

Marxist

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Editor's Note

In this issue, Marxist discusses the far-reaching changes that are being made to the Indian education system. An assault on rationality and reason is an important part of the fascistic project that seeks the metamorphosis of our secular democratic republic into a rabidly intolerant exclusivist Hindutva Rashtra. This becomes necessary in order to nurture a feeling of 'blind faith' amongst the people instilling a false consciousness by generating poisonous hate and provoking violence against the religious minorities.

The changes in the education system are vital to create such a psychological make up among the vast masses of people for establishing an overarching Hindutva identity. The education system is, hence, not only the theatre for the battle of ideas, but also an instrument for exercising social and ideological control over the people.

The communal-corporate nexus that rules the roost under the Modi government converges profit maximization with reshaping people's consciousness. Reflecting this, the New Education Policy 2020, focuses on three Cs – Commercialization, Centralization and Communalization of the education system and its content.

Nilotpal Basu gives an overview of the NEP 2020 which is the roadmap to refashion Indian education. "Divorced from anti-colonial legacy, the framers of NEP 2020 have completely broken away from this legacy. In stressing the preeminence of Indian past without any specific detailing of the possible course of such assimilation, the 'vision of NEP 2020' is "to instill among the learners a deep rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought but also in spirit, intellect and deeds" and "curriculum and pedagogy from the foundational stage onwards will be redesigned in the Indian ethos". (Para 4.29)"

This essay discusses the onslaught on public and mass education that leads to the complete exclusion of the marginalized sections of our people converting education to a privilege from a right. There has been closure of a large number of government schools. The overall reduction in sanctions in budgetary allocations is leading to severe restriction on the access of education legitimizing the already high levels of dropouts. He emphasizes the need to strengthen the resistance to the implementation of NEP 2020 and simultaneously expose the real nature of this pernicious policy.

Prabhat Patnaik discusses the issue of inviting foreign universities to India recollecting an argument between Mahatma Gandhi and Ravindranath Tagore over the former's call to students to leave educational institutions and join the anti-colonial struggle. Gandhi's response to Tagore's objection recognizes that education plays a *social* role, in so far as that the type of education that is imparted is not independent of the type of a *social* role for which the recipient of that education was being prepared for. Education, thus, is not a homogeneous 'thing' providing 'knowledge'. The emphasis on education as neutral a 'thing' is central to the epistemology of any oppressing entity.

Under neoliberalism a shift in the education paradigm is a shift from a perception of education that produces 'organic intellectuals' of the people of a free India, to one that produces 'organic intellectuals' of international finance capital. Such a paradigm is perfectly capable of accommodating the anti-intellectualism of the fascistic Hindutva forces. Prabhat Patnaik says, "A counterpart of the neo-liberal-neo-fascist alliance that has acquired hegemony over the polity can thus be established in the realm of education, with no immediate contradiction between the two poles of this alliance".

D Raghunandan discusses the far-reaching changes in the school curricula in science, mathematics and related subjects. These changes are no less pernicious than those in history and political science. Even if they are politically not so striking and their social ideological implications not so obvious, these changes are part of the overall assault on science and scientific temper by the fascistic Hindutva forces.

This contribution discusses the various facets of these changes such as treating mythology as science; generating manufactured history and propagating pseudo-science etc.

The deletion of Darwin and biological evolution from Class IX and X text books deprives students of evolutionary theory that teaches about the biological world around us, the relationship between living beings and the importance of the natural world in creating and sustaining different forms of lives. Religious orthodoxy had all along rejected the Darwinian theory of evolution, of how all organisms evolved over time through changes in species in response to their environment. This has been and continues to be seen as an affront to the existence of God who created all living matter propagated by all religious orthodoxies.

"These deletions complete the picture of a new school system designed to ensure that students are uninformed or poorly informed on major issues in science, social and political life, particularly as regards issues in which the ruling establishment would much prefer that future citizens of the country do not get involved, leaving a space to be filled by a centralizing, Hindutva ideology-driven authoritarian State", writes Raghunandan.

In lieu of a **Document** the Marxist is reproducing an insightful essay by one of India's foremost historians **Romila Thapar** with the permission of the online portal Wire where it was published. Romila Thapar argues that if the NCERT has its way then the study of Indian history will move entirely outside of India. The removal of large portions of Indian history from text books written for Classes VI to XII is discussed focusing on three facets: why are text books crucial to education; what is the significance of seemingly arbitrary hacking of earlier versions of Indian history; and what is the immediate purpose for doing so?

Romila Thapar highlights the three functions that text books serve – they bring together basic information required to understand a discipline; they encourage students to ask relevant questions enhancing their knowledge and they are an aid to the teacher in teaching a subject and its significance in our society and culture.

When text books are altered, "one knows that education is not the primary purpose of the books. The actual concern is to nurture citizens that are content with what they are taught by those in authority, without in any way questioning it." The importance of studying history provides the perspective of the evolution of humanity in many ways and the clarity of physical structure relies on the quality of knowledge we use to build our lives. Romila Thapar concludes by saying that "outside India, the multiple cultures of India and their achievements will be studied as part of Indian history and Indian culture, irrespective of the religion of the dynasties that may have presided over the achievements." But, we in India will be entirely ignorant of their significance since we shall not know them as part of Indian history nor as a part of other history of the world.

These deletions constitute a major assault on the knowledge of Indian civilization of past times.