

A Report on the Andhra Pradesh SCERT Social Studies Textbooks

Undertaken by

Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies

For Aman Trust, New Delhi

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Introduction

Social Skills and civic competencies and a national perspective would...equip him [the student] to participate in the task of social and economic reconstruction.
(Preface to Social Studies, Class VI)

Social Studies, whether in India or anywhere else in the world, carries the responsibility of inculcating citizenship values and national identity among students. A quick glance through the prefaces of the Social Studies textbooks of Andhra Pradesh State Board make obvious the two objectives that guide the curricular contents: citizenship training and nation-building. They also alert us to the civic and national values that must influence the student's understanding of India's past, its contemporary institutions and its 'destined' goals. Each individual component of the curriculum, be it family, region, or population, gains significance within the boundaries set upon the writing by these guidelines.

Representing the pedagogic voice of the developmental, modernizing State, the textbooks are framed within a rational and modernist imagination. They represent the onward journey of the Indian nation through history towards a moment marked by reason and emancipation. It is the task of the texts to elaborate this moment and the institutions and practices that embody it. The nation-state, the lessons reiterate, has rational laws; well-defined rights and efficient administrative and political institutions but traces of the reactionary pre-modern linger on in the 'social' space. The textbook has the reformist responsibility to help the student identify and move away from these recalcitrant forces so s/he can participate in the process of modernity and enjoy the fruits of democracy.

Yet a closer examination of the lessons points to a complicity with some of the most taken-for-granted, 'self-evident' and hegemonic values of the society. These share in what one may call the general 'textbook values' in India as well as popular cultural representations of family, community, neighbourhood, etc.¹

¹ For example, consider the following passage from an NCERT Civics textbook published in 1999: "As you know ours is a developing country. Most of the children are half-fed and half-clad. Their dwelling places stink with filth and odour. Poverty, malnutrition and lack of education is leading to increase in cases of child delinquency and juvenile crimes. What is child delinquency? It is a kind of misbehaviour on part of

The reformist and top-down pedagogy often results in the ‘blind spots’ of the textbooks—characterized by a lack of imagination that some of the passages and descriptions may be outright humiliating to a child from marginalized background in the classroom. For instance in Civics, tribal communities are described as primitive, superstitious and lacking in hygiene. The lesson puts the tribal child in an impossible situation vis-à-vis her peers in the classroom, her own self-concept and identity and the ‘knowledge’ that she must ‘master’ in order to be recognized as modern.² It is only through assuming the voice of the modern state, which is also the voice of “everybody” (who is educated, urban and forward-thinking), that this ‘knowledge’ about tribals can be presented as benevolent and reformist. As Patricia Williams writes while discussing the situation of black students who have to answer racist questions in examinations:

The exam reinforces widely-held misperceptions...The absence of “white”...signals everybody is white. “Blacks” therefore become distanced, different, “othered.” In order to deal with such a problem on an exam, moreover, students are required to take the perspective of “everybody”; for black students this requires taking a stance in which they objectify themselves with reference to the interrogatories.... The point of view assumes a community of “everybody’s” that is in fact exclusionary. (88-89)

The AP Social Studies textbooks are written within a frame where an illusion of neutrality and universalism masks the deeply normative character of the lessons. When the lesson talks about an “ideal” family, that family represents the order, values and

the child which hampers his mental growth. He indulges in various kinds of anti-social activities. Instead of becoming an asset to his home or family, he becomes a burden to his family. A delinquent child is further prone to other vices.... The Government of India is taking all possible measures to check child delinquency in this country.” (Class VIII, 34)

² “... the basic process of education, which aims not only at normalizing subjects, but also at *making* them the bearers of the values and ideals of society, or integrating them into the fabric of ‘hegemony’... mainly by means of *intellectual* processes, is not mere *learning*, an acquisition of capacities, knowledge, ideas, and so on, written on a *tabula rasa*, as classical empiricist liberalism innocently imagined. On the contrary, it has to be a deconstruction of an already existing identity and a reconstruction of a new one.... Sometimes the libertarian forms are the most violent, because they put the burden of dis-membering and re-membering on the child him- or herself, thereby asking him or her to be his or her own surgeon and engineer and torturer... (See Etienne Balibar, “Violence, Ideality and Cruelty”)

etiquette of an upper caste, middle class and Hindu household. It is also a miniature model of the nation.

All the members of family lead their life by extending co-operation to one another. Father or mother or both earn livelihood and bring goods necessary for the maintenance of the family. Mother looks after the home and children. She works hard to promote the happiness in her family. The modern mother takes up, in addition to looking after the home and children, some occupational activities also for the family livelihood. Children love their father and mother very much. Family trains the children in adjusting their mutually opposing interests. It provides residence where children with different temperaments, attitudes, desires, ideas and habits live together.³ (Class VI, 107)

The norms of the textbook derive their ethical charge also through repeated reference to idealities such as “nation”, “constitution” or “common good”. Also, there is a total identification with the perspective of the nation-state as a welfare-oriented, benevolent and cohesive category. This has the following effects:

- a) There is an absence of multiple perspectives and local knowledges in the books. For instance, rivers, land or forests are all looked at from the point of view of the developmental state. In fact, there is a dehumanization of other ways of life. Within such a frame there is no space for the extremely relevant knowledge of the forest that may form a part of the lived world of a tribal child. She and her

³ The passage reinforces the idea of the family consisting of an invulnerable, protective father and a nurturing mother, one that we see all around ourselves, in billboards, films or advertisements. Research has shown that for children from marginalized families (dalits, blacks or single-mother), parenting follows a much more complex path. They often witness the parents (father or mother) helpless, inadequate or disruptive vis-à-vis the system. See *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* for an illuminating discussion of the anxieties about basic necessities that are part of the real world for most black children and that cloud their school day. Recounting a black child’s experience at the rent board hearing with his mother, she writes, “Horace is a witness for his mother, but he also witnesses her humiliation in this setting of institutional power. Formal, specialized language and knowledge systems hold sway; we do not have the words, the phrasing, to command respect. Someone else makes, knows, and adjudicates the rules.”

- community can only be imagined as the object of the developmental initiatives—to be ‘improved’ and brought on par with the nation on the path of progress.⁴
- b) The uncritical and State-oriented perspective results in blindness towards the some of the underlying realities of development and modernization—the uprootings, deforestation, loss of traditional livelihood and other kinds of marginalization. Bound by its reformist role, the textbook is divorced from the effects of development around us—whether in newspaper discussions or in popular protests or in the everyday lives of children.

It is the mandate of Social Studies to connect with contemporary realities in order to equip the child with the necessary skills to engage with and make sense of the world around her. Let us look at the goal of social science as stated in one of the prefaces:

The various components of the content which have been drawn from different subjects of Social Sciences should be seen as interrelated. So, teaching of these subjects without any emphasis on these interrelations cannot achieve the objectives and purposes of teaching Social Studies. The teachers of Social Studies shall therefore integrate the content of different Social Sciences, *wherever possible*, with contemporary issues and problems and develop the concepts of National Integration, Unity, Nationalism and International understanding among the students and thus, prepare them as good citizens. (My italics, Class VII)

How far does the promise to connect with the contemporary world get translated into the textbooks themselves? One may notice that the burden is almost entirely put on the teacher. As we go through the lessons this comes across as an impossible demand, because the top-down and reformist tone of the narrative discourages entanglement with what appears from that perspective as the ‘messiness’ of the present. Also, it is difficult to coincide the requirements of ‘National Integration’ and ‘Unity’ with many of our contemporary contestations over ‘citizenship’ and ‘nationhood’.

⁴ See Wolf, G. (ed). 1995. *Landscapes: Children’s voices* for an understanding of the rich knowledge of the forests that is part of the lived world of tribal children.

Our review is informed by some of the current debates in the field of education. In recent years, there is a growing criticism that the normative world of textbooks is overwhelmingly upper caste, middle class and urban-centred. Anveshi's project with children from government schools (2000-2002) reveals that work is integral to familial survival for them. Yet their textbooks do not ever image the world from the perspective of a working child. The normativity of the lessons—cleanliness, order, familial values—disavows the lived worlds of working/marginalized children.⁵ Anveshi's work forms part of the growing research establishing that childhood cannot be understood or represented in a single or homogenized manner.

This review is a critical evaluation of the objectives, content and pedagogic strategies of the textbooks through an analysis of selected portions from history, geography, civics and economics. While our analysis points to the ideological affiliation of the textbooks, it is also an indication of the pedagogic effect that a lesson may have. Most of our suggestions towards how the textbooks may be rethought emerge through our analysis although we do make a list of proposals at the end of each section.

Some of the questions that we explore in this review are:

1. Is there an overload of information? Does the text lend itself to rote learning?
2. A related question—does the text attempt to teach children concepts rather than 'facts'?
3. Is the child introduced to the basic disciplinary methods of the subjects? Does she participate in the process of constructing knowledge? Or is knowledge presented as a 'given'?
4. Does the textbook have a unitary worldview? Is there scope for students to interpret events and ideas from more than one perspective?
5. Does the text attempt to build on the pre-existent local/regional knowledge that a child may bring to the class?

⁵ See Vasanta. D. 2004. "Childhood, Work and Schooling: Some Reflections." *Education Dialogue*. 2.1 (Monsoon): 5-29

History

The history sections are written in a mode that is common in textbook history-writing in India. The point of view is that of an ‘omniscient narrator’ who has complete and authentic knowledge of the past. Students are provided with only the barest introduction to historian’s tools—the sources and records that help her to reconstruct the past. In classes VI and IX, there is one chapter each discussing various kinds of sources (inscriptions, coins etc) but this knowledge remains isolated from and is not integrated into the rest of the lessons.

History as a Record of Facts

The most obvious thing about these history textbooks is that they treat history as a body of facts. Every event or period is presented as the way things “really” were and there is no sense of selection, discovery or interpretation. As a result, some of the most contested ideas of the present get taught as “fact”. For example:

The Aryans belonged to one race...The Aryans were of a noble complexion. Their skin colour was bright and not black. The Dasyus were of black colour.
(Class VI, 78)

This is the child’s first introduction to the “ancient past” of India. Without any reference to the interpretational frames (Orientalist or nationalist) or the contemporary cultural politics that have produced the concept of the “racially superior Aryan”, these statements stand as “truth”. Since the frame admits only one point of view, there is no mention of the well-worked contemporary arguments that the Aryans were not a racial group at all.¹ In a different frame, it could have been possible to put together two differing interpretations—the earlier one of Aryans as a race and the more recent ones that contest that view. It would have also conveyed the idea that history is a not a fixed discipline but one that is subject to contestation and reinterpretation.

¹ Since the mid-twentieth century, the theory that has come to fore is that the Aryans were a linguistic group rather a pure and superior race. For an informative discussion see *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* by Romila Thapar.

Since the discourse derives its authority from positivism, myths and beliefs also get presented as facts with strange effects. For example, religion is written about as belief (as in the Biblical format), not as history—and it gets treated as “history”.

Jesus arose from his grave after 3 days and appeared to his devotees. This is called “Resurrection” by Christians.... The resuscitated Jesus was visible to his devotees for 40 days and later acceded to his father’s abode in heaven (the Kingdom of God). (Class IX, 90)

The above passage could have been used to mark a point of deviation from the dominant discursive structure instead of being presented as part of it. Myths and belief could have been used to introduce children to other ways of looking at the past.

In an effort to teach students as many facts as possible, the lessons often move at a breathless speed. For instance, in the one and half pages devoted to ancient China the writing moves from agriculture to art to philosophy with barely a pause.

In ancient China Confucianism and Taoism were propagated by Confucious and Lao Tze respectively. Taoism preached simple life and self-less attitude. Lao Tze was born in B.C. 604. He published his views in the Ta-Nochi king. Confucious was born in B. C. 551 and lived upto B.C. 479. He was contemporary to Mahavira and Gautama Buddha. (Class IX, 83)

Here, Confucious and Lao Tze are alien-sounding names that the child must torture herself to memorize. As we can imagine, it would be practically impossible for her to appreciate their impact, or the social or political contexts of their respective philosophies. In the same way, she may learn a lot of detailed biographical information (birthplace, father’s name etc) about someone—Ambedkar or Napoleon for example—but almost nothing about what he did or why he is important.

History as Teleological

History is also, in the manner of most textbooks, presented as a linear, programmatic narrative. It is introduced as follows in Class VI: “History may be defined as the record of achievements in civilization and culture attained by a people or a nation in onward march of time.” This sets the tone for a teleological narration and the same

maxim is repeated over the grades. This has a crippling effect in terms of pedagogy: every moment gets subsumed under and has no life outside the grand narrative of progress and modernity. A historical moment constituted by the complex philosophies of Confucius and Lao Tze can be summed up in exactly two lines under the overarching umbrella of the growth of the Chinese civilization. To further emphasize the point, in the same chapter, we have two pictures of the ancient fish-shaped Chinese compass (one is actually printed upside down!). In a telegraphic listing of the various achievements of ancient China—presented as proof that “Ancient Chinese Civilization was considered as an important milestone in the evolution of Human Civilization” (IX, 84)—we find no further explanation of the compass. There is no discussion of how it came into being; what its uses were or of basic questions that might occur to a child (example: why would a compass be fish-shaped?). In the flow of the narrative of progress, the story of the compass can only be unidirectional.²

A Narrative of the “Modern”

Guided by the modernizing objectives of Social Studies, India’s past is presented as journey to catch up with the West and the modern is imaged in the history of Europe. To quote from the Class VIII textbook, “Modern period in Indian history begins with Eighteenth century because many characteristics of modern period had begun in this century. These features of modern times appeared much earlier in Europe.” (59) Narrated in this mode, modernity appears in India only with the coming of the colonialism. It is the Indian bourgeoisie, educated in Western ideas of liberty and equality, who usher in the new nation and become its rightful proprietors.

The educated section of people was the intelligentsia of the country, which was called the middle class i.e., those who earned their livelihood by extending their services to the country. This educated class understood the

² It is helpful to think about this question through Foucault’s notion of “eventalization”. He writes, “What do I mean by this term? First of all, a breach of self-evidence. It means making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all.” (226)

British political institutions and came to know how the British people enjoyed liberty, equality, and fraternity in their country. They wanted to bring in social and economic changes in India on modern lines which necessitated social reforms in India.... English Education played an important role not only in bringing advanced ideas and modern science to India but also made the Indian people think and realize the defects and evils of Indian society such as divisions and inequalities created by caste system in Indian society, oppression of women, certain inhuman practices like sati, child marriage, infanticide etc. Consequently there was growing awareness among the people of the backwardness of Indian society caused by superstitions associated with religious beliefs. (Class VIII, 87)

This mode of looking at the ‘modern’ in India is clearly untouched by the academic debates that have animated the field of Indian historiography since the 1980s, especially with the emergence of the Subaltern Studies initiative in 1981. The historians of the Subaltern Studies Collective claimed that Indian history—colonial as much as national—was elitist in its structure and its assumptions.³ It erased the many struggles from below (by groups like peasants, tribals) against colonialism but also against local power relationships.⁴ Subaltern Studies sought to mark a break in this history and foreground the figure of the subaltern (the peasant, the tribal and so on).

³ In his ground-breaking “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” that marks the beginning of the Subaltern Studies venture, Guha writes that the historiography of Indian nationalism is dominated by elitism. The historiography of nationalist historians represents Indian nationalism primarily as an altruistic and idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom. But it “fails to acknowledge, far less interpret, the contribution made by people *on their own*, that is *independently of the elite* to the making and development of this nationalism.” (3)

⁴ Writing a history of Subaltern Studies initiative, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002) writes, “Using *people* and *subaltern classes* synonymously and defining both as the “demographic difference between the total Indian population” and the dominant indigenous and foreign elite, Guha claimed that there was, in colonial India, an “autonomous” domain of the “politics of the people” that was organized differently from the domain of the politics of the elite. Elite politics involved “vertical mobilization” and a “greater reliance on Indian adaptations of British parliamentary institutions” and tended to be relatively

This is not to say that the child should be introduced to the complexities of the Subaltern Studies critique. But if school textbook writing is more informed by the recent interventions within the discipline, then one can hope for a reduced degree of reliance on axioms that represent Indian modernity as monolithic and Eurocentric. It could also open out possibilities to explore non-middle class (tribal, dalit) consciousness in the emergence and constitution of the Indian nation.

A Nationalist History

Ultimately, the question that occurred to us during this review is “Are the history sections marked by the ideology of Hindu nationalism?”⁵ Our reading suggests that the lessons do not have any systematic or overt affiliation to the ideological agenda of Hindutva. However, the lessons are deeply conservative in other ways as they endorse the popular commonsense about caste, community or religion. This is in line with the nationalist mode in which history textbooks have generally been written in India since Independence. Idea(s) like “timeless unity of India” are taught as part of the effort to inculcate a national identity in the child. The lesson “India: Its Geographical Features—Unity and Diversity” in Class IV emphasizes the underlying and unchanging homogeneity of India despite surface differences.

The Himalayas in the north of India, like fort walls, protect India against foreign invasions; they also protect North India against the cold winds blowing from the North.... Among Indians we have people who follow different religions....[yet there is] Unity in Diversity. It is only when we are united forgetting these differences, that our nation can march forward and

more legalistic and constitutional in orientation.” In the domain of “subaltern politics,” on the other hand, mobilization for political intervention depended on horizontal affiliations such as the “traditional organization of kinship and territoriality” or on “class consciousness” depending on the level of the consciousness of the people involved....Central to subaltern mobilization was a “notion of resistance.”

⁵ The early 2000s were marked by controversies surrounding history textbooks of NCERT as well as certain (especially northern) states. Several concerned historians (the Delhi Historians Group, for example) and intellectuals condemned the introduction of blatantly communal versions of the past in these textbooks. In the aftermath of these controversies, it is natural for us to wonder if the APSCERT textbooks (having been revised more than once since 2000) contain elements of Hindutva.

become rich and prosperous. *A study of Indian History tells us that when we lacked unity, our country suffered in its development and when we were united, forgetting our differences of race, religion and language, our country had progressed and developed.* (My italics, Class VI, 72)

The rhetoric of the passage, as we can see, consolidates the imagined boundaries (entrenched in our minds through patriotic songs, films or the national anthem) of the nation. It stands distanced from, and in fact, negates the many regional and separatist struggles in contemporary India that a child is bound to encounter in other sources (newspapers, media, reports of riots) or even experience within her own community/region. Within these imagined boundaries it is difficult to think of “region” as having a separate history, not subsumed under the trajectory of the nation. Not surprisingly we do not have any reference to Telengana as a different region or the various linguistic/cultural differences within Andhra Pradesh that have crucial implications for contemporary identity and politics within the state.

History and Islam

Coming to the portrayal of Islam in the textbooks, it would be difficult for us to say that there is an alignment with the forces of Hindutva. Some of the lessons speak positively of Islam—for example the influence of the concept of Universal Brotherhood in Islam on Hindutva (Class VII). Yet—and this is worrisome—certain ideas about Islam and Islamic rulers (in popular circulation) get taught in the most casual, taken for granted manner. The lessons on medieval India in Class VII, reproduce the Orientalist/colonialist representations of the Islamic monarch as “irrational” or the hegemonic representations of the Muslim ruler as an “invader”. Note how the following examples draw on the popularly scandalous notions regarding the bigotry and madness of the Islamic ruler.⁶

Look at the following descriptions:

⁶ Nineteenth century colonial historiography paints Tipu Sultan as irrational, sadistic—even perverted. Coming close to our times, consider the representations of the Muslim ruler (Ala-ud-din Khilji for instance) in *Amar Chitra Katha*. For an extended discussion, refer to *Amar Chitra Katha: History, Masculinity and the Consolidation of the Indian Middle Class 1969-1991* by Deepa Sreenivas.

- Tughluq loved Islam but was not a fanatic. Since his innovations and new methods of administration failed he is known as the mad man of history. He was a short tempered Sultan. (63, VII)
- Feroz Tughluq ...took fascination in maintaining slaves. (63, VII)
- Timur looted the wealth of Delhi and went back to Samarkhand after destroying the fields of Delhi in one year. (63, VII)
- He [Aurangzeb] was a learned man. He gained a lot of military and administrative experience as the viceroy of Deccan. He was a Sunni Muslim and bigot. (71, VII)

While the lessons are more clichéd and simplistic in the lower grades (Classes VI and VII), they become a shade more complex and less jingoistic in the later grades. But the stress remains on political history and even that history is completely nationalist. It is, in the final analysis, a post-independence “Congress” history. Some textbook writers lean more to the left, some more to the right. That is all. The differences show up in the “facts” that they present.

Proposals:

Children should be introduced to the process of historical reconstruction through an introduction to sources—inscriptions, coins, artifacts, visual and textual material, myth, literature and diaries. This knowledge should be integrated into the lessons. The chapter on Harappa in Class VI is a huge missed opportunity in this sense. In Class IX, the chapter on sources called “Pre-history” is basically an exercise in proving the evolutionist growth of humankind. Also, names like “John Marshall” and “Mortimer Wheeler” are quoted as the final authority on interpreting evidence to uncover the “truth” about a certain period. In the end, the chapter on historical evidence is written in the same fact-mode as the rest of the books.

Instead of a total stress on history as the history of capital or of modernity, there can be several “small” histories—of everyday practices or local monuments. It is important for children to realize that clothes, fashions, hairstyles, comics and the

familiar things around them all have histories. This would form the basis for social and cultural history (as against the purely political history format of the textbooks). A local sense of history is important for the construction of identity for children from subaltern communities.⁷ These children's group identity gets totally lost in the Aryan versus Dasyu or the Colonial versus Nationalist narrative of history as it is written now. A history of food culture or of a hairstyle or of the body will also bring out the precariousness of many things we take for granted (in terms of propriety and decorum—what we should eat, how we should behave and so on). For instance, a history of food would reveal that beef-eating was a perfectly acceptable practice during the Vedic times. This can be liberating for a dalit or Muslim child. Because the knowledge of history is organized in the textbooks in such a way that everything points to vegetarianism or non-beef food practices as the way things should be today.⁸

⁷ In an essay called "Children's Literature after Apartheid: Examining 'Hidden Histories' of South Africa's Past" Jochen Petzold says that official history in schools during apartheid was "used to justify the roles assigned to blacks and whites...by making it seem 'natural' for the white minority to rule the country." In the late 1980s, shortly after the dismantling of apartheid Heinemann South Africa started a series called "Hidden Histories". Apart from representing an alternative version of the past, books like Martin Hall's *Slaves, Rings and Rubbish* (1995) highlight "the importance of a local sense of history for identity formation, while simultaneously exposing the constructedness of historian's accounts of the past."

⁸ Refer to Murali Krishna's thesis for a poignant recounting of how he would survive on meager food rather than eat beef for fear of being teased and ostracized by his upper caste friends in school.

Civics

Among all the subjects of Social Studies, Civics carries the most pronounced burden of citizenship training. The austere narrative of Civics is the child's first formal introduction to the purpose, mechanisms, institutions and laws of the state. To quote from the preface of class X:

Civics will help develop an understanding of National Integration, one's own duties and responsibilities in democratic India, how to face the challenges keeping in view the larger goals of the polity etc.

Despite its official tone, the authority of Civics is consolidated through a resonance with the hegemonic cultural representations of family, motherhood, home, community, orderliness, hygiene etc. Look at the representation of family:

Family is the cradle of civilization. Family is the best training ground for citizenship. It trains the children of today to be the citizens of tomorrow. Family inculcates good manners in the children....The children respect their parents.... (Class VI, 107)

"The Family", which is the very first unit of the Civics curriculum, demonstrates the disjunction between family as the site of "ideal" childhood and the way most government school children might experience family. For many of them, family is a more complex unit than a bonding of "pure love" or a miniature model of the nation. It is a means of economic survival and interdependence.¹

¹ For an thought-provoking discussion of what family and childhood mean to most black children who attend public schools in America, see Ann Arnett Ferguson's *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. She writes about the "anxieties about basic necessities that are part of the real world some children experience and that shadow their school day" (114). Also, "the boys are alerted by family to the dangers of "the real world" for black males through admonitions, object lessons from direct personal experience, and electrifying moments such as watching the videotape of Rodney King being beaten senseless by the police" (116). The boys also realize that their parents when engaged in a confrontation with school adults or public officials come across as a weak force face-to-face with institutional power (120).

Similarly, Murali Krishna M., in his M. Phil dissertation titled *Autobiography as a Resource for Educational Theory: A Dalit Life Story*, recounts the grueling struggles of his childhood simply to survive and stay in school. As a dalit child, he had to not only share housework but also do

Teaching Modernity

Civics has a double-edged narrative—on the one hand, every adult in independent India is a citizen and has equal rights. On the other, there are large pockets of humanity in India who do not possess the required “modernity” to be citizens—they are yet-to-be-citizens. It is the job of Civics to identify these points of the pre-modern even as it lays out the norms of the modern democratic nation for the child. One can say that History lays the ground for Civics to define the pre-modern, in need of intervention from the modern state. In History, we find that there is an unambiguous distinction between reason and unreason. For instance, man moves from superstition beliefs and idol worship to belief in a single god.² Grounded in the evolutionist knowledge of history, Civics marks out for us that which is an “anachronism” in the modern age. The description of the tribal, for example, echoes that of the pre-historic man in the history textbook.

These communities live in hilly and forest areas. *Their dress and habits differ.* Their transportation and other facilities are very meagre. They are very superstitious. Illiteracy is very high in them. Their chief occupations are wood-cutting, hunting, selling forest products etc. The places where they live are without sanitation. Government has taken many steps to provide them with facilities like education, transportation, medicine etc. To improve their conditions, reservations are made for them by government in admissions to

backbreaking labour at a construction site. His grandfather, grandmother, aunt and mother each had to face untold hardship to keep him in school. In fact, as he writes, any small contribution, even something as humiliating as cast off clothes would count towards a dalit child’s schooling and survival. Yet, his or her home world and school world are worlds apart....the culture and ideology of the school often leaves [him/her] ashamed of his or her background and culture (34).

² The historians of Subaltern Studies Collective have consistently focused on this issue. In an essay titled “Reason and the Critique of Historicism”, Dipesh Chakrabarty writes that scholars of Indian history have generally presumed that “for Indian to function as a nation based on the institutions of science, democracy, citizenship, and social justice, “reason” had to prevail over all that was “irrational” and “superstitious” among its citizens....For instance, peasant’s lives, including their politics, are replete with practices that would seem “superstitious” to the rational and secular observer....Where would the polytheism that marks everyday life find its place in such a frame of thought?” (237)

educational institutions and appointments to public services. Cultivation has developed in some tribal areas too. (Class VI, 110-11)

The tribal here is presented as an aberration to the “civilized” norm—as subhuman. One can imagine how such a description would place a tribal student in a deeply humiliating situation in the classroom. Yet this “knowledge” derives an unquestionable legitimacy through the textbook’s total affiliation with the perspective of the interventionist developmental state. This story also obliterates the developmental trajectories of the State that have resulted in the uprooting and displacement of vast tribal populations.

The Recalcitrant Social

The project of modernity (the “march of reason” as the history lessons teach the student) remains incomplete due to the negative pull of the pre-modern that linger in the social space. How does the textbook refer to the plight of peasants, given that suicide by a large number of farmers is a politicized issue in AP and has been linked to globalization and the changing priorities of the modernizing state? To quote, “They spend extravagantly on marriages, births and deaths. They borrow large sums of money for these purposes.... The money-lenders exploit their ignorance and illiteracy and often deceive them.” (Class VI, 113)

Also look at the list of “social evils” listed below:

Poverty, ignorance, alcoholism, illiteracy, inequality, disease, superstition, and lack of educational facilities are the main social evils in our society. (Class IV, 113)

It is hard to miss the manner in which poverty and illiteracy are clustered with backwardness, anti-sociality and ignorance. Such associations mesh with the binarization between urban and rural, reason and superstition, educated and illiterate that runs through the Civics discourse.

Given the recalcitrance of the “social”, the lessons reiterate time and again, there must be an “attitudinal changes” among people (Class X, 244). Consider the reference to “untouchability” below:

A large number of people in traditional India were kept outside the *chaturvarna* system.... Untouchability is abolished and its practice is

forbidden under Article 17 of the Indian Constitution. The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 imposes penalties for preventing a person on the ground of untouchability from entering a public place. However, social discrimination still persists in India.... For this, a significant change in social attitudes is necessary. (Class X, 243)

By locating “untouchability” a) in the past and b) in social attitudes, the text distances the experiences of discrimination/ostracism that a lower caste child (and her family) experiences in her contemporary world in social as much as in governmental spaces—the police station, the hospital and the school itself. In this discourse, the many real inequalities that children experience on an everyday basis are made to look insignificant or a result of their or their community’s ignorance and inability to fight for justice.³

A Civil Societal Discourse

Ultimately, the discourse of Civics does not deviate from the language of rights and civil societal responsibilities. As the chapter on “Indian Democracy” in Class IX tells us “In democracy all citizens are equal. The law does not recognize any special privilege based on birth or wealth. All have equal rights to participate in politics and contest for any political office.” (231). The model of citizenship that is put forward is that of participatory and deliberative citizenship:⁴

The responsibility of a citizen is not over if he votes to choose his representative once in five years. Citizens must constantly review and check

³ In *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Patricia Williams recounts an incident where a child who is afraid of a big wolfhound is told by her parents that there really is no difference between a big and a small dog. She writes this story “illustrates a paradigm of thought by which children are taught not to see what they see; by which blacks are reassured that there is no real inequality in the world, just their own bad dreams; and by which women are taught not to experience what they experience, in deference to men’s way of knowing.” (13)

⁴ See John J Cogan’s *Citizenship for the 21st Century: An International Perspective on Education*. “A good citizen...is committed to participation in public life;...taking an informed interest in public affairs...ideally, playing an active part in them. (4). ...Citizenship is not a matter of unquestioned obedience to whomever is in power or to the forces of tradition.... Rather, citizenship involves thinking for oneself, while at the same time listening to and respecting the viewpoint of others, in order to become personally engaged with the problems and issues that confront our society. (5)

the activities of their representatives. Public opinion has an important place in democracy. It can be expressed through organization of meetings, rallies and processions, or submitting memoranda to the officials or people's representatives. (Class X, 231)

So, while Civics places Indian democracy and the Constitution in the zone of the ideal, it also demands certain heroism of the child/would-be-citizen to qualify as "citizen". But a total affiliation with the internationalist (read Western) model of reflective, participatory citizenship forecloses the many questions that are relevant to understand contemporary life in India. For example: Do government offices and judiciary and administrative institutions as per the dictates of the Constitution. What are the gaps between prescriptions and actual functioning? Consider the following description of the police department, an important arm of the government machinery:

Protection of (a) Citizen's life (b) their properties and (c) the internal law and order are some important duties of this department. It sees that persons indulging in criminal activities violating law are detected, arrested for presentation in courts of law, and punished by these courts.... Officers of this department deal sternly with criminals violating law and order. (VIII, 97)

Yet in reality most underprivileged children experience the law or the policeman in their lives not as fair and neutral but as arbitrary, unfair and sometimes downright brutal. In fact, a child who goes to a government school is more likely to come in contact with the police man rather than the middle class child who may only experience the smiling, reassuring or heroic "cop" on the television or in films. Can Civics afford to exist without acknowledging some of the experiences that children or their parents or families/communities may have in real life and the manner in which they negotiate rather than stick to a sanitized version of the way the police department ought to work.⁵

The Civics textbooks' perspective on traffic education (on which there is a chapter in each grade) would throw further light on its absolute civil societal orientation. Most of the children who come to government schools negotiate roads on a daily basis—they

⁵ See *The Branded* by Laxman Gaikwad for an autobiographical account of how a marginalized child experiences the law as brutal, irrational and arbitrary.

either walk to school or commute in an overcrowded auto or bus. They are bound to encounter beggars, vendors or strangers who sometimes help them cross the road. They also come to understand that the traffic on a road may have its own logic which may be different from the laid down traffic rule. Sometimes bus drivers stop at unauthorized stops to let women or children disembark.

Yet in the civics lesson, the road, with its neat dividers, intersection, traffic lights and uncluttered pavements is a metaphor for order and discipline. With its metropolitan focus and stress on “citizenly behaviour” the text fails to draw on the “real” knowledge of children and is in danger of becoming “irrelevant” to their worlds and daily struggles.

Proposals

We find an over-reliance on definitions and aphorisms in the lessons. Civics (as well as other sections of Social Studies) should try to shed what may be characterized as a ‘dangerous banalness’—a dependence on stereotypical representations that foreclose critical thinking. For example:

Though the flowers in a garden are different in their shaped, colour and smell, yet we may put them together in a garland. The thread that runs through the garland unifies the flowers in it. In the same way, Nationalism integrates our people....So, we all should be Indians first; only then, we should belong to different religions, languages and regions.

The Civics lessons should try to address questions like the following: What is the experience of democracy for an average child in a government school? How do she and her family negotiate the demands of everyday life, something as simple as the requirement for a gas connection? What kind of negotiations are carried out by the families and communities of marginalized children with employers, neighbourhood leaders, local politicians as well as government officials in their struggle for water, electricity, healthcare and so on?

Geography

The geography sections of the social studies textbooks focus on what can be broadly described as physical and human geography: a section on physical geography of the earth and a large section is about 'world geography'. This seems to be in line with at many other conventional school level textbooks of geography in other countries.¹ New textbooks of geography, at least at the high school level seem to be moving towards what is called as 'environmental studies'². The thrust of the latter is to teach geography through an emphasis on contemporary issues of urbanization, environmental degradation etc.

The Discourse of Geography and the Perspective of Development

The basic thrust of geography is to teach the student from the perspective of the Indian state – its burdens, its resources, and its territory. While the burden of modernizing its citizenry is predominantly borne by the subject of civics, geography shares with economics, the objective of laying out the 'developmental' burden of the nation-state. All spaces are organized around the nation-state: agriculture, forests, transport etc. are discussed in terms of impact of the arrival of nation-state on the scene. The interests of the nation-state are given priority over the interests of men, women, families, villagers, tribals, communities who might have a stake in the geographical space. The following discussion is a pointer to the ways in which geographical knowledge is organized in the lessons so that the agenda of "development" overrides every other agenda.

Geographical space is presented as always-already existing. Along with physical aspects such as oceans, winds, and atmosphere, various continents, regions and countries are also presented as 'naturally existing entities'. Note, for example, the similarity in the sentence structure of the first lines of two lessons on 'Atmosphere and Hydrosphere' and 'North America –Location and Extent' in Class VII.

¹. Gabler, Robert E 'A Handbook for Geography Teachers', National Council for Geographic Education, Illinois, 1966.

² Widdowson, John, John Smith and Roger Knill 'GCSE Geography in Focus', John Murray, London, 2001.

‘The earth on which we live *has* three spheres – the Atmosphere, the Hydrosphere and the Lithosphere...The atmosphere is a mixture of several gases. Nitrogen, Oxygen and Carbondioxide are important gases of the atmosphere.’ (1)

‘North America *lies* in the northern hemisphere. It *is* the third largest continent of the world...North America stretches between 7’N and 83’ latitude and between 20’ W and 120’W longitude.’ (11)

The significance of human effort in naming and in fact, making of these spaces is hardly mentioned. Therefore, the description of the physical territory is given a priority in the narrative – the exact location on the map, the various aspects of landscape, the forms of natural resources etc. People come as an *adjunct* to this physical space, actually in separate lessons on ‘Population’. Here again they are discussed as races or nationalities, in the most uncritical sense. The emphasis is on demographic dimensions with an emphasis on statistics. Consider the following examples from Class Vii :

‘North America is about eight times the size of India, but its *population* is about half that of India. The *total* population of the continent is about 400 million and its *density* is about 15 persons per square kilometre’. (p.16)³

Geographical spaces are also presented as ‘natural resources’⁴ that can be utilized to achieve maximum possible profit – that is development. This is the context in which forests, soils, minerals are presented as the ‘resources’ of the nation-state (but not of people). In fact, the necessity of utility maximization is emphasized at every point. Consider the following example from Class X under the heading of Animal Wealth

³ A similar example: ‘The total population of South America is about 230 million. The average density of its population is about 13 persons per square kilometer. ..The people of South America belong to three main racial groups. They are the American Indians, the Negroes and the Europeans.’ (p.29)

⁴ The conversion of ‘nature’ into ‘natural resource’ happens during the building of modern bureaucratic, nation-states where they seek to exercise control over population, resources, in a new mode – of maximizing utility. James Scott discusses this in his ‘Seeing the State’.

‘Livestock is a part and parcel of and an ally of agriculture....*India* supports a large number of livestock population in the world as the Indian farmer is heavily depends on livestock either for draught force or for manuring the farm. But unfortunately, livestock and dairy farming are the *least developed branches of Indian agriculture* on account of its being foodgrain oriented. As a result though *India is rich in livestock* – population, very poor in animal production. The *poor quality of Indian livestock* breeds, lack of grazing and fodder facilities, the *religious and sociological outlook of the Indian farmer* and a much neglected care in animal husbandry sector are responsible for poor animal production in the country. (63)

Here, the multiplicity of animal husbandry practices among Indian farmers and their uses is read not in an integral/historical context, but vis-à-vis a modernity or a modernization process that the ‘Indian state’ has decided upon to pursue. As a result of this reading, the processes of learning about the actual livestock are reduced to measuring it either as modern or non-modern. The opportunity for understanding the importance of livestock to actual rural living, from where a great many number of children come to the school system is lost.

Geographic Regions: The “Developed” and the “Backward”

Further, geographical space is not only presented as ‘natural’ and ‘immune to history’ but also as ‘recalcitrant’ – as resistant to the initiatives of the State. Responsibility for droughts, famines, regional backwardness etc. is constantly laid at the door of geographical geological factors. The best example would be the description of Telangana, a region in Andhra Pradesh. “Telangana is not developed due to dry weather and scanty rainfall’ whereas in fact less than 10% of irrigation expenditure went to this region in the nearly fifty years of the existence of the state. The unproblematized application of developed/developing, modern/backward distinctions have a way of foreclosing dialogue on the basis of the texts among students or between students and the teacher. If one looks at the resources that text provides for a student from a ‘backward region’ to inquire about this nature of ‘backwardness’ – they are sketchy, mostly confined to the nature of the

soils, lack of irrigation – almost giving the impression that the nature of geographical conditions have led to such backwardness.

What reinforces the modern/backward division is an underlying strong Western humanist perspective permeates descriptions of peoples and regions – one that proclaims superiority of the West and the inferiority of the rest of the peoples/cultures in Africa, Asia etc. While the mild examples of this would be statements such as ‘America is the most developed country’ a more difficult example would be ‘most of the African states became independent only in the last forty years, and have since made progress in developing their resources’ or even “Africa is a backward continent”. There is an uncritical implicit narrative of “industrial modernity” as a “desirable developmental model” written into the country’s geographical aspects, whether it is that of transport, industries, agriculture, imports/exports etc. (See Appendix I for examples).

The Pedagogical model of Geography in Textbooks

In the sections on physical geography of the earth, concepts such as atmosphere, and weather are discussed. In the sections in world geography students are taught the space-time distribution of population, industry, transport, agriculture, forests, soils, population etc, through the discussion of their status in each continent or country. The following are some of the salient features of the pedagogical model of the lessons:

From sixth standard onwards, in each year, some attempt has been made to introduce the student to certain concepts in the former area with increasing levels of complexity in the higher classes. The sections in ‘world geography’ however, are written at the same level for all the five years. From sixth standard onwards, a sub-section of geography of each continent in the world is introduced (numbering 11 pages) with under the same lesson heads, with the same concepts and assumptions. Upgradation of the concepts or increasing complexity is not overtly visible as one reads upwards in the textbooks.

The features of the geography of the earth such as atmosphere, climate, oceans, river systems etc., are introduced (and discussed) in a cursory and abstract mode. While the

effort to increase complexity over the years is evident in some instances (such as in the discussion of ocean system in 6th and 8th class, temperature in 6th and 9th classes), it is not done systematically about several other concepts such as climate, river systems, water etc.

The method is deductive, descriptive, with a heavy dose of factual details. It is difficult to get a sense of time and space, which are integral to understand geographical concepts through these thick descriptions of population, agriculture, industry, transport etc. The understanding of the spatial relationships between these concepts, which is integral to thinking like a geographer, therefore becomes remote. Let us take the example of agriculture. Here the assumption is that, by going through the discussions of 'agriculture' in several countries and continents and regions, the student would familiarize oneself with the idea that 'farming practices' differ from place to place, time to time, and respond in varied ways to introduction of technology. However, nowhere is this assumption laid out or discussed – even through question/answers. What is instead underlined is the variation in farming practices with-in a strong perspective that modern, scientific farming practice is the best and desirable; thus curtailing the inquiry to whether, why and how all areas in the world have adopted it and the reasons for not doing so.

While certain complex notions such as race and population are used with abandon, several others such as backward, modern, developed/developing, scientific, that can be understood only in the context of a particular debate, are indeed used as adjectives to describe particular countries or regions. This is the most problematic aspect of the writing of the geography text, given the normative implications that most of these terms carry. These notions have a way of foreclosing the dialogue on the basis of the text between the students or between the teacher and the students on these very descriptions, thereby preventing an inquiry about the geographical descriptions. For instance,

Proposals:

First, it is imperative that children be provided with a good introduction to the field of geography that is absent in the textbooks—What is it? What is so specific about geography? What do geographers do? How would it be different from other kinds of

geographical knowledge that children may acquire outside the classroom? As may become obvious from our analysis, the textbook itself is non-dialogic in nature. As geography is presented as an immutable subject (the geographer being absent as the constructor of knowledge) one finds that there is little possibility of a dialogue with the text either for the teacher or the student. Where the student is addressed, it is assumed that she is innocent of any kind of geographical knowledge. One only has to think for a minute to guess the range of children's geographical knowledge. It could be an urban slum child's knowledge of her way home from school or workplace; a middle class child's knowledge of a local super-market or a playground; a rural child's knowledge of the climate, soil, trees and animals; a fisher-folk child's knowledge of the ocean or a river; a tribal child's knowledge of the forest etc. Within the textbook, there is hardly any space for a dialogue with other kinds of geographical knowledge that the students might bring to the classroom.

Second, attention to the development of basic skills in areas such as reading or drawing maps is not systematic. There is a single lesson in the VII standard devoted to maps: pertaining to reading the different conventional signs in a map. While maps are extensively used to illustrate the spread or prevalence of several phenomena, they are understood in a positivistic sense: as the direct representation of real landscape, terrain or territory.⁵ While it would be unrealistic to expect a school textbook to have a critical awareness of the politics of mapmaking, how would it even attempt to address the possible questions that a child in a high school may have about the territory of India – for instance, Kashmir?

⁵ Pickles, John 'Texts, Hermeneutics and Propaganda Maps' and J.B.Hurley 'Deconstructing the Map' in *Writing Worlds – discourse, text & metaphor in the representation of landscape* by Trevor J.Barnes and James S.Duncan, London, Routledge, 1992.

Economics

The Perspective of Economics

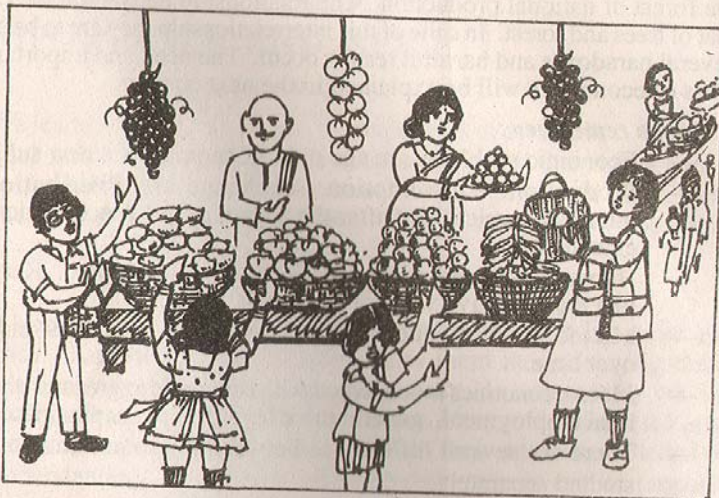
The first unit in the economics section of the 6th class social studies textbook has an example of what is being attempted in this subject, and perhaps in school education, for the first time in the life of a student. There is a line sketch of a fruit shop, complete with a man and woman fruit sellers, adults, two children and baskets of fruit. This sketch is an illustration that is used to teach the concepts of micro and macroeconomics to the child. Price, purchase, sale, profit, loss... are introduced to the child for the first time in school (really the first time—unless the child is a fruit seller's daughter or son), by alluding to the market processes illustrated.

Look at figure below. There are different kinds of fruits in the fruit market. Business people (sellers) are engaged in their sale. Buyers are the consumers. Price depends on supply and demand, size and quality of fruits. Morning price of the fruit is different from the evening.

Micro economics explains the relative prices of different goods and services. It is also called price theory or theory of value. There are no answers in microeconomics to some very important economic problems. The study of macroeconomics is necessary for finding answers to such problems as poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment.

5. Macroeconomics

It is also classical. But it came into limelight and popularity due to the writings of the economist, J.M. Keynes in 1936. Macroeconomics studies not only issues pertaining to national income, aggregate (total) employment, general price level (general price level is known through index number of prices) surplus/deficit in foreign trade but also averages like per capita income and per capita consumption. Microeconomics and macroeconomics are like the two legs of a human being. Both are essential. Let us note the differences between the two branches of economics.



Fruit Market

However, the text that teaches the concept distances the reality referred to by the illustration – rather than recall the smells, sounds, activities, transactions, reasoning and feelings in the fruitshop, the text focuses on the abstract operations of the market as such.

Thus, if the textbook addresses the child as a student (of economics, here) the illustration is nothing but a *representation* of the market from the perspective of economics.

Given the goal of teaching the child the perspective of economics, what may be done? The problem of poor writing in the original is intimately associated with the economics perspective of the writer. The shortening and telegraphing of the sentences in the text intensify the abstraction of the economics perspective. As a first step to pedagogic improvement, it may be feasible for the text to be “written” by some one for content and then edited for style by a different person. A different editorial hand may work to smoothen the text, subtly relocate it and make it understandable to the child. As a first trial below, this is what would be possible:

Have you gone to a fruit shop? Can you remember the different kinds of fruits there? Some fruits cost more and others cost less. The price of each fruit, what it costs, is different. The price of a mango is different from the price of a banana. The price of a fruit also often changes from morning to evening. This is called price variation. The prices vary for different reasons. Sometimes, many more mangoes come into the market in the day. There are not enough buyers, and the sellers want to earn some money for the day, so the price goes down. At other times so many mangoes are sold that there are very few left and there are many buyers. Then the price goes up. Sometimes, the fruit seller reduces his price in the evening because he wants a little more money for his home by selling more fruit. Many fruit sellers also sell at a low price to the first buyer (boni) because it brings good luck for the day. Micro economics teaches you why the prices of goods (mangoes, brinjals, fans, cement, bus charges) vary. But it does not give you all the answers. It does not teach you why people don't have jobs (unemployment), why they are poor (poverty), how people get rich (wealth), why some countries are poor and others rich. This is taught by macro economics. We need to learn both micro economics and macro economics.

The focus should be to teach the child by connecting the knowledge the child may be expected to already possess, to the new knowledge being imparted. This linkage will encourage a process of reflection and abstract thinking that the learning of this subject

requires. Would it be possible for the children to be introduced to a fruit seller invited to the class room so that they get a feel for the subject from his own description of how he buys and sells? This will teach them subtly, from the beginning, the first lesson often forgotten in economics, and that is that people's lives are determined by economic activity.

The perspective of development in economics textbooks

The entire economics section of the 7th class social studies textbook is devoted to the economy of Andhra Pradesh. After a brief description of economic development, and the role of different sectors in this process, the rest of the chapter is a description of the economic development of Andhra Pradesh.

In AP, after a general introduction to gross economic growth figures, the description is split into development in agriculture, industry, services and welfare in Andhra Pradesh, from 1950-2000. The aim of the chapter is to tell the school child the story of the progress of the state over the first fifty years of independence. This story, being told for the first time to each child in the seventh class, introduces the concepts of time, change of economic factors with time, of improvement and of becoming worse. In this process, the value of any thing done to "improve" economic development is defined as good, and any thing that restrains it is defined as bad. This is again the first time the value perspective of economic theory and development are introduced to the child.

Here I will look only at the representation of population in the textbook. The lesson on population is divided under subheadings: a) Growth; b) Rural-Urban Population; c) Sex Ratio; d) Literacy; e) Infant Mortality; f) Regional Variations in Population Density. Under each of these sub headings, the textbook describes the population in an impersonal, Malthusian light. Population growth is bad, A.P's population increases too much, too quickly. Excessive rural population is not good, A.P has a high rural population. A low sex ratio indicates poor development, and A.P has a poor sex ratio, and so on... The result of this chapter, if it is understood at all, is a complete espousal of the government's perspective and take on the problem of population. This is something like a brainwashing process. It is fairly well known that the problem of population can be seen in different perspectives. There have been many

criticisms of the “problems of overpopulation approach”. There are many questions that arise with respect to this lesson:

1. should the child be indoctrinated into the government’s values of population control so quickly – is that the task of government schools?
2. Is it possible to teach the child about the economics of population without espousing the governmental perspective – can government education have some autonomy with respect to government objectives?
3. How should the lesson be structured so that the child begins to understand the population concepts properly, in a grounded manner? Would it, for instance, be possible for the lesson to draw on children’s experience of people, crowding, friendly groups, play grounds, class rooms, etc., to explain the abstract notions of population?
4. Should this governmental perspective be taught at all? How would the change in the role of the state with liberalization of the economy be mediated in teaching the child a useful concept of economics?

Proposals

We think that the economics section and the perspective of national development should be discussed seriously by a group of diverse economists and political theorists in order to arrive at some consensus on what to teach. Perhaps as in history, it would be better to teach concepts and their worth rather than content and value judgments.

In all these lessons, the only contextualizing elements in the textbook are last section in the exercises called “Activities to be undertaken by the students.” Is it possible to make the lesson plan itself to conform completely to the activities proposed so that the learning process is more deeply grounded?

Appendix I

It would be illustrative to compare the first sentences of the lessons on each of the continents. Lesson heads are given in the brackets.

South America	Africa	North America	Asia
<p>The <i>most important crops</i> of South America are maize, wheat, coffee, sugar-cane and cotton. (Agriculture)</p> <p>South America is <i>rich in minerals</i> like petroleum, iron ore, copper, tin and nitrate. (Minerals)</p> <p>South America has <i>rich natural resources and has huge water-power</i> resources. (Industries)</p> <p><i>Transport system is not well developed</i> in South America. (Transportation)</p> <p><i>South America depends to a great deal on international trade.</i> (Trade, Exports, and Imports)</p>	<p>African remained backward, as most of the country was governed by European countries who did not take interest in <i>developing the resources of Africa</i> except the minerals and a few special crops which they wanted. .. Most of the African countries became independent only in the past forty years and have since made progress in developing their resources. (Agriculture)</p> <p>Africa is a backward continent. The major occupations are agriculture, mining and pastoralism. (Industries)</p>	<p>North America is the <i>world's most prosperous continent</i> (Minerals)</p> <p>North America is <i>one of the highly industrialized continents</i> of the world (Industries)</p> <p>North America has a <i>dense network of the most modern means of transport</i> (Transportation)</p> <p>North America is <i>the most prosperous and highly industrialized continent of the world</i> (Exports and Imports)</p>	<p>Asia is a continent <i>rich in agricultural resources</i> (Agriculture)</p> <p>Asia is <i>rich in mineral resources and Hydro-electric power.</i> (Industries)</p> <p>There are <i>several modes of transport in Asia. Rivers are the convenient and natural means of transport in Tundra and Taiga regions.</i> (Transportation)</p> <p>Most of the <i>countries of Asia export raw materials and import manufactured goods from European countries</i> – (Trade Exports and Imports)</p>

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