Academic Dishonesty of Indian Educationists and Education System: 
Mapping (Re)presentation of the Assertive Voices in School Syllabi 

Bijender Singh 
Assistant Professor, 
Dept. of English, 
Indira Gandhi University, 
Meerpur (Rewari) Haryana-123401

Article History: Submitted-05/03/2022, Revised-16/03/2022, Accepted-24/03/2022, Published-31/03/2022.

Abstract: 
This paper aims to trace the dishonesty in representation of assertive voices which are part of school syllabi in India. Some decades ago, the school syllabi were completely negligent towards the radical voices that contributed enormously into the cause of the equality and human rights of marginalized sections of India. No society or academic arena can remain unaffected of the vociferous voices for a long period and India is no exception. Consequently, these voices not only were revisited by the government and educationists but also were included in the school syllabi to make students acquainted with these iconoclasts and their ideologies. In this attempt, what these revolutionaries did for society became an integral part of syllabi but the evils they fought against were totally neglected or misappropriated. As Krishan Kumar argues that schools and syllabi in fact propagate the dominant structures and continue social hierarchies, the school syllabi do not mention the social evil/structures these revolutionaries fought against. Based on some of the school syllabi and some autobiographical narratives, this study attempts to prove that either there is no representation or only misrepresentation of marginalized revolutionaries. This has been practised dishonestly to cover the social evils, mainstream people were prejudiced of, which were inhuman and exploitative in nature; to undermine the ideas and actions of the marginalized revolutionaries; and conceal those inhuman theory and praxis, the mainstream people of India were proud of. All these attempts of misrepresentation prove intellectual/academic dishonesty of Indian educationists and system.

Keywords: Assertion, Representation, Misrepresentation, Voices, Syllabi, Narratives.
Academic Dishonesty of Indian Educationists and Education System: Mapping (Re)presentation of the Assertive Voices in School Syllabi

Any society across world has never ever been an egalitarian one. All the societies remained visibly the centre of continual combat for power, domination and privileges on the basis of religion, economy, caste, class, gender, race, ethnicity and colour etc. All those in power flaunt their culture and keep it intact through diverse mechanisms to retain the status quo. Since “there is nothing permanent except change” (Heraclitus) and cultures fluid; the society may not linger forever on the same structures but keeps evolving. But, education system through its pedagogy dissembles as an instrument to uphold the dominant structural values. On the contrary, Nelson Mandela argues that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” (“Famous Quotes”) Following his advice, people have protested against the dominant structures in larger interest of humanity across the world, over the centuries. They protested against religious dictums, caste, class, gender, race, ethnic and colour discrimination so vehemently that assertive voices has made a niche not only in the social discourse but also in other discourses—political, social, religious and economical—as well.

Resultantly, the democratic states had to include these voices reluctantly in syllabi and educational framework but posed pretentiously to carry forward the legacy of the leaders of the movements. The iconoclasts like Ambedkar, Phule, Nehru, Birsa Munda, Charumati and others are printed in school text books of different subjects in the different states. But, still the question of no representation forced the educationists and education system to establish departments and centres of gender studies and social inclusion in higher education institutions and led to conduct research in the field from the objective standpoint. But how and from which perspective, these voices in the school subjects or the disciplines are taught still remains unattended. Bhog et al. state that “It is well-established fact that the school curriculum is not neutral knowledge.” (51 “Reading Gender”) Pedagogy does not let the stakeholders discuss on the axis of caste, class, gender and race etc. rather attempts to homogenize systemically. Furthermore, efforts are made inconspicuously to either normalize or reduce the radical personalities to the size of reformers only.

In this context, Ambedkar who led a movement to liberate women, Dalits and other marginalized people from gender, caste and class oppression and succeeded also to some extent has been part of school syllabi in Uttar Pradesh but with a bio-data strategy. It informs only the positions he held and his other achievements. It dishonestly does not floodlight the movement he led against caste all through his life. This measured attempt reduces him to the size of a victim of
caste system who rose to the position of minister in the parliament, so on and so forth fighting caste discrimination. Just he is idealized as committed fighter against all odds in his individual life. Likewise is the case of Periyar, a towering personality, who led anti-caste movement. He is included in Tamil text books but his caste politics is represented in the Tamil text books as a response to cunning caste system—untouchability. His distinct position outside the caste, enquiry into and critique of vicious caste system, rejection of religion and, radical ideology are all painted in penumbral light. He in hagiographic tone is projected completely as a Gandhian. While it is well known fact that Gandhi had never attack caste system the way Ambedkar and Periyar do. To sustain the dominant cultural values, the radicals are figured out as liberalists or humanists by totally blunting the edge of their ideology.

In addition to these, Birsa Munda, a rebellion against the all ‘dikus’ including zamindars [landlords] and mahajans [money-lenders], has been depicted as freedom fighter that fought against Britishers. The protest of Munda has been tailored to nationalism. The exploiters of tribals in India, for centuries, are absent from the discourse. This narrow mindedness of Indian academicians dwarfs those who have fought against the dominant structures to fit them into the dominant cultural and nationalistic frame. The misrepresentation of heroes who attacked severely on undemocratic and exploitative systems borrows the narrow frameworks from meta-narratives which have helped to propagate these structures over the centuries.

The heroes, not only from marginalised sections, as discussed above are instituted opaquely but also from mainstream. For illustration, in a Gujrat State text book, Acharya Narendra Dev, a political philosopher and “scholar of socialist theory and ideology” (Singh) interprets Nehru and his writing letter to Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, his sister, after their father’s death regarding the ancestral property wherein Nehru confirms himself not the sole owner of parental property but only a trustee as only a sacrificing act and Nehru as an ascetic. (Bhog, et. al. Textbook Regimes 79) He deputes himself as the trustee of that property for the reason that he himself, as the letter reads, addresses strongly the question of property rights and critiques patriliny. But, his position has been marked as an act of great sacrifice—saintly one, blunting his critique of inheritance and women’s property rights. All this evidences clearly that the educationists and syllabi committee

1 Outsiders

www.galaxyimrj.com
are so dishonest that the personal achievements mean more to them than the social evils and inequalities.

Similarly, we see the ghettoisation of women fighters by undermining the impact of their actions. Charumati Yodha, a spinster and boyishly dressing women, has been roomed in Hindi language text books of Gujrat state. Her choice of not-to-marry, under influence of Gandhi, is projected as a mission to serve the society not a revolt against patriarchy. And her cross-dress, rejection of marriage and, spirit to support victims of domestic violence are disguised as the acts to serve humanity rather than her feminist move. She, being unremittingly ready to help the victim of patriarchal oppression, “…used to get information about such cases. She used to march off to save these women who had no support. She would knock sense into the husband, mother-in-law and sister-in-law of the woman.” (qtd. in Bhog, et. al. 81) Even for her feminist contribution, the educationists present her as “an amazing moral force and strength . . . . warrior.” (qtd. in Bhog, et. al. 81) Thus the educationists dissolve the crux of revolutionaries’ character and actions and keep mum on issue the evils.

In the same light, Avvaiyar, a fiercely independent and unintelligent bard, glorified Tamil classics. Being unattractive and old she is known for remarkable character and her wit. “Two rich men test the incorruptibility of Avvaiyar, to see if she will sing the praise of their non-existent valour and munificence. Avvaiyar turns her act, commenting instead on their worthlessness. In a sense, Avvaiyar’s grandmotherliness makes her wise icon, suitable and accessible to children.” (Bhog et. al. “Reading Gender” 58) Here, Avvaiyar is reduced just to body only. Her wit means nothing to the educationists. Likewise, in last decade of the twentieth century, in Hindi text book of Haryana state, it was taught that protesting against the ‘Simon Commission’ Lala Lajpat Rai died in 1928 because of police beatings but it has never been disclosed against which agenda of ‘Simon Commission’ was he, along with other congressmen, protesting? This too is an attempt to paint him as a freedom fighter celebrity and cover his attitude towards the marginalized section of Indian society.

It will be a mistake to perceive that the only radicals are undermined in school textbooks. But contrary to this some were overestimated too. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is taught in school text books of Rajasthan state as he had led various movements and was also imprisoned in Cellular
Jail, Port Blair. For being a freedom fighter and a political prisoner he was mentioned as ‘Veer’ [brave], but in the same text book this has totally been concealed that he had filed a mercy petition for acquittal with a commitment not to involve in freedom struggle in future. “Let me go and I will give up the fight for independence and be loyal to the colonial government.” (The Wire) This came to limelight when Congress led Rajasthan government removed—under intention that students must not be misinformed—Savarkar’s honorific ‘Veer’ from the history book of class twelfth on the ground that he had sent four mercy petitions to Britishers from Cellular Jail swearing himself “the ‘son of Portugal’ in his second plea on November 14, 1911.” (Scroll)

It is also pertinent to mention here one more celebrity, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the second President of India (1962-67), whose birthday is celebrated as ‘Teachers’ Day’ in India. He is idealized in Indian educational circles as the ideal teacher and a great scholar. But, it is concealed completely that he was under trial in Calcutta High Court in the case of plagiarism for getting published the Ph.D. thesis of Jadunath Sinha in his own name under title Indian Philosophy that he had submitted to Radhakrishnan and one other instructor. The matter had come to media limelight also. But “Radhakrishnan tale ended happily... for Radhakrishnan! Sinha crumbled before the pressure exerted on him by the high and mighty, including the then vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee. In 1933, the matter was settled out-of-court.” (Venkatesh) Thus some lime Savarkar and Radhakrishnan are idealized whereas others like Ambedkar, Munda and others are underrated by education system and educationists.

This is how the exclusive standpoint of Indian educationists domesticates the personalities from below by deliberately focusing on their life narrative rather than the significance of their politics; ignoring or moderating the ‘controversial’ acts; idealizing some and undermining the others; diluting their politics and; interpreting the iconoclastic voices into nationalistic ones. The idealization of those who committed blunders and whose integrity still remains doubtful is sheer academic dishonesty. This dishonesty is not limited to the personalities only but has seeped deep into the education system. The cultural corruption, accomplished through syllabi, is also an unavoidable issue. Illaiah, with regard to the cultural corruption, argues that low culture does not get proper room in school text books as it should be. He mentions that “For Brahmin-Baniya  

2 Brahmin is a priestly class who ranks high among all varnas whereas the Baniya is a trading class stands at the third level of caste/varna hierarchy.
students there were their childhood stories, very familiar. . . . The boys bore the names of these Gods; the girls the names of the Goddesses. I distinctly remember how alien all these names appeared to me.” (13) He continues it was not only the case of characters and content of syllabi but the writers too. He remarks that “The name of Kalidasa 3 was alien to us as the name of Shakespeare.” (13) In a word, he adds that Telugu text books were as alien to him as any English text book. In Meghasandesham, Bhagavatam, or Mahabharatha he underscores that “we do not find our lives reflected in their narratives.” (15)

Hence, Kancha Illaiah raises the issue of dishonesty emphatically in the school syllabi, of educationists and educational system. The cultural representation in the Tamil school text books that Illaiah mentions is exclusive which, for centuries, has been propagating and promoting the dominant culture. This ignores fundamentally the subaltern culture i.e. the culture of Dalits and Tribal in the same way as it did with the assertive voices and their politics. Besides, the cultural exclusion, the large gap in the lived experiences and textual ones, is much relevant issue. Gaekwad, a writer and DNT4 activist, discovers discrepancy in lived experiences and textual narratives. He attests Illaiah’s argument and exposes that the pledge “India is my country, All Indian are my brothers and sisters, I am proud of its rich and varied heritage” confuses him and forces him to ponder “if all this were true, we were being beaten with false allegations of theft, when in fact we had committed no theft; why they beat my mother, pulled at her sari and asked her to hand it over alleging it to be stolen property.” (Gaekwad 62)

The vast gap between the textual idealism and the lived experiences further tortures him. He raises questions “why our race is branded and treated as a thieves’ community. If all Indian are brothers and sisters, why are not my brothers given jobs? Why do we not get land, decent houses? If we are all brothers, why are my brothers forced to resort thieving in order to feed our people at home?” (62) Gaekwad’s bio-narrative unveils Indian pseudo-notion of brotherhood, nationhood, culture and heritage as the certain communities are still the victim of daily brutality; branded as thieve; have no permanent land and houses; and are considered good-for-nothing. Owing to their being ‘branded’ as thieves by of Acts and laws in 1871 and 1952, they are discarded, neglected

---

3 Ancient Sanskrit writer
4 De-notified tribes

www.galaxyimrj.com
and, forcefully removed wherever they attempt to inhabit. Consequently, their women remain always prone to violence: physical, verbal and sexual.

Thus, study concludes that the education system and educationists are fundamentally dishonest which is why the school text books either ignore the assertive voices or make them moderate and, categorise these among nationalists’. Their life achievements, incidents and accidents find more space in the text books than their politics and the issues they fight against all through their life. Contrarily, the dominant leaders who supported the social and political system are represented and celebrated with undue honour solely on basis of caste or class. Opposite to this fact, the leaders from marginalized sections are undermined and dwarfed. Further, cultural corruption is all pervasive in the text books which negates completely the marginalized cultures or misrepresents it. And students are fed forcefully the pseudo notion of brotherhood, nationhood, culture and heritage. All this proves intellectual corruption, academic dishonesty, unprofessionalism and immorality of Indian educationists and education system. So educationists and education system of India represent the assertive voices dishonestly.

Works Cited:
Bhog, Dipta, et al. The Text Book Regimes: A Feminist Critique of Nation and Identity. Textbook regimes-nirantar. https://www.google.com/search?ei=Cvt1XtfMMNuU4-EPtMGg6As&q=text+book+regimes+niratnar&oq=text+book+regimes+niratnar&gs_l=psy-ab.3...33i160l2.1270358.1272470..1272765...0..0.213.1573.0j10j1......0....1..gws-wiz.......0i13i30..26%3A108.q8xsXuc8Xx8&ved=0ahUKEwjXeXuu6voAhVbyjgGHbQgCLQ4dUDCAAsuact=5. Accessed on 21 March 2020.

www.galaxyimrj.com


