



ALL INDIA FORUM FOR RIGHT TO EDUCATION

अखिल भारत शिक्षा अधिकार मंच

Secretariat: 306, Pleasant Apartments, Bazarghat, Hyderabad 500 004

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AIFRTE Statement on NCERT 'Rationalisation' of CBSE syllabus

Dated: Apr 28, 2023

The ongoing debate on the NCERT's claim to be rationalizing the CBSE curriculum framework and syllabus has created confusion and unrest within academia. Objections have been raised concerning the deletion of important periods of India's history such as the rise and advance of the Mughal empire, the role of different communities during the freedom struggle and the subsequent evolution of India as a constitutional Republic, and of the social and political affiliation of the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi. Given the character of the communal underpinnings of the present regime, these have tended to dominate the public sphere but are in fact only the tip of the iceberg.

The so-called rationalization is a deep and damaging assault on the very nature of education and spearheads an anti- scientific, ideologically limiting and anti-democratic approach to the very process of learning and creative advance of knowledge.

The portrayal of ancient Indian philosophies as being uniform and continuous cannot be supported by any meaningful evidence which is in fact witness to the sharply conflicting nature of Charvaka materialism, Buddhism, Jainism etc., with the vedantic tradition which itself reveals the diversity of the six schools of philosophy. The Sufi-Bhakti medieval monotheistic and even agnostic traditions only amplify the complexity and range of ideas resulting from the advent of Islamic thought in the sub-continent.

The deletion of historical narratives of particular struggles for social and economic justice, for gender liberties etc., creates a false image of a social order marked by conformity and denies the power of dissent in advancing new ideas and social norms.

The freedom struggle was not merely the engagement of traditional ideas with so-called 'western' thought. It was a questioning of entrenched inequalities and historical oppressions of caste, class, gender, linguistic and regional forms of discrimination. This was the substance that contributed to the idea of a national unity that found expression in the Constitution and rejected firmly the idea of a religion-based 'Hindu Rashtra' despite the partition of the country and Pakistan's establishment of an Islamic state.

The exclusion of Darwin and the theory of evolution highlights the casualness with which scientific advances are approached. Its impact would be funny if it were not so dangerous. A recent cartoon has two schoolchildren discussing if the "modern monkey evolved from ancient Indians"!

The above examples only serve to show how important it is both to conceptualize and contextualize the nature and purpose of a curricular framework and the syllabi that are prepared to achieve its goals. An ideologically motivated chopping and changing cannot but be the greatest disservice that can be done to the future of India's children and youth.

AIFRTE condemns the wasteful and conceited exercise of the NCERT's 'rationalization' of the CBSE curriculum which displays more arrogance than understanding.

AIFRTE demands that the imposition of these alterations be stopped forthwith and a transparent and open debate involving discipline experts and the learning community of teachers and students be immediately initiated.

Jagmohan Singh

Chairperson, AIFRTE

Madhu Prasad

Spokesperson, AIFRTE

Prasad V

Organizing Secretary, AIFRTE

शिक्षा नहीं कोई कारोबार, है यह जनता का अधिकार

Contacts:

Organizing Secretary: Prasad V, Mob: 7736335904

Co-Organizing Secretary: Lokesh Malti Prakash, Mob: 9407549240

Treasurer: M Gangadhar, Mob: 9440414073

Spokesperson: Madhu Prasad, Mob: 9891234299; Co-spokesperson: Kanupriya: 8847638522

Office Secretary: Shishu Ranjan, Mob: 8409494970; Associate-Office Secretary: Nitin, Mob: 7869090287

Email: aifрте.secretariat@gmail.com & office.aifрте@gmail.com

Website: www.aifрте.in