

DOCUMENTS

Changes in NCERT Textbooks

Below, we are reproducing in full, a series of articles that appeared in the national daily, *Indian Express*, reviewing the recent changes made to school textbooks by NCERT. In carrying these news reports, our aim is to direct attention to the deliberate omissions being made in educational materials and to establish the sinister, ideological plot undergirding these choices.

NCERT maintains that the immediate context to these changes is to make learning material manageable in light of the recent disruptions caused by the pandemic. However, a close reading of the changes and linking those to the larger ideological goals of the RSS- backed BJP government is essential in understanding the *real* purpose behind them.

General Elections to the Lok Sabha in 1999 gave a decisive mandate to the BJP and its allies, who collectively formed the government under the banner of National Democratic Alliance. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) was then headed by Murlī Manohar Joshi who initiated large-scale changes to school and higher education curriculum. Under Joshi, the existing educational infrastructure was dismantled to make room for outlandish and inaccurate claims as historical facts while also coercing colleges and universities into starting pseudo-science departments in Vedic Mathematics, Astrology or Ayurveda. A widespread opposition to this emerged at the national level and big campaigns against ‘saffronisation of education’ were conducted. This, however, did not stop the process, but nevertheless halted many a proposal from being implemented and retarded the pace of sweeping changes that were contemplated by the government.

Then too, communalization of education and the attack on rationality was justified as routine ‘updates’ to educational syllabi and calling out past governments for extending patronage to a version of history that suited the government of the day. As Aditya Mukherjee points out in this issue of *The Marxist*, and scholars such as Prabhat Patnaik, Irfan Habib, K.N. Panniker, Arjun Dev et al. have pointed out in our previous issues and other publications, the pursuit of history comes alongside a tacit understanding of its ‘proximate’ nature amongst the historians. That history can never be reclaimed, *as it was*, is a well-established fact among all historians; it may well be the *only* fact for historians. Of far greater importance, and one which was unashamedly suspended then, is the method - a fidelity to proper modes of historical interrogation, a pursuit of rational belief, a close attention to the multivocal nature of the sources.

The changes enacted in the NCERT textbooks today seem to be in seamless continuity with BJP’s previous attack against a particular mode of apprehending India’s past and present society. If the previous BJP government enacted crimes of commission, here the ‘reviews’ commit crimes of omission. Of particular interest is the treatment meted out to the administrative regimes of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals.

Many scholars, admonished these days as liberal-Marxists and secular, were the first to articulate some of the most pointed and empirically established critiques of pre-colonial state systems and their modes of revenue extraction. However, these critiques were never premised on the faith of a particular ruler. In contrast, an emphasis was laid on social and subaltern groups that have often taken stock of their own living conditions and turned those reflections into transformative, social movements. Unsurprisingly, it is this aspect of Indian society that does not sit well with the powers-that-be and has been axed for being too cumbersome.

As changes in the Political Science and Sociology textbooks reveal, entire passages on the 2002 Gujarat violence have been removed. Gone too are social movements that were watershed moments in Indian democracy, like the anti-Emergency struggles. The reasons are easy to suspect and need no belaboured explanation. What is instead worth reminding our readers is that for an organization such as the RSS, which has contributed very little to the field of social movements from the time of anti-colonial struggles, people’s ability to articulate and agitate for causes of justice and empowerment is an uncomfortable subject. After all, it is logical for a school student to ponder over the absence of RSS

and its affiliates from any of these movements.

As the political arm of the RSS the BJP uses its control over the government to further the fascistic project of 'Hindutva Rashtra'. This requires that the present secular democratic republic based on the Constitution of India is replaced by their 'Hindutva Rashtra'. For this, the effort is to resurrect irrationalism as the mainstay for the success of this fascistic project. Irrationalism by its very definition is an ideological trend hostile to reason. It mounts the challenge to the power of reason in human affairs and the capacity to provide knowledge about reality. Knowledge, at any point of time, can never explain the *whole* reality. Objective reality is far richer and complex than our knowledge of it. Instead of seeking to bridge this gap on the basis of a rational scientific enquiry, irrationalism concludes that one cannot obtain rational knowledge of the entire reality. The entire reality can only be grasped with 'faith' or 'intuition', considered as a higher form of knowledge. The promotion of such 'faith' replaces reason with unreason feeding the nurturing of obscurantism, blind faith, superstition and backwardness. This facilitates the effort to replace the study of history with Hindu mythology and philosophical enquiry with Hindu theology. This, in turn, permits the control of peoples' social consciousness to establish an overarching 'Hindutva identity'. The systematic reworking of the syllabus taught to our students attacking and seeking to neutralize universities that nurture rationalism and scientific enquiry and appointing Hindutva ideologues to various positions, controlling education and culture, are a part of this agenda.

As you read the special reports below, we want to reiterate that the changes are neither novel in their intent nor sincere in their claims for looking out for students' interest. The pandemic is merely an alibi. What is at stake is the republic itself.

EXPRESS INVESTIGATION PART 1:
FROM EMERGENCY TO GUJARAT RIOTS,
LESSONS OF PAST DELETED FROM TEXTBOOKS OF FUTURE
BY RITIKA CHOPRA
(JUNE 18, 2022)

Deleting references to the 2002 Gujarat riots, dropping passages that dealt with Emergency's draconian impact on people and institutions, removing chapters on protests and social movements, including those spearheaded by the Narmada Bachao Andolan, Dalit Panthers and Bharatiya Kisan Union. These are some of the most sweeping changes in social science school textbooks since the NDA government came to power in 2014.

These changes result from a textbook 'rationalisation' exercise undertaken by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) six months ago for all subjects. It comes ahead of the proposed revamp of the national school curriculum (National Curriculum Framework or NCF), which will see a further revision in NCERT textbooks.

The Indian Express scrutinised 21 current history, political science and sociology textbooks for Classes 6 to 12 and matched their content with tables circulated within NCERT on the proposed changes. While the textbooks will not be reprinted due to shortage of time, the changes will be communicated to schools formally.

This is the third textbook review since 2014. The first one took place in 2017, in which the NCERT made 1,334 changes, including additions, corrections and data updates, in 182 textbooks. The second review was initiated in 2019 at the then Education Minister Prakash Javadekar's behest to reduce the burden on students.

The official rationale for the latest exercise is to reduce curriculum load further to help students make a 'speedy recovery' in learning, which has been hit by Covid disruptions.

Consider some of the most glaring changes made to the content related to contemporary India:

Gujarat Riots

References to the 2002 Gujarat riots have been dropped from two textbooks. First, two whole pages on the riots in the last chapter of the current Class 12 political science textbook titled 'Politics in India Since Independence' have been deleted. The first page carries a detailed paragraph that lays out the chronology of events — the train full of karsevaks set on fire followed by violence against Muslims — and refers to the National Human Rights Commission's criticism of the Gujarat government for failing to control the violence. The deleted passage states: 'Instances, like in Gujarat, alert us to the dangers involved in using religious sentiments for political purposes. This poses a threat to democratic politics.'

The second page (now deleted) carries a collage of three newspaper reports on the riots along with an excerpt of NHRC's observation from its Annual Report of 2001-2002 on the Gujarat government's handling of the riots. Former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous 'raj dharma' remark in this section has also been removed: 'My one message to the Chief Minister (of Gujarat) is that he should follow 'raj dharma'. A ruler should not make any discrimination between his subjects on the basis of caste, creed and religion.' Vajpayee had said this at a press conference in Ahmedabad in March 2002 with Narendra Modi, the then Gujarat Chief Minister, sitting by his side.

The second reference to the Gujarat riots has been deleted from the Class 12 sociology textbook 'Indian Society'. NCERT has dropped a paragraph under the section titled 'Communalism, Secularism and the Nation-State' in Chapter 6 that describes how communalism drives people to 'kill, rape, and loot members of other communities in order to redeem their pride, to protect their home turf'.

The dropped passage states: 'A commonly cited justification is to avenge the deaths or dishonour suffered by their co-religionists elsewhere or even in the distant past. No region has been wholly exempt from communal violence of one kind or another. Every religious community has faced this violence in greater or lesser degree, although the proportionate impact is far more traumatic for minority communities. To the extent that governments can be held responsible for communal riots, no government or ruling party can claim to be blameless in this regard. In fact, the two most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred under each of the major political parties. The anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984 took place under a Congress regime. The unprecedented scale and spread of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 took place under the BJP ' government

According to the Government's reply tabled in the Parliament, 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed, 223 were reported missing and 2,500 injured in the Gujarat riots of 2002.

Emergency

The chapter on the Emergency in Class 12 political science textbook 'Politics in India Since Independence' has been reduced by five pages. The deleted content in the chapter titled 'The Crisis of Democratic Order' pertains to controversies surrounding the decision to impose an internal Emergency and the abuse of power and malpractices committed by the Indira Gandhi government during that time. It lists excesses such as the arrest of political workers, restrictions on the media, torture and custodial deaths, forced sterilisations and large-scale displacement of the poor. This section also mentions the Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice J C Shah, set up by the Janata Party government in May 1977 to probe allegations of excesses by the Government during the Emergency.

Reference to the draconian impact of the Emergency has also been deleted from Chapter 6 ('The Challenges of Cultural Diversity') of the Class 12 sociology textbook 'Indian Society'. 'The Indian people had a brief experience of authoritarian rule during the 'Emergency' enforced between June 1975 and January 1977. Parliament was suspended and new laws were made directly by the government. Civil liberties were revoked and a large number of politically active people were arrested and jailed without trial. Censorship was imposed on the media, and government officials could be dismissed without normal procedures. The government coerced lower level officials to implement its programmes and produce instant results. The most notorious was the forced sterilisation campaign in which large numbers died due to surgical complications. When elections were held unexpectedly in early 1977, the people voted overwhelmingly against the ruling Congress Party,' the now-deleted paragraph states.

Another reference to curbs placed on all trade union activities during the Emergency has been deleted from Chapter 8 ('Social Movements') of the Class 12 sociology textbook 'Social Change and Developing in India'. This reference was made in a section titled 'Workers' Movement'.

Protests & Social Movements

As many as three chapters detailing protests that turned into social movements in contemporary India have been dropped from political science textbooks across Classes 6 to 12. For instance, a chapter on the 'rise of popular movements' has been dropped from the Class 12 textbook 'Politics in India Since Independence'.

This chapter traces the journey of the 1970s chipko movement in Uttarakhand, the growth of the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra during the seventies, the agrarian struggles of the eighties, especially the one spearheaded by the Bharatiya

Kisan Union. It also covers the anti-liquor movement of Andhra Pradesh, the famous Narmada Bachao Andolan that opposed the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada river and its tributaries in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, and the movement for Right to Information.

NCERT has also removed the chapter ‘Struggles for Equality’ from the Class 7 political science textbook that describes how the Tawa Matsya Sangh fought for the rights of displaced forest dwellers of Satpura forest of Madhya Pradesh.

The third chapter on popular struggles has been deleted from the Class 10 political science textbook ‘Democratic Politics – II’. It looks at indirect ways of influencing politics through pressure groups and movements. Apart from the movement for democracy in Nepal and the protest against privatisation of water in Bolivia, the chapter also talks about the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the non-violent Kittiko-Hachchiko (pluck and plant) protest of Karnataka in 1987, the Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation founded by Kanshi Ram and the National Alliance for Peoples’ Movements, which counts Medha Patkar as one of its founders.

The only chapter on social movements in the sociology curriculum for Classes 11 and 12 has been considerably reduced. Among the several changes made in the chapter titled ‘Social Movements’ in the Class 12 textbook ‘Social Change and Development in India’ is the removal of an exercise box that asks students to discuss the recent farmers’ protests against the three farm laws passed by the Parliament.

Democracy

Four chapters about democracy and making of Indian democracy have been deleted on the ground that similar topics have been covered in political science textbooks of other classes. For instance, the chapter titled ‘Key Elements of a Democratic Government’ in the Class 6 political science book has been dropped. This is the first detailed introduction to the concept of democracy in middle school and talks about some of the critical elements that influence the working of a democratic government, including people’s participation, conflict resolution, equality and justice.

The chapter ‘India After Independence’, which talks about the framing of the Constitution and making of linguistic states, has been removed from the Class 8 history textbook ‘Our Pasts III’ for the same reason.

Also dropped are chapters on ‘Democracy and Diversity’ and ‘Challenges to Democracy’ from the Class 10 political science textbook. While the first introduces students to the concept of social divisions and inequalities along the lines of race and caste across the world, the latter talks about reforming democratic politics. These two chapters were first removed from the CBSE curriculum in April, and now it has been permanently dropped from the NCERT textbook.

‘NCERT Decision’

Asked about the decision-making process behind these deletions, NCERT director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said: ‘The entire (textbook rationalisation) exercise was completed before I took charge. So I cannot comment on the nitty gritty of it.’

Saklani was appointed in February this year. His predecessor Sridhar Srivastava said: ‘This is an NCERT decision and it’s now in the public domain. That’s all I have to say.’

Other Deletions

Jawaharlal Nehru

Former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s quote on Emperor Ashoka deleted from the Chapter ‘Ashoka, The Emperor Who Gave Up War’ in the Class 6 History textbook. The deleted quote states: ‘His edicts (instructions) still speak to us in a language we can understand and we can still learn much from them.’

Nehru’s remarks on the Bhakra Nangal Dam dropped from the Chapter ‘Structural Change’ in the Class 12 sociology textbook (Social Change and Development in India). ‘Our engineers tell us that probably nowhere else in the world is there a dam as high as this. The work bristles with difficulties and complications. As I walked around the site I thought that these days the biggest temple and mosques and gurdwara is the place where man works for the good of mankind. Which place can be greater than this, this Bhakra Nangal, where thousands and lakhs of men have worked, have shed their blood and sweat and laid down their lives as well?’

Sedition

A section describing the arbitrariness of colonial law through the example of sedition and how Indian nationalists played a role in developing a legal sphere in India is no longer part of a Chapter ‘Understanding Laws’ in the Class 8 political science book. This deleted section also carries the following exercise for students: ‘State one reason why you think the Sedition Act of 1870 was arbitrary? In what ways does the Sedition Act of 1870 contradict the rule of law?’

Naxalism

Almost all references to Naxalism and the Naxalite movement have been deleted from social science textbooks. A full page on the peasant uprising of 1967 along with a box on the Naxalite ideologue Charu Majumdar now stands dropped from Chapter 6 titled ‘Crisis of Democratic Order’ of the Class 12 political science textbook ‘Politics in India Since Independence’.

The mention of Naxalite movement has been removed from a section on ‘Peasants Movement’ in Chapter 8 of the Class 12 sociology textbook ‘Social Change and Development in India’.

An imaginary narrative titled ‘A Moral Force in Politics’, inspired by socialist leader Kishan Patnaik, removed from a chapter in the Class 10 political science book. In the narrative, four fictional women, who are members of the people’s movement, debate Kishen ji’s advice to decide whether they should form a political party.

Two years ago, this page had drawn flak from the Nagpur-based anti-naxal organisation Bhumkal Sanghatan, mistaking Kishen Patnaik for the Maoist leader Kishenji, who was killed in an encounter in 2011. Bhumkal Sanghatan’s criticism had prompted former Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Raman Singh to demand its removal from the textbook forcing NCERT to clarify that the story was referring to Kishan Patnaik and not Kishen ji.

Rationalisation for Recovery

The latest review of school textbooks started late last year. On December 15, the then NCERT director Sridhar Srivastava wrote to heads of all concerned departments asking them to initiate a textbook review by involving internal and external experts.

Srivastava made a case for the review citing the pandemic: ‘Though we are in the process of making our National Curriculum Frameworks, the development of new textbooks may take some time to come out. But in view of giving children the opportunity for speedy recovery in their learning continuum, NCERT needs to take a step towards rationalisation of its syllabi and textbooks for the next year across the stages. We have somewhat rationalised the textbooks at the primary stage for the next year. Given its continuity with higher stages, this exercise needs to be done in every subject area and for all the classes from VI to XII also.’

The guiding principle for the rationalisation exercise is overlapping content in the same class or other classes, difficulty level, content that can be covered through self-learning and irrelevant or outdated content. Internal subject experts have conducted the rationalisation exercise with the help of external experts, but NCERT hasn’t disclosed names of those involved from outside.

PART 2:
KEY DELETIONS ON CASTE,
MINORITIES IN REVISED SCHOOL TEXT BOOKS
BY RITIKA CHOPRA
(JUNE 19, 2022)

‘A Dalit is likely to be confined to traditional occupations such as agricultural labour, scavenging, or leather work...’

Minorities ‘must face the risk that the majority community will capture political power and use the state machinery to suppress their religious or cultural institutions...’

These sentences are among the several on the caste system and discrimination that have now been pruned from school textbooks by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). These redactions are part of the most sweeping set of changes in textbooks in the past eight years since the BJP-led NDA came to power.

The Indian Express scrutinised 21 current history, political science and sociology textbooks for Classes 6 to 12 and matched their content with tables circulated within NCERT on the changes. It found that the cuts included several examples of discrimination faced by lower castes and minorities, which were introduced in 2007 to ‘build a sense of a just society’.

According to NCERT, the latest ‘rationalisation’ exercise aims to reduce the curriculum load to help students make a ‘speedy recovery’ from learning setbacks suffered during Covid. However, the Council has been in the eye of the storm in the past over its content on caste.

During the Congress-led UPA rule, a cartoon on Dalit icon B R Ambedkar was removed from the Class 11 political science textbook following protests. Last year, a report by a think-tank headed by BJP leader Vinay Sahasrabudhe, which was submitted to the Parliamentary Committee on Education, claimed that the textbooks give ‘disproportionate attention’ to caste.

Now consider some of the key changes carried out this time:

Caste System

The section on varnas in the Class 6 history textbook (‘Our Past – I’) is reduced by half. Sentences on the hereditary nature of varnas, classification of people as untouchables and rejection of the varna system have been removed from the chapter ‘Kingdom, Kings and an Early Republic’.

The deleted portion reads: ‘The priests also said that these groups were decided on the basis of birth. For example, if one’s father and mother were brahmins one would automatically become a brahmin, and so on. Later, they classified some people as untouchable. These included some crafts persons, hunters and gatherers, as well as people who helped perform burials and cremations. The priests said that contact with these groups was polluting. Many people did not accept the system of varna laid down by the brahmins...’

The following sentences from the section on ‘ashramas’ — the four stages of life as defined by priests — in Chapter 6 of the Class 6 history textbook are now deleted: ‘The system of ashramas allowed men to spend some part of their lives in meditation. Generally, women were not allowed to study the Vedas, and they had to follow the ashramas chosen by their husbands.’

A mention of women and shudras not being allowed to study the Vedas in ancient India has been dropped from a section on the ‘Puranas’ in the chapter titled ‘Buildings, Paintings and Books’ in the Class 6 history textbook. The original sentence reads: ‘The Puranas were written in simple Sanskrit verse, and were meant to be heard by everybody, including women and shudras, who were not allowed to study the Vedas.’ The revised sentence now ends at ‘everybody’.

A big chunk of the section on discrimination in the Chapter titled ‘Diversity and Discrimination’ in Class 6 political science textbook (‘Social and Political Life – Part I’) has been dropped. The deleted portion reads: ‘...Caste rules were set which did not allow the so-called ‘untouchables’ to take on work, other than what they were meant to do. For example, some groups were forced to pick garbage and remove dead animals from the village. But they were not allowed to enter the homes of the upper castes or take water from the village well, or even enter temples. Their children could not sit next to children of other castes in school...’

Another paragraph has been removed, which states that ‘caste-based discrimination is not only limited to preventing Dalits from undertaking certain economic activities but it also denies them the respect and dignity given to others’.

Four examples of how ‘untouchability’ operates have been dropped from a chapter on ‘social inequity and exclusion’ in the Class 12 sociology textbook ‘Indian Society’. These include:

1) ‘A Dalit is likely to be confined to traditional occupations such as agricultural labour, scavenging, or leather work, with little chance of being able to get high-paying white-collar or professional work.’

2) ‘At the same time, untouchability may also involve forced inclusion in a subordinated role, such as being compelled to play the drums at a religious event. The performance of publicly visible acts of (self) humiliation and subordination is an important part of the practice of untouchability. Common instances include the imposition of gestures of deference (such as taking off headgear, carrying footwear in the hand, standing with bowed head, not wearing clean or ‘bright’ clothes, and so on) as well as routinised abuse and humiliation.’

3) A passage from social activist Harsh Mander’s book ‘Unheard Voices: Stories of Forgotten Lives’, describing the

ordeal of a Dalit manual scavenger, is out. It reads: ‘...The excrement only piles up at each seat, or flows into open drains. It is Narayanamma’s job to collect it with her broom onto a flat, tin plate, and pile it into her basket. When the basket is filled, she carries it on her head to a waiting tractor-trolley parked at a distance of half a kilometre. And then she is back, waiting for the next call from the toilet...’

A section has been removed from the last chapter of the Class 12 sociology textbook ‘Social Change and Development in India’ on the upper caste response to increased visibility of Dalits and other backwards classes through social movements. The section states how some members of the upper caste now feel that the government ‘does not pay any heed to them because they are numerically not significant enough’.

This section also had an excerpt from Satish Deshpande’s book ‘Contemporary India: A Sociological View’ on why earlier upper-caste generations did not think of caste as a living reality of modern India. Deshpande is a professor of sociology at Delhi University.

In the same textbook, an extract from a paper on how Dalit women face greater threats than their upper-caste counterparts has been removed from the last chapter on ‘social movements’.

Four imaginary narratives from the chapter on ‘equality’ in the Class 7 political science textbook ‘Social and Political Life – Part II’ have been removed. They introduce students to a domestic helper, a Dalit writer and a Muslim couple, all of whom have experienced discrimination.

Minorities and Discrimination

A box describing a common stereotype about Muslims that they are not interested in educating girls, and why this is far from the truth, has been deleted from the chapter ‘Diversity and Discrimination’ in the Class 6 political science textbook ‘Social and Political Life – II’. An accompanying photo of three girls studying together has also been left out.

A reference to the ‘resurgence and newly acquired political power of the Hindu communalists’ and how this makes it harder to settle disagreements over steps taken by the Government to protect minorities has been removed from Chapter 6 titled ‘The Challenges of Cultural Diversity’ in the Class 12 sociology textbook ‘Indian Society’.

In the same chapter, the following sentences on the possibility of a numerical majority winning political power and its impact on the minority community has been dropped. ‘In democratic politics, it is always possible to convert a numerical majority into political power through elections. This means that religious or cultural minorities — regardless of their economic or social position — are politically vulnerable. They must face the risk that the majority community will capture political power and use the state machinery to suppress their religious or cultural institutions, ultimately forcing them to abandon their distinctive identity,’ it reads.

A first-person account of a Muslim woman being asked to change her traditional attire to jeans following communal disturbances in her area has been deleted from the chapter on marginalisation in the Class 8 political science textbook (‘Social and Political Life — III’).

PART 3:
TEXTBOOK REVISION SLASHES PORTION IN HISTORY
ON ISLAMIC RULERS OF INDIA
BY RITIKA CHOPRA
(JUNE 20, 2022)

The ruling establishment’s view that Indian history glorifies invaders and Mughals at the cost of others has now found a strong echo where it probably matters the most — school textbooks.

The content on Islamic rulers has suffered deep cuts in sweeping changes made to textbooks by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) under its latest ‘rationalisation’ exercise, internal records show.

The Indian Express scrutinised nine current history textbooks for Classes 6 to 12 and matched the content with tables .circulated within the NCERT on the proposed changes

It found that most of the changes related to Muslim rulers have been made in one textbook: several pages on the Delhi Sultanate, ruled by many dynasties including the Mamluks, Tughlaqs, Khaljis and Lodis, and the Mughal empire have

been removed from the Class 7 history textbook ‘Our Pasts – II’.

The official rationale given by the NCERT — the government body that decides on curriculum and textbooks — for the latest textbook revision exercise is to reduce curriculum load to help students make a ‘speedy recovery’ from learning setbacks suffered during the pandemic.

‘Distortion’ and ‘misrepresentation’ of India’s past has been the common refrain among members of the ruling BJP. Even as recent as June 10, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said at a book launch that the country’s history is misrepresented with prominence given to Mughals at the cost of empires such as the Pandyas, Cholas, Mauryas, Guptas and Ahoms, and that now ‘no one can stop us from rewriting it’.

Here are some of the significant changes made by the NCERT on Islamic and Mughal-era rulers:

Three pages dealing with the expansion of the Delhi Sultanate, especially down south, in the Class 7 textbook ‘Our Past – II’, have been deleted.

The deleted portion also had a section explaining a masjid: ‘A mosque is called a masjid in Arabic, literally a place where a Muslim prostrates in reverence to Allah. In a ‘congregational mosque’ (masjid-i-jami or jama masjid) Muslims read their prayers (namaz) together. Members of the congregation choose the most respected, learned male as their leader (imam) for the rituals of prayer. He also delivers the sermon (khutba) during the Friday prayer. During prayer, Muslims stand facing Mecca. In India this is to the west. This is called the qibla.’

That apart, a detailed chart comparing Alauddin Khalji’s response to repeated Mongol attacks with that of Muhammad Tughluq has also been left out.

The chapter ‘The Mughal Empire’ in the Class 7 textbook, too, has suffered cuts, including a two-page table detailing milestones and achievements of Mughal emperors such as Humayun, Shah Jahan, Babur, Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb.

In the Class 12 history textbook, the chapter ‘Kings and Chronicles: The Mughal Courts’ (Themes in Indian History — Part II) has been deleted. The chapter dealt with Mughal-era manuscripts like Akbar Nama and Badshah Nama and how these chronicle the history of Mughals through battles, hunting expeditions, building constructions and court scenes.

Key Table Changed

In an earlier table on the changes, which was posted on the NCERT website and downloaded by The Indian Express, there were further revisions pertaining to a portion on Mahmud of Ghazni, a section on ‘Akbar’s policies’ and the entire content on independent political states carved out of old Mughal provinces — all in the Class 7 history textbook ‘Our Past – II’.

This table was replaced last week with another that does not reflect these three deletions and changes. The changes listed in the earlier table were:

Reference in the second chapter to Mahmud Ghazni of Afghanistan, who invaded the subcontinent and raided the Somnath temple, has been tweaked. First, the title ‘Sultan’ has been dropped from his name. Second, the sentence ‘he raided the subcontinent almost every year’ has been revised to ‘he raided the subcontinent 17 times (1000-1025 CE) with a religious motive’.

Further, a paragraph on Mahmud’s interest in knowing the people he conquered better has been cut. The deleted passage read: ‘Sultan Mahmud was also interested in finding out more about the people he conquered and entrusted a scholar named Al-Biruni to write an account of the subcontinent. This Arabic work, known as the Kitab ul-Hind, remains an important source for historians. He consulted Sanskrit scholars to prepare this account.’

The chapter ‘The Mughal Empire’ is renamed ‘The Mughals (16th to 17th Century)’. A section on ‘Akbar’s policies’, including the broad features of his administration, his interest in the religion and social customs of different people and how he commissioned the translation of Sanskrit works into Persian, has been removed.

The title of the chapter ‘The Delhi Sultans’ has been changed to ‘Delhi: 12th to 15 Century’.

The NCERT has erased the entire five-page content on the independent political states of Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad that were carved out of old Mughal provinces from the chapter ‘Eighteenth-Century Political Formations’. The content on states under the control of the Rajputs, Marathas, Sikhs and Jats has been retained.

‘Not selective’

Speaking to The Indian Express on the latest rationalisation move, NCERT Director Dinesh Saklani said: ‘Firstly, this is not a selective exercise. We have tried to reduce curriculum load for students across all subjects and not just social science. We have also done the same for maths and science. That apart, this exercise was done very professionally with the help of external experts. NCERT doesn’t interfere with what the experts have to say. They felt some of the content could be deleted because it is covered elsewhere in other textbooks.’

Saklani said there is also a need ‘to remain mindful of the problems that students faced during Covid’. ‘Not only was there learning loss, but they also lost a lot of time. It would have been very unfair on our part to not help them with the curriculum load,’ he said.

Asked about the discrepancy between two tables carrying changes in the Class 7 history textbook, he said: ‘Usually, there are multiple drafts. I don’t know if someone uploaded an unfinished draft by mistake or something. As far as NCERT is concerned, there is just one table (for every textbook) and that one is now available on the website. Please just consider that.’

More deletions

Among the other deletions are:

Students will no longer have to study chapter ‘Rulers and Buildings’ in the Class 7 history textbook. It focuses on the architectural style of temples built by Hindu kings and mosques, tombs and forts built by Muslim rulers.

In Class 11 history, the chapter ‘The Central Islamic Lands’ has been removed. It deals with the rise of Islam and its expansion over a vast territory stretching from Egypt to Afghanistan, the core area of Islamic civilisation from 600 AD to 1200 AD.

PART 4:

AT TABLE REWORKING SCHOOL CURRICULUM: 24 WITH RSS LINKS

BY SOURAV ROY BARMAN

(JUNE 21, 2022)

When the National Education Policy (NEP) was launched in 2020, it didn’t elicit much partisan attack. Largely insulated from ideological pull and push, it set the roadmap for reforms, some of which were rolled out recently: from a common entrance for admissions to universities to four-year undergraduate programmes.

In one area, though, a place for politics has been marked at the table: restructuring of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for schools — the first such exercise since the Modi Government came to power in 2014 and the fifth since Independence.

From a national co-convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch to the chief of Vidya Bharati, 24 members with RSS links, some of them serving functionaries, figure in at least 17 of 25 NCF national focus groups working on curriculum changes, an investigation by [The Indian Express](#) .has found

The investigation also revealed, over the past three days, key deletions in social science textbooks, including references to Gujarat riots and the caste system, Mughals and contemporary protest movements, in a separate rationalisation exercise by the NCERT.

The NCF curriculum revision, meanwhile, is being led by a 12-member steering committee headed by former ISRO chairman K Kasturirangan and appointed by the Union Ministry of Education.

The revised NCF will be the foundation for new NCERT textbooks. And the papers prepared by the NCF focus groups will provide a roadmap for the changes. These focus group members — 7-10 in each group — were appointed by the NCERT through a notification on December 28.

The terms of reference states that the groups are expected to ‘develop a clear understanding of the theme in the context of the perspectives and recommendations of the NEP-2020 specifically with regard to...curricular and pedagogical structure and to clearly specify implementation strategies for each stage’.

When contacted, Kasturirangan said he would not comment on any matter related to NCF. A senior member of the committee said: ‘We will do full justice to the task given to us and do everything possible to present a fair, objective and

impartial document.’

Here are the focus group members with RSS links, and their response to queries — on the links and the groups:

Philosophy and Aims of Education

Dr Bhagawati Prakash Sharma: Ex-Vice-chancellor of Greater Noida-based Gautam Buddha University. National co-convenor of RSS-affiliate Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM).

Response: “I am with the SJM because it is a movement. SJM is a forum, which is about awakening people about economic patriotism. I am also in the central committee of SJM.”

Datta Bhikaji Naik: Committee member of Goa wing of RSS-affiliate Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram.

Response: “(I suggested that) ideological aspects of Indian philosophy should be conveyed to students through short stories...and Sanskrit be used as a link language. There is no clash between my association with RSS and being a part of this group.”

Education in Social Sciences

Prof (retd) CI Issac (group chairman): Member of Indian Council of Historical Research, former faculty at Department of History, CMS College, Kottayam. State working president of Kerala unit of RSS-linked Bharatiya Vichara Kendra and member of ABVP since 1975. In March, during an NCF consultation session, Prof Issac had said: “Nowadays, our history in school syllabus is subjective, not objective. The Indian defeat, Hindu defeat is the main theme of the school syllabus.”

Response: “I am a swayamsevak and a church-going Christian...I never allow my ideology to be reflected in such forums. I work for national interest, irrespective of religion, caste, or regional differences.”

Prof Vandana Mishra: Assistant Professor with School of International Studies, JNU. Former national secretary of ABVP. She declined to comment.

Mamta Yadav: Sociology teacher at a Haryana government school. Former national vice president of ABVP, still a member.

Response: “I am not the vice president anymore, and there is no conflict between me being a part of the focus group and a member of ABVP.”

Holistic, Enjoyable & Engaging Curriculum & Pedagogy

D Ramakrishna Rao (group chairman): All-India president of RSS educational wing Vidya Bharati.

Response: “My connection with education is important, other aspects are not important.”

Science Education

Prof Milind Sudhakar Marathe (group chairman): Retired associate professor at Mumbai’s K J Somaiya College of Engineering. Former national president of RSS student wing ABVP.

Response: “I am not in the focus group because I am an ABVP member but because of my credentials as a teacher of science and technology.”

Kishore Chandra Mohanty: Odisha president of Vidya Bharati.

Response: “(I was chosen) based on a four-page note I had prepared on science education and my credentials of having worked in this area in the past.”

Environmental Education

Prof Payal Mago: Principal of Delhi’s Shaheed Rajguru College of Applied Sciences, director of DU’s Campus of Open Learning. ABVP office-bearer till 2013.

Response: “I teach Botany and am working on an ICSSR study on ‘Ecological Feminism of Indian Women’. I contested the students union election in 1984. Until 2013, I was a member of the (ABVP’s) core group, which is the academic council.”

Mathematics

Dr Shriram Muralidhar Chauthaiwale (group chairman): Retired maths professor, all-India convener of Department of Vedic Mathematics under Delhi-based Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas. Member of Vidya Bharati’s All India Vedic Mathematical Council.

Response: “I was nominated to the group by the NCERT director. And I have worked very rationally.”

Arts Education

Prof Mamta Singh: Associate professor of Visual Arts at MKP Girls Inter College in Dehradun. Associated with the ABVP “for past three decades”, currently Doon area president and member of national executive.

Response: “We need to go beyond Islamic architecture and focus on Indian art forms and culture... The UN honoured me in 2009 for my work on the role of art on women empowerment.”

Early Child Care & Education and Foundational Literacy & Numeracy

Dr Suresh Gohe: Educational consultant with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Area head of RSS-affiliated teachers’ forum Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal.

Response: “I have a specialisation in psychological and educational counselling...we need to ensure that India once again cements its position as jagatguru (world leader).”

Linkages Between School and Higher Education

Prof Ishwar Sharan Vishwakarma: Chief of UP Higher Education Commission, member of Indian Council of Historical Research, retired professor of Ancient History and Archaeology at Deen Dayal Upadhyay university in Gorakhpur. General secretary of RSS-affiliate Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana.

Response: “We have been picked on qualification and expertise. My basic identity is that I have been a professor of ancient history and archeology.”

Raman Trivedi: Former professor and head of department of fisheries at Bihar Animal Science University, and currently its director (student welfare). Ex-national vice-president of ABVP.

Response: “I no longer hold any official post in ABVP.”

Publication of Quality Textual and Non-textual Materials

Prof Ashutosh Mandavi: President of ABVP Chhattisgarh unit, teaches in the advertising department of Kushabhau Thakre Journalism & Mass Communication University in Raipur. He declined to comment.

Prof Brij Kishore Kuthiala: Chairperson of Haryana State Higher Education Council, former VC of the Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication (MCNUJC). RSS ideologue. In 2019, the then Congress state government ordered a probe into his conduct as VC, including the alleged purchase of a liquor cabinet using university funds.

Response: “I am a swayamsevak. But I am an academic also and have been a vice-chancellor.” He did not respond to the allegations during his VC stint.

Guidance and Counselling

Prof (retd) Nilima Bhagabati (group chairman): Faculty member in education studies at Guwahati University, chairperson of the eastern regional committee of National Council for Teacher Education. Executive member of RSS-affiliate Bharatiya Sikshan Mandal.

Response: "I specialise in adolescent psychology. I have done over 4,000 counselling sessions of students and parents in Assam. I am involved in the counselling of learners and parents through Students Wellness Society and Education Support Society."

Alternative Ways for Schooling

Prof Ramachandra G Bhat: Former Vice-Chancellor of Karnataka-based Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana. Key member of All India Gurukulam Prakalpa of Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal, an RSS body.

Response: "Our focus group made recommendations on introducing Indianness in every aspect of education."

Gender Education

Rashmi Das: Editor of magazines and news services TelecomLive and InfraLive, run by Live Media & Publishers Pvt Ltd; PhD in International Relations from JNU, member of executive council. Former president of ABVP's JNU unit and former general secretary of JNU students' union.

Response: "My work with ABVP is part of my identity. But where is the contradiction or conflict in that? I am not an office-bearer of ABVP anymore...I have been involved in capacity building of students pro bono...I also publish on awareness and rights campaigns for autistic children."

Anjali Deshpande: Secretary of RSS-linked DRISHTI Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra, a study centre.

Response: "DRISHTI represents the same school of thought as RSS. I started working with ABVP in 1976. I am among the first full-time women workers of the organisation."

Adult education and Value Education

Govind Prasad Sharma: Chairman of National Book Trust, former president of Vidya Bharati, member of the 12-member national steering committee on NCF.

Response: "What matters is our contribution as members through extensive discussions over the months."

Value Education

J P Singhal: Former Vice Chancellor of University of Rajasthan, quit in 2017 following adverse remarks on his qualifications by Rajasthan High Court. National president of RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh.

Response: "The position paper of our group is still being prepared."

Emerging Role of Community in Education

Dr Bishnu Mohan Dash: Associate professor at IGNOU's rural development department. General secretary of Bharatiya Samaj Karya Parishad which, he said, works under the patronage of Sangh's Bhartiya Shikshan Mandal.

Response: Claimed expertise in "Indianisation of social work education".

Teacher Education

Prof (Retd) Chandkiran Saluja (group chairman): Retired from DU's Central Institute of Education in 2013. Headed working committee of RSS-constituent Samskrita Bharati.

Response: "I support the NEP because it has the potential to infuse new energy in the student community and shape their ideas and imagination."

'No comment'

NCERT director Dinesh Saklani declined to comment on the focus groups. School Education Secretary Anita Karwal did not respond to requests for comment. Former NCERT director in-charge Sridhar Srivastava, who had issued the notification on focus groups, declined to comment.