The debate between secularism and Hindu nationalism – how India's textbooks have become the government's medium for political communication

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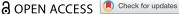Kusha Anand[a] and Marie Lall[b]

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ABSTRACT

Schools and textbooks are significant mediums for the transmission of political ideas. Textbooks therefore reflect the ideology of the day whilst imparting values, goals, and myths to younger generations. This article provides an insight into the nexus between politics, the state, the social contract, and school textbooks in India. It critically highlights the ways in which the discourses of political parties of the (national) Self and Other are invoked and reflected in school textbooks underpinning the parties' versions of national identity and transmit their wider political messages, with devastating results on the debates about Indian citizenship. There is a clear link between changing political parties at the helm of national and state governments and which school textbooks are in use. The article reviews the textbook politics between 1998 and 2020, focusing in particular on how the present BJP-led government has appointed Hindutva-minded scholars to lead education institutions underpinning the message of India being a Hindu nation. The right wing RSS has been allowed by the Narendra Modi government to influence the formulation of the National Education Policy 2020 as well as suggesting changes to textbooks to push the national discourse of citizenship defined by Hindutva at the Union and State levels. The article adds, theoretically and substantively, to the specific link between education and the current issues of Indian citizenship as the government tries to change the values of India's constitution. Not many in this generation of Indians think this is abnormal, as this reflects what they have learnt at school and historically been used to shape the hostile mind-set of new generations vis-à-vis their neighbors, and other religious communities. The article evaluates how over the last two decades textbooks of the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) interpret government policy objectives and guidelines to depict Indian national identity, internal ethnic and cultural diversity, and citizenship.

Introduction

This article provides an insight into understanding the nexus between politics, the state, the social contract,and school textbooks in India. It discusses how the government of India uses textbooks as a tool for political communication. In

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doing so, the article adds, theoretically and substantively, to the specific link between education and the current issues of Indian citizenship as the government tries to change the values of India's constitution and disenfranchises Muslims of their citizenship rights. Not many in this generation of Indians think this is abnormal, as this[1] reflects what they have learnt at school and historically been used to shape the hostile mind-set of new generations vis-à-vis their neighbors, and other religious communities. Since 2000, education has been used to lay the ground for systemic discrimination on communal lines. The article evaluates how over the last two decades textbooks of the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) interpret government policy objectives and guidelines to depict Indian national identity, internal ethnic and cultural diversity, and citizenship.

The last two decades have seen concerted efforts by political parties in India to infuse their ideologies in the minds of voters by influencing the country's education system. The most effective method has been to revise the narrative of subjects that have a bearing on voters' lineage and language. Be it Center or the State, revisions of textbooks have been done time again by successive governments in an attempt to steer future generations of voters and their families toward the left or right.

The false binary between two hegemonies[2] Congress and BJP in India

It is however incorrect to solely blame the rise of the BJP for the move toward a Hindu nationalist and Hindu centric change in identity and education and to simply juxtapose Congress as secular vs the religious nationalism of the BJP. The false binary among Congress and BJP has been constructed because of the ideological vacuum of Congress. Although Congress claims to be a secular party with soft corner for Muslims, it is deceptively Islamophobic as well as anti-minority. The Congress party at times has also sought to downplay its secular roots and embrace pro-Hindu sentiments (Jaffrelot, 2019). In the early years after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru,[3] and the ruling Indian National Congress/Congress party sponsored an Indian brand of secularism created to bind the country's "disparate communities together under one roof" (Jaffrelot, 2019, p.6). Starting in the 1980s, the Congress party started to pander to a religious community after another overtly, and Indian secularism[4] was broken as a result. Indira Gandhi pursued to capitalize on religious differences in different blatantly skeptical methods. This political strategy empowered Hindu nationalists to assert that the Congress party was spreading 'pseudo-secularism.'[5] Through these events, Indira Gandhi thus "opened the door for Hindu nationalism to expand political salience" (Jaffrelot, 2019, p.53). Secularism thus became "synonymous with the politics of opportunism, planning a dynamic of competitive victimisation" (Mehta, August 2020, para.1). The Hindu nationalists who came to populate the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

and its several ideological affiliates have steadily harbored a blatantly different view; they envision India as a majoritarian nation-state. The conflicts inherent in the 'competing visions of Indian nationhood' have been visible in recent years, mainly since the BJP's electoral victory in 2014. Since 2014, Hindu nationalism has put the Congress party – as well as secularism on the back foot. The BJP is regarded as the new hegemon of Indian politics. The rising consensus gives the impression that Hindu nationalism has achieved traction at the cost of secularism "to the point of being viewed as the only legitimate stance an electorally successful nationwide political party can take" (Palshikar, 2019, para. 2).

Textbooks play a dominant role in the pedagogic culture of India. School textbooks thus become the primary vehicles through which societies and governments transmit national narratives (Hussain and Safiq, 2016), and are therefore an ideal medium of political communication. They depict a society's ideology or ethos and impart values, goals, or myths that the society wishes to transmit to new generations (Bourdieu, 1971). Textbooks also explain historical conflicts and present political parties (Naseem and Stober, 2014) in a particular light. The school history serves the dual function of transmitting historical knowledge and creating a shared desired national identity (Carretero et al., 2013). It constructs the myths of origins and draws geographical, ideological, and affective boundaries to distinguish the nation from its 'others.' This is achieved through processes of inclusion and exclusion, though not without contestation. Particularly, in divided societies, the past and its interpretations are deeply contested and controversial. The role of school textbooks in political socialization is therefore part of promoting active and critical citizenship (Taxel, 1989) or for creating compliant, unquestioning citizens (Apple in Lall and Vickers 2009).

This article will first present the relationship between political communication, education, national identity, and citizenship. It then reviews the link between changing political parties and textbooks in India. Lastly, it analyses how different parties used textbooks as means of political communication whilst in power and draws on contestations around the idea of who is a citizen.

Political communication, education, national identity and citizenship

Political communication is part of the conversation between the political leaders and the masses (Manning, 2000), and therefore influences the social contract of citizenship. In this exchange political leaders can relegate their views to the public and replace existing ideas. These leaders re-define the heroes and 'party cadres[6]' and simultaneously help strengthen the prevailing mythology and create a new mythology (Bate, 2009; Wyatt, 2010). They cleanse and present discourses by which the 'historical inertia[7]' is transmitted (Pulla, 2017, p.1). Part of this is done through education, schools and textbooks as well as the media (Jozelić, 2020).

Governments across the globe develop education policies to legitimize their knowledge, defend patterns of social mobility, and raise their power in the social arena. Therefore, education is never neutral; its inherent political nature relies on those whose interests it presents, in which form and for what purpose it exists (Freire, 1972). Freire (1985) suggests that every society uses the school, its curriculum and its textbooks as an essential Gramscian medium to store, transmit and legitimize knowledge, as well as to make sure this is internalized by the young. Many political parties use the education system to influence the national identity discourse of the day. This is done by creating an artificial exclusive national identity to bind the nation together, while at the same time defining who is to be excluded from this particular vision (Adeney and Lall, 2005; Lall, 2008). As such education is a political tool and strongly linked to national politics (Anderson, 1999; Greenstein, 1969; Lall, 2009). Identity politics in and through education or educational discourses is a multifaceted phenomenon (Taylor, 1994). It is contested, creates conflicts, and offers connotations to conflicts between states by allowing textbooks to draw the boundaries between *us* and *them* and attempting to naturalize particular national worldviews (Naseem and Stober, 2014).

Research shows that schooling and discursive reproduction of power are interrelated and textbook curricula represent a way in which nationalist powers dominate the selection and representation of public knowledge. As such, textbooks become part and parcel of political communication. Textbooks are a preferred medium for politicians to share information and their political movements with the public (Puolimatka, 1995) because they are seen as 'neutral' and authentic knowledge (Apple, 1993). They serve as an additional source of political knowledge for most of the pupils who impart the content to their families (Apple, 1993); as well as for other agents of political socialization (primarily the media). In addition, in any country, school textbooks are a part of a 'selective tradition,' or the elite's vision of legitimate knowledge (Kumar, 2001, p.10). The content selection influences curriculum design and textbook writing (Anyon, 1978, p. 40; Apple, 1993). Anyon (1978, p. 40) claims that "knowledge which counts as social studies knowledge, tend(s) to be that knowledge which provides formal justification for and legitimating of prevailing institutional arrangements." The 'broader cultural messages' of school textbooks that 'bear similarities to government policy,' and how the simple mention of the history and cultural elements of less powerful people renders such knowledge unimportant (Apple, 1993, p. 46). Textbooks thus influence the way students view their own identity and their relationship to their group and others (UNESCO, 2011, p.168). They also become a source of controversy, they discuss, highlight (or avoid) and interpret conflicts in the light of the policies they pursue (Lall, 2008).

Textbooks are 'authoritative accounts' of 'real' information representing specific constructions of 'reality' through their 'content' and 'form' (Apple, 1993, p.15). Apple further describes how children bring the 'correct knowledge' back home to their families, extending the reach of school textbooks beyond the classroom. Since they provide an authoritative pedagogic version of received knowledge by positioning people differently in hierarchical relations of power (Chris, 1994), whole communities will 'learn' what is seen as the correct interpretation of the knowledge of the day. Power operates through educational practices, social interactions and the normative language of schooling to create social identities, social relations and dominant modes of thought (Lipman, 2004). The state and social movements interact to form certain conditions in which conflicts arise over official knowledge (Apple, 2001). Textbooks can be also situated within all social institutions, such as schools, workplaces, government, the media, and so on. Luke (1995) claims: "Texts are moments when language connected to other semiotic systems is used for symbolic exchange ... Human subjects use texts to make sense of their world and to construct social actions and relations required in the labour of everyday life. At the same time, texts position and construct individuals, making available various meanings, ideas, and versions of the world" (p. 13). Based on Luke's claim, texts construct significance in defining and interpreting meanings within all social interactions and institutions. Hence, the school textbooks become a medium for constructing individual and social identity (Ross, 2000) as well as underpinning rights that form part of the social contract.

Textbooks are fundamental to the educational system in the global south. The notion of 'textbook culture' fosters political issues concerning the prescription of an official hegemonic curriculum (Apple and Christian-Smith, 2017; Kumar, 2005). This leads to an absence of teacher autonomy, who sense constraint in terms of carrying different types of knowledge into the classroom (Kumar, 2015). Textbooks have been fundamental to schools in India ever since an education system was officially introduced during the colonial era in the early nineteenth century (Kumar, 1988). Their relevance has sustained as postcolonial Indian governments still recommend textbooks to state-run schools. They not only delineate teacher instruction, but also dictate student assessment patterns. One of the significant contentions against such a doctrinaire system is that it controls teacher autonomy, whose curricular choices are bound by the text (Apple & Christian-Smith, 2017; Kumar, 1986). Thus, there has been a demand for widening resource systems for teachers in India, which has been clear for over two decades (GOI, 1993, 2020; NCERT, 2006). Nevertheless, within a financially-constrained educational system, textbooks remain to be the only accessible material resources in most schools. Hence, textbooks have become the basic minimum equalizing force, ensuring that all children have access to equal educational opportunities (Morris and

Hiebert, 2011). This is the intention why, along with efforts of broadening resource systems, efforts at improving the quality of these significant curricular documents have been sustained. For these reasons, textbooks merit attention as a valuable means of understanding both schools and society. Textbooks are only one part of the school environment, and thus offer a partial picture, however, they are the part liable to central control as well as uniformity: they give an accurate impression not so much of what children actually learn but what the state intends for them to learn.[8]

The idea of *a citizen* has been manifested with contemporary discourses of global citizenship, identity-based movements and a reiteration of nationalism (Kadiwal and Jain, 2020). Lall (2009) and Kamat (2004) argue that in South Asia, the national political and economic elites have managed to mobilize anxieties arising from globalization to acquire power and legitimacy over control of resources. It can be argued that the increased use of religion against those of another faith or culture in the context of South Asia does not prove the 'clash of civilisations,' but it is deliberately constructed through ever narrow projections of the 'self' of the nation and changes who has rights vis a vis the State. Civic and citizenship education are central to progress the projects of consolidating a unified national identity and character building (Kadiwal and Jain, 2020). It is also essential to produce loyal national citizens who facilitate national unity and economic progress. Citizenship education and the creation and reinforcement of identities thus have always been seen as a principal aim and purpose of schooling (Wenger, 1998). Textbooks are used to reform the "character of citizens so that they are transformed into dutiful, obedient, virtuous, and subservient citizens of a paternalistic state" (Kadiwal and Jain, 2020, p.23) and the state can employ any discourse as it needs in any given circumstances (Saigol, 2003). For instance, Manjrekar (2010) exemplifies how gender, class, caste, religion and nation interweave in school textbooks to construct a body of normative knowledge about one's identity in the social, historical, political and economic entities, called Gujarat and India. Common to school textbooks of all subject areas is the importance of the idea of Nation and the manner in which it is constructed. The nation – the Motherland – is 'divine,' 'eternal' and 'bountiful.' This character of the nation is entrenched in 'our civilisation' and its exclusive morals, the core of which are spiritual or religious (Manjrekar, 2010). These religion-oriented values are at heart 'Hindu' values. Within the context of these constructions of the nation, nationalism and citizenship are outlined not only as deriving from religious values, however are also instilled with a religious quality. The focus in Civics lessons is on the notion of the robust centrist, regulatory nation-state, entrenched in an exclusive value system bequeathed by tradition. Mythology and epic, pervasive in history lessons as indicating a system of mutual ideals, values as well as traditions, search their place in the modern definition of the Indian nation as well (Manjrekar, 2010).

Link between changing political parties and textbooks in India

In India, education is both a State and a Central subject, meaning that different types of textbooks can co-exist across different States, depending on which political party is in power, regardless of the government in Delhi. The two coordinates of identity politics (secular versus communal and Center versus State) are visible in textbook discourses under governments of different political orientations. This means that within the country, school textbooks can portray both secular and Hindu–national positions, depending on where they are in use and who is in power (Lall, 2009; Nawani, 2018).

Over the past few decades, the NCERT textbooks have been revised as successive political parties have come to power at the Center. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is a key institution in India's education system. It defines the official guidelines for curricular development and develops 'model' textbooks within different school subjects (Flåten, 2017). The NCERT develops curriculum frameworks, which are used in schools across India, affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) (Naseem and Stober, 2014). It is thus in charge of determining curriculum standards for the whole of India. The political party in power decides who is appointed as NCERT director and other key posts in charge of creating the education policy and curriculum. Consequently, the nation's educational mission changes when the dominant party changes at the helm.

Nation-building has always been a key concern of NCERT education policies and textbooks throughout the course of independent India's history. The National Curriculum Frameworks (NCFs), written by NCERT as guidelines for national education, always maintained the importance of nation-building, regardless of which political party was in power (Guichard, 2010). Nation-building, as elsewhere is done by constructing a mutual national past, mythologies of ancestry, historical recollections and culture, which can instill a mutual national identity (Miller, 1988).

Background to textbooks' revisions in India

School textbooks have been a topic of huge controversy in India. The textbooks that had been conceived in the 1960s and 1970s were instruments to help constructing a united India and it was considered that for India to be united, it needed to be secular (Guichard, 2013). In 1969, the Report of the Committee on School Textbooks emphasized the crucial role of history textbooks in building 'national unity' (Guichard, 2013, p.72). The authors of these textbooks belonged to diverse historiographical traditions – influenced by Marxist historiography, but they shared a secular understanding of India's history. They rejected the British interpretation of Indian history and the 'nationalist and the communalist/Hindu nationalist ones,' in which a 'Hindu golden age' was

ended by Arab invasions beginning a 'Muslim period' followed then by a 'British period' (Guichard, 2013, p.72). Secular historians disagreed with the idea of Hindus and Muslims as two distinct and antagonist groups. They highlighted that "most of the Indian past saw a peaceful and harmonious living together," and a socializing and enrichment between Hindus and Muslims (Bhattacharya, 2008; Thapar, 2009; Guichard, 2013, p.72).

From the late 1970s, the argument about the function of religion as well as religious opinions in describing citizenship and assessing textbooks became gradually more pronounced (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1983). This controversy around the elucidation of 'medieval' Indian history happened in 1977, during the Janata regime. It also included the textbook historians' interest in social and economic history, and their inclination to elucidate conflict among elites mainly in political rather than religious terms (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1982, p. 26).

In the late 1990s the NCERT textbooks published in the early 1980s, were criticized as 'Marxist' and replaced by textbooks between 2002 and 2004 under the Hindu nationalist BJP government (Lall, 2008; Guichard, 2010, p.44). Many State governments followed suit and also changed their textbooks. After a national controversy on the 'saffronisation'[9] of history textbooks and a change of government in 2004, a third generation of textbooks was developed, which appeared between 2006 and 2008. Some States retained the Hindu nationalist textbooks, others changed to more secular textbooks (Guichard, 2010, p.44). Textbooks became a political football for whoever won State elections, becoming a site for a larger debate between secularism and communalism (Lall 2009). The national government changed again in 2014, reverting to a Hindu nationalist leadership. At the time of writing, the BJP-led Central government is looking to 're-nationalise' education once more, and Modi believes this is more effectively done at the State level.

The following sections will review how the different parties used the NCERT textbooks as means of political communication whilst in power, focusing in particular on the contrasting periods of the BJP-led coalition government (1998–2004), the Congress-led coalitions (2004–2014) and the current BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2014 onwards).

The BJP's political communication/message through textbooks (1998-2004)

In the 1998 (and follow on 1999) elections, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA a coalition of regional parties and the Shiv Sena headed by the BJP) rose to power (Adeney and Saez, 2007). The Hindu nationalist movement including its political wing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that aims to redefine India according to its Hindu cultural legacy. Lall (2008, p.158) notes that the chief aim of the BJP has been to integrate the ideology of 'Hindutva'[10] into the future generations. Hindutva is founded on the basis

that India is primarily a Hindu nation and non-Hindus living in the country have a choice either to accept the majority's domination or leave the country (Flåten, 2017).

From 1998 to 2004, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) used education policy as an instrument in promoting and spreading its Hindu nationalist ideology (Taneja, 2003). In 2000, the NCERT published the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for school education. Hindu nationalist ideologues used education to indoctrinate Indian children into their own version of the Hindu nation. The NCF 2000 laid down the official guidelines underlying the renewal of educational policies. It was heavily based on the Hindutva ideological agenda and on the premise of *'Indianise, nationalise and spiritualise.'* The discursive implications of this slogan are enormous. *'Indianise'*: India is not really Indian as there are too many foreign elements; it needs to be 'indianised.' *'Nationalise'*: It is not a proper nation, because again it contains too many un-Indian elements, so it needs to be nationalized.[11] All foreign elements had to be purged from the curriculum (Sharma, 2002). These included the British legacy as well as aspects of Indian culture that were seen as having been introduced by the Mogul (and Islamic) invaders. *'Spiritualise'*: India has no soul as the foreign, non-Hindu elements (as opposed to the consumerism advanced by economic globalization) have taken it away. The policy engendered a massive textbook revision that justified an anti-minority outlook. In these textbooks, Muslims across history were homogenized, described as invariably antagonistic, perpetual aggressors and violators of the sacred Hindu land, women, cows and temples. The BJP appointed scholars to re-write the history textbooks because the old textbooks were secular (as well as out of date), and did not focus on Hindu achievements (Guichard, 2010). The revised curriculum surrendered accuracy to meet the nationalist goals and utilized history as an instrument for propaganda (Hasan, 2004, pp.165–166). For the Hindutva historian, revisiting history is not simply about differentiating the 'other,' but finding the 'self'- i.e. the Hindu nation which has been oppressed for so long. For Hindutva the 'self' is present in the culture of the country. It does not need to be created but simply recognized and communicated. So, this was the start of a political project that aimed to mobilize cultural resources to produce recognition for every Hindu. The main product of history, as a part of education, was highlighted as the development of the 'national spirit' and 'national consciousness' by instigating pride among the youngest generations regarding India's past or distinctive religio-philosophical ethos, presented as Hindu (Lall, 2008, p.176).

In effect, the rise of the BJP to political power at the Center meant an end to the separation of religion and education in State schools. Under the BJP's logic of majoritarianism, the Indian nation was re-conceptualized as Hindu. But not an inclusive Hindu-ness, but one which draws the lines of differentiation

between itself and a constructed non-Hindu. The main argument behind this, espoused by the government of the day was that previously the Hindu majority had suffered as the role of minorities had been unduly emphasized. The BJP hoped to 'rectify' the situation by giving the Hindu population their rightful place, starting with the school textbooks. The nationalist agenda meant a radical re-articulation of Indian identity in that it turned whatever Indian identity was not, into its very core. This move however at this time did not (yet) touch on issues of citizenship such as rights, responsibilities and political participation.

In the view of their opponents, the agenda shifted the basis of identity from secularism to religion, from plurality to unity, from equality to hierarchy, from co-existence to oppression (Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 2001, p.22). Since the NDA textbooks were based on an (unstated) attempt to define a Hindutva 'essence' of the nation (Guichard, 2010, p.10), secular-liberal authors challenged these measures as tools of Hindu nationalist communication. (Kumar, 2001; Sharma, 2002; Subarmaniam, 2003; Taneja, 2003; Nanda, 2004; Setalvad, 2005; Lall, 2008; Lall 2009). The Communist Party and left wing historians introduced various campaigns against history textbooks. In 2001, polarization reached new heights when Arjun Singh, who was later to be appointed Education Minister under the Congress-led coalition government in 2004 criticized the BJP for 'talibanising' the writing of history (Lall, 2009, p.176). The BJP defended itself by "claiming that it had actually helped to free history from the vestiges of colonisation: far from attempting to talibanise education." The goal of this action was in fact 'de-Macaulisation'[12]/ "de-secularization' and an attempt to de-secularize and fundamentalise the Indian education system in order to strengthen the BJP's future voter base (Lall, 2009, p.176). The debates and 'the virulence of the arguments' between the opposing parties (BJP and Congress), clearly show that the controversy was not about scientific and educational concerns, but opposing views of Indian history and Indian national identity (Guichard, 2010).

Congress efforts: 'de-saffronisation' of education and political communication/ message through textbooks (2004-2014)[13]

In 2004, the BJP-led coalition lost their power to the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA)[14] who remodeled the curriculum once again. Based on the ideology of the anti-colonial struggle led by the Indian National Congress, Indian nationalism for the most part seeks to represent itself as championing a secular, plural, inclusive vision of India and its history. In 2005, a National Convention against communalization of education was organized where many scholars and education ministers of non-BJP States called for the withdrawal of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2000 (Taneja, 2003). In order to 'cleanse' the textbooks, the UPA government

reappointed scientists and historians associated with the Congress party as heads of educational and research institutions (Guichard, 2010). This included Professor Krishna Kumar, whose political and educational pedigree was clearly secular.[15] Subsequently, the NCERT again revised the curriculum, syllabi and textbooks to remove and replace the communal content (Banerjee and Stöber, 2016; Bhattacharya, 2009). However it should be noted that states with BJP led state governments did not switch their textbooks after 2004 (Lall 2009). This meant that what students learnt across India was dependent on the state government of the day.

The NCERT framed another document, known as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) of 2005. The NCF 2005 is a subjective constructivist framework that rejects any sort of essentialism. It focuses on the study of the production, development, evolution, interrelations of social differences and social categories:

"*Seeking guidance from the Constitutional vision of India as a secular, egalitarian and pluralistic society, founded on the values of social justice and equality, certain broad aims of education have been identified in this document. These include independence of thought and action, sensitivity to others' well-being and feelings, learning to respond to new situations in a flexible and creative manner, predisposition toward participation in democratic processes, and the ability to work toward and contribute to economic processes and social change*" (NCF, 2005, p.vii).

Countering the communal textbooks of 2003 was one of the stated aims for producing the revised NCERT social science textbooks between 2006 and 2007 (Guichard, 2010, p.10). The goal was to produce 'secular' textbooks, in line with the constitution, which defines India as being 'secular.' In the NCF 2005, social science was considered as an important method of delivering knowledge to construct a fair and peaceful society – the political message of the day (NCF, 2005, p.50).

The textbooks published by the NCERT in 2006, reject hate content. The Congress party intended to foster democracy by integrating constitutional values of plurality and secularism (Setalvad, 2005). Textbooks managed to present a mainstream view of Indian history while minimizing assumptions and presenting multiple interpretations of history. When it comes to difficult subjects like the consumption of beef in ancient India, these UPA books omit any discussion of such topics (Guichard, 2010, p.11; Bhattacharya, 2009). They represent a mainstream style of Indian history with a reduced amount of assumptions and interpretations of history. The books also provide a detailed account of distinct historical topics, such as urbanity in the Indus Valley Civilization[16] (Panda, 2007). The textbooks intend to disrupt the authority of the historian and the textbook and empower the student to formulate new ideas about the topic (Bhattacharya, 2009).

The NCERT history school textbooks of 2006[17] also establish a secular conflict framework of presentation and depicts minorities (such as Muslims and Christians) in a positive light. The explanation of historical events contrasts with the derogatory language and condemnations that appeared in the previous textbooks published before 2005. The historical topics are based on the value framework ('directive principles') of the constitution including in-depth discussion of 'equality, liberty, justice, fraternity, secularism, dignity, plurality, and freedom from exploitation, which is one of the 'curricular concerns' prescribed in the NCF (2005, p.53). According to Guichard (2010, p.24; Bhattacharya, 2009), the purpose of these textbooks is to construct 'homogeneity' and to depict India as a united and 'natural entity.' The UPA government's NCERT textbooks depict India as a composite culture, where communalism is represented as one of the major challenges of modern India and the root cause of the partition of India, the main political communication of the day.

The NCF 2005 can thus be considered a serious effort in making education a process of social change and democratization (NCF, 2005, p.51). The BJP in turn criticized Congress-led UPA for whitewashing the record of Muslim 'atrocities' to acquire Muslim votes, and claimed that the UPA was trying to 're-falsify' or 're-distort' the textbooks (Banerjee and Stöber, 2016, p.4). The following section reviews how the current BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014 has countered the Congress party measures by using textbooks as means of political communication.

Narendra modi-led BJP government efforts: political communication through textbooks[18] (2014-2020)

In the 2014 national elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was elected outright[19] and Narendra Modi (Modi) became the Prime Minister of India. Prior to his election as Prime Minister, the State of Gujarat where he had been Chief Minister had been described as the 'Laboratory of Hindutva' (Spodek, 2010, p.349) due to the large State-sanctioned violence that occurred against Muslims in 2002 whilst Modi was the Chief Minister. For the 2014 elections, Narendra Modi re-defined Hindutva in a new manner combining development, nationalism and Hindu identity. Modi declared that "nationalism is development" and that "being nationalist is the essential aspect of Hindutva" (Flåten, 2017, p. 392).

Modi's vision of education, articulated through the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 aims to transform the existing system of education again (GOI, NEP, 2020). Despite the Central government's lack of drive toward ideologically revising the NCF and the textbooks since 2014, several State governments have been accused of pushing a Hindutva (RSS[20]-backed) ideology in education. During Modi's first year in office, the Sangh Parivar[21]

pushed for significant changes to the school textbooks that had been drafted under the Congress period to reflect a pro-Hindutva agenda in the name of cultural nationalism (Sharma, 2016b). Modi's government has left the Hindutva reforms of the education sector to the Sangh Parivar related civil society organizations, such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad[22] (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He has also deliberately left the Hindu nationalist ideas or ideological reforms to the individual states (12 states[23] are currently governed by the BJP), in the knowledge that these reforms will underpin the Hindutva political communication message. More on what the State governments have done is discussed below.

In fact since 2014, a strong RSS influence seems to be guiding national education policy, from the setting up of research chairs in universities to senior appointments made in the education sector (Venugopal, 2018). In 2017 a committee[24] was also set up 'quietly' in New Delhi by culture minister Mahesh Sharma to institutionalize through education the RSS philosophy that 'India belongs to Hindus' (Jain and Lasseter, 2018). Manmohan Vaidya, RSS spokesman stated that "the true colour of Indian history is saffron and to bring about cultural changes we have to rewrite history" (Jain and Lasseter, 2018, para.2). According to the committee, the rewriting of history is necessary because Indian schools teach a deeply 'Congress-ised version of history.'[25] The committee has already drafted conclusions including: 'archaeological findings, DNA to prove that Hindus are descended from the land's first inhabitants, the ancient Hindu scriptures are fact, not myth' and that it is to work backwards to find evidence to support those conclusions (Jain and Lasseter, 2018). The conclusions are divisive, conflate history and mythology and seek to establish the supremacy of one religious group over all others' (Jain and Lasseter, 2018). Prakash Javadekar, then the minister of Human and Resource Development (HRD), mentioned that he will take the conclusions of this committee 'seriously' (Jain and Lasseter, 2018).

The following section will review how the current BJP government has been using the school textbooks as a medium of political communication to promote or contextualize the discourse of citizenship. The predominant theme relates to the discourse of citizenship in India is the anti-Muslim sentiment that is further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

State textbooks revisions

Several BJP-ruled States, including Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Goa and Maharashtra amongst others have taken the most 'creative liberties' to reinforce a Hindutva revivalist agenda and attempt to erase Muslim identity (Syed, 2019). One of the main goals of the new editions to Gujarat and Rajasthan

textbooks (to the old textbooks drafted under Congress) is to insist that "the rule of non-Hindutva communities was disastrous" in medieval times (Syed, 2019; Traub, 2018; Westerfield, 2019).

Historical events and exclusion of muslims: distortions and omissions

The BJP-led state government in Rajasthan has amended key historical facts in school textbooks of 2006[26] (Sharma, 2016a). Traub reports that "the early Hindu era is depicted in the Rajasthan books as an unrivalled Golden Age" (Westerfield, 2019, p.7). The revised textbooks of Rajasthan glorify the role of Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar[27] in the Indian independence movement in order to instill patriotism and nationalism in the young generation. In the grade 10 political science textbook, Savarkar has been depicted as a great revolutionary, patriot and 'sangathanwaadi' (organization man) (Sharma, 2016b).

The revised textbooks in Gujarat depict the second era of history also leads to a complete erasure of Muslim identity and culture. Traub writes, "One book reduces over five centuries of rule by a diverse array of Muslim emperors to a single 'Period of Struggle' and demonizes many of its leading figures" (Traub, 2018; Westerfield, 2019, p.7). The 2002 Gujarat carnage[28] is titled as the 'Gujarat riots'[29] instead of 'anti-Muslim riots' in the revised NCERT textbooks.[30] Apart from the title and the opening line, the text in the passage on the 2002 Gujarat violence remains the same and continues to highlight critical observations about the role of the then BJP state government (Pandey, 2018).

There are also distortions in the medieval period that have been made part of textbooks such as the name of Qutub Minar a prominent pre-Mughal structure built by Qutab-ud-din Aibak.[31] The battles for power between Shivaji and Afzal Khan, Akbar and Maharana Pratap, Guru Govind Singh and Aurangzeb, are given a religious color by disseminating that all the kings who fought against the Muslim rulers were Hindu nationalists (Puniyani, 2017). Whereas Gujarat's textbooks "take a more moderate line on ancient India" than their Rajasthan counterparts, they "still tend toward the view that 'the most glorious and prosperous age of Indian history' occurred before Muslim rule" (Traub, 2018; cited in Westerfield, 2019, p.7). A major part of Indian history, science and philosophy are interconnected with more than 700 years rule of Muslims over the sub-continent; a chapter that is currently rejected by right-wing Hindu nationalists and has therefore ushered in an era of the 'Murder of History' in the Indian polity (Syed, 2019).

In addition, Muslims, after their influential history during the Mughal era had already been distorted, their accomplishments have been erased from textbooks. In Rajasthan, the selection of notable Indians in the 'Hamare Gaurav' (Our Pride) sections of the environmental science textbooks itself is

a giveaway (cited in Westerfield, 2019, p.14). There is not a single Muslim among the 15 notable Indians featured (Chowdhury, 2018). Very much reflecting the NCF 2000 slogan, all religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians have been termed as the 'other' or 'foreigners' who invaded the country (Traub, 2018; Westerfield, 2019, p.7). In the political science textbook of Rajasthan, the section on the Uniform Civil Code,[32] depicts the different laws for different communities and sections that it claims create separatism (Bharadwaj, 2017). The chapter also makes a case against positive discrimination and the grant of any special facility to any religious community. These textbooks are also continuing to shape the narrative of Muslim and Hindu identity in a way that perpetuates division and hate.

Consequently, history is being distorted and interpolated and the Indian youth are, thus, being inspired by Hindutva ideologues to believe that the Muslims were and are the real cause of all that is wrong with India (Syed, 2019). History textbooks now include all those 'great' men who fought against the Muslim 'invaders,' it is the constitutional commitment to religious diversity and the plural fabric of India that was invariably invoked. A similar trend can be seen in Europe and other parts of the world which have witnessed the rise of majoritarian nationalism (Mahajan, 2020). These instances of the anti-Muslim discourse in the school textbooks, are refortified by the media and political actors in India (Waiker, 2018). The States are motivated to adopt national building element in education for character building which is centered on good citizens. The States thus become laboratories for testing and tweaking reforms, which later could be scaled up (nationally) (Chowdhury, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2019).

The first term of Narendra Modi was marked by a "de facto ethnicization of Indian democracy: Hindu nationalist vigilante groups have implemented articles of faith of the Sangh Parivar in the streets, including its cow protection agenda, the fight against 'love jihad[33]' and reconversion programmes to Hinduism" (Jaffrelot, 2019; Jaffrelot and Verniers, 2020, p.3). Several BJP-ruled states adopted stricter laws and the members of the BJP used communal rhetoric to spur a violent vigilante campaign against the consumption of beef and those engaged in the cattle trade. As a result, between May 2015 and December 2018, at least 44 people – including 36 Muslims – were killed in such attacks (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The following section presents how these issues were linked to textbooks at the national level.

National textbook changes – Hindu culture, Hindi language and the 'mythical cow'

The 'mythical' cow[34] and its divinity is another 'axiom' held by Hindu Nationalists that, as Jha's book[35] proves, may not be based on fact. Jha writes, "the sanctity of the cow has . . . been wrongly traced back to the Vedas, which are supposedly of divine origin and the fountainhead of all knowledge and

wisdom. In other words, some sections of Indian society trace the concept of sacred cow to the very period when it was sacrificed and its flesh was eaten" (Jha, 2002, p.18). However, while Hindutva leaders claim that beef eating was first introduced to India by Muslims and other foreigners, in reality, "the cow was not always all that sacred in the Vedic and subsequent Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical traditions … and its flesh, along with other varieties of meat, was quite often a part of haute cuisine in early India" (Jha, 2002, p.20). Since Modi came into power, cow vigilantism has been on the rise, which has resulted in Muslims and Dalits being killed over the protection of cows, sacred in Hinduism. As mentioned above, the cow and its protection have been also converted into a symbol of communal identity of the Hindus and 'obscurantist' and fundamentalist forces that has led to major rioting and violence toward Muslims throughout India for eating beef and those engaged in the cattle trade (Ramachandran, 2017).

Ignoring the evidence to the contrary and refusing to include any mention of the debate in their textbooks, this feeds the flame of cow protection-based communal violence through textbooks. In 2016, the Rajasthan Class 5 Hindi textbook added: "contains a letter in which the cow declares herself a purveyor of strength, wisdom, longevity, health, happiness, prosperity and glory, enjoins children to serve and protect her, and signs off with – Yours, Kamdhenu Gaumata[36]" (Chowdhury, 2018, Westerfield, 2019, p.4). The glorification of ancient India has been a recurring theme of the Hindu right-wing discourse in India. Modi made several pseudo-scientific claims between 2014 and 2019. Pragya Singh Thakur, a member of the ruling BJP, claimed that cow urine can cure cancer (Solomon, 2019). Today there are claims that cow urine can help prevent Covid 19.[37]

As mentioned above, those who have suffered most in the ban on cow slaughter and the subsequent vigilante movements have been Muslims. At a larger scale Muslims as a community are being otherised through the marginalization of Urdu.[38] The mutually constitutive relationship thus between identity and language is the subject of an exploration of the tensions with the status of Urdu and English languages in Indian schools (Matthan et al., 2014).

In September 2015, Mahesh Sharma, the Minister of Culture, defended the requirement to protect India against Westernization (Guichard, 2017). Sharma believes that teaching English or additional foreign languages at the expense of Sanskrit[39] or Hindi create 'cultural pollution' (Guichard, 2017). Dinanath Batra[40] has been advocating that the use of foreign languages in schools should be banned (Sharma, 2016). This was due to the fear of seeing the Hindu nation disappear if its 'purity' and 'superiority' are not reinstated (Guichard, 2017, p.7). The RSS affiliated Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas,[41] a Hindu-right educational institution, also recommends removing the verses of Mirza Ghalib[42] and other Urdu poets from the NCERT textbooks (Sharma,

2016b). The Nyas has also requested the government to 'clean' Hindi text-books by removing Urdu words such as 'Eeman' (faith), 'Rujhan' (trend), 'Shiddat' (intensity) and 'Taaqat' (strength) (Sharma, 2016b) and replace them with Hindi words. The attempt to establish an integrative and all-pervasive framework centered on Hindu culture is a direct expression of Hindu nationalist ideology (Flaten, 2017), and reflects the current political message of the Modi government.

In the context of education, the 'ghettoization' of Urdu has been the product of this association, as well as its removal from government offices and courts. The lack of government support for the language despite constitutional rights to study in one's mother tongue has been combined with broader market forces to shape the real and imagined status of Urdu today as a marginal, Muslim language, unsuited to the demands of modern India (Vaugier-Chatterjee, 2005), pathologizing the communities that speak it.

The next section will engage with aspects of the BJP's ideology in school textbooks.

'Authoritarian' ideology and brainwashing youth for the Hindu rashtra

In an attempt to completely eradicate what is seen as the leftist agenda in textbooks, the BJP textbooks have been introducing an authoritarian presen-tation of history and imposing right wing ideological messages and values onto the new generation of citizens. Self-sacrifice for the nation is embedded throughout the textbooks (Westerfield, 2019).

In Rajasthan, the Class 3 Hindi textbook introduced in 2016 adds "-seven year-old Maina . . . is burnt to death by the British because she wanted independence for the country." The textbook writes that she "went to her death 'laughing'" and at the end of the chapter "children are asked what they would do if they were in Maina's place and were asked to plunge into fire" (Westerfield, 2019, p.12). This disconcerting message to children offers an example of the devotion Hindutva leaders expect from Indian citizens toward the mission of Hindu nationalism.

One lesson in a Class 8 Gujarat textbook insists that "awareness regarding co-operating with the security agencies has to be developed. Social harmony should be pursued even at the expense of individual rights." In addition, one of Rajasthan's seventh-grade book recommends, "We should refrain from negative acts like strikes" (cited in Traub, 2018). Traub writes that these political messages contain a "whiff of authoritarianism; due to these pro-posed limits on autonomy and dissent" (cited in Traub, 2018; Westerfield, 2019, p.12).

A Class 12 Gujarat textbook, after elaborating on the limits of democracy, begins with "surprisingly frequent criticism of the Treaty of Versailles and an enumeration of Mussolini's successes" and then begins to praise Adolf Hitler at length. The text reads: "Hitler made a strong German organization with the help of [the] Nazi party and attained great honour for this. By favouring German civilians and by opposing Jews and by his new economic policies, he made Germany a prosperous country . . .. He transformed the lives of the people of Germany within a very short period by taking strict measures. He safe guarded [sic] the country from hardships and accomplished many things" (cited in Traub, 2018; Westerfield, 2019, p.13). This endorsement of Hitler and Nazism can be found in the original writings of Hindutva philosopher Savarkar[43] (Savarkar, 1949, p.81; Westerfield, 2019, p.13). Through the endorsement of Nazi Germany, these textbooks are thus channeling the ideology of one of the Hindutva founders, spreading 'fascist' messages.

This can be explained by Stuart Hall who discussed that discursive struggle which involves destroying the elements that comprise of the hegemonic construction and imparting novel meanings and political directions. As Hall elucidates, economic crisis, education, media, and law and order are critical spaces where 'right' notions have been well constructed and reinforced. He argues that authoritarian populism is an "exceptional form of capitalist state – which unlike classical fascism has retained (though not all) the formal representative institution in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an active popular consent" (1979, pp.14–20). With reference to India, Vanaik points out that 'Hindu extremism' has existed since the 1920s, within and without national movements. However, recently, there is a broader public receptiveness of these right wing ideas (2001, p.52), underpinned by what children have been learning at school. This certainly contributes to modifying the knowledge as well as experiences of the general population in a 'rightward' shift. Right wing authoritarian populism, henceforth, is a form of restructuring of state-society, state-capital, and society-society (with its heterogeneity) relations where the objective is powerful and controlling. In contemporary India, it is the case of powerful controlling government through 'market liberalism' and 'Hindu fascism' (Vanaik 2001, para.26; 2017) and school textbooks.

This section shows that the 2016 and 2018 textbooks differ substantially from their 2002–2004 counterparts. The explicit inclusion of Modi's and other BJP politicians' agendas in the textbooks is not just about synthesizing a common national identity but also pacifying the public on social justice issues (Waiker, 2018). They have three main objectives. First, making linkages between the historical and mythical achievement of Hindu figures and Gods, which highlights the essential relationship between the nation-state of India today and the ostensibly Hindu politics of the past. Second, this discourse seeks to categorize Hindus as having been eternally dominant in India and

imposes a contemporary vision of a Hindu past (Thapar, 2014). Third, monopolizing the economic development discourse with Hindu experiences effectively negates the significance of Muslims, which feeds into the larger context of the Hindutva narrative (Waiker, 2018).

Elections in 2019 and change from development to nationalism

After the 2019 elections, where the BJP won an even greater majority of seats, a big reshuffle took place in the cabinet; about half of the new or promoted ministers had strong RSS connections. Of the 303 BJP MPs in the Lok Sabha, 146 or 48% have an affiliation to the RSS. In the Rajya Sabha, of its 82 MPs, the BJP has 34 with links to the Sangh (Pandey and Arnimesh, 2020). Such links are increasingly visible in the decision-making of the government. The most important panel in the Modi cabinet, the cabinet committee on security (CCS), is dominated by the Sangh (Pandey and Arnimesh, 2020)[44] with the explicit goal of promoting and disseminating a radical Hindu ideology. Part and parcel of this is a redefinition of citizenship.

Citizenship and education: new 'contestations'

As mentioned above, part of the Hindutva project resulted in school textbooks being rewritten in a number of States,[45] erasing Islamic history, including the Mughals and Muslim emperors. This ideology promotes the idea of a Hindu Rashtra, which aims to formally establish Hinduism in Indian politics and citizenship while continuing an anti-Muslim agenda (Matthan et al., 2014). The BJP draws upon 'orientalist constructions of India' to define an authentic global citizen who would not challenge neoliberal globalization but adjusts to it (Jain, 2016). Nation is primarily perceived as Hindu and cultural identity that is conceptualized in a static fashion (Balagopalan, 2009). At the present historical-political juncture in India where the Hindu Right has been able to use, redefine, and monopolize the ideological resources of the modern state, it is setting the terms of belonging to 'national culture' and political community with bureaucratic documentation to prove one's citizenship through school textbooks (Appadurai, 2019).

The rhetoric on 'good' citizenship was framed by Hindu nationalists to develop the moral fabric of a Hindu society through education that includes character-building, sportsmanship and fair play (Matthan et al., 2014). Creating the distinction between 'us' and 'them' often closely involves references to nations and nationhood. Under BJP rule, Muslims have been simultaneously categorized as an internal and external other: both a 'termite' and 'infiltrator' (Matthan et al., 2014). A consequence of this shift might well be that being an Indian citizen becomes synonymous with being a Hindu. Hindu Rashtra then will not be imposed from the top down by the Modi government,

but it will still become part of everyone's lives. Within months of the election win, this was apparent in the political decisions described in the following paragraphs.

Political acts, political communication and protests

In the autumn of 2019, the government revoked the Special Status of the state of Jammu & Kashmir (Article 370 of the Constitution) and implemented the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state of Assam, which forced people to verify or forfeit their citizenship which excluded 1.9 million 'doubtful citizens' out of Assam's 33 million residents (Jaffrelot and Verniers, 2020). In December 2019, it passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which provides an "accelerated path to Indian citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian refugees who fled persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan before December 2014, to the exclusion of any Muslim refugee or of refugees from other neighbouring countries, such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives or Myanmar" (Jaffrelot and Verniers, 2020, p.3).

These political acts were unprecedented in a country that had till then not linked Indian citizenship to religion. Throughout 2019, government action – including the CAA, continued enforcement of cow slaughter and anti-conversion laws, and the Supreme Court, ruling on the Babri Masjid site in November 2019 created a culture of 'impunity' for nationwide campaigns of harassment and violence against Muslims (Panda, 2020).

The government has explained the CAA as a measure to protect religious minorities in the South Asian region – minorities whose numbers are steadily decreasing in the identified countries (Mandhani, 2019). In late 2019-early 2020, the government also expressed its intolerance through the brutal repression of student protests against the CAA, which have subsequently turned into a national citizens' protest movement for democracy, pluralism and secularism. For months, the government has also maintained the state of Jammu and Kashmir, demoted to a Union Territory cropped of a state assembly, in a complete communication lockdown, in what has already become the longest Internet shutdown ever to be imposed in a democracy (Masih et al., 2016; Jaffrelot and Verniers, 2020).

There is protest against the changes that the government is imposing that meets government and vigilante violence. An example of this is the protests by JNU staff[46] and students, that was met later with a vigilante response to try and instill fear at India's higher education bastion of free speech. There is also widespread support for these changes that result in violence against Muslims that the state does not counter. In February 2020, there were episodes of anti-Muslim violence in Delhi that a leading scholar of Hindu-Muslim violence in India described as a 'mini-pogrom.' More than 35 people died in sectarian

violence in New Delhi. The homes and businesses of Muslims were attacked and mosques were vandalized by mobs (Mujahid, 2020). All schools in the capital were shut as clashes intensified between those for and against the CAA and NRC. In the riots in Northeast Delhi, a Muslim majority area, schools were burned down; even the school supplies were destroyed. The situation was so fragile and charged that the examinations had to be postponed (Mujahid, 2020).

The changes in India's education system over the last two decades have resulted in a part of the Indian population not questioning the citizenship act changes and that although there are protests against this amongst the elites (such as JNU) there are many who now feel justified in their anti Muslim attitudes. Education has historically been used to shape the hostile mind-set of new generations vis-à-vis their neighbors, and other religious communities. Education has been used to lay the ground for systemic discrimination on communal lines (Lall and Anand, 2020). Despite reforms in both countries, curricula and textbooks still depict the 'self' as right (or victim) and the 'other' as wrong (or aggressor). Today, societies reap what was sown in the classrooms over decades as COVID-19 brings bigoted behavior to the fore. This is reflected in rising communal resentment as COVID-19 serves to exacerbate the inequalities on religious/ communal lines (Lall and Anand, 2020).

Conclusion

The article has highlighted how Indian political parties interfere with text-books to transmit their political messages. There is a clear link between changing political parties in government and school textbooks.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s education policy has led to wider nation-wide policy changes that impact notions of belonging and citizenship. These political measures are the violation of the secular foundations of the Indian constitution and a means to weaponize citizenship through education (Kadiwal and Jain, 2020). The National Education Policy 2020 does not mention the word secular even once (MHRD, 2019). It raises questions about what it may mean for the idea of citizenship and education in contemporary India (GOI, NEP, 2020).

The ideological messages are seen as acceptable across society because schooling is understood as the site of hegemony; wherein students and teachers practise the perpetuation of 'common-sense ideas' on a par with the leading mainstream political images. For Gramsci, education is the means to fabricate intellectuals from the subaltern social groups who would be capable of contrasting and transforming the prevailing social order through critical thinking. In India's current process of instruction, the learners however supress the process of reflexively reviewing abstract notions for fear of being

labeled anti-national. This becomes precarious when the abstract notions become factual for the learner's consciousness and later become part of the conventional common sense (Gramsci, 1971).

In keeping with Gramsci's ideas, the current BJP government has been using the school textbooks as a medium of political communication to re-contextualize the discourse of citizenship. The predominant theme related to the discourse of citizenship in India today is the anti-Muslim sentiment. Through its anti-left (to the point of being a 'pro-authoritarian') ideology, Hindutva leaders are producing a generation of students that are moving backwards toward becoming a more bigoted and at the same time more submissive populace (Westerfield, 2019).

Notes

1 Professor Marie Lall is Professor of Education and South Asian Studies, Dr Kusha Anand is Research Fellow. Both are at the UCL Institute of Education.

2 By hegemony, Gramsci intended the 'permeation' throughout society of a complete system of morals, attitudes, views and integrity that has the impact of supporting the 'status quo' in power relations. Hegemony in this context might be described as an 'organising principle' that is 'diffused' by the process of socialization in daily life (Burke, 1999, 2005).

3 India's first prime minister.

4 William Dalrymple had published "The City of Djinns" in 1993 after he spent several years in Delhi. He mentions in the book how he would hear the educated class of Delhi saying that Muslims need to be taught a lesson as they have been "appeased" by Congress for way too long. It shows how Islamophobia isn't a new phenomenon. It has always been served on the breakfast tables of the Indian majority. Different political parties have used it for their benefit. It is just that Congress managed to create the binary, and many fell for it. India's elections show that right-wing Hindu nationalism has achieved total hegemony over Indian society (Vanaik, 2019).

5 A term that connotes minority appeasement (Jaffrelot, 2019).

6 Parties are dominated by politically elite groups of activists.

7 The theory of Historical Inertia states quite that events build up a kind of inertia over time so that following events are heavily determined by what people expect to happen.

8 The reason why 10 years of Congress led government did not reverse what the BJP had done in 2000 is because states were allowed to choose their textbooks. Textbooks were changed after state elections, resulting in them becoming a political football. See Lall in Lall and Vickers 2009.

9 Saffronisation is used to depict Hindu Nationalism (Hansen, 1999). It is an Indian political 'neologism' (termed after the saffron robes worn by Hindu *sanyasis*) used by critics and others to refer to the policies of right-wing Hindu nationalists that seek to recall and glorify ancient Hindu cultural history. Hindutva is an ideology that seeks to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life (Syed, 2019). Saffronisation of India's education system refers to a Hindu agenda based on mythology in order to counter scientific methods of education. Education policy has been used by the BJP to 'saffronise' the school curriculum and rewrite history to overemphasize Hindu influence in the shaping of India at the cost of other significant cultural 'remnants' by altering textbooks by forcing a Hindu narrative (Rashid, 2016).

10 In the essay 'Hindutva: Who is Hindu?' Veer Savarkar himself wrote, "Hindutva is not identical with what is vaguely indicated by the term Hinduism." The Hindutva forces also want to amend the Constitution of India, remove keywords and turn India into a theocratic state based upon 'systemic inequality', 'anti-egalitarianism' and 'elitism' – where the Hindus will have supremacy over all the other religious minorities. Hindutva ideologues were inspired by the nationalist, racial, supremacist and cultural values of both Nazism and Zionism. Over the decades, that combined influence has got 'culturally internalised' within the Sangh Parivar (Chaudhuri, 2020).

11 Although this slogan was written in 2000, it links to today's labeling of anti-national elements in Indian society.

12 Thomas Babington Macaulay was the person who presented the Western education system and English literature to India.

13 At that time, Congress was ruling at the central level.

14 Current member parties of UPA are Indian National Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Nationalist Congress Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Indian Union Muslim League, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Jharkand Mukti Morcha, Kerala Congress, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Revolutionary Socialist Party and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi.

15 Krishna Kumar was the director of the NCERT from 2004 to 2010.

16 The Indus Valley Civilization was a Bronze Age civilization within the north-western regions of South Asia. It is a territory would spread from northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India.

17 NCERT (2005). Themes in Indian History-I, II, and III. Class XII. Delhi.

18 The NEP 2020 underlies the textbooks that are to be written.

19 Modi's victoryincreased the BJP's vote-share from 19% in 2009 to 31% in 2014, giving it an outright majority without its supporters, not requiring the BJP to form a coalition to govern. Modi was reelected in 2019.

20 Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was the first person to articulate Hindu nationalism in his goal of a Hindu Rashtra in 1925 (Jaffrelot and Therwath, 2007). Savarkar described Islam and Christianity as 'foreign elements' existing in India, and thus he suggested that their religious practices or activities should be restricted to the private sphere (Pandey, 1991, p.3005). Inspired by Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar formed the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a militant Hindu nationalist organization, often defined as 'fascist' (Basu et al., 1993). The chief aim of RSS was "to penetrate the entire social structure to forge a Hindu nation that would be physically, morally and socially sound." RSS expanded its aims by establishing different organizations targeting distinct sections of society, such as women, youth, students, secluded/excluded castes and ethnic groups; they were known as the Sangh Parivar, the family of the Sangh (Jaffrelot, 2005, p.5). The Sangh Parivar has attempted to homogenize the Hindu community in order to integrate a sense of Hindu national identity (Fearon and Laitin, 2000).

21 The Sangh Parivar has always shown interest in the teaching of history, not only because it contributes to defining the national identity, but also because the Parivar believes the version of the past portrayed by secularists does not reflect reality. It's impression on the Modi government is also evident (Jaffrelot and Jairam, 2019).

22 The family of the Sangh also consisted of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), along with its youth wing known as Bajrang Dal. The members of these groups often participated in the Hindu-Muslim riots (Jaffrelot and Therwath, 2007, p.15).

23 In 2020 at the time of writing, the BJP hold a majority in 12 states- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

24 Reuters states that Modi had not requested the committee's creation. The committee was prompted by Sharma but its mission is in resonance with Modi's viewpoint. During the 2014 launch of a hospital in Mumbai, Modi referred to the scientific achievements acknowledged by ancient religious texts and of Ganesha (a Hindu deity with an elephant's head) (Jain and Lasseter, 2018).

25 History textbooks praise Congress leaders to 'the exclusion of others' (Hindu leaders).

26 The Congress Party's textbook on India's modern history in which members of the Nehru-Gandhi family are glorified.

27 The Class 10 book depicted Savarkar as a great revolutionary, a great patriot, and a great 'sangathanwaadi' (organization man).

28 In February 2002 the western Indian state of Gujarat, governed by the Hindu nationalist chief minister Narendra Modi, witnessed one of the country's biggest massacres. Responding to reports that Muslims had set fire to a train carriage, killing 58 Hindu pilgrims inside, mobs rampaged across the state. The riots flared up again and killing, raping and looting continued. More than 2,000 Muslims were murdered, and tens of thousands were rendered homeless in carefully planned and coordinated attacks of unprecedented savagery (Mishra, 2012).

29 In 2002, the western Indian state of Gujarat under the Chief Ministership of Modi witnessed horrific anti-Muslim riots (headed by the death of Hindu activist Kar Sevaks in a train fire in Godhra) in which hundreds of Muslims were killed. This massacre was carried out by organized Hindu right-wing groups who raped and murdered Muslims (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012).

30 Politics in India since Independence, NCERT Textbook in political science for Grade 12. A chapter titled 'Politics in India since Independence' (page 187) in the Class XII political science textbook has a passage under the heading 'Anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat'.

31 The textbook distorted the real name of Qutub Minar. It depicts it as 'Vishnu Stambha', having been built by emperor Samudragupta.

32 Uniform civil code is the ongoing point of debate regarding the Indian constitution's mandate to replace personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in India with a common set of rules governing every citizen.

33 It is "a supposed form of religious warfare by which Muslim men lure Hindu women away from the faith, have circulated in one form or another in India for more than a century" (Bhatia, 2017, para.6).

34 In Hinduism, the cow is considered sacred. Article 48 of India's constitution directs the state to "take steps … prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves," and 21 States criminalize cow slaughter in various forms. Cow protection has been promoted as a key issue by the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Lynch mobs, often organized over social media, have attacked minorities – including Muslims, Christians, and Dalits – under suspicion of eating beef, slaughtering cows, or transporting cattle for slaughter (Jha, 2002). Since the BJP came to power in 2014, there has been an increase in attacks.

35 Jha, author of The Myth of the Holy Cow (2002) uses considerable historical and archeological evidence to prove that beef was routinely eaten during the Vedic period. After release, Jha received many death threats in 2001 which led to the withdrawal of his book in India (Dalrymple, 2005).

36 It is a divine bovine-goddess described in Hinduism as the mother of all cows.

37 https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/cow-urine-drinking-indian-hindu-coronavirus-covid19-a4387386.html

38 There is linguistic diversity among Muslims. However, Muslims are reduced to being Urdu speakers, which is also political, communal and exclusionary.

39 In 2014, Smriti Irani, the former Minister of Human and Resource Development (2014–2016) decided to replace German with Sanskrit, as the third language in Kendriya Vidyalayas.

40 Dinanath Batra is the former General Secretary of Vidya Bharati, the school network run by the RSS.

41 The Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas is a Hindu right-wing educational activist organization founded by Dinanath Batra between 1978–79.

42 Mirza Ghalib was a prominent Urdu and Persian poet during the last years of the Mughal Empire.

43 Linguistic diversity among Muslims. However, Muslims are reduced to being Urdu speakers, which is also political, communal and repetitive.

44 It only has two non-RSS members.

45 Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Goa and Maharashtra.

46 https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2020/may/05/delhi-court-to-hear-jnu-professors-plea-on-campus-violence-2139328.html

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