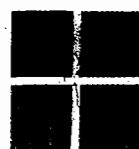


REMOVE BIASES AGAINST MINORITIES

handbook for
school teachers



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Preface

Indian society has always been remarkable for its religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. These diversities are also tied up with the challenges that positive streams of social progress have had to face at various points of time, as is the case even today. One major challenge which school teachers have to face is that posed by cultural and religious particularities during the teaching and learning processes. Students with diverse backgrounds are marked by different sets of particularities based on the culture and religion they come from. These differences lead to certain practical difficulties while teaching them together in school, and there is little sensitivity in the usual approach towards this reality.

School teachers are part of this very society, and are, therefore, subject to the influence of diverse religio-cultural values and qualities. Given this context, it is necessary that the initiative to strengthen secular values in India must begin at the school level itself. Towards this end PEACE has developed a 'training module' accompanied by relevant 'readings' that would help understand the various types of difficulties faced during the teaching of students, especially those from minority communities, particularly muslim - the biggest minority community of India, as well as the role played by teachers in this. It is also our aim to go beyond merely understanding the problem, by suggesting the kind of 'educational intervention' that can guide our quest for possible solutions. The purpose of training out this handbook is to inculcate secular and democratic values among the school teachers.

In preparing this module, the foundation has been provided by the 'cyclical method of experiential learning and teaching', and at the core of the approach is the spirit of 'participation'. The accompanying readings are expected to contribute towards greater clarity on the related subjects. Before they were finalised, the readings were subjected to a serious discussion held at Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh, in which 140 individuals participated, including schoolteachers, educationists, social activists and representatives of organisations working in the sphere of education. Significant suggestions that emerged from the discussion have been incorporated in the readings, in an effort to improve the content.

We chose to start with schools from Rajasthan and Delhi in the first phase as their curricula contain some seriously prejudiced and deceptive 'facts'. We organised workshops with teachers of schools from the two states, including schools run by social welfare organisations, and tried to build a deep understanding of the subject. The quality of the module and readings, and how effective they can be, was the theme of an assessment workshop with the same

group of teachers, which brought to the fore several important suggestions that we incorporated in the draft documents.

In completing this whole process the contribution of social welfare organisations, schoolteachers and educationists has been invaluable. Among the participants that made important contributions are the following: (from Jaipur) Government Girls Upper Primary School, Motikatla; Government Upper Primary Schools at Ghatgate, Adarsh Nagar, Babu ka Tila, Murlimanoharji, Baad Bagpura Chaksu, Baddli and Sanwaliya; Rehmani Model Senior Secondary School, Ramganj; social organisations and citizens' groups like Digantar, Sambhav, BGVs, Vihan and PUCL; (from Delhi) Summerfield School; The Banyan Tree School; St Paul's School; Delhi Public School, Mathura Road; KR Mangalam World School; Carmel Convent School; DLF Public School; Presentation Convent Senior Secondary School; Delhi Public School, SJ Enclave; Tagore International School; New Horizon School; Deepalya School; Deepalaya Formal School; Air Force Bal Bharti School; Sanskriti School; Delhi Police School; Navjagriti Collective, Nehru Memorial Library and Museum and others. I thank the teachers, management and principals of all the participating schools. I also thank the social organisations, activists, educationists and other intellectuals working in the sphere of education including cultural activists of Delhi School of Drama, without whose support this work would not have been possible. And, in the end, I specially thank the following members of the council of advisors: TK Oommen, Imtiaz Ahmed, Vinod Raina, N. K. Raina, Apoorvanand, Ajay Kumar, Poorva Bharadwaj, Kavita Srivastava, Anuradha Sen, Geetanjali Kala, Mukul Priya, Achyut Yagnik, and Ishtiaq Ahmed. Their support and guidance has been indispensable for this exercise. The support of Dr Jitendra Chahar and Daliya Kar too has been remarkable. We are also thankful to Lalit K. Pawar, Principal Education Secretary, Rajasthan State.

We thank the Minority Rights Group International (MRG) for their indispensable support for the project "Pluralism and diversity in Asia: Protecting the Rights of Religious Minorities Through Education and Training", which help us in taking this process forward. We will consider our endeavour meaningful if this training module and the accompanying readings truly reach out to achieve the objectives for which they were prepared.

Anil Chaudhary

Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE)

Review of school curriculum

It is shocking that even after sixty two years of independence; vicious communal propaganda against the minorities continues to spread in most part of the country this is posing serious threat to secular and democratic values of the Nation. This study highlights the attempt made by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu politico-religious organizations to promote communal ideology through school textbooks. Propagation of the communal ideology is one of the main objectives of the communal project of the RSS and its allied organizations in the country. The grand plan is to encourage children to adopt communal way of thinking. The program was not only to capture political power but also to communalize the State institutions such as the legislature, bureaucracy, educational institutions, media, police and security forces. The RSS gives its ideological work the utmost priority and when the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), its political front, captured power at the Center and various States, it introduced textbooks that generate hatred among the children towards other religious minorities. Attempts are also made to promote distorted history to encourage prejudices among the school children.

Thus, the communal forces are seriously endangering the values of democracy, civil liberties, secularism, and equality of all citizens irrespective of religion, caste, region or gender as guaranteed by the Constitution. In recent years, with the communal forces coming to power in several States and at the Center, communal challenge has grown into many folds and acquired monstrous proportion. With the active use of State power the RSS has succeeded in spreading its ideology of hatred even among the children by introducing communal textbooks in schools. The RSS is portraying "all communities other than Hindus as foreigners in India, who are disloyal and unworthy of trust." The RSS founder K.B.Hedgewar described "Muslims as 'hissing Yavana snakes' who had to be put in place or they were to face extinction- become 'dead as a dodo'. Though the textbooks, it is claimed that Ashoka's advocacy of ahimsa (non-violence) and the growing influence of Buddhism spread 'cowardice' and that the struggle for India's freedom became a 'religious war' against Muslims." Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the Indian freedom movement and the apostle of non-violence was described as a "Dushtatam" who "had to be eliminated." In the past, with the support of the BJP government, RSS has succeeded in spreading its hate campaign to unprecedented levels. This became possible with the introduction of the new text-books in schools. In the name of spreading true Indian culture, hatred against the minorities was spread in the country.

The RSS has built several front organizations in the last two decades with the purpose to spread this hatred against the minorities. Their ultimate goal was to capture power at the Center and States by religious mobilization. During this

period, several sectarian riots were taken place in which thousands of innocent people lost their lives. The demolition of Babari mosque and the Gujarat riots were the most prominent. These riots became possible mainly because of poisoning of minds of the younger generation. The sectarian penetration of the government, bureaucracy, police, and media enabled this carnage to take "monstrous proportion. The hate text-books made it possible for the BJP leaders in Gujarat to successfully mobilize fascist mobs who were responsible for the demolition of places of worship or killing women and children.

With the help of educational setup, the RSS is spreading the divisive hate ideology since 1952. The influence of their school known as Saraswati Shishu Mandirs has now multiplied manifold. A National Steering Committee on Textbooks Evaluation consisting of respected secular scholars under the chairmanship of Professor Bipan Chandra was setup much before the BJP came to power. The committee reviewed the report in 1993-94 prepared by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) on textbooks in use in various states brought out by the RSS-run Saraswati Shishu Mandir Prakashan and Vidya Bharati Publications.

The committee's recommendation regarding the Saraswati Shishu Mandir Prakashan was as follows:

"Some of the textbooks are currently in use at primary level in Saraswati Shishu Mandirs present an extremely virulent communal view of Indian history ---- The intolerant and extremely crude style and language as well as the totally uninhibited way historical "facts" have been fabricated are designed to promote not patriotism, as is claimed but totally blind bigotry and fanaticism----Those textbooks should not be allowed to be used in schools.

For the Vidya Bharati Publications, the committee recommended:

The committee shares the concerns expressed in the report over the publications and use of blatantly communal writings in the series entitled, Sanskriti Jnan in the Vidya Bharati schools which have been setup in different parts of the country. Their number is reported to be 6,000. The committee agrees with the report that much of the material in the so called Sanskriti Jnan series is 'designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism in the name of inculcating knowledge of culture in the young generation.'

The committee is of the view that the Vidya Bharati Schools are being clearly used for the dissemination of 'blatantly communal ideas'--- The committee recommends that states should disallow the use of this series in the schools. The state governments may also consider appropriate steps to stop the publication of these materials which ferment communal hatred and disallow the examination which are held by the Vidya Bharati Sansthan on the basis of these materials.

Some of the extracts of the NCERT report submitted to Bipan Chandra committee from the textbook Gaurav Gatha for class 4th, are as follows:

It was said that under emperor Ashoka: Ahimsa (Non-violence) began to be--- advocated. Every kind of violence began to be considered a crime---.It had a bad effect on the army. Cowardice slowly spread throughout the kingdom. The State bore the burden of providing food to the Buddhist monks. Therefore, people began to become monks. Victory through arms began to be viewed as bad. (pp30-31).

On the rise of Islam it was said:

Wherever they went, they had a sword in their hand. Their army went like a storm in all the four directions. Any country that came (in) their way was destroyed. Houses of prayers and universities were destroyed. Libraries were burnt. Religious books were destroyed.(pp51-52).

Extracts from the textbook Itihas Gaa Rahaa Hai for class 5th, Saraswati Shishu Mandir Prakashan Lucknow:

---After that the invaders came with a sword in one hand and the Quran in the other. Innumerable Hindus were forcibly made of sword. The struggle for freedom became a religious war. Innumerable sacrifices were made for religion.-- we never allowed foreign rulers to settle down but we could not reconvert our separated brethren to Hinduism.(p. 3)

(it was a deliberate attempt to generate hatred against the Muslim community and the apparent unfinished task was the re-conversion to Hinduism of the Muslim converts.)

The NCERT report summed up the impact of these books in the following words:

The main purpose which these books would serve is to gradually transform the young children who come to these schools to study into bigoted morons in the garb of instilling patriotism in them.

Excerpts from the NCERT report on the publications of Vidya Bharati.

Vidya Bharati Sansthan provides education in religion, culture, and nationalism. Some examples of the kind of knowledge of Sanskrit these books are disseminating have presented India in extreme chauvinistic terms as the 'original home of world civilization.' One of the booklets (No. 9), for example, says,

'India is the most ancient country in the world. When civilization had not

developed in many countries of the world, when people in those countries lived in jungles naked---Bharat's Rishis-Munis (Indian saints) brought the light of culture and civilization to all those countries.'

In one of the books (No.12) designed to promote contempt and hatred against other religions, the Christian community is portrayed as anti-national and a threat to the integrity of India. Read the following:

'It is because of the conspiratorial policies of the followers of this religion that India was partitioned. Even today Christian missionaries are engaged in fostering anti-national tendencies in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala and other regions of our country because of which there is a grave danger to the integrity of present day India.

One of the statements on Islam is as follows:

Thousands of opponents of idol worship, the followers of Islam, go to the pilgrimage centre of Islamic community at Kaba to worship 'Shivlinga'. In Muslim society, the greatest wish is to have a 'darshan' (see) of that black stone (Shivlinga)

The Vidya Bharati was setup up in 1977 by the RSS as an apex all India organization to provide "true education" that will inculcate nationalism and help spread the ideology of the Hindutva among the Indian children. Soon, 500 schools were opened in the country where 20,000 children were admitted. In 1990s, the BJP government in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh helped established vidya Bharati schools and even permitted them to set up their own syllabus and conduct examination. They also introduced teacher's training programmes. By early 1990s, the total number of schools run by the Vidya Bharati was around 6,000 with 40,000 teachers and 1,200,000 students. With the formation of the BJP led NDA government at the Center in 1998, the RSS influence spread through out the country. In 1999, according to the reports, Vidya Bharati was running 14,000 schools with 80,000 teachers and 1,800,000 students. In 1998, the Kalyan Singh's government in UP, used the State run schools to spread the RSS ideology. He allowed the RSS Shakas to be conducted in schools and made compulsory for all primary schools in the State to involve RSS pracharaks (preacher) for imparting naitic shiksha or moral education.

This was the period when the country was facing serious economic and political instability. Congress Party was fast loosing its ground due to the leader ship crisis. With the rise of Pakistan backed Islamic militancy In Kashmir, secular parties' lost considerable support among the masses. The RSS-BJP exploited the situation in its favor and the vacuum was filled by the BJP. Once the BJP captured power at the center and States, RSS exploited the situation in its favor to spread its hate campaign through education in the country. Gujarat was declared as a model State by the RSS where the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi had succeeded in spreading hatred against the minorities. A link between the Godhra

carnage in Gujarat and the poison fed to young minds in schools has been reported by the social scientists. The class 9th students were taught that:

---apart from Muslims even the Christian, Parsees and other foreigners are also recognized as the minority communities. In most of the States the Hindus are in minority and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are in majority in these respective States.

In the State of Gujarat, Social Studies text for class 10th virtually praises fascism and Nazism.

'Hitler had strongly declared that 'the Germans were the only pure Aryans in the entire world and they were born to rule the world. In order to ensure that the German people strictly followed the principles of Nazism. It was included in the curriculum of the educational institutions. The textbooks said, 'Hitler is our leader and we love him.'

Internal achievement of the Nazism: 'Hitler lent dignity and prestige to the German government within a short time by establishing a strong administrative setup. He created a vast State of Greater Germany. He adopted the policy of opposition towards the Jewish people and advocated supremacy of the German race. He adopted a new economic policy and brought prosperity to Germany---

The book has not mentioned the massacre of the millions of Jewish people by Nazis in Germany. Nationalism, efficient administration, economic prosperity was approvingly discussed and the methods with which it was achieved by the Nazis were not questioned. There was a tacit approval to its policies by praising Hitler. The RSS textbooks give lot of attention to history but it mostly presented distorted and fabricated history with communal biases against the minorities. The general argument in these books is that the 'Muslims cannot be trusted' and 'they can never live peacefully with others. They are 'barbaric, immoral.' The RSS founder Hedgewar believed that they are like 'hissing Yavana snakes.' It is also written that Muslims and Christians are foreigners and alone Aryans are 'true Indians,' and that they came from outside of India but where the original inhabitants of the country. The

BJP government used the State institutions to undermine scientific and secular interpretation of history and promoted an obscurantist, backward looking, and communal historiography through the State institutions at the national level. The NCERT introduced a new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2000 without achieving any consensus. The education is a concurrent subject based on partnership between the Centre and the State. Therefore, it's a tradition that any major initiative in education introduced by the government is discussed in the Parliament and the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), a body which include the education ministers of all the States and Union Territories. The curriculum is prepared by the NCERT with the help of professional academicians

The BJP first appointed its sympathizers in the NCERT who prepared new curriculum, without any reference to CAGE, thus violating both tradition and procedural requirements. The books introduced during the BJP rule deleted passages from the NCERT books introduced by the Congress government. These books were written by the prominent historians such as Romila Thapar, R.S.Sharma and Satish Chandra on the recommendation of the National Integration Council, a government body. These books were written with the purpose to create doubts in people's mind and violate religious sentiments of the minority communities and to replace secular history with communal writings.

The media, secular historian, and a wide section of intelligentsia voiced their protest against the communalization of Indian education system. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and the former President of India K.R.Narsyanan and other prominent persons condemned the government action. The sectarian forces not only changed the textbooks but started attacking those who did not agree with their kind of interpretation of Indian history and dubbed them as 'anti-nationals.' The RSS chief K.S.Sudarshan called those who were resisting the 'revision' of the NCERT textbooks as 'anti-Hindu Euro-Indians.' He said these people do not know about the 'Vedic maths' and have no knowledge that ancient Indians knew about the nuclear energy and had the technology to build aero planes. Sudarshan also demanded that historian's like Romila Thapar, R. S. Sharma and Arjun dev should be arrested. Some of the leaders of Hindutva movement even called for a 'war for the country's cultural freedom.' Murli Manohar Joshi, the then Union Minister of Education even branded the secular scholars as 'more dangerous than cross border terrorism'

The secular intellectuals believe that 'the communal attempts to distort Indian history and to give it a narrow sectarian colour in the name of instilling patriotism and demonstrating the greatness of India actually end up doing exactly the opposite'.

The textbooks draw heavily on the kind of propaganda that the so called Sangh Parivar Publications have been projecting for quite some time. The major features of the presentation of Indian history in the new NCERT books may be summed up as follows:

1. India is held to be the original home of the Aryans. No concern at all is shown with the origins of peoples speaking Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic languages.
2. The Indian civilization is supposed to have its sole fountain-head in the 'Vedic Civilization' which is given much greater antiquity than historians have been willing to assign it so far. The latter is claimed to have embraced the Indus Civilization, now to be called 'Indus Saraswati' civilization, which is thus entirely credited to the Aryans.
3. All substantive, scientific discoveries (from zero to decimal placement of numerals to heliocentric astronomy) are supposed to have made in the 'Vedic Civilization'.

4. The Hindu religion is held superior to other religions. The Upanishads are proclaimed as 'the most profound works of philosophy in any religion'. Both Buddhism and Jainism are held to have emerged out of them. Hindus had no sense of constraints about chronology, unlike the Christians. Hindus, moreover, had been, by their faith, true patriots. In the modern freedom struggle too, they alone are held to have been sincere, while the Muslims only dreamt of a Muslim empire or a separate Nation. Medieval Muslims and modern Christians were also to have been deeply influenced by racism.
5. The caste system was all right in the beginning; only 'rigidities' (not inequities or oppression of Dalits) are seen in its later stages and very lightly touched upon. The Dalits, in fact, are excluded from history.
6. A neutral or even admiring stance is maintained about practices such as sati or jauhar in ancient and medieval India. Abductions of women are described as a legitimate form of marriage, not apparently inconsistent with women being held in honour.
7. Foreigners have taught little or nothing to Indians, while India has given so much to the world in all realms of culture.
8. Muslims brought little new to India, except oppression and temple-destruction. All the dark corners are thoroughly presented in the narrative of medieval India, as regards Muslims, while they are coolly overlooked in that of ancient India.
9. The rise of a composite culture is ignored or downplayed. Kabir gets a sentence in the medieval India textbook with the great difficulty. (where, on the other hand, Guru Gobind Singh appears as a 'devotee of Goddess Chandi').
10. In modern India, 'Muslim separatism' is the great bugbear, while Hindu communalism is not even mentioned, and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders appear uniformly as great patriots.
11. The growth of the great modern values of democracy, gender equality, secularism, welfare state, etc., is neglected, or passed over in silence.
12. There is little or nothing on Indian social reformers like Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Jotiba Phule, and even B.R.Ambedkar-since apparently traditional Hindu society is not thought to have been in need of reform.
13. The mainstream secular and democratic elements in the National Movement are presented as unimportant or mere obstacles to the growth of (Hindu) 'Cultural Nationalism'. Harsh words are used for the Moderates; there is a deliberate effort to either ignore or present in unfavorable light Jawaharlal Nehru, and also the Left, especially the Communists.

With such parochialism and prejudice as the driving forces behind these textbooks, it is clear that these cannot be converted into acceptable textbooks by a mere removal of the linguistic and the factual errors pointed out in our Index. In many cases the basic arguments in the textbooks are built on these very errors of fact, and so the errors cannot be removed without changing the main ideas behind the textbooks.

"These textbooks are beyond the realm of salvage, and they need to be withdrawn altogether' commented by academicians as well as activists. These textbooks were written with the purpose to generate distrust of minorities and the insistence that the Aryans have not come from the Central Asia but originated in India. Also that Vadic civilization predated any other in India and was superior to other civilizations.

Now, once again the Congress led coalition government has come to power and have initiated the programme to weed out the communal or sectarian propaganda introduced by the BJP government at the national level. But, the problem is that the BJP continues to remain in power in several States where school text-books full of biases against the minorities are being taught. The civil society groups and secular scholars and individuals are demanding the withdrawal of these textbooks. Besides this, thousands of the RSS-run Shisho Mandir and Gyan Bharati schools, all over the country, are also teaching biased textbooks to millions of children.

■ Exercise 1

Socialization: Introduction with Each Other

The Aim of the Exercise

- To know and comprehend about each other;
- To ascertain participants' perception of minorities; and
- To help participants make adjustments and socialize among themselves.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

After requesting the participants to take their seats, initiate the process by enquiring about their immediate problems regarding workshop arrangements. If the workshop is residential, inform them about the lodgings, boarding and telephone facilities, etc. Welcome them on behalf your organization or institution, introducing yourself and your organization/institution, and then request the participants to introduce themselves one by one, giving name, name of the school, classes and subjects taught by them, and so on. After this formal introduction, note down the main points on the board, requesting the participants to think and note down their views on those points. They can do this either in the hall, or in solitude at some other place. Meanwhile, for the detailed introduction, the facilitator must note down the main points on chart paper and put it up on the board. A constellation of points is given below as an example:

- What major challenges do you face while teaching students from different backgrounds in terms of culture, religion, social values, ambience and customs?
- What are the major socio-economic differences among the students?
- What are your expectations from this workshop?

After their perusal and thinking, when they come back in the larger group, every participant should be asked to put forth his/her views before the gathering. The facilitator should meticulously note down the challenges in teaching students from various cultural, religious, social and economic backgrounds as explained by the participants. All this information is of immense importance in conducting the workshop, starting with arranging the participants in groups. Expectations of the participants must be penned down on chart paper and put up on the board.

Exercise 2

Clarifying the Purpose of the Workshop

The Aim of the Exercise

- To bring clarity about the aims and objectives of the workshop among participants, and deal with their various anxieties towards it;
- To create a conducive atmosphere for conducting the workshop; and
- To prepare the basic ground for the workshop.

Exercise Task

Description of aims and objectives of the workshop on chart paper by the facilitators, including

- Knowing and understanding the constitutional provisions and legal framework concerning minorities;
- To discern and explain the conditions of the minorities and the mindsets regarding this;
- To comprehend and discern the reasons, effects and challenges of particular kinds of mindset regarding minorities; and
- To formulate strategies to deal with this problem.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

While clarifying the aims and objectives of the workshop, the expectations of participants should be duly considered. They should be explained why the workshop is necessary, and where the idea came from. Patiently answer the questions regarding the aims and objectives of the workshop. Participants should be clearly told which of their expectations can be taken care of in the workshop, and also those that cannot be fulfilled due to the workshop's limitations.

This should be followed by a brief introduction and description of the organization conducting the workshop. While welcoming the participants, enquire once again if they have any problems with the arrangements. Also discuss with them the methodology of conducting the workshop and fix the timings. If it is already too late, then conclude the first day's proceedings at this point, otherwise announce the tea break and facilitate the participants to get into informal interactions and discussions outside the workshop hall. This will ease the process of mutual affinity and dialogue.

Exercise 3

Perception of Minorities

The Aim of the Exercise

- To clarify participants' perception of minorities.

Exercise Task

The following question is put before participants:

- What image comes to your mind by hearing the word minority? What do you understand by the word minority? Write it in your notebook.

This is first done as an individual exercise, and after 10 minutes, the same exercise is repeated in groups, followed by the presentations.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

If the number of participants is 10-12, divide them into two groups. One group should not consist of more than five to six members, as live interaction and discussion/debate is more intense in small groups, and every member gets the opportunity to participate in the process and air his/her views. Mutual interactions and discussion among participants must be continuously encouraged. When all the participants have finished their individual exercises, they should be asked to do the same exercises in their groups. Each micro-group should note down its collective understanding on the board, and then they should present it before the macro-group, that is, in the bigger congregation of the workshop.

Reference Material

What is a Minority?

The word minority is discussed in Articles 29, 30, 350(A) and 350(B) of the Indian Constitution, but it has not been clearly defined. For example, according to Article 29, a minority is "such class of citizens who have specific language, script, or culture". Article 30 talks about two categories of minorities: religious and linguistic.

In 1946 a sub-committee was established by the United Nations Human Rights Commission to address issues related to the security of minorities. It defined a minority group as an underprivileged section of society that aspires to maintain and preserve its caste, religious and linguistic traditions, besides and their other specific particularities.

In India, it is generally the followers of religions other than Hinduism that are considered 'minorities' as 80 per cent of the population is made up of those who are called Hindus. From this point of view, Muslims constitute the biggest minority group. According to the Minorities Commission Bill, 1992, "by minority is meant that community which has been notified as such by the Central Government". On 23 October 1993 the central government notified Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis as minority communities.

In the case of *TA Pai Foundation and others versus State of Karnataka*, the Supreme Court in its judgment opined that the determination of a minority – religious or linguistic – should be determined in the context of a particular state and not on the basis of the country's total population.

Thus Muslims are the majority community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and in the union territory of Lakshadweep, while Sikhs form the majority community in Punjab.

Exercise 4

Constitutional Provisions

The Aim of the Exercise

- To develop an understanding of the constitutional provisions concerning minorities.

Exercise Task

Open discussion in the bigger group. Question for discussion:

- What are the laws and constitutional provisions for minorities?

(To give appropriate inputs towards enhancement of the participants' understanding regarding such laws and constitutional provisions while incorporating the points emerging from the discussion.)

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

The facilitator should ask the participants to discuss in the bigger group about the laws and constitutional provisions for minorities. Encourage participants to speak out their mind, but don't compel them to speak. Keep nothing the points made by the participants on chart paper.

It is possible that some participants hold different opinions, and it is not necessary that they would arrive at a consensus. Instead of imposing any opinion on them, their views too should be given due consideration.

Because of hailing from different backgrounds and with their different experiences, there may be qualitative differences in the views of the participants. The facilitator's input should aim at keeping the focus on the present conditions of minorities.

Reference Material

Constitutional Provisions regarding Minorities

United Nations Declaration on Minorities (1992) instructs all the nations to preserve the identity and status of minorities. This declaration demands of nation-states to ensure that minorities completely and effectively enjoy their human rights and basic freedoms without any discrimination, and make it possible for minority communities to maintain their specific particularities and develop their culture, language, customs and rituals.

Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution prohibit any discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste and place of birth, and establish complete equality among the citizens. Article 15 entrusts the State with making special provisions for the welfare of women, children, socially and educationally backward classes, scheduled tribes (STs) and scheduled castes (SCs). Article 16 directs the State to make provisions of reservation in government jobs for those backward classes who do not have adequate representation in these services.

Analysing the constitutional provisions for minorities, the Rangnath Mishra Commission had opined that "caste" and "class" are not synonyms of each other - their meanings are not the same. Affirmative action on the basis of social and educational backwardness is in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. Therefore, in a specific situation a caste or a religious community can be treated as a class. It is true that Article 15 does not clearly define and elaborate the status of minority communities, but socially and educationally backward minority communities do nonetheless qualify for the benefits due to "socially and educationally backward" classes under Article 16.

In the case of *Indira Shahane and others versus Indian State*, the Supreme Court had opined that an entire community can be treated as a class on the basis of its social and educational backwardness. Article 46 of the directive principles section of the Constitution clearly mentions that the State "should take special care to enhance the interests of the weaker sections of the society".

Legal Framework for Minority Rights

The National Minorities Commission was established in 1993 under the Civil

Rights (Protection) Act 1955. Following are the functions of this commission:

1. To assess the progress of the minority communities under the central government and in various states;
2. To monitor measures of protection of minority rights given by the Constitution and laws passed by Parliament and various state assemblies;
3. To make necessary recommendations to the central and state governments for the effective implementation of provisions for protecting the interests of minority communities;
4. To examine the complaints of violations of the rights of minorities and take up these cases with the concerned officials;
5. To study, examine and analyse problems arising out of discrimination against minorities, and suggest measure to resolve them;
6. To make appropriate recommendations to the central and state governments for the betterment of the minority communities;
7. To prepare and submit a report on the conditions of minorities, focusing on the problems faced by them.

The Rangnath Mishra Commission had said that Article 338 and Section 9 of Article 339(A) of the Constitution provide that the Centre and each state government must consult the SC/ST Commission on important issues concerning SCs and STs. But there is no such provision in the Minorities Commission Act 1992.

Under the Minority Educational Act 2004, there is provision for a national commission, which would give its recommendations regarding minorities' education to the central and state governments. Under this Act, if there is any controversy between a university and a minority institution, the decision of the commission shall be the final.

General and Special Rights

Without a comprehensive knowledge of the constitutional provisions regarding minorities, appropriate understanding about minorities cannot be developed. Though the word minority has not been clearly defined in the Indian Constitution and there is mention of minorities based only on religion and language, there is nonetheless a detailed description of minority rights. The Constitution provides two types of rights to minorities – “general” and “special”. The “general” category includes those rights that are applicable to all citizens, whereas the “special” category rights are exclusively concerned with minorities and are related with the maintenance of their separate identity. The differences and similarities between “general” and “special” are well-maintained in the Constitution. The Preamble declares India a secular State – a point of special relevance for minorities. It also declares equality of opportunities and positions,

and freedom of movement and speech for all citizens. This too has special relevance for the religious minorities.

Section IV of the Constitution deals with directive principles of State policy and Section III contains fundamental rights that are judicially enforceable. Citizens' social and economic rights are mentioned in Section IV. Known as "directive principles", these are "not legally binding on the state but are basic elements for the proper functioning of the administrative system of the country and hence it is imperative for the state to follow these principles while making laws". (Article 37)

The directive principles contain the following provisions for the minorities:

1. Removal of inequalities of status, facilities and opportunities for any individual or specific community living in any part of the country practising any profession is the duty of the State. (Article 38(2))
2. The State must pay special attention towards the betterment of the educational and economic interests of the member of the "weaker sections" of society. (Article 46)

Section IV-A contains the duties of all the citizens, including the minorities. Following points of Article 51(A) is especially important in the context of the minorities:

1. It is the duty of all the citizens they should encourage sense of cooperation and fraternity among all the citizens of India transcending their religious, community, caste and regional feelings.
2. It is the duty of the citizens to understand the importance of the common heritage and the composite culture and preserve them.

Section II of the Constitution containing the fundamental rights is divided into two parts: (1) rights of the general category, and (2) rights of the special category. Rights of the general category are the following:

1. Right of equality before law and equality of law (Article 14);
2. Right against discrimination on the basis religion, community, caste, sex or the place of birth (Articles 15(1) and (2));
3. The authority of the State to make special provisions for the development of the socially and educationally backward classes (Article 15(4));
4. Right to equality of opportunity in employment or in appointment in any government office (Article 15(1) and (2));
5. State's authority to make the provision of reservation for those backward classes who it thinks are not adequately represented in government jobs (Article 16(4));
6. Freedom to follow and propagate any religion that does not violate public order,

moral values and fundamental rights (Article 25 (1));

7. Freedom for any religious community to form organizations for religious purposes, according to its belief, to manage its religious issues and acquisition of moveable and immoveable property as long as it does not have adverse effects on morality, public order and public health (Article 26);
8. Prevention of forcibly collection of taxes from any individual for religious propaganda of any specific religion (Article 27); and
9. Freedom to participate in any religious programmes in State-managed or State-aided educational institutions (Article 28).

Rights of the "special" category for minorities include the following:

1. Every community's right to preserve its language, script and culture (Article 29(1));
2. Right against discrimination in admission to any government-managed, -sponsored or -aided educational institution on the basis of religion, community, caste, sex, language etc. (Article 29(2));
3. Right of all religious and linguistic minorities to establish and run educational institutions of their choice (Article 30(1));
4. Prevention of discrimination in governmental grants for educational institutions run by minorities (Article 30(2));
5. Special provisions for the languages of particular communities in a state (Article 347);
6. Provision for instruction in the mother tongue in primary education (Article 350);
7. Provision of a special officer and his/her duties for the linguistic minorities (Article 350(B));
8. Right of members of the Sikh community to wear the kripān (Clarification 1 in Article 25).

Exercise 5

Visualizing the Conditions of Minorities

The Aim of the Exercise

- To build the participants' vision of minorities.

Exercise Task

The following question is put before participants:

- What is the condition of minority children in your opinion?

The group task shall be given on the basis of this exercise. After the groups have worked on the exercise task, the groups will make presentations.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

If the number of the participants is 10-12, make two groups. It is better if there are maximum 5-6 participants in a group so that intense discussion is possible and every participant would have better opportunity to express his/her views. Continuously encourage the participants for mutual discussions. As the participants would be from different backgrounds and with different experiences, and given the sensitive nature of the subject, it is important to respect their views and to try making all them put forth their views. Tell each group to note down the main points of its discussion and present its views one by one in the bigger group. On the basis of the important points emerging from the discussions, provide the inputs to build an understanding on the present conditions of the minorities.

Reference Material

The Condition of Minorities

To understand the condition of the religious minorities in India, particularly that of Muslims, perusal of the Sachhar Committee report is imperative. The report presents a comprehensive analysis of the conditions of Muslims on the basis of data collected from various governmental agencies, banks, the Minority Commission and various agencies of the state governments. The following are the main points of the report:

1. Literacy average among Muslims is well below the national average. The literacy gap between Muslims and others is wider in urban areas and among the women. Most of the Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 have either never gone to the school or dropped out.
2. Muslim parents are not against mainstream education and want to educate their children in subsidized educational institutions. Muslim parents have very limited access to government schools.
3. Bidi workers, tailors and mechanics should be covered under social security as Muslims have very limited representation in the professional managerial cadre.
4. The average loan provided by the banks to Muslims is two-third of that given by banks to other minorities, and in some cases it is less than half. Under the 15-point programme of the prime minister (1993), the other minorities are the main beneficiaries of the banking and loan facilities of the Reserve Bank of India. Consequently, Muslims have been marginalized.
5. In small villages there is clearly an inversely proportional relationship of the population of Muslims and their access to educational and infrastructural facilities. There are no roads and bus stop facilities in small Muslim majority villages.
6. Muslim representation in IAS is only 3 per cent, in IFS, 1.8 per cent, and in IPS, 4 per cent.
7. Muslim representation in Indian Railways is only 4.5 per cent, out of which 98.7 per cent are employed in lower cadre jobs. Representation in banks and universities too is very low. Only 6 per cent of the police constables are Muslims. Their representation in the healthcare sector is 4.4 per cent, and in transport services, 6.9 per cent.

8. All the indicators suggest that the "other backward classes" of Muslims are victims of greater deprivation, and their conditions more miserable, than the "other backward classes" (OBCs) of Hindus. The work participation rate (WPR) indicates that there is a big rupture between OBCs (67 per cent) and the Muslims. Moreover, in government/public sector enterprises the representation of Muslims is far less than that of OBCs.
9. There are around 500 thousand registered Waqfs in the country, which hold 600 thousands acres of land with a book value of Rs 60 million.

Religious Minorities: Some More Facts and Figures

1. **Religious coordination between rural and urban areas:** According to the Rangnath Mishra commission report, the extent of urbanization among the Muslims has been greater between 1991-2001 as compared to that of Hindus and Sikhs, though larger populations of Jains, Buddhists and Christians, apart from Muslims, live in cities and towns. In fact, compared to other religious minorities, a greater proportion of Jains live in cities.
2. **Sex ratio:** According to 2001 census, the average sex ratio of all the religious communities is 933 females to 1000 males. The sex ratio is highest among Christians – 1009 females per 1000 males. Among the Muslims the sex ratio is 936 females per 1000 males, which is slightly higher than the average sex ratio. During 1991-2001 the average national sex ratio increased from 927 (1991) to 933 (2001). In this period this ratio increased from 930 to 936 among Muslims; from 994 to 1009 among Christians; and from 888 to 893 among Sikhs. According to the 2001 census, the sex ratio among children is 927, which is less than the national average of 933. Except among the Muslims (950), child sex ratio among all the other religious communities has declined.
3. **Population ratio of senior citizens (60 years of age and above):** The senior citizens count for 7.45 per cent of the total population of the country. Among the Muslims this population is the least (5.75 per cent) among all religious communities. This simply means that the life expectancy is at its minimum among the Muslims.
4. **Age at the time of marriage:** Out of all the men who got married before the age of 21 years, 51.3 per cent were Hindus and 47 per cent Muslims. Out of the women marrying before the age of 17 years, 37 per cent were Hindus and 41.3 per cent Muslims. Marriage of girls below 10 years of age accounts for 3 per cent of the total number of marriages. Following are the child marriage averages in various communities: 2.6 per cent among Buddhists; 2.2 per cent among Muslims; and 2.6 per cent among Hindus.
5. **Average size of the household:** In a study organized by the Rangnath Mishra Commission with the survey of five states – Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal – it was found that the average size of a Muslim household was 3.4 persons. The smallest average household size of 2.2 was found among Parsis. The proportion of joint families was the highest among Muslims at 12.4 per cent.

6. **Literacy rate:** The literacy rate among the Muslims is 59.1 per cent – lower than the national average but higher than that of SCs and STs. Difference between male and female literacy is the highest among Hindus (23 per cent), followed by Buddhists (21.4 per cent) and Muslims (17.5 per cent).
7. **Educational level:** Among the minority communities, Jains have the highest percentage of graduates (21.47 per cent), followed by Christians (8.71 per cent) and Sikhs (6.94 per cent). Muslims have the lowest percentage of graduates. Though they are in a better position as far as primary education is concerned (65.31 per cent), the figure drops to 10.96 per cent by the secondary level and 4.53 per cent by the higher secondary level.
8. **Child death rate:** The national child death rate is higher than that of the religious minorities – Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains.
9. **State of nutrition among children:** Muslim children, along with children from SC, ST and OBC communities, are generally the victims of malnutrition, whereas the children of the other minorities – Christians, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs – are better nourished.
10. **Birth rate:** The birth rate in India is relatively high at 3.59 per cent. Among SCs and STs, it is 3.15 per cent and 3.06 per cent respectively. The average percentage of children born to married women in the age group of 40-49 years is highest among the Muslims (5.72 per cent). Among SCs, STs and OBCs, the average percentages are 4.85, 4.74 and 4.43 respectively. Among Hindus and Buddhists the figures are 4.34 and 4.25 respectively. The lowest birth rate is among the Jains (3.32 per cent).
11. **Residential facilities:** In terms of having pucca (concrete) houses, Muslims lag far behind (23.776 per cent), but they are far ahead in terms of living in kuchha (mud/ thatched) houses. They also top the list of people living in rented houses (47.74 per cent).
12. **Poverty:** In 1999-2000, the Government of India conducted a study for the assessment of poverty among various religious minorities. Not only among Muslims and Sikhs, but among all the religious communities, poverty rate is much higher in the villages than in the cities. In the cities, poverty is the highest among Muslims (32.92 per cent).
13. **Average income:** According to the Rangnath Mishra report, the average monthly family income in India is Rs 2,103. Among the religious minorities, Muslims are at the bottom (Rs 1,832) and Parsis at the top (Rs 3,484). Among Christians the average is Rs 1,906.
14. **Dependency ratio:** In the matter of dependency ratio, Muslims top the list of youth dependency (778), but are at the bottom in the list in old-age dependency (109). Probably this is one of the reasons of their economic backwardness.

Condition of Women in Minority Communities

The Indian Constitution not only grants women the right to equality, but also instructs the state governments to take necessary steps to preserve and advance

their interests. The reality, however, is that equality and dignity are still a far cry for women in general. Despite various pro-women legislations, lives of Muslim women are still governed by patriarchal rules. Although there has been some improvement in their condition in the fields of education and literacy, the female child death rate is still the highest among Muslims, and this is reflected in the sex ratio for the age group of 0-6 years. The Rangnath Mishra report mentions that all of the northern and western parts of India have come to be known as the crematoriums of girl children – born as well as unborn – with the help of illegally prevalent sex-determination tests.

Exercise 6

Popular Perceptions about Minorities

The Aim of the Exercise

- To analyse popular perceptions about minorities, and build an understanding of their condition on the basis of this analysis.

Exercise Task

The following questions are put before participants:

- What are the perceptions about minorities that are popular among children?
- What are the bases of these perceptions?

The group task shall be assigned on these two questions. The groups will make their presentations only after they have worked on both the questions.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

While assigning the exercise to the groups, the facilitator must clarify that they should begin to work on the second question only after they finish answering the first one. The groups should note down the main points that emerge from the exercise. This will be followed by the group presentations.

Note down the main points emerging from the group presentations. Keeping in mind the seriousness and sensitivity of the subject, facilitate the participants to openly express their opinions. The facilitator should give his/her inputs in a way that helps the participants to focus on the challenges they face during teaching.

Reference Material

Perceptions about Minorities Popular among Children

An analysis of school textbooks reflects the prejudices against minorities prevalent in society and shows the cultural-religious effect of the majority community on educational systems and the curriculum. In its attempt to preserve and encourage the country's composite culture in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has carried out some revisions in school textbooks. The secular character reflecting the composite culture of India that marked the textbooks prepared by NCERT in the 1970s and 1980s was subverted by Hindutva forces during the BJP-led NDA regime. The congress led UPA Government have asked the NCERT to remove biases in school curriculum against minorities. Rajasthan state congress Government is also engaged in similar exercise.

Under British rule, the textbooks had emphasized the differences, tensions and conflicts among various religious communities. In the post-Independence period, the emphasis shifted to religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims, and the idea of a composite culture. However, political controversies regarding school textbooks have been surfacing in the country time and again.

Initially, the Government of India had constituted the National Board of School Textbooks and entrusted it with the preparation of textbooks on languages, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. In June 1968, the National Unity Association emphasized the need for textbooks that would encourage and consolidate national unity and integrity. Unfortunately, however, there have been consistent tendencies within India's parliamentary politics to oppose the concept of 'minority' and define nationalism on the basis of Hindutva values. This kind of politics sees school textbooks as a means to perpetuate the ideology of communalism for the realization of its political end. This is why when the BJP-led government came to power riding on the communal politics of Hindutva, it took upon itself to make changes in the textbooks and subvert the secular texture and composite culture that these books had tried to consolidate.

Education is a subject on the 'concurrent' list in the Constitution – decisions regarding education are taken by both the central and the state governments. So wherever the BJP comes to power, it changes the contents of the textbooks to suit its political interest. For example, in 2009, with the UPA government at the Centre, the BJP government in Himachal Pradesh decided to remove a lesson on the famous artist MF Hussein from the 11th class Hindi textbook and replace it with one on the

Punjabi artist Sobha Singh and Russian artist Nicholas Roerich. According to the chairman of Himachal Pradesh Educational Board, state governments can introduce upto 20 per cent change in NCERT textbooks.

Beyond these controversies, however, there are certain other important aspects that are generally ignored. The language of most textbooks is prejudiced against the minority communities and reflects the dominance of the majority community.

Mental Structure of Children

Children already have a particular mental structure acquired from socialization in the family and its social ambience. The language used in households is usually based on religious/caste prejudices and dominance, with particular tones and connotations. Communication in that language automatically constructs a particular kind of mental structure. Even most of the stories and tales narrated to children are from religious-mythical compilations. These stories not only provide recreation to children, but also create a mindset that makes the children treat them as real. Indeed, they perceive them as real because they are linked with many real social practices.

Children spend considerable time in schools and are socialized in accordance with the prevalent socio-cultural ambience. Learning from textbooks, games and various cultural activities is also conditioned by this ambience, and all school-related activities lead to the creation of a particular kind of mindset. For their political ends, the Hindutva forces too run various kinds of educational institutions, including a sizeable number of schools. These schools have their own textbooks, besides organizing their own sports and cultural activities.

Exercise 7

Challenges in Teaching

The Aim of the Exercise

- To build an understanding of the challenges in teaching due to the mindset of children about minority communities.

Exercise Task

The following question is put before participants:

- As a teacher, what kinds of challenges do you face in class with respect to children's mindset about the minorities?

Group task shall be given on the basis of this exercise. The groups will make presentations after finishing the exercise.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

After the presentations, the facilitator should tell the participants that although this exercise aims to develop an understanding of the challenges regarding children's mindset about minorities, we should also build an understanding about the challenges of the curriculum about minorities. With the agreement of the participants, they should be then asked to do Exercise 8. The facilitator should give his/her input only after Exercise 8.

■ **Exercise 8**

Challenges in the Curriculum

The Aim of the Exercise

- To build an understanding of the challenges on the issues of minorities in the curriculum.

Exercise Task

The following question is put before participants:

- What challenges do you face in teaching regarding the issues of minorities in the curriculum?

Group task shall be given on the basis of this exercise. After the groups finish doing the exercise, they will make presentations.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

The facilitator must direct the participants that this exercise too shall be conducted among the same groups as the previous exercise. In the last exercise, the discussion centred on challenges discussed arising out of pre-conceived notions about children from the minority community and tried to build an understanding around it. The discussion in this exercise would focus on challenges arising out of the way minorities are presented in the curriculum, and seek measures to meet these challenges. After the group presentations are over, the facilitator should give his/her inputs on Exercises 7 and 8 together.

Reference Material

Challenges Faced in Teaching

Teachers have many difficulties, and a distorted version of history is only one of the reasons. Some times teachers from the minority community are apprehensive of teaching history and other social sciences as when they try to explain the facts in the historical context, students generally treat them more as members of the minority community than as teachers. The problem is to rectify the language in the contemporary historical context. For example, in teaching medieval Indian history, there is reference to the word Mlechchha, which means dirty and is used for Muslims.

Students' Mindset

Students acquire a particularly stereotyped mindset about Muslims, replete with myths and rumours about their identity, practices and language. For example, it is said that the system of veils (*ghunghat*) among Hindu women was introduced after Muslims came to India. Truth is, the system was already in place when foreign invasions happened, along with other patriarchal anti-women social evils like sati.

In deed, communal ideologues and propagandists present their formulations in such a way that they seem linked with real social practices. The veil is linked with the *burqa* and it is said that Muslim women wear it, even as many Muslim women do not wear it at all, especially working Muslim women belonging to the labouring classes. Similarly, all Muslims do not speak Urdu. The Muslims of Kerala speak Malayalam, those of the Bhojpur region speak Bhojpuri, and so on. Yet, the general impression is that Muslims speak and read only in Urdu.

Although terror attacks, especially post-9/11, have fed into propaganda that portrays Islam as an aggressive religion whose adherents provide recruits and support to terrorist organizations, the reality is quite the contrary. In fact, Muslims in India have been quite vulnerable to the aggressive mindset of the communalists. This stereotyped, widely popular mindset perceives 'Muslim' as

synonym of 'Pakistani' or 'pro-Pakistan'. The Sachhar Committee report has revealed that only 4 per cent of Muslim children go to the madarsas. Indeed, the general impression is that Muslim children study in *madarsas*, which are projected as centres of fundamentalist Islamic training. (The word *madarsa* is derived from the Arabic word *dars*, which means centre of learning.) No one is ready to listen to the fact that even Hindu children study in *madarsas* even though there is evidence of an increasing number of Hindu students attending *madarsas* in West Bengal. These children prefer the *madarsas* as centres of modern education in science and technology. In West Bengal, there are at least four madarsas in which the number of Hindu students exceeds the number of Muslim students: Qasba MM High *Madarsa* in Dinajpur district; Ekmukha Safiabab High *Madarsa* in Coochbehar district; Orgram Chatuspalii High *Madarsa* in Vardman district; and Chandrakona High Islamic Madarsa in Midnapur district. In Qasba, there are 618 Hindus among more than 1,000 students, and in Orgram, 554 of the total 868. In Chandrakona, there are 312 students, whereas in Ekmukha, the number is 418. In these institutions, Hindus comprise 57-64 per cent of the students. There are non-Muslim teachers too. In all, there are 506 *madarsas* with 17% non-Muslim students and 11% non-Muslim teachers. There are considerable numbers of Hindu teachers and students in the institutions run by Sikhs and Christians.

Dr Valmiki Mahto's book on the schooling system in Bihar refers to two systems of education that were prevalent before British rule: *pathshalas* and *madarsas*. The author points out that neither were the *pathshalas* exclusively for Hindus, nor the *madarsas* exclusively for Muslims. There were Muslim teachers also in *pathshalas* and Hindu teachers in *madarsas*. However, there is another significant feature associated with these two systems: admission in *madarsas* was generally easier than in *pathshalas*, and while the Sanskrit *pathshalas* mostly admitted upper-caste students, students from those Hindu castes who are today known as "backward classes" studied in the *madarsas*.

Exercise 9

Overcoming the Challenges

The Aim of the Exercise

- To develop an understanding on the strategy to overcome the challenges.

Exercise Task

This exercise will revolve around the question: What can you do to deal with these challenges

- At the level of children's mindset?
- At the level of textbooks and the curriculum?

The group task shall be assigned based on these two points. After the groups have worked on both points, they will make presentations one by one.

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

While assigning the task, the facilitator must clearly instruct the participants to begin working on the second point only after finishing work on the first point. Note down the main points emerging from the presentations. Incorporating these points, the facilitator should give the input in such a way that participants can focus on the solutions..

Reference Material

There are practical limitations to planning a strategy in the classroom to meet the challenges in teaching posed by the stereotyped mindset of the students, and by textbooks and the curriculum, has practical limitations. To make it easier for participants, the main points of the strategy to meet these challenges are given below:

- Images of Muslims in India and abroad should be presented to students, pictures that show Muslims engaged in various occupations, and speaking, walking, dining, praying, singing and dancing. These should be explained properly as religious and other activities in various cultural ambiances have specific particularities.
- Pictures of people living in the colonies, streets and the world at large should be presented to students to explain that people have different ways of living and working in different cultural ambiances.
- There should be strict instructions to teach and explain the words and the language of the textbooks in their proper contexts, for example, while dealing with words like Mlechchha, Harijan and Chamar.
- The secular spirit of the Indian Constitution should be emphasized repeatedly in the course of teaching and interacting with students.
- There should be strict instructions banning religious symbols and festivals in schools.
- Special refresher programmes and classes should be organized for teachers.
- There should be orientation programmes for teachers together with students.
- Screening of films and performances of plays that aim to break religious prejudices should be organized more often in schools.
- Propagandas of prejudices against the minorities should be intelligently refuted with substantiation by examples. For the healthy development of society, these refutations must be based on facts.
- The various forms in which the system of veil has been prevalent among women must be explained by socio-historical facts.
- Historical facts should be used to explain that, like saints, invaders too do not have any religion; they can be from any religion.

// remove biases against minorities / handbook for school teachers -

■ Exercise 10

Evaluation of the Workshop by Participants

The Aim of the Exercise

- To get the workshop evaluated by participants.

The following questions are put before participants:

- To what extent has the workshop fulfilled your expectations from it?
- What are your suggestions to make the workshop more effective?

Facilitator's Note: About the Process

The facilitator must clarify to the participants that they should evaluate the workshop on the basis of these two points. Participants can evaluate the workshop by writing in their notebooks or by discussing in the bigger group. The facilitator must note down the main points of the discussions. The facilitator should then appeal to the participants to ensure that the clarity gained from the workshop gets reflected in the classroom, and ask them to stay in touch by phone, letters or email. With this, (s)he should announce the conclusion of the workshop.

PEACE

Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE) is an organisation represented by committed and experienced people which is endeavoring to make the process of social change stronger at local and larger levels.

In this context, the prime concern of PEACE is to enhance the awareness and knowledge of the people's groups wrestling to save their identity and democratic values, and of individuals and communities struggling for their livelihood.

For the last few years, by initiating a process of dialogue between groups and people's organisation with a common understanding, PEACE has been trying to strengthen the process of widespread people's movements and alliances.

Other than this handbook, we had also created and published educational learning materials on the issues that have impacts on the common man's life.



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PEACE

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