



INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES

NGO in consultative status (Roster) with the
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

IOS/MA/PF/2021.7

July 14, 2021

Committee Section (EWCY&S)
Rajya Sabha Secretariat
New Delhi

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is in response to the Circular issued by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Committee Section (EWCY&S) calling for "Specific Suggestions" regarding "Reforms in the Content and Design of School Text Books" <https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/CAR.pdf>.

Please find attached the suggestions and observations by the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi after due deliberations for your kind consideration.

Institute of Objective Studies (IOS), New Delhi is an NGO in consultative status {Roster} with the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations, which is working since 1986 with the aim to undertake purposive research and studies on matters and issues of concerns for peace, development, progress and democracy leading to creation of a humane society based on egalitarianism and justice.

The IOS has completed about 415 research projects and has come out with about 413 publications focusing on various aspects of socio-economic and educational problems of Muslims and society at large. The IOS has so far organised about 1270 conferences, seminars, symposia and workshops etc., on themes relevant to social, economic and educational condition of Muslims and other marginalised communities.

Kindly acknowledge its receipt.

With kind regards,
Yours truly,

Dr. M. Manzoor Alam
Chairman

Encl.: As Above

INSTITUTE OF OBJECTIVE STUDIES, NEW DELHI

**Suggestions in respect of the Circular issued by the
Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Committee Section (EWCY&S) calling for
“Specific Suggestions”
regarding
“Reforms in the Content and Design of School Text Books”
<https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/CAR.pdf>**

Following the circular, social media became active alleging that NCERT has polluted the minds of kids for far too long, now the central government plans a complete overhaul of school textbooks. The opinion expressed the view that after years of incessant demands from the general public asking the central government to rewrite the history books using sources and evidence without adulterating them with the propaganda of some perverted individuals, the centre has finally started the long-overdue exercise.

So, the social media has created the story that it is on the ‘general public demand’ that the central government has decided to rewrite the school textbooks. We know that historians who wrote the NCERT textbooks are widely acclaimed as scientific historians; they are drawn from eminent universities and institutions from across the country, but in the eyes of certain people strongly present on social media, they are ‘ill-motivated individuals’.

It’s important that our kids study since it helps them understand themselves as also other people and foremost it teaches a working understanding of change. Besides this all, history provides students with the tools required to become decent citizens. In addition, studying history makes our students better decision makers.

The NCERT history textbooks in circulation are written with a great purpose. Continuity, change and development are highlighted to make students aware about how Indian society at different times in history made progress in each area of life-economic, social, cultural, religious beliefs, rituals and customs, language, arts and crafts, industry, architecture, etc. Kids’ minds are being made open to accept change. Facts are presented as facts and their meanings are made clear. Then, along with Indian history, children are also being told what was happening elsewhere in the world, so they are able to compare the events taking place in India with the contemporary world developments in different continents. What we

get from the team of NCERT history textbook historians is scientific history based on primary sources.

Help from photo archives provides the school textbooks with necessary visual aid which makes the story behind events quite interesting.

The three main points that the central government has stated in its circular speak volume about the exercise which is likely to take place in near future. The reform work is likely to be assigned to a Board.

In the following, we will examine briefly each of these THREE POINTS:

1. FIRST POINT: “REMOVING REFERENCES TO UN-HISTORICAL FACTS AND DISTORTIONS ABOUT OUR NATIONAL HEROES FROM THE TEXTBOOKS.”

Suggestion/observation: It seems that the author/s of the circular are drawing distinction between historical and un-historical facts. Facts are facts. Facts can't be taken wrong. Certain facts become part of history since they make impact on the society at large. Facts are drawn from different sources. There are multitude of facts which we don't take notice of since they are insignificant, making no impact on the society, but we fail to understand which are 'un-historical facts' referred to in the circular. Will the central government or the Board which will be authorized to rewrite history tell specifically which un-historical facts are found in the present NCERT history books. Then, the central government or the Board (likely to be appointed) should answer who are those 'national heroes' about whom distortions have crept into NCERT textbooks.

2. SECOND POINT: THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CIRCULAR STATES: ENSURING EQUAL OR PROPORTIONATE REFERENCES TO ALL PERIODS OF INDIAN HISTORY.”

Suggestion/observation: Instead of this, the legitimate demand should have been to bring out to the fore, on the basis of authentic primary sources, 'continuity, change and development' through ages in all walks of life. In this way, historians will be producing more focused studies which they have already done in the present history books. However, updating is required since the NCERT history books first appeared in 2006, 2007, 2008, say more than a decade ago.

3. THIRD POINT: THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CIRCULAR STATES: “HIGHLIGHTING THE ROLE OF GREAT HISTORIC WOMEN HEROES, INCLUDING GARGI, MITRIDEVI, OR RULERS LIKE RANI OF JHANSI, RANI CHANNAMMA, CHAND BIBI, ZALKARI BAI, ETC.”

Suggestions/observations: Habba Khatoon of Kashmir, Nur Jahan, Jahan Ara, Zeenat Mahal have been ignored, though they were influential women in their own right. Here we will add that history should focus on women short story writers, novelists and poetesses who impacted on the minds of the people. In addition, modern Indian history section, in our opinion, should also focus on women leaders who participated actively in national movement and struggled for social and women's rights in post-independence era. Then, instead of projecting some individual as hero, historians may examine and present them as role models. Social-economic issues raised in the Dalit literature should form a part of volume dealing with modern/contemporary India.

We suggest that the central government should organise open debates in various parts of the country on these three major points mention in the Rajya Sabha/central government circular. The NCERT textbook historians should be invited to these open debates and the protagonists of re-writing history campaign should engage with them in these debates so that doubts can be cleared.

Further, it is suggested that audio-video recording of these debates should be made public through electronic and print media.

In addition to the above, the following major points should also be undertaken before any exercise to re-write history textbooks for schools:

1. Criterion for composition of the board for review should be declared in advance with assurance of its all efficient and representative character.
2. Consultations on modifications should be widely held addressing all sections of the people of this country.
3. Focus must be on contributors to science, art and good governance, rather than anything like fairy-tale heroes.
4. India's inclusive culture should be advanced through facts assuring unity with diversity.
5. Expert observers should oversee the process for conformity with globally required and acceptable standards.