urdu became the language of the urban people of northern India and the Deccan and is one of the best examples of the growth of common cultural harmony' (p. 36). Literature produced in Pali and other languages is also discussed. This is a rare instance of inclusion in a textbook which received public attention, when it was first published, for its poor content and production, and overt Hindu bias. The Class 6 book aims to show the positive interaction between Hindu and Muslim cultures in this period and mentions Akbar, who built up 'emotional integrity' (p. 1) in this context. 'Medieval India [thus] made a remarkable contribution to the building up of modern India' (p. 2).

Moving into 'Modernity'

The threads that pull chapters on Medieval and Modern History together, particularly in the Classes 6 and 7 books, are the themes of violent conflict, defeat and emasculation at the hands of 'foreign invaders and rulers', along with religio-cultural movements centred on the lives and actions of specific individuals that evoke veneration and pride. There is valorisation of militarism (Class 6: Rana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Gobind Singh as defenders of the faith; Class 7: the armed revolutionaries, and annexation of Hyderabad and Junagadh), along with glorification of religiosity. Inclusion of the lives of saints and seers, and the emphasis on Rambhakt (even in the case of Kabir) in the Class 6 book, and a focus

on the piety and virtuosity of leaders of the social reform movement (Class 7), add up to a picture of a seamless pan-Hindu identity. This identity reforms itself and assumes a 'national' identity, even as it stands threatened by invaders of other faiths (with the Muslims given most prominence). Vernacularisation of tradition is emphasised as a means to bring religious tradition closer to people and making the masses 'cultured' (teachers' note, chapter on Tulsidas, Class 6, p. 81).

Nationalism and nationalist identity is framed in relation to a religion-based morality. This is more evident in the chapters on the social reform period, but also in the chapters on the freedom movement where heroic sacrifice and suffering is subsumed under the ascribed nationalist quality of 'inner strength' (Class 7, p. 98). Denunciation of 'social evils' associated with the Hindu religion, most significantly Brahminical orthodoxy and caste discrimination, but also blind faith and superstition, appears prominently in both books, as factors that weaken and disunite the people. In the Class 6 book on the medieval period, each of the religious figures (barring Tulsidas) is shown to shun caste/break caste taboos. In the Class 7 book as well, caste is dealt with within the framework of social reform, through showing individual social reformers breaking caste taboos, and a fairly sensitively written chapter on Phule, who is mentioned as the guru of Ambedkar and Dhondu Karve. The conversational style of narration makes possible encounters of various kinds: between men and women, upper caste/class and lower caste/class, through which social identities are highlighted.

There is a sense of pan-Indian identity in the section dealing with medieval India, which is totally missing in the modern sections, where the only references to the south of India, that too in passing, are those to Tipu Sultan, the annexation of Berar and post-independence merger of Hyderabad. Gujarati identity does not come out as strongly as one would expect. There is greater 'ownership' of figures like Siddhraj Jaysinh and Hemachandracharya (Class 6), Dayanand Saraswati (Class 7) and Patel, than Gandhi, who is cast more as a national figure. Although violence and violent conflict are a staple of these books (particularly the one on the medieval period), Partition and Gandhi's assassination are alluded to tangentially.

Evoking Wonder

Many of the chapters in the books adopt a style that is conversational and in the story-telling mode. This enables a smooth translation of pedagogic aims to content. This is usually the case in the chapters on religious figures, but is also employed in other chapters. This style makes a powerful impact, inviting the reader into the drama of the text, and highlighting/reiterating themes and tropes far more dramatically than plain text. Awe and wonder can be evoked (e.g. Class 6, p. 16: Sahasralinga temple built by Siddhraj Jaysinh: 'You would like to call up before your mind's eyes the picture of those myriad lamps lit up in



Pic. 8

the temples and reflected in the waters of the lake at night.’). It can bring alive the torment of tradition (e.g. Class 7, p. 30: Rammohan Roy’s sister-in-law Alokmanjari’s soliloquy when she is faced with having to commit sati: ‘Is dying after the dead husband the only way to keep his memory alive? ... has the Almighty created me for all this?’) The link between the quest for personal salvation and national freedom is brought out dramatically in a conversation between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda: ‘How selfish you are! You don’t have to ask anything for your personal pleasure. You have to lead the whole of India on the path of happiness.’ The text continues: Why did Ramakrishna pull him out of the trance? Because he wanted to make ‘this young heir of his perform tasks for India’s development’ (Class 7, pp. 53, 54). The call to Rana Pratap to defend Hindu honour is brought out in the words of a court poet: ‘O Hindupati Rana Pratap, continue to look after Hindus. Recall your vow. Put up with these hard times. All other Hindus are asleep, you are the one awake. Will you too go to sleep?’ (Class 6, p. 69) (Pic. 8).

The terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘Mughal’ are used interchangeably in the text. Significantly, the term ‘Muslim’ appears more frequently when a situation of conflict with Hindu rulers is being described (e.g. Class 7, chapters on Maharana Pratap, Shivaji, the third battle of Panipat).

Religion, Identity and Nation

A continuous thread that runs through and indeed links the books is the significance of religion—in the lives of individuals, communities and the imagined nation. For individuals, religion and religious belief inform human qualities of simplicity, asceticism and social justice, as well as action/resistance to injustice. From 1757, right up to the assimilation/annexation of Hyderabad and Junagadh (not dated in the Class 7 book) into the era of the modern Indian nation-state, narratives of violence, submission, intrigue, strategy, defeat and victory have at their core a basis of religious difference.

The narration of history that develops is a masculinist narration, at times militaristic and at others simply carrying the full power of male agency. Leadership is essentially marked as male, and even the colonial rulers are upheld as good leaders. Spiritualism softens and gives a rationale for patriotism as religious duty, and carries with it the emotive power of paternalism. The emotive appeal to nationalism is based on assertions and images that are spiritual/religious. Gokhale’s significant contribution to the shaping of nationalist politics was a ‘testimony to his inner strength’, his emphasis on upholding ‘purity of means for attaining ends’ and ‘the values of truth and honesty in political affairs’ was his ‘greatest gift’ that earned him ‘the respect of even Englishmen’ (Class 7, p. 59). It is mentioned, for example, that Gokhale ‘made no distinction between politics and religion’. His ‘disciple’ Gandhi called him a ‘pious, religious soul’ (p. 59). The nationalism of Gandhi himself is one that is

based on morality ('political authority will have to bow to truth', p. 76). Gokhale was his political mentor; the student also learns that Gandhi's spiritual guru was Shrimand Raj Chandra (Class 9, 2005, p. 28). Bose is claimed to have cultivated his social consciousness through exposure to Ramakrishna. Tilak is said to have organised religious festivals 'to promote ... nationalism and to intensify the sense of national awakening. These festivals also helped to strengthen a certain degree of fearlessness ... and unity among the people' (Class 7, p. 64).

Tagore is mentioned as the composer of our national anthem; immediately after which it is stated that in his 'celebrated' *Gitanjali*, Tagore offers his devotion to the 'Highest Presence', namely God. (Class 7, p. 107). Tagore's complicated and critical approach to nationalism, his opposition to uncritical sentiments of traditionalism and his deep distress over the growing communalism he was witness to in his last years do not inform the writing of this chapter.

The Quit India movement is portrayed as having been successful because of the 'inner strength' of India as a nation embodied in the ideal of the leader, Gandhi. This is reiterated in the teachers' note: the people of India gave proof of their inner strength by standing up to the British (Class 7, p. 98). The sanctifying of real and symbolic spaces of political action, especially in the context of protest and violence, can be seen in the case of Jallianwallah Bagh, which is referred to as 'a place of pilgrimage' (p. 82). 'For Ravindranath [sic], India is *punya tirth*, the land marked by a special kind of holiness' (p. 105). The most interesting example of this 'strategy' of sanctification is the depiction of the Dandi March: 'The picture reminded of [sic] Sri Rama's progress towards Panchvati. The simplicity, piety, good cheer and faith which lit up the faces of the satygrahis turned this protest march on political grounds, into a holy yatra, a religious pilgrimage. The presence of the same feeling turned the Dandi March into the Dandi Yatra' (p. 87).

Nationalism and nationalist identity are framed in relation to a religion-based morality. This is more evident in the chapters on the social reform period, but also in those on the freedom movement, where heroic sacrifice and suffering are subsumed under the ascribed nationalist quality of 'inner strength' (Class 7, p. 98).

The Class 6 book presents a double narrative based on a fairly coherent conception of the medieval period: continuous political conflict primarily between Hindu and Muslim rulers, and the 'religious' or spiritual' unity that was made possible, initially through the work of Shankaracharya: 'The India of Shankaracharya's time was a divided land, politically and socially ... In the field of religion, rites and rituals were in both (south and north)', and his four maths 'stand today as symbols of the spiritual unity of the nation' (p. 26). The 'pan-Indian' tradition and practice of Bhakti (achieved, the book says, through Ramanujacharya's influence on 'acharyas and gurus ... a cult that spread through centuries', p. 31) are reiterated through the selection of saints and religious personae.

Political conflict is largely represented in terms of religious conflict: Hindu rulers having to develop their states and guard their frontiers while surrounded by Muslim-ruled kingdoms (e.g. Vijayanagar and Bahamani kingdom [which is not named]). Attributing religiosity to rulers (e.g. Raja Bhoj, Rajendra Chola as worshippers of Shiva) leads to discussion of the conflict between Shaivism and Vaishnavism. This could be to highlight the spread of Vaishnavism to the North (especially in the context of Gujarat where it has a strong cultural presence). Opposition to Ramanujacharya from the Shaivite Cholas is stated to have led to its spread (p. 31).

The Class 6 book includes lessons on a number of religious persons who get bookmarked as ‘national-historical’ through their strategic inclusions in the textbook. Care has been taken to place each of these religious figures within a chronological timeframe, giving dates of their births and deaths. This is not the case with the other political figures in the text, and a departure from the general mode observed in both books (more so the one on modern India), where little attention is paid to periodisation of any sort. It appears to have been done to legitimise the inclusion of religious figures within the disciplinary boundaries of History, to validate the mythification of the past. (Unlike the Class 5 book, the saints and sages in the Class 6 book are not mythological figures.) It also makes it possible for students to contextualise them with respect to the political history discussed in other chapters. (Hence Ramanujacharya appears after the chapter on Rajendra Chola.)

All religious figures project a progressively evolving Hinduism, whether they are from the Bhakti and other reformist traditions (Kabir, Gyaneshwar, Guru Nanak) or from other traditions (Shankaracharya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu): one that not only transcends caste, class and creed, but explicitly denounces social divisions and discriminatory practices based on caste. There is also repeated reference to resistance to the orthodoxies of blind faith and tradition. The value of secularism, defined as tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for other faiths, finds a place in the Class 6 textbook. The modern idea of secularism is attributed to Akbar: ‘The biggest contribution that Akbar made was that he gave the concept that the state is based on citizenship and not on any particular faith or religion. The modern idea of secularism is based on this concept. He created a model state with people following diverse religions. This achievement of his made him the best ruler of the medieval age’ (Class 6, p. 64).

However, it is in juxtaposing the religio-cultural with the religio-political that the book appears to achieve its pedagogic intent. The chapter on Tulsidas (Class 6) brings this out most

vividly, since it links the religious with the national by stressing the embodiment of the 'Almighty in human incarnation' and the 'qualities of the ideal ruler' as depicted in *Ramcharitmanas* (p. 80). It should be noted that the only four 'Muslim' characters in this book appear as dyads of good (cultured, moral, just) and evil (zealous, cruel, unjust): Amir Khusro and Allaudin Khalji; Akbar and Aurangzeb. In the latter, Aurangzeb occupies a mere fourth of the total space, but his 'ruining' of Akbar's 'model secular state' by an 'Islamic state' (p. 64) casts a shadow over the rest of the History section in the book. The last few chapters on the militarised Hindu response to Mughal rule (Shivaji's 'Hindavi Swaraj') are posited against Aurangzeb's espousal of an aggressive 'Islamic state'.

There is an explicit denunciation of caste, and in many cases, the orthodoxies of religion, in all the chapters that discuss the lives of religious figures (barring Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Tulsidas) in the medieval period. This is done through the selection of events and episodes in their lives (Pic. 9).

By the time the last lesson of the Class 6 book is read, it is established that a unified response to foreign invasions is not possible due to a decline that has set in due to political reasons as much as lack of religious faith: the divisions among Hindu rulers were due to 'wars among themselves, some of them "siding" with Aurangzeb either out of fear or to defeat other rulers'; 'the people were idle, ignorant and fearful. Instead of having faith in religion, they were guided by superstitions and blind faith' (Class 6, p. 83).

This theme, redeemed to some extent through the figures of Shivaji, Rana Pratap and Guru Gobind Singh, nonetheless constitutes a narrative of (emasculatation and) decline that is carried over to the Class 7 book, which states it to be an explicit reason for colonial expansion and consolidation. The idea is most well developed in the chapter on Shivaji, where it is stated that in 'Maharashtra' it was possible to counter the Mughals because they had a long tradition of religious saints who preached that caste distinctions should be abolished, and therefore it was possible for them to possess more of the 'nationalistic spirit'. Shivaji, it is stated, 'echoed this sentiment of the people and provided them with a strong leadership' (p. 73). It is suggested in the chapter that he did this with a morality derived from his religious faith. As against the Muslim 'Other', Shivaji did not seek to take women when he conquered lands (an example is given of an incident when he refuses a woman captured by his army), nor convert them; in fact he appointed Muslims to high ranks. And against the orthodox caste Hindu 'Other' he reconverted his old

Pic. 9

Thakur passed away on 16th August, 1886. Thereafter Narendra became an ascetic, assumed the name Vivekanand and undertook a pilgrimage with a restless heart and a strong desire to do something good and great for the whole world. He came in contact with Pundits, Sanyasis and Sadhakas. He visited Banaras and other holy places and returned to the Monastery. There is one incident worth mentioning from his childhood. In the meetings held at his father's place also people belonging to different castes and observing different faiths used to come. So, there were different hookahs kept for them. Once Narendra had tried to smoke a hookah of a Muslim chacha. When his father rebuked him for doing so, he replied, "I thought, let me try and find out what happens by not believing in discriminations based on castes and class."

Shivaji belonged to the times in India when most parts of our country were ruled by Muslim rulers. The Hindu population had become weak, indifferent and suffered humiliation. Hindu chieftains and landlords bowed to Muslim rulers to serve their selfish interests. It was under such circumstances, that Shivaji emboldened them by instilling in them love and respect for Swadesh and Swadharma (i.e. motherland and one's own religious faith) and founded the Hindavi Swarajya.

Pic. 10

friend into the Hindu faith. The chapter on Shivaji brings together the various arguments presented in the earlier chapters and forms the core of what perhaps can be identified as the Savarkarite argument against caste within the desire for an aggressive, masculinist, Hindu nationalist ideology — one that has an emotional appeal to tradition but also has 'emboldening' possibilities when the community finds itself humiliated and defeated. The chapter talks of Shivaji giving the Hindu population a sense of strength through 'Swadesh' and 'Swadharma' (translated as motherland and one's own religious faith) and adds that he 'founded the Hindavi Swarajya' (p. 74) (Pic. 10).

In the Class 8 book, a section on the rise of the Marathas is actually a long paean to Shivaji. It mentions that although the Mughals ruled in northern India, there were several kingdoms in southern India. 'At that time some saints and devotees of god in Maharashtra created among the people the desire for freedom from foreign rule and the urge to protect their religion' (p. 12). Shivaji's leadership is represented as emerging out of tutelage into character and bravery, first by Jijabai, who 'brought him up as [a] fearless, adventurous, self-respecting and patriotic youth by reciting to him stories of bravery from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and mythology or the Puranas' (p. 13), and his guru who gave him 'lessons in the protection of Brahmins and cows, patriotism and guerrilla warfare' (p. 13). Much like in Class 7, the rationale of 'internal dissension and disunity' as facilitating consolidation of invaders' rule is emphasised in this book as well. As a 'fierce' nationalist, Rani Gudiako defended Naga culture against the 'English', and tried to stop conversion activities in the Northeast (Class 8, p. 55).

The parallels drawn between religion and politics in the books reflect the mindset of those who produce them (Pic. 11). It is what makes it possible to replace Awadh with Ayodhya in the English translation of the Class 8 book—thereby suggesting a Muslim ruler conquered the birthplace of Rama—and then defending it by stating that children will be more familiar with Ayodhya than Awadh.

The revised book for Class 9 (2005), in the chapter 'Nationalism in India—Emergence and Developments', accepts the importance of western thoughts and political organisations, but also adds that these 'were inspired by the strength and inspiration from its [India's] own past cultural inheritance' (p. 18). According to the text, the 'cultural unity' of India is a given fact: 'in development of nationalism in India the inheritance of cultural unity of India has given a very important contribution' (p. 18). Modern institutions and the 'political unity' they manage to create are 'spiritualised' by the text. In fact the text flits continuously between tradition and modernity and 'uses' both of them without realising the problems it creates. Hence,

Social and Religious Causes : The programme of social reforms which the Company's government had started implementing, for supporting social and religious leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy had created a fear in the minds of the people. They feared that the English planned to destroy India's religion and culture. They felt the government was deliberately forcing the people to convert to Christianity. Some priests openly criticised the Hindu and Muslim faiths and the customs of both. But they never talked impartially about the rot that existed in the Christian Church. Orthodox Indians were annoyed by the ban on the custom of Sati. The Company's government protected those Indians who were converted to Christianity and granted them the right to a share in their ancestral property. The social structure that existed in India was frequently ignored in the army, prisons and railway trains, which angered the orthodox Indians. A majority of people in the society in those days were orthodox. So these new changes and reforms created discontent among them. As a result, some people joined the revolt of 1857 to save the socio-religious structure. Many Moulavis issued farmans (orders), to their followers to start crusades or 'Jehads' like the Wahabi and Faridi movements against the English.

Pic. 11

the British conquered almost all of India and established political unity by introducing similar administrative systems, judiciary, laws, rules and regulation, military set-up and the English language. 'This political integration brought spiritual uniformity in Indians and as a result of it "nationalism" was spread' (p. 20).

Muslims and the Nation

Muslims are not so much explicitly 'othered' in History lessons as unassimilated within the larger rubric of national identity, which is constructed as hegemonically Hindu. There are ruptures and dangerous slippages involved in this. Selective inclusions, omissions and textual strategies allow for this exclusion. The principal axis of difference in the nation is seen to be religion. Muslims are represented as a homogenous community; the one rupture in this conception is mention of Sufi saints (who are said to be close to the Bhakti saints in their thinking). The Mughals/Muslims rupture ancient Hindu glory through invasion, and although there is allusion to the knowledge they bring with them, in terms of science and architecture (Class 10, 2006) they present, ultimately, a challenge to Hindu solidarity, fractured by caste divisions (Class 7, 1999).

Muslims are also represented as a fundamentally orthodox community—subjects of reform in the nationalist period, both from within its boundaries (e.g. by Wahabis) and by leaders influenced by western liberalism, like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Even here, boundaries are maintained: it is stated that Sir Syed Ahmed had 'good relations' with Hindus but 'opposed the participation of Muslims in the Indian National Congress' (Class 8, p. 31). Their allegiance to rulers outside the framework of the Indian nation is made clear: discussing the Khilafat movement, the Class 9 (2005) text says: 'Turkey was defeated in World War I, so Indian Muslims were not happy' (p. 29); 'Sultan of Turkey was the President of the Muslim world, so Indian Muslims were shocked by his imprisonment' (p. 30).

The theme of ‘Hindu-Muslim unity’ pervades discussions of the independence movement, given up as something of a lost project with the coming of the Muslim League that, unlike the Congress that ‘stood for the entire Indian community’, claimed to be the ‘representative of the entire Muslim community in India’ (Class 8, p. 76), and encouraged ‘communalism’ from ‘beginning to end’ (Class 9, 2005, p. 23). Stress is laid on its claim to a new nation, and, of course, the death of Gandhi, who ‘sacrificed his precious life’ for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity (Class 8, p. 80).

The Many Moods of Nationalism: Revisions of History Post 2002

The Class 8 Social Science book, published in 2004, was the first of the set of revised textbooks to be brought out by the Gujarat State Board of School Textbooks after the cataclysmic events of 2002. This textbook focuses on the nationalist movement, ending its section on History with Partition and independence in 1947. While retaining some sort of continuity with the earlier books, the Class 8 book represents a new turn in the presentation of history, particularly in its insertion of religious identity into existing discourses of school History, the inclusion of militant nationalism as a significant (and hitherto neglected) part of the nationalist movement and the attempt to include Gujarat’s contribution to the freedom struggle.

Nationalism emerges within a distinctly modern context, that of colonialism, which in the textbook is subsumed within and interchangeably used with the term ‘British administration’. In the chapter ‘The British Conquest of India’, the history of colonialism is encapsulated in less than a page; it is said that trade with the ‘wealthy Indian nation’ that continued since ‘ancient times’ saw Europeans in the fray finding sea routes after the land route from Asia was closed off by the ‘Muslim Turks’ taking over Constantinople in 1453 (p. 18). The downfall of the Mughal empire and extension of British rule echoes most of what is covered in the Class 7 book, although expanding on policies of the administration and focusing more on the personalities of the period—Warren Hastings, Cornwallis, Bentinck and Dalhousie—who successively expanded the British empire. On the lines of their earlier introduction to students in Class 7, they are shown to be strong men of determination and action.

Social political and economic effects of the British administration are discussed, touching on the exploitative aspects of labour and land alienation. Among the social ‘results’ of the British administration were the actions of social reformers influenced by liberal English education who were able to ‘think with the modern point of view’ (p. 21) and to address the ‘many evil social customs ‘that became firmly entrenched in the Middle Ages’ (p. 24). Reformers from Gujarat like

Narmad, Karsandas Mulji, Mahipatram Rupram and Behramji Malabari are absorbed into the national with Rammohan, although their specific contributions within Gujarat and orientations to social reforms at a wider level are given no place. The political effects of English education are stated to be the growth of an English-educated middle class that produced great statesmen like Gandhi and others. Nowhere is the anti-colonial impulse delineated; where it came from and why, what animated it—none of these are thought to be serious questions of history.

An important departure from earlier books is the focus on reform within religious communities. In the pre-independence period, it seems that the national splits up into these various communities. This approach also sets the stage for discussion of the Muslim League and the role of Gandhi's spiritual, rather than political, struggle for Hindu-Muslim unity. This chapter also includes the anti-caste movements of Narayan Guru and Phule, as well as the work of Thakkar Bapa among adivasis in Gujarat.

Revolutionary Nationalism

The new Class 8 book marks a significant rupture in the narration of nationalism seen in earlier textbooks. Here one sees a distinct effort to foreground the more militant forms of nationalism in the extant anti-colonial movement, moving away—as far as is possible—from Congress nationalist narrative. The political agenda of this textbook is exemplified by its cover page, which has seventeen portraits of 'freedom fighters', some pre-dating the modern nationalist movement and some associated with it, but all associated with some form of militant response to colonial rule. The absence of Gandhi, Patel and Nehru on the cover signifies their displacement from what could be considered valid knowledge of the nationalist movement for students in Gujarat. The ones who are included are Subhash Bose, Savarkar, Khudiram Bose, Bhagat Singh, Shyamji Krishna Verma, Vasudev Balant Phadke, Durgabhabhi, Rani Chenamma, Rani Gudialo, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhikaiji Cama, Sardarsinh Rana, Birsa Munda, Lakshmibai—a medley of icons, ranging across class, caste, ethnicity and regions, that offers scope for a revisionist pan-Indian nationalist history based on militant resistance of all kinds.

The lesson 'The Rise of Nationalism' draws out the counter-discourse to mainstream history. Armed resistance in and after 1857 in Gujarat and elsewhere are discussed, particularly the Nayakda rebellion in Gujarat, the Santhal movement in Chotanagpur and the Namdhari movement in Punjab. The reasons for 1857 include dissatisfaction with reforms by orthodox 'Indians', which did not go far enough. It is mentioned that in Gujarat support for the 1857 rebellion was missing, and this is attributed to the lack of writings by intellectuals of that time (p. 41). The reverberations of 1857 were felt in Gujarat in the form of the Nayakda



Veer Savarkar



Shyamji Krishna Varma



Shambhudhan Fuglo



Khudiram Bose

rebellion, tribal revolts, Vagher 'people's war' (p. 40). That the Hindu-Muslim divide grew with 1857 is stressed, with the 'Divide and Rule' policy implemented after 1857 'to break the unity between Hindus and Muslims ... government encouraged communal feelings and differences between the two communities. So they supported Muslim leaders like Sir Saiyad Ahmed' (p. 42). The text adds: 'The revolt failed, but it was a source of constant inspiration to the freedom movement which followed it, and even today it still nourishes the feeling of patriotism among Indians. Of course, the revolt has been presented in different ways by different writers. It was first described as Sepoy's Mutiny [sic] of 1857. Later Veer Savarkar named it the First War of Independence' (p. 43).

A distinct attempt is made to elide the totalising narrative of Congress nationalism through narratives that contest the predominance of the Congress and Gandhi. The limitations of the moderates and the rationale for radical nationalism are persuasively argued. Five out of eleven pages on the Indian National Congress and the growth of nationalism (chapter 5) are devoted to portraits of those who advocated violent opposition to colonial rule, including Phadke, Savarkar, Khudiram Bose and others. Gujarat figures prominently through descriptions of revolutionary nationalists abroad, many of whom were Gujaratis, such as Shyamji Krishna Varma, Sardarsinh Rana and Madam Cama.

The Class 9 (2005) text also has a section 'Severe Revolutionary Movements in Gujarat', which opens with the sentence: 'Sir Aurobindo Ghosh was a pioneer of armed revolution in Gujarat' (p. 25). It names several leaders who came under revolutionary influence and speaks of the government's efforts to suppress the movement. According to this narration, the 'flood of revolutionary movement' reduced because of the 'entry of Gandhiji through [the] non-cooperation movement' (p. 25).

The selective appropriation of militant nationalists as part of the 'revolutionary movements' obscures their avowal of different yet distinct anti-colonial politics. That many of these people (Phadke, Bhagat Singh, Madam Cama and also Shyamji Krishna Varma) had strong commitments to socialism as an ideology is of no concern to the textbook writers. Durgabhabhi, who helped Bhagat Singh escape from Lahore after the murder of Saunders, is described as the 'wife of a Gujarati Nagar Brahmin' (p. 54). That she was active in the decidedly radical left-wing Naujawan Bharat Sabha is left unsaid.

Savarkar: A Present Absence

It is interesting that the Class 7 text does not talk about Savarkar at length, except to say that his was an illustrious name among the Indian revolutionaries, and that he set up Abhinav Bharat to train young men in 'horse riding, shooting and in army formations'; also that he was a 'disciple' of Shyamji Krishna Varma in England and that he was later sent to exile in the Andamans (pp. 69, 70). In the Class 8 book, he is

called a poet, writer and ‘staunch patriot’ (p. 53), opening a branch of Abhinav Bharat in London where he was engaged in revolutionary activities. Savarkar is credited with renaming the Mutiny as the First War of Independence (Pic. 12).

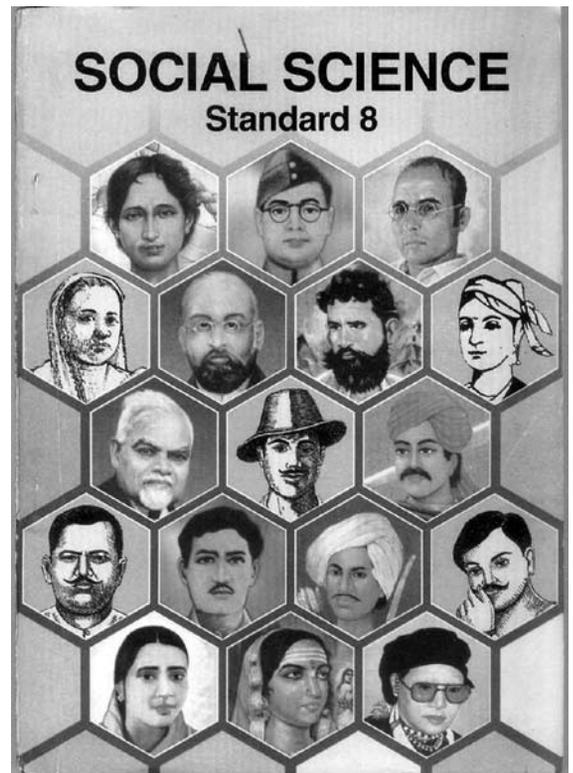
Although it is mentioned that Savarkar’s deteriorating health as a result of repeated incarcerations led to his death in 1966 (Class 7, p. 53) (the trope of the suffering body of the nationalist), his activities in his later years find no place. In this sense, the textbook reverts to the more canonical biographic representation. What is interesting, however, are references to his presence in the lives of others; for example, he is said to have designed the flag Madam Cama unfurled at the International Socialist Conference in 1907, or the mention of Bose’s meeting with ‘revolutionaries like Veer Savarkar’ during his ‘whirlwind tour of the country’ when World War II breaks out.

The Representation of Gandhi

When the Class 8 textbook was published in 2004 in a situation of deep social scarring following the violence of 2002, critics pointed out that Gandhi had been dishonoured because he did not appear on its cover (Pic. 13). Significant, however, are the more subtle displacements of Gandhi in the nationalist historiography of Gujarat’s History textbooks. Gandhi is cast more as a national than a regional leader, a spiritual rather than a political one. An attempt is made to make him appear less ‘exclusive’ in the history of the freedom movement. In the Class 7 textbook, for example, Dayanand Saraswati (chapter 8) is positioned as a great public figure who has done great work for the revival of Indian culture and for social and national progress before Gandhiji arrived on the scene. ‘Gujarat is proud of him’ (p. 42). Years before Gandhi, Gokhale fought against the salt laws (‘Let us not forget that Gokhale protested on the same issue, on the salt tax ... much ahead of Gandhiji, years before the Dandi March, and the government had to reduce tax’ (p. 58).

Gandhi is also made out to have interrupted the armed resistance of the revolutionaries. Following one of the rare instances when Gujarat figures in the book—the attack on Lord Minto in Ahmedabad (no date), where those involved are named as followers of Barindra Ghosh—the text continues: ‘The armed resistance grew weak, when Gandhiji later took over the leadership of the freedom struggle. But this in no way minimizes the importance of the sacrifices made by the revolutionaries’ (p. 72). In the Class 8 book, it is mentioned that both Patel and Nehru

Pic. 13



Non Co-Operation Movement (1920-22)

The Nagpur conference of December 1920 declared that the non co-operation movement to which Congress had given approval was to be started in August 1, 1920. Now, the Congress made a strong demand for independence of India instead of self-government under the thumb of the British Empire. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Annie Besant and Bipinchandra Pal did not agree with non co-operation movement. Therefore, they left the Congress.

Positive aspect of movement, Hindu-Muslim unity to be strengthened, insistence of utilizing 'Swadeshi' articles, revival of spinning wheels at every door to collect rupees one crore in 'Tilak Swarajya Fund' etc. programmes were included. While negative aspects consisted of boycott of government functions, titles, school-colleges etc. tendering of resignations by members of local self-government; boycott the use of foreign cloth and other articles etc.

Pic. 14

India (p. 59). The Non-Cooperation movement launched by Gandhi is described in terms of its 'negative' aspects like strikes, boycotts etc, as well as its 'positive' aspects which include constructive work in starting educational institutions, etc. The terms 'positive' and 'negative' are completely misplaced, and reflect a statist view of nationalist history (Pics. 14 & 15).

Gandhi is considered to have brought the nationalist movement to the centre of the common people's life across regions and classes, whereas the base of earlier nationalist movements was the urban middle class (Class 8, p. 35). In the Class 8 book also, there is an attempt to minimise Gandhi's political role in the freedom movement, without diminishing his persona as a 'spiritual' guru to the movement. It is interesting to note that the text also talks about his spiritual guru: 'Gandhi's political mentor was Gopal Krishna Gokhale and spiritual guru was Shrimand Raj Chandra' (p. 28).

Gandhi thus emerges as a venerated spiritual, if effete, leader of the masses, bringing morality into the nationalist movement, rather than as a political leader. 'A unique and important feature of Gandhiji's

Pic. 15



Mahatma Gandhi

At the time when Gandhi took his entry on the stage of politics and became famous, in India most of the earlier prominent leaders of the Congress had either passed away or had retired from politics. For example, Arvind Ghosh. The main leader of the Congress, Tilak, had died in 1920. So the influence of Gandhi in Indian politics and his hold on the Congress grew fast. With this there began a new phase in the national struggle. During this phase an effective change took place in the method of functioning of the Congress and the national struggle. This method consisted of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and satyagraha. Truth, non-violence, fasting and the spinning wheel were weapons with which it was fought.

Another special feature of this phase was that prior to Gandhiji's arrival on the scene, the national movement in India was mainly limited to the cities and the middle class. Labourers, farmers from villages and various classes of people had kept away from it. This means that the nationalist movement had not yet become a common people's movement. But Gandhiji turned it into a truly nationwide and common people's movement by involving in some way or other people belonging to different regions and classes in India.

were not initially followers of Gandhi's ideology; that at several points various leaders disagreed with him (including Bose and Nehru); that he gained 'prominence because other leaders (like Gokhale and Tilak) had retired or died'; and that 'From the point of view of time Gandhi was lucky, because of a class of urban intellectuals who had the leadership for movement' had emerged in

struggle was his way of collecting all the proofs of the strength of his struggle. All the participants in his movements got to learn the lessons of political and moral education' (Class 8, p. 59).

Partition and Gandhi's Assassination

In a short paragraph on Gandhi's assassination in the Class 8 book, his political persona is further effaced by attributing the attainment of freedom to his 30 years of 'valuable contribution in bringing about awakening among the masses in India and providing guidance to India's freedom movement. He was and is the "Father of the Nation" in its true sense' (p. 80). The backdrop of his assassination are the communal riots that broke out after independence. The lesson makes no attempt to contextualise Gandhi's killing, attributed to a 'fanatic named Nathuram Godse', except to mention that 'some people' did not like his efforts to douse the 'communal fire' (p. 80). In the absence of any contextualisation of events and with no mention of the Hindu Mahasabha as an oppositional political formation, students are left to understand that Gandhi's assassination was an aberration rather than a politically motivated act.

In Class 7, Gandhi's assassination is referred to only in passing (p. 113), in the context of Patel and Nehru, more to glorify Patel than discuss the assassination itself: 'The situation at the time of freedom and Partition was indeed extremely tense [not explained why]. It was made almost tragic through the assassination of Gandhiji. All these events had an adverse effect on Sardar Patel's health, although he continued working despite ill health, giving support to Nehru ...' (pp. 113-114). In the context of violence and the body, it is interesting to note that this lesson touches on Partition only tangentially, in relation to loss, and Nehru's fast for peace. 'India won freedom on 15 August 1947. But as we all know, India had to pay a heavy price for it. The country was divided into two independent units: India or Bharat and Pakistan' (p. 111). At this stage, students are introduced to the idea of Partition as an event. There is no reference at all to its antecedents (interestingly, neither Jinnah nor the Muslim League are mentioned in the text at all, and for that matter, the Indian National Congress appears only in the chapter on Jallianwallah Bagh and makes a casual appearance thereafter). However: 'These were the days of crisis. The partition of the nation led to riots and to acts of violence and bloodshed. Gandhiji went on a fast and Nehru too observed a fast without giving it publicity' (p. 116).

In the treatment of Partition in the revised textbooks of Classes 8 and 9, there is no mistaking the blame placed squarely at the door of the British by their policy of divide and rule 'and certain other reasons' (Class 9, 2005, p. 55) and, prominently, the Muslim League. In Class 9 (2005) the chapter 'Challenges Before the Nation' begins with violence as a prologue to the formation of the nation. Communal riots and the problem of refugees are discussed. The textbook says, 'the League

encouraged “communalism” from beginning to end. Consequently, discord was created in Hindu-Muslim relations. Finally, it resulted in the partition of India in 1947’ (p. 23).

‘Dawn of Independence’ continues with the spiritual image of Gandhi: ‘Gandhi was shocked due to the partition of India therefore he was deeply plunged into grief [sic] and drifted into meditation’ (Class 9, 2005, p. 47). There seems to be a conscious effort to show that although Gandhi led the nationalist movement, Sardar Patel was the one to undertake the tougher jobs involved in the unification of the nation. The chapter ends with a call to the younger generation to make continuous efforts to increase ‘the status, reputation and position of India in the world’ (p. 48). Although in History lessons in the textbooks, the map on which the ancient-medieval-modern are drawn is the map of an Indian nation, when the Indian nation-state does actually come into being, students are unable to understand why it should be any different from the cultural, indeed Hindu, nation they have been studying all along. The absence of conflict in the narratives of the modern Indian nation-state is nowhere more pronounced than in the representations of Partition and Gandhi’s assassination.

Gujarati ‘Identity’: Where is the ‘Asmita’?

One would expect History lessons in Gujarat’s textbooks to construct a definite sense of Gujarati identity. However, this construction, if it exists at all, is sparse. In the pre-modern era, Siddhraj Jaysinh is associated with the glory of Patan. In the Class 6 text, the chapter on Jaysinh, a king of the Solanki dynasty and a patron of learning, art and literature, shows him returning to his state ‘Anhilwad Patan’ after the conquest of Dhara, the capital of Mahuva. He brings with him a large number of books in various branches of learning. Among these is a treatise on grammar written by King Bhoj of Mahuva, which is used as a standard text in schools. King Siddhraj decides that ‘even our region Gujarat too should produce a text’ of the same order. He puts the question to the royal assembly: ‘Do we have anyone in this large assembly who is capable of writing a learned book of this standard? If we could prepare such a treatise, it would raise the prestige of Patan to a new height’ (p. 9). Finally, Hemachandracharya, Jain scholar and poet in his court, takes up this responsibility. When Hemachandracharya completes the writing of his treatise on Gujarati grammar *Siddha Hema Shabdanushasana*, a procession is taken out on the streets of the city. Placed on the seat of the ceremonial elephant is the treatise, the king and Hemachandracharya walking alongside. This, the lesson notes, was a most rare sight, with the elephant and knowledge signifying ‘the union of power and knowledge’ (p. 10); the people of Patan, and ‘the whole of the region of Gujarat ... sang the praises of the Prince and the Pandit’ (p. 10).

The social history of Gujarat, whether it is the upper class/caste social reform movement, or the adivasi movements in the late nineteenth

century, or the Gandhian movement in tribal areas (which are still seen in the educational arena), finds no mention in the Classes 6 and 7 books. In the Class 6 book, apart from the lesson on Hemachandracharya and the glory of Anhilwad Patan under Siddhraj Jaysinh's rule, there is reference to Mirabai, without explicitly locating her in relation to Gujarat, the influence of Kabir through his two Brahmin followers in Gujarat, and three low-caste followers of Guru Gobind Singh. In the social reform period (Class 7) there is no mention of the work of those who are considered canonical figures of mid and late nineteenth-century Gujarat: Mahipitram Rupatram, Narmadashankar Lalshankar, Karsandas Mulji and Behramji Malabari. Instead, the work of Swami Sahajanand and Dayanand Saraswati is emphasised. Gandhi comes across as a more distant figure: more a national, rather than regional, hero. There is a curious ambivalence about Gandhi in the textbook and at this stage of the analysis one can only speculate why this is so. It is interesting to place Gandhi alongside Sardar Patel, who is a figure clearly 'belonging' to Gujarat, as well as to the nation. In Patel's case, there is some reference to his background: 'The way of life in [Patel's] family was marked by hard physical work and by simplicity' (p. 111). Qualities of his leadership are reiterated over and over again in his identification as the strong man of Indian national/territorial unity.

There are different ways in which these constructions can be read. One striking feature in the Class 7 text is the positing of western with shastriic/vernacular knowledge. It is not that these are given parity; the elitism of English is directly addressed. It is mentioned, for example, that Dayanand Saraswati did not have an English education: 'Even without taking any formal British education, he succeeded in introducing many social reforms' (Class 7, p. 42). His use of Hindi is said to have contributed to its acceptance as a national language (p. 42): 'Though he was himself a pandit of Sanskrit like Tulsidas, he composed his works in Hindi. As an alternative to English, he advocated the use of regional language. He always kept before his mind the welfare of all the people of India' (p. 45).

In this book there is a focus on the religious dimension of social reform in nineteenth-century Gujarat (Swami Sahajanand and Dayanand Saraswati). Specific attention is drawn to the high educational levels of Rammohan Roy, and the lack of 'western' education of a figure like Swami Sahajanand (Pic. 16). He is positioned as someone who was supportive of the efforts of the British at controlling law and order, someone whose reforms were supported by the British but not by upper classes (castes). A large section of the chapter on social reform focuses on Swami Sahajanand, possibly because of his significance to the elevation of the middle and lower castes in Gujarat (and also because he is the founder of the Swaminarayan sect). There are references to Swami Sahajanand's attempts to reform the *dudhpiti* tradition by 'reasoning' with the Kshatriyas where he is stated to have told them that 'they are committing a double crime of infanticide and homicide "of female" [sic] and stressed that grooms should also be made aware'. The chapter



Sahajanand Swami, who had not received any formal British education, knew that the Britishers had started nabbing the Thugs and Pindharas in order to relieve people of their menace.

Pic. 16

mentions his work in spreading girls' education and a code of social conduct of widows to live with dignity and respect (p. 31), with separate arrangements made for them in temples and religious assemblies.

The revised books attempt to fill this gap. In the Class 8 (2004) textbook, there is reference to nineteenth-century social reformers from Gujarat, although their contributions and positions on social and political issues of the day—against religious orthodoxy (Narmad, Karsandas Mulji) and position of women (Malabari)—are not discussed at all. The impact of 1857 on Gujarat and the movements in the state at the time in opposition to colonial policies are referred to. The chapter 'The Contribution of Gujarat in India's Freedom Struggle' is a three-page biography of three freedom fighters: Mohanlal Pandya in Kheda, Ravishankar Maharaj in Borsad and Jugatram Dave in Bardoli. The Dharasana Satyagraha is mentioned but discussed only from the point of view of Gandhi and Patel's leadership. Gujaratis based in Europe—Varma, Rana, Cama—find a home in the pantheon of Gujarati nationalists (Pic. 17a & 17b).

'Arzi Hukumat', the last chapter in the Class 7 text, is on the secession of Junagadh to Pakistan and how Patel's statesmanship brought it back to Gujarat and the new nation. The chapter refers to Hyderabad as well, and in both cases, the annexation and the violent occupation of

Pic. 17a

the states is not referred to at all. Instead the focus is on the fact that the subjects were Hindu while the rulers were Muslim, who were getting help from Pakistan in order to secede from the Indian union. Since the origins of Partition are never made clear, it is difficult for the student to understand these events in any way other than a basic Hindu-Muslim conflict.

8

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GUJARAT IN INDIA'S STRUGGLE OF FREEDOM

The social, religious and national awakening which had taken place in the rest of India during the 19th century was experienced in Gujarat also to a greater or smaller extent. Gujarat also has made its contribution to the various movements that were carried out in India beginning from the Great Revolt of 1857 to the attainment of freedom. After Gandhiji's return from South Africa in 1915, Gujarat, under the guidance of Gandhiji and Vallabhbai, played an important role in all political struggles. Gujarat played a unique role in the movements that took place during the Gandhian Era. Most of the movements first started from Gujarat and then were followed in other parts of India. The first Satyagraha during which Gandhiji's methods were implemented was the Farmer's Satyagraha at Kheda. Gujarat and the Gujaratis also spearheaded the programmes of boycott (of British goods), swadeshi, national education, Khadi, prohibition (of alcoholic drinks), etc. Here we shall study in some details about the model and important Satyagrahas that were undertaken in Gujarat.

The tone of the chapter is highly charged with jingoistic nationalism. In Junagadh's case, it is made out that the People's Army, facilitated by the Provisional Government, 'liberated' the region, forcing the Nawab and his wily minister to flee to Pakistan. At one point, it is said 'the state recruited more Muslims in the army to harass the Hindus. As a result, about one lakh Hindus migrated elsewhere' (p. 120). Kutiana, a Muslim-dominated territory, is conquered ('even though the women-folk of the Mers were willing to fight ... Kutiana surrendered ... and the bravery and heroism of the People's Army won the day ... The Nawab's army pleaded for peace and for mercy. And so the merger of Junagadh with the Indian Union was finally achieved ... In this way, a people's revolution in the true sense of the word now came to a happy end' (p. 121). It is significant that the reigning in of this truant region (signified as Muslim majority, Pakistan-leaning) is attributed to the spontaneous revolutionary desire of a heroic 'people' to unify the 'nation': 'The revolution led by the people at large of their own free will was a major factor in achieving the unification of the nation' (p. 123).

Apart from these references to Gujarat's location in nationalist history, there is some mention of Gujarat in the territorial entity of the nation through reference to its contribution to the economy. In the newer (post 2004) books reviewed in this report, as well as those published after 2006 (Classes 5-7), the focus on Gujarat is conscious and deliberate. The Class 8 (2004) book, for example, positions Gujarat as a state with a frail geography, because of its proximity to Pakistan: 'Gujarat is a border state. Its land and sea boundaries touch the boundaries of Pakistan which is like a den of terrorism' (p. 94).

It is interesting to note that despite abundant reference to Patel's role in the unification of the states post-independence, there is no reference to the coming into being of the state of Gujarat. The Mahagujarat Andolan is conspicuous by its absence in History textbooks, so is the historic Navnirman movement of the 1970s that led to the fall of the then government in power.

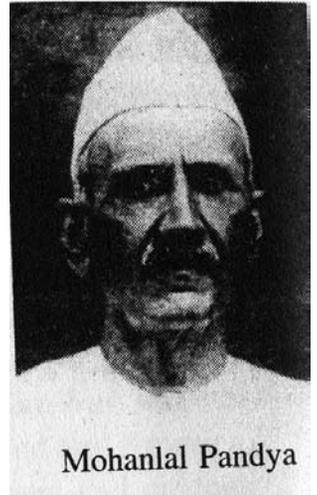
In the nationalist period, the only woman from Gujarat to be represented is Madam Cama. (Miraben is referred to as Madeline Slade who changed her name!) Apart from a general reference to women participating in the salt satyagraha, there is no mention of women in Gujarat, not even Kasturba Gandhi or Maniben Patel, Sardar Patel's daughter.

A Strong State, a Strong Leader

The national leader is the proverbial man of character, committed to building a strong State. Strength of character is to be admired and venerated in male leaders who can define and steer the destiny of a strong nation. The 'people' await the leader as a messiah who can deliver them from all manners of oppression and injustice. The Aryans, Kshatriyas, Harshavardhana, Shivaji, nineteenth-century British administrators



Ravishankar Maharaj



Mohanlal Pandya

and the strong leaders of the Indian nationalist movement are all cast as men who made it possible for the modern Indian nation to arrive. For example, in the exercises to the chapter ‘The British Conquest of India’ (Class 8), students are asked to write short notes on: ‘In spite of his being an imperialist, Lord Dalhousie was also a reformist; William Bentinck is known as a liberal Governor General.’

Since the project of nationhood is essentially a homogenising one, anxieties around possible disruptions abound in the texts. The construction of the ideal Indian nation is depicted in terms of a strong spiritual unity within given physical boundaries. Unity is also linked to the idea of a strong nation-state where the State’s economic and repressive functions are well in place. There is valorisation of strong States in the books as ideals of nation-building. Even discussions of ancient civilisations (the Persian and Greek in any case bound by racial Aryan ties to India!) refer to greatness as related to possibilities of unbreakable unity. The Roman empire is extolled for its strong ‘central government and uniform laws’. The text says, ‘uniformity of laws is a great Gift of Romans to [the] world. As a result of this uniformity of laws, unity and order were established’ (Class 9, 1992, p. 63).

Challenges are not discussed from the standpoint of people and communities but through the lens of the strong State. The cultural unification of the modern Indian nation-state was achieved through the actions of the strong leader, Sardar Patel. Patel is extolled as the chief architect of the Union of India. As mentioned above, the perspective is that although Gandhi led the nationalist movement, it was Patel who handled the more difficult tasks. It is maintained that he created a strong, integrated India, which is to be celebrated. The ‘unification’ of India, the merger of states, is cited as Patel’s ‘great contribution as a statesman and politician ... a miracle, one which Sardar carried out through love, patience, large heartedness and firmness. But for his leadership, the country would have gone to pieces and broken up into small fragments. His great qualities of leadership were best seen in the events surrounding the merger of the princely states of Junagadh and Hyderabad’ (Class 7, p. 113). The Class 9 (1992) text states: ‘The then Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, merged about 562 small and big princely states of India into [the] “Indian union”, thereby solving ‘one more complicated problem’ (p. 47) (Pic. 18).

True to his position in public imagination in contemporary Gujarat, Patel comes across very much as the ‘Loh Purush’: a man of determined action, the ‘Iron Man’ of the nation. Two incidents in Patel’s life that draw out his special strengths as a leader have come to occupy the space of legend in Gujarat. They relate to his ability to bear physical and emotional pain. The first story is about when Patel, as a young student, impatient at a barber’s hesitation to lance a boil in his armpit, picked up the red-hot iron and did it himself; the second story has to do with him continuing to fight a case in court even after getting a telegram

It was a mammoth task to convince kings and nawabs of more than 500 Princely and Provincial states spread all over the country to join in the Federation of India. Moreover, it was to be done very hurriedly. Fortunately, India had a very iron-willed and far-sited leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Under his capable leadership, this seemingly impossible task was completed in a very less time. Mr V. P. Menon, who was at that time Secretary of the Home Department, has played a remarkable role under the leadership of Sardar Patel.



Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

Pic. 18

informing him about his wife's death (Class 7, p. 113). Lessons refer to him as 'strong minded'; someone who 'did not take long pondering things'; a person with 'great sincerity of purpose, though he was at the same time a man of few words ... He was not one to seek power for his own sake. He had great qualities such as a willingness to make sacrifices, a gift for taking right decisions guided by a practical sense, an acute intelligence, a remarkable strength of character, fortitude and patience' (Class 7, pp. 112-113).

The Fascist as 'Supremo'

The unwavering strength of the leader of the strong, centralised nation-state is a theme in all textbooks and a reflection on the perspective on democracy in the textbooks. The discussion of fascism and Nazism in the Classes 9 and 10 texts, both old (1992 and 1993 respectively) and new (Class 9, 2005) follow the trend of valorising the strong male leader who promises restoration of pride and honour to 'the people'. Chapter 6 of the Class 10 (1993) book, 'The World between the Two World Wars', discusses fascism and Nazism. The text explains that one of the reasons for the rise of fascism in Italy was because 'during the First World War, Italy had to incur a heavy expenditure; the population of the unemployed was increasing rapidly. Starvation was becoming widespread. The government did not take any measure to improve this condition. To end all their miseries the masses were in search of a saviour (*taranhar*, Gujarati edition). At that time, the people found their leader in Benito Mussolini' (p. 67). About Mussolini the text says, 'revolutionary ideas were instilled into him from his childhood' (p. 67). Also, fascists were 'ready to remove at any cost any hurdle which was against the interests of the party and the country' (p. 68). In describing how fascism developed, the text says, 'gradually the membership and the members of branches (*shakhas*, Gujarati edition) of the fascist party began to grow' (p. 68).

Fascism is seen to have had 'internal achievements' and 'benefits', which the lesson lays out (p. 68): economic progress; eradication of unemployment and illiteracy; and compulsory military service and expansion of the navy. Mussolini also gained popularity by placating 'millions of Catholics' through his policy of acceptance of the power of the Pope in the Vatican. Thus, by maintaining a stoic silence on the crimes of fascism and the myriad ways in which fascism is present in the contemporary world, the text presents fascism as one among many ideologies that deliver quick results, with only minor problems: for example, 'this party was a staunch opposer of democracy and individual freedom and also of communism' (p. 68).

On Nazism in Germany, the Class 10 (1993) textbook maintains that the failure of the democratic government led to the emergence of Nazism. Due to the treaty of Versailles '*swarmani German yuvako*' (p. 66, Gujarati edition) were angry. 'The industrialists and capitalists of Germany were scared of communism' and so, 'fearing this, the capitalists funded the activities of the Nazi party and helped in the spread of Nazism' (p. 69). This nexus between money, power and State fuelled the growth of Nazism. The people of Germany wanted 'a strong government capable of taking prompt decisions' (p. 70). Hitler's personality too was responsible for the rise of Nazism: 'his speeches worked like magic and the masses looked upon Hitler as their saviour' (p. 70). The text gives Hitler the benefit of doubt in its descriptions of his life: 'Although an Austrian by birth he became the worshipper (*pujari*, Gujarati edition) of Germany and its nationalism. He believed that the German leaders and the Jews were responsible for the German defeat, and 'with the aim of re-establishing the pride of Germany he entered politics' (p. 70). To establish the Nazi party, several units of the Nazi party were set up throughout the country and the Nazis, 'were always prepared to liquidate the opponents of the Nazi party' (p. 70). Hitler led Germany to extreme nationalism (*anayash*, Gujarati edition), and caused World War II (p. 68).

Under the heading 'The Supremo', the text says, '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 insure that the German people strictly follow the principal of Nazism it was included in the curriculum of the educational institutions. The textbooks said, "Hitler is our leader and we love him."' (p. 71). One of the darkest chapters of the human history, the Holocaust, has been described in only one sentence: 'they committed the gruesome and inhuman act of suffocating sixty lakh Jews in gas chambers' (p. 71).

Once again the 'internal achievements' of Nazism are enumerated (Pic. 19). Remarkably, listed as an achievement is that 'he adopted the policy of opposition towards the Jewish people and advocated the supremacy of the German race' (p. 71). Some of the questions in the exercise section are: '1. Describe the special features of the Fascist ideology and 2. Compare the internal achievements of Fascism and Nazism.'

It is significant—and tragic—that the glorification of Hitler can be found in an older textbook that precedes the coming to power of the right-wing BJP government in the state, indicating a much longer history of fascist admiration, at least among textbook writers. The language of *shakhas*, strong national set-up, restoration of national pride, and muted reference to the Holocaust are reminiscent of contemporary fascist discourse. It is indeed disturbing to think that textbooks in Gujarat have played a role in securing ideological consensus for such discourse through school knowledge. The debates around the controversy generated by the revised textbook of Class 9 in 2005 brings to the fore the tragedy of this history. The 2005 book uses the basic format and language of the 1993 text, but underlines the ‘combination of nationalism and socialism’ of Hitler’s ideology: ‘Hitler adopted aggressive policies and led the Germans towards ardent nationalism. His policies gave birth to the World War. The Nazi soldiers were wearing blue dress and were adorning [sic] the symbol of “SWASTIK”. They considered Hitler as their “FUHRER” (Saviour), (p. 11; caps in original). After protests by activists in the state, particularly over the complete silence on the Holocaust, the government published a revised edition of the book in 2006, which paid more attention to language and presentation and explicitly mentioned the Holocaust (Class 9, 2006, p. 10).

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, but in doing so he led Germany to extreme nationalism and caused the Second World War.

Pic. 19

Varna as a ‘Precious Gift’

In all the books, the sanctity of the varna system is upheld, and varnashrama glorified. The four varnas are immutable categories. Occasionally there is ambiguity about whether membership to a varna is based on birth or occupation, and how, if at all, it is related to class. The terms are often used interchangeably. In the Class 5 book, which deals with ‘ancient’ India, varna is decided by birth and not by occupation, with each varna having certain ‘natural’ characteristics and values (gundharm) associated with it. In Class 9, students learn that ‘Aryans divided the society into four “Varnas” or classes on the basis of the work done by each class’ based on occupation and not birth (p. 42). The lesson also quotes the example of Vishwamitra, who, although a Kshatriya, could become a Brahmin Rishi. Could a Shudra become a Brahmin through penance? The book does not go anywhere close to that question. That this mobility was possible only for the upper castes is not highlighted; the Shudra’s place is fixed through their service to ‘the other three classes’. Caste exemplifies the nexus between knowledge and

power: the varna system, according to the Class 9 text, 'was a unique social structure based on a systematic study of human life' (p. 43).

The celebratory tone describing varna as an ideal system to maintain social order is tempered by a focus on casteism as a social problem or challenge before the nation in Civics lessons (discussed elsewhere). In History, however, although there is admission of 'corruption', there is a final resolution: 'The brahmanas were regarded as the highest class while the shudras were treated as the lowest class. These distinctions have persuaded in spite of the attempts made by the reformers to remove them. Yet the importance of the varna system as an ideal system of building the social and the economic structure of a society cannot be overlooked' (p. 76). Varnashrama is included in a chapter on the cultural heritage of ancient India in Class 9; the lesson calls it 'a precious gift of the Aryans' to mankind (p. 75).

At places, the caste system has been described as a corrupt form of the varnashrama system. Caste became problematic because birth became the marker of caste and not karma (deeds). While not addressing the inherent inequality brought on by graded hierarchy, the texts mention the work of 'reformers', 'saints and pious people' to address caste 'distinctions': 'Fortunately, some saints and pious people were also born in the lower caste whose teachings and preachings of human dignity and idealism have largely influenced the Indian society' (Class 9, 1992, p. 92). Efforts towards reforms initiated by upper-caste reformers are treated positively. 'The higher caste people realised their illtreatment to the downtrodden, as education cultivated in them a progressive insight' (p. 92).

Interestingly, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas appear in lessons, both in the ancient, medieval and modern, but there is silence on the role of Shudras. In fact the shift to casteism as a social problem stems from an anxiety with the lower castes' disaffection as a threat to the integrity of the nation: 'the problem of casteism is also becoming a serious challenge for national unity because the lower caste is seen as inherently inferior ... Now they have become conscious about their rights and duties and they ask for justice. Sometimes even they began to exercise pressure on the government for their legitimate rights. Some fanatics resort to violent movements to ascertain their rights' (Class 10, 1993, p. 92). The problem is not viewed as a social problem, related to questions of human dignity or rights of citizen. Rather, casteism becomes a 'problem' because it can destabilise the nation. Of course, the progress of the nation is hampered due to their social backwardness: 'these people, due to their socio-cultural limitations, could not maintain the pace of development along with the advent of urban culture' (Class 10, 1993, p. 92).

Caste inequality as an impediment to national cohesion is a recurrent theme. In the Class 6 book that deals with medieval India, caste is specifically pointed to as an impediment to Hindu political unity. The final chapter in the History section sums it up: Ahmed Shah Abdali, on learning that the many fires burning in the Maratha camp were

because of the different castes preparing their own food, says that it will be easy to defeat a sharply divided enemy: ‘Those who can’t cook together can’t fight together’ (p. 102). The Marathas’ loss of this battle further signifies the importance of caste unity and the need to gloss over caste discrimination/asymmetries in the larger interest of Hindu unity.

The concern with caste in representing the medieval era is revisited in the book on modern India, albeit in a different form and certainly not with the same intensity. There is far more fluidity in approaching caste in the Class 7 book, where again it is often conflated with class and singled out for reform, not denunciation, and identified as an impediment to progress. Nonetheless, there is a focus on caste in this book as well, primarily through reference to the work of Swami Sahajanand: his idea of a ‘morality-oriented’ religion, free of purity-pollution taboos and the belief in dignifying the lower castes. Given his position as the founder of one of the most visible and powerful religious formations in Gujarat, the Swaminarayan sect, it is not surprising that he is given such prominence in the books. An incident is narrated where a lower-caste person, shunned by the Brahmins, comes to meet Swami Sahajanand, who turns to their community, ‘the lower caste (harijans)’: ‘Go, you too will develop scholarship and virtues characteristic of true Brahmins and your conduct will be so pure and free from blemish that it will put Brahmins to shame’ (p. 31).

The Class 7 book also has a chapter on Phule (‘Mahatma Jyotiba Phule’, chapter 7) that is sensitively written, with rare shades of complexity. The chapter opens with a dialogue on caste that touches on the oppressive controls of caste on labour, through a conversation between Poona’s Brahmins and Govindrao, Jyotiba’s father. The Brahmins ask: ‘Govindrao, are you afraid of religion or not? Are you aware of the fact that the Almighty has divided society into four “varnas” according to their Karmas and characteristics?’ (p. 37). Gender is also invoked as the dialogue goes on with the Brahmins mockingly accusing Jyotiba and his wife of having forgotten their caste occupations (gardening). The threat of violence is held forth as an obsequious Govindrao is told, ‘Your happiness will not last long as you are trying to snatch away our means of livelihood.’ The threat of loss of Brahminical control of caste labour is located within the British impetus for social reform: ‘Do you wish that your children should do our work and our children should do their work, now that the British have invited them to go ahead on the path of social reform?’ (p. 37). Govindrao begs forgiveness and promises them he will tell his son that for a peaceful life, he will ‘perform his duties according to the varnashrama’ (p. 37) (Pic. 20).

Phule’s work is described as breaking the shackles of ‘undesirable social practices like widow tonsuring [caste not alluded to here], female infanticide and widow remarriage’. Through the lesson, one gets the sense that both Phule and Savitribai worked together (they are called the ‘couple’) although there is no mention of Savitribai herself. There is a direct association with modernity, as the text states that it is Phule’s



Pic. 20

They opened one school after another. In such schools children were admitted without any discrimination of class, caste, creed, colour or economic background. Children of the poor and the weak, girls and the untouchables, everyone could join these schools without any discrimination. It was something unprecedented in those days. Jyotiba's feelings were hurt when people kept him at a distance on social occasions and feasts inspite of the fact that he too was equally educated. He could understand the pangs of pain of those who were always subjected to the humiliation of being treated as untouchables throughout their life. One of his close friends invited him to his wedding feast and then remarked : "Take care not to touch, you know, who we are, and who you are." These words shocked him and also made him understand what his mission in life should be.

(...)

Jyotiba himself remained indebted to many a thinker. While reading essays of Thomas Mann he came across some vital maxims such as :

"The world is my country - my religion is to do good."

"My own mind is my own church."

(...)

These books have made a significant contribution to the process of reawakening and social reconstruction in western India. Similarly, the organization founded by him - 'Satyashodhak Samaj' has also acquired historic importance. It began to break the shackles of undesirable social practices that had been hampering individual growth and causing a great harm to all men.

While exposing hypocrites and pseudo pundits he began to say that no agent was needed between a devotee and the Almighty.

exposure to an English missionary (through his aunt) which enables him to 'pick up English effortlessly, an experience that helps shape the mission he and Savitribai embark on' (Class 6, p. 38).

Caste discrimination is also read through the prism of body. The point is made that caste discrimination and purity pollution could operate on social occasions and persist despite English education (p. 38). Repeated encounters with upper-caste people, even friends, which involve social exclusion and purity-pollution practices, convince Phule of his mission. From here on, caste disappears as a term of use as well as a social category and the focus becomes social equality without reference to caste or gender. In fact it is suggested that a quasi-religious strain informs his social actions: 'Universal religion: Truth to everyone. This religion stands on equality, justice and fraternity' (p. 40); 'while exposing hypocrites and pseudo-pundits [the work of the Saytashodhak Samaj] he began to say that no agent was needed between a devotee and the Almighty' (p. 39). And, as children of that Almighty, 'we should all forgo differences and discriminatory practices' (p. 39).

While it is true that the text itself ceases to focus caste, the activity and notes to the teacher at the end of the lesson once again draws attention

back to this aspect. The activity given to students is to ‘Organise a debate in your class on the topic: Social Structure based on varnas (class distinction) hampers social progress’ (p. 41). The teacher is instructed to pay special attention to the following: ‘1) social inequities have arisen due to varna-based social structure and 2) the lower strata of the society is deprived of education due to untouchability’ (p. 41).

In the Class 7 book, the chapter on Phule sits between chapters on Keshav Chandra Sen on one hand and Dayanand Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda on the other. It is more than likely that the chapters will be taught in this order. The other chapters talk of the futility of caste, and human emotion above caste (Ramakrishna, p. 51); a ‘return to the Vedas’ as a rejection of caste and class, and the possibilities of creating ‘a healthy and sane society in which everyone would get an opportunity to advance according to his abilities and not on the basis of his birth (Dayanand Saraswati, p. 44). Within this discussion on social reform, then, caste becomes politically neutralised by bringing it under the category of a social evil based on lack of humanness in society. The structural aspect of caste is not stressed; only that it can be ‘removed’ through the interventions of holy men and nationalist leaders. The link between Phule’s work and political articulations of caste in the nationalist movement is touched upon, but again in a neutral vein. It is mentioned that Phule was the guru of Ambedkar and Karve: ‘it was on his pioneering work that these two great followers of his succeeded in creating an awareness for the need to bring equality in the Indian society’ (p. 38). In the Class 7 book, caste then disappears in the historical narrative of nationalism and the nationalist movement.

Untouchability is discussed in a chapter on social reforms in Class 8 (2004). Here one sees again the familiar trope of the reformer as spiritual leader: Narayan Guru ‘inherited the qualities of purity of character and simplicity from his parents ... since his boyhood ... [he had] a spiritual bent of mind. He performed severe penance and turned towards the service of the backward classes’ (p.32). Untouchability is seen as merely irrational and not structural, and Narayan Guru’s analysis of untouchability is reduced to his ‘belief’ that illiteracy is the ‘root cause of superstitions and evils. He persuaded the untouchables to get education’ (p. 32).

Caste formulated as the ‘evil’ of untouchability dominates all discussion on reform of society, whether in the nineteenth century or during the nationalist movement. Complexities of caste as a social and embodied experience remain unexamined. The Class 8 lesson speaks of how, with the ‘passage of time, the feeling of nationalism developed in the minds of people ... organisations like the Indian National Social Conference addressed themselves to the eradication of evils that affected the people of the backward classes ... yet the right of untouchables to enter temples was passed as late as 1937’ (p. 32). Although it is interesting that the discussion of nationalist reform speaks of how laws granting property

rights of Hindu women also had to wait till 1937, there is no attempt to address women. Indeed, in all lessons, women's caste is systematically subsumed within the caste of 'their' men. In the Class 8 text, there is just one line mentioning Dr Ambedkar as chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee.

Representations of the Body

The story of Apala in the Class 5 book suggests how women's bodies mediate their relationship to identity, knowledge and power within patriarchy. Apala is rejected by her husband and commanded to return to her father's home because she has a white spot on her elbow (Class 5, p. 2). Yagnavalkya does not want Maitreyi to come along with him on his quest for eternal happiness because her body is weak (Class 5, p. 7). Divine intervention is the only solace for women: Apala prays rigorously and leads a life in solitude. She cannot go back to her husband's house as she is a self-respecting woman, and she refrains from going to her father's house because of social constraints. The grace of the Sun God—who is there for everyone on this earth (p. 3)—is her only resort. Here again, a bodily image is represented: Apala transforms from an 'ordinary woman' into a 'saint comparable to Lopamudra, Bhadra, Vashishth and Visvamitra' (p. 3) (Pic. 21).

Allusions to the body are generally associated with qualities that enhance attributes of moral character and physical ability. It is highlighted that Tulsidas described Rama as a 'person with a fine combination of virtues, strength and beauty' (Class 6, p. 79). In the chapter on Dayanand Saraswati it is stated: 'Fascinated by his inquisitive mind, robust physique and celestial light of celibacy, many heads of sects and monasteries wished to make him their disciple' (p. 43). Tilak was 'frail in physique, but had an exceptionally strong memory ...' The text goes on to say how Tilak cultivated his body through traditional exercises (Class 7, p. 63).

The body of the nationalist, worn in body through incarcerations but with unbroken spirit, is also referred to: Bose's failing health but determined resolve (Class 7, p. 101); Tilak's 'rigorous imprisonment that made him lose weight, bruise his palms but remain unbending in his spirit' (Class 7, p. 64).

Gandhi's return to India dressed in a '*deshi kurta* and shoes of a *deshi* variety' evoke a response from women, who say, 'in appearance he looked like an accountant, a munim, in some shop'—and this was the man who had defeated General Smuts in South Africa. The text continues: 'Appearances count for so much in this world' (p. 75).

Descriptions of the individual body and the body of collectivities are gendered, such as the description of Rani Lakshmbai (mentioned above)

and racialised (Marathas, Rajputs, Sikhs, Pathans). Rana Pratap, Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh are projected in extremely masculinist terms. In a context where repeated defeat at the hands of the enemy signals masculinist decline, Rana Pratap is mentioned as the only Rajput ruler not to have bowed to Akbar's sovereignty by giving up wives and daughters (Class 6, p. 67). Descriptions of events signify the pedigree of the martial races which is corporeal and embodied: blood flowing out of the tent and dripping from his sword, Guru Gobind Singh gathers Sikhs willing to be beheaded, in a programme to liberate them from the fear of death (Class 6, p. 83); or the violent Pathans reigned in by non-violence: 'Hundreds of Pathans, members of that fearless tribe, now pouring into the streets ... chests laid bare to receive the bullet wounds ... bearing no arms. This was a new avatar of the same Pathans who were once said to be notorious for their wild, violence [sic] acts' (Class 7, p. 88). An exercise at the end of this lesson is, 'Explain: 'The Pathans showed a rare capacity for non-violence at the time of the salt satyagraha' (p. 90).

Pic. 21



Apala walked out of her husband's house. Apala's husband was under the impression that she would go back to her father's place. But Apala was a woman of different type. "Why should I go back to my father's place?" Apala asked herself. Why not lead an independent life with self-respect?

Apala built a small cottage in the forest. She plucked flowers and after having a bath in the river, she stood there offering her prayers to the Sun. The Sun God is a god who is present everywhere. The heat of the sun purifies your body.

When Apala sat in meditation, verses, sacred mantras came naturally to her. The Sun God Himself, the destroyer of all darkness, the one who sustains life would appear before her.

For Teachers

The following points should be kept in mind in teaching this lesson :

- As human beings, man and woman are born equal. From the point-of-view of sense of self-respect also, man and woman are equal. A woman is always dependent, she has to depend on her husband for all her happiness, she cannot lead a life of self-respect once her husband rejects her. All such notions should be rooted out.
- Apala, in this lesson, reminds us of the fact that self-respecting women with a great sense of independence lived even in Vedic times in our country. This is the main point that the teacher should keep in mind while teaching this lesson.

Tropes of Violence

Violence looms large in the mythological stories presented in the Class 5 book. The prologue itself confirms that *Mahabharata* 'is mainly the story of war' (p. 21). Bloodshed, violent images of men at war, violence against women (Draupadi being dragged by her hair into the court) convey these images. The constant quest for power through violent means is repeatedly depicted in the book, with no ethical resolution; in this way, violence is presented as defining power and prestige. The textbook shows the expansion of power with the use of violent means. For example, the textbook gives accounts of various dynasties that expanded their kingdom to exert power, faced external aggression, coped with that aggression and emerged as winners. As all this unfolds, violence emerges as the only means to maintain and expand power.

That so much violence is represented in the textbook only proves that it was an integral part of our 'glorious' past, and that this violence was perceived as justified. The most important evidence of this is the warrior caste. The Kshatriyas were a violent caste, and since they are called the protectors of society, it can be inferred that violence was justified; questions were not raised. Indian culture does not seem to have a mechanism that allows for questioning anything wrong.

The representation of Mahavir and Gautam Buddha as moderates who brought in non-violence, penance, sacrifice, renunciation and spirituality into religion, follows immediately after the description of violent Kshatriya dominance. Including Mahavir and Buddha also breaks the dominance of Aryans in the book. The building of a nation through *ganarajayas*—which can be recognised as the beginning of modern-day democracy—can be read as an analogy to present-day realities.

The revolutionaries (Class 7) are characterised by aggressive masculinity: 'The revolutionaries have enriched the soil of this garden with their very life blood ... History is witness to their idealism ...' (p. 72). The path of armed resistance is glorified, through Tilak's impatience with 'entreaties' put forward by Moderates (p. 62). The chapter on Indian revolutionaries is prefaced with the comment that before Gandhiji, there were those, like in other enslaved countries, who took to violent means. These 'patriots who loved their motherland took to arms in order to fight the foreign rulers who were themselves fully armed' (p. 68). One incident of horrific violent action by British soldiers and several instances of brave sacrifice have been highlighted in this chapter. The focus is selective and manipulative: Vasudev Balwant Phadke is mentioned in connection with his raising funds for a nationalist army and his subsequent arrest. The operation to raid the treasury to feed famine-affected people in 1860 is not mentioned. Madan Dhingra's last words before being hung for killing Curzon Wylie are highlighted: 'I pray to God that I might be born over and over in Bharat so I could sacrifice my life for this noble cause' (p. 70).

Tradition, Modernity and Culture

A sense of justice derived from religious morality pervades the ways in which conflict within tradition, and between tradition and modernity, is represented in the books. If, in the late medieval period, laying 'down lives for religion and ... fighting against injustice' is given importance (Guru Gobind Singh, Class 6, p. 83), then in the social reform period (Class 7) there is engagement with these debates through the prism of a newly acquired modernity made possible through western, English education. Social transformation, in the Class 7 book, is not only drawn from this modernity, but also through the knowledge of the past, a predominant aspect of which is religious precept and practice. The social reform period is prefaced with the desire for freedom evidenced in 1857, which is stated to be a protest against 'divide and rule': '1857 was a move for obtaining political freedom. But at the same time, social and religious fields also revealed the early signs of reawakening and enlightenment' (Class 7, p. 29). Rammohan Roy, for example, 'proved that no religious scriptures endorse the practice [of sati] ... and though he was himself a scholar of most of the classical languages [not mentioned which], he was an ardent supporter of Western education through English, because he understood well the importance of the knowledge of Western science and learning' (p. 14). The message that comes through is that he laid the foundations for a great future without giving up what was good and noble in the past.

The conflict between tradition and modernity presented is resolved through a 'Reawakening' (the title of the chapter that deals with the era of social and religious reform), a term that directly invokes the glory of the past. The chapter in fact does deal with social and religious reform, starting with Rammohan Roy. His efforts at abolishing sati are framed within the context of his own sister-in law's sati: 'Setting aside Alokmanjari's wishes, ignoring Ram Mohan's opinion, a valuable life was consigned to fire merely to fulfill the vanity of an upper class family to honour a tradition ... It is the most salient feature of reawakening: the protection of life. Life cannot be sacrificed at the altar of blind faith' (p. 30). The chapter does place the practice within an 'upper class' here, possibly meant to stand in for upper caste (as in the rest of the book) and does take a position against the violence of blind faith, although as with the rest of the traditions, it is not mentioned why these were specifically focused on women.

Ramakrishna is shown to reject useless knowledge like rituals and scriptures, which would have helped him to earn a livelihood (Class 7, p. 48). Here the conflicts within tradition are resolved within tradition itself: such as gaining knowledge from potters and sculptors, music, learning from Nature, and a non-sectarian approach to religion and religious practice. However, it is interesting to observe the placing of Ramakrishna within a context of colonial Bengal and the emergence of a western educated section with new anxieties arising out of modernity.

In Ramakrishna Paramhans's times, Kolkata and Eastern India had started getting new education. The younger generation which was availing of higher education had developed scepticism for Indian philosophy, religion and cults of devotion and sadhana. A strong intellectual like Vivekananda was also among them. By inspiring him to follow the path of faith, Ramkrishna not only did good to India but also to the entire world.

Pic. 22

shake off people's sense of poverty and tried to inculcate in them self-confidence, remind them of the aspects of the great and glorious Indian cultural heritage ... through learning, beyond controversies for Pundits to indulge in futile debates'; and with these sermons, 'the awareness on the part of Indians also began to increase ... [his] speeches like the holy river Ganges, were cool, sacred and life-developing' (Class 7, p. 55). Keshavchandra Sen 'advised people that instead of rejecting all things and ideas in an indiscriminate manner, they should examine every old tradition carefully and accept and continue whatever was found useful and compatible with modern life. As a result of this, Indians began to think favourably of their nationality, culture and great traditions' (Class 7, p. 32). It was therefore 'but natural for a person like Keshavchandra to develop respect for Sri Ramakrishna Paramahans', who praised him for his 'mundane but divine life' (p. 33).

Through Vivekananda, he is shown to have had an impact on the world. (p. 49) (Pic. 22).

One also sees an accommodation of modernity within tradition, a resolution made possible when there is confident self-identity. Vivekananda 'tried to

A linear narrative then allows for a jump from the Prarthana Samaj (social reforms, education and wider spiritual understanding) to the Home Rule movement (nationalism) in the same paragraph (Class 7, p. 33). 'The Home Rule movement encourages the need to attain freedom. It is during this phase of reawakening that the educated class began imbibing good things from the outside world and also learnt to appreciate the value of their own cultural heritage' (p. 33). None of the personalities associated with these movements are found worthy to be introduced. A neat sliding into the nationalist movement is thus enabled, with conflicts and anxieties around modernity and tradition neatly erased or referred to only obliquely. Disagreements between Agarkar and Tilak on social reform and swaraj, for example, are referred to only in a later chapter on the return of Gandhi. Agarkar's position is not discussed at all, and Gandhi appears to have resolved the issues merely with his entry on the political scene (Class 7, p. 77).

Enabling Modernity

While the tropes of religion and spirituality dominate discussions of the tradition-modernity dyad in the Indian national context, at best embracing the modern within the script of tradition-as-civilisation, the origins of western modernity is located within the European Renaissance. The first chapter of the old Class 10 (1993) book discusses the rise of modernity and its positive impact, the Renaissance, Crusades, and the Reformation. The main emphasis is on presenting the defining movements of European history in a nutshell. Subtleties and nuances

are not addressed, with discussions of characteristic features of the Renaissance—rationalism, humanism, materialism and liberalism—each being allotted one small paragraph. The text makes sweeping statements without explanation. Thus, about rationalism the text says, ‘religion had lost its ‘iron grip’ over man’s intellect ... renaissance man discarded blind beliefs, superstitions and traditional ideas ... [that] man and not religion, must be at the centre of all human activities was accepted universally’ (p. 5). Such claims of universality continue: ‘thus the renaissance was an important force which pushed mankind from the middle age with its narrow-mindedness and superstitions into the more liberal and progressive modern age’ (p. 6).

The books emphasise that western modernity enabled reform and also, to some extent, nationalism in the Indian context. Social reformers were influenced by ‘the liberal idea’ spread by English education, and coming into contact with them, ‘prominent Indians’ like Rammohan Roy, Durgaram Mehta, Narmad, Mahiptram, Mulji and Malabari became ‘committed social reformers’, persuading the government to enact laws against sati, child marriage and widow remarriage. ‘The importance of women’s education increased due to their efforts’ (Class 8, p. 24). One of the ‘positive effects’ of British rule was the emergence of a new middle class who ‘used their knowledge of English to understand the changes that were taking place in the world ... This class played an important role in starting the struggle for independence’ (p. 25).

In the Class 10 book, consequent upon the American Revolution, the American State is presented as a new and great beginning. However, the text also adds, ‘America is today the most powerful nation in the world, it is also the greatest democracy in the world today’ (Class 10, 1993, p. 37). The juxtaposition of power and greatness suggests that it is the greatest democracy because it is also the most powerful nation. There is no attempt to raise questions about democracy; the text assumes that principles of democracy are the best mechanisms through which society/State are to be organised. In the case of the French Revolution, it is nationalism that is viewed as a positive offshoot: ‘During the period of the revolution the French men were united to meet the danger of the invasion by Austria and Prussia. This, in course of time, gave rise to nationalism’ (p. 43).

Science and scientists are treated with reverence. Thus science could not flourish in the medieval age because ‘the minds and reasoning power of man were under the overbearing shadow of religion’ (Class 10, 1993, p. 21). The modern age is important because ‘the intellectual became aware of the shortcomings of the past and a new age of discovery was born’ (Class 10, 1993, p. 22).

A Gendered History

In all books, the social actor is unmistakably male. Man is the subject and agent of history: ‘Man is a social animal. He develops himself as well

as the society while living in it. For this, from time to time, he makes changes in the social order created by himself. These changes have either changed the life style of man or forced him to change it ... These changes have been very important in history ...' (Class 8, 2004, p. 4).

Women are not completely absent in the books; they appear prominently in discussions on early India and also in nationalist discourses, albeit as peripheral actors and typically cast as heroic mothers, chaste wives and glorious warriors. In the post-nation frame, in chapters on Civics, gender (equity, empowerment, equality) displaces the category of women altogether.

Through the gender lens, it is possible to see recurrent patterns across subjects and rubrics that help in our understanding of how the normalisation of gender hierarchy occurs. I will draw upon some of these themes to illustrate how gender, class, caste, religion and nation interweave in these books to construct a body of normative knowledge about one's identity in the social, historical, political and economic entity called India. Within this knowledge, both absences and presence of women are significant.

Women, Culture, Nation

What does the politicisation of memory mean for women? 'Vedic' India gets legitimacy by the assertion that women held 'high' and 'respectable' positions. The textbook says, 'learned women like Apala, Ghosha, Lopamudra and Vishwawara have even composed

Pic. 23



"No, Maitreyi", said the Rishi, "The path which I am taking is a most difficult one. It involves harsh penances. You are a woman. You are so frail and delicate. You cannot stand the ordeal."

"My master," said Maitreyi, "I am your wife. We are bound to each other with ties which are eternal. I must share all the joys as well as pains and hardships of life with you. You cannot set out alone, leaving me behind."

But, the Rishi remonstrated, "Why do you wish to undergo all these hardships? And, the end of the quest is so uncertain. You may not secure the kind of happiness which we want to attain in the end, for all you know."

"May be, we may never attain the goal. Yet we can share the sufferings and the hardships of the journey to attain it. We can do the penances together. I am your wife. Why should we part ways? I have the same right to do the penances for the rare kind of happiness as you have. Why do you deny me the right?"

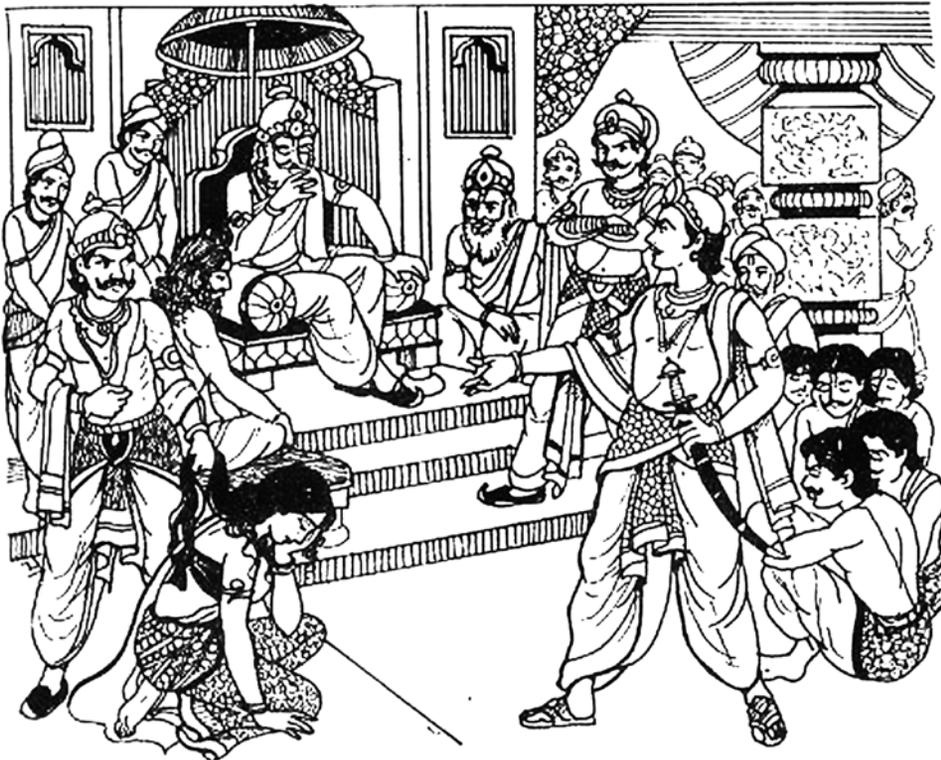
Yajnavalkya was deeply touched at Maitreyi's devotion. And so Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi, husband and wife, set out together in quest of happiness which is undying and eternal.

The name of Maitreyi is foremost among the names of the great tradition of womanhood in India.

verses which are included in the Vedas' (Class 9, 1992, p. 42). But figures like Apala and Maitreyi exist along with Sita and Draupadi, represented as docile and helpless. It is Sita who is presented as an ideal for Indian women. 'The idea of a good wife as presented by Sita has provided a model to be followed by the succeeding generation of women for ages' (Class 9, 1992, p. 79). Thus tradition assigns women high status and, at the same time, situates and anchors them to a norm that has not lost its power even today. Needless to say, this ideal woman supports and reproduces the patriarchal family, which is key to maintaining both nation and community. The space created for women is overshadowed by patriarchy. Therefore, women are given wings but their flight is monitored. A gradual disappearance of women is noticed as the discussion shifts to Kshatriya honour and dominance, an almost inevitable dissolution.

In the Vedic period, it appears that a nebulous space was created for women to express self-respect and self-reliance, albeit as daughters (Apala) or wives (Maitreyi). Apala's strong refusal to go back to her husband, and Maitreyi's willpower to follow her husband, stand as symbols of liberation which are undermined with statements like 'Lord, I am your wife, we are bound to each other in happiness and in sorrow' (Class 5, p. 2) (Pic. 23). Apala's domesticity is emphasised in the questions given at the end of the lesson in the exercise section: '1) Introduce Apala as a strong-willed, kind, and cultured house wife; 2) What kind of work did Apala, the daughter of a rishi, do in the house in her childhood?' Teachers are told to keep in mind that 'autonomous, self-respecting women existed in our country right from the Vedic period as can be seen from the character of Apala'.

Pic. 24a



The Kshatriya dominance that overpowers the textbook in the Epic era gives women like Sita, a Kshatriya woman, short shrift. When she tries to reason with Ram about the killing of the demons, her reasoning is portrayed as stemming from her insecurity as a wife. One of the most important events of the *Mahabharata*—the disrobing of Draupadi—serves as a moral rupture in the narration of Vedic heritage. The chapter on Vikarna (Class 5, pp. 28-32) brings out the power hierarchy and politics of power within Kshatriya patriarchy. For Vikarna the issue at stake is the insult to the *Kuruvansha Kulvadhū* (daughters-in-law of the Kuru clan) for whose cause he challenges his Kshatriya elders. Gender and age hierarchies operate to silence him because he is the youngest. The Kshatriya woman's identity recedes in the face of masculine supremacy (Pic. 24a & 24b). As represented in the Vedic period, women voiced their choice against injustice. In contrast, in the Epic Age, Kshatriya women lapse into a complete silence; they are shown as submissive and self-effacing. The lesson on Vikarna does not raise any issues about the otherwise extolled *Kshatriyadharmā*.

Other stories from the epics in the Class 5 text that deal with gender relations such as that of Kunti and Karna provide a source for rich discussion. The lesson says that Kunti would have had to face humiliation from society if her 'boon' was revealed. Yet, despite Karna's angry accusations, she emerges as the upholder of the Kshatriya family honour. The story about Sudama's wife, who has to submit to his ritual fasting at the cost of her hungry children, forcefully reinforces domesticity as ennobling. A question in the self-study section of the Class 5 lesson on Sudama is: 'Housewives help in up keeping family traditions. Explain this through the character of Sita' (p. 35). Sita is not even a character in the story!

Pic. 24b



"But son", said Gautami, "The son is known after the name of his father, and not that of his mother."

"Mother", said Shatkarni, "In our part of the country, in the south, you can also associate the name of the mother with that of the son. But in wishing to be known as Gautami-putra, I am not led by any such social practice. I am guided simply by the desire that the world should know how I have been moulded entirely by the training you gave to me, by the principles of sound character you instilled in me. My success is entirely due to your good work in bringing me up the right way for a King."

Mothers, wives and daughters are mentioned in nearly every chapter in the Class 6 book on Medieval History, often by name, either as those who give permission to men for renunciation, or those who are likely to be given up to Muslim rulers on defeat in war. Mothers are also referred to in their role of cultural reproducers, instilling values in their heroic sons (Shivaji, Siddhraj Jaysinh, Bose). The representations of these women either highlight the narratives of just and fair kings (Minaldevi, Siddhraj Jaysinh's mother, appears as his advisor in the abolition of tax levied on pilgrims

to Somnath, and also pardons a local 'dancer' from giving up land for a well to be constructed in her name, Class 6, p. 16) or serve as foils to the beliefs of their husbands (Ramanujacharya sending his wife to her parents for upholding practices of caste purity and pollution, Class 6, p. 30) (Pic. 25). Religion, in the narration of Medieval History, comes across as a domain of male knowledge. Although Bhakti is at the core of this narration, the only references to Mirabai and Andal are in the context of Bhakti's pan-Indian character (Lord Krishna being worshipped in the north and south, p. 28).

Ramanuja's wife believed in the caste system. After serving food to a guest of the Vaishya caste she removed the plate with a stick and took bath. Ramanuja was very unhappy at this. She disregarded his wishes thrice. Ramanuja then sent her to her father's place and became a sanyasi.

Ramanuja drew disciples from almost all the castes and social strata. They included labourers as well as learned Brahmins. When a wealthy landlord named Kuresh from Kanchi met him, he decided to become his disciple.

Pic. 25

The Slippage between Public and Private

When women get written into the nation in History books, the public-private is elided as their core virtues of domesticity and religiosity are highlighted. The continuity between the woman's role of moral reproduction in the family and the nation are brought out in repeated references to the motherland, citizenship as birth from two mothers and, of course, the omnipresent trope, the quintessentially Indian *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The ideology of the family extends to the conduct of nations, as the norms of familial cooperation and lack of conflict extend to relationships at the global level.

There is one chapter each in the Classes 6 and 7 books on brave Indian women: Rani Ahalyabai in Class 6 and Rani Lakshmibai in Class 7. Both narrations are highly militaristic accounts of their heroism and courage. This reading of their histories is cast within a patriarchal notion of their 'brave womanhood'. Their valour is accommodated within their roles as ideal Hindu women: both, for example, are shown as being intensely devout and pious. The visual of Ahalyabai has her holding a basket of votive flowers (Pic. 26). Lakshmibai's daily routine, it is stated, consisted of ceremonial prayers before state duties and reading of holy books before retiring (Class 7, p. 24). It is mentioned that Ahalyabai builds up a women's army. An incident is narrated when she convinces her rival that attacking her army would result in his shame in case of either defeat or victory, so it is best that he gives up the idea of invasion (Class 6, p. 98). One incident in the life of Lakshmibai has her rebuking the Maharaja of Gwalior for wanting to feed Brahmins to propitiate the Gods for a victory against the British, by telling him that 'such hopes are futile and he should join the battle' (Class 7, p. 26). Her military defeat is narrated with passion. There is detailed reference to her body: of medium build, with a lovely nose and expressive eyes. Her description on the battlefield is that of the goddess at war (she is referred to as *Ranachandi*) 'in kurta, pyjama and crimson headband, bedecked in ornaments, flanked by two women body guards' (p. 26). Her



20

RANI AHALYABAI

Once a queen with a lustrous face, who lived like an ascetic after ascending the throne, asked the keeper of the royal treasury to unlock it. When it was opened, it was found overflowing with precious metals like gold and silver and precious stones like rubies and diamonds. The queen placed a holy basil (Tulsi) leaf on it and announced, "This state is not mine. It belongs to Lord Shiva." This queen was Maharani Ahalyabai of Indore. She looked after the state administration for 30 years, but always maintained that she was ruling on behalf of Lord Almighty. From the treasury she had inherited, she spent a lot of wealth for many public welfare projects, but not a penny for her own self.

Ahalyabai was born in 1725 AD. Her religious-minded parents imparted to her, the education of the holy books at home from which she derived inspiration about the right way of living.

Pic. 26

story is that of the lone female warrior who heroically binds together a defeated army and then finally dies because of a fall from her horse. 'In this way a brave female figure of the glorious Indian tradition breathed her last in a valiant manner' (p. 27). The teacher is told to emphasise that, 'Many great women of India have made significant contribution to various fields at different times' (p. 28). The exercise at the end of the lesson: 'Find out the poem [sic] *'Khub ladi mardani wo Jhansi wali rani thi'* and sing it in chorus' (p. 28).

These depictions enable women to emerge not only as mythologised figures but as 'empowered' individuals, conscious of their special role in the nation's destiny and in the independence movement. For example, the first Social Science book to come out after 2002 (Class 8, 2004), introduces the student to the counter-discourse to mainstream Congress history through portraits of those who participated in violent struggle. Among them are, of course, figures like Savarkar, but also women like Rani Gudiyo who fought against religious conversion in the Northeast, and Durgabhabhi who helped Bhagat Singh escape from Lahore.

Women appear as mothers (reproducers of morality), as in the case of (the mothers of) Bose, Gokhale and Nehru, but also both as bearers of morality and as mothers who influenced their sons. Jijabhai, Shivaji's mother, brought him up as a fearless, adventurous, self-respecting and patriotic youth by reciting to him stories of bravery from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the Puranas (Class 8). At the same time, women are also represented as transgressors of the patriarchal code—norms of gendered knowledge, mobility and sexuality—reflecting the anxiety over their roles as ideal reproducers of the religio-moral community. Some examples: Rani Rashmoni slapped by Ramakrishna because of her pondering over mundane worldly affairs while in prayer (Class 7, p. 49) (Pic. 27); Dayanand Saraswati being poisoned by a dancer in the Jodhpur court because the king was coming under his religious influence

(pp. 44-45); Vivekananda deciding to stay on in a durbar because the dancer sings a devotional song wherein 'he sees the form of the divine mother in the courtesan' (p. 54).

Women are critical to the narration of history since they symbolise the honour and shame of the community. Protection of Hindu women is essential to Hindu honour: for example, Chittor sacrificed to protect the honour of Padmini; the Rajput ruler Rana Pratap refusing to give up his daughter to Akbar (p. 68). But there is Hindu honorability as well as honour; protection of Muslim women is covered in two instances in the book: Vir Durgadas returns Aurangzeb's granddaughter after several years, well versed in the Koran, and hence Aurangzeb rewards him by naming him commissioner of Patan (Class 6, p. 90), and Shivaji returns of a 'gift' of a Muslim woman captured by his subedar (p. 72) (Pics. 28 & 29). Women's bodies also appear as transgressors of norms. The older edition of the Class 9 textbook states that before the advent of Islam, Arabs were victims of many superstitions. Polygamy was prevalent and women were also allowed to remarry. So, immorality was rampant (p. 70).

In the Classes 7 and 8 textbooks, women are absent presences in the chapters on social reform because, as the books assert, they are the subject of reform themselves. In the Class 7 book, apart from brief mentions of Sarojini Naidu, Madam Cama, the martyrdom of Kanaklata and Ratna Phukan from Assam, Sr. Nivedita, Miraben and Annie Besant, women are absent as historical actors in the nationalist movement. There are two or three references to women's participation in the boycott of foreign goods (surprisingly not called '*swadeshi*': it

Sometimes when Ramakrishna Paramhans was engrossed in meditation or in performing Puja; people watching him used to find the sight amusing because he would 'feel so much oneness with Kalimata at times that he would start performing his own puja. Once Queen Rasmani was a patron of the temple of Dakshineswar, sat next to Paramhans and closed her eyes in meditation of Kalimata.

After a few moments, Paramhans slapped her on the face, because he knew that she continue to think of her mundane affairs even during worship. Rani Rasmani did not take offence.

To Ramakrishna Paramhans the supreme goal of life was the realization of God.

He believed that realization of God could be attained through devotion to Kalimata also. He treated his wife Sharadadevi, also as an incarnation of 'Shakti' (the goddess of strength and power). Both of them led their life happily together observing celibacy. As if, he himself and Sharadadevi - both were friends of 'Maa' (Kalimata).

Pic. 27



Chhatrapati Shivaji

Pic. 28

When Shivaji returned to his camp after defeating the Sardar of Kalyan in a battle, some of his soldiers approached him and said, "Maharaj (Your Excellency), we've brought for you a beautiful gift." With these words, they presented before him the young and beautiful daughter-in-law of Kalyan's Sardar. The soldiers had hoped that Shivaji would be pleased to receive such a gift. But Shivaji bowed a little before that lady as a gesture of courtesy and said, "Had my mother been so beautiful, I too would have been equally handsome." With these words he returned her to her family with respect and dignity and issued a strict instruction to his soldiers never to repeat such a mistake in future.



(...)

After handing over the child prince in a safe hideout, Durgadas waged a war against Emperor Aurangzeb. The battle lasted for 25 years. Mughals had to close the gates of Jodhpur even during day-time. Seeing Durgadas's act of valour, the Rana of Udepur also sent his army. Aurangzeb too set up a military post at Ajmer. He himself led his forces in the battle. Durgadas gave him a valiant fight and put him in such a tight corner that he had not only to vacate Ajmer but leave his grandchildren – his elder son's son and daughter Sufiabanu – behind, whom Durgadas captured as prisoners of war.

(...)

Sufiabanu was growing up. The Emperor was apprehensive that Durgadas might get her married to a Hindu and thereby disgrace him. So, he opened negotiations through an intermediary named Ishwardas Nagar of Patan. When everything was finalized and all details were sorted out, Durgadas himself went to the south and personally handed over both the children.

Pic. 29

is asserted that Gandhi wanted them to participate in the movement so that it would be non-violent) (p. 89); in the Quit India movement; and, 'along with the uneducated', in the freedom movement in its later phases. There is not a single visual of women in history other than one of the Rani of Jhansi (p. 23), and of two women in a visual of the salt satyagraha (p. 86). Women in Gujarat are stark by their absence: there is no mention of Kasturba Gandhi, Maniben Patel, Anasuya or Mridula Sarabhai. In the Class 8 book, quite a few women find mention, all either dowagers or those who took over kingdoms and fought the British. Madam Cama, Rani Gudialo and Durgabhabhi are mentioned. (In fact Madam Cama is a figure who stands outside the religio-national, but still firmly within the moral.) As mentioned above, Durgabhabhi, who it is said shielded Bhagat Singh by posing as his wife, is described as the wife of a Nagar Brahmin (p. 54); Rani Gudialo, it is emphasised, fought against conversions (the only word to merit an entry in the glossary at the end of the lesson!) in the Northeast (pp. 54-55). Begum Zeenat Mahal, wife of Bahadur Shah Zafar, 'and the Princes' convinced him to assume leadership of the 1857 revolt, encouraging the rebels and enabling the revolt to spread across the country (p. 38).

Nationalist Women

The Class 8 (2004) book has reference to women in the nationalist movement, attempting to draw out, in its pan-Indian sweep, women who had participated in and helped in 'revolutionary activities'. Rani Chenamma, Durgabhabhi, Rani Gudialo and Madam Cama feature in these descriptions as women of culture, honour and pride. It is mentioned, for example, that Rani Chenamma returned British women and children captured by her 'with due honour' (p. 53). Women find a nominal and tokenistic rather than substantive position in the narration

of the nationalist movement, with students expected to know the names of Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant and others. The representation of movements is so weak that a mere roster call is all the curriculum aspires to.

Gandhi is credited with bringing women of India as ‘partners’ ‘out of the four walls of the house ... It was great work of women amelioration [sic] by making them partner in social services’ (Class 9, p. 38). Women’s involvement in the Non-Cooperation movement is gestured towards, and it is assumed that empowerment came to them naturally as a consequence, but there is no attempt to draw out their specific contributions as active political actors. In the context of the salt satyagraha (mysteriously clubbed with the eradication of untouchability!), there is mention of large numbers of women participating in picketing—in Surat under the leadership of Mithuben Petit and Kasturba Gandhi, of whom a visual has been added. What this involved for these women, what were their own writings on the subject, how did they mobilise other women to participate—none of these questions students may have, are addressed.

Conclusion

The narrative of History in the state social science books is overwhelmingly one about the ancient and supreme glory of Indian civilisation. This ancient glory draws from primarily Hindu Vedic and pre-Vedic texts, epics and religious books, and constructs the memory of an Indian culture and civilisation that is timeless, all encompassing and awe-inducing. A strong and graphic sense of the nation before its time emerges, and seeps into the representation of the modern nation-state too, blurring the fact that the sources of this history are mainly mythological and quasi-fictional. Therefore, this is a nation that is Hindu, and predominantly upper caste—in fact, it is mostly a history of the life, times and achievements of the Aryans—with values like valour, chivalry, love for the community and crucially, faith/piety. Notwithstanding this, the vision/memory of the nation thus constructed over time assimilates ‘other’ influences and communities which may have appeared in the pages of history, smoothing over any conflicts or fissures that may have happened, into the ‘metaphysical boa’ that is the glorious Indian civilisation. Gujarat—its own social history, its movements and icons—find little place within this History. What Gujarat History puts on the plate then, is a homogenised version of an Indian past, with the objective of provoking patriotism and awe for the nation bordering on religious faith.

Medieval History becomes a period of fall from glory, and for the corruption of ‘Indian’ society and religion by various factors—caste, the fracturing of the state by multiple invasions and so on. By the end of this period, hyper masculine patriots like Shivaji restore the values and

glory of the nation, unifying it once more. Moreover, the character of the 'modern' nation too, with 'new' values like democracy, equality and so on are seen to have existed in the ancient past so vividly described earlier. The modern nation validates itself by hearkening back to the homogenised Indian civilisation that always was, and always will be. A brief period of darkness, when women's status deteriorated and the 'gift' of the varna system transformed into the discriminatory system of caste—is reformed and set right with the advent of the modern nation. What emerges strongly is the masculinist narration that history is—with men as determining the course of action through History. History is a series of power-driven events, engineered by men: women fit in as appendages of these men, to validate men's actions and values or to stand in for the shame and honour of the community. In the chance that they make an appearance in the public sphere, they are judged by how they train their domesticity and religiosity.

In the scheme of things, human progression happens when strong and determined men unify and lead people, instilling a sense of belonging and patriotism. Such iconic leaders—Shivaji, Sardar Patel, Mussolini and Hitler—are appreciated in the Gujarat History lessons. This can be seen even more sharply in the revised History books of 2004, under the aegis of the right-wing BJP government, where clearly the task of promoting hyper-nationalism is placed on the shoulders of the History textbook. All the above mentioned aspects, which we see in History textbooks of other States too, come together with even greater force to provide the rationale for highlighting revolutionary nationalism as the key constituent of the independence movement. Gandhi becomes a mere 'spiritual' icon. The Gujarat History lessons make explicit the purpose that textbooks serve in constructing and communicating a particular vision of the nation.

Hindu Past for a Hindu Present: The Vidyabharati Books

Ten books produced by the Vidyabharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan, the education wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), are analysed here. The books include educational books (including textbooks for National Open Schools), those used for teacher training and ideological literature that focus on education, covering a set of booklets published in Gujarat.

The Aims of Vidyabharati Education

Education is one of the main strategic foundations on which Hindutva forces have relied for the spread of their influence and social power base. This forms one of the crucial reasons for the systematic establishment of Vidyabharati schools all over India. Education being one of the main development goals of any government in power, it is through these schools that the RSS hopes to reach out to hitherto educationally neglected areas in the vast political hinterland of the country. Introducing Vidyabharati, the booklet *Vidyabharati Ek Parichay* (VEP) says, 'Several organisations are working and progressing in various fields of social life which have emerged from the sap of the roots of the RSS tree; Vidyabharati is one of them. Vidyabharati was formally established in 1977, but their work on education began long back. The first Saraswati Shishu Mandir was started in Gorakhpur, UP, in 1952.' The objectives of Vidyabharati are ostensibly to build a system of education whereby spiritually enlightened nationalist youth helps the poor and disadvantaged in the nation. According to VEP, Vidyabharati is the largest educational NGO in India, running more than 20,000 educational units, 2,285 Sanskar Kendras and 1,529 Ekal Vidyalayas. More than 24,44,000 students obtain shikshan and sanskar (education as well as grounding in culture) in these units, from about 1,02,000 teachers (pp. 6-7) (Pic. 1).

In Gujarat, Vidyabharati runs 345 schools with 1,334 teachers and 34,655 students (VEP, p. 31). Vidyabharati Gujarat is recognised by the National Open School (*Rashtriya Mukta Vidyalaya*) to take examinations for Classes 3, 5 and 8 (p. 9). Vidyabharati is also involved in training of teachers, Vidya Sahayaks, or para-teachers, and yoga instructors in Gujarat (p. 27). Vidyabharati claims to use State Board books for the general curriculum in their schools, and in addition, has books like Jeevan Vikas Pothi (JVP) for all students and Balika Shikshan (BS) for girls.

OUR OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to develop a form of national educational system which can nurture a generation of youth committed to Hindutva and engrossed with devotion for the nation physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually to face the challenges of life successfully, and whose life is devoted to the rural people, tribals (*vanvasi*) and people living in the mountains, slums, to free them from poverty, pain, scarcity and bad social practices, exploitation and injustice, and make national life equitable, wealthy and cultured.

Pic. 1

આપણું લક્ષ્ય

આપણું લક્ષ્ય એ

પ્રકારની રાષ્ટ્રીય શિક્ષણ પ્રણાલિનો

વિકાસ કરવાનું છે, જેના દ્વારા એવી

યુવાપેઢીનું નિર્માણ થઈ શકે જે હિન્દુત્વનિષ્ઠ

અને રાષ્ટ્ર ભક્તિથી ઓતપ્રોત હોય, શારીરિક,

પ્રાણિક, માનસિક, બૌદ્ધિક અને આધ્યાત્મિક દૃષ્ટિ

પૂર્ણ વિકસિત હોય તથા જે જીવનના સાંપ્રત પડકારોના

સામનો સફળતાપૂર્વક કરી શકે તથા એનું જીવન ગ્રામીણ, વનવાસી,

ગિરિકંઠરાઓ અને ગૂંપડપટ્ટીઓમાં રહેતા પોતાના દીન, દુઃખી,

અભાવગ્રસ્ત બાંધવોને સામાજિક કુરીતો, શોષણ અને

અન્યાયમાંથી મુક્ત કરાવીને, સામાજિક જીવનને

સમરસ, સુસંપન્ન અને સુસંસ્કૃત બનાવવા

માટે, સમર્પિત હોય.

● વિદ્યા ભારતી ●

To cater to areas where there are no schools, Vidyabharati runs mobile schools, which are called shishu rath prakalp. They are more active in border areas—for example, Ladakh, UP and the areas bordering Nepal, Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, the Pakistan border in Rajasthan and Kachchh in Gujarat—here national security is a sensitive issue (VEP, pp. 8-9).

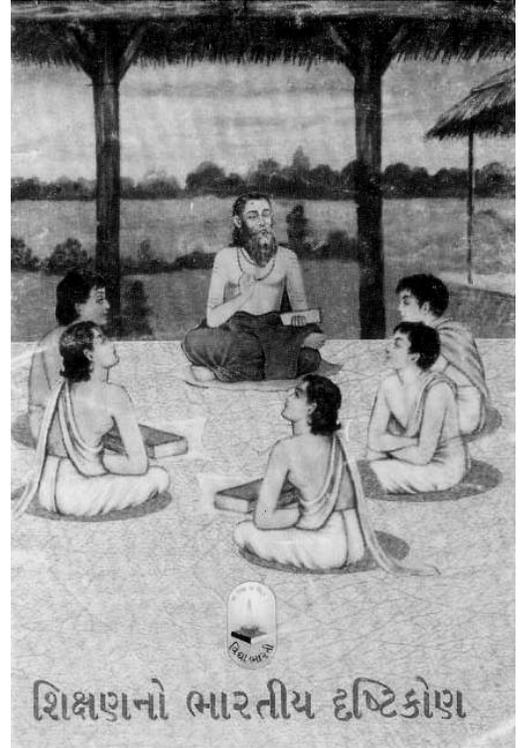
One of the booklets published by Vidyabharati, Shikshan no Bhartiya Drashtikon (The Indian Perspective on Education) (SBD), explains that the need for a new education system has arisen due to the damage done by the education system introduced by the British. 'They have not destroyed our schools, libraries or killed our scholars. But they changed our philosophy of life through the medium of education. When the roots of a society change, other parts of society also change ... It is a conflict between the Indian and European philosophy of life; in some places it is a confusing mixture, resulting in abject deprivation, mismanagement and mental strife (*klesh*). We therefore need to change the educational content thoroughly on the basis of the Indian philosophy of life. The change will be subtle (*sukshma*) and yet

visible (*sthu*). The principles, systems, references and processes all need to be overhauled. This has to be undertaken at all levels — from primary to higher education’ (p. 14).

It further adds that the aim of education is to have balanced and total development (*santulit evam sampurn vikas*). Education develops the body and mind, the intellect and soul (*sharir, man, buddhi ane aatma*). It is equally related to the individual as well as society. A human child gets his/her rightful place in society and absorbs national heritage and culture. It is a medium to protect, develop and transfer ancient heritage. It is an important tool in character building. The space of the school is a crucial site of socialisation for children. Finally, a country is the reflection of education in that country (*Desh evoj hoy chhe jevu te deshma shikshn hoy chhe*). These books also envisage education as emancipatory (*Sa vidya ya vimuktye*) (Pic. 2).

The RSS perspective on education is that in India, *shikshan shastra* (the discipline of education) is called *shikshan darshan* (the philosophy or vision of education). The essence of this philosophy rests on the belief that we are not bodies, minds or intellects but souls, and that this soul is omnipresent (SBD, pp. 5 and 10). The third significant aspect that underlies the RSS ideology of education is the belief in *punarjanam* (rebirth) and *karmawad* (that deeds of the past have implications for the present). ‘The belief in rebirth has a special space in Indian philosophy. The principle of karma is associated with it. Happiness, unhappiness, knowledge, renunciation and emancipation, all are the result of past actions. One should work without thinking of the fruits of the work.’ (*Purwajanmna sanskarma viswas e bhartiya jeevandarshnu ek vishesh pasu chhe. Aa sanskar siddhantnu shikshnma vishesh sthan chhe. Teni sathe jodayelo karmvadno siddhant chhe. Manushyne sukh, dukh, gyan, vairagya, bandhan moksh potana karmona parinam swarup j prapt thay chhe*) (p. 12).

This tall claim of spirituality notwithstanding, it seems Indian philosophy is not averse to material enjoyment. Any doubts about that are laid to rest in the booklet: ‘The aim of emancipation does not lead us away from material enjoyment; in fact, it helps us to enjoy material life ... The problem is that we want to develop brain power by education but not the physical, spiritual (*pranik*) and mental powers.’ In Indian philosophy, education is for emancipation but also for material enjoyment (*bhogkari*), posterity (*yashkari*), happiness (*sukhkari*). Thus, it does not neglect material aspects but takes it to the highest levels of spirituality (p. 6).



Pic. 2
The Indian Vision of
Education

Ideas of rebirth and destiny legitimise caste, class and gender hierarchy and place education outside the pale of emancipatory possibility and individual and collective mobility. These discourses construct the educational subject as one who will uphold karmavad and work without any expectation of the fruits of labour.

The Rhetoric of ‘Saffronisation’

One of the booklets published and distributed by Vidyabharati is called Bhagvakaran Ke Shiksha Ma Rashtrawadi Punarjagaran (Saffronisation or nationalist renaissance in education; BRP). In the prologue, Bhanu Pratap Shukla explicates on the merits of saffronisation of education. Saffronisation of education is nothing but ‘Indianisation’ of education, proclaims the booklet. Fulminating against communists, it justifies saffronisation: ‘It is indispensable if the nation is to be protected from communists, whose aim is to destroy India, as they believe that India is a State comprising sixteen different nationalities. They were also supportive of the two-nation theory and willing to divide the country on the basis of religion. How can the communists write a history of India that will portray the universal, eternal (*sanatan, shashwat*) character of India? They did not hesitate to paint history red and now create a hue and cry over saffronisation!’ (p. 1). It is not appropriate to teach history written by communists which asserts that, ‘Aryans are outsiders and Mughals are sons of the soil’ (*Arya videshi ane Mughal swadeshi*). ‘They have portrayed Guru Gobind Singh as a militaristic Guru and associated Tegh Bahadur with plunder and rape ...’ The text asks indignantly: ‘Is it fair to hide Indian knowledge from students? Shall we keep on telling them that Indian culture does not contribute anything to world culture? Is history meant to collect examples that will generate disrespect for our forefathers?’ (p. 3).

The prologue ends with an aggressively posed question: ‘what should we call those elements that are against making education “Indian”? Aggressors? Anti-nationals or foreign agents?’ (*Je tatvone shikshan Bhartiya thavadevama vandho chhe temne bhartiya rashtrajeevanni paramparama kai shrenima rakhva joie? aakramakhoru? Rashtradrohi ke videshi dalaloni?*) ‘Saffron is the first colour in the national flag. Those who oppose saffronisation insult the national flag’ (p. 4). Further: ‘We must understand why saffronisation is necessary. On 6 November 1999, the Pope announced that India will become Christian and on 6 March 2001, the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid defended Taliban’s act of destroying the Bamiyan Buddhas’ (p. 2). Thus saffronisation is not only justified but is found to be absolutely necessary to counter Macaulay’s sinister designs to contaminate our education system with the European philosophy of life, the communists’ aim to destroy the great and unified Indian nation, and the terrorism of Islam, and thereby to establish the innate greatness of universal, eternal (*sanatan, shashwat*) character of India (Pic. 3).

(...)

ભારતીય રાષ્ટ્રજીવનની પરંપરામાં શિક્ષણને ભારતીય થવા દેવામાં કેવી મુશ્કેલી અને કેવો કઠખાટ ?

(...)

“ભગવાકરણ” અને “ભગવા”ને નકારાત્મક સ્વરૂપમાં પ્રસ્તૂત કરી રહેલા લોકો શું ભારતના રાષ્ટ્રધ્વજનું અપમાન નથી કરી રહ્યા, જેમાં ભગવો સૌથી ઉપલો રંગ છે ?

(...)

રાષ્ટ્રવાદી શિક્ષણનો વિરોધ કરવાવાળા લોકો મુસ્લિમ મદ્રેસાઓમાં અપાઈ રહેલા મજલહી શિક્ષણનો વિરોધ કેમ નથી કરતા ? શું આ વોટબેંકના રાજકારણનું ધૂણાસ્પદ રૂપ નથી ? શું એ સાચું નથી મેકોલેના સામ્રાજ્યવાદી માનસપુત્ર, માર્ક્સના ચેલાઓ અને મદ્રેસાઓમાંથી બહાર પડેલ તાલિબાન આજે ભારતીય રાષ્ટ્રીયતા, ભારતીય એકતા અને અખંડતા માટે સૌથી મોટું વિઘ્ન બની ગયા છે ?

(...)

એ કયા કારણો અને હેતુ છે કે બાળકોના દફતરનો બોજ ઓછો કરવા અભ્યાસક્રમમાં નવી શોધો પર આધારિત પરિવર્તનનો વિરોધ કરવામાં આવી રહ્યો છે ? શું એ સાચું નથી કે આપણી અત્યાર સુધીની શિક્ષણ પ્રણાલિ અને અભ્યાસક્રમનો જ દોષ છે કે ઘણા વિદ્યાર્થીઓ પરીક્ષામાં નિષ્ફળ જવાના કારણે આત્મહત્યાનું આત્યંતિક પગલું લે છે ?

(...)

પશ્ચિમ બંગાળમાં

શિક્ષણનું સંપૂર્ણપણે ડાબેરીકરણ કરનારા લોકો જ ભારતીયકરણનો સખત વિરોધ કરી રહ્યા છે. શું ભગવાકરણના વિરોધના નામ પર વાસ્કોડિગામા દ્વારા શોધવામાં આવેલ કહેવાતા ભારતનો ઈતિહાસ અને અસ્તુ એડમ સ્મિથ દ્વારા લખાયેલ અને ભણવાઈ રહેલ રાજ્યશાસ્ત્ર અને અર્થશાસ્ત્ર શીખવા તથા અંગ્રેજી સામ્રાજ્યવાદીના પગલે પગલે ચાલવા માટે ફરજ પડશે ? જ્યાં સુધી કૌટિલ્યનું અર્થશાસ્ત્ર, શુક્રાર્યની નીતિઓ, વાલ્મિકી અને વ્યાસ રચિત રામાયણ અને રાજ્યશાસ્ત્રની ઉપેક્ષા થતી રહેશે ત્યાં સુધી ભારતવાસીઓનું આત્મગૌરવ ટકી રહેવાની

From ‘Saffronisation or nationalist renaissance in education; BRP’

Why is it difficult to Indianize the education tradition of the Indian nation?

(...)

Do not those who oppose ‘saffronisation’ and saffron, insult the Indian national flag, which has saffron colours at the top?

(...)

Why is it that people who oppose the nationalist education do not speak against the communal education provided in madrassas? Is this not the perverted face of the vote bank politics. Is it not true that the imperialistic, intellectual followers of Macaulay, the disciples of Marx and Talibans produced by the madrassas, are posing grave danger to Indian Nationalism, unity and integrity?

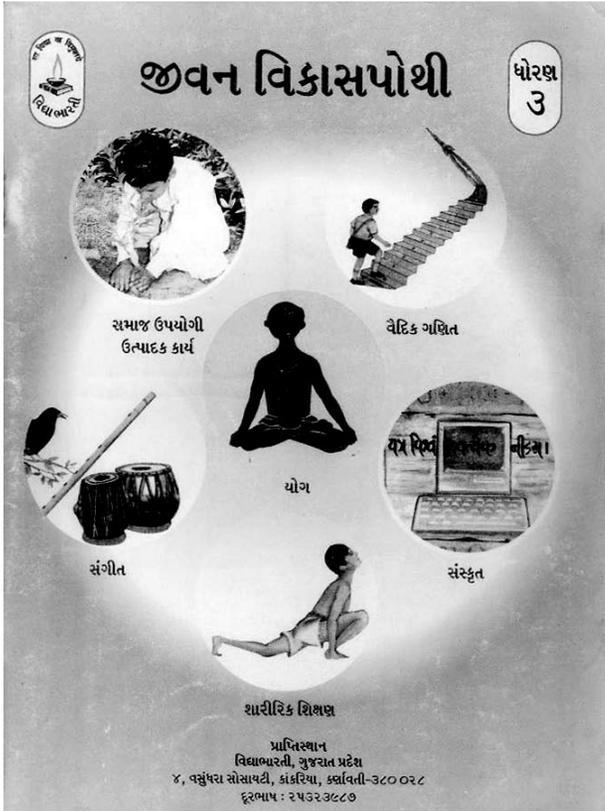
(...)

What is the reason and intention behind opposing the policy which aims at lowering the burden of bags, and based on new research, on education? Is it not true that due to the fault of our education system and curriculum, the students who fail in exams take the extreme step of suicide? ... Those people who have completely made left-favoured education in West Bengal ... will they not force students to learn the so-called Indian history discovered by Vasco de Gama ... economics of Adam Smith?

Transacting Hindutva Ideology: Shabdpothi, Vakyapothi, Jeevan Vikas Pothi

Shabdpothi (Book of Words), Vakyapothi (Book of Sentences) and Jeevan Vikas Pothi (Progress for Life) are part of a set of texts, graded yearwise, published by Vidyabharati Gujarat for schools affiliated to the National Institute of Open Schooling.

The primers analysed here for Class 3 provide the basic vocabulary for Vidyabharati’s imagination of the Hindu way of life (Pic. 4). The Shabdpothi (SP) is a student’s first introduction to the formation of words, using letters he/she has been familiarised with—both literally and phonetically. Its chapters consist of lists, ostensibly designed to help children form and recognise words, and thereby increase their knowledge of words. The introduction to this Shabdpothi gives us a



Pic. 4
Jeevan Vikas Pothi

glimpse into the words that have been included: names of musical instruments, places to visit, holy places, great personalities, holy cities and so on. The book aims to inculcate, through introduction to these words, the student's love for the world, conservation of the environment and a basic knowledge of India.

The book begins with the written and phonetic forms of the alphabet. Some basic words are listed. Along with these are words such as *vamal*, *kathan*, etc. (p. 6). These words are difficult to understand, because their meanings are not given. There are word forms for every letter, some of them being Ganapati, Bharat, Narayan, Nagraj, Kumbh and Hanuman. Each of these has religious connotations for Hindus, reflecting the Hindu moorings of the Vidyabharati books. This trend is found throughout the book. Similarly, *shlok*, *bhasm*, *shastra*, *dhanushya*, *brahma*, Lakshmi, Lakshman, *parmatma*, are examples of words formed by joining two syllables.

Obviously, the choice of these words is not innocent. They are clearly part of the pedagogic aims of Vidyabharati education, to familiarise students with words that are symbolic of the

Hindu religion (Pic. 5). It is important to note that along with India, the book also focuses on Gujarat. Included is a list of districts in Gujarat, Hindu pilgrimage sites and places worth visiting, mountains and rivers. Almost half of the book's content is designed to inculcate 'knowledge' of Hindu religion, particularly mythology, in the minds of a Class 3 child. Everything that a Hindu should know is included here, without any consideration for the age and capacity of the child. The five elements of the body (*Panchamhabhut*), *tithis* (lunar dates based on the Hindu calendar), the star signs, ten directions, holy rivers of the country, lakes, mountains and forest with their mythical names (e.g. Pampa *sarovar*, Khandav *van*, Kamyak *van*, Kshirsagar, Ratankar), holy trees, oceans, Gods and Goddesses, their animal vehicles and their weapons (Kaumudki *gada*, Sarang *Dhanushya*, *vrajra*, *trishul*, etc.) (p. 36) are mentioned here. What is interesting is that Bharat Mata also figures in this pantheon! The list of ideal children includes Nachiketa, Sarvadaman, Aaruni, Upamanyu, Shravan, Dhruv, Prahlad, etc. Note that this list does not include a female child (p. 37).

A list of Mother Goddesses (*Matrudevata*) appears before that of Gods: Arundhati, Sita, Savitri and Gargi. Alongside this list are also mentioned the historic figures Kannagi, Chennamma, Rudramma, Nivedita, Sharadamani Devi (p. 38). The names of male rishis are mentioned.

પ્રણમ્યા માતૃદેવતા	
અરુંધતી	અનસૂયા
સાવિત્રી	સીતા
પાર્વતી	દ્રૌપદી
કણ્ણગી	ગાર્ગી
મીરાં	દુર્ગાવતી
લક્ષ્મીબાઈ	અહલ્યા
ચેન્નમા	રુદ્રમ્મા
નિવેદિતા	શારદામણિ દેવી

Revered Mother Goddesses

Arundhati	Anusuya
Savitri	Sita
Parvati	Draupadi
Kannagi	Gargi
Meera	Durgavati
Lakshmibai	Ahalya
Chenamma	Rudramma
Nivedita	Saradamani Devi

Pic. 5

The philosophers included are all from the Vedic period. Interestingly, the list of scientists has 'Vedic Age' scientists (Panini, Aryabhata) and some contemporary ones, which include Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The Aadya Sangitkar (original musicians, dancers) list includes Krishna, Saraswati, Shankar, Narad, etc. (p. 43). A child of Class 3 is taught the names of eighteen Puranas, the Vedas, Upvedas, Vedang-Upanishads, fourteen gems and twelve *jyoti lingams* (pp. 47-48). The planets are mentioned in the most unscientific way. Mythical entities like Rahu-Ketu find their way into the list of planets, and so too the Sun! Rahim, Raskhan and Abdul Kalam are the only Muslim names in the entire book. They figure in the list of devotees.

The thrust of the book is to drill 'Hindu' values and tradition into the minds of the students. The concept of the nation also becomes a medium through which religion is filtered. The repetition of the names of rivers, national days and mountains is to perpetuate the idea that Bharat is the land of Hindus. The presence of Hindu religious symbols in the Shabdpothi is reinforced in the Vakyapothi (VP). 'Mandir Sau Koinu' (The Temple is for every one) describes a temple in painstaking detail. The temple resembles a homogenised Hindu village, where everyone is welcome (VP, p. 25).

The book has chapters such as 'Ghar Chhe Tirath Dham' (The Home is a Pilgrimage Site), lists of various Hindu festivals (Holi and Diwali), the names of the weapons of Gods and Goddesses, etc. so as to make the student aware of Hindu religion and aspects linked to it. Mythology is continuously invoked to support the authenticity of the text. For example, 'Sangeet ni Maja Maja' (The Charm of Music) features Krishna's flute and Narad's veena. It proclaims: 'The cow is our mother, we worship the

cow, she is the wealth of our country' (*Gaay aapni mata chhe, gaayni puja thay, gaay apna desh nu dhan chhe*) (p. 23).

The Jeevan Vikas Pothi (JVP) books from Classes 1 to 7 have identical sections on the philosophy and principles of yoga, yam, niyam and aahar. Yam is defined as the values a person should practise to remain in harmony with others in society and the universe, as prescribed by Patanjali: non-violence (*ahimsa*), truth (*satya*), abstinence from even the thought of taking what belongs to another (*astey*), simple living and abstinence from accumulation (*aparigrah*) (Class 3, p. 3). The five *niyams* (rules) are: cleanliness, satisfaction, concentration and hard work to achieve one's goal, self-study and supreme trust in God. Following these rules leads to the acceptance of God as the ultimate and unquestionable; it also leads to total acceptance of everything bestowed by Him as His gift. All values should help to bring us closer to God and spirituality. The text says that non-violence is the greatest religion, truth being the form of God Himself. Leading a simple life, being content with what one has, abstaining from all evils is outlined as the way to the divine path. Aahar should be pure food, clean and cooked in a clean pure place by the person with pure mind and love. It should be nutritious with less spices. One should eat to survive and not survive to eat. The principle and philosophy behind yoga is followed by a list of practical tasks to be undertaken (pp. 10-11). The book recommends spiritual immersion through surrounding oneself with images of divinity: Bharat Mata or Omkar in the yoga room, and those of saints like 'Bhagwan' Patanjali, Shankaracharya, Buddha, Sant Gyaneshwar, Mahavir, Shankar, Krishna, Narsinh Mehta, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mirabai (p. 11).

In the JVP (Class 3), some stories from the Jain and Buddhist traditions are included as part of the greater Hindu tradition. An ostensibly 'Sikh' story, 'Amar Bal Shahido' (p. 28), centres on Aurangzeb ordering two young children of Guru Gobind Singh to either convert to Islam or face the prospect of being walled off alive (Pic. 6). Merely six and eight years old, the two boys thought Islam was a fate worse than death (*Muslim dharmne mrityuthi pan badtar samjine*) and accepted the latter. Yavan is the term used to refer to Muslims who desecrate and defile the Hindu faith (p. 29). A story on Jijamata shows her vowing to kill all Yavans when she is told her calf is killed by a Muslim; on another occasion, she saw a Yavan urinating behind the temple and again was infuriated enough to vow to destroy Yavans completely (p. 29).

The section 'Samaj Upyogi Utpadak Karya' (Socially Useful Productive Work) critiques western perspectives of life, which are said to stem from a materialist approach. The Indian lifestyle, on the other hand, is imbued with religiosity and spirituality, thus gearing it to the well-being of society rather than the individual (*Pashchatya jeevan vichar arth sapeksh chhe, Jayare bhartiya jeevanvichar dharm sapeksh chhe. Bharatiya jeevan vichar vyakti sapeksh nathi, samaj sapeksh chhe*). It is in such a context that socially useful productive work is represented as

૩. અમર બાળ શહીદો

ગુરુ તેગબહાદુરજીએ ધર્મરક્ષા માટે પોતાનું જીવન અર્પણ કરી દીધું. ગુરુ ગોવિંદસિંહ પણ હિંદુ ધર્મની રક્ષા માટે અનેક લડાઈઓ શૂરવીરતાથી લડ્યા. તેમની શક્તિ અને વીરતા જોઈ ઔરંગઝેબ ખૂબ જ અકળાતો હતો. આનંદપુરને બરબાદ કરી ગુરુ ગોવિંદસિંહને જીવતા કે મરેલા હાજર કરવા ફરમાન બહાર પાડ્યું. આનંદપુરનો કિલ્લો ઘેરાઈ ગયો હોવા છતાં શીખસેના મોગલસેનાનો કચ્ચરઘાણ વાળતી હતી. ખૂબ જ તકલીફો વધી જતાં સંઘર્ષ ચાલુ રાખવા અડધી રાત્રે ગુરુજીએ કિલ્લો છોડી દીધો. ભાગદોડમાં આખો પરિવાર છૂટો પડી ગયો. ગુરુજીની માતા સાથે ગુરુજીના બે પુત્રો જોરાવરસિંહ અને ફતેહસિંહ હતા, જેઓ મોગલસેના દ્વારા ગિરફતાર કરવામાં આવ્યા.

ઔરંગઝેબના દરબારમાં મુસ્લિમ ધર્મ અંગીકાર ન કરે તો કતલ કરી નાખવા ફરમાન છૂટ્યું. જોરાવરસિંહ અને ફતેહસિંહ સિંહબાળ હતા. માત્ર છ વર્ષ અને આઠ વર્ષની ઉંમરનાં બાળકોએ મુસ્લિમ ધર્મને મૃત્યુથી પણ બદતર સમજીને દીવાલમાં જીવતા ચણાઈ જવાનું મંજૂર રાખ્યું. આ તરફ ગુરુજીના મોટા પુત્ર કુમાર અજિતસિંહ પણ પિતાની આજ્ઞા લઈ દસ શીખો સાથે યવનસેના ઉપર સિંહની જેમ ત્રાટક્યા અને યવનોનો મોટા પાયે સંહાર કરી પોતે શહીદ થયા. તેમનાથી નાના ભાઈ ઝુઝારસિંહ પણ ચૂપચાપ કેવી રીતે બેસી રહે ? ગુરુજીએ તેમને પણ સ્વધર્મની રક્ષા કરી અમરપદ પ્રાપ્ત કરવા માટે હસતા મોઢે ગર્વભેર વીરવેશ પહેરાવી આશીર્વાદ આપ્યા. ઝુઝારસિંહ પણ યવનસેના પર મહાકાળ બનીને ત્રાટક્યા અને અસંખ્યને મોતને ઘાટ ઉતાર્યા. અંતે તરસ્યા થાકેલા બાળકે યુદ્ધભૂમિમાં આખરી શ્વાસ લીધો.

ધર્મરક્ષા માટે પોતાના પિતા, પુત્રો, પરિવાર અને સર્વસ્વનું બલિદાન આપનાર ગુરુ ગોવિંદસિંહજીના સ્પર્શમાત્રથી ધરતી અને આસમાનના કણ - કણ તથા અણુ - અણુ પવિત્ર થઈ ઊઠ્યા. તેમનો લલકાર “સવા લાખ સે એક લડાઉ, ચિડિયો સે મૈં બાજ મરાઉ, બિલ્લી સે મૈં શેર મરાઉ, તબ ગોવિંદસિંહ નામ કહાઉ.” આજે પણ ગૂંજ્યા કરે છે.

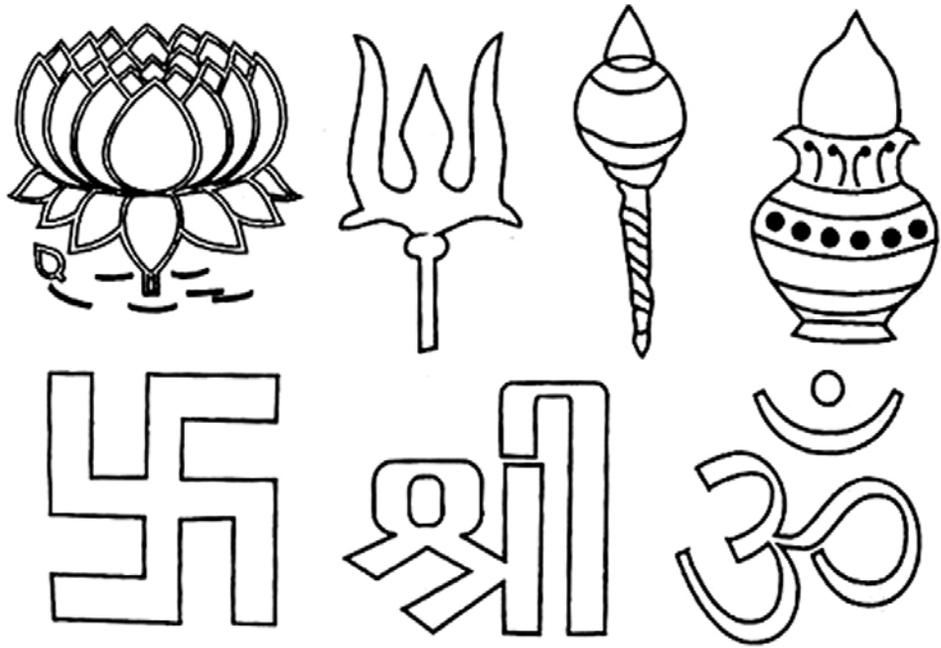
Immortal Child Martyrs

Guru Tegh Bahadur dedicated his life for the protection of religion. Guru Gobind Singh also fought bravely many battles for the security of the Hindu religion. Aurangzeb was quite annoyed with their power and bravery. He ordered that Anandpur be destroyed and Guru Gobind Singh be caught dead or alive ... Guruji's mother and his two sons, Jorawarsingh and Fatehsingh, were arrested by the Mughal Army.

In Aurangzeb's court, it was ordered that if they do not embrace the Muslim religion, they will be killed. Although being six and eight years old, they considered conversion to the Muslim religion worse than death, and agreed to die ... Guruji blessed and asked him to attain immortality by fighting for his religion. Jujaharsingh attacked the Mughal army and killed innumerable soldiers. At last, thirsty and tired, he breathed his last on the battlefield ... Just by the touch of Guru Gobind Singh ji the Earth and the Sky became pious. He is the one who sacrificed his father, sons, and everything for the security of his religion.

important for society (p. 46) even if it does not generate money. With the above-mentioned perspective it is explained that the students should be infused with a sense of creativity and be aware of the surroundings they live in. Celebration of festivals, commemorating great personalities, conservation of forests, saving water and electricity, making the best out of waste are recommended as activities that promote socially 'useful' productive work.

The 'social' is restricted to the community of Hindu religious practice. An activity for students is the making of a collage of traditional symbols, like the trishul, swastik and the lotus; they are called 'cultural symbols' (*sanskritik pratiko*, p. 54) (Pic. 7). Others include feeding the cow, watering the tulsi plant, taking a resolution on birthdays (which could include saying Sri Ram before eating), making a list of religious books, etc. (p. 58).



Pic. 7

The conflation of Hindu with nation is most in evidence in one chapter in the Class 3 JVP (pp. 60-64), which has pictures of Gods and Goddesses—Krishna, Ram, Saraswati, Lakshmi, etc.—along with ‘national’ figures like Laxmibai, Veer Savarkar, Gobind Singh, etc. The effortless conflation of religious figures with national personalities and the image of Bharat Mata seek very clearly to blur the boundaries between myth and reality.

The obsession with proving the superiority of Hindu traditions results in content and imagery, unsuitable for a child, such as the inclusion of a section on ‘Vedic maths’ and one on music that introduces students to sounds, singing and various musical instruments. All the instruments shown are those played at Hindu religious functions: *damru*, *shankh*, *khanjari* and *morli*. The practical part includes upasana of *Omkar*, Mantrocchar and hymns.

Most of the poems in the Class 3 book are dedicated to the motherland and the nation imagined as the holy land in need of protection by worthy patriots. The book constantly reminds students of being Hindu and the privileges that accrue from this affiliation. ‘Each particle [of this soil] is like a temple ... Every iota of this land guards India.’ (p. 101) (Pic. 8). Other poems are about Krishna and cows, the daily routine of the Shishu Mandir, the celebration of Holi, Uttarayan and songs about nature or play.

અમને અમારા ભારતની

અમને અમારા ભારતની માટી પર અનુપમ પ્યાર છે (૨)

આ માટીમાં જન્મ લીધોં તો, દશરથનંદન રામે
આ માટી પર ગીતા ગાઈ, યદુકુલભુષણ રથામે
આ ધરતીની આગળ મસ્તક ઝૂકે વારંવાર છે ॥૧॥

આ માટીની જોહર ગાથા, ગાઈ રાજસ્થાને
એને બનાવી પાવન, રાજા સાંગાના બલિદાને
મીરાંનાં ગીતોની એમાં, હજી રહી ઝંકાર છે... ॥૨॥

આ માટીની શાન વધારી, તુલસી સૂર કબીરે
અર્જુન, ભીષ્મ, અશોક, પ્રતાપી, ભગતસિંહ જેવા વીરે
આ ધરતીના કામ કામમાં, શુભકર્મોના સંસ્કાર છે. ॥૩॥

કામ કામ મંદિર આ માટીનું રજ રજમાં ભગવાન છે
આ માટીથી તિલક કરો, આ મારું હિન્દુસ્થાન છે.
આ માટીનો રોમ રોમ, ભારતનો પહેરેદાર છે. ॥૪॥



We dearly love the land of
our Bharat

We dearly love the land of
our Bharat

In this land Dashrath's son
Rama was born
In this land Krishna sang the
Gita

We bow our heads again
and again before this land.

Rajasthan sang the valiant
story of this land
It was made pious by Rana
Sangha's sacrifice
Mira's songs still echo ...

Tulsi, Sur and Kabir made
this land proud
Bravehearts such as Arjuna,
Bhishma, Ashoka, Pratap,
Bhagat Singh
Every particle of this land is
endowed with pious intention

Every particle is a temple,
every speck of dust God,
Apply this dust on foreheads,
this is my Hindustan.
Every iota of this land guards
India.

Enlisting the Body in the Healthy Hindu Nation

The body is central to the Vidyabharati scheme. A healthy body is very important to serve the nation and religion. 'Sharirmadhyam khalu dharma sadhanam' and similar expressions recur in VP, JVP and BS. The body is personified as the only possible instrument through which an individual reaches God. Being healthy and staying fit is a part of religiosity. Bodily health is essential for one aspiring to the greatest goal: serving one's own religion.

The Vakyapothi for Class 3 stresses intake of good, simple food and yoga, early rising, prayer and respecting parents. Students are told not to lead a fast-paced life (p. 63). Phrases like '*maansik taan nubhavay*' (he/she experiences mental stress) are used in sentence formation exercises. What sense does a child of Class 3 make of the term 'mental stress'? The book comes up with more profundities: 'anger burns the blood, good thoughts help attain a good life, trust in God is a path to good health' (p. 64). Many home remedies such as Ayurvedic digestives are also suggested.

An analogy is drawn between the body and the nation vis-à-vis external aggression. There are injunctions against certain foods: refrigerated food, for example, is considered unhealthy. Food items on the banned list include bread and other items made of flour: these are part of the urban culture influenced by the west which is metaphorically cast as an external aggression upon the Hindu body, and by extension, the body of the Hindu nation. By regulating food intake, the body and, therefore, the nation's prosperity are assured. The book is full of various examples that signify rejection of anything that is perceived as even remotely western. The importance of a healthy body is emphasised and religious influence has been used to highlight this importance. Bodily strength also represents the violence that can escort strength and might. Obeisance to God strengthens character: 'God is the greatest and he is the creator; man is one of his creations. When man realises this, he will become humble' (JVP, Class 3, p. 8). Dhruv and Nachiketa are presented as icons for young children, examples of the spiritually strong child. It is expected that their perseverance and courage will be looked upon with admiration.

Gendered Bodies of the Nation

In the JVP books, physical health is considered to be the means to perform religious duties. Since the body is the mediator of spiritual health, there is great emphasis on physical exercise. Details of various types of exercises are given; their importance in schools to convey the message of unity is stressed. Favoured games are: kho-kho, 'captain-captain' etc. These games call for a united group that obeys a leader, promotes fair play and a sense of team spirit. While these attributes of games are important in themselves, they are consistently related to the development of national spirit through physical discipline.

The normative body in these sections is male: there is no reference to girls, either in the text or in the visuals. 'The Motherland' is repeatedly used but the bodies sought to be cultivated for its defence are male. Despite employing gender-neutral language, no girls are seen performing yoga, physical education and music. The silences are significant, however. The book maintains that the test for physical capacity should be different for boys and girls (Class 3, p. 34), and they should do yoga in separate rooms. In the section on Sanskrit, women are symbolised as the Motherland and role models like Rani

Lakshmbai are presented. On the other hand, women are depicted in stereotypical and domesticated roles, for example, women working in kitchens or women as nurses or teachers.

Embedding Religion in the Architecture of Nation

The deeply political nature of the Sangh Parivar's cultural project comes through clearly and repeatedly in the Vidyabharati books. They reflect a conscious attempt to conflate nation and religion in the name of Indian culture (Pic. 9).

Hindu unity against the enemy requires militaristic Hindu icons based on the exclusion of the 'others'. A milder version of this can be observed in the lesson 'Ame Sadachari Thayishu' (We will be Men of Honour): 'We will be *daanvir* (generous) like Karna, *desh bhakt* (patriotic) like Shivaji, *matru-pitru bhakt* (devotees of parents) like Shraavan and leaders like Savarkar, Guru Gobind Singh, etc.' (VP, p. 43). The prayer for Bharat Mata includes Nanak, Mahavir, Buddha, along with Ram, Krishna, Shankar and Brahma; other Indian religions are deliberately excluded here. The book says that 'all Hindus should come together to take a pledge that there should be harmony and love in society' (JVP, Class 7, p. 111). Harmony amongst Hindus is desirable; however, other religions cannot be included, it seems, in the idea of the nation.

'Bharat Amir Desh Chhe' (India is a Wealthy Nation, VP, Class 3) proclaims the greatness of the Indian nation. (Pic. 10). The text posits lack of patriotism as the reason for the poverty of the nation. The booklet *Aapanne kon Joie Macaulay Putra ke Maharshi Putra?*, published by Vidyabharati in 2004 to protest the government's decision to introduce English from Class 1, attributes this degeneration to slavery to western ideas (Pic. 11). Deploying a range of arguments, from the pedagogical significance of teaching in the mother tongue to the agenda of cultural imperialism and penetration of markets in India, the booklet advocates regeneration and renewal of the Hindu spirit to build a strong nation.

The back inside cover page of the Class 3 VP book shows the heights of greatness the Indian nation has achieved: the religion of India is universal (*Bharatno Dharma Vaisvik Chhe*), India is the Guru of the World (*Bharat Jagatguru Chhe*). The Class 3 JVP section on Sanskrit begins with the poem 'Bhavatu Bharatam'. India should become powerful with its weapons and scriptures, practices and morals, work and religion; we should pray for emancipation (p. 60). In short, the poem venerates the country by praising its religion, tradition, strength and culture. Nation and religion are highlighted the most, and nation and national tradition are equated with Hindu traditions.



ભગિની નિવેદિતા



કપિલ



ભાસ્કરાચાર્ય



ભગતસિંહ

India is a wealthy country

India is a wealthy country
Because

India's rivers have sweet
waters
India's land abounds with
grain
India's jungles have many
trees

India's mines are filled with
valuable metals
India's oceans have precious
gems
India's air is cool

Indian weather is pleasant
Indian religion has devotion,
charity and sacrifice
Indian people are very
intelligent

Then, why are we poor?
Because
There is a lack of patriotism
among Indians.

Pic. 10

ભારત અમીર દેશ છે

ભારત અમીર દેશ છે.

કારણ કે

ભારતની નદીઓમાં મીઠું પાણી છે.

ભારતની ભૂમિમાં ખૂબ અનાજ પાકે છે.

ભારતના જંગલોમાં ખૂબ વૃક્ષો છે.

ભારતની ખાણોમાં કીમતી ધાતુઓ છે.

ભારતના સમુદ્રમાં મૂલ્યવાન રત્નો છે.

ભારતની હવા શીતળ છે.

ભારતની ઋતુઓ સુખદાયક છે.

ભારતના ધર્મમાં તપ, સેવા અને ત્યાગ છે.

ભારતના લોકોમાં ઘણી બુદ્ધિ છે.

તો પછી ગરીબ કેમ ?

કારણ કે

ભારતના લોકોમાં દેશભક્તિ ખૂટે છે.

A Hindu Language of Nationalism

As the analysis of Shabdpothi and Vakyapothi shows, nation and religion are closely meshed together to decisively influence students at this formative stage in their lives. At both the intellectual and cognitive levels, this careful coalescing of nation and religion is bound to leave lasting impressions on young minds. The blending of Hindu religion and the Indian nation—the Hindu Rashtra—is more explicit in the Vakyapothi. The lesson 'Bharat Karmabhumi Chhe' categorically states: 'Bharat is the Arya Bhoomi, Moksha Bhoomi, Bhakti Bhoomi' (VP, Class 3, p. 48).

The nation and duty towards the nation are reiterated several times over. The lesson 'My Pledge' asserts: 'I will serve my country, I will respect my national song and national flag, I will protect the nation, I will not destroy any public property. I will be happy only if my country is happy' (*Maro desh sukhi toj hu sukhi*) (p. 41).

To build this national citizen, it is necessary to inculcate virtues of service and sacrifice from a young age. The poem 'Ame Marishu Desh Mate' (We will die for the Country) brings out the instrumental vision of the child as future citizen: 'We will study, play, eat, laugh, sing, dance, live and die for the nation' (p. 47). In JVP Class 3, there are sixteen

poems and songs of which six are dedicated to the motherland and five are more direct paeans to Hindu nationalism. 'We will be the exterminators of the enemy ... as we play our games, Hindus will be united ... we will sing the song of Bharat Mata' (*Ame git gashu Bharat matana... thaishu kaal shatruna... Hindu banishu ek sahu khel khelta ...*) (p. 100). Hindutva socialisation through play!

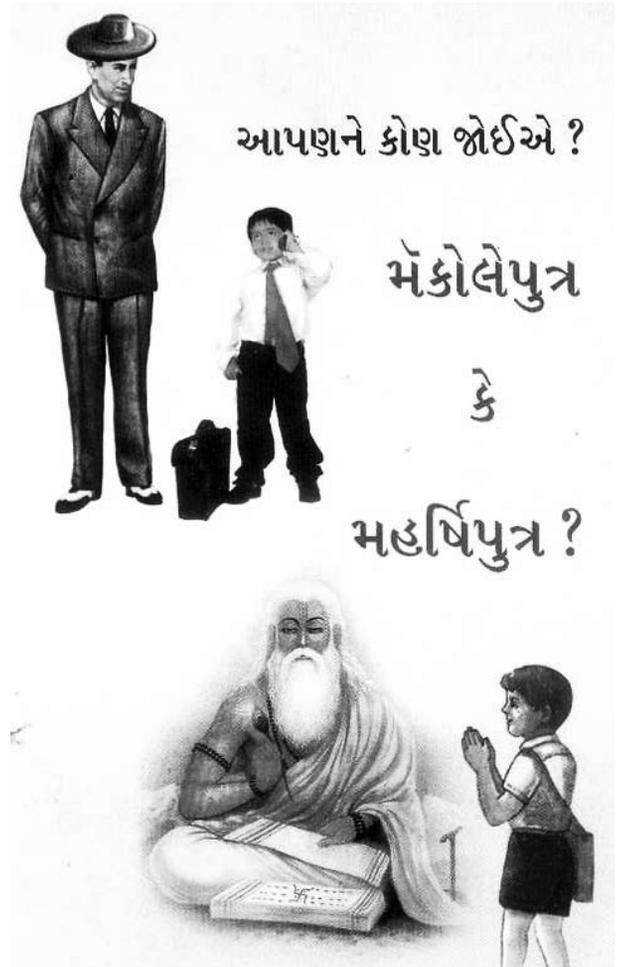
Family and Nation: Sanskari

Parivar, Samarth Bharat

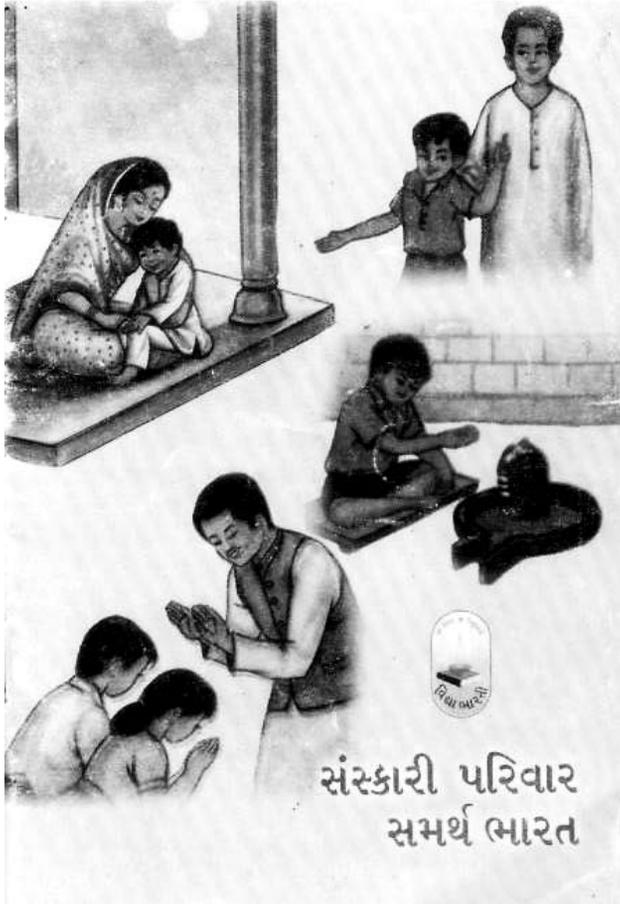
The booklet *Sanskari Parivar, Samarth Bharat* (SPSB) ascribes social insecurity and violence firmly to lack of love in the family (p. 39), women being the primary sources of this love (Pic. 12). The family is the foundation of society and therefore all social problems are rooted in the degeneration of the family system. The notion of family is elastic, not restricted to only blood relations but extended to all the living and inanimate entities that surround the family. Servants, animals and trees are all part of the family; as the family goes on extending its ambit, it will ultimately embrace the entire world (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*).

Harmful social practices (*samajik kuriwajo*), like the monstrous dowry system which sets our daughters-in-law on fire, the scourge of untouchability that insults our brothers, sexual and economic exploitation, beggar children, foeticide, status of women and so on, are characteristics of uncultured families (... *aa badhuj asanskrut parivaro na lakshan darshave chhe*) (p. 39). Thus ultimately, women of the family are responsible for all kinds of evils and problems in society, including the perpetuation of violence. It is the woman's fault that she was unable to inculcate right kinds of cultural values in the child so as to bring up a responsible member of society. The deliberate overlapping of the family with the nation and violence shows how women are important to the goal of transforming India into the Hindu Rashtra.

Gruhashthashram is considered to be best among all four ashramas: in *gruhashthashram*, *gruhashth* and *gruhini* (the man and woman of the household) are not separate but indivisible. Both *gruhashth* and *gruhini* should not have meals before the other family members—children, elders, disabled dependents, servants, pet animals, guests, etc.—have had theirs. The head of the family (husband and wife) should not



Pic. 11
Who do we want? The Son of Macaulay or the Son of Maharishi?



Pic. 12
The Ideal Cultured
Family, Empowered
India

prioritise his/her own needs, but that of the non-earning members who should not be treated as dependents; neither should the *dampati* (couple) be contemptuous of them. The family should be based on respect for elders, love and friendship for equals and affection for the young (pp. 15-16). In such a family, the mother is a child's first teacher and the family its first school. While on the surface the representation of such a family is based on respect for all, all the examples in the booklet clearly mark it as a hierarchically organised and male-dominated institution.

Marriage itself is a purely instrumentalist institution: solely directed towards procreation and the cultural nurturing of children. The emphasis on motherhood manifests itself through detailed descriptions of a mother's role in raising the kind of children who would grow into valuable citizens of the nation.

In a series of prescriptions of how she is expected to behave, right from the moment of taking a decision to have a child, to what she should read, eat, how she should sleep, etc. (p. 5), the text slots the mother in a specific role. The example of an educated, cultured and virtuous

mother is given to prove that her behaviour affects the foetus from the very start. The example given is that of a bright young woman with ambitions of becoming a Chartered Accountant. She is married off by her parents, but wants to continue studies after marriage. However, since there is no other woman in the family, she has to take care of her husband, father-in-law and two brothers-in-law. It is a kind and loving family, but an inner disquiet nags her because she cannot realise her dream of studying further and becoming a Chartered Accountant. When she becomes pregnant, she realises that this dream can never come true. She delivers a boy. Being a cultured woman and mother, she raises him well. He is brilliant and good to everyone, with the exception of his mother. He ignores her and is rude to her. The family approaches psychologists to address this problem. It is diagnosed as a consequence of her negative feelings and selfish desires during pregnancy (pp. 7-8). Using this example, women are advised that they should be very careful from the moment they take the decision to have a child. The mother's inner frustrations about having a child because that would restrict her aspirations affected the child so much that her sacrifice for him became irrelevant (Pic. 13).

The normative assumptions implicit in this story—that a woman has no control over decisions in her life, such as marriage, a career, having children—point to its central argument: that girls must be trained from an early age to be *gruhinis*. Effacement and negation of the self, denying even a personal sense of loss at not being able to dream her dreams, are crucial to ward off emotional rejection by one's children. Her only concern should be performance of the pious and exalted duty of providing a cultured *vanshaj* (lineage) to her *kul* (dynasty) (p. 9).

The greater danger of this logic when extended further is that if she cannot do what is expected of her as a *gruhini*, it is not only a disservice to the child and family, but to the entire nation. This is further elaborated in 'Samajik Samarastano Abhav' (Absence of Social Harmony). In this section it is explained that the family is the foundation of society and therefore all social problems are rooted in the degeneration of the family system, which is India's most valuable heritage and a beacon of light to the problems of the world. Strengthening the family system will strengthen the nation and lead to the betterment of the entire world (p. 38).

The nation's problems can only be solved through this fortification of family values. A curious balance is maintained between upholding social hierarchy and demanding the creation of individual dispensations towards them. Disparities exist due to a basic degeneration in values and can only be banished through the creation of ideal families: 'The varna system created by Manu has all but vanished today, but because of our imperfection and narrow-mindedness we have created differences that will lead to the disintegration of our society. For example, *jatibhed* (caste differences), *prantbhed* (regional differences), *bhashabhed* (linguistic differences) and *sampradaybhed* (religious differences). It is necessary to have greater mental strength at the family level to remove these differences' (p. 38). This mental strength requires disparities to be 'resolved' through a reciprocity that admits inequality: 'The foremost

Pic. 13

ભવિષ્યની કોઈ જ આશાઓ બચી નહીં. એની પીડા હવે ક્રોધમાં પરિવર્તિત થઈ. ગર્ભમાંનાં બાળક પર તે જાણે ગુસ્સે થવા લાગી. બાળકના જન્મ પછી પણ તેની ભાવના પણ એ જ રહી અને બાળક સાથે વાતો પણ એ જ ભાષામાં કરવા લાગી. બાળક પ્રત્યે પ્રેમ હતો, બાળકનું લાલનપાલન પણ સારી રીતે કરતી, પરંતુ તેની અંદર દુઃખની ભાવના અને બાળકને બન્ધનરૂપ માનવાની એની ગ્રંથિ એટલી ઊંડી હતી કે એની અસર બાળક પર પડી. બાળકનાં સુષુપ્ત મનમાં એ સંસ્કાર પડ્યા જે એની મા સાથેના ઉદ્દેસ વ્યવહારના કારણરૂપ બન્યાં. પુત્ર કે માતા

There were no hopes for the future. Her pain turned into anger. She was angry with the child in her womb. After the birth of the child also her feelings remained the same and she started speaking to the child in this language. She loved the child and cared for him properly but the inner feeling of unhappiness and sense of bondage was so deep that it affected the child. His innocent mind was deeply affected by these feelings and this became the reason for his defiant behavior with his mother.

difference is in economic levels. For that we should create such an atmosphere in each house where the poor are respected in the homes of the rich, and the rich have easy access to the homes of the poor' (p. 38). There is thus no reference to structural inequities, neither is there any analysis of the exploitative relationship between the rich and the poor or the need to eliminate these differences. The emphasis is on socialisation within the family for co-existence without hostility (p. 38).

The book further propounds: 'all those who behave indecently with women or indulge in arson, looting, stealing, killings and riots are also members of one or other family. We can also infer that they may be victims of some mental illness. Love and trust in the family is the true solution for this. We need to believe that the family is the citadel of affection; only then will social violence gradually disappear' (p. 39). By perpetuating a naive faith in the family to rid society of what are essentially behavioural aberrations, the harsher realities and causes of sexual exploitation and violence against women are evaded.

An Education for the Ideal Woman: Balika Shikshan

Gender is not explicitly represented in Vakyapothi, Shabdpothi and Jeevan Vikas Pothi. Ordinary women or girls are absent, except for Rani Laxmibai, whose bravery is valorised as a synecdoche of the brave Indian woman. Despite their explicitly instrumental inclusion, the only women to be found in these texts are Goddesses, including Bharat Mata. The Hindu male is the National Man.

Vidyabharati gives special thought to girls' education to enable young girls to develop the capacity and mentality to become cultured *gruhinis* (homemakers). A cultured society is created by cultured families, and a cultured *gruhini* makes cultured families (VEP, p. 13). A special book for teachers and parents, *Balika Shikshan* (BS), has been published to fulfil this need for schools run by Vidyabharati. As the name suggests, *Balika Shikshan* has a very clear purpose as well. The book believes that there is a need to safeguard the dying 'Hindu tradition'. It addresses the anxiety about social and moral decay in the national space and creates a set of ideals for reformation of the family to be engineered by women: 'the seeds of tradition and cultural values find fruition in the family and women are the foundations of this' (*Sanskritik dharohar, ane sanskarna beej parivar ma nirman thay chhe ane teno aadhar nari chhe*) (Prologue). The cover itself clearly conveys this objective: ideal Hindu womanhood is exemplified by Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji, Rani Ahalyabai and Rani Lakshmibai (Pic. 14).

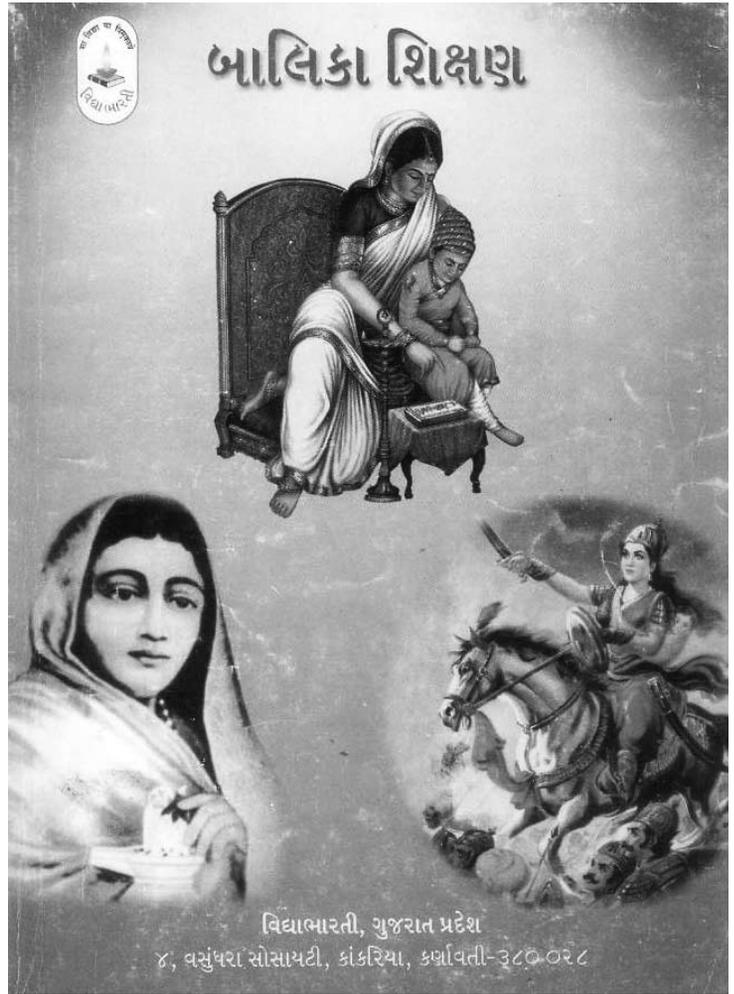
The prologue to the book makes clear that the book aims to empower girls for their role in the family. Girls should be given a respectable position in the house, since disregarding women leads to the downfall of tradition.

Respect is necessary to enable women to inculcate values of sacrifice, love, kindness, and to be helpful towards everyone in the family. Right from childhood a girl should be trained to become a housewife who takes care of the whole house. 'It is necessary that girls should learn household work well and should also enjoy it (*Balikao ne gharna kamoma kushal banavama ane tema anand anubhavti karvani aavashyкта chhe*) (Prologue). If a girl is to aspire to be a housewife does she need to study Mathematics or Science? The purpose of these subjects is limited in the life of a girl. 'Taking interest in household work helps in making conventional studies more interesting and because of which one can understand the science behind household work.' (*Gharma ras levana karane shikshan sarthak thashe ane shikshana, karane, gharna kamo pachlnu samajvigyan, tatvagyan, ane vlgyan, dhyan aavshhe*) (Prologue). Housework provides the necessary scaffold for a girl's knowledge seeking.

In the BS vision, women are naturally endowed with qualities to uphold the morality of the nation: kindness, courage, sacrifice, a helpful disposition and dedication. A girl needs to be trained to nurture all these values. 'The atmosphere at home also helps the child [the girl child] to acquire good values and she can take those values to her husband's house which is an added advantage' (Prologue). Values inculcated in her childhood will make her a good wife, a good mother and a good homemaker, and the patrilineal and patrilocal marriage system makes it possible for these values to course through the nation's veins. The book has been divided into three parts: 1) *Arogyashastra* (health); 2) *Gruhavyavasta* (home management); 3) *Sanskritik Varso* (cultural heritage). All three are essential to groom a girl as the caretaker-cum-manager of the family, and to perpetuate cultural traditions (Pic. 15).

Health within the Folds of Religion

'*Arogyasashtra*' starts with the oft-repeated shloka, '*Sharirmadhya Khula Dharm Sadham*'. The entire section stresses the importance of



Pic. 14
Balika Shikshan

From 'Balika Shikshan'

Today psychological problems have destroyed family life. One reason is that contemporary thinking processes have become pathological. Television is the illusion responsible for such pathological thinking process. The depiction of women in TV serials is that they are wicked, unfaithful, untrustworthy and indulging in immoral relationships. The innocent minds of young girls get affected by viewing the women in expensive saris, big cars and palatial bungalows, this in turn leads them to wrong expectations in life ... When girls with such expectations marry and go to the in-laws home, they find that the reality is different. The real mother-in-law is more lovable, kind and wise than the mother-in-law of the serials. The real home is like a middle class home which is simple and fulfils the daily requirements of life. Then, one feels that dreams have been shattered. Life becomes difficult and dissatisfaction is felt. At such a time Ayurvedic health tips come to help ...

Tolerance is another virtue required for happy family life. We should accept the other, help them, let go our share and sacrifice. The mantra of family life shows not to be 'I' but 'you'. We should feel satisfied in helping our relatives attain progress. We should feel satisfied in paving the path of progress of our near and dear ones.

માનસિક વિકારો એ આજે પરિવાર જીવનને છિન્ન ભિન્ન કરી નાંખ્યું છે, એનું એક કારણ આજનું વૈચારિક પ્રદૂષણ છે. ટેલિવિઝન એ આ વૈચારિક પ્રદૂષણ ફેલાવનાર રાક્ષસ છે. આજે પ્રસારિત થતી સિરિયલોમાં સ્ત્રીઓ કપટી છે, એકબીજાને છેતરનારી છે, દગાબાજ છે, અનૈતિક સંબંધોમાં રાચનારી છે એવું દર્શાવવામાં આવે છે. ભારે સાડીઓ પહેરીને, વૈભવી આવાસો, વૈભવી મોટરકારોમાં ફરતી સ્ત્રીઓ જોઈને કુમળું માનસ ધરાવતી બાલિકાઓનાં મનમાં ખોટી અપેક્ષાઓ ઉત્પન્ન થાય છે. તેઓ પણ મોટા થઈને આવા વૈભવમાં રાચવાનાં સ્વપ્નો જોવા લાગે છે. જાહેરાતો વળી બજારોમાં ઘી ઊમેરવાનું કામ કરે છે. યુવતીઓ આવી અપેક્ષાઓ સાથે સાસરે જાય છે, પરણે છે ત્યારે વાસ્તવિકતા કંઈક જુદી જ જુદી છે. વાસ્તવિક સાસુ સિરિયલની સાસુ કરતાં વધુ પ્રેમાળ, દયાળુ, સમજદાર હોય છે. જ્યારે વાસ્તવિક ઘર સાદું, સીધું, જટુરિયાતોની પૂર્તિ કરે તેવું મધ્યમ વર્ગીય હોય છે. સ્વપ્નાં તૂટ્યાનો અહેસાસ થાય છે. અસંતોષ પ્રગટે છે, જીવન અકારું લાગે છે. એ વખતે આયુર્વેદનું સ્વસ્થવૃત્ત મદદે આવે છે. સંયમ એ સ્વસ્થ જીવનની ચાવી છે એ સમજવું જોઈએ અને આજનાં આ વૈચારિક પ્રદૂષણથી બચવું જોઈએ. આયુર્વેદની દૃષ્ટિએ આ વૈચારિક પ્રદૂષણ એ કફ પ્રકોપનો જ એક પ્રકાર છે. તેનાથી બચવા જરૂર છે, શ્રમકાર્યની, સેવાકાર્યની.

સ્વસ્થ પારિવારિક જીવન માટે બીજી જરૂર છે. સહનશીલતાની, બીજાનો સ્વીકાર કરવાની, સેવાભાવની, જતું કરવાની વૃત્તિની, ત્યાગવૃત્તિની 'હું' નહીં પણ 'તું' એ પરિવાર જીવનનો મંત્ર બનવો જોઈએ. સ્વજનોની પ્રગતિનો માર્ગ પ્રશસ્ત કરવામાં સંતોષનો અનુભવ થવો જોઈએ.

various aspects of daily life, such as good food, daily activities, clothing, physical and mental health. Every aspect of health is simultaneously scientific and religious: 'Food is God and one who helps in digesting the food, is also God almighty' (*Anna devta chhe, ane bhojan ek yagy chhe, aa bhojan pachavnar parmatma chhe*) (BS, p. 3). When it comes to the body, cleanliness is paramount. Clean food, clean surroundings, clean vessels are important because these personify purity in the divine sense of the world. Purity and divinity are the two aspects that seem to be the ultimate goal of human existence. The body is made up of seven elements and therefore food consumed should be able to satisfy these elements. Food should change according to the seasons since seasonal change is accompanied by atmospheric changes. Fasting once a week is very important because it helps in better digestion. Brahminical traditions like reciting of shlokas before the meal, keeping a little food aside for God before eating, are excessively entangled with the scientific aspects of health. Involvement of God in the daily routine is considered to be essential. Prayer is considered to be instrumental in keeping one linked to God in his/her daily routine.

The book explains the principles of Ayurveda which is premised on the belief that a human body is made up of five elements: water, air, sky, earth and fire. The human body consists of three components that are *waat, pith and kaaf*. Everything that happens to a human being

is caused by imbalances in these three categories. The book proffers a scientific and religious explanation for this deduction, based on the twin ideologies of destiny and rebirth: 'disease is not accidental, neither is it a problem that has occurred suddenly but is the result of some mistakes in the past' (p. 43). The entire analysis is individual-centric and does not consider the social aspects of either disease or individual life. The only medicine for this is fasting and, if necessary, this can be complemented with medicine given by a *vaid* (Ayurvedic doctor). Health-related topics have been manipulated so as to convince the students about the centrality of Ayurveda to the Hindu way of life. The book is emphatic in its assertion that a healthy body cultivated thus is necessary for serving Bharat Mata.

Negotiating Tradition and Modernity in Balika Shikshan

There is a constant conflict between tradition and modernity. As this book has been specially designed to safeguard the 'dying traditions of the country', anything that is modern is consistently debunked. Each of the three parts of the book has a blueprint for leading a satisfying life. Everything related to health, clothing, housekeeping, stitching and even creative nationalism (*krutishil deshbhakti*) is mentioned in the book. The book also acts as a guide for girls. The book prohibits use of the toothbrush and toothpaste, shampoos, hairclips, cosmetics, packed food and junk food. Television is cited as the main cause of all problems. 'TV is a thought-polluting demon' (*television e ek vaicharik pradushan failavnar rakshas chhe*) (p. 42).

The section 'How to decorate your house' (BS, p. 66) denounces homes that have posters of actors and cricketers, and couples (Pic. 16). Every room has to be decorated in a traditional fashion, even the kitchen. There is complete rejection of the modern kitchen; there should be no dining tables or sofa sets.

The book maintains that tradition should not be lost in any of the daily routine matters. There is nothing wrong with Indian decor or traditional furniture per se, but it is the underlying moral tone, the plethora of hidden agendas in this emphasis on the 'Indianness' of the home that makes it less than innocent. The normalising of what constitutes Indianness is couched in the emphasis on simple, non-western modes of living. Indianness is counterposed to the western in an unproblematic way. It is ultimately the middle-class, upper-caste norms that prevail within this notion of Indianness. Banal as it appears, this idea of having an 'Indian' home is about making it as 'Hindu-looking' as possible, festooned with visuals of Hindu piety, in the name of an 'Indian' aesthetic consciousness.

Expounding further on tradition, the book has a section dedicated to explaining why everyone should light lamps for puja, or apply tilaks

From 'How to Decorate your House'

Views are changing about pictures and other home decorations. The kinds of pictures that are being used in homes are those of actors, cricketers or uncultured ones like a boy and a girl kissing on a park bench with the caption 'The First Love', 'Kiss me'. Images like these convey unnatural ethics/values from childhood. Instead images of good culture and values for both adults and children at home like Hanuman flying with the mountain or Kevat washing the feet of Ram-Sita and taking them across the Ganges, children of Guru Gobind Singh sacrificing their lives to uphold religion, Luv-Kush stopping the horse, Shabari offering berries to Ram and Lakshman, Rani of Jhansi riding her horse with her child strapped to her back ...

Pic. 16

ઘરના ચિત્રો તથા અન્ય સાજસજામાં પણ અત્યારનો દૃષ્ટિકોણ બદલતો જાય છે. ઉદા. તરીકે ઘરમાં જે ચિત્રો લગાવેલાં હોય તે એક્ટર્સ, ક્રિકેટર્સના હોય અથવા તો અસંસ્કારક્ષમ હોય જેવા કે બગીચામાં એક બાંકડા પર બેઠેલો એક છોકરો તેની પાસે બેઠેલી છોકરીને ચુંબન કરીને કહેતો હોય 'ધ ફર્સ્ટ લવ', 'કીસ મી' આવા દૃશ્યોથી ઘરનાં બાળકો ઉપર નાનપણથી અસ્વાભાવિક સંસ્કારો પડે છે તેથી ઘરમાં રહેનારાં મોટાં અને બાળકો ઉપર સારા સંસ્કાર પડે તેવાં ચિત્રો જેવા કે હનુમાનજી હાથમાં પર્વત લઈને ઉડતાં હોય, કેવટ રામસીતાના પગ ધોઈને ગંગા પાર કરાવતો હોય, ગુરુગોવિન્દસિંહના બાળકો ધર્મ માટે જીવતા યજ્ઞાતા હોય, લવકુશ ઘોડાને રોકતાં હોય, શબરી રામ-લક્ષ્મણને બોર ખવડાવતી હોય, ઝંસીની રાણી પોતાના બાળકને પીઠ પાછળ બાંધી ઘોડા પર બેસી

on the forehead. The book takes care to point out the variation in tilaks, as these are indicative of different caste status: this is presented as a nugget of information, a fact to be known about Indian society. Everything related to Hindu religious rites is explained, with all its implications, including why a married woman should apply vermilion on her forehead. A sign of 'wedded bliss', it is termed a '*suraksha kavach*' (safety vest) (BS, pp. 47-65), the marker of the *pativrata wife* (Pic. 17). Girls are placed firmly within the domesticated sphere, with all its attendant controls and regulation of female sexuality. Women are the carriers of (Hindu) culture, their duty is to produce (male) Hindus so as to increase the ranks of the community, they are to provide loving care to all members of the family unconditionally, they are to subordinate all their aspirations to that of the family, and by extension, the community and further the (Hindu) nation. What makes the patriarchal edict found in BS different from the ordinary, run-of-the-mill patriarchal instruction, is its underlying objective—which is to engender the creation of a generation of women whose actions will be guided by a set of moral directives that root themselves in the ultimate goal of the Hindu Rashtra. This explains why modernity in any form is frowned upon and blacklisted. Modernity, with all its contradictions, also opens up avenues hitherto closed for girls; it also presents communities with secular options and spaces—however truncated this secularism is. It questions and threatens tradition, which Hindutva cannot afford if it is to realise its goals of the Hindu Rashtra, as this Hindu nation is premised on unquestioning obedience and submission. It demands the suspension of individual will. Girls are more pliable, easier to mould within a patriarchal context, and it is this overarching patriarchal context that Hindutva seeks to enmesh with its goals and prescribed roles for women.

The Everyday Creation of Cultural Identity

Since the book emphasises Hindu tradition and values, there is a blatant assumption that the entire nation is Hindu. It can also be said that the book addresses a Hindu audience. Throughout the book there is surprisingly little mention of sacrificing oneself for the nation. Could it be because it is for the *balika*, whose domain (and happy destiny) is

નારીનાં સેંથામાં સિંદૂર અને કપાળમાં ચાંદલો શા માટે ?

સેંથામાં સિંદૂર અને કપાળમાં ચાંદલોએ અખંડ સૌભાગ્યવતી નારીનું શુકન અને શણગાર છે. તેમાં શરીર વિજ્ઞાનનું મહત્વ પણ છે. કપાળનાં જે ભાગમાં સ્ત્રી ચાંદલો લગાવે છે ત્યાં મસ્તકનાં બ્રહ્મરંધ્રનો મધ્યભાગ આવેલો છે. પુરુષોનાં બ્રહ્મરંધ્રની સરખામણીએ થોડોક નાજુક હોય છે. સિંદૂર સ્ત્રીઓ માટે એક જાતનું સુરક્ષા-કવચ ગણાય છે. સિંદૂરની બનાવટમાં પારો, હળદર અને ચૂનો વપરાય છે. તબીબી દૃષ્ટિએ પારો માનવીનાં શરીરની ઊર્જા અને ઉત્તેજનાને નિયંત્રણમાં રાખે છે. આવી સુંદર પરંપરા વિશ્વનાં કોઈ જ ધર્મમાં જોવા મળતી નથી, એટલે જ ભારતીય સંસ્કૃતિ મહાન અને અમર છે. લલાટ આજ્ઞાશક્તિ, વિચારશક્તિનું કેન્દ્ર છે.

gruh sanchalan, that is, taking care of the house and, through that, serving the nation?

The book has a three-page chapter titled ‘Krutishil Deshbhakti’ (Creative Nationalism) (BS, pp. 121-123) which has various examples of how the nation gets affected by the small things that a student does in his/her daily routine. This section outlines how national interest can be served through being mindful of waste and excess. It is explained that trees are felled for wood and paper, so students should be careful about using pencils and paper. They are told not to waste food and that the amount of food wasted in the country could be used to feed the starving millions. Water is a national resource and should not be wasted. Interesting examples about abjuring facilities offered by private agencies that weaken national progress are mentioned, such as private tuitions, which affect the future of the nation because teachers do not perform their best in schools where children cannot afford them; and private travel agencies that provide luxury buses at minimum cost and attract a large number of people from the middle class, leading the government to lose out on public transport.

Nationalism is related to consumption in interesting ways. Since the book is directed towards constructing the ideal Hindu girl, beauty products find mention. Cosmetic products, like television, are part of a larger cultural imperialist agenda and, dangerously, also a religious one: ‘Multinational companies profit the most from cosmetic products used here. This in turn, tramples upon the local products’ market, causing unemployment. Foreigners use the profit gained out of these products for religious conversion of the poor and the ignorant of our country, which is why so many people are turning away from Hindu religion and are being lured by other religions’ (p. 122). Here, the book connects a stance against multinational products with an anti-conversion position (is it the case that multinational companies represent ‘western’ capital, and ‘western’ represents Christianity?), and identifies nationalism with Hinduism. By the same logic, it urges the reader to refrain from consuming coffee or Bournvita and food produced by foreign companies (Pic. 18).

The section titled ‘Sanskrutik Varaso’ (Cultural Heritage) is the longest in the book and like the books discussed above, provides lists of Hindu

Why Is there Sindur in a Woman’s Parting and a Bindi on Her Forehead?

Sindur in the parting and bindi on the forehead are auspicious signs and ornaments of eternal auspicious wifehood. They also have a physiological importance. The part of the forehead on which women put the bindi is also the centre of the brahmandhra (the opening of the cosmic spirit/consciousness). It is slightly weaker than the brahmandhra of men. Thus sindur is considered a protective shield (suraksha kavach) for women. It is created from mercury, turmeric and lime. According to medical science, mercury controls energy and excitement in the human body. No other religion of the world has such a beautiful tradition; this is why Indian culture is great and immortal. The forehead is the centre of directive power and thinking power.

Pic. 17

From 'Creative Nationalism'

In a country as virtuous as Bharat, people have started believing in beauty of the body instead of beauty of the soul. Young girls especially have started using beauty products advertised on TV, such as soaps and perfumes like Fair and Lovely, Ponds powder, Colgate, Lux and Lifebuoy. These products are made by multinational (foreign) companies. A large part of the profits go to foreign countries. As a result of this in our country small scale industries like the small attar perfumers and vaseline producers have declined. A question of unemployment has arisen. Also with the profits the people of these countries bind our country to poverty and illiteracy and use this for religious conversion. Many people in society have converted from Hinduism. Enhancing bodily beauty is thus resulting in great damage to our country. Renouncing these beauty products and using only swadeshi products would be considered an act of patriotism.

Pic. 18

સૌંદર્ય પ્રસાધનો અને દેશ : ભારત જેવા ગુણવાન દેશવાસીઓ આત્માના સૌંદર્યને બદલે શરીરના સૌંદર્યને સાચું સૌંદર્ય માનવા લાગ્યા છે. ખાસ કરીને છોકરીઓ ટીવીમાં આવતી સૌંદર્ય પ્રસાધનના સાધનોની જાહેરાતોથી આકર્ષાઈ એ સાધનોનો ઉપયોગ કરતી થઈ છે. ઉદા. ફેર એન્ડ લવલી, પોન્ડ્સ પાઉડર, કોલગેટ, લક્સ, લાઈફબીય જેવા સાબુ, પરફ્યુમ વગેરે. આ વસ્તુઓનું ઉત્પાદન મલ્ટીનેશનલ (વિદેશી) કંપનીઓ દ્વારા થાય છે. આ વસ્તુઓ વાપરવાથી મોટાભાગનો નફો વિદેશમાં જાય છે. જેના કારણે આપણા દેશના નાના-નાના અતાર બનાવવાના, વેસેલીન બનાવવાના ગૂંદ-ઉઘોગો પડી ભાંગે છે. બેરોજગારીનો પ્રશ્ન ઊભો થાય છે. બીજું આ વસ્તુના નફાના પૈસા વિદેશ જાય અને વિદેશના લોકો તે જ પૈસા દ્વારા આપણા દેશના ગરીબ-અજ્ઞાની બાંધવોના ધર્મપરિવર્તન માટે વાપરે છે. સમાજનાં કેટલાંક લોકો હિન્દુધર્મ બદલીને વિદેશી બને છે. આમ, શરીરનું સૌંદર્ય વધારવા માટે દેશનું ખૂબ મોટું નુકસાન થઈ જાય છે. આપણે આવા સૌંદર્ય પ્રસાધનની વસ્તુઓનો ત્યાગ કરી સ્વદેશી જ વસ્તુઓ વાપરીશું તો બહુ મોટું દેશભક્તિનું કાર્ય કર્યું ગણાશે.

symbols. This is the only place in the book, apart from a section on embroidery and rangoli designs, where visuals find a place. The *swastik*, *kamal* (lotus), *shankh* (shell), *tulsi* (basil), *deepak* (lamp), *vad* (the banyan tree), the peepal tree, *Sudarshan Chakra*, the 'Hindu Flag', *trishul*, *Nandi*, the snake, the *lingam*, coconut and the *billipatra* (a leaf used during religious rites) are representations of Indian tradition and heritage. The symbolism of these in everyday life is explained through epic and mythology. The lotus, for example, is associated with several mythological stories about Shiva, Vishnu and the creation of the earth. The significance of the symbols is attributed to antiquity and timeless use in religious practice. These obviously Hindu symbols are called the symbols of the nation.

The swastik has an interesting description. According to the book, the symbol is universal and was found in the caves of the prehistoric period. It is the symbol of *kalyan* (welfare), and is also used in Jainism and Buddhism. The text also mentions that the reverse of the Hindu swastik is the symbol of destruction, and that Hitler, in using this, ended up destroying thousands of people and was himself destroyed (p. 124) (Pic. 19).

The canon of national symbols includes holy rivers, seven holy mountains, lakes and seven towns, the '*mokshdayini*' (gateways to salvation). The cultural significance of these sites is glossed over by emphasis on their mythical purity, sanctifying the land (*Surya putri* Yamuna, *Bharat ni sauthi vadhu pavitra nadio mani ek che*) (p. 143). Hindu festivals and scriptures such as the *Veda Puranas*, the *Upanishad*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagvad Gita* are described as great gifts of our traditional heritage.

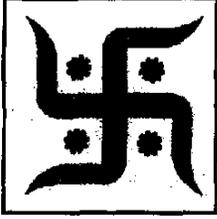
The Hand that Rocks the Cradle: Women and Reproduction

The normative assumption of women's reproductive role is central to Balika Shikshan. For this, an appropriate education involves the basics

સાંસ્કૃતિક વારસો

સંસ્કૃતિ પરિચય

સ્વસ્તિક



ભારતીય સંસ્કૃતિમાં સ્વસ્તિકનું પ્રતીક લગભગ સર્વવ્યાપી છે એમ કહેવામાં ભાગ્યે જ અતિશયોક્તિ થશે. સ્વસ્તિકનું પ્રતીક અનાદિકાળથી ચાલ્યું આવે છે. પ્રાગૈતિહાસિક કાળની ગુફાઓમાં સ્વસ્તિકની નિશાની કોતરાયેલી તથા ચિત્રાંકિત સ્વરૂપમાં મળી આવે છે તો કેટલીક અત્યંત પ્રાચીન ઈમારતોના પાયામાં પથ્થર ઉપર કોતરેલ સ્વસ્તિક મળી આવ્યાં છે.

સ્વસ્તિક કલ્યાણની ભાવના દર્શાવે છે. સ્વસ્તિક શબ્દમાં સુ અક્ષર કલ્યાણવાચક છે અને અસન્તાવાચક છે, અર્થાત્ સ્વસ્તિક દોરનારનું કલ્યાણ થાય છે, સ્વસ્તિકનું દર્શન કરનારનું કલ્યાણ થાય છે અને જ્યાં

જ્યાં સ્વસ્તિક દોરવામાં કે કોતરવામાં આવે તે તે સ્થળ અને સ્થળનું પણ કલ્યાણ થાય છે. પ્રાચીન સમયથી આવી ભાવના ચાલી આવે છે.

Cultural Heritage Introducing Culture Swastik

It is not an exaggeration to say that the symbol of the swastik is omnipresent in Indian culture and has been existing since time immemorial. The signs of the swastik are found as pictures and engraved in prehistoric caves and also on the base stones of extremely old buildings/monuments. In the word swastik, the letter Su conveys well-being and represents the force against evil power.

The one who draws, the one who views the swastik, as well as all places where it is drawn are suffused with well being. This is an ancient idea.

Pic. 19

of 'gruh sanchalan': learning household work, stitching, sewing, how to keep the house presentable, inculcating good values in children. In every section, the stereotypical image of women is reaffirmed. Yet gender neutrality in language is maintained through the use of the term 'manushya'; nowhere is there explicit reference to the girl or woman. The book is full of general health advice, but there is nothing about the health needs of adolescent girls, except for a cursory mention of menstruation in the context of cleanliness. Interestingly, by contrast, the section on appropriate attire is targeted solely at girls. Suitable clothes, jewellery, shoes and hairstyles are all discussed in detail. Tight garments are frowned upon and stress is laid on wearing clothes in accordance with the season. The use of cosmetics is banned. Hair without oil and left open or haircutting is out of the question, as 'it is considered as inauspicious in our culture' (p. 33).

A section titled 'Vyavasay' (p. 21) talks about various occupations. The public and private domains are firmly fixed: 'the husband's work is to earn money and the duty of the wife is to run the house' (*Gruhast nu kary paisa kamava mate naukari dhanda karvanu ane gruhini nu karya gruh sanchalan karvanu chhe*). Homemaking is about sacrifice in the interest of care, and creating an ideal environment, and in this the woman has to balance her supreme qualities of nurturance with an empowered sense of regulation. Although, for example, she is meant to cook good food, she is cautioned: 'she is the centre of the kitchen; she should understand that she should make food that soothes the stomach and not the tongue' (p. 12).

The last section lists women from mythology and history who symbolise the sacrifice, courage and knowledge required the ideal Hindu woman to fulfil her role as reproducer of the community: Arundhati, Anasuya, Savitri, Janaki, Rani Lakshmbai, Chennama, Ahaiyabai, Gargi, Mirabai, Rudrammaba, Nivedita and Sharadamayee. For the young

female audience of *Balika Shikshan* they form the pantheon of stars, role models to aspire to.

Conclusion

The books highlight a nationalism that advocates Indian philosophy and culture, assumed to be Hindu, emphasising the significance of morality, discipline and 'nationalist' lifestyle. An effort is made to familiarise future citizens with various aspects of an identity that conflates the Hindu religion and nationalism. In this tradition, gendered division of roles is emphasized in a prescriptive tone, especially for girls. The overtly partisan content of these books, especially with regard to Indian history and 'national identity', positions *Hindutva* as the normative and natural framework for understanding the individual and society. This simultaneously marginalises 'other' religions and communities, and underlines the aim of *Vidyabharati* Education as creating the ideal Indian nation as a Hindu one.

Textbook Regimes: A Feminist Critique of Nation and Identity explores the linkages between nationalism, identity and gender in school textbooks. The study attempts to understand the politics of school textbooks, moving beyond standard techniques of addressing gender, like increased visual representation and removal of gender stereotypes. This feminist critique uses power as a key concept to analyse how structures and hierarchies are reflected and validated in the content and pedagogy of the language, social sciences and adolescent education/moral science textbooks. An in-depth reading of textbooks maps the manner in which knowledge within the different disciplines gets constructed for the learner. It also studies the impact of centrist notions and regional politics on the content of school textbooks. By intersecting gender with other categories of caste, class, religion, and with issues of sexuality, the study attempts an understanding of how inequities are recast and communicated in textbooks.



nirantar

Nirantar is a feminist organisation that works on issues of gender and education, promoting literacy and access to information and engendering the education process in diverse contexts. Through grassroots interventions, research, training, creating educational resources, advocacy and engagement with the women's movement, the organisation brings issues of equity and gender centre stage in the arena of education.