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Inclusion of Cultural Values in Hindi Textbooks ('Malhar', 'Durva', and 'Vasant') of Classes 6 to 8 and Its Impact on Social Sustainability: A Progressive Content Analysis

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Abstract

The textbook represents the primary stepping stone in formal education, holding a pivotal position within the contemporary educational framework. As one of the most traditional and enduring visual aids in pedagogy, it serves as the essential medium through which educators transmit knowledge to students. Functioning as an accessible, cost-effective, and structured guide, it effectively addresses core developmental needs. In the Indian context, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) plays a crucial role in publishing standardized textbooks aligned with national goals.

- This research paper evaluates the relationship between the cultural values embedded in middle-school level (Classes 6 to 8) Hindi textbooks—'Malhar' (Class 6), 'Durva' (Class 7), and 'Vasant' (Class 8)—and their impact on social sustainability. The study is based on a progressive qualitative content analysis independently conducted by the researcher.
- The findings reveal that the narratives, poems, folk traditions, and biographies within these textbooks systematically foster core values such as gender equality, environmental consciousness, and social equity among learners as they transition from Classes 6 to 8.
- These research outcomes align seamlessly with the vision of character-building outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) and Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (SDG 4.7). Conclusively, the paper offers practical recommendations for integrating modern digital challenges and experiential learning into the textbook curriculum.

Keywords: Cultural Values, Social Sustainability, Content Analysis, Hindi Textbooks, NEP 2020.

Introduction

"Books are a whole universe, the very foundation of life. When there is no one around, books are the truest love inside."

A language textbook is far more than a mere instrument for linguistic instruction or grammatical training. It acts as a profound gift that enriches knowledge, fosters moral consciousness, and serves as an exclusive catalyst for a child's holistic development, logical reasoning, and cultural grounding. Grounded in this philosophy, the true purpose of education extends well beyond conventional literacy or passing examinations; as underscored by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (SDG 4.7),

education must actively cultivate empathetic, conscious human beings while promoting peace, human rights, and global sustainability. It is these foundational cultural values embedded within language curricula that ultimately serve as the bedrock for long-term "Social Sustainability."

Recognizing this vital influence, the present study endeavors to conduct a progressive content analysis of the prominent middle-school Hindi textbooks—*Malhar*, *Durva*, and *Vasant*. The research specifically evaluates how cultural values are structured within these texts and analyzes their direct impact on fostering social sustainability. The investigation reveals that while the current curriculum brilliantly champions core values of social justice and inclusivity, it simultaneously highlights a critical gap: contemporary green (environmental) values and digital values still require a strategic, intentional boost. Ultimately, while this study focuses strictly on the Hindi curriculum, it establishes a clear framework for future research to explore how other academic subjects can evolve to build a more conscious, balanced, and sustainable future.

Literature Review

1. Psychological and Developmental Context of Middle School Students

The rationale for specifically selecting Classes 6 to 8 (ages 11–14) lies in the profound developmental significance of early adolescence. During this crucial, transitional phase, children's cognitive perspectives, moral frameworks, and worldviews begin to take definitive shape.

- **Cognitive Development (Jean Piaget):** According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children in this age bracket transition into the 'formal operational stage' (Piaget,1952). This cognitive shift allows them to move beyond concrete observations, enabling them to think abstractly, reason logically, and process complex societal values.
- **Moral Development (Lawrence Kohlberg):** Furthermore, Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development indicate that early adolescents operate within the 'conventional morality' phase (Kohlberg,1984). At this juncture, individuals actively seek to understand social order, societal norms, rights, and duties to effectively integrate into the community.
- **Psychological Receptivity:** This target group represents a critical formative period characterized by heightened psychological receptivity. Consequently, these young minds are uniquely susceptible to the deep, structural, and lasting impact of the literary content they consume.

2. The Pedagogical Impact of Textbooks and Curriculum Design

Language textbooks do not merely serve as tools for rote memorization; rather, they act as primary agents of socialization and the bedrock for Social Sustainability—defined as the creation of an inclusive, just, and resilient society.

- **Character & Personality Formation:** The narratives, essays, and stories embedded within Hindi textbooks exert a profound, long-term influence on students' character building and personality development.
- **Beyond Repetitive Tasks:** Crucially, the exercise questions structured at the end of chapters in textbooks like *Malhar*, *Durva*, and *Vasant* are not merely repetitive academic tasks. Instead, they are strategically designed to stimulate original and critical thinking, encouraging students to engage in active cognitive processing and relate textbook morals to real-world scenarios.
- **Catalyst for Social Sustainability:** By internalizing these narratives, students develop a sense of social harmony, serving as a vital catalyst to anchor these developmental milestones and build a sustainable future.

Relevance to the National Education Policy (NEP 2020)

The structural findings derived from the content analysis of these textbooks align seamlessly with the foundational pillars and core objectives of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020). NEP 2020 strongly advocates for a shift away from mere rote learning, emphasizing instead the holistic development of a child's moral character, critical thinking, and social consciousness.

During the critical transition from childhood to early adolescence (Classes 6 to 8), students actively begin constructing their independent worldviews. At this formative juncture, the literary selections within the Hindi curricula—such as the philosophical verses of Kabir, the profound social realism in Premchand's narratives, and various inspiring historical anecdotes—serve as vital pedagogical tools. This curated content translates the policy's vision into practice by directly anchoring contemporary education in human values and ethical reasoning.

Furthermore, the embedded themes of social equality, environmental responsibility, and communal harmony within these lessons systematically cultivate essential 21st-century competencies (the "4Cs": Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity) and sensitize students' cognitive perspectives. This exposure nurtures empathy, emotional intelligence, and logical reasoning. Simultaneously, by introducing students to diverse regional lifestyles and regional folklore, these textbooks instill a deep reverence for India's pluralistic cultural fabric, thereby advancing the constitutional ideal of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat".

In essence, these middle-school Hindi textbooks transcend their conventional role of imparting linguistic and grammatical proficiency; they function as powerful instruments designed to realize the mandate of NEP 2020 by molding a socially sustainable, inclusive, and progressive future society.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and descriptive Content Analysis design, utilizing a desk-research approach. Since the core objective is to evaluate embedded textual values, the study relies strictly on textual data and does not involve external human participants, surveys, or interviews.

Universe of the Study (Sampling Frame)

The primary research material comprises the latest NCERT Hindi textbooks prescribed for Middle School (Classes 6 to 8). Specifically, the dataset includes the textbook series: *Malhar* (Class 6), *Durva* (Class 7), and *Vasant* (Class 8).

Dataset and Sampling

The primary corpus for this research consists of the prescribed NCERT Hindi textbooks spanning the entire middle-school segment (Grades 6 to 8):

1. **Malhar (Part-1) [Class 6]** – Representing the foundational/introductory stage.
2. **Durva (Part-3) [Class 7]** – Representing the transitional/intermediate stage.
3. **Vasant (Part-3) [Class 8]** – Representing the advanced/analytical stage.

The selection of these specific texts relies on purposive sampling. This multi-grade corpus allows the study to track the vertical progression of socio-emotional and linguistic concepts as learner's transition through critical developmental phases.

Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis include specific text segments, thematic narratives, character arcs, folklore, regional idioms, and heritage vocabulary distributed across the selected chapters of *Malhar*, *Durva*, and *Vasant*. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, the units of analysis are systematically divided into:

1. **Textual Content:** All chapters, short stories, poems, essays, and character dialogues.
2. **Pedagogical Apparatus:** The analytical exercise questions and discussion prompts featured at the end of each chapter.

Categorization and Coding Scheme (Analytical Framework)

To ensure systematic evaluation across all three grades, the qualitative data was coded into five distinct conceptual dimensions aimed at holistic student development, mapped across the core pillars of social sustainability:

1. **Moral and Character Development:** Analyzing foundational ethics (honesty, empathy, and respect) and how their complexity increases from Class 6 to 8.
2. **Cultural Contextualization:** Evaluating narratives that bridge urban-rural perspectives through regional traditions, agrarian lifestyles, and folk arts.
3. **Empathy and Social Sensitivity:** Identifying themes fostering compassion toward marginalized groups, traditional artisans (e.g., 'Badlu'), and fauna.
4. **Linguistic and Aesthetic Competence:** Assessing the enrichment of vocabulary, introduction of diverse literary genres, and structural aesthetics across the three levels.
5. **National Integration and Pluralism:** Evaluating texts that promote inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diverse regional, linguistic, and religious identities.

Data Analysis Process

The analytical process involved a comparative, close reading of the text corpus. Every chapter in *Malhar*, *Durva*, and *Vasant* was mapped against the five coding categories. The analysis focused not only on individual text meanings but also on the progression—how a theme introduced simply in Class 6 (*Malhar*) matures into deeper socio-critical commentary by Class 8 (*Vasant*). Qualitative exemplars and dialogue strings were extracted to validate the findings.

Data Analysis and Key Findings

A) Social Equity and Inclusion

The Hindi textbooks for Classes 6 to 8 feature numerous lessons designed to cultivate empathy and sensitivity toward the marginalized, economically underprivileged, and historically disadvantaged sections of society.

- **Example:** Literary works by Munshi Premchand and *Kabir ki Saakhiyaan* (The Couplets of Kabir) in Class 8 directly critique caste-based discrimination and social hierarchies. Kabir's profound assertion, *"Jati na poocho sadhu ki, pooch lijiye gyan"* (Do not ask a saint about their caste; rather, seek their knowledge), teaches students that an individual's identity is defined by their virtue and intellect rather than their birth. This foundational value serves as a core driver for establishing social equity within the community.

B) Peace, Tolerance, and Social Justice

- **Thematic Essence:** The curriculum strategically integrates narratives that emphasize conflict resolu-

tion through diplomatic dialogue, mutual understanding, and fraternity, rather than confrontation.

- **Academic Translation / Application:** The texts encourage students to reflect on peaceful coexistence within a diverse society.

C) Environmental Consciousness and Sustainable Lifestyle

- **Thematic Essence:** In Indian ethos, nature has historically been revered as sacred and recognized as the fundamental sustenance of life. The curriculum meticulously integrates this ecological philosophy across various learning stages.
- **Academic Translation / Application:**
  "The textbooks beautifully weave the principles of environmental stewardship into the learning experience. For instance, introductory poetry in Malhar (Class 6) cultivates an innate love and respect for nature, while advanced narratives in Durva (Class 7) evoke deep compassion toward fauna and instill an urgency for wildlife conservation. This progressive pedagogical approach successfully guides learners from basic ecological awareness toward practical sustainability."

D) Gender Justice: 'Jahan Pahiya Hai' (Where the Wheel Is)

- **In-Depth Analysis:** P. Sainath's reportage *'Jahan Pahiya Hai'* (Class 8) is the true story of rural women in Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu, achieving their freedom and economic self-reliance through a cycling movement.
- **Challenging Stereotypes:** This text directly challenges the traditionally dictated domestic roles assigned to women.
- **Social Impact:** When students read this narrative, it awakens a sense of respect and equality toward women within them, thereby ensuring Gender Justice in society.

Data Analysis and Key Findings

Based on the progressive qualitative content analysis of the textbooks *Malhar* (Class 6), *Durva* (Class 7), and *Vasant* (Class 8), the following core findings have been established:

1. **Social Equity and Inclusion**

- **Core Finding:** The middle-school Hindi curriculum systematically cultivates deep empathy and structural sensitivity toward the marginalized, economically underprivileged, and historically disadvantaged sections of society.
- **Pedagogical Evidence:** This value aligns progressively across the grades, culminating in Class 8 (*Vasant*) with profound literary w orks by Munshi Premchand and *Kabir ki Saakhiyaan* (The Couplets of Kabir). Kabir's philosophical assertion, *"Jati na poocho sadhu ki, pooch lijiye gyan"* (Do not ask a saint about their caste; rather, seek their knowledge), directly critiques rigid social hierarchies. It teaches young learners that an individual's true identity is anchored in virtue and intellect rather than birth, serving as a vital driver for social equity.

2. **Peace, Tolerance, and Social Justice**

- **Core Finding:** The text corpus strategically integrates narratives that prioritize conflict resolution through diplomatic dialogue, mutual understanding, and fraternity over confrontation.
- **Pedagogical Evidence:** The selected essays and stories act as an academic catalyst to prepare students for peaceful co-existence within a diverse, pluralistic society. It trains their cognitive perspectives to respect differing viewpoints and uphold democratic values.

3. **Environmental Consciousness and Sustainable Lifestyle**

- **Core Finding:** Rooted in the traditional Indian ethos where nature is revered as sacred, the curriculum meticulously builds a progressive ecological philosophy that matures as the student advances from Class 6 to 8.
- **Pedagogical Evidence:** The text layout beautifully weaves the principles of environmental stewardship into active learning. For instance, the introductory poetry in *Malhar* (Class 6) fosters an innate love and respect for nature. As learners transition, the advanced narratives in *Durva* (Class 7) evoke deep compassion toward fauna and instill an urgency for wildlife conservation. This structural progression successfully elevates learners from basic ecological awareness to a mindset of practical sustainability.

4. **Gender Justice and Dismantling Stereotypes**

- **Core Finding:** The curriculum deliberately moves away from portraying women in traditionally dictated, submissive domestic roles, actively replacing them with narratives of female agency, independence, and leadership.
- **Pedagogical Evidence:** A prime exemplar is P. Sainath's renowned reportage *'Jahan Pahiya Hai'* in Class 8 (*Vasant*). Documenting the real-life cycling movement of rural women in Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu, the text demonstrates how a simple tool can facilitate massive socio-economic self-reliance and freedom. Analyzing this narrative awakens a profound sense of gender equality and mutual respect among early adolescents, thereby advancing the constitutional ideal of Gender Justice.

Summary Matrix of Content Analysis

The following mapping matrix summarizes how the core textual selections systematically align with the distinct pillars of social sustainability across the middle-school framework:

Textbook (Grade)	**Primary Analytical Theme**	**Core Literary / Pedagogical Exemplar**	**Targeted Social Sustainability Value**	**Impact on Student Development (Ages 11–14)**
Malhar *(Class 6)*	**Foundational Ecology & Nature Reverence**	Introductory Nature Poetry and Ecosystem Essays	Environmental Consciousness & Sustainable Lifestyle	Cultivates an innate love for nature, moving students from basic environmental awareness to early stewardship.
Durva *(Class 7)*	**Social Sensitivity & Cultural Co-existence**	Narratives on Fauna Conservation and Rural/Agrarian Traditions	Empathy, Tolerance, and Wildlife Preservation	Expands the child's moral framework to encompass compassion for fauna and appreciation for

Textbook (Grade)	Primary Analytical Theme	Core Literary / Pedagogical Exemplar	Targeted Social Sustainability Value	Impact on Student Development (Ages 11–14)
				pluralistic regional cultures.
Vasant *(Class 8)*	**Social Equity & Critique of Hierarchies**	*Kabir ki Saakhiyaan* (The Couplets of Kabir) & Works of Munshi Premchand	Social Justice, Inclusivity, and Intellectual Merit	Encourages abstract reasoning to challenge caste-based discrimination and understand human worth beyond birth.
Vasant *(Class 8)*	**Gender Justice & Female Agency**	P. Sainath's Reportage: *'Jahan Pahiya Hai'* (Where the Wheel Is)	Gender Equality & Socio-Economic Self-Reliance	Directly challenges traditional domestic stereotypes; instills respect for women's autonomy and rights during the conventional morality phase.

Impact on Learners

The integration of these cultural values within the Hindi curriculum exerts a structural and transformative influence on the holistic personality development of the learners. The specific dimensions of this pedagogical impact are systematically classified in the table below:

S.No.	Core Dimension of Impact	Observable Shift / Development in Learners (Ages 11–14)
1	**Moral and Character Development**	Through deep interaction with character arcs in the narratives, students internalize foundational ethics such as integrity, empathy, and reverence for elders.
2	**Cultural Grounding and Contextualization**	Learners operating within urbanized or contemporary settings develop a grounded understanding of India's agrarian roots, traditional folk arts, and the sociological significance of regional festivals.

S.No.	Core Dimension of Impact	Observable Shift / Development in Learners (Ages 11–14)
3	**Empathy and Social Sensitivity**	Specific chapters such as *'Badlu'* (the lac bangle maker in *Lakh ki Choodiyan*) or *'Nadaan Dost'* invoke a structural compassion toward fauna and foster socio-economic empathy toward struggling traditional artisans.
4	**Linguistic and Aesthetic Competence**	Exposure to regional idioms, folklore registers, and heritage vocabulary enriches the learners' expressive capabilities and develops a mature appreciation for the aesthetic beauty of Indian literature.
5	**National Integration and Pluralism**	By engaging with the diverse literary genres across *Durva* and *Vasant*, learners develop tolerance, emotional intelligence, and respect for pluralistic religious, linguistic, and regional identities.

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