CHAPTER 3

SECULAR NATIONALISM IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA: THE NEW EDUCATION

We have analysed the theoretical orientations to the concepts - school education and nationalism, how they acquired significance in the Indian context in the last two centuries and finally, the different ideological orientations they derived in the Indian socio-political scenario in the previous chapter. In this chapter we would focus upon the meaning and nature of the concepts – secularism and secular nationalism, how they emerged in India and their significance in the whole question of ‘nation-building’ in India after independence. In this regard the educational policies formulated by the government of India are dealt with in the second part of this chapter. The final part of this chapter would deal with the processes through which the Indian state attempted to inculcate the ideology of secular nationalism through the school education. Here, we have focused on the analysis of history textbooks of class VI, VII and VIII prepared and prescribed by the NCERT which is followed by the Central Board of Secondary Education - the largest network of schools in India.

Part A - Secularism in India

After a long struggle against Britain’s colonial rule, the Indian subcontinent was divided into two states, India and Pakistan, in 1947. Pakistan portrayed itself as a state of a homogenous people whereas India proclaimed a pluralistic nationalism that welcomed religious and cultural diversity. At the time of the Partition it was estimated that there were 361 million people living within India’s borders; of these people 315 million were Hindus, 32 million Muslims, 7 million Christians, 6 million Sikhs, one million Buddhists, 100,000 Parsians and a small minority of Jews. It was owing to this multi-ethnicity that India opted for secularism, which was considered vital for the existence of the Indian state. Secularism was believed to solve the problem of religious and ethnic pluralism by uniting India. Secularism was derived from the idea of modernity. It was connected to the nation-building and development of the new and modern India, and it was supposed to
give a basis for a new identity for Indians. A modern, secular Indianness would replace traditional, old-fashioned religious identities.

The father of Indian secularism, Jawaharlal Nehru, with the Congress Party of India, developed a strategy of containment by which he meant that there should be a distance between the state and the religious passions of society. But to make a difference to the Western secularism this was interpreted to imply that all religions were entitled to flourish in India equally, that the state of India would lean on its mantra of ‘unity in diversity’.

Mahatma Gandhi skillfully united the people in the 1920s and 1930s with his campaign against the colonial rule. He understood the totalising meaning of religion for the Indian people and tried to integrate the religions of India to the nationalist movement. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to create secularism on the foundation that Gandhi had made, but he saw that the unity would be more stable if religious feelings were confined to be outside of political life.

Secularism essentially means that religion and politics should be kept in different spheres in society, religion in the private sphere and politics in the public. Indian secularism, on the other hand, means that this division is not that strict but the state is allowed to support religions equally. According to T. N. Madan, secularisation ordinarily refers to the socio-cultural processes that enlarge the areas of life, such as material, institutional and intellectual, in which the role of the sacred is progressively limited. Secularity, then, is the resultant of this process, and secularism is the ideology that argues for the historical inevitability and progressive nature of secularisation everywhere.1 Madan has done a sociological study on the crisis of Indian secularism and the rise of fundamentalism. Madan sees religious behaviour as a reason for the rise of fundamentalism which has then caused the decline of secularism.

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Secularism: Meaning and Emergence of the Concept

The notions such as secularism, democracy, nationalism and nation-state derive from the changes that took place in eighteenth century Europe. They are products of the ideals of Modernity, which changed the relations of power in society by the transformation of frontiers into borders. Modernity also paved the way for the idea of secularism. In the time of Enlightenment states shifted from the rule of the Church to the rule of a secular ruler. Secularism limited the rights of the Church to interfere in issues concerning governing. A secular state is then the opposite of a religiously governed state.

The Latin root *saeculum* denotes the 'here and now', 'this-worldliness' and 'contemporaneity'. The dictionary defines 'secularism' as the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all consideration drawn from belief in God, or in a future state. It defines the word 'secular' as pertaining to this world, and especially carrying a negative connotation, the exclusion of the religious element in politics, education, etc. As T.N. Madan observes, The English word 'secular' comes from the Latin *saeculum*, which means 'an age' or 'the spirit of an age'. It has the same meaning as the Greek *aeon*, which is used in the New Testament for an 'age' or 'era'.

The conflict between religious faith and human reason, which forms part of the background to the emergence of the modern ideology of secularism, surfaced in the late Middle Ages. Historically secularism as an orientation to the world is linked to two major interrelated processes in Europe. There were some theological developments within Protestantism that legitimated scientific investigations as a search for laws of nature that God had instituted; however, the scientific activity gained its own internal autonomy and legitimacy among the practitioners without the role of God in the work. The second stream that led into secularism was the dominance achieved in European thought from the seventeenth century onwards by Enlightenment rationalism.

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2 Ibid, p. 6
3 Ibid., p. 10
This change began in Europe at the end of the Thirty Years' War when the church properties started to be transferred to the exclusive control of the princes. This statement became after the French Revolution a value statement. The term 'secularism' was coined in 1851 in England and the secularisation was built into the ideology of progress.\(^5\)

However, later on, the term secularisation is generally employed to refer to the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols as religion is considered to be an open or potential threat to modern polity.\(^6\)

Partha Chatterjee, an eminent political scientist, has defined three principles as the characteristics of a secular state. The first is the principle of liberty, which requires that the state permit the practice of any religion, within the limits set by certain other basic rights which the state is also required to protect. The second is the principle of equality, which requires that the state does not give preference to any religion over another. The third is the principle of neutrality that is best described as the requirement that the state does not give preference to the religious over the non-religious and which leads, in combination with the liberty and equality principles, to what is known in the constitutional law of the United States of America as the 'wall of separation' doctrine: namely, that the state does not involve itself with religious affairs or organisations.\(^7\)

**Indian Secularism**

Secularism is treated as a legitimate norm of the Indian political system. Secularism, in India, does not mean the separation of religion from the state but rather a benevolent neutrality towards all religions, which are treated equably. However, this universalist position exists alongside an effort to reduce the ascendency of religion in society. The 1950 Constitution, strongly influenced by Nehru, did not recognise religious communities

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but only individuals, to whom it guaranteed in Article 25 'freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion'. This ideal concept of religion as a private matter implied a reduction in its sphere of influence through the impact of the state in its capacity as the agent of 'modernisation'. Nehru's principal achievement in this voluntary perspective was undoubtedly the Hindu Code Bill. Nehru stated, 'India will be a land of many faiths, equally honoured and respected, but of one national outlook.'

The British colonial rule evolved a policy of religious neutrality in their colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The British tried to stay neutral on the disputes over religion, and were particularly careful not to be seen as promoting Christianity. After the assumption of power in India by the British Crown in 1858, a significant step was taken in instituting equality before the law by enacting uniform codes of civil and criminal law. The area left out was personal law, which continued to be governed by the respective religious laws as recognised and interpreted by the courts. The reason why personal law was not brought to the scope of a uniform civil code was the reluctance of the colonial state to intervene in matters close to the very heart of religious doctrine and practice.

The Founding Fathers of Indian Secularism

Mahatma Gandhi has, for his part, aided the evolvement of the concept of secularism by clarifying the relationship between state and religion. Gandhi actually rejected the ideology of secularism without any qualifications, but interestingly and consistently advocated for a secular state completely detached from the religious concerns of the people. At the same time, Gandhi emphasised the inseparability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. He has written that 'those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.'

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10 T.N. Madan 1997, pp. 36-37
For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life and that is why politics were the arena of public interest. The inseparability of religion and politics in the Indian context was for Gandhi a fundamentally distinct issue from the separation of the state from the church in Christendom. When he did advocate that religion and state should be separate, he clarified that this was to limit the role of the state to secular welfare and to allow it no admittance into the religious life of the people.\(^{12}\) As Madan further states, 'Gandhi died because he had striven unceasingly to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. There were competing nationalists' discourses in India in the beginning of the twentieth century but Gandhi had tried to combine these under the aim of “swaraj” (self-rule).'

Jawaharlal Nehru was the main architect in the relation between the state and religion in India. While Gandhi put his faith in the reformed, ethnically refined individual, in creating a better if not the ideal society, Nehru considered the shaping of suitable institutions as the best means of achieving the same goal. Of all the modern institutions, it was the state which he believed would be the principal engine of social change. The ideal state according to Nehru was first and foremost democratic, but also socialist because of its bad economic situation and secularist because of the cultural and religious diversity.\(^{13}\)

While both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru recognized the importance of the cultural diversities existing within India and tried to provide India's various religious and ethnic groups with a cohesive nationalist ideology, they differed in their approaches to the definition of Indian national identity. In Nehru's framework of Indian nationalism, there was no place for religion or religious orientations. He recognized the importance of the contributions that Islam as well as Hinduism had made to the development of the composite nature of Indian culture and civilization. Deeply influenced by the liberalism of the West, Nehru was committed to the rational and secular organization of the society and believed that religious values and beliefs would stand in the way of full realization of

\(^{12}\) Madan 1998, p. 305

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 310
an individual's potential. He fully approved the state's role in the material advancement of society to enhance the level of individual and mass consumption.\textsuperscript{14}

Gandhi's concept of national identity, on the other hand, did not exclude the role of religion in the social and political life of the country; in fact, for him it was imperative that "religious and moral values infuse and condition secular advance and therefore [he] emphasized personal discipline and altruism over consumption and acquisitiveness."\textsuperscript{15} In order to counter the divisive and competitive nature of religion-based group politics and diffuse the tension it caused, Gandhi tried to identify values common to all religions. Furthermore, he sought to develop equal respect for all religions through his personal conduct. His goal was to create religious tolerance without ignoring the importance of religious values in social life.

Malik and Singh observe:

It was, however, Nehru's concept based upon the secular, liberal, and humanistic values of the West that became the dominant trait of the political culture of India's ruling elites. Gandhi's ideas and values, which had roots in the folk culture of the country, became peripheral in the context of India's political culture.\textsuperscript{16}

This elite culture consisted of what James Manor has called "the liberal Nehruvian virtues - commitments to secularism, open discussion, tolerance of diversity, probity, the need for reform to promote greater social justice, and so forth."\textsuperscript{17}

A careful reading of Nehru's writings and speeches brings out very clearly his conviction that religion is a hindrance to the change and progress which are inherent in human society and that the belief in supernatural agency which ordains everything has led to a

\textsuperscript{14} Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh: 'Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?', in\textit{Asian Survey}, Vol. 32, No. 4 (April, 1992), pp.319-20


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.420

certain irresponsibility, and emotion and sentimentality have taken the place of reasoned thought.\textsuperscript{18}

He was influenced by the experience of European nations and Marxist thinking and believed that industrialisation would erode the influence of religion. Therefore, he did not worry too much about religion or its political expression, namely communalism, because he passionately believed that these phenomena would vanish at the touch of reality.\textsuperscript{19} In this regard, an understanding of his ideological differences with Gandhi would enhance our reading of his aspirations as well as his ambiguity.

Avijit Pathak observes "It was impossible to imagine Nehru without Gandhi. Yet, Nehru's rational/scientific mind (a mind that learned from Marx, Darwin and Freud) did not always feel comfortable with Gandhi - his critique of modernity, religious language, moral obsession and simplicity."\textsuperscript{20} "In spite of the closest association with Gandhi for many years", wrote Nehru in his Autobiography, "I am not clear in my mind about his objective."\textsuperscript{21}

He did not hesitate to write that he had often disagreed with Gandhi at his "religious and sentimental approach to a political question and his frequent references to God in connection with it."\textsuperscript{22} Moreover, he was absolutely critical of Gandhi's \textit{Hind Swaraj}. For him, as Pathak observes, "it was 'wholly at variance with modern ideas and conditions.' It was an "utterly wrong and harmful doctrine." In \textit{Hind Swaraj} his modern eyes could see nothing but "the praise of poverty and suffering and the ascetic life."\textsuperscript{23} His goal was, therefore, clear when he wrote: "We cannot stop the river of change or cut ourselves adrift from it, and psychologically we who have eaten the apple of Eden cannot forget that taste and go back to primitiveness."\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{Discovery of India}, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund. 1983
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{An Autobiography}, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 469
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Jawaharlal Nehru 1984, p. 509
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] Ibid. p.370
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] Ibid., p.370-71
\item[\textsuperscript{24}] Ibid. p. 511, also Pathak: 1998, pp.59
\end{itemize}
This future-orientation or this urge to modernize the country did not mean that Nehru was free from ambiguities. Any careful reader of his Autobiography or *Discovery of India* knows that he, like a critical intellectual, was not willing to lose his openness and his enquiring spirit. He questioned even his cherished modernity and its ability to understand India. To quote from Nehru:

India was in my blood and there was much in her that instinctively thrilled me. And yet I approached her almost as an alien critic, full of dislike for the present as well as for many of the relics of the past that I saw. To some extent I came to her via the West, and looked at her as a friendly westerner might have done. I was eager and anxious to change her outlook and appearance and give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts arose within me. Did I know India?...

Interestingly, Pathak argues that Nehru, despite his own emphasis upon modernity and secularism, was not free from reverence to the traditional values of Indian culture and society. The following passage from Pathak clearly substantiates this view:

It was this doubt that led him to discover India. In this quest he saw the aliveness of India's tradition. At Sarnath near Benares he 'saw' the Buddha preaching his first sermon! He 'saw' the critical spirit in the Upanishads. He could still 'hear' that inspiring prayer: "Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality!" In the *Bhagavad Gita* he saw "an inner quality of earnest enquiry and search, of contemplation and action, of balance and equilibrium in spite of conflict and contradiction." 26

Again, despite his critique of Gandhi's philosophy, he could not escape Gandhi. Gandhi, Nehru thought, understood the mind of India - a task in which his modernity, he might have feared, did not always succeed. To quote from his autobiography: "But the little fact remains that this 'reactionary' knows India, understands India, almost is peasant India, and has shaken up India as no so-called revolutionary has done." 27

While these ambiguities explained the richness of Nehru's mind, it should not, however,
be forgotten that, in the ultimate analysis, his modernity triumphed and in the post-
Gandhian era he was eager to make his countrymen realize the significance of such a
"national philosophy." Professor Bhikhu Parekh has identified some of the salient
features of this philosophy—national unity, parliamentary democracy, industrialism,
socialism, scientific temper and secularism.28

Madan observes, Nehru was committed to the ideas of the Enlightenment and represents
better than anybody else in India the predicament of modernity.29 Nehru has described
the creation of a secular state in a religious society as the biggest problem that he had
during his years in power.30 In 1961, just three years before his death he wrote: “We talk
about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in
Hindi for ‘secular’. Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That
obviously is not correct...It is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them
equal opportunities.”31

Even though Indian society at large was constituted by a diversity of cultures, languages,
religions and customs, it is to be noted that Nehru wanted it to become one nation in
unity. Thus the secular state was a requirement in the project of nationhood, as it would
guarantee the unity of India and further the identity of common ‘Indianness’. Secondly,
the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947, and the formation of the
Islamic Republic of Pakistan, nevertheless left within the boundaries of India a very
considerable majority of Muslims. During the partition Muslims and Hindus killed each
other without any hesitation. This led to speculation among most cynics that if India had
become for example a Hindu state, the living conditions of Muslims in India would have
been difficult to guarantee as positive.

28 Bhikhu Parekh, "Nehru and the National Philosophy of India", Economic and Political Weekly (January,
29 Madan 1997, p.37
30 For example, when Nehru was asked by Albert Einstein as to what was the most difficult task he faced as
the Prime Minister of India, Nehru replied, ‘to build a secular state in a religious society.
31 Quoted in Madan 1997, pp.245-46
Nehru admitted that before secularism can function in India, there needs to prevail a level of general education and a liberal outlook on life and scientific temper which unfortunately lack in India.\textsuperscript{32} In sum, what was pursued by the founding fathers of Indian secularism was a separation of two realms in the public: one was the political realm, wherein the interest of national unity, non-preference, and the rationalities and imperatives of the state compelled political actors to speak and act in certain ways, while at the same time praising the cultural diversity of India; the other was the cultural realm, wherein any community could celebrate itself and its own myths and exclude others. This cultural diversity was the foundation of the larger nation. However, the political realm was not supposed to be "contaminated" by unilateral celebration of one community or the open representation of particularist interests of a community.\textsuperscript{33}

**Secularism and the Constitution of India**

The most significant achievement of the free people of India was to give a new Constitution to themselves. The Constitution of India—the charter of India's freedom—is a product not of political revolution, but of the research and deliberations of eminent men. They assembled in the Constituent Assembly, prepared a Draft after months of intensive labour 'ransacking all the known constitutions of the world', and after discussion adopted it on November 26, 1949. The Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. As it embodies India's full self-expression and mirrors the hopes and aspirations of the people, it is but natural that education should find its own place in this great document.

The British influence, experience with the workings of provincial autonomy and the popularity of federalism as a desirable political system for plural societies in the 20th century influenced the framers of federalism. The Constituent Assembly recommended a centralised federal model for India according to the ideals of the upper caste English-educated supporters of the national movement. The Constitution of India gives far greater powers to the central government than for example the federal Constitution of the United States does. The central government in India can not only command and control states or

\textsuperscript{32} Madan 1997, p. 246  
\textsuperscript{33} Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.54
provinces but also make their autonomy ineffective and dismiss their governments and replace them with administrations run directly from New Delhi. The President may declare an emergency in a state if convinced that its government cannot be conducted in accordance with the Constitution. Hence, it was the responsibility of the central government to educate the Indian masses about the national identity and nationalism. The strong role of the central government has been a significant factor in shaping the history of independent India.

In the Preamble to the Constitution, India has clearly been referred to as a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic that secures for all its citizens: 'social, economic and political justice; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and promotes among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.'

The Preamble proclaims India as a secular country. Here it is to be kept in mind that the word 'secular' was added to the Preamble through an amendment during the period of emergency in 1976. It was not there in the original constitution. In the West the word 'secular' Implies non-recognition of any religion by the state whereas in India it meant equal respect for all religions (Sarva Dharma Sambhava).

The debate over the meaning of the term secular in the Indian constitution has been a heated one. As Bipan Chandra argues, the western Constitution from which the term secular is borrowed is a very different one. In West, the outcome of the struggle between the Church and the State was the separation of the two; the Church was allowed to decide on religious rituals, the state was to regulate secular affairs. In India, the concept secularism evolved as part of the struggle of nationalist forces against communal forces that wanted to use religion for political purposes divide the emerging nation on the basis 

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of religion.\textsuperscript{36}

Bipan Chandra cites Nehru, who put it best:

"We call our State a secular one. The word 'secular', perhaps, is not a very happy one and yet for want of a better, we have used it. What exactly does it mean? It does not obviously mean a society where religion itself is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion. It means free play for all religions, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conceptions of our State."

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The Constitution has accorded equal status to all religions instead of granting any extra prominence to any specific religion. As a matter of fact, through this principle the Constitution of India has upheld the ancient Indian tradition of \textit{Sarva Dharma Sambhava} or equal treatment of all religions. In keeping with this provision every individual has the liberty to profess, practice and propagate his or her religion. People belonging to any sect or religious community can open their own school. Similarly, people belonging to any minority community can open their own institution for the promotion of their religion and language. Besides, complete freedom of admission has been given to people of all religions and linguistic persuasion to any institution run by the government. Thus, the Central and the State Governments can not interfere in the religious life of the citizens. However, the state can interfere in the matters of religion where the issues of country's security, prestige, welfare and progress of its citizens are involved.\textsuperscript{38}

The problem, as far as our understanding is, that the Constitution does not define accurately what is meant by a secular Indian state and how religion should be separated from politics and the state. The most common conception of how this should be done, has been formulated by Jawaharlal Nehru, but the definition does not have a legal basis.

The Constitution of India also discusses the role of religion within the state. Religious rights were put into the Constitution as perceived solutions to the problems of religious turmoil which haunted pre-independence India and which led to the partition between


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p.48

\textsuperscript{38} D.D. Basu: \textit{Introduction to the Constitution of India}. New Delhi: Wadhwa and company. 2003(19\textsuperscript{th} edition)
India and Pakistan. The chapter on fundamental rights guarantees the interests of the minority groups which could not be overridden in a majoritarian democracy. In part III on fundamental rights and the right to equality article 15 prohibits the Indian state from discriminating any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Similarly, Articles 25-28 focus upon the religious rights.

**Difficulties with Indian Secularism**

The transferability of the idea of a nation-state based on secularism into multi-religious societies like India is beset with many difficulties. It should be realised that secularism cannot be restricted to rationalism, but it should be compatible with faith. The Indian version of secularism implies that while the public life may or may not be kept free of religion, it must have space for continuous dialogue between religious traditions and between religion and secularism.

The State in independent India is officially secular as it is not allied with any particular religion or an instrument of any church. Yet, in practice, the Indian State does not separate itself from religion, but tries to give a picture of itself as a neutral country by publicly recognising all religions and their social practices. Religious rituals, often with a preference for the Hindu, form a part of public functions held under the auspices of the state.

Secularism was seen as the only possible option that would be able to provide harmonious living together for the different tribes and peoples of India. Unfortunately Indian understanding of secularism failed to provide a satisfactory relationship between state and religion and the founding fathers were not able to explain to the people in their own languages what was meant by secularism.

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39 Madan 1998, p. 309
40 Nandy et al. 1998, p. 327
Part B – The Project of Nation-building and the New Education

The nationalist leaders were convinced that the absence of a proper nation-state and proper nationalist sentiments were major gaps in Indian society and showed how backward it was. For the nation-building process, the Indian National Congress appointed a Committee of Experts in the beginning of the 1940s to consider urgent and vital solutions to the problems occurring in the scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. The aims of the Committee were: the national integration of a diverse mosaic of groups, communities and societies; economic development of a country that had suffered from colonialism for 200 years; social equality in a land that was dominated by myriad forms of entrenched inequality; and consolidation of multi-party political democracy.

After the country's independence, the need for a transformation in the educational system was emphasised by the then political leadership. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, stressed upon this feature appropriately in his inaugural address to the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1948.42

"Whenever conferences were called in the past to form a plan for education in India, the tendency as a rule was to maintain the existing system with slight modifications. This must not happen now. Great changes have taken place in the country and the education system also be in keeping pace with them. The entire basis of education be revolutionised. The younger generation is our future hope. The way their faculties were developed and minds moulded would make the Indian destiny and their proper education must be given top priority..."43

Nehru’s role in creating a new education for the Post-independence India is unparallel. It was widely recognized by his ministerial colleagues. M.C. Chagla, who was the Education Minister in his cabinet, regards Nehru as a great educationist and a lover of education. Chagla states, ‘He was an educationist in the technical sense of the term. But in the wider and broader significance of that expression he was a great lover of education. He realised, as very few people have realised, that the greatest asset we have in this

42 Held in New Delhi, 13-15th January
country is our human resources. It is our young boys and girls who constitute the real national wealth and he, therefore, felt that the greatest investment that we can make was an investment in human beings, investment for the future and investment in education.\(^{44}\)

As R.P. Singh remarks about Nehru,

> Though not an educationist by training he had a deep insight into the nature of problems that educationists face. Nehru believed that progress and education are interrelated. All social action is dependent on the nature of education a nation offers. Education serves as a bedrock, the future edifice of society. Nehru's educational ideas therefore cannot be considered in isolation. They have their roots in the views he had on religion, political ideology, social standards and spiritual values. As Singh argues there is not a single political ideology, which does not require the help of education in all its manifestations. He states, 'to think of education sans politics is to think in a vacuum. Nehru's ideas on education emanate directly from his cultural background, his views on religion, his concern for the removal of poverty along with illiteracy, his desire to see India competing on equal terms with the most developed countries of the world and getting back this nation the status which it enjoyed once.'\(^{45}\)

Unlike Gandhi who was formulating his own ideas on education to be put into practice or how Tagore and Aurobindo were in the process of creating their own prototypes, Nehru was not involved in making any educational institution of his own. Singh writes:

> Nehru was a thinker. He had ideas on education but probably he could not go beyond this stage to set up his own educational institutions, like what Gandhi or Tagore or Aurobindo had done. He was no Vivekanand to think of setting up Ramkrishna Mission schools and definitely no Sir Syed or Swami Dayanand Sarswati to give a practical shape to his educational ideas. But that does not take away, the value of his thoughts on education because they reflect not only his times but also his own way of looking at things around him. Nehru's greatness lies more in his vision of modern India than in the small little details others had gone into. He needs to be read in the overall context of modernization of the nation and the role he envisaged for education to play.\(^{46}\)

\(^{44}\) In his keynote address of the 31st CABE annual meeting, held at Bangalore, 11-12 October, 1964, Sri M.C. Chagla, the then Education Minister paid his tribute to the late Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Cited in Biswas and Agrawal: 1971, p.70


\(^{46}\) Ibid., p.162
A few concrete examples of his creation could also be cited like the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Institutes of Science and Technology, National Laboratories, Atomic Research Centres etc. But they constituted his efforts to help India become competitive and modern. 'Europe was his model', states Singh, 'and he wanted India to come at par with Europe in all its strengths--intellectual, affluence, liberality and democratic institutions.'

Although the British gave India an educational system, which served their purpose regardless of its 'limited' and perverted "character", Nehru saw in it a strong point. He believed that it had "opened the door and windows of mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts." He welcomed this dynamism. Nehru was quite sure that "India will find herself again when freedom opens out new horizons, and the future will fascinate her far more than the immediate past of frustration and humiliation."  

In 1954 in a national broadcast to the nation he had asserted: "If we aim at the big things in life, if we dream of India as a great nation giving her age-old message of peace and freedom to others, then we have to be big ourselves and be worthy children of India."  

Under the topic The Modern Approach to an Old Problem he had talked of a 'better' mind, which is 'practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian.' He pleaded for the discovery of a "balance between the body and the spirit and between man as part of nature and man as part of society." On religion he had declared: "It is by humanity that one should acquire strength. We must keep control on language. This can be done by refraining from decrying other religions and praising one's own." He wanted Hindus and Muslims both to stop weeping for the past. "I do not condemn past for it has served good thing but these people do not run after the good things but the useless and harmful things."
Nehru talked about the aims of good education. "Education must provide", Singh cites from a letter which Nehru wrote to his sister, "a gradual transition to wider spheres of activity and new experiences. Intellectual training, though important enough, cannot take the place of this growth through personal experience of other." According to him, "school helps in developing self-reliance and the habit of cooperation, which are essential for every growing child, and indeed for a grown-up person also."\(^{51}\)

For him school curriculum had to have a balance between scientific subjects and the classics. He had "partiality for the literary aspects of education and great admiration for the classics." And yet his idea was that education ought to enable the child both to fit into the world as well as understand the subtleties of life. Nehru went on "But I am sure that some elementary scientific training in Physics and Chemistry, and especially Biology, as also in the application of science, is essential for all boys and girls."\(^{52}\)

Talking of higher education he had wanted that "innumerable technical and technological hands" be made available for the country. It was the job of the universities to produce doctors, statesmen etc. people who could serve their country and mankind equally well. Since education is meant to free the spirit of man and not to imprison it in set frame, he found no place for communalism in educational institutions. To the chagrin of many he had declared, "in such an India communalism, separatism, isolation, untouchability, bigotry and exploitation of man by man have no place, while religion is free, it is not allowed to interfere with the political and economic aspects of a nation's life."\(^{53}\)

The Education Commission, after about years of independence, re-echoed the visions of Nehru. A need for a revolution in education which in turn will set in motivating the much desired social, economic and cultural revolution was felt. However, the concept of educational revolution does not mean that there should be a complete uprooting of something existing and its replacement by what is altogether new. Education is a living organ, process, affecting the whole life of the nation. The 'revolution implies a new

\(^{51}\) Ibid., pp.164-65  
\(^{52}\) Ibid., p.166  
\(^{53}\) Ibid., p.166
thinking, a new direction, a new concern of education. There have been four commissions, a large number of committees appointed by the Government of India and State Governments and numerous advisory bodies have brought into focus this new concern in education and made a number of recommendations for the much-needed break-through.

Education has always been accorded pride of place in Indian society. The great leaders of the Indian freedom movement realised the fundamental role of education and throughout the nation's struggle for independence, stressed its unique significance for national development. Gandhi formulated the scheme of basic education seeking to harmonize intellectual and manual work. This was a great step forward in making education directly relevant to the life of the people. Many other national leaders likewise made important contributions to national education before independence.54

In the post-independence period, a major concern of the Government of India and of the States has been to give increasing attention to education as a factor vital to national progress and security. Problems of educational reconstruction were reviewed by several commissions and committees, notably the University Education Commission (1948-49) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53). Some steps to implement the recommendations of these Commissions were taken. With the passing of the Resolution on Scientific Policy under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the development of science, technology and research received special emphasis. Towards the end of the third Five Year Plan, a need was felt to hold a comprehensive review of the educational system with a view to initiating a fresh and more determined effort at educational reconstruction. The Education Commission (1964-66) was appointed to advise the Government on “the national pattern of education and on the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages and in all aspects.” The Report of the Education Commission has since been widely discussed and commented upon.55

55 Biswas and Agrawal: 1971, p.494
India decided to transform itself into a secular democratic republic, having achieved its political freedom and after careful consideration. As a result, the educational system was visualised to make its contribution to the development of habits, attitudes and qualities of character that would enable its citizens shoulder the responsibilities of democratic citizenship and to counteract all those destructive tendencies which hinder the emergence of a broad, national and secular outlook. It is to be noted that subsequent commissions and committees have laid emphasise on the creation of national integration among school children. The Resolution further states, 'the educational system must produce young men and women of character and ability committed to national service and development. Only then, education would be able to play its vital role in promoting national progress, creating a sense of common citizenship and culture, and strengthening national integration. This is necessary if the country is to attain its rightful place in the comity of nations in conformity with its great cultural heritage and its unique potentialities.'

The Secondary Education Commission was set up in 1952 under the Chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, (popularly known as the Mudaliar Commission whose recommendations were published in the Report of the Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53). States, as political, social and economic conditions change and new problems arise, it becomes necessary to re-examine carefully and re-state clearly the objectives which education at each definite stage, should keep in view. It focuses upon the educational needs of Democratic India.

**Education for National Integration**

In the first Chapter of the Education Commission (1964-66), which is known as the Kothari Commission, Education and National Objectives are declared as follows:

"The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms. This, we believe, is no more rhetoric. In a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people. On the

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56 Ibid., p.495
57 Ibid., p.303
quality and number of persons coming out of our schools and colleges will depend on our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction whose principal objective is to raise the standard of living of our people.\textsuperscript{58}

This Report was concerned with a synoptic appraisal of the then existing educational situation in the country and presentation of an overall programme of educational development for future. It also emphasised that education cannot be considered in isolation or planned in a vacuum. It has to be used as a powerful instrument of social, economic and political change and will. Therefore, education needs to be related to the long term national aspirations, the programmes of national development in which the country is engaged and the difficult short-term problems it is called upon to face.

The commission was of the opinion, that 'no reform is more important or more urgent than to transform education, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of our national goals.' This is possible, if "education is related to productivity; strengthens social and national integration; consolidates democracy as a form of government and helps the country to adopt it as a way of life; hastens the process of modernization; and strives to build character by cultivating social, moral and spiritual values." All these aspects are inter-related and in the complex process of social change, we cannot achieve even one without striving for all.\textsuperscript{59}

The 31st Cabe Annual Meeting, in its Resolution, delineated measures for emotional integration through a Pledge to be taken by all the students. The Board recommended that the Pledge suggested by the Emotional Committee, slightly amended as under, should be taken by all students and teachers at the, beginning of each working day. This practice, it was suggested, should be adopted in all institutions latest by 26th January, 1965.

"India is my country, all Indians are my brothers and sisters.

\textsuperscript{58} Ministry of Education, Govt. of India: The Education Commission, 1964-66
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., pp.5-6
And I am proud of its rich and varied cultures, and love my country, heritage. I shall always strive to be worthy of it. Shall give my parents, teachers and all elders respect, and treat everyone with courtesy. To my country and my people, I pledge my devotion. In their well-being and in prosperity alone lies my happiness. The committee also recommended that this pledge should be translated into regional languages and printed in every textbook and the school calendar.

The 34th address of the CABE in 1968 drew attention to the recommendation of the National Integration Committee that the entire educational system should be reoriented to serve the purpose of creating a sense of 'Indianness', 'unity' and 'solidarity', and to inculcate faith in the basic postulates of Indian democracy.

In order to improve the moral caliber of students in the country by inculcating in them the principles of correct personal behaviour and good citizenship, the Board recommended the study of inspirational literature, such as lives of great men, and the study of basic elements of different religions emphasising common culture and heritage. This should be accompanied by a proper atmosphere both in the home and in the school and proper utilisation of leisure.

Secularist Policy in Education
A secularist policy means that in political economic and social feature of a country's matters, all citizens, irrespective of their religious faith, will enjoy equal status. The Education Commission, 1964-66 states 'that the most distinctive equality of rights, that no religious community will be favoured. Promoting national consciousness is considered an important task of the Common School system in India. It is the responsibility of the educational system to bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society. This will be open to all

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60 Cited in Biswas and Agrawal: 1971, p.70
61 Ibid., p.79
children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic conditions or social status where access to good education will depend not on wealth or class, but on talent.\textsuperscript{62}

Secularisation does not mean that education would indulge in a anti-religious policy. It does not belittle the importance of religion as such. It gives to every citizen the fullest freedom of religious belief and worship. It is anxious to ensure good relations amongst different religious groups and to promote not only religious tolerance but also an active reverence for all religions.

In such a society, however, one has to make a distinction, between ‘religious education’ and ‘education about religions’. The former is largely concerned with the teaching of the tenets and practices of a particular religion, generally in the form in which the religious group envisages them, whereas the latter is a study of religions and religious thought from a broad point of view - the eternal quest of the spirit. It would not be practicable for a secular State with many religions to provide education in any one religion. It is, however, necessary for a multi-religious democratic State to promote a tolerant study of all religions so that its citizens can, understand each other better and live amicably together.

The Commission also cautions that the ban on religious instruction in schools would result in children growing up without any clear ideas of their own religion and no chance of learning about others. It argues that a syllabus giving well-chosen information about each of the major religions should be included as a part of the course in citizenship or as part of general education to be introduced in schools and colleges up to the first degree. It should highlight the fundamental similarities in the great religions of the world and the emphasis they place on the cultivation of certain broadly comparable moral and spiritual values.

The British policy of religious neutrality did not allow religious education in government or government-aided institutions. Even when the Christian Missionaries to whom India is

\textsuperscript{62} Ministry of Education, 1966
greatly indebted for their educational work lamented that no provision had been made for the teaching of Christianity, Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General, made it clear that 'all interference and injudicious tampering with the religious beliefs of the students all mingling, direct or indirect, teaching of Christianity with the system of instruction ought to be positively forbidden. The Education Commission of 1882 was in consonance with the declared religious neutrality of the State in not connecting the institutions with any one form of faith, but recommended 'that an attempt be made to prepare a moral text-book, based upon the fundamental principles of national religion, such as may be taught in all Government and non-Government Colleges', and 'a series of lectures on the duties of a man and a citizen' be delivered to each of the college classes. The Government, however, doubted 'whether such a moral text-book as is proposed could be introduced without raising a variety of burning questions'.

The University Education Commission (1948-1949), headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, devoted a whole chapter to 'Religious Education'. It emphasised that 'religion is a permeative influence, a quality of life, elevation of purpose," and 'to be secular is not to be religiously illiterate. It is to be deeply spiritual and not narrowly religious.' But the Commission reminded that 'The attempt to make students moral and religious by the teaching of moral and religious textbooks is puerile. To instruct the intellect is not to improve the heart... Our attempt should be to suggest and persuade, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily life and work, and books read from day to day.'

It recommended a short period of silent meditation every morning before the class work starts, and the study of:

(a) lives of the great religious leaders,
(b) selections from religious scriptures and
(c) the problems of the philosophy of religion.

63 Biswas and Agrawal: 1971, pp.439-441
The Indian Constitution (1950) holds that the State being secular, should not get mixed up with the encouragement of any particular form of religion, but it also provides equal opportunities for all religions. The Articles 28 and 30 clearly express the decision regarding religious education. Though the State itself cannot take any part in providing religious instruction, it is not restricted from recognizing and giving aid to institutions which provide such instruction to all those who desire to have it. After the promulgation of the Constitution there is a perceptible shift from the question of imparting religious instruction to that of inculcating social, moral and spiritual values.64

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) believed that religious and moral behaviour spring from the influence of the home, the influence of the school, and the influences exercised by the public. These, however, can be supplemented only to a limited extent by properly organized moral instructions 'dwelling on the lives of great personages of all times and of all classes. It may be noted that the Committee on Religious and Moral instruction set up in 1959 was, under its terms of reference, concerned with the teaching of moral and spiritual values (and not religious instruction).

The Education Commission (1964-66) pointed out that 'A serious defect in the school curriculum is the absence of provision for education in social moral and spiritual values.' It agreed with the recommendations of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction. The Commission recommended that conscious and organized attempts should be made 'for imparting education in social, moral and spiritual values with the help, wherever possible, of ethical teachings of great religions.' One of two periods a week could be committed for the instruction of moral and spiritual values, mostly based on stories drawn from, the great religions of the world, accounts of the lives of great religious and spiritual leaders and the essential teachings of great religions. The celebration of festivals of different religions is also, recommended.

Biswa and Aggarwal brings out the importance of education of the emotions and discipline of the will. It is long back that Tagore in his Bodher Sadhana struck a new

64 Biswas and Agrawal: 1971, p.470
note: 'We must constantly remember that neither the education of the senses, nor the education of the intellect, but the education of the feeling should receive the place of honour in our schools'. Discussing religious education, the University Education Commission has also stressed the point: 'We must habituate the students to right emotions.' The central theme of the recommendations of the Committee is to create conditions which would habituate the, students to right emotions that would foster national unity.

The committee on religious and moral instruction was appointed by the Government of India to make a detailed study of the entire question of religious and moral instruction in educational institutions under the Chairmanship of Shri Sri Prakasa, Governor of Bombay. The Committee emphasised upon the following recommendations:

1. Elementary Stage:
   (1) The School Assembly should allot a few minutes in the morning for group singing.
   (2) Simple and interesting stories about the lives and teachings of prophets, saints and religious leaders should be included in the syllabus for language teaching.
   (3) In the school programme, two periods a week should be set aside for moral instruction.
   (4) Through school programme, the attitude of 'service' and the realisation that 'work is worship' should be developed in the child.

2. Secondary Stage:
   (1) The Morning assembly should observe two minutes' silence followed by readings from the scriptures or great literature of the world or an appropriate address.
   (2) The essential teachings of the great world religions should be studied.
   (3) One hour a week should be assigned to moral instruction. Apart from this regular class instruction, suitable speakers may be invited to address the students on moral and spiritual values. Joint celebrations may be organised on the occasion of important festivals of all religions.
   (4) Organised social service during holidays and outside class hours should be an essential part of extra-curricular activities.

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66 Ibid., p.445
However, the point that we would like to emphasise here is, all the above-mentioned Commissions and committees were keen on upholding the secular values in their recommendations. While recommending the religious and moral instructions in education for the children of various stages, they never insisted upon any particular religious values to be inculcated. Their aim was to educate the children of the good elements of all the major religions of the world. As we have mentioned earlier in the previous section, Indian secularism is not rejection of religion altogether. Rather, it is aimed at equal treatment to all the religions irrespective of its numerical strength.

It is to be noted that India, being a country with a population having diverse socio-cultural background, political interests, contradicting worldviews, etc. was more vulnerable for a number of destructive forces. At the Conference of the Education Ministers held in November, 1960, the distressing frequency with which disruptive tendencies were making themselves in the country was discussed. It was felt that such tendencies, if unchecked, might threaten the unity of the country. In the circumstances, the importance of the role of education in countering such divisive trends and in fostering unity was stressed. The Conference recommended that a Committee be set up to study the problem and to suggest positive educational measures for promoting integration. This was followed by the appointment of the Committee in May 1961 by the Ministry of Education, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Sampuranand. Its members included Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Prof. T. M. Advani, Prof. Hiren Mukherjee, Shri M. Henry Samuel, Prof. M.N. Srinivas, Bhai Jodh Singh, Shri A. E. T. Barrow, Shri Asoka Mehta, Shri A.A.A. Fyzee.

Its objectives were as follows:

(a) To study the role of education in considering and promoting the processes of emotional integration in national life and to examine the operation of tendencies which come in the way of their development; and

(b) In the light of such study, to advise on the positive educational programmes for youth in general and students in schools and colleges in particular, to strengthen in them the processes of emotional integration.67

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67 Biswas and Agrawal: 1971, pp.446-48
Amongst its recommendations, the following which were referred to School Education are worth noting:

1) It is desirable to have a school uniform for school children.
2) Children should be taught to sing the National Anthem in unison and behave in a disciplined way when it is sung. They should also be taught the meaning of the verses. One of the first duties of citizenship to be taught at the very earliest stage is reverence for the Flag and the Anthem.
3) National Days - January 26, August 15 and October 2 - (The country's Republic Day, Independence Day and the Birthday of Gandhi respectively) should be celebrated by schools with the full participation of the teachers and the community.
4) The Government should encourage children to go on excursions outside their State by offering them partial assistance and maximum travel concessions.
5) The various architecture of India, different types of dress and manners, emphasising those points which are common, dance forms from the various States, life on a farm or in a village—all these give children an exciting and rewarding glimpse into the large country of which their State forms only a small part. Children should also be taught that the mere size of any State in India has no relevance necessarily to its importance, that every State in the Indian Union and the smaller territories has a part to play in contributing to the nation's well-being, prosperity and honour.
6) A scheme to produce children's films dealing with brief historical tales or legends, or even cartoons depicting stories from the *Panchatantra*, *Aesop*, or the *Jataka* tales and stories from the epics, or buildings and monuments that tell a story using the flashback method, could be launched by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
7) Another but simpler way of visual presentation is of the different States with the Ashoka Chakra in the centre, showing the natural resources of each State and how each helps to build up the country's economy, pictures of different Indian birds and animals, the stories of India's Five Year Plans, different ways of eating and living, different preferences in food may be attractively prepared for display.
8) There are several projects which schools can undertake for the promotion of inter-State understanding. A school may decide to run a 'Know Your Country' programme during which children share in the collection of information about a State in the Indian Union other than their own.68

As far as the Curriculum Framework is concerned, the Committee also believed that although it is not possible to provide religious education as a part of the curriculum for schools in a secular State, education will be incomplete if students are not helped to appreciate the spiritual values which the various religions present to the people. It recommended that talks, open to all, on the teachings of various religions by able and

68 Ibid., p. 447-48
competent persons may be arranged in the schools. It further emphasised upon the idea of national unity and the unity of mankind to be introduced from the very outset in the curriculum. This need to be done with due regard to children's age and understanding. Finally, the Committee insisted upon that the teaching of geography should be made compulsory.

Secular Values in Text-Books

Amongst various recommendations, the Mudaliar commission states: 'With a view to improving the quality of textbooks prescribed a high power Textbooks Committee should be constituted. No book prescribed as a textbook or as a book for general study should contain any passage or statement which might offend the religious or social susceptibilities of any section of the community or might indoctrinate the minds of the young students with particular political or religious ideologies.69

In the keynote address of the 29th annual meeting of the CABE, held at Jaipur, on 1-2 January, 1962, it Chairman, the then Education Minister, Dr. K.L. Shrimali stated: 'The National Council of Educational Research and Training has formulated a scheme for the production of books in selected subjects... It is not our intention that the State should have the sole monopoly of producing text-books. The Government will be one of the agencies for the production of text-books and it will be open to the educational authorities to select the best books available in the market. The aim is to improve the content and production of text-books and not to inhibit an original or personal approach by teachers or to restrict the competitive process through which better text-books can be obtained.

In case of the Text-books and other Materials are concerned,

1) A large reading material should be prepared; programme of translations must be launched. It is also necessary to produce original work in different branches of study written by Indians in Indian languages.
2) Potential talent in teachers should be developed by training them in the technique of writing textbooks.
3) History and geography textbooks, as the subjects demand all-India treatment, should be Centrally produced.

69 Ibid., p.305
4) Unfair suppression of detail should be avoided and facts of history should not be distorted in the attempt to promote integration.

5) The approach to history teaching and consequently in the writing of history textbooks, should stress cultural and social relationships of our people down the ages.

6) Geography textbooks should show children that we live today in an inter-dependent world.

7) The Government of India in collaboration with the National Book Trust, the Sahitya Akademi and Children's Book Trust, should formulate a scheme for the immediate production of a series of reference books for adults and children on the different States and Union Territories of India.

8) Books should be produced on traditional folklore and folk songs from various parts of India together with the transliterated texts and the translation.\(^{70}\)

Despite a strong emphasis upon upholding the secular values in the textbooks and curriculum framework made by various commissions and committees, it had been repeatedly brought to the notice of the Government of India that some of the textbooks prescribed for schools in several states contained certain passages in respect of which objections were raised by certain sections of minority communities on the ground that they hurt their feelings and militated against the directive principles of the Constitution. The matter had also been raised in Parliament. The Government of India, Ministry of Education, therefore, set up a committee on September 1, 1966, under the chairmanship of Prof. K.G. Saiyidain, Director of the Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, to examine the issue and to advise the Government of India on the principles to be adopted in the preparation and assessment of textbooks suitable for a secular State.\(^{71}\)

Its objectives were as follows:

(a) To examine the specific complaints regarding books brought to the notice of the Committee from different states, and to test their validity with particular reference to the need for promoting intercommunal and inter-regional Understanding;

(b) To state the general principles to be adopted in the and assessment of textbooks with special reference to the teaching of languages, history and social studies; and

\(^{70}\) Ibid., pp-449-450

Major Recommendations

1. Treatment of Religion in Textbooks

The fundamental principle of our national life, as far as the Constitution of India, is that an assurance of respect for all religions and promotes the spirit of tolerance for people who profess different faiths. It is, therefore, necessary that the children should not be shut off from the knowledge of their own religion or that of others. They should be taught to understand them and to live with people who profess other faiths. Textbooks should, therefore, endeavour in their limited way to acquaint the pupils with the basic truths of all religions and the contribution which they have made to the development of human values.

The committee emphasised upon the need for maintaining some reasonable kind of balance in any textbook between religious and non-religious material bearing on the life of the community. It argues that a disproportionate emphasis on mythological or religious material and the comparative neglect of scientific, social, intellectual or aesthetic expressions of man is not in keeping with the needs of a growing society which is trying to modernize itself. 'In presenting any religious material', the committee believes, 'textbooks should provide information about religions and not seek to provide any denomination's religious instruction. Besides, when the mythology or beliefs of a particular religious community are mentioned they should not be presented as if they are acceptable to all the communities of India.' For example, it points out, when talking about the river Ganges, to say that "the river is considered sacred by the Hindus" would be more appropriate and correct than the statement "the Ganges is considered a sacred river by all of us".

2. Treatment of Mythology in Textbooks

The committee recognises a limited scope for mythology which has value in contributing an ingredient of our ancient culture and legacy. While doing so, it also urges that we

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72 Ibid., p.463-64
cannot afford to become a slave to the past and the textbooks should pay due heed to the new aspirations and hopes of the younger generation.' Mythological themes are essential to fulfill certain educational purposes. For example, mythology helps the child understand literary allusions in the literature and poetry of the past, as well as the classical background of our ancient people. Some mythological stories have very appealing moral content universal acceptability. Such themes can be chosen.

The inclusion of mythology should always be purposeful. The object of education given in schools is not primarily to train children as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, etc., but as good, broadminded, tolerant, Indian citizens. The actual religious training of children should be primarily the function of parents or religious organisations or special schools set up by them for the purpose. This cannot, obviously, be taken up by the State educational system. 73

The committee also consistently stresses upon the following:

Lessons which are in the nature of formal worship or prayer should not be included in language text books, even when they are harmless. They are likely to be suspected because custom associates them not with their underlying meaning or literary charm but with the accepted modes of worship peculiar to particular religions. School books should, as far as possible, avoid selections of denominational prayers, for inclusion of textbooks. 74

The Education Commission has suggested the preparation of special material for moral and religious education in order to facilitate mutual understanding of religious and cultural attitudes in a multi-religious society. It would be more appropriate to include religious and mythological themes in these books than in the language readers which could then include more of secular material relevant to present-day needs. 75

73 Ibid., p.465
74 Ibid., p.466
75 Ibid., p.467
Teaching of History

While writing the history textbooks, it is very important to state facts with accuracy and objectivity in history readers, as there can be no compromise with truth. This is an important element in the education of the young. The Saiyidain Committee, however, felt that there is an element of interpretation in the treatment of historical data and it is essential to ensure that history is interpreted in a manner which will assist in the cultivation of understanding and in promoting the sense of national integration. In view of the fact that in teaching Indian history in past, during the British rule, stress has often been laid on religious differences and conflicts, the committee insisted upon that it is necessary that we should now highlight those situations — and they are legion — where people of all religious faiths have worked together in unity and cooperation.

The problem of selecting content is thus of great importance in the early stages of teaching history when the guiding principle should be not to give all the facts but to pick out those which may exercise the desired influence on the minds of children. This is not necessarily any falsification of history but a recognition of the obvious fact that it is literally impossible to present all facts. In fact, there is no special educational virtue in burdening the children's mind with old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago, but the emphasis should definitely be on peaceful, constructive, cooperative, creative, socially worthwhile activities in which men and women have been engaged during the historic process of building up noble values and ways of life.

One of the most objectionable features in the teaching of history — as well as in the writing of textbooks — is that it allows the act of individuals to be interpreted as an expression of the faith that they happened to profess. This should be avoided at all costs and the children should be definitely guarded against 'communal or sectarian stereotypes'. Interpretation of historical data therefore, is, a difficult task and it is essential to produce guide material nationally for the use of teachers and textbook-writers.76

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76 Ibid., pp.467-69
Work-Experience and National Service

The Committee felt that the school and the community should be brought closer through suitable programmes of mutual service and support. Work-experience and national service including participation in meaningful and challenging programmes of community service and national reconstruction should accordingly become an integral part of education. Emphasis in these programmes should be on self-help, character formation and on developing a sense of social commitment.\(^{77}\) In fact, it is due to this provision that all the schools encourage their students to take part in programmes such as NCC (National Cadet Cadre), NSS (National Service Scheme), Scout/Guide etc.

To sum up, the post-independence Indian educational policies were formulated by the political leadership with the following beliefs:

A. Educational institutions have a vital role to play in bringing about national integration and social cohesion among the younger generation. The school programme should be designed to awaken in the pupils an awareness of national oneness and for this purpose, includes community living based on co-operative self-help and democratic principles, the study of India's history and culture in the curriculum at various stages of education and suitable textbooks to inculcate moral and social values among students.

B. The school programme has to be supplemented by other activities such as programmes for bringing students together on a common platform and enabling them to gain first-hand knowledge of the diversified culture of the country through educational tours, the development of modern Indian and classical languages and making their rich store-house of literature available to larger numbers in different parts of the country through translations and the revival and development of India's composite cultural heritage through fine arts, dance, drama, music and literature.

Part C – Constructing India through the History Textbooks

In 1961, the Government of India set up the NCERT to advise and assist the Ministry of Education in the formulation and implementation of policies in school education. Around the same time, the Central Committee on Educational Literature chaired by the Minister of Education was set up and under this committee were set up panels of experts in a few subject areas, notably history, geography, Hindi and sciences. These experts were, in every case, from among the leading experts in their respective subject areas in the

\(^{77}\) Ibid., pp.496-97
country. It may be relevant here to mention that, as Arjun Dev points out, during this early phase, the historians who formed the panel for writing history textbooks included Dr Tara Chand, Professor Mohammad Habib and Professor K.A. Nilakanta Shastri and the first two textbooks brought out by NCERT in the 1960s were Ancient India and Medieval India for classes VI and VII respectively written by Professor Romila Thapar. Subsequently the experts who were associated with the work of preparing history textbooks included Professor Nurul Hasan, Professor S. Gopal, Professor R.S. Sharma, Professor Bipan Chandra and Professor Satish Chandra, Professor Sumit Sarkar and Professor Barun De. Professor R.S. Sharma, Professor Satish Chandra, Professor Bipan Chandra also wrote NCERT's textbooks dealing with Ancient India, Medieval India and Modern India respectively. Similarly leading experts were associated with the preparation of textbooks in other subjects which by 1975, when NCERT produced the first ever curriculum framework, included almost every school subject.

It was a period when the Nehruvian agenda of nation-making was the dominant worldview. As Pathak points out that one of the major objectives of the NCERT was to concretise the recommendations of the Kothari Commission, or the post-colonial agenda of education. The NCERT, as a result, intervened in the process of writing the texts for school children. For example, the first edition of the history texts for classes VI and VII were written in 1966 and 1967 respectively. The text for class VIII was written in 1970. And the civics texts were written in the 1970s. These texts, have gained widespread legitimacy and acquired a pan-Indian character.

The NCERT history textbooks were written by eminent historians, whose scholarship was widely acknowledged. They gained widespread legitimacy. Romila Thapar, a renown ancient historian of the country, has written the texts for classes VI and VII,
which deal with the history of ancient and medieval India.\textsuperscript{81} Arjun Dev (former Director of NCERT) and Indira Arjun Dev have written the history of modern India for class VIII.\textsuperscript{82} These texts have attempted to make the child aware of the rich history of India. The information range chronologically from the Indus Valley Civilisation; The Vedic Age; From the Mauryan Empire to the Age of the Guptas; The Delhi Sultanate; The Mughals; The Rise and Growth of British Rule in India; Religious and Social Reform Movements; The growth of Indian Nationalism; and The Achievement of Independence.

It is to be noted here, as Krishna Kumar points out that the opportunity to write these textbooks had arisen under M.C. Chagla (minister of education from 1963-1966) as a result of the initiative taken by a group of young historians, among whom was Romila Thapar. She recalls how the NCERT’s history series was not really born out of a policy decision, but rather out of an initiative for which the ethos was just right:

If I may be autobiographical, in the early sixties some of us did a survey of the textbooks that were used in the schools of Delhi. We were appalled at how bad they were. We wrote a vet/passionate letter to the then education minister M.C. Chagla and said that something should be done to change this, at least start from the textbooks. Chagla promptly wrote back that since we were so concerned and we were a bunch of historians, we should write the new textbooks.\textsuperscript{83}

Importance of History teaching in schools Kumar writes:

As a school subject, history comes under the strain of nation-building rather more than other subjects. A single-minded focus on the goal of inculcating a national consciousness often makes the teaching of history a means of ideological indoctrination. The role of history in arousing an interest in the past and respect for it, besides imparting the means of studying it, gets totally sidelined when the ideology of nationalism becomes the sole ground for organizing historical knowledge in syllabi and textbooks.\textsuperscript{84}

According to Pathak, it has to be realised that history is not just bundles of information.

\textsuperscript{81} Romila Thapar: \textit{Ancient India: A Textbook of History for Class VI.} New Delhi: NCERT (seventh reprint), 1993a & \textit{Medieval India: History Textbook for Class VII.} New Delhi: NCERT (sixth reprint), 1993b

\textsuperscript{82} Dev and Dev: \textit{Modern India: A History Textbook for Class VIII.} New Delhi: NCERT (fourth reprint), 1993.


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., pp.5-6
History is also written in order to convey messages. Historical data need not exist as 'pure'/neutral' facts as facts are often mingled with values. It is not impossible to see how historical writing privileges some facts and disregards others; how it praises, condemns, valorises things. History, in other words, is not just an 'objective' description of what happened. History is also about ideas, values and politics. Hence, history as a body of school knowledge, seeks to influence the mind of the child through certain values and preferences.

As E.H. Carr writes:
History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish on the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him. Carr also maintains, The historian is necessarily selective. The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate.

History and Ideology of Secular Nationalism
The NCERT history texts project the ideology of secular nationalism which was visualised by the national leadership and the subsequent education commissions. This ideological preoccupation does have a significant impact on the way the past has been seen and constructed. Interestingly, the NCERT never attempts to hide its ideological preference. For instance, in the foreword to Romila Thapar's text on medieval India, P.L. Malhotra has written: The National Policy of Education has stressed the importance of core curricular areas, along with a national curricular framework, in building the National System of Education. Many of the core curricular areas and the values that they are visualised to promote are directly related to the study of history. This relationship is obvious in the case of objectives such as promoting knowledge and understanding of India's common cultural heritage. It is no less important in its relationship with other objectives of the core areas such as the inculcation of scientific temper, and

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86 Ibid., p.12
egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes and removal of social barriers. It is also of crucial significance in combating obscurantism, religious fanaticism, superstition and fatalism. 87

Pathak identifies three important means attempted by the authors in order to inculcate the ideology of secular nationalism. They are:

I. Avoiding the Glorification of the Hindu Past
II. Emphasising the Ideals of Tolerance and Harmony
III. Privileging the Congress Nationalism

I. Avoiding the Glorification of the Hindu Past
In the ancient history textbook, a cautious/careful attempt to avoid the glorification of the Hindu past has been made. For example, in the chapter on the Vedic age, the text does not valorise the Vedic time. There is no attempt to characterise the philosophic depth of the Vedas or the cultural life of the people during that period. Instead, Thapar has relied heavily on the 'neutrality' of science or the 'objectivity' of information: how the Aryans came as pastoral nomads and how they took to agriculture and began to settle down in villages; how the cow was the pride of the place among the animals because people were dependent on the produce of the cow and how, for special guests, beef was served as a mark of honour. It would seem as though an attempt has been made to 'de-mystify/de-mythologise' the Vedic age. 88

Thapar brings out very clearly the conflicts between the Aryans and the indigenous people. The Aryans, when they settled in various parts of north India, were hostile to the indigenous people whom they referred to as 'Dasas' and 'Dasyus.' The Dasas and Dasyus did not worship the same gods as the Aryans and spoke a language which was different from the Vedic Sanskrit. Some Dasa chiefs were treated with great respect, but many of the Dasa people were enslaved so that eventually the word 'Dasa' came to mean slave.

87 Cited in Pathak: 2002, pp.112-113
88 Thapar: 1993a, pp.40-41
Thus Dasas who were enslaved had to do the most difficult and lowly work and were not treated kindly.\(^{89}\)

While the text highlights the limitations of the Vedic religion and the irrationality of the caste system, it sees Jainism and Buddhism as egalitarian religions. It projects Buddhism as a more egalitarian religion and hence more sensitive to the needs of the subaltern classes. The text mentions:

'The Buddha too did not favour the Vedic sacrifices and the many rituals which people had to perform. He objected to the importance given to the varnas because those who belonged to the lower varnas, the shudras and others, were ill-treated by the upper varnas. Buddhism and Jainism had followers among the craftsmen, traders, and peasants because they felt that these religions were not difficult to practise. The Brahmans, on the other hand, had made their religion difficult to practise because of many ceremonies and rituals. Buddhism in those days was opposed to elaborate ceremonies because not only were they expensive but they also encouraged superstition.'\(^{90}\)

Similarly, while narrating the age of the Guptas, the author does not glorify the 'Hindu Past', which the advocates of cultural nationalism do. Although the text tells us about divergent achievements of the Gupta period, such as the development of trade within India, western Asia and South-East Asia; the great literary creation, particularly the genius of Kalidasa; progress in the field of science, mainly through the work of Aryabhata, or the discovery of the decimal system and the concept of zero, the text does not forget to remind the child of a major contradiction of the Gupta period, the practice of untouchability.

As the text states:

Society was divided into castes, most of which lived in harmony together. But there was one group in the towns which was badly treated - the untouchables. They had to live outside the town, separate from the rest of the townspeople. They were regarded as so impure that high caste people could not even look at them. This certainly does not speak well of the Gupta society. So much unkindness to other human beings was a serious flaw.\(^{91}\) The message, one could derive from the above analysis is, that 'before you begin to speak of the 'glorious' Hindu past', as Pathak

\(^{89}\) Ibid., p.41 and also Pathak: 2002, p.113  
\(^{90}\) Thapar: 1993a, pp.56-57  
\(^{91}\) Ibid., p.97, also cited in Pathak: 2002, p.114
argues, 'you ought to be humble. You ought to understand its limitations, contradictions and paradoxes!'92

II. Emphasising the Ideals of Tolerance and Harmony

The texts have also attempted a parallel search for, and identification and celebration of ideals that can educate the child and teach him/her values like equity, harmony, justice, and tolerance.93 The author describes Ashoka as 'the most famous of the Mauryan kings, and one of the greatest rulers India has ever had'.94 The child is told about Ashoka’s great transformation, the way the battle of Kalinga made him realise the futility of war and the way he became a champion of peace, love and harmony. Moreover, the text praises Ashoka’s openness, his vast horizon, his tolerant attitude to all religions.95

The text informs us that although Ashoka, being a Buddhist, and wanted to make Buddhism popular, he was tolerant towards other religions. Thapar puts it, 'He believed in high ideals, which could lead men to be peaceful and virtuous ... Ashoka wanted all the different religious groups to live together in peace and tolerance .... The important thing was not the differences but the unity within the empire.'96

Furthermore, the text also hints at Ashoka’s subaltern heart. The fact that Ashoka used Prakrit instead of Sanskrit to spread his message showed his closer relationship with the masses. Prakrit was spoken by the common people, whereas Sanskrit was spoken by the educated upper castes .... Because Ashoka wanted to explain his ideas to the ordinary people, he used the language which they would understand.97

Besides, the text reminds the child, Ashoka looked after his people in various ways. He built good roads; along the roads he planted shady trees to keep away the hot sun; he

92 Pathak: 2002, p.115
93 Ibid., p.115
94 Thapar: 1993a, pp.60-61
95 Pathak: 2002, p.115
96 Thapar: 1993a, pp. 62-64
97 Ibid., p.62
opened medical centres where sick men could be brought for treatment. In Pathak's words, 'in Ashoka, the text wants the child to see all that is positive, great and ideal.'

Likewise, while writing about the medieval period, Thapar looks upon another great ideal ruler in Akbar. According to the text, 'Akbar was a great ruler not because he ruled a vast empire, but because of his concern for the country and the people .... In many ways Akbar had the same ideas about ruling as did Ashoka.' In one of his edicts, Ashoka says that 'All men are my children.' Akbar too had a similar view. Thapar writes:

'Akbar's great dream was that India should be united as one country. People should forget their differences of religion and think of themselves only as the people of India .... Akbar had one great quality. He was fearless. He showed boldness and courage in physical feats when he rode and tamed angry elephants or swam across rivers in full flood. He also showed courage when he opposed those who used their power and orthodoxy in trying to keep back new ideas and preventing changes from taking place in Indian society and Indian thinking. It was a fearlessness which was rooted in honesty and this is a rare quality.'

The chapter on Akbar is about his greatness. It is not just about his administrative skill; it is primarily about his accommodative spirit, his religious tolerance. It is mentioned how Akbar encouraged the translation into Persian of important works in Sanskrit like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and how this spirit of composite culture could also be seen in the architecture. For example, the architecture at Fatehpur Sikri is an excellent blend of Persian, central Asian and Indian styles. And the text also reminds the child of the rationale behind Akbar's new religion, i.e., Din-i-Ilahi.

He felt that every religion pointed towards God. And therefore he wondered why it was not possible for people following different religions to live peacefully with one another. He also wanted a way which would be common to all religions and would unite all people .... He suggested a new religious path. This was based on the common truths of all religions and a few rules taken from all religions.

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98 Pathak: 2002, p.115
99 Thapar: 1993b, pp.94-95
100 Pathak: 2002, p.116
Here, one could perceive that the 'idealisation of tolerance' means that 'history should not overstate the examples of hatred and antagonism particularly, the extraordinarily sensitive issues relating to religious conflict and division.' Perhaps, that's why Thapar, while writing an entire chapter on Akbar, does not write much about Aurangzeb. As Pathak observes, 'The section on Aurangzeb gets only two paragraphs. And here too one sees a certain restraint: a tendency not to overemphasise his intolerance or his hostility to other religious communities. Instead, there is an implicit attempt at blaming those who revolted against him.' Thapar: 2002, p.116

Aurangzeb's troubles, according to the text, arose mainly out of the fact that people in many parts of his empire were in revolt. Thapar: 1993b, p.104

In fact, the text has exercised restraint when it comes to writing about those who revolted against Aurangzeb. For example, as one reads the section on Shivaji, one realises that there is no glorification or idealisation of someone who was generally perceived as a great warrior. Instead, Shivaji has been depicted as a 'clever' and 'ambitious' ruler who was determined to 'harass' the Mughals! Unlike what has been written about Ashoka and Aurangzeb, no positive adjective has been used to designate Shivaji as a hero or a patriot. Perhaps the idea is to allow the child to see the culture of tolerance; to let the child see the Mughals as insiders and not as alien intruders. This becomes fairly clear when the Mughals are compared with the Portuguese. The Portuguese, the text suggests, never wanted to make India their home. They wanted to convert as many Indians as possible to the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. They were intolerant of the existing religions of India and did not hesitate to force people to become Christian.

However, the story of the Mughals, the child is told, was entirely different. A bigger difference was that the Mughals made India their home. They settled here and became a part of the Indian population. They were concerned with the welfare of India. Nor were the Mughals interested in converting large numbers of Indians into their religion. This is a clear manifestation of the history of Hindu-Muslim Unity. The chapter on the life of the people during the period of the Sultanate, therefore, gives great importance to

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103 Thapar: 1993b, p.104
104 Ibid., p.83
105 Ibid., pp. 83-84
the sufi/bhakti tradition. For example, the sufis did not try to convert Hindus to Islam but advised Hindus to be better Hindus by loving the one true god.\textsuperscript{106}

Likewise, the bhakti teachers also taught that the relationship between man and god was based on love, and worshipping god with devotion was better than merely performing any number of religious ceremonies. They stressed the need for tolerance among men and religions.\textsuperscript{107}

In a way, as Pathak observes, 'the child is asked to study and appreciate the history of Muin-Ud-din Chishti, Baba Farid, Nizam-Ud-din Auliya, Chaitanya, Kabir, and Nanak; not that of Mahmud of Ghazni or Mohammed Ghori!'.\textsuperscript{108} This is quite evident that the text emphasises upon the ideals of unity and tolerance.

III. Privileging Congress Nationalism

While presenting the history of modern India, the emphasis was on tolerance, unity and composite culture. As a historical necessity, it is considered important for the consolidation of modern nationalism and for promoting the vision of a united India. Hence, the depiction of the history of modern India was aimed at two things: a) critique of colonialism, and b) distinguishing nationalism from communalism. As Pathak states, 'Colonialism is exploitative, communalism is divisive, and nationalism is progressive; it is about unity and emancipation. As a result, the class VIII text on the history of modern India tells us about the exploitative character of colonialism, and divergent protests/revolts against it. However, the meaning the text attaches to nationalism is very significant for analysis. It is secular because it does not privilege any particular religion. It is based on unity and composite culture.' Hence, the text asserts very forcefully, the distinction between nationalism and communalism.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p.53  
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p.54, cited in Pathak: 2002, p.117  
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p.118  
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p.118
While the nationalist movement united the people on the basis of their common aspirations to take India on the road to progress, the communal parties questioned the very basis of Indian nationhood. Dev and Dev in their textbook on Modern history, point out that the Indian people, through the centuries of their history, had developed a rich common culture. It was rich because of its variety. The Indian nation consisted of people who followed different religions, spoke different languages and practiced different customs. This richness has been a source of pride to the Indian people and is something to be cherished. The communal parties tried to divide them.\textsuperscript{10}

The text also makes it clear that it is essentially the Congress that symbolises the spirit of nationalism. The Congress - with its nationalist zeal - has been separated from the communal organisation, like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. From its inception, the Congress stood for the unity of the people, irrespective of religious and other differences.\textsuperscript{11}

The Congress during the first 20 years of its existence had helped to unite the people for common national aims. In the following years, this unity was further strengthened and the aims became clearer. From a movement in which only small sections of the society were active, it became a movement in which millions participated with the aim of attaining freedom.\textsuperscript{12}

The text suggests that the Congress was for national unity. It argues, although the Muslim League propagated the two nation theory, those Muslims who wanted the unity of the nation, were with the Congress. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who in the early years of the 20th century had been a nationalist leader, later became one of the most prominent leaders of the Muslim League. The Muslim League claimed that it was the sole representative of the Muslims. The British Government agreed with this and, thus, promoted the Muslim League .... The demand for a separate state was opposed by large sections of Muslims. In the struggle for independence, Muslims, along with the people

\textsuperscript{10} Dev and Dev: 1993, pp.239-40
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.175
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.180
belonging to other communities, had participated and, like others, they also had suffered from the repressive measures of the British government. They were in the Congress in large numbers.\(^{113}\)

As Pathak observes:

All this implies that the Congress is being projected as the primary agent of the nationalist struggle. That is why, in the four bulky chapters on the nationalist struggle, there is a prominent presence of the Congress--its origin, its development through the different stages, and its maturation through Gandhi and Nehru. No doubt, the text does talk about the alternate voices--say, the voices of Chandra Sekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose. The text also reflects on the movements of the depressed classes--the movements led by the leaders like E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker and B.R. Ambedkar. Yet, what is striking is the overwhelming presence of the Congress in the text--the Congress as the primary agent, or Gandhi as the ultimate authority. Therefore, while writing about Ambedkar--and Ambedkar does not even get a full paragraph--the text does not forget to talk about 'the great importance which Gandhiji attached to the eradication of the evil of untouchability'.\(^{114}\)

Moreover, Gandhi's integrationist view is preferred to the politics centred primarily on caste identity. Pathak points out that the text seeks to take Congress nationalism for granted. It does not problematise it. Furthermore, the nationalist movement has been shown in a positive light. The text highlights its 'secular' character, its 'socialist' objectives, its tolerant/internationalist' outlook.\(^{115}\)

In *Learning from Conflict*, Krishna Kumar points out, 'In our country, the history syllabus of the final years of middle school, i.e. grades six, seven, and eight, shows a somewhat contrasting practice to be in vogue. The Indian school history syllabus and texts are structured around the idea of a continuous past, extending from ancient to the modern times. Prioritization of any kind, whether consciously pursued or unconsciously permitted, is conspicuous by its absence. The ancient and medieval periods are presented in a manner which ensures that they carry the same aura of relevance to the present as the modern period does. It is not as if our elementary school history books do not

\(^{113}\) Ibid., p.240  
\(^{114}\) Ibid., p.242, cited by Pathak: 2002, pp.119-120  
\(^{115}\) Pathak: 2002, p.120
acknowledge any breaks in history. They do, to some extent, acknowledge the transitional periods falling between major shifts in political and economic power.\textsuperscript{116}

In the post-colonial nation-states, the teaching of history has been perceived as a valuable instrument of continuing the nation-building exercise that the struggle for freedom from colonial control had initiated. In the relatively older nation-states, such as many of the European countries, the situation is somewhat different. There, although history has its place in the school curriculum, it does not take the form of a continuous story spanning thousands of years in chronological order. Children in their elementary grades do study specific topics relating to life in the ancient or medieval worlds, but they study these topics as isolated projects, attempting to construct what essentially is an alien past. Later, when the past is presented in chronological order, it is prioritized, in the sense that only the post-Renaissance past appears relevant to the present; the earlier past is presented even now as mainly an object of curiosity.\textsuperscript{117}

Kumar also points out that 'In the Indian case, the end of the freedom struggle marks the end of the history syllabus and the textbook in most states.' This, we would emphatically argue, has created a vacuum, which in turn, had serious implications. To quote Kumar:

\begin{quote}
After more than five decades of independence, the Indian system of education has not been able to introduce the history of post-independence India in the school curriculum? In certain states like Uttar Pradesh, the history textbook offers in a few pages a sketchy run of the main events that have occurred since 1947, but this kind of coverage is essentially a listing, not history. For the majority of schoolchildren, the history of India starts in ancient times and comes to an end in 1947. In this manner, the end of the freedom struggle also marks the end of history, i.e. the history one learns at school.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

The discontinuity which Kumar brings to our notice, has created a major vacuum in Indian history, which in turn, had serious implications. It created a situation which was especially prone to being taken for granted. For instance, when political parties other than Congress came to power, they attempted to write a post-independence Indian history

\textsuperscript{116} Krishna Kumar, \textit{Learning From Conflict}, New Delhi: Orient Longmann. 1996. p.26
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., pp. 25-26
\textsuperscript{118} Krishna Kumar: 2001, p.74
according to their ideological endeavours. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Rajasthan the BJP and its alliances indulged in such activities as rewriting the history textbooks, listing of post-independence events so as to suit their political agenda. We will discuss them in the forthcoming chapter while analysing the emergence of cultural nationalism in school education in the past two decades.

The politics of religious and caste identity has gained popularity over the last two decades due to the propagation of inter-religious suspicion and caste hatred. As Kumar observes:

The decline of the Congress as a party committed to secularism and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in India's neighbourhood and within India form the background required to explain the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its associate groups during the 1990s. The impact of these political developments on education has been quite noticeable, even in elite public schools which are normally regarded as bastions of the liberal personality. State-run schools have also undergone a loss of resistance to religio-revivalist propaganda. Both teachers and children have been exposed to the propaganda of religious revivalism in their life outside school.†† Besides, he argues that there has been a remarkable rise in the number of schools directly run by revivalist organizations. The vast chain of Saraswati schools is one prominent network of revivalist educational effort; there are several parallel religio-educational networks of this kind in operation now.‡‡

Seen in this grim background, in Kumar's words, 'the official policy to propagate secularism with the help of textbooks looks like using an ageing barrier against a powerful current.' The importance given in recent policy documents to 'value education'—a cover for ideological indoctrination—is an ominous pointer to future dangers.‡‡

Thus, it would be important for us to focus upon the origin and growth of cultural nationalism and its impact on school education in India, which created serious ideological debates. Therefore the foci of the following chapter would be the initiatives made by the cultural nationalists after coming to power. The BJP/RSS's political agenda of inculcating cultural nationalism through school education needs to be studied to understand its socio-political implications.

†† Ibid., p.61
‡‡ Ibid., p.62
‡‡ Ibid., p.62