Addressing the Notions of Reality, Representation and Relevance in Manipur State History Textbooks

Manisha Subba*

Abstract

In our education system, the textbook is an important aspect through which the curriculum is selected and organised. History being a dynamic subject has varying interpretations and representations. It provides us with the platform to see whether the representation is complete and question the relevance of the texts with so many realities co-existing. In this research paper, the researcher tried to construct the reality with the help of secondary sources, and then compare the representation as given in the History textbooks. The attempt to understand the relevance of textbooks was done by problematising it and studying the social conditions on the basis of which the content is selected and organised.

Introduction

Problems and issues in the curriculum could be addressed best by looking into the content taught and learnt in schools. This could take many forms, be it the hidden or the official curriculum. There can be no single definition of the word 'curriculum', but, the definitions do help us in giving various perspectives from which we can view it. According to one perspective, it is involved in selecting and organising the content which the school helps in distributing. 'Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realisation of this knowledge on the part of the taught' (Bernstein 1973, 266). Here, the researcher is concerned more with the curriculum aspect.

This research paper intends to look into the issue, by analysing and studying the representation of the

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* *Ph.D Scholar*, CIE, University of Delhi, Delhi-110 007

reality in the textbooks. The content in the texts is generated by a select group of specialists, who select from a 'commonwealth of knowledge and skills' (Stenhouse, 1975, 6). Knowledge could exist in the form of 'academic disciplines' in schools, which are usually 'defined and defended by boundaries, demanding recognition and validation, determined by groups of scholars' (Musgrove, 1968, 101).

It is a product as well as a determinant of our social interaction because the people who are involved in the selection of the curriculum intend to 'transmit, learn and share' the dominant culture (Parsons, 1952, 15). Schools generally reflect the values of people outside the schools, mostly of the dominant group. This 'referenced groups' are looked upon, copied and imitated, and used as a standard for comparison. So, in a way, education gives learners experiences outside their own culture. This might result in less understanding as some people might not be able to relate and identify with what is given to them as the content. The 'given' reality might not be similar to their 'own experienced' reality.

One of the most common ways for the students to meet the curriculum is in the form of textbook. In fact, textbook has become the most important aspect of our school system with all the teachers and the students tied to it. It is prescribed and is one of the tools of the state's hegemonic control. It is also a powerful tool of socialisation – conveying knowledge in the forms of ideas, information and skills. Its selection is influenced by the socio-economic, political and cultural

environment of the time. It may convey variety of signals in the form of subtle references, omissions, use of certain languages or repeated mentions. 'The textbook is part of a package of teaching-learning material that could be used to engage the child in active learning' (NCF 2005, 38). But, the textbook tends to dominate the curriculum in most schools.

Kumar (1988) has traced the root of the 'textbook culture' to the early nineteenth century, when the East India Company was trying to establish an education system. The education system came to be governed by the bureaucracy in all aspects - syllabi, content, teachers' training, and examinations. Colonial education aimed at morality and to develop submission of Indians to colonialism. The knowledge of the minority or subordinate class (Indians) was considered symbols of ignorance and hence, irrelevant to education. The only valid knowledge was one which 'fulfilled the agenda of acculturating the Indian student in colonial perceptions and attitudes'.

The researcher, too, agrees that the practice hasn't changed much as post-independence curriculum continues to be textbook bound. The processes of selection and representation of knowledge in the curriculum continues to be influenced by the tug-of-war between local vs. national concerns. The giving of the monopoly rights for the publication of textbooks, at least till the elementary grades, to the State corporations have been a major shift. 'The subversive role of the textbooks has not only distorted its academic purpose but also allowed it to be used as a

means of political and ideological propaganda by the state' (NCF 2005, 9).

Need for the Study

Taking a cue from Postmodernist Theory, the researcher has tried to build upon some alternatives, i.e., mini or local narratives, rather than grand narratives: '. . . the use of accounts focussing on a particular setting and with limited generalisability over space and time' (Alvesson, 2006, 32). Postmodernist politics offers a way to theorise local situations as fluid and unpredictable, though influenced by global trends. They believe truth is relative and it is for each individual to determine the truth for himself. They are sensitive to the socio-economic equality of all people, without any boundaries. The voice of even a single person is given space.

'People, who were not represented earlier, are today conscious of the importance of identity in the acquisition of political power necessary for the reasserting of their economic rights, cultural rights and social dignity' (Nambissan, 2000). The initiation by people, who were earlier not represented, to write their own history and represent themselves could be a result of this consciousness. The deliberate emphasis on their own history in the school textbooks could be an assertion of their identity, as in the History textbooks in Manipur. There should be a close connection between the needs of the society and what is being taught in the schools. But, at the same time, we need to question the relevance of the knowledge which is socially constructed and determined by the needs of a select group of people. Education has facilitated this awareness immensely. Here, we can acknowledge the role played by schools and the textbooks in (mis)representing the diversity of life experiences of people of different backgrounds within Indian society.

The main aim of any curriculum development is to help students understand the realities, in terms of their society, polity, economy, history, culture, and so on. But, we continue to be exclusive of the diversity that exists in our country. 'The extent to which the curriculum will reflect the structure of interests of different social groups will depend on the nature of relationships among the groups' (Kumar 1989, 70). People in power are likely to get larger representation; whereas, people lacking power may either get little or no representation.

The reason for choosing History textbook was because the researcher felt that the varied interpretations and representations make it a dynamic subject. Also, we are only aware of the history of the so called dominant group, we virtually tend to overlook the history, in terms of this study, of region and people who do not represent the so called dominant group. The history and people of South India and North - Eastern India are not given much representation in the national history. The researcher interest is to look into the fact that the people of Manipur have tried to assert their identity through the very textbooks which had refused to represent them.

Delimitations

1. The study is restricted to the State of Manipur.

2. The study is restricted to History textbooks of Classes VI - VIII, academic year 2008 – 2009.
3. Only the perspective of teachers of Social Sciences is taken.

Theoretical Framework

This research work deals mainly with the analysis and study of historical texts. The researcher intends to deconstruct the text and problematise the representation. The reality and culture of the dominant group is the one which gets represented, wherein, we get a misrepresentation of reality (Harris, 1979). The notion of reality is inherent in the processes of social interaction and our everyday life (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The individual and society are in a dialectical relationship with each other, influencing and shaping each other's existence and subjective understanding. Hence, the researcher is addressing the notion of reality of Manipur's History before addressing the representation in the state History textbooks.

The History of Manipur is sought to be understood using secondary sources (Singh, 1998; Kamei, 2006). The polity, economy, society and culture are studied, along with the different ethnic groups living in the state. The reality of the state would be incomplete without the discussion of insurgency and the struggle for one's identity. Hence, the issue of insurgency, entangled with ethnicity and identity politics is being understood (Ghosh, 2003; Kumar, 2005; Nunthara, 2005). Also, the presence of insurgency in the society and its influence on the learners and schools is seen from the teachers' perspective,

citing the problems and dilemmas faced in their day-to-day working. The reason for taking the perspective of the teachers was because the researcher is trying to understand the reality and its influence on the schools and the learners, and we need to acknowledge the important role of the teachers in transmitting, mediating, negotiating and opposing the given knowledge (Apple, 1993).

The search for one's sense of self arises when there is a misrepresentation or distortion of the reality one actually experiences and one is supposed to experience. The North-Eastern region is officially a part of India, but, the people in the region continue to be physically and emotionally isolated from the rest of the country. The merger of Manipur with India is believed to be a forced merger by the inhabitants of the region, as cited from the official accounts (Singh 1998). The gap between a regional and a national identity continues to haunt India in most other states of India as well. The image of a rising nationalist consciousness in the colonial period is supposed to be a part of the lore of the Nationalist Historiography, and nothing more (Khilnani, 1997). The relationship between nation and region is hard to understand, but both continue to co-exist. Within Manipur too, the presence of different ethnic groups continues to pose difficulty for the search for a Manipur identity (Kamei, 2006). The search for one's identity on the basis of one's ethnicity led to the growth of regionalism and the many self-determination movements. But, the pull of economics and development has led the Centre to acknowledge and

recognise the culture of various regions. Hence, a balance being maintained and the diversities being respected to an extent.

Schools are the sources of secondary socialisation (Parsons, 1959). In our society, the social identity of the learner supposedly determines their learning (Kumar, 1989). The learner always has to learn the knowledge and culture of the dominant group. The hegemony is maintained by the given knowledge which is to be transmitted, learned and shared (Parsons, 1952), generated by a select group of academicians, who have specialised in their respective fields (Stenhouse, 1975). Learners are socialised in the schools, either, covertly through the hidden curriculum in the form of prayers or in assembly, or, overtly in the lessons that are being taught in the classes. Here, textbooks play an important role in explaining the working of the world and have a powerful impact on the knowledge of the learners (Bennett, 1996). The 'textbook culture' is prevalent in almost all schools, where the teachers' work is to impart whatever is given in the textbooks to the learners, who will, in turn, rote memorise to pass the examination (Kumar, 1988).Here, we need to question and problematise the culture which is being taught in the textbook. It doesn't happen on its own; instead it is selected and reorganised by real people with real interests (Kumar, 1989; Apple, 1993). So, the researcher intends to address the notion of representation in the History textbooks studied in the schools of Manipur.

The reason for choosing the History textbook is because it deals with social relations, culture and the origin of human existence. 'Social relations are expressions of ideas about reality' (Winch, 1958). Through historical understanding, we begin to trace the internal relations inherent in the society, existing in the form of ideas and social structure. The politics of identity is laid bare and the space for interpretation(s) and re-interpretation(s) makes it a dynamic subject. The writing of their own historical and an alternate text to challenge the existing hierarchy of knowledge is also a process of their socio-political movement (Gramsci, 1971; Illiah, 2007). The search for one's identity has led to the search for one's history for the people of Manipur.

This can be understood by the notion of Subaltern Studies. Right from the time of the *Swadeshi* Movement in the late 19th and early 20th century, it was said that 'the real history of India was located in the *samaj* (society, community), not the *rashtra* (State) (Sarkar 1997). But again, we need to problematise the notion of *samaj* in our context – Who actually constitute our *samaj*? – in terms of class, caste, gender, region, religion. The notion of 'subalternity' in Subaltern Studies has shifted from clash of unequal cultures during colonial times, wherein, the aim was to uncover evidences of 'subaltern nationality', to one where it now acts as a means to provide 'liberating alternatives' to the oppressed people, by exposing forms of knowledge prevalent in society (Ludden, 2001). Also, our subaltern pasts can act as a supplement to our history by adding to our historical knowledge, and also, showing the limits

to our historical understanding (Chakrabarty, 2001).

The notion of relevance also needs to be addressed. The researcher intends to do by studying the curriculum framework given for the teaching of social sciences on which the History textbooks are based. The main curricular concerns are education for a cohesive society where all differences are sought to be eliminated; strengthening national identity and preserving of one's heritage by trying to understand the history of different ethnic groups and regions of the country; responding to the impact of globalisation by the study of one's civilisation along with other world civilisations and their interconnections; need to incorporate fieldwork, project work and group activities (NCF-2000). With nearly a decade old framework and a new NCF-2005 already initiated, the use of the books based on the old NCF-2000 can be questioned.

The use of facts and evidences, in the form of sources, to understand and construct one's own history is to be seen, whether the textbook gives any space to the learners to do so. The important interaction of historian and his facts, i.e., 'dialogue between present and past' is encouraged or not is to be questioned and analysed (Carr, 1961). The important role of teacher is also to be seen in the context of their mediating role in the teaching learning of controversial issues (Ballard, 1970). The obsession with learning, rather than understanding and questioning is to be addressed on the basis of whether controversial issues and discussions are given space in classroom interaction or not (Dickinson and Lee, 1978; Kumar, 1996). Also, the role of History and History textbooks in transmitting ideas about patriotism and one's sense of belonging is to be addressed. The political impact in propagating ideas, giving false or biased facts needs to be questioned (Paxton, 1999).

Hence, the attempt to understand the reality, analyse and problematise the representation, and question the relevance was made by the researcher for a holistic study of the problem. The various readings, which can never be enough, were read to form a perspective and understanding of the problem at hand. The studies on the sociology of education and the secondary sources led to the questioning of the realities which the researcher had been socialised into and had been made to believe in.

Research Design

The study is based on qualitative research. The study involves 'inductive analyses', exploring research questions with no prior hypothesis to be tested. It tries to give a 'holistic perspective' of the whole phenomenon and not reduce it to cause-effect relationships. A qualitative study involves fieldwork and takes place in 'naturalistic setting'. The researcher does not interfere, neither manipulates nor controls the study, but is open to whatever 'emerges'. The aim is not to generalise the findings but to have an 'in depth and detailed descriptive analysis of events, interviews, and the like' because it is 'context sensitive'. It takes into cognizance 'the social, historical, and temporal context in which the data was collected' (Best and Kahn, 2005, 242-43).

To ascertain the reality, in terms of its history, of the people of Manipur

The first step in this research study was to ascertain the reality, as experienced by the people. The researcher tried to look for books, journals and dissertations on the cultural, economic, political and social life in Manipur, for the understanding of the past reality. A historical descriptive study was taken up to understand the history of Manipur with the help of secondary sources. The reality of the state would have been incomplete without the discussion of insurgency and the fight for one's identity. Hence, the presence of insurgency in the society and its influence on the learners and schools is seen from the teachers' perspective, citing the problems and dilemmas faced in their day-to-day working.

To analyse if the representation is adequate in the State textbooks

In the research study, representation would be the accounts and facts as given in the History textbooks. The researcher would analyse and reread the History textbooks to understand better the selection and organisation of the content. Deconstruction, an approach dealing with identity and experience which is not present in the text is used by the researcher to analyse and problematise the textbooks. It gives a democratic platform to contest and question the omissions in a text. It is closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis', which means 'to undo', and is synonymous 'to deconstruct'. The role of deconstruction is to identify the nature of discourse and the depictions of reality and the presence of bias if any, so as to produce an ideological critique.

To find out the relevance of the texts through teachers' perspective.

In this research study, the researcher attempts to question the relevance of the History textbooks in terms of the content. The relevance of a text could be perceived in terms of the representation of the social reality in the curriculum. It should not to be treated as given but, we need to problematise it by studying the social conditions on the basis of which the content is selected and organised.

Sample

The researcher used non probability purposive sampling for the study. The criterion used to select the sample is teachers who were teaching Social Sciences to Classes VI, VII or VIII. The sample size chosen by the researcher was 31 teachers, out of which 30 teachers responded and 1 did not respond.

Tools

In this study, a questionnaire was used so that the respondents would have to answer questions and respond in writing. Both open form and closed form questions were used by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into three parts:

Part 1

Consisted of open ended questions on the composition of the learners of Classes VI, VII and VIII in terms of their

ethnicity; the present reality as experienced by the people and the effect of insurgency on the schools and the learners in Manipur; and the future of Manipur in terms of its economic prosperity, educational development and social change.

The researcher wanted to give the teachers ample space to voice their view in their own words. For example:

'Step-motherly treatment of the NE as a whole, of which Manipur is a part can be said to be the main cause why the people start to alienate themselves from India. There was no economic development brought to the NE after Independence while the mainland was developing almost in every corner. The main issue for the birth of insurgency in Manipur was the economic disparity, i.e., the state in comparison to other mainland states. Corruption and nepotism is another factor for the growth of insurgency.

Transport and communication, education, industries, etc. suffered ... the funding is negligible. Moreover people of the state Manipur (NE) are looked down upon as inferior by the mainland people. Teaching of history and the inclusion of the NE in the textbook of (Geography) would have helped others outside the region to know better about their own country. Many people, even educated persons don't know where Manipur is, for that matter other states of the NE.

What we need to do is to ask; whether the Govt. both in the State and the Centre has the political will to tackle this issue sincerely. The

sincerity of the Govt. is yet to be seen as corruption, nepotism is still flourishing and there is no political will at all. In short lack of political will and understanding of the Indian Govt. and the mainland people can be said to be the root cause for the present debacle'.

Part 2

Consisted of closed ended questions pertaining to issues of equitable representation of all the ethnic groups in the history textbook, classroom pedagogy, adequate and authentic selection and organisation of content, assessment, and policy.

The researcher wanted marked or restricted answers wherein the respondents had to choose one answer by marking 'Agree', 'Disagree', or 'Can't Say'.

Part 3

Consisted of open ended questions by questioning the relevance of the texts pertaining to the importance of local history, the misrepresentation of reality and the teaching of controversial issues in history. The researcher after thoroughly having read the textbooks took verbatim quotes and asked questions related to it.

Analysis and Interpretations

Qualitative data is usually analysed by giving 'detailed description, with direct quotations capturing people's personal perspective and experiences'. Hence, the answers were analysed and common themes were inducted from it, allowing 'the researcher to discover reality without having to fit it into a preconceived

theoretical perspective' (Best & Kahn, 2005, 242-43). The researcher has tried to give many direct quotations of the teachers so as to provide a rich description of the data. A simple quantitative technique, i.e., percentages was used in ascertaining the different perception of teachers regarding the notion of relevance of the texts.

1. To ascertain the reality, in terms of its past and the present, of the people of Manipur

The respondents were asked to give their view(s) about the issue of insurgency in Manipur.

How has it Affected Education System / Schools?

- ### *Regression*
  'Instead of progress, there is regression in the all-round development of the education system', writes one teacher. There is 'less number of working days' due to constant strikes and closure of schools. As classes cannot be conducted, 'syllabus cannot be completed in time'. 'Lessons are taught at random in order to complete the syllabus thereby leading to poor teaching – learning'. Hence, there is no smooth functioning and the school calendar is affected, with 'schools coming to a standstill'.

- ### *Monetary Demands*
  The insurgents demand money from the schools causing countless disturbances, and threats if demands are not fulfilled. 'In such a situation, schools are closed for some time and students and teaching staff hold sit in protests – requesting insurgents to withdraw the demands'.

- ### *Tension due to Terror*
  There is **'constant threat and fear'** felt by the administrators, the teachers and the students. This leads to **'tension'** and the closure of schools by the school authority when they are not able to pay the money demanded. There had been cases when teachers and students were kidnapped and killed if demands were not fulfilled.

- ### *Low Wages*
  The demand and collection of 'large sums have retarded the progress of infrastructure and wages of the employees'. Also, 'fixed percentages from teachers' wages are deducted . . . added to the woes of the teaching faculty', which have to be given to the insurgent groups.

- ### *Cleansing the System*
  Out of 30 teachers, three have written that insurgency has 'cleansed and checked' the education system, the students and the teachers systematically. It keeps a check on 'mass copying' during Board exams. 'The exams are held freer and fair… conducted smoothly'.

- ### *Forming of AMPSWA*
  All Manipur Private School Welfare Association (AMPSWA) has been formed, giving teachers a platform to come together and be united in their grievances. But, again it hasn't solved the problem completely with the organisation becoming more of a negotiating table.

  'Extortion from schools is still there but now it is more socially accepted by

setting up of the Private School Organisation', wrote one teacher, who is also the owner of the school. Hence, he is able to voice his opinions more freely and give a clearer picture.

How has the issue of insurgency affected the learners?

- **Fear Psychosis**
  'The learners start to develop psychological problem or disorder – restlessness, fear psychosis - leading to lack of concentration and trauma'. With cases of kidnapping of school children, 'a sense of insecurity is generated in them'.

- **Lack of Academic and Peaceful Atmosphere**
  With frequent strikes and closure of schools, 'syllabus cannot be completed leading to demoralised students, disruption of academic calendar, loss of knowledge and time'. Students are also made to 'protest' against monetary demands of the insurgents leading to loss of time. The learners lose 'opportunity to study peacefully and contently' as there is no concentration. It diverts the mind of the learners, leading to change of behaviour 'due to negative social interactions outside school', making them 'complacent, lethargic and no spirit of competition'.

- **Rise of Private Tuitions**
  As academic calendar is disrupted and syllabus cannot be completed in schools, parents are bound to send their children for 'private tuitions' so as to complete their course. Also, parents who can afford it, are sending their children outside the state to study. All this 'affect the income of parents', with a lot of money being spent on education.

- **Easy Means of Livelihood**
  The presence of insurgency affects the boys more, as 'ignorant youngsters are easily distracted and can be lured towards an easy earning'. It 'impacts particularly boys reading in Classes VI – XII'. Due to 'economic and family problems, poor academic performance, and absence of proper guidance', some boys join the 'militants'.

- **Gender Bias**
  Boys don't face 'diktats of do's and don'ts', unlike the girls, who are 'forced to follow a certain dress code' in schools (wearing wraparounds, the traditional wear for girls and women, instead of skirts and salwar-kameez in the higher classes). They are also supposed to 'maintain social moral behaviour'.

How do you see the future of Manipur, in terms of its:

Economic Prosperity?

Most of the teachers see a 'bleak future' with not much scope for any change. With economic activities coming to a halt due to 'extortion, killings, *bandhs*, strikes', there is a process of 'brain drain' with people choosing to study and work outside Manipur.

'There can be no economic prosperity in Manipur in the midst of all troubles and problems. When there is peace there is economic prosperity.'

Educational Development?

The presence of 'harassment, kidnapping, extortion, make people's

life unpredictable'. This leads to closing of schools and hence, education is 'badly affected'.

Due to 'corruption, the quality of education has gone down with the rich but less qualified getting a plum job while the poor but well qualified remain jobless'. If the 'present internal problems continue to persist' then the 'State's education would be at stake'.

Social Change

There will be 'violence, deterioration of morals and cultures, and more insurgency groups might arise due to difference in ideology, wants and demands'.

The practice of 'corruption in all spheres of life', along with 'narrow minded ethnic thoughts' will hamper the development of the state. There will 'be more and more insecurity, communalism, divisions, selfishness, killings, lawlessness and hatred among the people'.

The researcher concludes that the people of Manipur have been facing a reality full of turmoil and conflict since a long time. The diversity in terms of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural contexts has led to the presence of a complex society. The existence of multiple realities of both the tribal and the non-tribal populations stands in the way of resolving the dilemma of a common identity. The politics of identity continues to be played through the demands for their respective sovereign states by the various insurgents groups. In the tussle between the government and the insurgents, the price is paid by the common people in the form of parting with their money, peace of mind, a peaceful social life, and above all, their lives. Education system and students are also not spared from this threat. Both teachers and students are affected, as they are also an important constituent of the society. People continue to live life on the edge every day. But, all this is not visible, never given a platform in the national scenario.

2. To analyse the representation of the people, as learnt by the learners, in the Manipur State textbooks

The textbooks of Classes VI, VII and VIII recommended and used in the schools of Manipur are published by the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur (BSEM). The following table gives an overview of the content in the textbooks of Classes VI, VII and VIII.

Table 1.1
Contents of Classes VI, VII and VIII

Class	Year	Content
Social Sciences, VI	BSEM (2005) Manipur	People and Society in the Ancient Period 1. Studying The Past 2. Early Man and His Life 3. Ethnic and Linguistic Groups 4. Ancient Civilisations 5. Rise of Kingdoms and Empires in India 6. Major Religions

Social Sciences, VII	BSEM (2006) Manipur	People and Society in Medieval Times 1. Medieval Period in Indian History 2. Rise of Small Kingdoms in India in Medieval India 3. The Delhi Sultanate 4. Emergence of Regional Powers 5. The Mughal Empire 6. Rise of Independent States 7. States and Kingdoms in North-East India Since the 15th Century 8. Developments Outside India 9. Religious Developments 10. Manipur Under Garibniwaz
Social Sciences, VIII	BSEM. (2006) Manipur	People and Society in Modern Times 1. Industrial Revolution: Search for Markets and Raw Materials 2. Revolutionary and Nationalist Movements in America, France, Germany and Italy 3. British Conquest of India 4. Manipur and the British 5. India Renaissance: Socio-Religious Reform Movements 6. Indian National Movement 7. Manipur Under British Rule 8. Religious Changes in Manipur 9. The Second World War and Manipur

The common features in the textbooks of the three classes are being discussed as follows:

• There is an emphasis on facts and dates, events and personalities. History is not only stories about kings and their empires, wars and conquests. There is the need to study the contribution of the common people towards the generation of historical knowledge, especially about the community from which the learners come from so they might be able to relate and understand the politics of historical representation.

In the Chapter, *Rise of Kingdoms and Empires* (Class VI, 53-70) there is emphasis on kings and their empires. In Class VII, there are seven chapters on empires, kingdoms and regional powers (21-75, 90-93). Similarly, in Class VIII, wars and conquests are discussed (26-40, 43-50, 76-87, 96-99).

• The language used is 'narrative style'. The lessons go on a flow with 'no' questions or inquiry for the learners to ponder. The textbooks rarely emphasise on 'decisions, questions, and thinking'. There is a deep silence between 'those who write history textbooks and the students who read them' (Paxton 1999). There is no space given to the learners to imagine, think and understand the pasts. Everything is 'given' with the learners having to rote memorise them. The evidences are:

' . . . The four very old civilizations grew and developed on the banks of

river or river-valleys. There are a number of reasons for this:

(a) The rivers were good source of water.
(b) The areas near the rivers were very fertile.
(c) Rivers means of cheap and easy transport.
(d) The areas near the rivers had a good climate' (Class VI, 21-22).

- Examples of literary and archaeological sources are mentioned and discussed in the chapter, 'Studying the Past' (Class VI, 2-5). But, there are no examples of folklores and picture of sources which might have contributed to the curiosity and imagination of the learners who are of 11-12 years at Class VI. Moreover, it has been found from studies that 'formal thinking develops later and History for those under 14 years of age should not be over-abstract in form' (Hallam 1970).

- History is supposed to be a construction of the past by a continuous dialogue between the past and the present using source and evidences (Carr 1961). But, in the textbooks, the learners are 'given' the details with no clear use of sources or validation of findings.

The use of words likes 'we do not know exactly' and 'probably' cannot be made loosely as this might result in confusion and speculation with no use of evidences. The evidences are:

'We do not know exactly what or how early humans worshipped. They probably worshipped their ancestors, the sun, fire, water, earth, etc.' (Class VI, 13).

'Very little is known about the religious beliefs of the Harappan people. They probably worshipped animals and trees. The bull and peepal tree were their favourites (Class VI, 25-26).

'. . . flourished a wonderful civilisation in the Indus Valley. This civilisation came to an end . . . We do not know exactly how it happened. Repeated floods may have driven the people . . . It may have also been due to scarcity of water. Natural calamities like earthquakes. It is also probable that some tribes . . . invaded the cities in a series' (Class VI, 26).

- There is emphasis on world history, regional history, and history of Manipur, along with national history.

Table 2

Distribution of Specific Content in the Textbooks of Classes VI, VII and VIII

Specific Content	Class VI (No. of Pages)	Class VI (%)	Class VII (No. of Pages)	Class VII (%)	Class VIII (No. of Pages)	Class VIII (%)
World History	11 pages	29 %	10 pages	28%	8 pages	20%
Indian History	22 pages	58 %	9 pages	25 %	18 pages	45%
Regional History	2 pages	5 %	12 pages	33 %	-	-
Manipur History	3 pages	8 %	5 pages	14 %	14 pages	35 %
Grand Total	38 pages	100 %	36 pages	100 %	40 pages	100 %

- The role of Manipur is highlighted wherever possible and given more space. The evidences are:

  ' . . . Megalithic culture developed in Manipur also. . . The megaliths found in Manipur are victory memorials, ceremonial status symbols and memorials for the dead' (Class VI, 47).

  'During the medieval times, Indian trade, specially with the West, was carried on both land and sea. There were some important trade routes during the said period. There were . . . a land route to China and other south – east Asian countries through Manipur, etc.' (Class VII, 8).

- There is an attempt to integrate selective elements into the dominant tradition by bringing them into close association with the values of the dominant groups.

  For instance, the role of Manipur in World War II, and the contribution of the people to the Indian Freedom Movement are asserted with a separate chapter, **The Second World War and British**. There is debate among scholars about local responses to the war with two factions: Anglo-Allied and Japanese-INA. (Singh 1998, 171). This debate is not discussed in the text. Instead, a particular event of hoisting the Indian Tricolour by the INA in a locality is interpreted to have historical importance and integrated into the 'dominant tradition'.

  '. . . the INA set up its headquarters at Moirang Kangla and hoisted the Indian Tricolour on 14 April, 1944. All the areas south of Ningthoukhong were liberated from the British rule' (Class VIII, 97).

'Many Manipuris joined the INA and contributed to the fight for India's freedom from British rule. . . It accelerated the growth of political consciousness in Manipur. . . rousing of a sense of patriotism among the people. . . It also broke the wall of isolation that had kept the people of Manipur from the rest of the country. The relationship between the leaders of Manipur and other national leaders was strengthened' (Class VIII, 98-99).

- The Meiteis are given more space and voice, amongst all the ethnic groups due to their being the 'dominant group'. The evidences are:

  'The main source of the ancient history of Manipur is the early Manipuri literature in Archaic Meitei / Meitei script' (Class VI, 3).

  'The ancient Meitei society was divided into seven Salais (clans) as is prevalent today. Consolidation of the kingdom including all the clan principalities and most of the hill villages led to the emergence of a powerful kingdom. . .' (Class VI, 75).

  'During the time of king Khagemba (1597 – 1652 A.D.) the traditional Meitei religion flourished. . . He was a great patron of Sanamahi religion. . . Meitei religion lays stress on clean and simple food, clean and simple clothing, deep meditation, respect to the parents and good character' (Class VI, 89-90).

- The exercises at the end of the lessons are text based with the learners having to memorise the facts and definitions. There is no

space to analyse, do source reading, think, inquire, or develop historical understanding. The evidences are:

(i) **Answer briefly**

Q. Mention two archaeological sources of History. (Class VI, 6).

Q. A Chola king conquered the Maldives. Who was he? (Class VII, 25).

Q. In which year was the Meitei Marup established? (Class VIII, 94).

(ii) **Write 'True' or 'False'**

1. The Harrapans loved hunting. (Class VI, 49).
2. The Pratiharas were Rajputs. (Class VII, 25).
3. Pettigrew knew Bengali and Manipuri. (Class VIII, 94).

(iii) **Write short notes**

1. Old names of Manipur. (Class VI, 78).
2. King Bhoja. (Class VII, 26).
3. American Baptist Mission. (Chapter VIII, 95).

• The projects at the end of the lessons do not provide scope for visiting historical sites and museums or helping to develop interest and understanding. The learners are to make a list, draw a picture, or collect and paste pictures. The evidences are:

(i) Make a list of the historical monuments of Manipur (at least 3 in number). (Class VI, 7).

(ii) Draw the picture of the 'Dancing Girl'. (Class VI, 52).

(iii) Draw a picture of the 'Boston Tea Party'. (Class VIII, 25).

(iv) Collect and paste the picture of a famous mosque on a chart paper. (Class VII, 20).

The researcher also tried to analyse the textbooks in terms of continuity across the three classes and the themes emerging are discussed as follows:

• *Chronology*

There is a strict tracing of the history of humankind from Ancient in Class VI, Medieval in Class VII, to Modern in Class VIII. The periodisation of history into Ancient, Medieval and Modern is taken as the base for each successive class of VI, VII and VIII, and discussed respectively.

For example, the Meitei State is believed to have evolved in the ancient period:

'The ancient Meitei society was divided into seven Salais (clans) as is prevalent today. Consolidation of the kingdom including all the clan principalities and most of the hill villages led to the emergence of a powerful kingdom. . .' (Class VI, 75).

In the medieval times, the Meitei state is believed to have consolidated into a kingdom:

'. . . learn about the rise and growth of the kingdom of Manipur during the period from the 15th century to the 17th century A.D. Almost all the kings of Manipur in the medieval times were conquerors'. (Class VII, 64).

The modern period with the Burmese conquest and later, British rule is supposed to have led to devastation and loss of independence of Manipur:

'The Burmese forces occupied Manipur for seven years, from 1819 to 1826. During this period they carried out a systematic plan of

destruction in Manipur. The people in the valley were subjected to all kinds of inhuman torture. . . This Burmese reign of terror is known as the Seven Years' Devastation in the history of Manipur'. (Class VIII, 45).

- ### *Religion*

In Class VI, there is the study of the 'Traditional Meitei Religion' (89-90) in the Chapter *Major Religions*, which include Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism. For example:

'During the time of king Khagemba (1597 – 1652 A.D.) the traditional Meitei religion flourished. . . He was a great patron of Sanamahi religion. . . Meitei religion lays stress on clean and simple food, clean and simple clothing, deep meditation, respect far one's parents and good character' (Class VI, 89-90).

In Class VII, the coming of 'Mayangs' (a term used for people not originally of Manipur) (65), and of 'Hinduism' (86-87, 91-92) is taught to have led to Sanskritisation of the religious and social life in Manipur. The new religion is supposed to have been patronised by the kings of Manipur (86-87, 92). Some evidences are:

'The traditional Meitei religion got a setback during the reign of Garibniwaz. Many temples of the traditional deities were destroyed. . . Many other Hindu temples were also erected under the patronage of Garibniwaz . . . Each of the seven Salais (clans) was given a Hindu

Gotra. The traditional festivals were given Sanskrit names . . . Thus, the process of Sanskritisation of Manipur began vigorously' (Class VII, 92).

In Class VIII, the Chapter *Religious Changes in Manipur* talks about the 'Sanamahi Religious Movement', a movement to revitalise and revive the indigenous culture and religion. The evidence is:

'Sanamahi religious movement is the movement to revitalise the indigenous religion of the Meiteis (Meeteis). The followers of Sanamahi religion devote themselves to discovery of the ancient manuscripts or Puyas and popularisation of Meitei script . . . emphasised the re-discovery of traditional culture, customary practices and traditional religious ceremonies of the Meitei society. In 1976, Manipur State Assembly passed the Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple Act, 1976. . . In the census of 2001, Sanamahi religion has been recorded as one of the recognised religions of Manipur (Class VIII, 92-93).

- ### *Co-option*

The dominant group maintains their hegemony through compromise and the process of 'mentioning'. Here, the history and culture of less powerful groups are included in the texts by integrating its selective elements into the dominant tradition. These are brought 'into close association with the values of the powerful groups' (Apple 1993).

In the texts, the Manipuri Muslims, also given the name

'Meitei' Pangals, are being integrated into the Meitei culture by tracing their lineage to the Meitei group from their maternal side. They are welcomed and their contribution to the state of Manipur is also mentioned. The evidences are:

'. . . There are also Manipuri Muslims in the valley, popularly known as Meitei Pangals. They came to Manipur mostly during the time of King Khagemba from Bengal, from which the word Pangal (i.e., Bengal) was derived. Their forefathers migrated without womenfolk, married Manipuri girls, at the instance of the king, and settled here. Thus, on their maternal side, they are all descendents of the Meiteis in the valley. Like the Meiteis, they have also surnames conferred on them by the kings of Manipur. Meiteilon or Manipuri is their mother tongue'. (Class VI, 13).

'The newly settled Muslims contributed much in the socio-economic development of the kingdom' (Class VII, 67).

'Islam came to Manipur when Muslims settled in Manipur during the reign of king Khagemba (1597-1652). They were among those taken prisoners by Khagemba . . . in 1606 A.D. These Muslims were settled as a separate community in the valley. They were later joined by other Muslims who came at different times from Sylhet and Cachar. They took Manipuri women as their wives and settled in Manipur. They adopted Manipuri as their mother tongue. The Manipuri name for Muslims is Meitei Pangal, which is derived from the word, Bengal'.

- ***Marginal Groups***
Common people, women and the hill tribes are given isolated mentions or sometimes none at all. There is the need to study the contribution of these groups towards the generation of historical knowledge. The evidences are:

'There were many classes of people in the society, such as the ruling class, the priests, common men which included artists, craftsmen and farmers, and slaves' (Class VI, 32).

'During the Mughal period, the Indian society can be broadly divided into three classes of people. The Nobility formed the first and the highest class . . . The merchants, government officials and the rich peasants formed the Middle class . . . The lowest class consisted of the poor peasants, soldiers, artisans and shopkeepers (Class VII, 52).

'The Vedic Aryan society was well-organised . . . Society was patriarchal . . . The wife was an honoured member of the family. She participated in all religious ceremonies by the side of her husband. However, in the later Vedic period the status of the wife became lower. Polygamy was prevalent among the princes, nobles and rich class of people. The birth of a daughter was regarded as an unhappy occasion' (Class VI, 27).

'Girls could not go to school but were taught at home to be good house-keepers . . . Women also had no political rights . . .' (Class VI, 38).

' . . . The position of women was low. Purdah was followed by high class Hindu and Muslims ladies. Dowry system was prevalent among the Hindus' (Class VII, 33).

'First Nupilan was the first Anti-British movement launched by the women-folk of Manipur . . . the first forceful and effective public protest against an act of injustice committed by the British officials. It was a courageous act on the part of the women folk of Manipur and it set an example to be followed by the future generation' (Class VIII, 80-81).

'In 1939 the women of Manipur once again rose against the British and the Maharaja of Manipur. This event is known as the Second Nupilan . . . Some of the women leaders were arrested and put in jail . . . The movement was started by the women alone . . .' (Class VIII, 84-85).

' . . . The British Government requested the Maharaja of Manipur to help them with a labour force. Accordingly, the Maharaja tried to raise a labour force from amongst the hill people, both the Nagas and the Kukis. The Kukis resented this move very much. . . On December 19, 1917, a group of Kukis attacked the police station at Kumbi. It marked the beginning of the Kuki Rebellion, 1917-1919 . . .' (Class VIII, 81).

'Another notable anti-British movement was the Zeliangrong Revolt . . . The term Zeliangrong was coined in the year 1947. It is derived from the names of three groups of people namely, the Zeme, the Liangmai and the Rongmei. These people belong to the same ethnic group' (Class VIII, 82-83).

' . . . Many tribal volunteers lent their support to the INA and many were imprisoned' (Class VIII, 98).

The researcher concludes that the representation needs to be consciously reflected upon by teachers, parents, community, school administrators, and people involved in writing of the textbooks. The varied views of knowledge, in the form of varied representations, could lead to different social values, within a particular historical and social context, which could influence the structure and the content of curriculum (Pollard 2002). Instead of a world or a national or a regional or a local representation, there is a need to develop a historical understanding of the learners. Hence, there is a need for a 'critical pedagogy', building of a thinking mind, and a democratic environment where learners could problematise and question the existing inequalities and the misrepresentation of reality be it in any aspect of their lives – home, school, or society.

3. To find out the relevance of the texts through the perspective of teachers of Social Sciences

Analysis of close ended questions

Representation of All Ethnic Groups

Table 3
Teachers' Response on Representation

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
Representation of all ethnic groups is necessary	77%	20%	3%
Need for equitable representation of all ethnic groups	70%	23%	7%

Classroom Pedagogy

Table 4
Teachers' Response on Classroom Pedagogy

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
Learners are able to relate lessons to their lives and everyday experience	47%	33%	20%
Learners participate actively in class discussions when addressing Manipur	67%	20%	13%

Adequate and Authentic Selection and Organisation of the Content

Table 5
Teachers' Response on the Content

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
Content is adequate	23%	67%	10%
Content is authentic	46%	27%	27%
Teachers need to refer to other books	93%	7%	-

Assessment

Table 6
Teachers' Response on Assessment

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
Questions in the books are text based	93%	7%	-
Projects, assignments, reports, etc., are used for assessment	66%	27%	27%

Analysis of open ended questions

The teachers were asked to give their view as to why they thought that there is a need to teach the History of Manipur, along with Indian History and World History, to the learners of Classes VI – VIII.

• **Know One's Own Past**
  Most of the teachers wrote that there is a need for the learners to know one's own history first before knowing others. 'Knowing self first is essential to know others', writes one teacher. Also, 'the syllabus in Indian history did not cover Manipur's history (i.e., in the college)'. So, the assertion of one's identity by including themselves and studying their own history could be deliberate.

• **Inculcate Identity and Value**
  The teaching-learning of History is seen as means to know one's (lost) culture and foster a sense of patriotism and belonging. It helps the learners to be aware of their own 'roots' and makes them 'feel proud to call themselves Manipuri'. Some of the teachers believe that a 'sense of pride and patriotism' is instilled along with 'moral values of the past' in the learners. The learners 'know their cultures, customs and traditions' and form their own 'identity'. 'There is no greater glory in the learning of History than gaining the knowledge of one's own heritage and recognising the past of one's own nation' writes one teacher.

• **Future Aspiration**
  Some teachers wrote of the long term importance of teaching-learning of history and the need to give equal importance to local history, national history and world history so that learners could 'improve and compete with students outside their own state, country'. 'Teaching only History of Manipur will not give the learners a broad view of the world and all three should have equal footing or weightage'. The teacher also believed that 'a society cannot live in isolation need to compare and contrast in order to bring progress and development'. One teacher writes that the History of Manipur should be taught because 'it is necessary for students who compete in the state competitive exams'.

These open-ended questions were in the form of a small passage taken from the history text used in schools of Manipur. The teachers were asked to read and give their views:

1. '. . . Many Manipuris joined the INA and contributed to the fight for India's freedom from the British rule . . . It accelerated the growth of political consciousness in Manipur . . . arousing of a sense of patriotism . . . broke upon the wall of isolation that had kept the people of Manipur from the rest of the country . . .' (Class VIII, 98 – 99).

Why do you think the past is represented in this way, while the present is quite the opposite?

• **Same Goal in the Past**
  In the past, the presence of a common foe, the British brought the people of India and Manipur together. The dream of a sovereign

state of their own made 'the Manipuri join the INA with the hope that the British rule in Manipur will end and Manipur sovereignty will be restored'.

• **_Different Goals at Present_**

'. . . people were drawn together to face a common foe, the British . . . in the present things are no better than it was at that time . . . the walls are still there . . . the past seems to be losing its significance'.

Now, things seem to have changed with 'the people of Manipur struggling for independence'. One teacher writes, the 'step-motherly treatment of the North-East as a whole of which Manipur is a part can be said to be the main cause why the people start to alienate themselves from India'. Also, other teachers add that 'negligence and non-intervention from the Central Government (Delhi) to address the problems of unemployment, rise in price, and corruption of ruling governments, in the state has made them anti-Delhi, hence anti-India'.

• **_History as Socialisation_**

Some of the teachers believe that 'the young minds must be educated about the hardships faced in the past to take responsibilities on their shoulders'. This shows how History in school could be used as a means to socialise the learners and take pride in one's struggle and success in the past.

2. 'Any act of criminal violence or intimidation by any individual or group, causing terror and violation of human rights, may be called terrorism.

Examples:
  i) Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the USA.
 ii) Cross–border terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir' (Class VIII, 249).

This passage was used to elicit the teachers' responses regarding the text not addressing the issue of insurgency in Manipur. Did the teachers give these two examples in the class or did they try and sensitise the learners by addressing the issue of insurgency in the class? What were the learners' reactions and concerns? The teachers were requested to give an elaborate response.

• **_Interference and Fear Factor_**

The teachers wrote that the insurgent groups directly or indirectly interfered in the working of the state:

'The underground groups always interfere in all the different works taken up by the different departments of the government'. 'What is the point to drive one to understand insurgency when one is living with it . . . Today education is controlled by the diktats of certain insurgent organisation(s)'.

A feeling of threat is inherent as one teachers writes, '. . . everything lies in the hands of the extremists and terrorists . . . insurgents are directly involved in almost all the affairs'. Every one is 'compelled to remain silent' as lives may be at stake and 'it might endanger the teachers and won't help the taught'. 'Where there is rule of terrorists who

can go against them', questions one teacher.

Even if people were to question and ask for answers, the teachers wrote they might 'face opposition from some insurgent groups'. Also, 'it is impossible to mention / criticise about a few groups in particular where even the writers' life could be at stake'. Hence, the people seem to be living under threat and fear.

- ***Terrorism vs. Insurgency***
Some teachers differentiated between terrorism as given in the textbooks and insurgency as present in Manipur. One teacher writes that 'the former lays emphasis on terror activities, violence and creation of fear psychosis in public minds, whereas the latter tries to secure the co-operation of public to achieve their goal of self-determination and violence'.

Another teacher writes that 'there is great difference between the two . . . complicated . . . you cannot totally paint them black . . . need to justify their cause . . . the government is afraid that a chapter on it will give insurgents more sympathisers'.

Insurgency is supposed to be 'in lesser form and limited' and 'localised and smaller in extent' in Manipur. Also, 'all the violence may not be treated as terror'. Whereas, the examples given in the books were 'international and distinct issue' and hence, they were terrorist acts and needed to be addressed.

- ***Classroom Discussion***
The researcher got two different answers on whether the teachers addressed the issue of insurgency in the class, besides the two given examples, which is in direct contrast with what the researcher has understood after the analysis on teachers' perspective of the present reality of Manipur and the view of most teachers that everyone is aware about the issue of insurgency in Manipur.

Some teachers wrote that as 'the books were published earlier and outdated' and 'the issue of insurgency was not very serious in the past', it didn't have examples of insurgency and their acts of violence in Manipur. But, most of the teachers did try to sensitise the learners and discussed the violent acts and killings in the class.

One teacher writes, ' . . . an obligation to create in my students the spirit of patriotism and loyalty towards our country . . . instill hope and spell out where insurgency has contributed towards this chaotic existence'.

Most of the teachers wrote that the learners are aware and come out with 'many observations of their own and their insecurities'. They are 'disgusted with reality' and 'strongly react and condemn the inhuman acts of the insurgents'. They discuss with 'interest and enthusiasm' and 'are keen to know more about the causes . . . goal . . . demands . . . how to solve this problem of insurgency in Manipur'.

While some teachers wrote that 'every one is aware' and 'the learners take the issue of insurgency as a

matter of fact . . . has become a part of their society, integral to their living and thinking'. So, the teachers felt there was no need to discuss the issue in the class, as one teacher writes that 'there are better things to be learned and discussed'.

Also, the teachers felt that the learners '. . . are not mature enough and not the appropriate platform to discuss' and 'the learners are minor . . . and don't have knowledge of insurgency'.

The researcher concludes that the relevance of the textbooks could be questioned. Instead of highlighting the accomplishment and achievement of only a single group and 'typecasting particular groups as dependent and helpless victims who make limited contributions of significance', there is a need to represent each and every individual and group 'in all strata of human accomplishment' (Gay 2004, 319). Also, the adequacy and authenticity of the textbooks is an issue with the teachers as they have to refer to other books for validation.

The important role of teacher is also to be seen in the context of their mediating role in the teaching-learning of controversial issues (Ballard 1970). The obsession with learning, rather than understanding and questioning is to be addressed on the basis of whether controversial issues and discussions are given space in classroom interaction or not (Dickinson & Lee 1978; Kumar 1996). Some of the teachers do try and sensitise the learners on the presence of insurgency, having discussions on issues related to the immediate context of the learners. But, the larger picture on the social reality still needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

This research study concludes that the understanding of the reality is all the more important so as to change it for the good of everyone. The learners come from varied ethnic groups but they are being given a 'collective consciousness' through the textbooks. This does not help in 'meaning making' as learners are taking in the facts without relating to the experience. The distorted and incomplete representation of the social reality needs to be questioned because unless then the representation would continue to be irrelevant for the learners. Also, History is seen as a means of handing down of one's culture and value, nationalistic propaganda or fostering a sense of national identity. This understanding and practice by the teachers needs to be addressed and problematised. History is to be taught as a discipline and the learners made to develop historical understanding.

The regional history and the present situation of Manipur is one small reality in the vast universe of the national scenario of India. There would exist many such realities in the vast expanse within the national boundaries of India. Such realities continue to be subsumed and integrated within the same symbolic universe of dominant group and being presented by giving a cover of national identity. The important influence of our social context in recognising and

validating what is to be passed on as knowledge cannot be ignored. Until each and everyone get to know their true reality and get representation, the need to assert one's identity would never cease to exist.

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