

Curriculum, Ideology and Superstitions: A Critical Study of English Textbooks in India

Prakash J Waghmare

Research Scholar, Department of English, S.R.T.M University, Nanded

Abstract:

The present research paper discusses the curriculum of high school English language textbooks in the context of ideology. The idea of education is not innocent, secular, and ideologically neutral rather it is more biased. Education is full of ideologies. The ruling class that is in power controls the curriculum, textbooks and education system. These influential people manipulate society according to their ideology through education. Schools, textbooks and curricula are the central tools or agencies to transform dominant ideology into society through education. The ruling class people control the education system because they have hidden their benefits in it. Education is used to alter the ideology of dominant people in society. We consider school knowledge as the highest pure knowledge form and accept it without question. Therefore, the dominant class who is in power takes advantage of this situation. And considering this the current research paper critically examines the high school English language textbook in the context of Ideology.

Keywords: Ideology, Curriculum, Gender, Nationalism, religion & CDA etc.

Introduction

Education plays a significant role in society. Education makes society rational and carries toward modernity. Innovations widen the possibilities of the overall development of society. Leaving aside old customs, education can give you the courage to adopt new ways of living. Education can also give us scientific vision. The task of eradicating superstition can be achieved through modern education and an educated person can live in a society with open eyes. But, in reality, this does not happen. We see that educated people carry all kinds of superstitions.

Education is the medium through which a society can be created as per the need. Society can be shaped according to the need whether the shape is good or bad. we are shaped in a certain way through education. This form of 'making' is important in many ways. And so it is imperative to study the process of making this phenomenon multifaceted. From this point of view, we are looking at the issues of 'textbooks and superstitions' critically through this article.

In all countries, the government and the administration constantly try to transform society accordingly by changing education according to their interests. If the government and the administration believe in superstition and religious traditions, then naturally, through school textbooks, they try to create such superstitions and religious traditions in society. For example, in England, a government of Puritan ideas existed in 1649. Such an idea is disseminated through textbooks. The tradition of using textbooks as per the need has been going on since the British colonial period.

Overall, in addition to students, school teachers, curriculum and textbooks play a significant role in the education system. Through education, children are given the desired taste and shape from childhood. This is what is reflected in the future. Following this, the famous Western thinker Louis Althusser argues that the state adopts two kinds of ways to control society. One is the use of the military in a repressive way. This is what he calls 'Repressive State Apparatus'. The other way to suppress society is through ideological means. This is what he refers to as 'ideological state apparatuses'. In the second category, people are made to allow to be exploited by education, religion, family, and other social institutions.

American educationist Michael Apple discusses in depth how education and ideologies complement the relationship in his book "Ideology and Curriculum". Michael Apple says that education is one of the most effective means through which the dominant ideology of a society is instilled in society. Schools and education are not the means of equality, justice, and liberation in society, but on the contrary, a means of creating greater inequality in society. We all see education as impartial, but education is even more biased. Education gets such a regressive form as the province of education is kept under its control by the influential class of society. The interests of the ruling class are hidden in education, curriculum, and books. Therefore, they use education for their interests. We all need to look at the curriculum and textbook very critically.

Assimilation of textbooks and ideologies

It is a superstition that when a government of a certain thought comes, the content of superstition increases in textbooks. A specific idea is propagated through textbooks. No matter which government there is, the tradition of using textbooks has been going on since British colonial times.

There was an important difference between pre-modern and modern education systems. This difference was in the context of textbooks. There were no textbooks in the pre-modern education system; so in the modern education system, the appropriation of textbooks became very universal. This difference was mainly due to the difference between the pre-modern state and the modern state.

In modern times, the utmost sanctity of textbooks was passed. The penalty was that the knowledge in the textbooks is official knowledge and the same should be accepted. Students, teachers, and parents find the 'textbook' to be an official and recognizable source of knowledge. The examination is mainly based on textbooks and since the rewards depend on the success of the examination, the textbooks received a lot of preference. It was imposed that textbooks should not be criticized. Through the adoption of textbooks in an unscientific manner, the wider social system was also prepared for the students/educated to be accepted uncritically.

There was no reason why the modern state should be equipped with machinery for the compulsory and universal implementation of the textbook, or that it should have a machine like a printing press. Rather, in modern times, the spread of education became essential, and the upper classes began to feel threatened by the newly educated class. The role of managing this class was adopted so that this new class would be safe in this social system. In this process, the institution of 'school' was used.

During the Industrial Revolution in England, it was necessary to train the new working class. This work needs to be loyal to the owner. For this, it was necessary to instil values of 'loyalty', 'sacrifice', and 'obedience' in their minds. For this, capitalism employed churches to assimilate those values.

In the eighteenth century, through the churches, 'Sunday Schools' and 'Charity Schools' were opened for working-class children. These schools, which impart religious education to poor children, were started in the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution. The number of these schools increased after the Industrial

Revolution. By 1835, 24,232 copies of the Old Testament and 5,360 copies of the "Bible" had been distributed through the Sunday School. In other textbooks, the emphasis was on the values of 'sacrifice', 'integrity', 'love of truth', 'loyalty', and 'godly faith'.

Rationalism was spreading in Europe during the Enlightenment. Concepts such as 'religion', 'God', and 'heaven' were being questioned. At that time, the modern school was attached to stop this rationalism. Of course, the influence of these schools did not last long. England today has a higher proportion of non-believers than those who believe in religion and god. In England, in 1983- the proportion of those who rejected religion was 31%; in 2015, this proportion increased to 48%; Today it is 53%. In India, it is only 0.24%. (<https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media-centre/archived-press-releases/bsa-34-record-number-of-brits-with-no-religion.aspx>)

Indian textbooks and superstitions

India is no exception to such things. In India, since independence, governments of all parties have used the education system based on their interests. Unscientific and superstitious things were instilled in Indian culture, identity, ancient civilization, and society under the veil of Vedas and scriptures through this education. Every religion in the world contains a certain amount of superstitious things and they are repeatedly transferred from one generation to another. But it is more common in India. India is a very religious country. Our country is divided into many castes and religions. It is this that the education system and textbooks have been seen as a medium to preserve the identity of the country and transfer it back and forth forever. The ruling class deliberately tried to keep society as ignorant and superstitious as possible. Children's upbringing takes place in school. Students spend most of their time at school. That is why children's wisdom is fed with a dose of religion, caste, customs, and superstitions. School students are tomorrow's society. And through education, education succeeds in creating such a society in a way that is connected with our thoughts.

In India, more and more people have been kept in 'faith', 'belief in god and religion'. Modern schools and curricula played an important role in this process. Similar values were instilled in the textbooks initially created during the British colonial period. At that time, 'textbook' was called 'copybook'. In pre-modern times, there was a greater emphasis on reading in Vedic schools. It fell on the path of the British. The British did not want to inculcate a critical approach through education. The newly educated class was expected to have respect for colonial power. The Education Department was formed keeping in mind this need of the colonists.

In the British colonial period, the textbooks that were initially printed in Marathi were more full of morals. For example, Major Candy translated the book "Definition of Ethics" into Marathi in 1848. In the first lesson, it was expected that man's behaviour should be according to the rules laid down by God. The book was used as a textbook in schools in the nineteenth century.

Gauri Vishwanathan argued that the colonialists (the British) were under great pressure from Christian missionaries to include religious education in the Indian curriculum. However, the colonists also feared that such religious education would create an atmosphere of fear among the people of the colony and also incur the wrath of the colonial elites. After realizing these dangers of religious education, an attempt was made to create a particular public mood through moral education close to religious education. The literature of authors such as William Shakespeare, Joseph Addison, Francis Bacon, and John Milton was sown in the curriculum. (Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989; New Delhi: Oxford U P, 2000))

The strengthening of the textbook guaranteed definite publicity of such a particular ideology. The Nationalist Movement criticized the strengthening of the textbook. Mahatma Gandhi criticized that such empowerment leads to the hesitation of teachers' freedom: "If textbooks are considered as a means of education, then the living words of teachers are of little value. The teacher who teaches from textbooks does not have originality in our students."

(Source: "If Textbook R Treated As a Vehicle for Education, The Living Word of the Teacher Has Very Little Value." A Teacher Who Stitches From Textbook Dos Not Import Originality To His Puppies.)

(Krishna Kumar, Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas (1991; New Delhi: Sage Publication India Pvt. Ltd., 2005) 182.)

After independence, just as the Indian rulers inherited the armed forces, the police, and the prisons, so did the schools, and textbook production boards. After independence, a textbook production board was set up in a state like Maharashtra. Such autonomous bodies were kept away from democratic processes. In a city like Pune, it was set up and they were controlled by the elite, such things were done consciously.

Hindutva governments and textbooks

So far, various educational policies have been implemented to improve the education system. Various educational committees have also been appointed from time to time for this purpose. The appointed committees have also submitted their reports. Early reports were influenced by traditionalism; however, progressively these reports became more secular. But it appears to have been deliberately ignored by the passive rulers. Many of the facts in the report of the National Educational Committee, established in 1964, have not been implemented so far. The reports of some educational committees were suppressed.

When the governments of political parties influenced by religious ideas came, they brought textbooks under control more strictly. In the 1970s, when colourful textbooks were printed, eg. H. Patil's poem "Dev" (God) was printed in the first textbook. Apart from many other works of Saint Eknath, the composition "God's of God" was brought in another textbook. The third textbook begins. Madgulkar's poem "God's House". The fourth textbook begins with Ramdas Swami's "Verse of Mind"!

There is a chapter titled 'A Letter to God' in the English textbook for the class 10 'CBSC' course by NCERT. In which god and other such imaginary things are mentioned. The textbook 'History and Civics' of Maharashtra State Textbook has a lesson called 'Vedic Culture' which contains information about many legends like "The Vedas", "The Upanishads", "Ramayana", "Mahabharata" and many others.

"Song of Songs" is a poem in the English book of Gujarat State Textbook Class VIII which talks about the Hindu god 'Krishna'. On the whole, the ruling classes are doing the work of deliberately spreading unscientific superstition in society through education.

The above example illustrates how superstitions, unscientific, and ignorance are being spread through education and textbooks in society. More and more religious and other things based on religion are being rooted in the understanding. People are being deliberately tied up in religious, superstitious, unscientific, and imaginary things and are being ruled over. Despite knowing that society and the country only move forward with adopting a scientific approach in society, education and textbooks are used in a very bad way. This is a serious thing.

If you look at the current education policy and the National Curriculum Framework, you will see a clear picture. Some state governments in India have started implementing the 'New Education Policy 2020'. In some central universities, the curriculum has started to change according to this educational policy. The Karnataka state government has already started changing the school syllabus and textbooks. We can see

its repercussions from the protests that are taking place in Karnataka. Earlier when the Congress government came into existence in Karnataka, they too had interfered with the syllabus and textbooks.

Conclusion

In short, it is important to take into account how education, textbooks, and curriculum changes are made. The symbols and culture of the ideology of the ruling class are instilled in the school children. On the whole, modern education can be the way to liberation in society, but it can also be used against the principle of equality. Instead of moving towards development, the ruling classes are doing the work of plunging society into darkness because their interests are hidden behind keeping society in the dark. Education can be the way to take society towards liberation. Equality, justice, and fraternity should be instilled in society through education. Education should be used as a means to get out of the shackles of old customs and superstitions. New ways of living must be found and human life should be taken to the path of liberation, but in reality, we do not see that happening. This is a very serious matter for society.

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