

# Understanding Curriculum through the Concerns of Marginalised

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## Abstract

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*The paper engages with the term curriculum, and attempts to understand how it becomes an instrument of exclusion and divisiveness. This paper reflects on how the dilution of curricular goals has a deleterious impact and how curriculum transaction tends to reinforce the existent social hierarchies. The paper also briefly discusses about the key curricular recommendations of NCF 2005, Kothari Commission (1964) and Yashpal Committee Report (1993) particularly with respect to the representation of the marginalised in the Indian educational scenario. The discussion is done in light of concerns about the oppressed classes voiced in the Mandal Commission Report (1980). In this paper, an attempt has been made to delve into the underlying concerns that characterise developing a curriculum, particularly in the Indian context. Section 1 of the paper is an exploration of the term curriculum. It is pertinent to delve into the same as it forms the basis of understand how divisiveness and sectarian interests permeate the framing of the curriculum. Key aspects of this dimension are discussed in Section 2. Drawing insights from research studies on curricular framing and policy outlook (discussed in Section 3), an attempt has been made to explore how textbooks are often non-neutral, biased and are influenced by the socio-political factors and interests of dominant groups in the society. This analysis draws upon insights from policy initiatives such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005), reports and the efforts made to make education more inclusive, as elaborated in Position Papers on SC and ST by National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005).*

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### **CONCEPTUALISATION OF CURRICULUM**

The term curriculum has broader connotations with respect to the traditional understanding of a series of subjects that learner encounters for a specific period of time. Marsh (2009) describes that understanding the curricular dimensions requires an investigation at three levels which encompass looking at the planned aspects, how it is enacted and the experienced curriculum which hints at what is going on in the classroom. This understanding of the term curriculum is not limited to the idea of what is specified or deemed to be standardised. It rather includes the unpredictable dimensions of transaction of curriculum in the classroom. The need is to understand that the term curriculum is not only limited to certain academic subjects. Also, there must be flexibility with respect to the context of the learner. Marsh (2009) highlights that principles of curriculum construction must be inclusive in terms of how it addresses needs and experiences of learners, that involves making decisions about the content and process, and the range of issues, topics and concerns that need to be addressed.

Curriculum has been central to the understanding of processes by which knowledge hierarchies were established and validated. According to Brown (2013), 'the structuring power of knowledge was implicated as a force arbitrarily negotiating and sponsoring a cultural authority

while underwriting a given social, cultural, and economic order.' (p. 5). Theorists have repeatedly laid emphasis on the idea that schools are non-neutral institutions linked to the larger society through principles of domination and social control. The new sociology of education has been instrumental in viewing school from the perspective where schools could no longer be counted on to eliminate division within society they reinforced them through pedagogies, content and the hidden curriculum. In subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways, overt and implicit forms of knowledge transference promote class divisions.

It can be asserted that the curriculum functions as a powerful instrument which ratifies the nature of knowledge that is recognised and institutionalised through norms of approval. It can be stated to be 'purposively oriented'. However, instead of the common notion of what constitutes 'a model or an ideal curriculum', it is imperative among other considerations to recognise the composition of students and other sub-regional variations while framing the syllabus. Instead of carrying forward the legacy of outdated topics and replacing idea of comprehensiveness with information and facts it is essential that the syllabus and therefore the textbooks are suitably adjusted according to the needs and requirement of learners. It is a pertinent issue which should be taken into consideration while framing the curriculum.

### **FRAMING OF CURRICULUM IN INDIA**

Kumar (2004) laments the lack of deliberation over the framing of the curriculum. Describing the role of the bureaucracy in curriculum designing for the school stage, quasi-bureaucracy of the state-controlled institutions of pedagogical research and training, it is emphasised that a reflective inquiry into the structures of knowledge has seldom been on the agenda. Given, the ramifications of the integral relation between school and society, it is essential to recognise curriculum deliberation as a 'social dialogue' (Kumar, 2004, p. 14). It requires engaging on a wider level with different stakeholders in the education system and with the know-how of the variedness of social conditions and perspectives.

Kumar (2004) highlights that to facilitate expansiveness in the scope of deliberation and construction of the curriculum, it is vital to include teachers in the process. This also must refrain from being a mere token gesture; rather 'more important is the capacity of a deliberation to be sensitive to the dialogues going on in the wider society' (Kumar, 2004, p. 15). However, the subordination of the teacher and the muting of the voice and agency of the teacher in the culture of education in India give out a message of the blatant refusal to recognise the significance of teacher participation at a wider level. Teacher agency has been dominant in the past Indian educational narrative. A glance at the guru-shishya tradition

testifies to the importance of the exemplary, inspiring and essential value imparting Indian teacher. However, when a reference is made to the present scenario of the role of the teacher in state-led education system the spectrum varies from selective involvement to blatant disregard and alienation. Thus, in the larger process of social transformation through education, the role of the teacher, though given a pedestal according to the normative understanding of guru-shishya tradition, the teacher's presence remains unacknowledged. He further highlights that the little curriculum deliberation taking place in the higher circles of educational power remains extremely poor on account of the absence of the teacher's voice.

Highlighting the ill effects of the transcendental nature of the school curriculum, Kumar (2004) explicates that the disjunction between reality and the content of the curriculum is a cause of concern as issues that our society is grappling with find no reflection in the school's daily curriculum. The absence of any link with real life concerns tends to present only one-dimensional perspective of knowledge. The knowledge imparted in the classroom transcends all living concerns that children as members of the society might have, as well as all other concerns that the adult members of society have and which will affect children' (Kumar, 2004, p. 14).

**BASIS OF CURRICULUM FORMATION**

The crisis remains as the efforts to bridge this gap in pedagogical planning have had minimal outcomes. The attempt has been to bypass rather than remedying the dissociation between schools and society. Kumar (2004), argues that the overemphasis on the broad principles of children's psychology as adequate basis for developing suitable curricula and materials has led to the overlooking of the socio-cultural dimensions of the curriculum. This has particularly been expressed with regard to the 'behavioural objectives' of education schematised in taxonomy by Bloom (1956). The major issue associated with the same is the description of the objectives of curriculum and teaching largely defined in behavioural terms. This view, according to Kumar (2004) only takes into consideration the objectives with little regard for the knowledge content used to achieve these behavioural aims. Thus, the skills developed take precedence over the content or situation which may require using these skills. This view of curriculum takes into consideration 'how something is learnt rather than what is learnt. It promises a technical means to transcend the milieu, and it legitimises such transcendence in the name of effective instruction' (Kumar, 2004, p.16).

Nawani (2010) emphasises on the role of textbooks in legitimising and limiting the spheres of knowledge, more through the convenient exclusion of content. Describing

the same as the vital reason why textbooks have been problematised and politicised, she also adds it to the issue of convenient acceptance of the textbook as all that needs to be dealt with in the sacred portals of the classroom. Analysing the complexity of this contention with respect to History textbooks, Nair (2012) highlights how the word has attached emotive and political connotations to itself. Further, she explains how questions raised with respect to textbooks have been fundamentally addressed such as concerns of self-representation, cultural identity, versions of history, facets of citizenship, etc. Particularly discussing the same with respect to history textbooks, she states that textbooks are a resource for the State to 'disseminate a national consciousness and a "right" perception of the past' (Nair, 2012). Due to the sheer variedness of historical interpretations, textbooks for teaching history are often sensitive to issues of contemporary politics and culture. The degree of emphasis, people and events chosen to be represented are questioned.

As highlighted by Rathnam (2000), for designing of the curriculum, a selection process is at work, but what is even more perplexing is how and what kind of selection process is operative in a democratic set up. The reference is made to the idea of a coherent ideology which becomes functional when a curriculum is etched out. Apparently, cohering this can be questioned on the grounds that it is homogenising in nature

which is further problematised and complicated by the understanding that there levels of schooling and access were made available to different sections of the population. The persistent issue has been the inability to adequately draw the linkage between the aims and issues with the contents that should be incorporated in the curriculum. Because of the sheer diversity and the heterogeneity of the socio-cultural landscape, it requires consistent efforts and participation by all stakeholders in order to make it enriched and relevant. These include giving valence to dynamics of the indigenous practices, art forms, literature and narratives. Combined with an interdisciplinary approach, there has to be multilingual effort. The social concerns must necessarily find space in the pedagogy and the resources prepared for teaching-learning purposes.

Nambissan (2000) highlights the issue while discussing about the role of the curriculum emphasises on giving due consideration to the manner in which the educational experiences of Dalit and Adivasi children are influenced by the larger context of social marginalisation of these communities. The discriminatory attitudes contribute to negatively impacting the educational experiences of these children in classrooms which are usually in want of resources and motivated teachers. She further emphasises that exclusion on the basis of language and culture

are instrumental in passing on message of inferiority to the students throughout the schooling process. In light of these concerns, the efforts directed at curriculum construction must not be limited to mere rhetoric but rather they should be aimed at being constructive. The description of curriculum in National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) as a network of learning experiences or set of planned activities essential for realising the aims of education, and syllabus as a more focused constituent of the same is important. It highlights the view that it is not rigid or prescriptive but rather flexible, giving scope for specificities of the socio-cultural, historical and individual aspects to shape the course of the educational experience.

The overwhelming importance attached to the examination system in the determination of what is to be included in the curriculum is also a negative factor. It negates or devalues the importance of keeping into perspective the role of aims, the context and the cognitive requirements of the learners. A generalised, traditional understanding of the term curriculum underlines the fact that it is centred on the respective subject knowledge that can be accessed through the textbooks, and the subjects are dealt in an isolated manner. The need for memorisation often overwhelms the socio-political, geographical, and cultural diversities that exist across different areas.

## **REPORTS AND COMMISSION ON EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM**

### **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005**

One of the primary reasons underlying the overwhelming neglect of construction and transaction of curriculum has been that it has not been recognised as an act of deliberation. It has been an area of discussion and debate but confined to a domain which conveniently excludes a majority that partakes and participates through multiple ways with differing curricular dimensions on a daily basis. The perception has been dominant that its ramifications are only limited to a few within the school and stakeholders who participate in the process of its formation. Outside this domain it is deemed to be 'only' the state's responsibility to provide education. This mindset is instrumental in shaping the society as a mute receiver of knowledge or information which cannot be contested or challenged. The National Curriculum Framework critiques this alienated and one-dimensional flow of knowledge. Also, refraining from structuring educational knowledge according to a rigid particular pattern, it provides guidelines that attempts to bridge the artificial gaps created between home and school knowledge. It recognises that the immediate socio-cultural milieu offers a rich resource as thriving knowledge base, and replacing this with an information

overload weakens the foundations and limits the accessibility.

The document has been exemplary in attempting to give an in-depth understanding of the pedagogic concerns by drawing in socio-psychological complexities. Emphasis has been laid on the societal contexts, the process of knowledge generation, the learning environment and concerns of curriculum design. It further reiterates the need to respond to specific developments and concerns arising in contemporary debates such as: the retention of all children in school to achieve the goal of Universal Elementary Education; fostering democracy as a way of life; inculcating respect for constitutional values of plurality and secularism in children; promoting decentralisation to facilitate the generation of locally relevant knowledge and curriculum practices; sensitisation to environmental issues; and broadening of the scope of curriculum to include traditional crafts, work and knowledge.

A glance at the Position Paper of National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) titled Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks, drawing a historical continuum, on the document emphasises on the need for interrelatedness of the content articulated by various educational commissions. Citing the position of the Secondary Education Commission (1952), the document states that 'No single textbook should be prescribed for any subject

of study, but a reasonable number which satisfy the standards laid down, should be recommended, leaving the choice to the schools concerned' (Ministry of Education, 1952, p. 83). Successively, Secondary Education Commission (1964) also emphasised on quality of education and textbooks being a primary concern, citing the lack of research in preparation and production. The commission advocated the establishment of 'national standards' and recommended centralised textbook production level. Citing development in areas of child development pedagogy and the necessity for contextualisation of the curriculum as the need of the hour, National Curriculum framework (NCF 2005) upholds that idea yet supports multiplicity by stating that the idea, of nationalisation may mitigate the intention of making learning relevant.

The attempt should be to counter the politically partisan intentions that tend to determine the course of curriculum. The urgent need is to address and counter non-secular trends and concerns such as the communalisation of the past, the gendered representations and the barriers of caste and class discrimination, stereotypical values being promoted through curricular practices. This need for critical education must be translated into the textbook. The commitment towards equality in education has been voiced through all major policy initiatives. However, the task of concretising this

vision into textbooks is challenging enough and remains not fully realised (MHRD Report 2005, pp. 6–11).

The Kothari Commission (1964) also emphasised on the problems that arise when India is seen simply in terms of developmentalist approach as it treats poverty, illiteracy, and casteism and not from a perspective which brings to fore the myriad forms in which these malaises have become entrenched in the social setup. Instead, the Commission suggests an epistemological shift essential in designing the curriculum that takes into purview or accommodates the multiple ways of imagining the Indian nation. With this perspective, it also emphasises on the idea of linking the local knowledge. It thus, demonstrates the need for a creative balance. In order to achieve balancing between national and local, it is necessary to incorporate the local perceptions through which the people can relate themselves to the nation. Doing this will also ensure a much deeper and richer understanding of the nation.

Kothari commission (1964) also highlights a seminal concern of restraining the ambit of what can be classified as relevant for the scientific enquiry. Debunking the presumption that it is only natural and physical phenomena that can be subject to scientific inquiry, it puts forward the perspective that human sciences (history, geography, economics, political science, etc.) are 'scientific', but not in a reductive manner. It dislodges the association of some

subjects with a higher pedestal and the need for imitating the methods of physical and natural sciences in order to have the 'higher status' and legitimacy enjoyed by the natural sciences. Rather the commission emphasises on the distinctiveness of the discipline and the methods deployed as different, according to the requirements, but equally scientific in their endeavour.

Another significant concern that is highlighted is the role of the social sciences 'to create and widen the popular base for human values, namely freedom, trust, mutual respect, and respect for diversity.' Explicating on the same, the pedagogical implication that arise, highlights that social science teaching should be aimed at generating awareness and striving towards nurturing critical abilities in order to alert their minds to the society around them. It lays emphasis on the role of discussion. Necessarily concerns such as threats to the environment, caste/class inequality should be the focus though discouraging the need to deal with the same in an explicit manner.

Advocating an interdisciplinary approach, the role of textbooks is described as giving space and possibilities for stimulating the child's thought process and creativity. The interrelationship among disciplines is emphasised upon. Acknowledging the disciplines that make up the social sciences, namely history, geography, political science, and economics, are

distinct in the concerns addressed but this should not be a reason for compartmentalisation. Rather, it is essential that the boundaries of disciplines are opened up and diverse approaches are enabled to understand a phenomenon. Besides, dealing with the themes from an interdisciplinary perspective, it is essential that the themes are culturally relevant, and the concepts are introduced bearing in mind the age of the child. It is essential that careful selection of a few themes made, as well as having separate chapters relating to different disciplines are required (Kothari Commission, 1964).

Consistently, the efforts have been made to voice the need for achieving equality through education which had remained unaddressed due to the lack in the quality of education that is provided. There is a wide gap in the translation of this aim of education into reality as it has been referred to and articulated in various vision documents but realising the complexity and the diversity of our nation the attempt has not been holistic in nature. 'The basic problem that emerges has been conceptualising flexibility or diversity which is closely linked to the systems inherent limitation and inability to define the role of the 'curriculum' and its transaction.' (NCERT, 2005). The issue is that the term curriculum in itself has been used in a rigid and inflexible manner and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) advocates that decentralisation can

be wholly realised only when there are adequate regulatory mechanisms and optimum utilisation of resources in order to contextualise different aspects of the teaching learning process based on the needs and requirements of the learner.

The Yashpal Committee Report (1993) also recommends that the process of curriculum framing and preparation of textbooks should be decentralised in order to increase the teachers' involvement in these tasks. Decentralisation entails autonomy vis a vis the state or the district level institutions for the teachers and heads of the schools to develop curricular material according to the needs of the local environment. This is considered as a step towards enhancing the relevance of the curriculum and to innovate so as to make the educational experience enriching for the learner. This also entails boosting local partnership and ownership so that there is heightened sense of commitment and responsibility towards education.

Learning with Burden (1993), links the problem of curriculum load to the notions of 'knowledge explosion' and the 'catching up syndrome' (MHRD 1993, p. 20). Analysing the dynamics of the curriculum framing and its transaction from the standpoint of the learner it raises pertinent issues. The report highlights that apparently the textbooks seem to have been written primarily to convey information or 'facts', rather than to encourage children to think and

explore. Rote memorisation and retention of information is stressed upon and the issue of accessibility of textbooks is primarily due to the terseness of language and dealing with concepts in an abstract manner distances the learners from the text. The concern is further complicated as the learners have no other resource to resort to other than the prescribed one. Teachers also tend to emphasise on the textbooks as a body of truths which turns all knowledge into a load to be borne by the child's memory. Distanced from the child's everyday life, the content of the textbook further accentuates the transformation of knowledge into a load. Citing the example of social sciences, the report highlights that the practice has been to present every inquiry from a singular perspective that is suggesting one preferred answer to every question. (MHRD 1993, pp. 5-7). The report clearly highlights the importance of recognising the socio-cultural-regional contexts and not treating the child as a homogenised and undifferentiated reader.

**PROBLEMS OF SC, ST AND OBC STUDENT: NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 2005 AND MANDAL COMMISSION REPORT 1980**

The position paper on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks (2005) highlights the necessity of planning the curriculum on the basis of the understanding of where the child is instead of providing an arid learning

atmosphere and for providing justification of curriculum choices and 'therefore, the curriculum is viewed more as a conceptual structure for decision making rather than details of what is to be done in the classroom. It is essential that the workable principles and criteria in most of the areas such as selection and organisation of content, ways of interacting with children and classroom organisation, type of teaching-learning material etc.' (NCF 2005). It is all the more relevant in case of communities historically deprived of education. The context of deprivation is essential to be recognised.

The position paper of National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes present a grim picture of the participation of these marginalised groups in the educational process. Several key aspects of the analysis point towards how a significant proportion of Scheduled Caste and an even greater proportion of Scheduled Tribe children continue to remain out of school. The analysis indicates that accessing basic school is still a problem, especially in certain states and regions which have suffered gross neglect. Another significant factor is the overwhelming numbers that indicate increase in the enrolment. This can be interpreted as a manifestation of the desire to participate in the educational process. However on the obverse, the position paper reiterates the lack on part of

the school structure and educational process to retain them and the indicators of educational attainment are bleak in case of these minorities. The indexes of deprivation are even starker in case of girls enrolling from amongst these sections in schools. The resolve to equalise educational opportunity has been a constitutional commitment; however equality with respect to access, retention and achievement have not been realised as exclusion remains a depressing feature. The contributing factors have been economic and social deterrents, though differentially for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. 'Socio-cultural practices of exclusion and discrimination continue to define the existence of the poor Scheduled Castes. Scheduled Tribes are increasingly sucked into the vortex of rural and urban exploitation and inequality' (NCERT 2005). A variety of constitutional provisions testify to the commitment for the education of SC/ST children and articles 15(4), 45 and 46 cover several important aspects aimed at fulfilling the State's responsibility. Article 15(4) highlights the basic commitment to positive discrimination in favour of the socially and educationally backward classes and/or the SCs and STs. Article 45 declares the state's endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years and Article 46 endorses the aim to promote the educational and economic interests of SC and ST (Austin, 2012, p. 95).

The inclusion of Article 340 in the Constitution of India is indicative of Dr. Ambedkar's vision for an inclusive society. It is an empowering mechanism allowing the government to constitute a commission that addresses the concerns of the Other Backward Classes seeking to deal with issues concerning the social and educational backwardness (Austin, 2012). Despite the stiff opposition by Nehru government, his efforts are seminal in realising an institution to ensure that this marginalised social group is provided with opportunities which had been hitherto denied to them. He reiterated this concern in one of his speeches at Maratha Mandir: "This principle will apply not only to Marathas but all Backward Castes. If they do not wish to be under the thumb of others they should concentrate on two things, one is politics and the other is education" (Ambedkar, 1979).

Ambedkar emphasised on the need for empowering a community in order to progress. He argued that community must necessarily be allowed to have a 'moral but indirect pressure' in order to defend themselves against any injustice and to strive for equal rights and opportunities. He stated that "it is essential that such a pressure is maintained, as without it, the aims and policies of the state cannot have proper direction, on which depends the development and progress of the state" (Ambedkar, 1979). The recommendations made by the Mandal Commission in

India, established in 1979 by the Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai, with a mandate to 'identify the socially or educationally backward' was a welcoming gesture in this regard. It was headed by Indian parliamentarian Bindheshwari Prasad Mandal to consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination, and used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine 'backwardness.' The commission's report supported the affirmative action practice whereby members of lower castes (known as Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes) were given exclusive access to a certain portion of government jobs and slots in public universities, and recommended changes to these quotas, increasing them by 27% to 49.5% (Mandal Commission Report, 1980). The Commission pointed out that the education system was 'elitist' in its form and functioning and the report points out the detrimental impact it has or the serious concerns it raises about children belonging to the other backward classes. Pointing out to the colonial legacy being carried forward in the educational system, it highlighted the mismanagement of the resources and usurpation of the educational sphere by a privileged few giving scant attention to the children from OBC communities who are given no place in this system. It supports the need for a 'structural change' and a proper environment' for 'purposeful

studies' (Mandal Commission Report, 1980). These three terms are very significant in terms of developing an understanding of education from a sociological perspective. The term structural change has vast implications for initiating educational change. It points out to the existing discriminatory institutional practices, which make sure that the non-participative agenda thrives and children hailing from other backwards classes remain out of the schools (Mandal Commission Report 1980, p.56).

With respect to the concern for proper environment, the commission articulates the view that there are several significant reasons which account for the irregularity of the backward class students and high incidence of dropout rates. Firstly, it highlights the socially and culturally deprived environment under which children from OBC communities are born and brought up. The consequence of the same is that they get almost no motivation to study in schools. Secondly, it adds that the lack of material amenities results in most parents engaging them in occupational works at very early age (Mandal Commission Report 1980, p. 58).

The commission thus emphasised on the cultural empowerment of students from OBC communities. It says that upgrading the cultural environment is a very long process but certainly some measures can be taken and it suggested residential

schools for OBC children where they can pursue their studies more seriously. It is a suggestion which was implemented by the Chatrapati Shahuji Maharaj in his princely state long back in 19th century and gives an indication that how poorly the cause and issues of OBC's got addressed in independent India (Keer, 1976, p.356). It also emphasised upon the fact that children from this marginalised section were nowhere in educational advancement in the country. It is seminal that they should be provided with adequate facilities so that they can match the educational status with other groups. Here, a little interpretation is required because the report says that 'as the educational reforms are not within the terms of reference of the commission, we are also forced to trend the beaten track and suggest only the palliative measures within the existing framework' (Mandal Commission Report, 1980). It is clear with this statement in the report that people who were involved in drafting of the report were well aware of the fact that without educational reform, none of their recommendations would get fulfilled in a manner as desired by Dr. Ambedkar while drafting the constitution and emphasising on including the Article 340. That is why they make an observation of this kind which clearly indicates that they were forced not to go beyond the bureaucratic terms of reference with regard to education such as concession in fees, new schools,

new plan for education, and all state funded and state supported mechanisms. This raises the question of the much needed reform in the domain of textbooks and curriculum as it is vital to redress the discrimination within the ambit of the institutions of learning.

These two terms— cultural emancipation and proper environment, have far reaching, conceptual and psychological importance too. Kumar (1992) has drawn attention on how the dominant groups' ideas about education and the educated get reflected in the curriculum. Following the curriculum, Indian texts uphold symbols of the traditional, male dominated feudal society and its obsolete cultural values and norms. However, the content of education is divorced from the reality of the changing, dynamic India. It is a choice consciously or unconsciously made by those selecting textbook material from the available body of literature and by those creating it (Kumar, 1992).

So, this perspective of the child coming from the other backward classes for making the curriculum and textbooks is equally important as this community comes at the intermediate level in the traditional Hindu social order and more often than not gets accused for the atrocities against the scheduled caste in the country. It is important to understand the epistemological orientation of the exclusion. It has been popularised by the mainstream media and many scholars, that it is

OBC only who are responsible for the atrocities against the Dalits.

Kumar (2014) emphasises on the fact that even after excluding the so called five intermediate castes namely— Yadav, Kurmi, Jat, Gujjar, and Lodh— who make a powerful clout in North India and are numerically and economically strong, the rest of the almost 84 OBC communities for instance —Mali, Nau, Kahar, Nishad, etc., are nowhere in the picture in the power structure of the society. This is indicative of the fact that it is a theoretical fallacy that the so called powerful sections of the OBC are responsible for unleashing atrocities against the disempowered masses when they themselves have not attained that level in the social-political institution that they can be called powerful or advanced in any manner (Kumar, 2014, p.162).

It has to be understood that the children coming from Other Backward Classes have almost nothing in textbooks that they can relate to or identify with. The constructs of their milieu do not find any mention in the textbooks and quite often negative stereotypes are encountered which reinforce the hierarchies. In most cases, it is the upper caste which is prominently depicted. For example in Class VII Social Science book (Uttar Pradesh), a chapter on Mauryan empire states that Chanakya was a Brahmin and he helped Chandragupta Maurya to rule his kingdom. Now, with this explicit mentioning about a particular caste in a powerful role and unparalleled

intelligence, it is not difficult to locate the intent. Thus, it is important that the Other Backward Classes should have a say in the curriculum and textbook making process so that it can become more inclusive and more representative.

It is significant to note that despite being raised at various levels and many times, these issues related to the socio-psychological stigma and pressure in curriculum and textbooks remain in the concerned areas.

### CONCLUSION

A glance at curriculum construction and its transaction lays bare how hidden agendas proliferate and shapes the contours of what can be associated as knowledge within society and culture. Instead of nurturing the intellectual faculties, it

is rather detrimental and corrosive. The homogenising tendencies, that marred the secular character of the curriculum need to be countered by taking into account the different facets of representation. Despite the fact that NCF 2005 articulates this vision, these aspects remain unaddressed when a reference is made to its transaction. It is essential that an expansive and inclusive vision of education gives due consideration to the diverse cultures and traditions. The curriculum must offer or seek to address the understanding of concerns that are relevant to the present environment of the learner. The pedagogical practices, instead of being prescriptive in nature should be communicated through discussion, challenging the traditional power hierarchies.

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