

**AIPSN Resists
Regressive and Unconstitutional NCERT's Textbook changes**

A Note

All India Peoples' Science Network (AIPSN) is concerned that the National Education Policy 2020 implementation in respect of the content of school education at the NCERT having wider academic, educational, political and social implications is already underway. Changes have been made without any academic considerations or academic logic. No consultation with the SCERTs and the education departments of the state governments, School teachers, and the wider academic community having been done before deletions and revisions in the content of social sciences text books used at the school level. All the changes have been done in a hasty ad hoc manner. Academics, teachers and the Peoples' Science Movements have earlier also made their apprehensions clear about the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, to the Union Government and the State Governments who have the responsibility and decision and policy making power.

As the things stand, the Indian Express investigations done recently in this regard have brought out that NCERT is involved in making sweeping changes undertaken in the most opaque manner possible in respect of the social sciences textbooks used at the schools involving crores of students. Since NCERT is a specialized apex institution of the Government of India the process required should have involved the authorities and educationists working at the state level. The reach of NCERT is very wide and not limited to any particular state. Since school level education textbooks utilized in elementary and secondary education in the domain of social sciences can impact on the society as a whole the process should have been democratically undertaken in consonance with the academic requirements and the school education related provisions enshrined in the Indian Constitution as it stands today.

The revisions touches on some vital points about the state-citizen relationship, the vision of democracy, secularism and the constitutional vision of education as enshrined in the Indian Constitution as it stands even today. The revisions have been undertaken in a non-transparent manner as reported in the IE 4 part investigation. Chopping off sections, making revisions and undertaking deletions amount to rewriting the books of social sciences. The revisions in social science textbooks include the content related to the violence against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 and the discussion on Emergency in 1975-77. The apex agency of education is suggesting politically and ideologically motivated changes in the history text books, for example, deleting content related the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. The revisions will also impact how school students learn about the inequities of the caste system and the impact of social and protest movements such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

From the changes made it is clear that the school textbooks are being rewritten. Rewriting has been motivated by the push for the politics and ideology of a regressive nature. The intention is to completely stem out the critical thinking from the society through the highly questionable and repressive indoctrination process. This is what is reflected in the changes recommended to the school education textbooks. It does not want the students to learn about caste as a system of injustice. The deletions would end up in establishing an education system wherein the students will be actively prevented from understanding the actual functioning of institutions like caste,

community, class and political-bureaucratic apparatus and the real reasons for the emergence of social protests in India.

Without involving the wider academic community and the social scientists who edited the earlier books on Social Sciences-history, political and social domains of knowledge changes have been made by those individuals who are not known for their academic contributions in the social sciences domains. The process followed at NCERT has the full support from the Ministry of Education. Changes reflect the Hindutva agenda to turn education at the school level into the creation of an illiberal political-bureaucratic, academic apparatus and society which is communally charged in which protests of citizens would be, if not impossible but looked upon as social aberrations that need to be disapproved.

While the PSMs apprehended at the stage of the National Education Policy of 2020 formulation and announcement that the changes in education expected would be regressive, but the direction of these changes portends even a more dangerous trend. The ruling party led state governments are actively undertaking the same process in various states. Karnataka government is very much determined to make similar types of changes. The government is going ahead with these changes despite the resistance mounted by the leaders of opposition parties and social movements active at the state level. This means that the ruling party is not interested in following the Constitutional Obligations.

The political-bureaucratic apparatus is using the NCERT to make changes that will impact quite adversely on the state and direction of democracy, education and social change. The people's science movement urges the union government to stop this kind of irrational tampering in the textbooks with non academic intention and with communal objective. Before making any changes in the existing text book develop the national curriculum frame work with the leadership of academics who have strong conviction towards our constitution and constitutional values and also having deeper understanding regarding content and pedagogy. Any changes in the textbook shall be done with academic logic and pedagogical understanding. And people's science movement also urges the public to come together and resist the hasty, regressive, unconstitutional and nonacademic changes in the textbooks undertaken by NCERT.

Possible actions

1. Organize a national level online meeting on the topic
2. Release of a press note in all states.
3. Press conferences highlighting the retrogressive measures of the union government and state specific actions with regarding NEP
4. Small group protests in townships.
5. Explore the possibilities of forming issue based common platforms and take this a major agenda of that platform.
6. Seminars and dialogues to convert this as a popular agenda
7. Explore the possibility of social media campaign
8. Write letters to peoples representatives
9. Any other joint actions which may attract public attention.
10. A small team has to be constituted in each state to monitor the direct and indirect way of implementation of NEP in the respective states.

11. Wall and poster writing all are possibilities.