EDUCATING A NATION : NCERT HINDI TEXT-BOOKS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDIANNESS

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KAVITA KRISHNAN

Center of Linguistics and English
School of Languages
Jawaharlal Nehru University
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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES
CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "EDUCATING A NATION : NCERT HINDI TEXT-BOOKS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDIANNESS" submitted by **Ms. KAVITA KRISHNAN** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University, is an original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Ania Loomba

Dr. Ania Loomba
SUPERVISOR

Kapil Kapoor

Dr. Kapil Kapoor
CHAIRPERSON

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"(Our Freedom movement succeeded),... because 'freedom' was not merely a political notion. It was an ideal to establish an alternative civilisational consciousness in our life ... a dream to re-attain our lost 'self-hood' ... After fifty years of Independence, if we find ourselves uprooted from our civilisational moorings, is it not because we squandered away the priceless legacy of tradition bequeathed to us by ancestors?... (The question of how to) save Indian civilisation from inner disintegration, .. has been my central literary preoccupation ... because the language of novels and poetry traverse back to the dark roots of our racial and cultural memory."

- from the acceptance speech delivered by Hindi poet and writer Nirmal Verma on receipt of the 13th Moortidevi Award.[1]

"(Verma's) stringent attack on radical intellectuals and progressive leaders who have uprooted our civilisation from its nourishing sources, will definitely empower those engaged in the grim struggle to assert the country's cultural identity in the face of harsh odds...the historico-political background in which Verma received his award saw BJP leader L.K. Advani's Janadesh Yatra quickly converting itself into a journey for Hindutva and the reconstruction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya...(in a) powerful attempt to restore the ancient invisible unity of India..."

- Sandhya Jain, commenting in the 'Opinion' column of *The Pioneer*, May 22,1997,on Nirmal Verma's speech.

I quote these statements concerning a prominent Indian literary event, to indicate how literature and literary practices are crucially implicated in contemporary Indian politics.For the last fifty years,the centralising imperatives of the Indian nation-state have required the construction of an 'Indian' identity.This identity is said to have emerged

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[1]. Nirmal Verma, 'India: An Unwritten Epic', acceptance speech on receipt of Moortidevi Award, trans. Gagan Gill, *Biblio* Vol. II, No. 6, Delhi, June 1997, pp 6-7.

and is still typified by a cultural tradition of forging a "unity in diversity": a tradition that accomodates cultural 'diversities' while asserting an essential, monolithic 'unity'. This 'official' nationalism lays claim to an ancient tolerant amalgamated culture which since independence is being propagated by the State.[2] Another strand of nationalism that derives from an 'ancient Indian culture' has been that of the increasingly powerful and militant Hindu majoritarian nationalism (Hindutva), that equates 'Indian' culture with a 'Hinduism' that is in fact a construction of the last two hundred years. The state-sponsored nationalism as well as Hindutva have defined themselves against each other, but they have also overlapped in their attempted constructions of an essential 'Indianness' which suggests a homogenous continuity to 'Indian civilisation'. Educational institutions and curricula even prior to independence were important sites for the creation and dissemination of national identities. In independent India, they continue to be sites for the articulation of rival nationalist ideologies advocated currently, by specific political parties and formations for whom

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2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983, p.84-140. Anderson uses the term "official nationalism" to denote nationalisms propagated by colonial and post-colonial states, in contrast to the "popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s".

these have become defining political symbols and elaborate political agendas.

Several recent studies trace the historical connections between educational institutions, literary disciplines and nation-formation, and indicate the processes by which pedagogical practices sustain and reproduce dominant ideologies.[3] This dissertation examines the textbooks of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), used to teach Hindi language and literature, for their representations of culture, nation and citizenship, in order to trace the various ways in which the textbooks imagine and create the Indian nation.

It is relevant that I received my schooling in Madhya Pradesh, in an English-medium school following a Central Board syllabus and using NCERT textbooks. As in most Central Board schools, Hindi was taught compulsorily, through textbooks which assumed that Hindi was both the 'mother-tongue' of M.P. as well as the 'national language'. Since I was brought up in M.P., I am fluent in Hindi rather than in my 'mother-

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3. Refer to Svati Joshi, ed., *Rethinking English: Essays in Literature, Language, History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1994, first published by Lola Chatterjee for Trianka, New Delhi, 1991; Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, ed., *The Lie of the Land: English Literary studies in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992. Also, Krishna Kumar, *The Political Agenda of Education:A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*, Sage Publications, 1991.

tongue' Tamil. Fluency in English was valued as an unmistakeable linguistic sign of social prestige, but had no bearing on my national identity. However my ability, in spite of my Tamil origins, to read and speak Hindi was regarded as a marker of authentic Indian citizenship. During my schooling, however, certain questions arose about the meanings attached to learning and teaching Hindi. While all NCERT textbooks upheld 'nationalism', why were NCERT's Hindi textbooks far more insistent about the propagation of nationalism, than textbooks of other subjects ? The teachers' guidebooks published by the NCERT speak of the "pavitra uttardayitva" (sacred responsibility) of building national consciousness, that Hindi teachers and students bear, and I encountered similar phrases from Hindi teachers in classrooms throughout school.[4] Over the years, the hegemony of the Hindi language in the Chhattisgarh region of M.P. where I lived was challenged by movements promoting the Chhattisgarhi language, literature and cultural identity. This language, which my school had ridiculed as the 'uncivilised' language spoken only by illiterate servants, became the rallying point of demands for separate statehood. The common-sense fact about Hindi being the "mother-tongue" of all residents of M.P. was challenged.

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4. Anirudh Rai et al., ed., Preface to *Shikshan Sandarshika*, NCERT, New Delhi, 1994, p 9.

In the course of my post-graduation in English literature, I was exposed to much work which interrogated the history of English literature as a discipline in India. Recent studies have recommended that English studies should involve a "radical engagement" with Indian languages and literatures as well as with the "larger, often intersecting histories" that constitute English as well as other Indian literary disciplines.[5] . Other studies have traced the construction of an English literature as a discipline in tandem with British nationalism and its project of imperialism, and it was these nationalist and imperialist imperatives which shaped English studies as it was introduced into Indian higher education.[6]

I wish to initiate a similar project regarding the construction of an Indian nation and 'Indianness' through ideologies of literature, literary production and education. My exposure to work engaging with what Spivak terms "the burden of English studies", enabled me to examine the burden of teaching Hindi in India today.[7]

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5. Svati Joshi, *Introduction* to *Rethinking English*, p 29.

6. Sunder Rajan, 'Fixing English : Nation, Language, Subject', in *The Lie of the Land*, p 9.

7. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,'The Burden of English' in *The Lie of the Land*, p. 275.

The role of Hindi textbooks in circulating and securing dominant definitions of nation, citizenship and national culture, is in consonance with the project of various ruling groups of achieving hegemony. Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony to indicate power achieved through force as well as consent.[8] Althusser theorised the role of "ideological state apparatuses" (ISAs), in reproducing relations of production by constituting subjects who have internalised dominant ideas.[9]

Althusser located "the School" as one of the most effective among the dominant ISAs. His ideas have influenced critiques of education, family, media and other institutions, but his theory has been critiqued on the grounds that it leaves "little room for any contradictions or resistance".[10] Althusser speaks of the "concert" of ideology, "dominated by a single score", and he characterises the French educational apparatus as a system which coopts the efforts of radical teachers and renders them virtually ineffective.[11] Critics like Tony Davies have since paid attention to "the

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8. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans., Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Orient Longman, Madras, 1996, pp 12-13.

9. Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards Investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy, Monthly Review Press*, 1971, pp. 127-186.

10. Tony Davies, 'Education, Ideology, and Literature', *Red Letters 7*, 1978, p.4.

11. Althusser, p. 157.

contradictory or potentially progressive character of universal education and the efforts of many individuals and groups working within the (British) educational apparatus to resist and transform its ideological pressure."[12] Stuart Hall's work examining the ideological role of media and society has problematised the relation of the British media to power. Setting aside ideas of the media as the "voice of the ruling class", this work attempts to theorise the complex relations between media, politics and the State.[13] In India, states and ruling groups generate institutions to initiate processes of cultural development and dissemination, but strategies used to maintain relations of dominance,control, or influence over them vary. Until recently, the State directly owned radio and TV networks.

Simultaneously, institutions like the NCERT, the University Grants Commission, and the various akademies for the arts which are designated as autonomous, were set up through its initiatives and under its patronage. The relationship between the State, ruling ideologies and institutions like the NCERT is not simply causal or conspiratorial. The NCERT exists as

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12. Davies, p.4.

13. Stuart Hall ed., *Culture, Media, Language : Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, Hutchinson, London Melbourne Sydney Auckland Johannesburg, in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1980, pp.117-163.

an apex institution responsible for shaping curricular choices nation-wide. and its text-books should be seen as sites for the control of which various forces contend with each other. No single ideology is uniformly reflected in all its publications. and nationalist ideologies are unevenly represented over different disciplines.

It is also important to note that the NCERT is not the only agency that interests itself in the project of nation-building through education. The Constitution originally included education in the state list,but the Constitutional Amendment of 1976 includes it on the Concurrent List, which implies a greater centralisation. where according to the National Policy on Education [1986], "the Union Government would accept a larger responsibility to reinforce the national and integrative character of education".[14] However, state governments are free to bring out variants of the model textbooks prepared by NCERT. Most educational agencies at the state level emulate the NCERT, but at various significant junctures, these texts have been revised. In 1977, when the Janata Party formed the Central government, it sought to withdraw some NCERT history texts on the grounds that they "presented a completely different view of the image of the country far removed from traditional and cultural

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[14] *National Policy on Education*, p.9.

and scientific values". Krishna Kumar claims that the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which is the parliamentary front of the militant Hindu Sangh combine, "has greater interest in children's education than the government of India". In 1991-2, under BJP rule in UP, controversial revisions of history textbooks were instituted, which claimed that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India,and that the Babri Mosque at ayodhya was widely believed to be the site of a temple. In MP too, a controversial text-book which attributed all evils of Hindu society to the advent of Islam, was introduced to teach "India's cultural heritage".[15]

Apart from state agencies, several private organisations also invest in education. Kumar mentions the Saraswati Shishu Mandirs among 3,000 other schools which are affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, as an instance of the links which exist between Hindu revivalism and school education in the Hindi region.[16] Interventions in education and text-book writing, have also been made by experimental groups aiming to democratise education. The Ekalavya experiment developed a programme for alternative text-books in social sciences for

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15. Krishna Kumar, 'Continued Text', *Seminar* 400, Dec.1992, pp.16-19, and Purushottam Agrawal, 'A Stinking Marsh-Pond', ibid., pp.30-32

16. Krishna Kumar, 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India', *Social Scientist*, vol 18, no 10, Oct 1990, pp.4-26.

middle schools of MP, from 1986 to 1992, when it was closed down by the BJP government of MP.[17] My choice of NCERT text-books for analysis does not imply that state-level publications or those of private organisations are insignificant. The centralising functions of the NCERT and its commitment to producing text-books with a national rather than regional perspective, make its texts a useful site to study the intersections of state policies, and ideologies of nation and education.

While text-books of various subjects might contribute to propagating ideas of culture and nation, language text-books are particularly articulate and persuasive in this regard. This is because language, linguistic identity and literatures, are crucial to definitions of nationalism and nations. Benedict Anderson demystified the ideology of nationality as "human fatality" or "natural object" and termed nations "imagined communities".[18] He remarked upon the capacity of language to "generate imagined communities". According to Anderson, print capitalism enabled the constitution of modern nations by transforming human linguistic diversity by making a specific language the official

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17. Rashmi Paliwal and C.M. Subramaniam, 'Ideology and Pedagogy', *Seminar* 400, Dec. 1992, p.33.

18. Benedict Anderson, p.141.

medium of communication. Anderson identifies print language as "what invents nationalism" and literary production in the form of poetry, songs, anthems and the novel form as influential in shaping nations by creating "a special kind of contemporaneous community."[19] He traces the lineage of the "nation-building" policies of the post-colonial states to the imaginings of the 19th century colonial states.[20] He emphasised the role of modern education systems (both colonial and private) in promoting anti-colonial nationalisms; they created a bilingual intelligentsia which had access to " models of nationalism...produced elsewhere in the course of the 19th century".[21] However, Partha Chatterjee suggests that anti-colonial nationalism are not simply derivatives of European models of nationalism and the relationship between colonised intelligentsia, nationalist imaginings and colonial ideologies and policies are more complex.[22]

Svati Joshi elaborates that the role of the bilingual intelligentsia cannot be "annexed to a single homogenous perspective of

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19. Anderson, p.145.

20. Anderson, p.163.

21. Anderson, p.116.

22. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1995, first published Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993.

nationalism since if bilingualism enables access to western culture, it also involves a simultaneous negotiation with specific linguistic communities and the local social and ideological formations".[23] Colonial education imposed the study of English language and literature, and an English education system, with the express purpose of creating "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect."[24] But another major Anglicist policy was that of developing the vernacular languages through the diffusion of western knowledge, unifying their diversity and creating national languages and a national literature that would make them fit media for a liberal ideology and would eventually replace English education.[25] Susie Tharu argues that this agenda constituted the notion of an Indian literature and anticipated the nationalist agenda, which continues to inform our contemporary literary productions, pedagogical and critical practices.[26] Institutions like Fort William College in Calcutta (1800) were set up, which employed

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23. Svati Joshi, p.20.

24. Thomas Babbington Macaulay, *Minute on English Education*, 1835.

25. Svati Joshi, p.18.

26. Susie Tharu, 'The Arrangement of an Alliance: English and the Making of Indian Literatures', in *Rethinking English*, pp.160-180.

indigenous literati, and which recast Indian languages into textualised and codified forms. The agenda was to create 'authentic' and 'purified' versions of these 'fallen' languages, through grammars which reorganised them according to European grammatical categories and by creating Sanskritised versions. purged them of all Persian usages as well as contemporary dialects. This reconstitution of indigenous languages, their Sanskritisation and their fixity through the print form "turned them into languages of power within the larger linguistic communities which used other dialects".[27] The vernacular elites played an active role restructuring their languages.

Post-colonial India has also been marked by fierce debates surrounding questions of language. The debates surrounding a 'national' link language reveal that no monolithic 'ruling class' can be said to control the state. The tussle between advocates of English and Hindi as a pan-Indian link language "reflects a conflict ... between two elite groups : the nationally entrenched English educated elite and the new but ascendant elite sans the trappings of an English education. The differences between the two are indexed in terms of their urban-rural and caste backgrounds. while there is some overlap between them in economic terms, the sharp

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[27]. Svati Joshi, p.17.

differences between them in socio-cultural terms are marked by the language divide".[28] Hindi protagonism through the '70s and '80s has formed a significant element in Hindu revivalist nationalism as well as in the resurgence of the rural elites in North India.[29]

The contests over the shaping of Hindi as a pan-Indian link language reflected the inclusions and exclusions inherent to various imaginings of nation. The contemporary Hindi language text-books reflect traces of these contests. What shape the NCERT texts choose to give Hindi, and how they conceive of its relation to local spoken languages, Hindustani and Urdu, are significant indicators of how the texts imagine the nation.

The emergence of Hindi in North India was a result of a complex conjunction of colonial policies and nationalist movements. In addition to forging modern Sanskritised Hindi, nationalist movements also promoted the writing of a Hindi literary history. Sheldon Pollock identifies literary history as "the critical arena within which the story of the nation is

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28. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, 'Fixing English : Nation, Language, Subject', in *The Lie of the Land*, pp.15-16.

29. Badri Raina, 'A Note on Language and the Politics of English in India', in *Rethinking English*, p.293.

narrated".[30] Dominant narrations of Hindi literary history such as Ramchandra Shukla's *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas* (1929) published by the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, contributed to the consolidation of the Hindi language and literary tradition, as symbols of Hindu revivalist nationalism. Since then, these have been contested by literary critical currents which have emerged from movements such as the Progressive Writer's Movement of the '30s and 40s. These narrations are indicative of competing cultural and nationalist agendas. It is of interest to examine how contemporary literature textbooks represent or accommodate these competing programmes.

This dissertation limits itself to a study of the text-books for the upper primary and secondary classes (Std. VI to Std. XII) intended to teach Hindi as a 'mother-tongue' rather than as a 'second language'. The primary school texts, the second language texts, as well as the range of optional teaching materials, are not insignificant or uninteresting, but the scope of the M.Phil. demands a restriction of the field.

The first chapter attempts to account for the nationalist burden that Hindi text-books carry, and traces the historical contests through

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[30] Sheldon Pollock, 'Literary History, Region and Nation in South Asia - Introductory Note', in *Social Scientist*, Vol. 23, Nos.10-12, Oct.-Dec. 1995, p.5.

which Hindi came to be identified as a national language, organically linked to Indianness. The second chapter examines the textbooks for the upper primary classes for the complex and contradictory representations of community and language, culture and citizenship, that are enmeshed in the text-books and that constitute the official nationalist ideology of the State. This chapter also identifies the historical processes and moments out of which various components of nationalist ideology arose. The third chapter studies the text-books used to teach Hindi literature to students of secondary classes (Std. IX to XII). This chapter pays attention to the literary selections to assess how the text-books narrate Hindi literary history and how these narrations accommodate diverse literary movements and figures.

I conclude by comparing the textual and ideological strategies used by the upper primary and secondary school text-books; strategies by which interrogations of state-sponsored nationalism are permitted, evaded or accommodated. Throughout the dissertation, I have attempted to identify the cultural agenda and politics of the textbooks and to locate these historically.

CHAPTER -I

History, Hindi, and the NCERT: Constructing a 'National Language'

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986), emphasised the need for a curriculum that would "instil a nationally shared perception and...national ethos which would strengthen national identity and harmony".[1] The National Curriculum Framework (1986), produced by the NCERT, proposes to ensure that the values outlined by the NPE were "suitably infused in the syllabi of different subjects".[2] The centralizing imperatives implicit in the unificatory cultural mission of the NCERT become especially evident in text-book representations of the history of the Hindi language. The principle of cultural nationalism evoked by the phrase "unity in diversity",is inscribed in most of NCERT's textbooks.[3]

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1. National Policy on Education - 1986, (NPE), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, New Delhi, (with modifications undertaken in 1992), as described by *Guidelines and Syllabi for Upper Primary Stage, Classes VI-VIII*, NCERT, New Delhi, 1988.

2. *Guidelines*, p.1.

3. *National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework*, (NCF), Revised Version, NCERT, New Delhi, 1988, p. 4.

However, the representation of Hindi in Hindi language text-books, as a unifying national language, endorses, even while it masks its emergence as a language linked to the rise of socially powerful groups, and the suppression of less powerful literatures and languages.

In keeping with its vision of cultural unity, the NCERT attempts to monitor text-book production nation-wide. State-level educational agencies are free to adopt/adapt text-books in keeping with the broad guidelines laid down by the NCERT, but in the interests of "national integration", school textbooks published by non-NCERT bodies are examined "with a view to removing materials" such as communal prejudices, and "which impede national integration".[4] The National Council For Educational Research And Training was set up in 1961 to research indigenous teaching methodologies and develop model text-books, teacher-training methods and curricula. Consequent to the nationalisation of text-book publication in 1975, NCERT was saddled with the task of publishing text-books in all subjects, in English Hindi

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4. P.L. Malhotra, Director, NCERT, Preface to *School Education in India: Present Status and Future Needs*, eds. P.L. Malhotra et al, NCERT, New Delhi, 1986, p. xiv.

Sanskrit and Urdu, for all schools run, controlled or aided by the government about 98% of all the schools in the country).[5]

The NPE (1986) suggests that national educational syllabi be guided by a "common core" of themes and principles ranging from the history of India's freedom movement, constitutional obligations, environmental protection, gender equality and family planning.[6] The NCERT further develops guidelines and syllabi in two volumes for classes VI-VIII and classes IX-X respectively.

Though the agenda for the NCERT is elaborated often enough, its guidelines are intangible principles of nationalism. Since identity formation is inscribed in language-teaching, representations of Hindi in NCERT text-books derive largely from discourses of national character-building, of the 'mother-tongue' and of linguistic purity, which were fundamental to the history of Hindi as a discipline. The "Hindi Matribhasha" (Hindi as mother-tongue) is prescribed as it infuses "a sense of national goals" in students, since "education in the mother-

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5. Adil Tyabji, 'Denationalizing Textbooks', *Seminar 400*, December 1992, pp. 36-37 and Krishna Kumar, 'Continued Text', *Seminar 400*, pp. 16-17.

6. NPE, para 3.4, p.6.

tongue" is the best medium for "developing a sense of value and character".[7] The Hindi syllabus prescribed for the upper primary classes urges that the teacher impress upon the students that "only the pure form of language is easily accessible in society" and therefore students should be "alert towards the purity of language".[8] The teaching of literature in the Hindi Matribhasha likewise, is said to ensure "the development of good habits and ideas in students".[9]

Hindi is assigned a central role in the process of nurturing "unity and integrity" by invoking its status as a 'link language', its national character and its position in the national movement.[10] Many of the arguments which the NCERT uses to legitimise Hindi as a national language have their origin in the cultural and political movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in North India which sought to promote the Hindi language and the Nagari script. I will study the introductory essays to *Pallav-I* and *Pallav-II*, NCERT textbooks for Std.

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7. *Guidelines*, pp. 5-6.

8. ibid. p.4.

9. *Guidelines and Syllabi for Secondary Stage, Classes IX - X*, p.3.

10. NCF, p.4.

XI and Std XII, to examine how the NCERT describes "Hindi ka Swaroop" (the Nature of Hindi) and characterises the language as "Sampark Bhasha - Hindi" (Contact Language Hindi).[11]

The Hindi movement and Nationalism in North India

A central strategy by which the NCERT texts endow Hindi with a national character is to designate it as a "link language" or a lingua franca for Indians with diverse "mother tongues". The preface titled 'Sampark Bhasha' states that "just as Sanskrit was the contact language for ancient India, Hindi is the contact language for modern India. Further Sanskrit was never a mother-tongue, but was the medium for intellectual discourse all over India. Similarly, while standard Hindi is the mother tongue of a few, it is fast becoming the language to be used from a national platform".[12] Along with designating it as a "link language", the preface establishes the national character of Hindi by suggesting a relationship between the progress of the national movement and the

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[11] 'Sampark Bhasha - Hindi', Preface to *Pallav I*, and 'Hindi ka Swarup', Preface to *Pallav II*, pp. IX-XV, NCERT, New Delhi, 1990.

[12] 'Sampark Bhasha' p.vi.

linguistic and literary growth of modern Hindi. It narrates how Hindi acquired the status of the national language: "Post 1857 AD, when there was a wave of awakening in the country our national leaders accepted Hindi as a national language in spite of the richness of other Indian languages". [13]

The insistence that Hindi was expressly chosen from among contenders by the nationalists, betrays an anxiety about the status of Hindi. The history of language debates among anti-colonial nationalist leaders reveals a long tussle between Hindi, Hindustani and Urdu as the choice for a 'national language'. Hindi and Urdu, originally the same language, originated in the 1st century A.D. as Hindi/Hindavi, as a result of the fusion of Sanskrit and Persian language streams. The divide set in over centuries and acquired a communal colouring. Amrit Rai traces how the decline of the Mughal Empire spurred an anxious Islamic elite into developing a Persianised Urdu, 'purified' of Hindavi.[14] The British widened the gap between Hindi and Urdu in the 19th century by

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13. ibid. p.vii.

14. Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, p.285-89.

communalising these linguistic identities and establishing, as one among several agents of literary change, separate literacy disciplines for what was, even yet, one language. A stream of Hindu nationalists also attempted to Sanskritise Hindi and to standardise the Devanagari script.[15]

Within the reform and nationalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a felt need for a national language which would replace English. Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani were the prime contenders for the position of a pan-Indian language and their advocates tended to identify the languages and scripts with religious communities. Hindi written in Nagari was said to be the language of the Hindu majority and Urdu, of the Muslim minority, whereas in fact, "the great bulk of the population used non-literary regional and local dialects, and neither the sanskritised Hindi nor the persianised Urdu of the vernacular elite".[16]

Various political camps within the national movement and even within the leadership of the Indian National Congress (INC), advocated

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15. Christopher R.King, *One Language, two scripts: The Hindi Movements in Nineteenth Century North India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1994.

16. Christopher R. King, 'Forging a New Linguistic Identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868-1914' in Sandra B. Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras:Community,Performance and Environment, 1800-1980*, OUP, New Delhi, 1989, p.187.

language policies in keeping with their ideological positions. In 1939, the Hindu Mahasabha declared that Hindi and not Hindustani rightly deserved to be the national language. In 1905, within the INC, Bal Gangadhar Tilak forcefully argued for the acceptance of Hindi in Devanagari script.[17] Other members of the INC like Gandhi, Nehru, and Rajagopalachari advocate neither Urdu nor the newly emergent literary language of sanskritised Khari Boli Hindi, but the spoken Hindustani as a "common language", "all India" or "national language".[18]

Gandhi fashioned a description of Hindustani in accordance with the political contingencies of the time. He attributed the separation of Hindi and Urdu to the deliberate classicization of usage by literary scholars and defined Hindustani as a language that bridged the stylistic differences between Hindi and Urdu.[19] He claimed that Hindustani was the popular speech, common to Hindus and Muslims in North India and could be written in either the Persian or the Nagari script. By 1925,

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17. Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India*, OUP, Bombay, 1970. p.37.

18. Das Gupta, p.37.

19. Das Gupta, p.110. Also see M.K. Gandhi, *Thoughts on a National Language*, 1956, p.5.

Gandhi persuaded the Indian National Congress to accept Hindustani as the official language for the conduct of its proceedings but the use of Hindustani was hotly contested within the Congress by advocates of Hindi like Purshottam Das Tandon.

Various language associations were formed in North India to campaign for nation-wide acceptance for either Hindi or Hindustani. The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (HSS) was founded in Allahabad in 1910, to propagate Hindi as a national language. To counter the influence of revivalist leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya and Purushottam Das Tandon, proponents of sanskritised Hindi, Gandhi became active within the HSS, and even became its President in 1917 but faced heavy opposition from the Tandon camp. Gandhi wanted the name of the organisation changed since he felt it implied a commitment to a rarified literary form of Hindi. He resigned after the HSS passed a resolution in 1941 asserting that Hindi and Urdu were different languages, but established the Hindustani Prachar Sabha along with Nehru and Prasad. There were other organisations which tried to promote Hindustani as the language of composite culture; in 1927 a group of literary authors and

educators founded the Hindustani academy and in 1945 a more popular organisation, the Hindustani Culture Society was founded. However these organisations could not match the support that the Hindi literati could garner for Hindi.

The ascendance of Hindi indicates that neither the backing of powerful political figures, nor widespread popular usage can achieve hegemony for a language. Hindi gained hegemony because it had been forged and fashioned as a central symbol of cultural identity by emergent social classes and castes who influenced literary production. The mainstay of the Hindi movement was the leisured class and the professional petty bourgeoisie, like teachers, lawyers, traders and money lenders, landed families as well as those supported by urban employment. Its patrons also included princes, and estate owners who donated heavily to the propagandist institutions as well as to literary journals. These were the people who were to become significant players in local level politics in the coming years.[20] The newly emergent

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[20] Avinash Kumar, *History, Community and Consciousness: A Study of Hindi Journals, 1910-1930*, M.Phil Dissert., submitted to Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, 1996.

language, Hindi, attracted the dominant castes among the Hindus not only because it offered a suitable symbol of cultural identity, but also because government departments like education were beginning to provide employment to Hindi literati from these castes.[21] The vast mass of lower castes and classes remained outside the orbit of this powerful movement.

This movement received its impetus from influential reform movements which also contributed to the creation of communities in North India. The Arya Samaj, in its programme of organising a reformed Hindu society, proposed an important role for "the development of a lingua franca of reformed Hindus or the Aryas". The chosen 'Arya bhasha'(the language of the Aryas) was a highly Sanskritised Hindi, and the Arya Samaj suggested the institutionalised propagation of Hindi and Nagari through the Nagari Pracharini Sabha.[22]

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21. Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991, p.125.

22. Krishna Kumar, 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North Central India', *Social Scientist*, vol. 18, no. 10, October 1990, p.8.

Through a plethora of journals, as well as textbooks, a revivalist notion of Hindi was propagated as the language of the Hindu majority, whose pure form was closely and directly descended from Sanskrit and whose script was Nagari. Hindustani was considered fit only for popular creations, while only Khari Boli Hindi was appropriate for refined literary creations. Braj Bhasha, which as late as the 1920s, was the most important medium for poetry, was rejected, and the poet Maithili Sharan Gupta, in 1914, went to the extent of calling supporters of Braj, enemies of India's national language, Khari Boli Hindi. The Nagari script was preferred over the Kaithi script (which was more popular in the eastern region and was widely used for text books) since "rejecting Kaithi also meant indirectly affirming Hindi's close connection with Sanskrit". To Hindi supporters, rejecting Kaithi also meant separating Hindi and Nagari from a more popular but lower level of culture.[23]

Gradually this movement spread beyond the confines of the regional politics of North India and began to take on national proportions. The linguistic identity that was forged around Hindi-Nagari,

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[23] King, in Freitag (ed.), p.193.

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[23] King, in Freitag (ed.), p.193.

defining itself antagonistically to Urdu and Hindustani, Braj and Kaithi, became an important element in the self-conscious Hindu nationalism, which identified Indian culture with a glorious ancient past. This culture, it was claimed, had survived the attacks of foreigners and outsiders (Muslims and the British), and their languages Urdu and English, and Hindi-Nagari was the true vehicle of anti-imperialist expression.

Since this particular nationalist current is so enmeshed in the history of the development and prominence of Hindi, it is not surprising that even today, Hindi educators writing for the NCERT represent Hindi as a language which provides Indians with a cultural continuity between tradition and modernity. For instance the preface, 'Sampark Bhasha', claims, "In the golden age (of the national movement), the primary bearer of ancient Indian culture and national consciousness was Hindi."[24] Arguments which challenge or contest the status of Hindi as the national language find no place in the narrations of the history of Hindi found in these prefaces to NCERT texts. While celebrating the apparent

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[24]. 'Sampark Bhasha', p.vii.

consensus over Hindi as the national language, these essays reveal anxieties about several of these challenges.

The lineage constructed for the Hindi language marks a direct descent of Hindi along with most other modern Indian languages from Sanskrit. There is very little reference to the Prakrit-Apabhransha stage, from which, in fact most of the new Indian languages are directly descended, or to the profuse lexical borrowing from Persian and Arabic that took place at this stage of linguistic evolution.[25]

The use of kinship terms to invoke Sanskrit as the "mother" of all Indian languages, and other modern Indian languages as "sisters" of Hindi is intended to promote emotional and cultural integration for a large multilingual country.[26] However such metaphors also work to erase traces of the communal and political pressures that have shaped modern Hindi. As suggested above, Hindi emerged as the language around which dominant Hindu upper castes constructed their identity, and the language increasingly distanced itself from the various languages

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[25] Amrit Rai, p.285-89.

[26] 'Sampark Bhasha', p.vi.

of written or oral popular culture, such as Hindustani, the regional dialects like Braj Bhasha and Bhojpuri, and variant scripts like Kaithi. This also led to a distancing from the communities and castes whose medium of expression was Urdu, Hindustani or the regional dialects. These prefaces to NCERT's Hindi language text-books cannot successfully ignore this process, and therefore we see insistent protestations of Hindi as the bearer of India's 'composite culture'. To provide Hindi with a historical role as the bearer of a composite culture, the NCERT has had to accommodate marginalised traditions within an evolutionary history of Hindi. The preface to *Pallav-I*, 'Sampark bhasha',claims that Hindi literature, since its very origins, has had a national character. In order to illustrate the ability of Hindi to represent all sections of Indians, it claims that "Hindi literature has not been the literature of Hindus alone, but all religions and castes have contributed to it. Hindi literature had its beginnings in the works of Buddhist and Jain monks, and later Muslim Sufis and Sikh gurus enriched it... Similarly, the rise of the Sant poets like Namdev, Raidas, Kumbhandas, Nabhadas,

...disprove the claim that Hindi literature is only for the upper castes."[27] The Sufi, Sant and Sikh traditions are accomodated by the NCERT as proof of the claim Hindi can make to "compositeness". Significantly however, Urdu writing itself finds no place in NCERT's Hindi syllabi and literary histories.

Language and Indian Constitution

The struggle between Hindi and the Hindustani continued throughout the early 20th century upto 1945, and within the Constituent Assembly, which was founded in December 1946 to draft the Constitution. The political and literary movements traced above, resulted in Hindi being enshrined as the official language in the Constitution. NCERT's narration of the history of Hindi suggests that the constitutional status of Hindi is a result of a smooth consensus, giving no hint of the struggle that was waged as the Constitution was being drafted between 1946 and 1949.

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[27]. ibid., p.viii.

During the initial Assembly sessions, transactions took place, by an uneasy consensus, primarily in Hindustani or English. With prestigious leaders like Nehru and Rajendra Prasad holding sway, the language debates within the Assembly were tilted in favour of Hindustani. This position was eroded by the July 1947 session with the impending partition of India. Leaders of the Hindi movement who were also important members of the Constituent Assembly, made a concerted effort to dislodge Hindustani and to install Hindi. One of the members, Purushottam Das Tandon, who later became President of the Indian National Congress, was associated with many Hindu revivalist causes. Other prominent proponents of Hindi in the Constituent Assembly like Seth Govind Das, Sampurnanand, Ravi Shankar Shukla and K.M. Munshi tended to identify Hindi with Hindu cultural interest. According to them, Hindustani was a symbol of appeasement of the Muslim concern for Urdu. They demanded that Hindi alone, written in Nagari, be made the national language. In 1948, a book published by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan said, "...the mask of Hindustani has now been torn up and the real face of Urdu has been revealed...only 'Nagari Hindi' has to

be declared as the language of India".[28] Simultaneously, Sampurnanand propagated the idea that both Hindustani and Urdu which were interchangeably identified as the languages of Muslim appeasement, were anti-national.[29]

The caucus of Hindi leaders painstakingly garnered votes and support within the Constituent Assembly and organised huge pressure campaigns outside it. In 1947, they forced a crucial vote, refusing the suggestion that the decision, like most others, be taken by consensus. The Hindi bloc won by 78 votes against 77 for Hindustani. Ultimately, the Munshi-Ayyangar compromise formula of Hindi as "official language" for the Indian Union was adopted.[30]

Consequently, the Constitution directed the Indian State to develop and propagate Hindi as a national language. Article 351 of the Constitution reads, "It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi Language, to develop it so that it may serve as the

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[28]. Chandrabali Pandeya, *Sasan me Nagari*, Allahabad, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1948, p.60-61.

[29]. Sampurnanand, *Hindustan Times*, November 14, 1947, cited in Dasgupta, pp.136-37

[30]. Dasgupta, pp.136-37.

medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani, and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary, or desirable, for its vocabulary primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages". It is in keeping with this directive of the Indian State, that the NCERT gives the role of national language to Hindi, suppressing the history of the revivalist Hindi-Nagari movement in North India that fought successfully to oust Hindustani from the dominant position it held among nationalist leaders.

The standardisation and reconstitution of Hindi:

After the Constitution became effective, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan began a systematic campaign to sanskritise the official Hindi. Its leadership opposed the pro-Hindustani lobbies which suggested that the State distinguish regional Hindi from a more accessible national Hindi. The official language commission recommended that the Central Government give liberal financial assistance to voluntary associations for

the propagation of Hindi. Even before this policy was declared, substantial funds were being channelled to Hindi associations, despite the rival claims of the Hindustani associations. Tandon and others attacked the Ministry of Education in Parliament, and in 1954 the HSS held its 6th Annual Congress in UP, where RSS and Jana Sangh leaders were felicitated, and Maulana Azad, the HRD minister, was accused of favouring Hindustani. The Hindi associations secured the bulk of government funds in the form of contracts for the preparation of dictionaries, encyclopedias, coinage of terms, translation, and for teaching and propagating Hindi. Since the work of reconstituting Hindi and equipping it for national use had been virtually handed over by the government to associations such as the Nagari Pracharini Sabha and the HSS, it is no surprise that the language became increasingly Sanskritised. In November 1949, the All India Radio abruptly changed its "News in Hindustani" to "News in Hindi". The language used for broadcasting also changed, so much so that Nehru in 1948 complained that he could not comprehend the Hindi translation of his speech that had been broadcast. Since then, although the sanskritised official Hindi has been

repeatedly criticised, the process of sanskritisation has continued unabated.[31]

The NCERT essays also betray an anxiety about the standardisation of Hindi. ' Dialects' are seen as impure hurdles in the drive towards standardising and purifying official Hindi and the need for a "Manak Rup" (standard form) is repeatedly stressed. The preface to one of the NCERT text-books, Pallav-II emphasises that, "Hindi's variety and range does not mean that it has no standard form. In fact, the standard form has developed, stringing together its variety and range, with a definitive grammar and stock of words, and rules. Undoubtedly, this is its ideal form. In usage, this should be kept in mind...The test of a language's purity or impurity lies in its standard form".[32] The preface to part one of the same series says, "Hindi has had to strive harder than other languages to evolve as a standard and uniform literary language, the reasons for which are the vastness of the Hindi region and the diversity of its regional languages". [33] Why did these views gain

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31. See Dasgupta, pp.171-72.

32. 'Hindi ka Swarup', *Pallav-II*, p.xii

33. 'Sampark Bhasha', *Pallav I*, p.vii.

ascendancy within the Hindi language planning project of the State? The answer lies in the fact that organisations and projects engaged in developing the Hindi language have been monopolised by literatteurs and many of the experts chosen by the Union Government for these processes tended to be literary leaders associated with the Hindi movement. Language planners were concerned more with the codification of a form of standard Hindi than with the possibilities of disseminating it to its wide audience. Dr. Raghuvira, who compiled a lexicon for Hindi urged, "In creating (two million) words, the soul of the nation must be attended to, and for this purpose, Sanskrit will be the mighty weapon for forging all our linguistic needs".[34] Hindi associations which have wider political support in the Hindi areas also promoted the development of the language. It is natural that, with their experience, resources, and institutional support, the leaders of the movement were in a position to more than offset the influence of any dissenting experts in the field.[35]

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[34] Dr. Raghuvira, *India's National Language*, International Academy of Indian culture, New Delhi, 1965.

[35] Dasgupta, p.185-187.

The Hindi language planners had an ideological inclination for 'indianisation', which involved assembling an evolutionary linguistic history which has its origins in 'mother Sanskrit' and accomodates several other languages by locating them as primitive predecessors of Hindi, so that a single linguistic and therefore cultural whole would emerge. This was an understanding not shared by and large, by those devoted to modernising the advanced regional languages of India.

The Creation of the 'Hindi Belt'

The NCERT essays presume the existence of a 'Hindi heartland' or 'Hindi belt' - a vast area of North Indian states, whose inhabitants speak Hindi - largely as a mother tongue, or as a link language. One of the prefaces maps the language: "Hindi is the language of that vast area - U.P., M.P., Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and union territory Delhi - which is known as India's heart".[36] This statement hints at the access to political power that the 'Hindi belt' has acquired in modern Indian politics. The construction of a 'Hindi-speaking belt' by

[36] 'Sampark Bhasha', *Pallav* I, p.vii.

the Indian State as well as by various political and cultural forces is a process closely linked to the language policies of India, which were countered in their effort to promote Hindi by language lobbies of the South as well as those of so-called 'dialects'of Hindi. The state's promotion of Hindi in these political struggles has crucial implications for education and literacy programmes in the country.

NCERT intervenes in these political struggles when it insists upon the harmonious, yet hierarchical relationship of Hindi to other languages of the Hindi belt. Introductory notes to the text-books refer to the rich and lively relationship which Hindi, as a link language, shares with languages that are the 'spoken' tongues of various communities ("janapadon ki bolchal ki bhashaen"), in vast regions of the North.[37]

The coercive language policy of the Indian nation state has put into effect systematic discrimination against other groups and nationalities. Aijaz Ahmad comments upon the "multiplicities of enunciative capacity" in India, which, under the coercive pressure of the bourgeois modern state, must be abandoned and replaced by a mother

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37. 'Hindi ka Swarup', *Pallav II*, pp.ix-x.

tongue or *single* "regional" language, because the state assumes that diverse non-standard linguistic identities are a threat to modernity, nationalism and integration.[38] The case of Hindi in particular is revealing, where hegemonic concepts as well as statistical manipulations have been used to maintain the myth of Hindi as the standard national language, spoken by the majority of Indians especially in the Hindi belt. The 1961 census recorded 1652 mother tongues in India, at least 200 of which had 10,000 speakers or more each. The corresponding 1971 and 1981 census figures for mother tongues are 221 and 106 respectively. The variation in figures is due to the fact that from the census of 1971 onwards, the Census Commissioner was advised/ordered not to list languages with less than 10,000 speakers. Languages were grouped together under a dominant language, and as many as 48 languages like Bhojpuri and Maithili were grouped under Hindi, which suggested that

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[38] Aijaz Ahmed, "In the Mirror of Urdu: Recomposition of Nation and Community, 1947-65" in *Lineages of the Present: Political Essays*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1996. Also, Ahmed, *In Theory: Classes, Nations and Literatures*, OUP, 1992, p. 248, for a discussion of how mass literary cultures in India, till the 19th Century, remained polyglot, rather than unilingual.

the speakers of these tongues in fact spoke a constitutionally recognised Khari Boli Hindi.[39]

Census manipulations have an older history as well. Aijaz Ahmad speaks of the post-colonial Indian state's administrative elimination of Hindustani, so that it disappeared as a census category and certainly as a living link between Urdu and Hindi. The census figures obtained from U.P. at the time are proof of the increasingly communalised linguistic identities being imposed by the Indian state on Indians. Ahmad adds."For masses of peoples in U.P. in the first decade of independence, the three language categories, Hindi, Hindustani, Urdu were ... very fluid... " Cultural, communal, religious and official coercions were involved in changing this and in presenting the choice between Hindi and Urdu as "a choice between Hinduism and Islam, nationalism and foreignness".[40]

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[39] Bh. Krishnamurti in *Language and the State : Perspectives on the Eighth Schedule*, eds. R.S. Gupta, Anvita Abbi, Kailash Aggarwal, Creative Books, New Delhi, 1995, p.14-15. Also Nikhil Nayyar, *Language and the state*, p.169.

[40] Ahmad, *In the Mirror of Urdu*, p.207.

NCERT texts describe the relation of Hindi to languages like Bhojpuri and Maithili, Chhattisgarhi and Bundeli: "Hindi serves as a link language between these languages. Not only that, the medium of education of this vast area is in fact Hindi and not these languages".[41] Hindi is the medium of education because it is assumed to be the mother tongue of northern states; its imposition as a medium of education at the cost of neglecting various other languages is justified as a need for a standard regional as well as national language. This preface uses a perverse logic to cite this imposed language policy as proof of Hindi's uniform acceptability as a link language in these regions. Further, in its regional character, Hindi is the "medium of cultural expression for the Hindi speaking people" ("Hindi Bhashi janata ki Sanskriti ki vani").[42] This phrase implies that the entire region has Hindi speaking people; and that for those who use various 'dialects' for everyday speech, Hindi serves as a written as well as spoken medium of refined cultural expression. Sadhna Saxena, discussing her experience with literacy

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41. 'Hindi ka Swarup', *Pallav II*, p.ix-x.

42. ibid., p.xi.

campaigns in district of Madhya Pradesh, speaks of how the so-called 'Link language' Hindi is in fact unable to function effectively as a link even for the languages of the Hindi belt. The categorisation of some languages as 'standard' and others as 'backward', she asserts, is based on the "lingustically flawed" concept of "dialects", and is "more a political construct than linguistic fact".[43]

The attempt to impose Hindi as an official language was fiercely opposed in the South, leading to violent clashes in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in 1965. The NCERT preface, while making no mention of this opposition, is nevertheless compelled to fashion spurious cultural histories and draw harmonious links between Hindi and South India. It is claimed that the Bhakti period of Hindi demonstrated the confluence of North and South since the Bhakti Acharyas were from the South, and Bhakti Poetry was written in Hindi. Because of its southern origins one introductory note claims, Hindi works of Bhakti poets circulated freely in the South.[44] Aijaz Ahmad, in response to such claims, remarks that

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43. Sadhna Saxena, Kamal Mahendroo, 'Politics of Language',*Economic and Political Weekly*, Nov. 6, 1993, and Saxena, 'Language and the Nationality Question', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Feb. 8-14, 1997, p.268-272.

44. 'Hindi ka Swarup', *Pallav II*, pp. vii-viii.

historians are "unclear about how the Bhakti phenomenon of the Tamil region spread through the Deccan plateau and then across the Vindhyas...if indeed, the Northern forms of Bhakti were in some fundamental way a continuation of the Southern, which is again not entirely established."[45]

The Tamilnadu language riots of 1965 resulted in the dismissal of the Congress Party from power in the state, while the DMK and AIADMK parties gained power on anti-Hindi planks. The opponents of Hindi demanded that the official language remain English. The Constitution, while it deemed Hindi as the language of the Union, also provided that English would continue to be used for fifteen years, and in 1963, the Official Languages Act adopted English as an associate official language of the Union without any time limit. In recent years Hindi has emerged as the rallying centre of movements which oppose the English language and English education on the grounds that these perpetuate colonial oppression. The 'Angrezi Hatao'(Remove English) movement in Uttar Pradesh in 1989 renewed the idea of Hindi as the truly anti-

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[45] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory*, p.247.

imperialist national language. Advocates of such movements tend to freshly circulate myths about Hindi as the language of the majority of Indians. For instance, Badri Raina, who recommends the development of other vernaculars urges however that, "it is just as well to recognise that ultimately the best (if not the only) argument on behalf of Hindi is that half the country's population is already functional in it."[46]

What are the specific distillations of nationalism that are produced when the history of the Hindi language and discipline intersect with nationalist ideologies in an attempt to unify diverse identities on the basis of a shared 'Indianness'? The next chapter will consider this question.

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[46] Badri Raina, 'A Note on Language and the Politics of English in India', in *Rethinking English*, Svati Joshi, ed., p. 294.

CHAPTER - II

Tradition, Modernity and Official Nationalism

Renato Rosaldo, critiquing Benedict Anderson's analysis of nations as inclusive communities suggests that modern nation states are constructed by excluding certain sections of the population from the, "imagined community" and coercing others into dominant ideologies.[1] Acknowledging Anderson's emphasis on the role of literatures in constituting national communities. Rosaldo discusses how literary works are implicated in the simultaneous acts of inclusion and exclusion that are inherent to nation formation.[2] Commenting on nationalist narratives in India, Sudipta Kaviraj points out that "Narratives are not for all to hear, for all to participate in to an equal degree....there are very real frontiers of indifference and contempt" which, for instance exclude Muslim children from popular folktales.[3] As we have seen in the previous chapter,

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1. Renato Rosaldo, "Social Injustice and the Crisis of National Communities" in *Colonial Discourse/Post-colonial Theory*, ed., Francis Barker, et al., Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1994.

2. Rosaldo, pp. 245-249. Anderson's analysis of the opening scene of Filipino novelist Jose Rizal's *Noli me Tangere* had noted how Rizal describes a dinner party to which everybody in Manila is invited, emphasising "the universality of the verbal net he casts as he creates the national community". Rosaldo, however, points out how "gender differentially shapes the treatment of the guests....social class determines whose names are placed on the guest list" and the existence of racialised cultural minorities is not even acknowledged.

3. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India', *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, vol. VII, eds., Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, OUP, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1992, p. 33.

the development of Hindi literature contributed to the constitution of an emergent North Indian upper-caste Hindu community, and also played a symbolic role within the inclusive rhetoric of the Indian State's official nationalism. Literature is one of the sites where rival Indian nationalisms (elaborated later in this chapter) emerged and mapped the Indian nation variously, identifying different criteria for authentic citizenship. The mainstream Indian National Congress succeeded in articulating an ideology that, during the national movement as well as in the constitution of the new nation state, could accommodate rival visions of nation. This chapter will examine the different elements which constitute the nationalist ideology propagated by the State through the language teaching and character-building strategies of the Kishore Bharati series of text-books published by the NCERT. The series consists of three textbooks (Kishore Bharti, Vols.I, II and III) for std VI, VII and VIII respectively. I will consider these textbooks together, since they share the same structure and are usually prescribed as a series, and are meant to be treated as a body.[4]

The National Policy on Education, 1986, as well as the National Curriculum Frame work, 1988 (NCF) emphasise the role of education in

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4. *Kishore Bharti*, vols. I,II, ed., Shashikumar Sharma, Ramjanm Sharma, Anirudh Rai, NCERT, New Delhi, 1987, and Kishore Bharti, vol. III, ed., Shashikumar Sharma et al., NCERT, New Delhi, 1989. The teachers' guides corresponding to the Kishore Bharti texts are *Shikshan Sandarshika*, vols. I,II,and III, ed., Anirudh Rai, NCERT, 1994.

developing citizens with "a secular national outlook...a profound sense of patriotism, non-sectarian attitudes, capacity for tolerating difference arising out of caste, religion, region, language, sex etc...., all directed to the sustained pursuit of unity and integrity of the country".[5] The NCF also emphasises the role of the school curriculum in highlighting "the need to preserve the cultural heritage of our country,...(and)...in making our younger generation aware of the need to reinterpret the past and to adapt the new practices and outlook appropriate for a modern society."[6]

This amalgam of cultural nationalism and a "modern outlook" can be traced back to the discourse of twentieth century secular nationalism, as exemplified by Nehru, which has become, since 1947 an integral part of the discourse of the post-colonial Indian State. Nehruvian nationalism defined India's goal as one of becoming a society that is "both stable and progressive". For this, India would need both "a more or less fixed foundation of principles as well as a dynamic outlook." According to Nehru, Indian civilisation had equipped the nation with the principles required for an enduring culture, but India had yet to develop what the "modern west" possessed, which was a "dynamic outlook".[7]

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5. *National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework*, (NCF) NCERT, 1988, p.1.

6. NCF, pp.4-5.

7. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, first published Signet Press, 1946, pp. 505-506.

How do Hindi educators, who prepare the NCERT Hindi textbooks, perceive their role, within the broad secular - modern nationalism outlined by State Policies? The `Shikshan Sandarshika' volumes suggest guidelines to teachers for teaching the Kishore Bharati texts. In a preface entitled "Bhasha our uska Shikshan" (language and its teaching), the editor lays down perspectives on language teaching, especially the teaching of mother-tongue languages in general, and Hindi in particular. The preface avers that creativity and serious intellectual work is possible only in one's mother tongue. Further, the mother-tongue functions as the "language of culture" ("Sanskriti Bhasha"). Science, according to this logic, can be learnt in any language, but only the mother-tongue can be the language of a student's cultural education. The preface elaborates: "For these reasons, any education system that gives a foreign language greater prominence than the mother-tongue, is fundamentally flawed. In India, this fact needs to be taken to heart.[8]

The study of Hindi as mother-tongue by an extension of this argument, must acquaint Hindi-speaking students with their own culture. But Hindi educators also accord it more weighty responsibilities, as this statement from the same preface shows: "Hindi must bear a very great responsibility in the task of bringing an intellectual renaissance and arousing national consciousness in the country. Every Hindi teacher and student in India bears this very great and

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[8] *Shikshan Sandarshika*, Preface, pp. 6-8.

sacred responsibility (bada our pavitra uttardayitva)", since Hindi is the "primary medium of propagating Ancient Indian culture on a national level in the modern era.[9] The same preface stresses that "pure diction" needs to be enforced in students and that the irregularities of diction" and pronunciation due to the influence of dialects need to be eliminated. Although the need for elementary education in the mother-tongue is stressed, the "dialects" are clearly not perceived as "mother-tongues". It is recognised that "Hindi classrooms have many dialect speakers in it, who have difficulties in learning literary Hindi. It is the duty of Hindi teachers to make them capable of using Khari Boli (standard Hindi)".[10] The ideas about the "mother-tongue" as an authentic medium of disseminating culture can be traced back to anti-colonial nationalism, which according to Partha Chatterjee, created an inner domain of culture (including religion, family and language) over which it had sovereignty, as opposed to the material sphere (of economy,science,etc...) which the colonisers controlled. The bilingual intelligentsia, according to Chatterjee "came to think of its own language as belonging to (the) inner domain of cultural identity..."[11]

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9. ibid., p.8.

10. ibid., pp.8-9.

11. Partha Chatterjee,*The Nation and its Fragments:Colonial and Post-colonial Histories*,OUP,Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta,Madras,1995,first published Princeton University Press,Princeton, New Jersey,1993, p.7.

Secular Modern Nationalism and the Problem of Defining Indian culture:

The Kishore Bharati volumes are anthologies containing poems, short stories and prose essays written by well-known literary figures as well as by the NCERT staff. Kishore Bharti-I carries a description of 'Phoolwalon Ki Sair', a festival whose celebration was once organised by the last mughal rulers, and post-Independence, by various Indian governments (notably those of Nehru and Indira Gandhi).[12] This festival involves processions of Hindus and Muslims marching together through Delhi to Mehrauli, where sheets of flowers are offered at a Sufi dargah and a temple alternately. The prescriptive intent of this lesson is clear from the emphasis on the fact that the festival has enjoyed the patronage of various governments as a symbol of "national integration, Hindu-Muslim unity, and India's proud heritage of composite culture." The festival originated as a thanksgiving by a mughal queen when her son was released from a British prison. All of Delhi moved in procession to Mehrauli to bedeck the dargah, when the king declared that the temple too would be venerated. According to the text, the festival became a symbol of popular protest against the British, and was defiantly celebrated in 1857 at the time of the First War of Independence. Hindu-Muslim unity and anti-colonial nationalism are inextricably linked in this account, and this was achieved apparently because of the wisdom of the king. There is a pressure to assert that Hindu-Muslim unity

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[12]. Shailendra, 'Phoolwalon ki Sair', *Kishore Bharti* vol. I, NCERT, 1987, pp. 37-42.

is a spontaneous nationalist phenomenon. But the depiction of the role of the king and that of the people, hints at the contradictory pressure of communal conflict which requires the intervention of enlightened rulers. The figure of Nehru is crucial to establishing a historical continuity from the last mughal rulers to the Indian government. Nehru, the text recounts, recognised the festival as a symbol of national unity and revived it in 1961. It also narrates how Indira Gandhi converted this festival into a large-scale state pageant to which cultural representatives from various states were invited. This form of `official' cultural nationalism, works as proof of the State's secular credentials as well as a prescriptive signal to its people of cultural forms that may win state approval.

Prescriptive nationalisms which offer specific social and cultural sites for the formation of citizenship, underwrite many of the chapters in this series. In one, titled `Manchaha Kalapani' (the Kalapani of my dreams), a trip to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands takes on overtones of a patriotic pilgrimage rather than a tourist visit.[13] The author narrates how as a child he was fascinated by `Kalapani', where Indian nationalist leaders were imprisoned by the British. Among other places of interest on the islands, the Cellular Jail occupies a central position in the narrative. The prisoners' clothing are sacred icons, and the hangman's block conjures up revulsion for the "barbaric British" and

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[13]. Somdatt Dikshit, `Manchaha Kalapani', *Kishore Bharti I*, pp. 42-49.

reverence for the patriots who "irrigated this land with their blood". A poetic invocation hails the patriots in lofty terms: "O Priests of Independence, we bow to you several hundred times".

The enumeration and description of the tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar is well within the traditions of 19th century colonial ethnography, and represents tribal culture to mark its exoticness and difference from life on the mainland. An account of an Andaman tribe reveals: "They (the Ongis) roast live crabs and eat them and when they see a honeycomb, they climb the tree naked and eat the honey." The tribes of these islands are represented as groups distinct from both the nationalist martyrs who died on the islands and the citizens from the mainland who visit the "Museum for the Human Sciences to find out more about the natives of the islands." The visit to the museum suggests that the tribals are living relics of a past civilisation. However, the islands are accommodated and lauded as a model of national integration, a microcosmic national community which has mastered the national language Hindi, with ease:

"Members of the same family follow different religions. The media of education for the inhabitants of this island are Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Malayalam, English, Nicobari and Urdu. Even in the non-Hindi medium schools, children communicate in Hindi in the break. Although the number of people who originate from the Hindi states are few, it is Hindi which is used as

a link language by these islands. The people here learn Hindi very fast. In the matter of language, these islands certainly lead the way for the whole country."

Mainland Indians are addressed in the chapter on Kalapani, as an undivided nation. The life sketch of the Tamil `Poet-Saint Tiruvalluvar' however works as a literary link to bridge an implied divide between North and South Indian cultures.[14] This lesson which counts the Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar as one among India's many saints who taught people to lead peaceful and fulfilled lives traces similarities between his life and that of the North-Indian poet-saint Kabir. Tiruvalluvar, we are told, asserted that domestic life should not be shunned by saints. He married Vasuki, who was a princess "replete with virtues and beauty, and was a scholar", - the sanskrit phrases used are `pativrata' and `Sarva guna sampanna' which connotes domestic virtues desired in Hindu brides, to be employed in the service of their husbands. Vasuki, we are told, "dedicated herself to serving her husband body and soul, and, since his every order was the word of God, she took pleasure in following them. Several stories about Vasuki's devotion to her husband prove that "If one has an obedient and devoted wife like Vasuki, domestic life is superior (to an ascetic life). Such a life will prove a help rather than a hindrance to worship". The upper caste Hindu feminine ideal connoted by `pativrata' is glorified as a component of India's composite culture. It finds a place within the secular

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[14]. Narendra Vyas, `Sant Kavi Thiruvalluvar', *Kishore Bharti I*, pp. 112-119.

modernity professed by the textbooks, which points towards a problem inherent to the historical engagement of secular-modern nationalism with 'Indian culture'. I will attempt to locate some of these problems, through an examination of the chapter titled "Bharatiyata" (Indianness), which attempts to instil cultural nationalism from a secular perspective.[15]

The author Sheela Dhar defines 'Bharatiyata' as "that remarkable quality which has provided cultural continuity (to the) current of Indian culture that has flowed unabatedly for thousands of years. She lists the diverse people, lands, images that "can all be called Indian and have remained Indian for thousands of years." Such an assertion of the diversity as well as the eternal and natural unity of all Indians carries resonances of similar assertions by Nehru in his Discovery of India. In a section entitled 'The variety and unity of India", Nehru describes the wide range of differences of race, language, region and religion among Indians, but adds that "It is fascinating to find how (all these varied people) have retained their peculiar characteristics for hundreds of years...and have been throughout the ages distinctively Indian".[16] Sheela Dhar emphasises that tolerance towards the 'Videshi'(foreigner) is a fundamental element of 'Bharatiyata'

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15. Sheela Dhar, 'Bhartiyata', *Kishore Bharti II*, pp.24-30.

16. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p.60.

"History is witness that foreigners have repeatedly come to this land to settle, to gain knowledge, to loot or to seize power, the inhabitants of this country did not reject this way of life, but adopted whatever new practices they liked."

This assertion retains a crucial distinction between the original citizens of a retrospectively recognised "Bharat" and aggressive foreigners whose ways of life were assimilated or tolerated.

In keeping with Nehruvian nationalism, the coexistence of an ancient culture with a dynamic modernity is asserted, where "several centuries coexist within today's India....Nuclear power stations and jet airplanes belong to the twentieth century and create a picture of Modern India's golden future. On the other hand most tribals continue to live the same lives as they did centuries ago". The `tribal way of life' figures as proof of India's antiquity, while it is simultaneously placed outside the mainstream of Indian modernity and progress.

Sheela Dhar narrates the historical surrender of the "bloodthirsty dacoits" of the Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, before "a national leader" and suggests that this event, though it occurred in 1972, "sounds like an ancient tale...like the story of the bloodthirsty dacoit Angulimal's surrender before the Buddha". This narrative obscures the struggle of the Chambal dacoits against feudal oppression, and evades naming Vinoba Bhave as well as his own

movement for agrarian reform, and represents their confrontation as a mythological surrender of evil before good, violence before `Ahimsa'. History and politics are effaced in order to project a view of India's cultural continuity.

Gyan Pandey traces such secular reconstructions of `Indian Cultural Heritage', to a liberal nationalist discourse which, since the 1920s, defined itself in opposition to the `Hindu' or `Muslim' communitarian mobilisations which had characterised the early stages of Indian nationalism, and came to be perceived as "communal" and divisive.[17] Figures like Kabir and Akbar were constructed as proof that syncreticism was inherent to the Indian tradition. The fact that Kabir and others mobilised people in confrontation against the existing hierarchical order, especially that of caste, was erased within this new nationalist historiography.[18] Gyan Pandey suggests that this was perhaps inevitable, given its project of demonstrating the "priority of a `secular', `national' loyalty" of India's citizens throughout history, "over any loyalty to religion, caste or race."[19] Nationalism was constructed as "all that was forward looking, progressive and `modern'" while the identities of community, caste, or

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17. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p.247-48.

18. ibid., p. 249.

19. ibid., p.247.

religion became `premodern' or `backward'.[20] The "fundamental, essential unity of India", was demonstrated based on "natural" geographical contours, and a "unity of spirit" that arose without the aid of physical force but out of a culture of tolerance and assimilation.[21] This form of nationalism as exemplified by Nehru, retrospectively recognised an Indian nation, in ancient references to `Bharatvarsha' or `Jambudvipa'.[22] The spirit of nationalism is constructed as timeless, rather than as the result of historical circumstances, and historical human agency and movements. Romila Thapar emphatically claims that "nationalism is a historically specific condition", and that the partisan attempts of the Hindu Right to "take nationalism back" to ancient periods constitute a distortion of history.[23] In its insistence on the idea that India, Indian civilisation and Indian nationalism existed from the dawn of history, secular modern nationalism is unable to ground itself in concepts that are very distinct from Hindu nationalism. Its emphasis on an inclusive tolerance is underwritten by the tacit attribution of this tolerance to the original inhabitants of the ancient nation, towards outsiders. Such a nationalism overlaps with the ideology of the

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20. ibid., p. 241. Pandey remarks that in response to this form of nationalism, even those leaders like Gandhi who retained their belief in the centrality of religion and community, altered their analysis of society and nationalism significantly.

21. ibid., p.247.

22. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p.107.

23. Romila Thapar, `The Perennial Aryans', *Seminar 400*, p.24.

Hindu Right (Hindutva), which according to Gyan Pandey casts Hindus in the role of civilised and tolerant Indian citizens and Muslims as intolerant "barbarians" who are a "grave danger to society and civilisation".[24] In its definition and propagation of cultural nationalism, therefore, secular nationalism, (which has been a central element in the discourse of the Indian state, and which provides the broad ideological framework for the textbooks I am considering), replicates and reinforces the ideas of Hindu nationalism about citizenship, culture and nation.

Patriotism and the Category of the "National" Indian Citizen

This section will examine how ideologies of caste, community and language combine to create representations of citizenship and patriotism. One chapter from the NCERT Hindi textbook for class VIII is particularly revealing about what constitutes normative Indianness within secular ideology. Mahadevi Varma's essay on Rajendra Prasad, recalls her personal memories of "Rajendra Babu", his compact and stocky build, complexion, clothes, his cap, his "Dehati" or "Gramin" (Villager) appearance, and especially his "Dehati" Moustache.[25] The author comments that people often experienced a feeling of deja-vu when they met Rajendra Prasad for the first time, and ventures an explanation. His whole body, she says, epitomised a "common Indian person"

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[24] Gyanendra Pandey,ed., *Hindus and Others:The Question of Identity in India Today*,Viking Books,New delhi,1993, p.2.

[25] Mahadevi Verma, 'Rajendra Babu', *Kishore Bharti II*, pp. 141-149.

('Samanya Bhartiya Jan') - and in his temperament and lifestyle too he represented the common Indian farmer. This representation of Rajendra Prasad as a "typical" Indian citizen effaces the fact that he can typify, at best, a Hindu upper caste male member of the landed class of North India. This essay describes Rajendra Prasad's wife also as a "genuine daughter of the soil, ascetic, simple and motherly.....threading together innumerable relationships". She is also described as a representative of the "Common Indian housewife" (Samanya Bhartiya Grihani) who eats only after having served her husband and family. An uneasy moment in the narrative is when Rajendra Babu hesitantly tells the writer that his wife, in keeping with upper caste taboos, will not eat food touched by others, with the exception of the Brahman cook. Verma mentions that Prasad's wife was married as a child into a zamindar family of Bihar. This indication of Rajendra Prasad's class and caste background, comes just a few hundred words after Rajendra Babu is described as a "typical Indian farmer". The category of "Indian", which is in fact moored in highly specific and restrictive identities is nevertheless meant to be metonymic for all Indians.[26]

Sudhir Chandra has examined the tensions of late 19th century nationalism as articulated in Hindi literature. In the works of the pioneers of

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[26]. Somnath Zutshi discusses how a category of 'Indian' comes to be created, "which is to be metonymic for all Indians despite being based on narrowly restrictive categories", in his article, 'Women, Nation and Outsider in Hindi Cinema', in *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, eds., Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar, Seagull, Calcutta, 1993.

modern Hindi, like Bhartendu Harishchandra, Balkrishna Bhatt, and Pratapnarayan Mishra, he finds the simultaneous advocacy of a pragmatic Hindu- Muslim unity and tolerance towards Muslims, alongside a virulent depiction of the Muslim as the archetypal foreigner and the other of the Indian citizen. In the phrase "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan", which took on the popularity of a nationalist slogan and was coined in a poem by Pratapnarayan Mishra, the Hindi language is identified with the nation "Hindustan" and the religion "Hindu". Several nationalist plays and poems, Chandra finds, ascribed patriotism to Hindu characters, while the invader or foreign oppressor is represented as Muslim or part-Muslim, part-Christian.[27] The patriotic literature within the Kishore Bharti textbooks often replicates this pattern of representation, but a significant exception is the story of Ibrahim Gardi who represents a patriotic Muslim.[28] The story is set in 1761, after the third battle of Panipat, when the Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali defeated the Marathas and captured one of their generals - Ibrahim Gardi. Abdali, playing upon Gardi's Muslim identity, invites him to join his army and tempts him with high posts. Gardi however remains loyal to his king and Abdali eventually tortures and kills him. The story begins significantly with Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Awadh, who fought for the victorious Abdali against the Marathas. This battle

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27. Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p.125.

28. Vrindavanlal Varma, "Ibrahim Gardi", *Kishore Bharti - III*, pp. 67-72.

was therefore, clearly, not an Indian nationalist struggle against an Afghan assault. But, by retrospectively recognising an 'Indian nation', the story ascribes the identities of "patriot" to Gardi, "invader" to Abdali and "traitor" to Shuja-ud-daulah. The NCERT teacher's guide, instructs teachers to direct the students' attention towards the traits of the various characters. Abdali is described as "cruel, heartless, fanatic, intolerant, inhuman, and violent". In contrast, Gardi is "fearless, with an unbreakable loyalty to the country, master, respectful of all religions while being truly faithful to his own, free of linguistic bias, and dutiful". The teacher's guide also describes Shuja as a "coward" and a "traitor", quoting Ibrahim Gardi's own statement as being apt for Shuja: " He who betrays his nation, who aids the foreigners who destroy his nation, cannot be a Muslim."[29] Muslim figures in such narratives must prove their citizenship and commitment to secularism. Shuja is a Muslim who is insufficiently secularised, and it is implied that he supports Abdali out of religious solidarity. Abdali is represented as a fanatic Muslim, while Gardi is secular and nationalist inspite of his Muslim identity. It is significant that these textbooks do not at any point represent Hindu fanaticism or casteism. In other chapters an overwhelming number of Indian patriots are represented as Hindu male protectors of the nation which is often depicted as a mother. The primary idiom of patriotism or "Desh-Prem" is that of martial courage. Ranajit Guha

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[29]. *Shikshan Sandarshika* - III, pp.83-89.

locates the construction of Indianness in terms of Hindu martial valour, in the attempts of 19th century nationalists to challenge as well as appropriate the Orientalist categories of `martial' and `non-martial races'. Nationalist historiography constructed a history of Kshatriya/ Hindu valour, exemplified by the Rajputs in order to wipe out the "kalamka" or black mark that foreign historians had smeared on the reputation of Hindus.[30] Even non-violent nationalism is cast in the vocabulary of martial valour, with a chapter on Gandhi titled "Ahimsak Senapati" (Non-violent commander).[31] The only female patriot to figure in these textbooks is the Rani of Jhansi celebrated as "Mardani" (manly) in Subhadrakumari Chauhan's famous poem, `Jhansi ki Rani'.[32] Chandrashekhar Azad is represented as a revolutionary and a "great warrior" who laid down his life for "Mother India" while a poem on Subhash Bose is titled "Khooni Hastakshar" (Bloody Signature).[33] As the title suggests, Bose demands that blood be sacrificed for `Mother India' in return for independence.

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30. Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A 19th Century Agenda and its Implications*, S.G. Deuskar Lectures on Indian History, 1987, Published for the Center for Studies in Social Sciences by K.P. Bagchi & Co, Calcutta, New Delhi, 1988. p.58.

31. Anu Bandopadhyaya, `Ahimsak Senapati', *Kishore Bharti - II*, pp.53-63

32. Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, `Jhansi ki Rani', *Kishore Bharti - I*, pp. 74-84.

33. Manmathnath Gupta, `Chandrashekhar Azad', *Kishore Bharti - I*, pp. 34-41.

In the play "Vijay Parv" (Festival of Victory), a boy Balkaran bravely challenges Timur, who attacks and loots his village.[34] The teachers' guide suggests that teachers should refer to "Vijay Parv" while teaching "Ibrahim Gardi". The Hindu male patriot, Balkaran, uses a nationalist idiom derived from both Sanskrit and Hindu imagery as he asks his mother to anoint his head with "Raktchandan" (red sandalwood, connoting blood) to symbolise his readiness to die for his nation. The play distinguishes between the `Hindu gramin' (Hindu villager) and a solitary `Mussalman gramin' (Muslim villager) who addresses Balkaran's mother as bahen(sister), as he helps her escape.

Another story, "Lal Angaron Ki Muskan" (The Smile of Red Embers) in the same volume, is also recommended as a reference while teaching "Ibrahim Gardi".[35] A Muslim soldier from the court of Allauddin Khilji, the 14th century ruler of Delhi, seeks asylum in the Court of the Rajput King Hamir of Ranthambore. Khilji has ordered his death for some minor offence, and all other kings have refused him asylum for fear of incurring the wrath of the powerful king. To protect the refugee, Hamir fights Khilji, and the people of Ranthambore who are defeated, happily sacrifice themselves for a principle.

In this story, the antagonist Khilji is not an outsider but the king of Delhi. The qualities and principles extolled by the story are articulated in a

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34. Ramkumar Varma, `Vijay Parv', *Kishore Bharti - II*, pp.95-115.

35. Kanhaiyalal Mishra, 'Prabhakar', 'Lal Angaron ki Muskan', Ramkumar Varma. `Vijay Parv', *Kishore Bharti II*, pp. 95-115.

Hindu idiom. Hamir, tolerant towards the Muslim victim of Khilji's tyranny, promises him asylum, asserting that to give asylum is the "dharma" of his 'jati' (which connotes race as well as caste).

The rite of "jauhar" to which the title of this story refers, is described ceremoniously: "The men prepare a huge pyre. The women perform puja, they sing songs of worship and meet their husbands and touch their feet". The description ascribes bridal anticipation to the women rather than any hint of impending pain: "Today they decked themselves up in the best manner, since they had to go on their life's most important journey and they walked so eagerly towards their pyre, as though they were brides walking to their chariots after choosing a groom". "Jauhar" here becomes the feminine counterpart of masculine valour in battle, as a voluntary act which is the most glorious index of the martial tradition of the Rajputs. The fact that it is performed in the face of Khilji's aggression, reinforces stereotypes of brave and chaste Hindu women, principled Rajput men and cruel and irrational Muslim rulers.

The Kishore Bharti textbooks are primarily intended to teach the Hindi language and reinforce the identification of language with community. In Vijay Parv it is pointed out that Timur's soldiers use Arabic - Persian words and Hindi translations are provided for these. The preface to the teaching guides repeatedly stresses the need to enforce the use of standardised Khari Boli Hindi while words of Persian or Arabic derivation are referred to as "videshi" or

foreign, and these include commonly used words such as "shikari" (hunter), "Khoon" (blood) and "Zindagi" (life).[36] Students are instructed to find `Hindi' synonyms for such words, while none are provided for difficult Sanskrit words, implying that standard Hindi is the equivalent of Sanskritised Hindi.

In the cultural nationalism articulated by secular ideology of the textbooks, normative citizenship and patriotism are the prerogative of Hindu male members of upper castes and classes. Secular - modern ideology however is also concerned with inculcating a "scientific temper" and with constructing a modern nation, as the next section will elaborate.

Socialism, Modernity and the Scientific Temper:

Explaining why Nehru rather than Gandhi has proved to be a more enduring and useful myth for the Indian State, Sudipta Kaviraj remarks that "a bourgeois State requires for its legitimation images of an encouraging future, not nostalgia for the past, images that would help confuse the present with socialism, not with feudalism." [37]

This chapter has uptil now discussed how the Kishore Bharti textbooks in keeping with Nehruvian nationalism construct an ancient Indian past and a continuous cultural tradition. The encouraging future is represented in these

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[36]. *Shikshan Sandarshika II*, p.35.

[37]. Sudipta Kaviraj, `Apparent Paradoxes of Jawaharlal Nehru-V', *Mainstream*, December 13, 1980, pp. 25-31.

texts as an egalitarian and modern society which can be achieved by the intervention of a benign state. As HRD minister in 1986, P.V.Narasimha Rao prescribed the function that education should perform in "nation-building, economic reconstruction and social transformation....to tackle our population problem, eradicate ignorance, disease, poverty and fatalism."[38]

This statement indicates how the state conceives of education in starkly functional terms as a mouthpiece for government policies. The Kishore Bharti series, in keeping with such prescriptions, abounds in chapters prepared by NCERT staff, extolling the initiatives and policies of `Bharat Sarkar' (the Indian government).

Chapters on the indigenous space station in Shriharikota and the copper mines in M.P, are crammed with facts about the scientific and technological achievements of the Indian government.[39] The agenda of inculcating a `scientific temper' ties up with the cultural project of language teaching, and this agenda is exemplified in the biographical sketch of the scientist Vikram Sarabhai.[40] Sarabhai emerges as one of "modern India's topmost scientists,dedicated to India's technological progress," who "identified the

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38. P.V. Narasimha Rao, *Foreword to School Education in India: Present Status and Future Needs,* eds., P.L. Malhotra et al., NCERT, New Delhi, 1986, pp. vi-vii.

39. Gunakar Mule, `Shriharikota', *Kishore Bharti II,* pp. 72-80, and Prabhakar Dwivedi, `Tambe ki Khuli Khadan Mein', *Kishore Bharti I,* pp. 155-166.

40. Niranjan Kumar Singh, `Vikram Sarabhai', *Kishore Bharti II,* p. 156.

teaching of science with human values and ethics... i.e. science teaching should develop in every individual the strength to take decisions on the basis of logic and rationality." Other chapters aiming to link rationality with ethics carry out state-approved campaigns against overpopulation, poverty and discrimination against girl-children.

The Shikshan Sandarshika, comments on the story `Ladki'(Girl), that "our families, especially rural families", discriminate against girls.[41] The male narrator from the city visits his nephew's family in the village. Because of his urban modern sensibilities, he treats his nephew's son and daughter as equal, and is shocked, angry and compassionate to discover that the girl receives stepmotherly treatment, which she accepts uncomplainingly as her lot, saying "After all, I'm a girl". It is only the rational, humane urban man who can question injustice, which is located in the semi-modern, superstitious and irrational village. The worker in the poem titled "Mazdoor" (worker) is similarly powerless to effect change, but merely laments his lot.[42] He fatalistically relinquishes hopes of prosperity as a condition not suited to his `station': "I am a worker, what do I have to do with the dwellings of the gods?" His single question, "But don't others have a responsibility towards me"?

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41. Ramdarsh Mishra, `Ladki', *Kishore Bharti II*, pp. 17-23.

42. Devraj Dinesh, `Mazdoor', *Kishore Bharti II*, pp. 123-125.

invokes the welfarist hand-outs of a benevolent employer or State, but is unanswered.

The story "Ek Doona Do, Do Doona Char", uses a grandmother's tale to discuss the issues of over-population.[43] A grandmother tells her 16 grandchildren about her stay in Canada which she describes as a land of plenty, where milk and milk products are easily and cheaply available. One disbelieving child, asks how so much can be produced when large parts of Canada are snowed over, or are jungles or marshes. In contrast, he stresses, India's natural resources have made it possible for the government to transform the country, and set up dams, tubewells, electricity, railways, hospitals and colleges. The Grandmother agrees, but replies, "Population multiplies rapidly.and this is the cause of our country's backwardness inspite of being the most beautiful and rich land". The contrast between the natural productivity of India and the relative unproductivity of Canada, suggests that India's poverty is not ineradicable and can be attributed to the `over-productivity' of her citizens. The child's informed description of the efforts of the Indian State in fact conjures up a self-implicating contrast between a responsible State whose efforts are thwarted by its irresponsible people.

The implication of Hindi literature in dominant constructions of the Indian nation by the Hindu Right has been discussed. However, Hindi

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43. Turshanpal Pathak, `Ek Doona Do: Do Doona Char', *Kishore Bharti I*, pp. 71-76.

literature has also developed models of nationalism that challenge such constructions. The Kishore Bharti textbooks do include some work of writers belonging to the Progressive Writers' Movement which produced some of the most prominent literary figures like Premchand. But as we have seen above, the pieces chosen are idealist romanticisations of poverty and suffering, and suggest that these can be removed with the interventions of an egalitarian state.

The biographical sketch of Premchand in Kishore Bharti III by Nagarjun, a prominent Progressive writer in Hindi and Maithili, does not discuss the tensions between the representations of nation and class in Premchand's work; his socialist and "revolutionary" concerns are seen as identical with "nationalist" ones.[44] It traces Premchand's personal poverty, his transition from writing romances to "nationalist and revolutionary" writing, his participation in the freedom movement and his determined opposition to "any form of oppression", and his "eagerness to free Mother India from her hundred chains", so that the writing is seen as an extension of the writer's personal politics. Premchand's second marriage also works to reinforce his revolutionary credentials: he married a child widow. He is condoned for the breakdown of his first marriage since according to Nagarjun, "it was arranged by his stepmother....and the girl was not only ugly and older than him, but also haughty and foolish. She fought with her husband and with his stepmother as

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44. Nagarjun, 'Premchand', *Kishore Bharti III*, pp. 143-152.

well." This endorsement of conservative sexual codes indicates the limitations of Nagarjun's conceptions of oppression and revolutionary freedom, and consequently the exclusivity of his imagining of the nation.

Premchand's short story `Pariksha' (The Test), included in Kishore Bharti I, is not one of Premchand's better known realist or reformist works.[45] The story involves a wise old Diwan (minister) of a kingdom, and his search for a successor who is "generous, sensitive, and brave". All aspirants for the post are hypocritical and greedy, but one of them is willing to help a poor farmer (the Diwan in disguise) whose bullock-cart is stuck in the mud. This act proves that he is capable of compassion and "will never oppress the poor"; and he is therefore given the post. The choice of this story from Premchand's repertoire, legitimises the idea that poverty can be alleviated by state policy rather than by popular struggles. In these narratives of modern nation, "woman" and "workers" do not figure as representative Indians, but as aberrant remainders of injustices which the progressive nation state must fight. Caste or casteism, another injustice which the nation-state has pledged to fight, finds no representation whatsoever.

The textbooks I have considered are prepared by NCERT staff; most of the lessons have been written by members of the staff who have been trained within University Hindi Departments to teach the Hindi language. In

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[45]. Premchand, `Pariksha', *Kishore Bharti I*, pp.144-151.

consonance with the directives of the NCERT, these lessons aim to propagate a homogenising secular cultural nationalism that either effaces existing socio-economic and sexual hierarchies or attributes them to rural, backward India. This nationalism and secularism itself has a complex history,and its discourse has historically shared much with the essentialist Hindu nationalism against which it defined itself. Hindi language teaching also carries strong traces of its own disciplinary history, and privileges a Sankritised Hindi as the national language, implicitly the language of Hindus, as opposed to Urdu, the language of `foreign' origin, and belonging to `foreigners'. Hindi literature, too, along with other literatures, has embodied many of the contradictions of secular nationalism and its ambiguous relation to Hindu nationalism. The textbooks intended to teach literature rather than language, allow for more marked contests between different discourses of nationalism which will be discussed in the third chapter.

CHAPTER - III

Anthologies of Literature: Evasions and Accommodations

The Hindi textbooks published by the NCERT for secondary school (Std. IX-XII) are literary anthologies of prose and poetry.[1] These textbooks are designed to "inculcate good qualities in students and create a sense of pride in their language, literature and culture" by introducing them to Hindi literature.[2] Unlike the Kishore Bharti texts, these contain literary selections only, rather than material written by NCERT staff. In the secondary school anthologies, therefore, the concepts of `nation' and `culture' emerge through the construction of literary categories (literary history, authors, periods, movements and themes). This chapter will examine how literary histories and literary movements in Hindi have engaged

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1. The textbooks examined in this chapter are:
Swati I, Poetry Textbook, std IX, Course A, eds., Anil Vidyalankar, Shashikumar Sharma, Ramjanm Sharma and Anirudh Rai, NCERT, 1989.
Swati II, Poetry Textbook, std X, Course A, ed. A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT 1990.
Niharika I, Poetry Textbook, std XI, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1989.
Niharika II, Poetry Textbook, std XII, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1990
Parag I, Prose Textbook, std IX, course A, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1989
Parag II, Prose Textbook, std X, Course A, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1990.
Pallav I, Prose Textbook, std XI, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1989.
Pallav II, Prose Textbook, std XII, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1990.
Praval I& II, Alternate Textbook, std XI& XII, eds., A. Vidyalankar et al, NCERT, 1990.Except where indicated otherwise,all translations from Hindi are mine.

2. P.L. Malhotra, Director, NCERT, Preface to the *Parag, Pallav and Praval* vols., NCERT, New Delhi, 1989-90.

variously with the question of defining India and Indian culture, and how literature textbooks represent and accommodate these contesting definitions.

Implicating literary history: the formation of a discipline:

Hindi literature as a discipline was consolidated and shaped within the Hindi departments established at Banaras Hindu University and Allahabad University, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its disciplinary formation had close links with Hindu revivalist cultural nationalism. *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*, the history of Hindi literature written by Acharya Ramchandra Shukla and published by the Nagari Pracharini Sabha in 1929, consolidated the ideology of India as a country of and for Hindus, and Sanskritised Hindi as the language of its cultural renaissance.[3] This authoritative history continues to the one of the most powerful influences on subsequent criticism as well as on most literary anthologies, and therefore its principles and politics are worth examining closely.

Shukla's *Itihas* is no mere chronological account; it is impelled by a missionary zeal to provide Hindi with a literary and linguistic lineage purified of the 'foreign' influence of Urdu. He persuasively performs the formidable task of recasting the language so as to dissociate it from its most immediate history.

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[3]. Ramchandra Shukla, '*Hindi Sahitya ka Itihaas*', (A History of Hindi Literature), 1929, rev. ed. 1940, 16th reprint, Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Samvat, 2025, i.e., Varanasi 1967.

Describing early prose writing in Khari Boli, Shukla argues that "Muslims began filling it with a storehouse of foreign sentiments", giving rise to the "unnatural form (of Khari Boli) called Urdu", while its "genuine natural form" was used by Hindu pandits in their "cultured speech". He claims that even the English, though they were foreigners, "realized that what was called Urdu was neither the natural language of the country, nor was its literature the country's literature, in which the people's sentiments and ideas were preserved".[4] Shukla disapproves of the writing of Raja Shiv Prasad who had recommended the use of "Persian words which have become our household words", instead of replacing these with Sanskrit words. Shukla endorses instead, the view of Raja Lakshman Singh that "Hindi and Urdu are two completely separate languages; Hindi is spoken by the Hindus of this country and Urdu is spoken by the Muslims here and the Hindus with a Persian education". Shukla consolidates this distinction by grounding it in a homogenous national community, with a unified cultural tradition. Raja Shiv Prasad's language is deemed unsuitable on the grounds that:

> *"Any country's literature is connected to the cultural tradition of that country...to reject the use of Sanskrit words which had been in use for thousands of years, and to swallow a foreign language instead was against the nature of the country".*[5]

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[4]. Shukla, *Itihas*, p.297.

[5]. ibid., pp. 240-41.

Shivdan Singh Chauhan comments on the exclusions that have resulted from this deliberate and forced distancing of the Hindi and Urdu literary traditions:

> *"The Farsi-based Urdu style of Khari Boli...has not even been considered Indian. (Hindi Literary history has excluded)...several writers of this Urdu style - Wali (1674), Mir (1709-1809), Nazir(1740-1830) and others had established an impressive poetic tradition and a distinct prose style even before the great poet Bhartendu Harischandra".*[6]

Shukla, however argues that "the language of Hindi prose was in trouble due to Urdu", and credits Bhartendu with developing a "purified and sophisticated style" which resolved the debate between the proposals of Raja Shiv Prasad and Raja Lakshman Singh.[7] Shukla identifies Bhartendu and his contemporaries with nationalist resurgence and a commitment to social reform and coins the term `Lok-hit' (People's Welfare) as a criterion for literary merit. This concept continues to be relevant for various streams of Hindi literary criticism.[8]

The authoritative periodization undertaken in Shukla's *Itihas* has been widely adopted by subsequent historians. Itihas divides Hindi literary history into four periods; the Veergatha Period (950-1318 A.D.), The Bhakti Period (1318-1643 A.D.), the Reeti Period (1643-1850 A.D.) and the Adhunik or Modern

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6. Shivdan Singh Chauhan, *Hindi Sahitya ke Assi Varsh*, Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1954, pp. 8-9.

7. Shukla, *Itihas*, pp. 247-48.

8. Shukla, *Itihas*, pp. 75-76.

Period (1850-). Shukla characterizes and analyses literary periods on the assumption that Hindu/Indian civilization has suffered repeated foreign invasions and foreign rule, and the course of India's cultural history has been defined by reactions against these foreign influences. He characterizes the emergence of Hindi literature as a time when the primary literary creations were `Veergathas' or ballads celebrating Hindu warrior kings who resisted Muslim invaders. The Bhakti movement, he claims, took place because, `Muslim rule' having consolidated itself, "the hearts of the Hindu people had no time for pride or enthusiasm. For a race that was despondent about its lost manhood, there was no other path but to contemplate the strength and compassion of God".[9] Dr. Namvar Singh points out that this argument was a communal one employed by colonial historiographers.[10]

A close examination reveals the evasive strategies employed by the NCERT anthologies in dealing with the Bhakti period and the critical debates surrounding it. The preface to *Swati-II*, an anthology of poetry for Std. X, introduces the Bhakti period with the assertion: "The Islamic invaders had a deep impact on people's lives. In these circumstances an Indian current of thought had a chance to develop".[11] This statement is ambiguous; its characterization of Bhakti as an `Indian current' could mean that it was a Hindu response to the Islamic

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[9]. *Itihas*, pp. 17-18.

[10]. Namvar Singh, *Doosri Parampara ki Khoj*, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1983, p. 71.

[11]. Preface to *Swati II*, p.ix.

invasion, or that it was a product of the intermingling of Islamic and indigenous traditions. In either case, it amounts to endorsing Shukla's position, rather than the powerfully articulated critiques of this position by critics like Hazari Prasad Dwivedi who characterises Bhakti as a movement against the hierarchies of the existing caste order.

Dwivedi argues that such a movement would have taken place even if no `Islamic invasion' had occurred, whereas Shukla accused the `Nirgun Bhakti' poets (Kabir and others who worshipped an attributeless God) of a "concealed disrespect for Lokdharm" which might "destroy the propriety (maryada)" of society.[12] Dwivedi defines "Lokdharm" as the oppositional ideology of the disempowered classes and castes, and therefore argues that Kabir is its best representative.[13] Kabir, in Shukla's assessment, is deviant and dangerous, while Tulsidas is the best representative of "Bhartiya Janata" (the Indian people) and their values. Shukla approves of Tulsi, who "showed the beauty of familiar social duties" and upheld "Lokdharm", which for Shukla was, as Dr.Namvar Singh argues, equivalent to the "Varnashram Dharm" (the varna system).[14]

The preface to *Swati-II* accommodates critics of Shukla from the Progressive tradition, and acknowledges that the Bhakti poets "opposed distorted

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[12]. *Itihas*, pp. 75-76.

[13]. Namvar Singh, *Doosri Parampara ki Khoj*, p.71.

[14]. ibid., p.79.

practices and superstitions", as well as "idol worship, Roza, Namaz and polytheism", but makes no mention of the opposition to caste oppression. It also endorses the caste and gender hierarchies enshrined in Tulsidas' *Ramcharitamanas*, holding that this work "throws light on the ideal relations between teacher and pupil, parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters".[15] The thematic classification by the *Swati* textbooks is also revealing: Kabir and Tulsi are both classified as "Bhakti" poets, but only selections from Tulsi are selected under the category "Jeevan Darshan" (Philosophy for life). Kabir may be a canonical poet of the Bhakti period, but not one whose oppositional philosophy has contemporary relevance. One of the prose anthologies, *Praval-II*, includes a commentary by Kubernath Rai on Kabir's views on language - another contentious issue for critics.[16] The commentary, "Bhasha Behta Neer" (Language is flowing water) alludes to the famous song sung by Kabir: "Sanskrit Bhasha Koop Jal, Par Bhasha Behta Neer" (Susie Tharu translates this as "Sanskrit is the stagnant water of the Lord's private well, the spoken language is the rippling water of the running stream"). Susie Tharu remarks that Kabir and his contemporaries had challenged the literary and religious hold of Sanskrit and used the languages spoken by the people for

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[15]. Preface to *Swati II*, pp. ix-xi.

[16]. Kubernath Rai, 'Bhasha Behta Neer', *Praval II*, pp. 41-50.

philosophical discourse and poetic composition.[17] Whereas Shukla disapproved of Kabir's unlearned "Khichdi" (mixture of several dialects) which he deemed unfit for poetry, Dwivedi considers him to be a master ironist. Kubernath Rai claims that Kabir had "no sense of history" and that his observation about Sanskrit was merely "mud-slinging directed at the priest class of which Sanskrit was a symbol". Rai then devotes over two pages to arguing that Sanskrit, far from being "well-water", is in fact the foundation of our culture, due to which "our identity is intact while the civilizations of Greece, Rome and Mesopotamia have been wiped out". Rai concurs with Kabir's injunction that Hindi should be assimilative but warns against "ill-intentioned people who interpret it to suggest that it should become rootless", thereby locating the roots of Hindi in Sanskrit alone. The figure of Kabir has been established by secular historiographers as well as the Progressives as part of mainstream cultural tradition, and the anthologies attempt to incorporate him within Hindi literary history without challenging the critical legacy represented by Shukla.

Patriotism, Lok-hit and the Progressive Writers' Movement:

The anthologies of poetry (*Swati I* and II and *Niharika I* and II) are organized thematically rather than chronologically. These themes include `Nature',

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[17]. Susie Tharu, `The Arrangement of an Alliance: English and the Making of Indian Literatures', *Rethinking English*, ed. Svati Joshi, OUP, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1994, p. 164.

`Philosophy of life', `Bhakti' `Love and Beauty', as well as `Patriotism', `Valour', and `Enthusiasm and Self-Confidence'.

The preface to *Swati-I* describes the capacity of poetry to "generate good qualities like love for humanity, love for the country, sacrifices" and to "make the mind tender, liberal and sensitive". Poetry is said to make a deeper and more lasting impression on young minds and is therefore the preferred medium for inspirational works equating "Desh Prem" (Patriotism) with martial courage and martyrdom.[18] All the four poems under `Desh Prem', included in Swati-I, employ an exaggeratedly sanskritised vocabulary to demand sacrifices for the nation. `Swadesh Prem' by Ram Naresh Tripathi uses `Divakar' and `Nishakar' instead of `suraj'(sun) and `chand'(moon). Makhanlal Chaturvedi's poem `Virvarati' insists on the similarity between revolutionary and Gandhian nationalists, who are brave warriors "whose every pore is filled with mother's milk". The poem by Ramanand Doshi, titled `Tum Hamari Chotiyon ki Barf ko Yon mat kuredo' (do not thus scrape at the snow on our peaks), uses Puranic images to warn those who would attack India's Himalayan borders:

"We have performed the Lasya and the Tandav (dances of death), we belong to the race of Mira and Shiva who drank poison and lived;

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[18]. Preface to *Swati I*, p. VIII.

consider this snow to be mother's milk on sandalwood or kesar; this is our country's dust and we will die for it."[19]

Patriotism is inflected very differently by the writing that belongs to or is inspired by the Progressive Movements. Such writing equates nationalism with `Lok-hit' a genuine concern for the people; however, this tradition defines this concept in a very different way from Shukla. In an address delivered at the inauguration of the All India Progressive Writers' Conference, Premchand defined the manifesto of the movement as follows:

> *It is the duty of literature to champion and advocate the cause of whoever may be oppressed, exploited and deprived - whether it is an individual or a community.... (literature must) render more valuable service to our society... (and must be weighed) on the scales of utility."* [20]

Nationalism continued to remain a concern for Progressive Writing, for the strand of `Nai Kavita' or `New Poetry' inspired by Progressivism, as well as for the progressive tradition of criticism. Dr. Namvar Singh argues that it was socialism and social concerns which constituted "true nationalism " for the Progressive poets.

Their impulse towards realism makes such poets describe their own villages in loving detail, and this constitutes true nationalism, Namvar Singh

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[19]. Ramnaresh Tripathi, `Swadesh Prem', Makhanlal Chaturvedi, `Virrati', and Ramanand Doshi, `Tum Hamari Chotiyon ki Barf ko yun mat Kuredo', *Swati I*, pp.1-6.

[20]. Premchand, `Sahitya ka Uddeshya', *Kucch Vichar*, Allahabad, Saraswati Press, 1973,trans.Harish Trivedi in *Rethinking English*,p.197.

suggests, and feelings of solidarity with Indians from other regions, as well as inhabitants of Latin America, Africa, and so on.[21]

Progressivism and Modernism were two divergent and opposed tendencies, but there were significant overlaps between both, and the Progressive tradition remains a powerful strand within Hindi writing. Harish Trivedi points out that of the seven modernist poets published in Agyeya's *Tara Saptaka* (an anthology which inaugurated modernism in Hindi), as many as five declared themselves in their prefatory statements to be Marxists or Communists.[22] One of these was Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, who equates the "modern outlook" with "the outlook of the people" (Janta Ka Drishtikon), which is inspired by "contemporary reality" rather than "the fraudulent slogan" of "Bhartiya Sanskriti".[23]

Progressive writers are part of the literary mainstream and are therefore represented in the NCERT anthologies, even though their work interrupts the celebrations of nation with questions of class. The only two poems included in *Swati-II* under "Desh Prem" written by Progressive writers, display the "suspicion and ambivalence towards freedom" which, according to Alok Rai, marks

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[21]. Namvar Singh, *Adhunik Sahitya ki Pravrittiyan*, Lokbharati Prakashan, Allahabad, 1995, pp. 94-95.

[22]. Harish Trivedi, 'Reading English, Writing Hindi: English Literature and Indian Creative Writing', *Rethinking English*, ed. Svati Joshi, New Delhi, 1994, p. 197.

[23]. Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, 'Adhunik Kavya ki Chintajanak Sthiti', *Muktibodh Rachanavali*, vol 5, ed., Nemichandra Jain, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, Patna, 1980.

progressive works that engage with the theme of Independence.[24] Girija Kumar Mathur's poem `Peharuey Savdhan Rehna' (Guardsman, Be Watchful) is a measured and contingent celebration of the moment of Independence, warning that "the enemy has moved away, but his shadows remain" and that independence "is only the first gem culled from the ferment among the people".[25] Freedom from colonial rule is represented as a result of an ongoing movement against all forms of oppression. The rhythm of the poem conveys caution and alertness. Another poem, `Paittrik Sampatti' or `Paternal Inheritance' expresses the idea, widespread within the left, that the hopes raised by independence were betrayed by the national leadership.[26] D.D. Kosambi, wrote in 1957 of the "rapid disillusionment at promises unfulfilled.. The inevitable mass protest against hunger, the ultimate India reality".[27] The Second Party Congress of the Communist Party of India (CPI) declared in 1948, "Yeh azadi jhootha hai" (This freedom is false). Aggrawal's poem lists, with heavy irony, the `paternal inheritance' that a poor farmer has inherited from his dead father - the debris of a house, a broken cot, a few feet of barren earth, debt, termites and hunger. The poem ends by asking

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[24]. Alok Rai, `The Trauma of Independance: Some Aspects of Progressive Hindi Literature, 1945-47', *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, no.6, January to March, 1984, pp. 32-33.

[25]. Girijakumar Mathur, `Peharuey Savdhan Rehna', *Niharika I*, pp.20-21.

[26]. Kedarnath Agrawal, `Paittrik Sampatti', *Niharika I*, p.39.

[27]. D.D Kosambi, `On the Class Structure in India', in *Exasperating Essays*, 1957,People's Publishing House, p.30.

"what can he know of freedom? What can he know of the matters of a free nation?"

Mathur and Aggrawal are exceptions in these anthologies. Most often, the concepts of `Lok-hit' or `Lok-Mangal' are defined in ways that conflate the nation-state with a socialist one. The concept of an identifiable `popular will' is useful for the bourgeois nation-state which claims to represent this popular will. The anthologies of prose contain several instances of this kind. Kanhiyalal Mishra `Prabhakar' in an essay titled `Lok Mangal', anthologised in *Praval-I*, defines `Lok' as "mute collective humanity" that has no language, only feelings; the person who can give expression to these feelings is their leader.[28] This mass of people, or `Lok' possesses "innate knowledge" and will be led by any leader full of valour and sacrifice, who can assure them of a peaceful environment". He concludes that the welfare of the people equals the welfare of the nation. Instead of representing collectives struggling against oppression, `Lok' is defined as a passive and homogenous mass, whose aspirations can be represented by an elected leader. Leaders chosen by the "innate knowledge" of the people can assume the role which movements had performed.

In his critical essay, `Towards a New Culture', in *Pallav-II*, Ramvriksh Benipuri announces that "Hindustan is independent",and a new culture must be developed, based, like the new economy and society,on "freedom, equality and

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[28]. Kanhaiyalal Mishra `Prabhakar', `Lokmangal', *Praval I*. pp.0-19.

humanity.... free of exploitation". Deriving from the agenda of Progressivism, he insists that writes and artists must correctly depict "oppressed people."[29] The nation-state and its five-year plans are however considered capable creating a people's society; socialist ideas function here as part of a populist state sponsored nationalism.

If Prabhakar and Benipuri assume that the national governments would oversee `people's welfare', a range of satirical works castigate the ruling orders for relinquishing their duty towards the people. In the essay titled `Jeep par savar Illiyan' (Parasites atop a jeep), Sharad Joshi compares urban administrators to parasites who "feed off crops".[30] *Parag-I* includes a famous piece by Harishankar Parsai, called `Bheden aur Bhediye' (Lambs and Wolves). Parsai satirises India's democratic system, where Indian citizens, like innocent lambs, are fooled into voting for hypocritical leaders, represented by involves, whose election campaigns are conducted by writes, journalists and godmen, in the shape of hyenas. Satire directed at corrupt politicians, the urban bureaucracy or local feudal powers, has been hugely successful and popular as for instance the novel by Shrilal Shukla, *Raag Darbari*. [31] But these works tend to represent oppression as endemic to the system and therefore virtually unchangeable. *Pallav-I* includes a play by Vishnu

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[29]. Ramvriksh Benipuri, `Nayi Sanskriti ki Or', *Pallav II*, pp.55-61.

[30]. Sharad Joshi, `Jeep Par Savar Illiyan', *Pallav II*, pp.71-78.

[31]. Shrilal Shukla, *Raag Darbari*, 1968.

Prabhakar, titled `Seema-Rekha' or `Border line', which is much more didactic in its critique of the ruling orders.[32] A family of four brothers and their wives microcosmically represents the nation; the minister, the police chief and the businessmen represent the ruling classes that "have gone out of hand". The fourth brother and his wife represent "the citizens of free India, of a free nation; human beings", and they remind those in power that "in a democracy there are no rulers, there are only those who serve". The martyrdom of the fourth brother brings the others to their senses and "restores a balance". The moral order stands restored, where the rulers are forced by the conscience keepers from within their own class, to recognize their responsibilities to the ruled, and regain humility, patriotism and a commitment to the democratic ethic.

`Bharatiya Sanskriti' as a literary theme:

In the anthologies of poetry,"Desh Prem" is a distinct literary theme,and in the prose selections as well, the NCERT anthologies identify "Bharatiya Sanskriti" (Indian Culture) and "Bharatiyata" as a specifically literary concern by selecting, from the repertoire of an author's works, those writings that discuss this theme.

Writers with different literary and political concerns have viewed the theme of "indianness" variously,depending on the nature of their engagements with cultural traditions.In an article written in 1951 discussing the "Worrying Condition of

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[32]. Vishnu Prabhakar, `Seema Rekha', *Pallav I*, pp.64-82.

Modern Poetry",Muktibodh recognises that `New Poetry' which inherited the legacy of both modernism as well as progressivism, was at the cross-roads. At this juncture,he identifies the attempts to introduce the theme of `bhartiya Sanskriti' as an ideological attack on the progressive tradition:

> *"If Bhartiya Sanskriti means forming a people's culture on the basis of their own experiences and issues, then such a slogan can never be wrong.. If it teaches hungry people to be disciplined while upper classes oppress them, then a very big fraud is being perpetrated in the name of `Bharatiya Sanskriti'... It is a slogan/ideological weapon from the reactionary camp and writers of the lower middle classes should reject it".*[33]

Progressive writing however is not free from essentialisations and simplifications in its own engagements with cultural tradition. Muktibodh's views on `Bharatiya Sanskriti' and its relevance or otherwise for modern poetry as well as for modern reality, are not represented by the anthologies. As representative of the progressive tradition, the textbooks select Dr. Ramvilas Sharma. A prolific critic who is self-proclaimedly marxist, Ramvilas Sharma, however, actively constructs a historically flawed homogenous tradition of culture and Hindi literature. *Praval-II* includes an essay by Ramvilas Sharma, titled "Kavi : Prajapati" (Poet:Creator).[34] The editor's introductory note to the essay summarises Sharma's manifesto: "Commitment to society is the touchstone of literature". Sharma asserts that literature is committed to changing, not reflecting society. The

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[33]. Muktibodh, pp. 283-84.

[34]. Ramvilas Sharma, `Kavi:Prajapati', *Praval II*, pp.65-71.

creator-poet is a realist and is committed to inspiring the mass of people to changing oppressive human relations. Having laid down these principles, Sharma traces a brief history of Indian literature. In a breathtaking erasure of all conflict and all historical specificity, he asserts that Sur-Tulsi-Mira-Kabir, as well as Tiruvalluvar, Chandidas, Lalded, Nanak, all inspired human beings to revolt against the "feudal shackles" of caste and religion. Sharma says these poets "shook the tattered shackles ... all over India," in the 15th and 16th centuries. In the 17th and 20th centuries, again, a variety of writers in Indian languages are said to have attacked "English rule and feudal remnants". The "glorious tradition of our literature" is said to have been uninterruptedly progressive and revolutionary, "from Bharat Muni down to Bhartendu".

Sharma attacks writers who "teach Indian people the lessons of dependence and slavery". Sharma's categories of "reactionary" writers, belie his own assertions of an unchallenged tradition of writing. He asserts nevertheless that "those who love the soil of this country, and who love its people, and who understand the epoch - changing role of literature, are going ahead".

Dr. Purushottam Aggrawal points out that marxist critics like Chandrabali Singh and Ramvilas Sharma are so eager to construct a `progressive-democratic tradition', that they include a variety of literary works and writers with complete disregard for their specific historical and ideological contexts. A writer like Maithilisharan Gupta is accommodated within this tradition for his nationalist

consciousness, ignoring the sectarian, even communal moorings of this consciousness.[35]

Across literary traditions, a nationalism that locates Indianness in a glorious Aryan past has found followers. A poem by Jayshankar Prasad a prominent poet of the `Chhayavaad' or romantic tradition, anthologised in *Swati II* echoes these sentiments.[36] Prasad's poem, titled `Hamara Pyara Bharat Varsh' (Our beloved nation Bharat) celebrates the idea that "we did not come from elsewhere; this was the land of our birth.. we are the same great children of the Aryas". The poem recalls that "India...taught the `Yavan' (muslim) compassion", and therefore "victory was not that of the sword; religion held sway in the land". Indians are identified as descendants of the Aryas, as counter-posed to the `Yavan', who needed to be civilised. In the same text-book, a poem by Maithilisharan Gupta hails the `motherland' as "kshamamayi, dayamayi, kshemamayi, sharandayini devi" in terms that connote the worship of a Goddess.[37]

Gopal Singh Nepali's poem `Mera Desh Bada Garvila (My Proud Country) is full of images of a homogenous Hindu national community. The festivals of Holi and Diwali, the "simple" pujas, and idols are listed, as are various seasons

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[35]. Purushottam Aggrawal, *Teesra Rukh: Alochana aur Sanskriti ke Bare mein*, Vani Prakashan, New Delhi 1996, pp.128-144.

[36]. Jayshankar Prasad, `Hamara Pyara Bharatvarsh', *Swati II*, pp.55-56.

[37]. Maithilisharan Gupta, `Matribhumi', *Swati II*, p.56.

and rivers. The idea of a tolerant and ancient culture that merges foreign cultures with itself, is reiterated. "Foreigners have come and gone... the care free life style of (this country) has digested their ways and made them its own". The poem lists the characteristics of Indian citizenship:

"Ram in each mind, the Gita by the side, the Ramayan is respected in each and every house. India's inhabitants are like this.. Ram's victory is hailed by all. and Krishna's flute plays melodiously... " The worship of Ram, Krishna and the Gita are cited as pan-Indian qualities that account for the greatness of Indians. The final stanza contains the favourite secular image of "Mandir-masjid-Girija' but it is linked with the holy trinity, like the confluence of the three holy rivers at Sangam and the holy trio of Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh. The questions following the poem ask students to explain how the poem expresses pride in the beauty, styles of worship and festivals an is an expression of "unity in diversity".

The text-books attempt to ignore the differences between different streams of nationalism, and seen in this perspective, the diversities are merely attributes of a well-defined unity grounded in an assimilative Hinduism.

Premchand is represented in *Parag - II* by an essay which eulogises Swami Vivekanand and is neither one of his nationalist stories nor part of his writing on social questions.[38] Once again there is tension between the essay itself and the editors' introduction to the writer and his work. Premchand is introduced by the

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[38]. Premchand, `Swami Vivekanand', *Parag II*, pp.36-45.

editors as a writer whose main concerns have been "national revival and social reform", and whose writings have "depicted powerfully and realistically the oppression, poverty, social evils, women's misery and the distortions of the caste system which prevail in Indian society".

Premchand quotes a passage from Vivekanand that addresses Indians as "residents of pure Aryavarta" and calls upon them to be independent. Addressing his "Indian brothers", he reminds them that "Sita, Savitri and Damyanti are the goddesses of their race", and calls upon brave men to "be men and say with pride that I am an Indian, a resident of India, and every Indian is my brother, whether illiterate of poor or of a high or low caste. India's gods nourish me". These Hindu revivalist sentiments are not representative of the kind of nationalism that Premchand came to espouse in his novels and stories. Sudhir Chandra comments that before being influenced by Gandhi, Premchand's writings were of a "revivalist orientation", which was "not surprising... considering the influences on him - Arya Samaj, Vivekanand and Bankim".[39]

Literary texts require history as a site for the construction of fixed cultural traditions. `Fatehpur Sikri' by Raghuvir Singh, in *Pallav-II*, challenges representations of Akbar popularised by nationalist historiographies.[40] The editor's

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[39]. Sudhir Chandra, `Premchand and Indian Nationalism', *Modern Asian Studies*, 16, 4, (1982), pp. 603-604, Printed in Great Britain.

[40]. Raghuvir Singh, `Fatehpur Sikri', *Pallav II*, pp.22-30.

introduction states, "the writer wishes to acquaint us with Akbar's greatness". In the secular nationalist project of reconstructing a secular cultural heritage for the nation, the figure of Akbar has had a central place. Akbar has been constructed as a ruler who strove to consolidate an Indian nation, who was tolerant and liberal, and who laid the foundations of a secular nation-state.[41] Raghuvir Singh's writing is accorded the status of history rather than literature by the textbook. He is credited with "making the dry facts of history alive and interesting." The essay therefore carries the weight of historical facticity and is not treated merely as a literary sketch of Akbar. The essay begins by describing the Buland Darwaza (Victory Arch) at Sikri, as a "great monument commemorating Akbar's victory over Indian civilization". Akbar "set out to synthesise two completely different civilizations", but this quest "remained a mirage". While nationalist narratives, for instance Nehru's Discovery of India, accept the failure of Akbar's religion, Din-e-Ilahi, they usually speak of Akbar's tremendous success in creating a truly Indian tradition of political and cultural catholicity. In Singh's account, `Indian' and `Muslim' cultures are not only counterposed as different, but also as irreconcilable inspite of the most well-meant efforts.

A description of Salim Chishti's tomb in the same essay, says, "From all over North India, Hindus and Muslims and others are drawn to this tomb every

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[41]. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Communal North India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 247-48.

year, thinking, `Since this person granted Akbar's wish in his lifetime, can't his soul in heaven grant another of Akbar's humble wishes'," i.e., the wish for cultural synthesis. The nature of the synthesis which Akbar failed to achieve is further elaborated : "Akbar wished to wipe out the intolerance of the Islamic religion, and to take the help of Indian tolerance in lessening its harshness", which is why he tried to create and preach the religion of Din-e-Ilahi. The reason for his failure, this implies, is the stubborn intolerance of Islam which has resisted being synthesised with the benign 'Indian' culture/Hindu religion.

The essay, describing Sikri, goes on to mention a dais, where Akbar and his close friends "played chess with live chess-pieces. Each piece was a beautiful slave. On moonlit nights ... how intoxicating these games of chess must have been". The essay constructs Sikri as a dream-world, and this anecdote is meant to convey the extent of luxury of the Mughal Muslim empire under Akbar. The depiction of female slaves as chess pieces contributes to the stereotype of the decadence of `Muslim rule' in India.

Representations of Akbar within Hindi literature has always been ambiguous. Akbar has been simultaneously represented as an exception to the stereotyped Muslim ruler, due to his tolerance to Hindus and his spiritual quest, and also as a wily ruler who faked tolerance to dupe Hindus. His fondness for meat, wine and women has been represented, in consonance with common

stereotypes.[42] The agenda of Raghuvir Singh's essay is to demolish the figure which secularist historiography constructs of Akbar. Singh confers praise on Akbar for his human qualities and liberalism, but the compliment is a backhanded one: the figure of Akbar emerges as final proof of the impossibility of integrating the "intolerant" and "harsh" Islamic culture with benign and tolerant Indian/Hindu culture. The textbook frames this essay so it fits secular specifications; one of the questions following the text asks, "On the basis of the text, throw light upon Akbar's ideas about religion, and their relevance for India's present circumstances." The essay is articulated in a way that allows stereotypical and essentialist ideas about `Indian' and `Islamic' cultures to coexist with its representation of `Akbar's greatness' and his ideals which hold relevance as ideals even today. But this coexistence is an uneasy one; this essay's insistence on the unattainability of secular compositeness ruptures the entire thrust of the framework of the textbook, for which India's compositeness is both a timeless truth as well as an ideal to be upheld by its citizens.

The essays in *Praval-I* and *II* by Mahadevi Varma and Agyeya, also discuss Indian culture and Indianness. Hindi Romantic poetry (chhayavad) of the early 20th century followed by the modernist and Progressive movements initiated complex engagements with modernity and with new literary traditions and ideas,

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[42]. C. M. Naim, `Popular Jokes and Political History: The Case of Akbar, Birbal and Mulla-do-Piyaza', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 17, 1995, p.1460.

in conjunction with nationalism. Mahadevi Varma, one of the only woman writers given prominence in Hindi literature wrote Romantic poetry between 1930 and 1942, after which she took a vow to speak no English, but only Hindi. Her prose writings display a concern for the cause of Indian women. She was the principal of Prayag Mahila Vidyapeeth, a nationalist institution, set up to provide higher education of an indigenous kind for Indian women. Her femininst concerns make her relation to dominant cultural traditions ambivalent and her two essays anthologised in these text-books display this ambivalence. Her "Sanskriti Ka Prashna" (The Question of Culture) in *Praval-I*, envisions culture as an organic growth, whose essential self cannot change.[43] She stresses the "Samanvayatmak Shakti" (assimilative strength) of Indian culture, its numerous streams, but asserts that the "Mool dhara" (main current) has not dried up, and its "Mool tattva" (fundamental quality) has not changed. She stresses that the search for culture is not "the search for the life-signs of a dead race, but a search for the paternal inheritance of living successors, and these successors are sitting eagerly in the corners of every hut to receive it."

In her essay, "Jeene Ki Kala" however, she speaks of the traditional principles which need to be reinterpreted and practiced, in ways that empower Indians rather than burden them.[44] Indians have a heritage of the best values and

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[43]. Mahadevi Verma, 'Sanskriti ka Prashna', *Praval I*, pp.57-67.

[44]. Mahadevi Verma, 'Jeene ki Kala', *Praval II*. pp. 15-24.

principles, but are inept at translating them into "the art of the living". This ineptitude is country-wide, but women in particular are cursed by it. Verma celebrates Indian womanhood in the most essentialist terms as guardians of culture. Indian women continue to be: sacrificing mothers, pativrata wives, loving sisters, and obedient daughters, when all the awakened women of the world are sacrificing their old culture for "materialistic pleasures". Indian women are described as goddesses in their ability to bear injustices. But this celebration is gradually tinged with bitterness and censure, when the `girl-widow' is described, who suffers "inhuman bodily and psychological tortures in the name of `Satitva' (pure wifehood) and restraint". Varma describes the "burden of the spiritual and pure ideal of Sita-Savitri which a wife learns when she not only serves her alcoholic, villainous and brutish husband but prays to be reborn as his wife". She describes daughters who, "at a mere gesture from their father, forget their colourful dreams and, without a sigh, follow the most unsuitable of husbands". "Who can but be amazed" at sisters and mothers who have loved unselfishly even when exploited by sons? The essay indicts "Hindu society which has strait-jacketed women into mere mute displays of its ancient glory". She says that society, "which has never learnt to give its women anything but slavery", has seen all kinds of epoch - making changes, "but has expected women to remain unchanged like rocks even amidst the tumult of doomsday". Such stability, she says, "can be the ornament of death, not of life".

She goes on to arrive at a definition of patriarchy: "What can one say of the vileness of those who possess sovereignty over wealth, religion, and authority". The reasons for this sovereignty are elaborated. "Having been accorded the duty of earning by society, men have captured a sort of capitalist power; being stronger, they have naturally got authority. Apart from this, being the makers of social rules, they have successfully made themselves as free as possible and have bound women in the most difficult of confinements".

Her essay introduces gender conflicts into a discussion of Indian culture, and she skillfully interrupts her own celebration of essential and eternal culture by demanding that women should learn the "art of living" and use these principles to dismantle rather than perpetuate oppressive hierarchies.

Agyeya, the pioneer of modernism in Hindi engaged critically in his writing with western forms of modernism as well as with traditional Indian attitudes to life and literature. His essay on `Bharatiyata' recommends that the "life-denying" passivity and acceptance of all oppressions as well as the timeless ahistoricity which is seen to characterise Indianess should be rejected, or "preserved in a museum" while only living ideas, with contemporary relevance should be preserved. [45]

The NCERT anthologies of literature along with the *Kishore Bharati* text-books share the guiding philosophy of secular modern nationalism. However

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[45]. Agyeya, `Bharatiyata', *Praval I*, pp.77-85.

various literary movements and critical debates exert pressures resulting in strategies to evade contentious issues as well as to accommodate various conflicting positions within the secular nationalist framework. The secular cultural nationalism which these anthologies attempt to perpetuate is strained in various directions, at some points by progressive, and occasionally feminist and modernist writing, but most successfully by Hindu majoritarian ideology which subtly works within the secular tradition which accommodates and endorses it so that it emerges as the predominant ideology of the text-books.

CONCLUSION

We have seen the ways in which the nation and its cultural history are narrated within the NCERT Hindi textbooks. The cultural heritage which the text seeks to impart, regardless of whether its perspective is a 'secular' or a 'communal' one, draws on the 'evocative propaganda', to borrow a phrase from Sudipta Kaviraj, of the continuity and unity of national culture.[1] The insistence on a continuous national heritage and the project of constructing it, unites both secular narratives which stress assimilativeness (for instance the essays by Sheela Dhar and Mahadevi Verma), as well as those which ground assimilativeness in a tolerant Hinduism (for instance Jayashankar Prasad's poem as well as Raghuvir Singh's essay on Sikri).

The upper primary school texts, following NCERT directives closely, employ fictional devices as well as non-fictional ones to impart nationalist ideology, as well as specific state policies like family planning. Within the Kishore Bharti series, no interrogations of this cultural harmony are allowed to appear, since there is little pressure to represent various literary or political streams. Very little writing from progressive traditions are anthologised in these texts, and what elements of it

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1. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Imaginary Institution of India', *Subaltern Studies: Writings in South Asian History and Society, vol VII*, Partha Chatterjee, and Gyanendra Pandey, eds., p. 9.

are included, serve to strengthen the images of the bourgeois nation state as one committed to building an egalitarian society.

Within the literary anthologies for the secondary classes, the pressures of contesting literary histories, disciplinary debates as well as various literary movements demand representation and exert pressures to stretch the guiding principles of the texts. This is what allows Aggrawal's poem, and Verma's 'Jeene ki kala' to expose some of the exclusions performed by dominant nationalisms.

However, within these texts as well as the Kishore Bharti series, we can see the truth of what Raymond Williams wrote about ideology and education:

> *"Selectivity is the point: the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain others... are neglected and excluded. Even more crucially, some of these meanings are reinterpreted, diluted or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements from within the effective dominant culture".*[2]

Not only are literary practices associated with Urdu completely excluded within the literary histories narrated by the NCERT as well as from literary

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[2] Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', *Schooling and Capitalism: A Sociological Reader*, Roger Dale et al, eds., London, Routlege and Kegan Paul, 1975, p. 205.

selections but also only those works from a writer's repertoire are selected which discuss some variant of 'Bharatiyata', and all such writings are sought to he accommodated within a framework of secular nationalism. The textbooks introduce 'Ibrahim Gardi' and 'Lal Angaron Ki Muskan' as stories which propagate values which are valuable for secular nationalism, and present the chapter on Fatehpur Sikri and Gopal Singh Nepali's poem as examples of syncreticism and 'unity in diversity'. From the Progressive tradition, the writings of Ramvilas Sharma are included rather than the more politically sharp and polemical writing of Muktibodh on Indian cultural traditions.

Hindi, more than other pedagogical disciplines, associates itself with the project of constructing a national unity and a nation based on 'Indianess'. The teaching of History as well as language and literature has lent itself easily to nation-building projects. Within History, attempts have been made to intervene in education, and the involvement of historians like Bipin Chandra, Romila Thapar and R.S.Sharma in the preparation of NCERT's history textbooks has been seen as the triumph of the tenacity of Nehru's legacy in building an ideology of the Indian State.[3] Given the pervasive suspicion of the State among liberal intelligentsia, how can one explain their willingness to be part of State educational projects? Though

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3. Krishna Kumar, 'Secularism: Its Politics and Pedagogy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Nov. 4-11, 1989, p. 2475.

the Indian State may espouse increasingly repressive ideologies and policies towards the Indian people, the wheels of government machinery grind slowly, and not always surely, so the concerns of the NCERT and its texts are no index of the political concerns of the current ruling formations. The unevenness in the dissemination of state policy can be seen in the context of the change in the composition of ruling groups ruling the State. The Congress itself, which had enjoyed dominance till the late '80s, had undergone several shifts and transformations, away from the Nehruvian model, and in its functioning, its distinctness from right-wing revivalist parties had blurred. Krishna Kumar reminds us that "revivalism is no more a party creed confined to any particular organisation in the spectrum of mass politics."[4] While ruling coalitions representing various regional and rural elites now control the State, the political concerns of these new power groups, have not made much dent in the orientation of the Hindi discipline, although many of them are powerful in the 'Hindi region'.

For instance, caste and caste-based mobilisations have become crucial to contemporary political discourse, but there is still virtual silence on the subject of caste in the textbooks. The Nehruvian framework persists in education, and the effort of the intelligentsia involved in State educational projects is to tap

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4. ibid., p. 2475.

unmonitored spaces where the State may be brought to fulfill its self-proclaimed principles of secularism and liberal democracy. Though the impulse to centralise is seen as an inevitability of State rule, its very arms and tools, the nation-wide educational infrastructures, are preferred over private educational experiments. The scope of State influence over the country's geographical and socio-cultural expanse attaches significance to the political implications of any syllabus change.

The dissemination of education is also refracted by economic factors and the differentials of class, caste, gender and language that finally shape the teaching of text-books. The kinds of teachers, schools and students among which the text-books circulate, give final shape to the nature of State education in India. The framework of Nehruvian nationalism is however strained to its limits in NCERT's Hindi language and literature text-books in the direction of a Hindu majoritarian philosophy. The endorsement which these 'secular' texts give to such a philosophy, only contributes to reinforcing its claim to being commonsensical.

I do not wish to suggest that the ideological orientation of the textbooks determines the response of its recipients. Educators have stressed the anti-secular Brahminical basis of our whole pedagogical apparatus, but the textbooks are after all only guidelines. It is within classrooms and schools, and by teachers with different political positions, using different pedagogical practices, that any textbook

is taught. Undercutting all of this is of course, the literacy rate which the nation boasts, 52.24 % in 1991, (1991 Census Report). The literacy level puts paid to arguments about the need for a single link language. NCERT text-books reach a select audience among the educated. Circulated largely in Central government schools in the Hindi region comprising Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi, these texts have worked to culturally reshape those very states where the many languages that constituted Hindi are in use. Krishna Kumar emphasises that most educational agencies apart from the Central ones, strengthened by State patronage for Hindi, reproduce its communal histories of language and literature whether they are State government institutions, religious schools or private institutions.[5]

The possibilities for intervention within State agencies and text-books should be directed towards undoing the selective communal histories which have become the dominant form of representation of the Hindi language. Pervasive changes within the literary discipline would be required for the teaching of Hindi language and literature to be transformed.

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5. Krishna Kumar, 'Hindu Revivalism and Education in North Central India', in *Social Scientist*, 18: 10, 1990, pp. 4-26.

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