

## TEACHING TO HATE

### THE HINDU RIGHT'S PEDAGOGICAL PROGRAM

*Nandini Sundar*

In 1992, “Hindu” *kar sevaks* or “volunteers for god” under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other fronts of the Hindu chauvinist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS),<sup>1</sup> demolished the Babri Masjid, a fifteenth-century mosque in Ayodhya, sparking off a round of violence across the country. They claimed the mosque had been built over an earlier temple commemorating the birthplace of the Hindu god, Ram, a claim that secular professional historians have contested.<sup>2</sup> For many children in RSS run schools, however, this divisive, painful, and bloody propaganda has long had the status of “facts,” which they learn as part of “history” or “general knowledge.” For instance, the *Sanskriti Gyan Pariksha Prashnоти* or a primer for a “Cultural Knowledge Exam,” which all students in RSS schools take and for which they get a certificate, has the following list of questions and answers:

Q: Which Mughal invader destroyed the Ram temple in 1582?

A: Babur

Q: From 1582 till 1992, how many devotees of Ram sacrificed their lives to liberate the temple?

A: 350,000.

Q: When did the program of collecting bricks for the Ram Mandir begin?

A: September 30, 1989.

Q: When did the Karsevaks fly the saffron flag on Ramjanmabhoomi?

A: October 30, 1990.

Ten years after this demolition, with the BJP now in power as the leading partner in a coalition government, a key arena of struggle within India is the extent to which RSS educational philosophy is allowed to become official policy.<sup>3</sup> If schools are one of the modes by which nations imagine and reproduce themselves, debates over schooling systems—availability, cost, curriculum,

language, pedagogical techniques—are, at heart, debates over the style and content of this imagining. This chapter is an attempt to examine the ways in which Hindu Right notions of citizenship, nationhood, and patriotism are shaping the national debate over education in India and how these notions are transmitted through the RSS's own widespread and growing network of schools.

With the BJP in power, the RSS has been able to position its own people in national educational bodies, such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the University Grants Commission (UGC)<sup>4</sup> and thus determine the official educational agenda for the country. Much before it came to power, however, the RSS was cognizant of the centrality of education to any project of gaining power and reorienting the political arena. Its educational front, Vidya Bharati, runs one of the largest private network of schools across the country. As of March 2002, Vidya Bharati had 17,396 schools across the country (both rural and urban), 2.2 million students, over 93,000 teachers, 15 teacher training colleges, 12 degree colleges and 7 vocational and training institutions.<sup>5</sup> Although Vidya Bharati schools follow state board exams and state prescribed textbooks, they have additional subjects and cocurricular activities, during which the bulk of “indoctrination” takes place. In addition to Vidya Bharati, which caters mostly to a lower-middle-class and upper-caste base, other RSS fronts providing education include the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), which specializes in welfare schemes for *adivasis* (lit. original inhabitant),<sup>6</sup> including hostels for school children; Sewa Bharati, which works among *dalits* (scheduled castes);<sup>7</sup> and the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, which runs single teacher three hour centers for preschool children where they are taught the rudiments of reading and writing, Sanskrit and *sanskars* (good behavior).

When it comes to debating the nation's past or understanding contemporary society at the official level, the BJP shares with other conservative governments certain preferences and omissions in deciding curriculum content: for them, social science, especially history, is intimately connected with inculcating national identity and patriotism (Hein and Selden 1998; Kumar 2001; Nash et al. 2000; Nelson 2002). Most often, moreover, the “nation” is identified with dominant groups in society and only narratives that value the role of these groups positively are seen as patriotic.<sup>8</sup> Patriotism, in this version, also means extolling the virtues of one's own country over that of others and glossing over its negative phases (Nash et al. 2000). In the United States, this involves describing America as a consistent defender of freedom and democracy all over the world and minimizing discussions of slavery or the extermination of native Americans (Hellinger and Brooks 1991), in Japan it involves glossing over wartime atrocities (Nelson 2002), and in India it takes the form of glorifying an ancient Hindu past and minimizing caste oppression. Ideological conflicts over the shape and content of history or civics textbooks inevitably involve debates over the emphasis given to certain people—dominant groups versus women and minorities—or certain periods in history over others.

In terms of the pedagogy transmitted by the RSS's own schools, however, the more relevant model for comparison appears to be fascist schooling, although there are significant differences in that the RSS's control over the state is still far from complete, and is further complicated by the country's federal structure and the creation/reinforcement of distinct religious and ethnic populations through separate schooling systems. Under fascism, while the curricular content is geared to define nationhood in terms of particular attributes, the major work of cultural demarcation is done through extracurricular activities and the everyday rituals that punctuate the school day such as assembly, attendance, uniforms, and so on (Blackburn 1985; Kandel 1935; Mann 1938; Minio-Paluello 1946). As against the mere silencing of the diverse cultures and contributions of women, minorities, or workers found in conservative visions of education, the fascist school curriculum involves an active manipulation of historical evidence in order to foster hatred for and violence against minorities. While denigrating people of other countries is common enough in all school curricula, especially countries with which one has been at war, fascist schooling is also marked by the construction of enemies within. Finally, while fascist schools do not have a monopoly on militarist education,<sup>9</sup> preparing children for national "defence" is intrinsic to the fascist project (Giles 1992; Wolff 1992).

The first section of this chapter describes the RSS's attempts to appropriate the national and official educational arena by introducing communal, and often simply false, interpretations of history and society. The second section, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Chhattisgarh state in central India, shows how apart from just being overtly "Hindu," RSS education aims to produce students geared to thinking of non-Hindus as enemies. Such education "succeeds" in attracting ordinary non-RSS Hindu students, however, because of the failures of the state educational system.

### CONTROLLING NATIONAL EDUCATION: THE TEXTBOOKS WAR

In India, education has rarely occupied much space in the public sphere. Within this realm, the focus has mostly been on issues of literacy and access to schooling rather than curricular content.<sup>10</sup> Indian government schools are the bedrock of the educational system, especially in rural areas, although the number of private schools is fast expanding. However, both government and private schools generally follow government-mandated curricula, and use government produced textbooks. In India's federal structure, in addition to the national school boards such as the Central Board for Secondary Education, individual states have their own school boards that conduct certification exams. States also bring out their own curriculum and textbooks, but these are usually modeled on the national curriculum framework and textbooks produced by the National Council for Education and Training (NCERT), which is technically an autonomous body, but in practice, part of the government. The federal government is thus a key player in determining

educational content and performance across the country. While the quality of textbooks has been pedagogically patchy in the past (Kumar 2001) and the extent to which schools have been really secular can be debated,<sup>11</sup> in principle, at least, the federal government was committed to an educational policy that reflected the constitutional definition of India as a secular state.

The appointment of an RSS ideologue, Murli Manohar Joshi, as Minister of Human Resource Development (the portfolio that includes education) has introduced a qualitatively new dimension to the educational scene. In 2000–01, the NCERT issued a National Curriculum Framework for School Education, which according to critics, reproduced the RSS's ideological agenda (Delhi Historians' Group 2001). The essence of the new educational philosophy is summed up in the terms "Indianize, nationalize and spiritualize."<sup>12</sup> For the RSS, even as schooling is seen as an overt and directed instrument of political and cultural transformation aimed at creating a unified "Hindu" nation, its educational philosophy is far from revolutionary,<sup>13</sup> and seeks to overturn even the limited advances toward greater caste, class, and gender equality since independence. Much of it is aimed at reinforcing the existing social order in the face of growing challenges from below—from women, lower classes, and lower castes—relying on an appeal to a glorious past, before it was destroyed by "Muslim invaders," "Christian missionaries," and "Westernization."

The controversial National Curriculum Framework for School Education, drawn up by the NCERT in 2000, bears quoting in detail:

Traditionally, India has been perceived as a source of fulfillment—material, sensuous and spiritual, consisting primarily of an agrarian society, the social design of which emphasized self-sufficiency, contentment and operational autonomy for each village . . . The social matrix was congruent with the economic design based on the principle of distributive authority given to each village unit . . . A sizeable segment of the contemporary Indian society seems to have distanced itself from the religio-philosophic ethos, the awareness of the social design and the understanding of the heritage of the past . . . the structure of the authority of the Indian agrarian society has been disturbed. *An individual in the formal work system could exercise authority over those who were otherwise his superiors in age and in the societal structure.* In the agrarian society, successive generations followed the occupation as well as the goal sets of the family or caste at large. However, technological developments later introduced new professions and consequently new goal sets emerged. *In contrast to the joint and extended family system, the society now is witnessing the phenomenon of nuclear families, single parents, unmarried relationships and so on.* (NCERT 2000, pp. 3–4; emphasis added)

Despite the formulaic appeal in the very next paragraph to the "national goals of secularism, democracy, equality, liberty, fraternity, justice, national integration and patriotism," it is impossible not to note the sense of loss and dismay that greets the changes in this idealized agrarian society, such as the loss of caste authority when a low caste person is in a position of bureaucratic power or when women are no longer bound by the patriarchal joint family.

A petition by three activists/citizens, pleading that the NCERT had not followed the correct procedures for consultation with the states before preparing the curriculum and that it sought to introduce religious teaching was, however, rejected by the Supreme Court. Article 28 of the Constitution that states “no religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of state funds” was interpreted by the Judge to allow for teaching *about* religions. In addition, Justice Shah expounded on the virtues of religion as the source of ethics (values) in a society fast losing its social moorings: “for controlling wild animal instinct in human beings and for having civilized cultural society, it appears that religions have come into existence. Religion is the foundation for value base survival of human beings in a civilized society”.<sup>14</sup>

Having won its case, the NCERT released its history and social science textbooks. Although textbooks in other subjects have also been criticized (Menon 2003) they have not earned the same kind of attention as history texts—in part because of the centrality of history to the RSS’s own project of rule. In a logic where the past is seen as determining current identity, rights to citizenship, and raising questions of historic reparation and justice, the teaching of history is inevitably deeply political (Kumar 2001; Nash et al. 2000). What Hitler laid down for the teaching of history in *Mein Kampf* might well apply to the RSS agenda today: “History is not studied in order to know what has been, but one studies history in order to find in it a guide for the future and for the continued preservation of the nation itself” (quoted in Kandel 1935, p. 65). In part, the greater focus on history is also due to the strength and sophistication of contemporary historical scholarship in India, and its success in challenging colonial and communal narratives (Lal 2003).

The NCERT social science/history textbooks are not only shockingly low on both grammar and fact, but also reflect many of the RSS’s pet themes, particularly the urge to prove that Indian civilization is synonymous with Hinduism, which in turn is synonymous with the “Vedic civilization.”<sup>15</sup> This Vedic civilization is thought to be the font of all things great in the world including the discovery of the zero, while all the evils that beset India can be traced to foreigners, including Muslim invaders and Christian missionaries. In the textbook on medieval India, the exactions of the Sultanate Rulers or the Mughals are exaggerated and portrayed in anti-Hindu terms, and their contributions to society, culture, and polity are ignored. The idea that the Babri masjid was built on an earlier temple is given textual sanctity: “the sites (for Babur’s mosques) were carefully selected . . . Ayodhya was revered as the birthplace of Rama” (Jain 2002, p. 134). It is not difficult to see the parallels with the version of history coined by the RSS’s late chief and ideologue M. S. Golwalkar, in his *We or Our Nationhood Defined*: “Ever since that evil day when Moslems first landed in Hindusthan, right up to the present moment the Hindu nation has been gallantly fighting on to shake off the despoilers” (Golwalkar 1939, p. 12).

In his remarkable book, *Prejudice and Pride*, Krishna Kumar compares Indian and Pakistani textbooks on their narrative of the freedom struggle,

and finds both lacking in important ways. In projecting the freedom struggle as a secular progression, rudely interrupted by partition, and by focusing mainly on political events and personalities, the earlier NCERT textbook on modern India, Kumar argues, did not enable children to understand the processes and sociological factors that led to communalization and partition. Nor do they get a sense of why a secular constitution meant so much for India's leaders (Kumar 2001). In the new NCERT textbook for class IX, however, there is even less attempt to understand ideals and processes. Instead, the blame is clearly assigned. *Contemporary India* spends considerable time on the role of the Muslim league in causing partition, and the perfidy of the communists for supporting the Allies in World War II, while omitting any mention of the RSS or the Hindu Mahasabha's contribution to communalism and partition. There is no word on Gandhi's assassination by RSS sympathizer, Nathuram Godse. With such remarkable passages as "The task of the framers of the constitution was very difficult. Their foremost job was to ensure the integrity of the country taking into account the presence of Pakistan within India herself," children are easily led to see Muslims as fifth columnists and not fully Indian. Much of this is again presaged in Golwalkar:

In this country, Hindusthan, the Hindu race with its Hindu Religion, Hindu Culture and Hindu Language (the natural family of Sanskrit and her offsprings) complete the Nation concept; that, in fine, in Hindusthan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but the Hindu nation. All those not belonging to the national, i.e. Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language, naturally fall out of the pale of real "National" life . . . . Only those movements are truly "National" as aim at re-building, revitalizing and emancipating from its present stupor, the Hindu nation . . . . All others are either traitors or enemies to the National cause . . . . (Golwalkar 1939, pp. 43-44)

*Contemporary India* covers the scope of world history from the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries in ten pages, presumably on the assumption that 14-year-olds cannot cope with more. The Russian revolution is dismissed in a couple of lines: "Many generation-old rule of the family of Czars was swept away by a coup led by Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Party. This political change was presented to the world as an ideological revolution rooted in Marxism and Communism" (NCERT 2000, p. 9). As for Hitler, we have this remarkable paragraph:

The German nationalism which had developed a superiority complex about the purity and antiquity of its so-called Aryan blood was smarting under the humiliating terms imposed on it under the Treaty of Versailles. The German frustration gave birth to the personality of Adolf Hitler who created the Nazi party. The ideology of the Nazi party was a sort of fusion of German nationalism and socialism. The rising tide of German nationalism was seething with an ardent desire of revenge. The Germans readily accepted Hitler as their leader and surrendered to his dictatorship. (NCERT 2000, p. 10)

There is no mention of the Holocaust, and perhaps this is not surprising in the light of what Golwalkar had to say on the subject:

To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic Races—the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by. (Golwalkar 1939, p. 35)

When challenged by historians on his seeming admiration for Hitler, Hari Om, the author of *Contemporary India*, argued that their criticism stemmed from a desire to cover up the far worse crimes of communism: “To the Indian Leftists, the Fascists were some kind of red herring. By concentrating on the crimes of Hitler and Mussolini, they hoped to divert attention from their own misdeeds which, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, were of bigger proportions” (Lal et al. 2003, p. 231).

#### STATE FAILURE IN SCHOOLING: BREEDING GROUND FOR SECTARIANISM

While it is important to understand the Hindu Right agenda on education and explore how far this schooling actually works to produce Hindu chauvinist identities, it is equally important to see this as a product of the wider context of state schooling. Despite Article 45 of the Directive Principles of the Constitution urging all states to provide “free and compulsory education for all children till they reach the age of fourteen years,” and a recent constitutional amendment upgrading education to a fundamental right, literacy rates in India are comparatively low (65.4 percent in the 2001 census). In any case, even in the face of reassuring statistics on the number of schools opened, teachers hired or children enrolled, the micro level reality remains grim. In 1999, the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) in the low literacy states of central India found widespread teacher absenteeism, leaking roofs, nonexistent toilets, no drinking water, no blackboards, and no educational materials such as textbooks and maps. The report wryly notes “the only available teaching aid available in all schools is a stick to beat the children” (PROBE 1999, p. 42). In addition to these problems are those peculiar to areas inhabited by adivasis, such as the language gap between students and teachers who do not speak any of the local languages, blatant discrimination or at the very least unequal treatment by teachers compared with non-adivasi or upper caste students, and general condescension that makes the educational experience particularly alienating for most tribal children (Nambissan 2000; Nanda 1994; PROBE 1999).

Teachers, especially in adivasi areas, often blame parents for not sending their children to school, either because they are too “backward” to realize the importance of schooling or because they need to send their children to work.

The same report as quoted above also states, however, that parental motivation to send their children to school is high across the country. In fact it is not the opportunity cost of child labor foregone that is the problem but the cost of sending children to school, as well as the poor quality of education and the sense of inferiority generated in tribal children that makes it not worth the expense (Furer-Haimendorf 1982; PROBE 1999).<sup>16</sup>

In other words, even among those populations historically alienated by the schooling system, there is a relatively strong and widespread desire for education as a means to challenge existing social inequities and to lay claim to the attributes of citizenship that the state promises, despite their experiences of the state in practice. One consequence of this widespread desire for education and the lack of matching state initiative has been the considerable increase in private schooling, both of the religious nonprofit and the supposedly secular profit-making variety. In many places, particularly urban or semiurban areas, this has exacerbated social differentiation, with the poor being confined to vernacular government schools and anyone with the slightest ability to pay sending their children to private schools, preferably "English medium" ones. Increasing class and communal divisions, promoted through differential schooling, thus diminish the promise of a more meaningful common citizenship held out by higher literacy levels (Jeffery et al. 2002; Vasavi 2000).

### MULTIPLE SYSTEMS: RSS, CATHOLIC AND STATE SCHOOLS IN JASHPUR DISTRICT, CHHATTISGARH

In order to appreciate the context in which RSS schools have taken root and the message they impart, it is instructive to look at the actual functioning of such schools. Textbooks are only a small part of pedagogical practice, and their reception cannot be understood without looking at the specific setting in which they are taught. As Luykx shows us: "educational processes . . . are fundamentally, cultural processes" (Luykx 1999, p. xxxiii). This section, accordingly, aims at fleshing out this notion of pedagogy as cultural interpellation, based on fieldwork conducted in Chhattisgarh state primarily, but not only, in Kunkuri, the headquarters of a development block in Jashpur district. Like other small urban concentrations (really glorified villages) in a predominantly adivasi belt, Kunkuri has a significant number of traders, mostly from the Marwari and Jain communities but also some Muslim families. A number of government staff also live here. The villages nearby consist of Uraon adivasi cultivators most of whom are now Christians. Unlike most similar localities in this state, Kunkuri has a proliferation of schools and is known as something of an educational center in the district. This is primarily because it is home to one of the oldest and best Jesuit boarding schools in Chhattisgarh, the Loyola boy's high school.

In the late 1940s, the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) was founded here to counter Christian proselytization, setting in motion a process of competitive schooling. In recent years the Jesuits have also started a coeducational English medium day school in the Loyola premises. A Catholic girls high school,

Nirmala, run by the Order of St. Anne's, has a small boarding house attached to it. Kunkuri has two government high schools with hostels (one for girls and one for boys), as well as a government middle school. It also has a Saraswati Shishu Mandir (run by Vidya Bharati), which is at present only from primary to middle school but has plans to expand to high school.<sup>17</sup> The Saraswati Shishu Mandir has no hostel, but some of the students stay in the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram hostel. Some VKA hostellers go to Loyola as well.

The schools are distinctive not just in terms of their extracurricular content, but the social composition of both students and teachers (see tables 8.1–8.3). In both the Catholic and RSS case, there is some degree of boundary policing for their own communities. The Catholic schools cater primarily to Christian adivasi students, who are mostly the children of both peasants and salaried government employees. Large-scale recruitment to the army and to the Assam tea gardens, from World War II onward, encouraged by the Church, brought greater prosperity and also increased income differentiation among the local adivasis. Thanks to the education they get from these schools, many of the Uraons in this area have been able to take advantage of reservations for adivasis in government jobs and Loyola graduates are estimated to occupy about 20–40 percent of the state administration posts in Raipur, the state headquarters. In addition to the priests who teach, almost all the teachers are Catholic. Many of the business families have also traditionally sent their children to Loyola, because it was the best education on offer in the area. However, now that there are alternatives in the form of the government school and Saraswati Shishu Mandir, which also have good results, many parents have started sending their children there.

**Table 8.1** Social composition of students of Loyola, Saraswati Shishu Mandir (SSM), and Government Schools (2001–02)

	Scheduled tribes	Scheduled castes	Other backward castes	General	Total
Loyola (6–12)	1,042	37	162	42	1,283
Loyola Hostel (6–12)	422	—	47	4	473
Loyola English Medium (1–5)	NA	NA	NA	NA	270
Loyola English Medium (6–9)	NA	NA	NA	NA	124
SSM Primary (1–5)	100	50	140	105	395
SSM (Middle and High 6–10)	50	30	316	10	406
Govt. Boys High school hostel	143	10	25	—	178
Govt. Boys total	287	46	216	23	572
GB Middle (6–8)	49	13	25	2	89
GB High (9–10)	134	15	114	12	275
GB Higher (11–12)	104	18	77	9	208
Govt. Girls High (9–10)	134	19	86	20	259
Govt. Girls Higher (11–12)	42	7	31	19	99

*Note:* Loyola starts from the sixth, SSM goes up only to the tenth, the Government girls and boys school have classes from 6 to 12. The figures for Govt. girls middle school were not available, and nor was the detailed breakup for Loyola English medium school. NA = Not Available.

**Table 8.2** Loyola Hostel (2001–02)

Tribals	Non-tribals	Christian	Non-Christian
422	51	409	64

**Table 8.3** Saraswati Shishu Mandir (2001–02)

	Christians	Muslims	Hindus	Total
Primary school (1–5)	44 (all tribal)	37	314	395
Middle and High	20	30	356	406
Total	64	67	670	801

The clientele of the RSS school is predominantly lower-middle-class Hindu families, particularly government employees, small business owners, and traders, who can afford the fees of Rs. 80–250 (approximately \$2–5) per month (depending on the grade and the locality). In terms of caste, RSS schools have more “other backward castes” (OBC) than adivasis among both students and teachers. The RSS, BJP, and other affiliates have a strong base among the OBCs since they feel threatened by the educational advancement of the Uraons, and are resentful of the reservations they get in government jobs. The Kunkuri Shishu Mandir is somewhat different from other Vidya Bharati schools where the children are almost totally Hindu (Sarkar 1996, p. 245) in that it has approximately 16.4 percent Christian and Muslim students. Most of these Christian adivasi children belong to families with one parent in a government job, since only they can afford the fees. The Kunkuri Viyda Bharati principal claimed that their parents sent them because they were taught discipline and culture in addition to their regular school courses, but this clearly needs further investigation.<sup>18</sup>

In the RSS school, out of a total of 26 teachers, only seven are women, of which one is a Christian Uraon, while the bulk are from the “other backward castes.” The minimum qualification for a primary school teacher in the Vidya Bharati network is high school certification, but a little more than half (14 out of 26) are postgraduates. Recruitment is through written exams, followed by an interview, a seven-day training period, and then another exam. Those who complete a year long training course (six months correspondence, six months regular attendance) run by Vidya Bharati at the Saraswati Shiksha Mahavidyalaya in Jabalpur get extra increments. Becoming a teacher in one of the Vidya Bharati schools (unlike many of the students who come to these schools simply to get a good education), generally requires prior and special commitment to the Sangh agenda, which is further reinforced by the ideological training they periodically receive. However, teaching in these schools is also seen as a job—and given that teachers are paid less than the government scales, many of them would be happy to switch to government jobs.<sup>19</sup>

The Government schools are divided roughly evenly between adivasis and “other backward castes” in terms of students. However, approximately only one third of the teachers are adivasis (12 out of 31). Since government schools do not charge fees, unlike the Catholic schools or the RSS school, they tend to attract the poorest adivasi students or those students from business families, particularly girls, for whom schooling is seen as just a way of marking time before they get married or take over the family business. The level of discipline is generally much lower in government schools, with a corresponding decline in pass percentages. Extra curricular activities are also noticeably limited compared with the religious schools. The government boys’ school has recently acquired a strict principal, who has ensured better results, leading to a corresponding increase in enrollment.

While pass percentages are an inadequate reflection of school performance, because the results are not weighted by factors such as the numbers enrolled, drop out rates, and the caste, class, and gender composition of students, table 8.4 provides a rough comparison. Both the government schools and Loyola had on average between 100 to 200 students, while the SSM had on average less than 50 students per year.

In sum, while religion evidently does play a role, the ultimate criterion for parents in selecting schools appears to be exam results and cost of schooling. In the public perception, RSS schools fare well on results and are affordable for the lower middle class and thus manage to attract a range of children whose parents are not necessarily committed to the Sangh agenda. Children who graduate from these schools, however, seem to end up with a strong sympathy for the Sangh, especially the discipline it imparts.<sup>20</sup> The following section, based on ethnographic observations in the Kunkuri Shishu Mandir attempts to explain why this is so.

**Table 8.4** Tenth grade results: percentage of those who passed the exams

Year	SSM	Loyola	Government girls	Government boys
1991–92	NA	48	22	62
1992–93	NA	63	45	32.4
1993–94	NA	47	15.05	19.6
1994–95	NA	35	6.8	24.3
1995–96	NA	58	24.4	20.4
1996–97	59	66	23.4	51
1997–98	52	49	20.2	25.5
1998–99	51	NA	26.4	59.4
1999–2000	93.84	NA	28.4	52.3
2000–01	NA	67	18.1	47

*Note:* I have selected the Tenth Board Exam results because this is the only grade for which I have figures for all the schools. The Saraswati Shishu Mandir only started its Xth grade from 1996 to 1997. The percentages have been calculated on the basis of those who sat the exams. NA = Not Available.

## SARASWATI SHISHU MANDIR: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

The first Saraswati Shishu Mandir was set up in 1952 in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, although a Gita school had been established by the RSS chief Golwalkar in 1946 at Kurukshetra, Haryana. As the number of schools grew in different states, an all India coordinating body, called Vidya Bharati, was set up with its headquarters in Delhi. The Vidya Bharti educational mission is founded on the objective of training children to see themselves as protectors of a Hindu nation:

The child is the centre of all our aspirations. *He is the protector of our country, Dharma (religion) and culture.* The development of our culture and civilisation is impact in the development of child's personality. A child today holds the key for tomorrow. *To relate the child with his land and his ancestors is the direct, clear and unambiguous mandate for education.* We have achieve the all round development of the child through education and sanskar i.e. inculcation of time honoured values and traditions. (*sic*) (Vidya Bharati website, 2001; emphasis added)

The Vidya Bharti schools are funded through fees and private donations from rich trading families or other wealthy sympathizers, a point that they make much of when comparing themselves with Church organizations that get money from abroad. In fact, however, as a recent study showed, foreign exchange from nonresident Indian sympathizers of the RSS amounts to significant sums.<sup>21</sup> The RSS also claims to take no government aid, though periods of RSS expansion certainly seem to show an uncanny correlation with having a BJP government in power.<sup>22</sup>

In what follows, I describe different aspects of the school's organizational culture, focusing particularly on the extracurricular markers and makers of identity. To a great and unacknowledged degree, the educational culture of missionary schools has become part of the general educational culture and to that extent, RSS practices may be seen as a perfectly legitimate reaction to "Christian" markers introduced in the guise of "modern" and "secular" education. For instance, in private as well as in government schools, children start with morning assemblies where they are made to pray or subjected to some "uplifting thoughts." While many government schools have started making girls wear the north Indian salwar kameez, boys invariably wear shorts or pants, and in the more elite schools, girls generally wear skirts. Teachers are addressed as "Sir" or "Ma'am" or "Miss."

In the Vidya Bharati schools, however, care is taken to use purely "Hindu" cultural markers. Although the students' uniforms are not dramatically different from those of children at other schools (blue kurtas for girls with white sashes and khaki shorts/pants for boys), in sharp contrast to other schools, teachers here also wear uniforms. Even more unusually, while women have always borne the burden of upholding tradition through sartorial conservatism (in this case white sarees with red borders), here male teachers too flaunt their indigeneity by wearing white dhotis and kurtas unlike the Western pant/shirt that has

become universal costume for urban educated men in India. The use of Sanskrit terms to address teachers (Acharya), the practice of touching their feet as a mark of respect, and the naming of classrooms after Hindu sages (Vashisht Kaksh, Vishwamitra kaksh), also mark the school out as a space where Hindu Dharma and Hindu *sanskars* are asserted with pride, where tradition is saved and transmitted as against the “deculturation” or “christianity and Westren [*sic*] mores” that convent schools lead to (Vidya Bharati website). While “sanksars” also refer to the rituals that mark stages of life, they are defined here loosely as good influences, good habits and values, all of which are essential to character formation (Jaffrelot 1996, p. 48).

In addition to the two national days (January 26 and August 15), the Vidya Bharati schools have their own roster of special days to be celebrated, such as the birthdays of Shivaji and Jijabai, Vivekanand, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, and Savarkar, all of whom are icons of Hindu nationalism, or in some cases simply Hindu Mahasabha/RSS leaders. Significantly, Gandhi’s birthday, which is a national holiday for the rest of the country, is not celebrated, although in recent years efforts have been made to appropriate him too. Other official holidays are also eschewed, in favor of traditional Hindu referents. For instance, Shikshak Diwas or Teacher’s Day (which is officially celebrated on September 5 on the anniversary of the country’s former President and well known educationist Dr. Radhakrishnan) is celebrated on the birth anniversary of the Sage Vyasa, which is the traditional Hindu Guru Poornima (Teacher’s Day). Krishna Janmashtami stands in for Children’s Day, officially celebrated in India on Nehru’s birthday, November 14. In the process, myth and history, the birth and death anniversaries of actual historical figures and those of mythical characters are seamlessly conflated and inscribed in the child’s consciousness through the regime of annual holidays, celebrations, morning prayers, as well as through the content of history and “cultural knowledge” textbooks.

A similar process of conflation (of real and mythical events/people), elision (of non-Hindu persons and things) and abuse (of facts) is evident in a variety of spheres. The *Ekatmata Stotr*, which students recite to start the school day, lists the names of all the mountains, rivers, Hindu pilgrimage sites, Hindu mythological figures, sacred books such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh books, saints and poets, Hindu kings and queens and finally RSS leaders like Hegdewar and Golwalkar. Another example is the Sanskriti Gyan Pariksha primer published by Vidya Bharati at Kurukshetra, from which the question on the Ramjanmabhoomi is reproduced at the start of this chapter. The exam is, on the face of it, a disinterested test of knowledge about the country’s geography, history, and culture. It is in question-answer format, and combines sections on actual and mythical Hindu figures, actual events and events from the Mahabharat, Ramayana and so on. RSS fantasies are introduced here as acceptable historical facts, including the notion that Homer’s *Illiad* was an adaptation of the Ramayana and that Christ roamed the Himalyas and drew his ideas from Hinduism (Sahmat 2001, pp. 14–18). Needless to say, neither in the Ekatmata Stotr or the Gyan Pariksha Primer,

are there references to anything Christian or Muslim and the version of Indian culture that is produced is thus an exclusively Hindu—and more specifically upper caste (mostly Northern)—culture.<sup>23</sup>

More than just a site for the transmission of Hindu cultural traditions, however, the school is portrayed as a temple. Starting with the name itself, Saraswati Shishu Mandir (student temples of Saraswati, the Hindu Goddess of learning), the practice of leaving shoes outside the classroom (as in temples), the chanting of Sangh shlokas in Sanskrit to mark each transitional point such as the break for recess or the end of the school day, the rich visual display of calendar art posters of Hindu Gods and Goddesses<sup>24</sup> are all practices that reinforce the notion of learning as an act of faith or religious devotion that precludes any kind of critical questioning. As against being a space where children can transcend their religious identities and begin to learn about other cultures or develop faculties for critical enquiry, the school becomes an extension of the kind of religious discourse that is imparted in temples. This is not the same as the rote learning for which Indian schools are notorious, but a sense that the functioning of the school helps to keep a religious identity alive.

Textbooks maintain the emphasis on devotional zeal. The history textbook for class V, for example, refers constantly to “Mother India” from whose womb many brave sons were born, who worshipped her and died for her, with the Gita in their hands and *Vande Matram* on their lips (Singh 1997, pp. 27–28). Most of the Vidya Bharati schools are affiliated to the CBSE (Central Board for Secondary Education) or their local State Boards. In general, these schools follow the syllabi (and the textbooks) published by the NCERT. Earlier, there were obvious contradictions between official texts which said that the Aryans came from central Asia and the RSS assertion that they are indigenous to India, or those that give Gandhi pride of place in the freedom struggle and the RSS denigration of Gandhi as a *Dushtatma* (bad soul) for “appeasing” Muslims. Individual teachers may have perfected sophisticated pedagogical techniques for getting around this (Mody 2002), but perhaps what enabled the two belief systems to coexist is the emphasis on teaching in order to get marks and pass exams. The revised NCERT textbooks do much to alleviate this problem, in that they broadly reflect RSS ideology, yet they are still inadequate in that they cannot openly talk about the Sangh.

Vidya Bharati therefore brings out its own textbooks, which “supplement” and “correct” the history that is taught in the official books, working more by selective emphasis on certain figures than by crude propaganda against Muslims and Christians. *Itihas ga Raha hain* (History is Singing) for class V blames “internal disunity” for the invasions by the Turks, Mongols and Mughals, but notes that even in the medieval period the “freedom struggle” was kept alive (Singh 1997, p. 9). While professional historians point to the presence of Hindu generals in Mughal armies and the fact that Shivaji, the archetypal Hindu king had a Muslim general, as evidence of the fact that medieval power struggles can not be understood in religious terms, the RSS sees this as a betrayal of Hindus and reserves its greatest criticism for such

“collaborators” (Singh 1997, p. 78). The connection between these views and the violence enacted by the RSS against Hindus who helped Muslims during the 2002 pogrom in Gujarat is clear (Sundar 2002b, p. 117).

Christian pastors are described as one of the main instruments of colonialism (Singh 1997, p. 27), thus strengthening the association in children’s minds between Indian Christians and antinational activities. While Gandhi and Nehru are perforce mentioned as leaders of the freedom movement, equal pride of place is given to the Hindu nationalist stream consisting of Tilak, Malviya, and religious men (*sadhhus* and *sanyasis*). One of the central planks of the RSS is the equation of “holyland” with “motherland,” which supports the claim that because Muslims and Christians have their Meccas elsewhere, they are not fully loyal to the country. The text exhorts children to remember who they are so as not to become slaves again and asks rhetorically:

Whose is this country? Whose motherland, fatherland and holyland is it? Whose customs and festivals are celebrated according to the agricultural rhythms and climate of this land?<sup>25</sup> Which people is it who call Sivaji, Ranapratap, Chandragupta, Bhagwan Ram, Krishna, Dayanand their great leaders.

It then goes on to a fervent description of the greatness of the RSS founders, Hegdewar and Golwalkar, and the need for an organization such as the RSS to build Hindu unity (Singh 1997, pp. 77–81).

In addition to the prescribed curriculum, Vidya Bharati schools teach five extra subjects all of which are thought to contribute to the development of *sanskars* or character formation: moral education (*naitik shiksha/sadachar*), which includes stories about great men, songs, instruction on honesty, personal hygiene and so on; physical education (*sharirik shiksha*), which includes learning to wield a stick, dumbbells, and martial arts; *Yoga*; music/singing (*sangeet*); and Sanskrit (from kindergarten onward and not just from the third as in government schools). “Vedic Mathematics,” alleged to be indicative of the mathematical prowess of the Vedic peoples but which contemporary Indian scientists describe as nothing more than a computational tool with no Vedic origins, is introduced in the third standard.

While the schools attempt to inculcate Hindu *sanskars*, they also borrow liberally from elite school organizational forms. Students are organized into groups (Bal Bharati for classes 6–8; Kishore Bharati for classes 9–11 and Kanya Bharati for girls) to teach them self governance. These groups are assigned responsibility for the library, singing practice, celebration of national days, and so on. During the hour and a half long Kanya Bharati sessions per week, girls learn sowing and cooking so that, as one teacher explained, they can be good housewives and mothers “like Jijabai (who exhorted her son Shivaji to war) and Lakshmibai (who strapped her child on her back and fought the British in 1857).”<sup>26</sup>

In order to achieve more complete indoctrination, a constant attempt is made to wrest control over the family’s socialization functions as well. Unlike the usual practice of calling parents to school for parent–teacher interactions,

teachers from the Saraswati Shishu Mandirs go to students' houses and tell their parents about the children's performance, activities planned by the school, and other matters. They also have an *abbibhavak sammelan* or gathering of parents once a year. Children also serve as messengers by taking home pamphlets about RSS or Vishwa Hindu Parishad activities for their parents. Teachers keep an eye out for promising students or volunteers who can go on to RSS summer camps known as Officer Training Camps and receive further ideological training. According to the principal of one of the Shishu mandirs, about 2 percent of the students from middle and high school go to these camps every year.<sup>27</sup>

If Vidya Bharati schools stopped at transmitting a religious identity per se, they would be little different from Catholic schools, whose daily routine is also marked by morning and evening mass, which is compulsory for Catholics but not for non-Catholics. What marks the transition to fascist schooling, however, is the overriding emphasis on the physical "defence" of religion. At the end of the school day, following the *Visarjan mantra*, the teacher asks *Hamari Mata kaun hai* (who is our mother?), to which the students reply, hands raised, fists clenched: *Bharat Mata, Bharat Mata* (Mother India). The teacher then asks *Iski raksha kaun karega, kaun karega* (who will protect her, who will protect her?), to which they shout *Hum Karenge, Hum Karenge* (we will, we will).

At Republic Day (January 26) celebrations in a Saraswati Shishu Mandir school in Raipur in 2002, the same slogan was repeated after the national flag was hoisted. The rest of the program was a long succession of speeches on terrorism, self-defense, and the need to fight Pakistan, thus inscribing blood and guts as the very essence of patriotism. For instance, the female student (leader of Kanya Bharati) who was conducting the program said that the 24 spokes in the Ashok chakra in the center of the Indian flag "reminds us that we should be 24 hours alert in the defence of the country." After a display of physical exercises, *leziuum*, gymnastics, and yoga, honoring the country's martyrs and Hindu *dharm's* "four gods and four castes," primary school children sang a song about the need to fight the "neighboring country" and demolish it as brave children of Savarkar (Hindu Mahasabha leader), a theme that was reiterated by the Chief Guest's address at the end of the program. In between was a speech in English on "terrorism," another one by a fifth grade girl in Hindi on September 11 and December 13, which pitted the "conservative, fundamentalist, terrorist Muslim community" on one side versus the "powerful American community" on the other. India lay in between, with its belief in *vasudeva kutumbkam* (the whole world is one family). A high school boy gave a speech in Chhattisgarhi on "Defence" and the "danger for Hindus" faced with enemies both outside and inside the country (i.e., Muslims). One very small girl talked about how the constitution laid down rights and duties for all, but some people only thought of their own rights and did "injustice" to the rights of others.

On the face of it this was an unexceptional exercise in reminding people of their civic duties, but in the light of the RSS discourse on government

“appeasement” of minorities at the expense of the “majority,” acquires a clear anti-Muslim and anti-Christian bias. Indeed, the fact that Pakistan and Indian Muslims are never explicitly named but referred to only as “the neighboring country” or “terrorists” paradoxically serves to strengthen the message, since the RSS can then take recourse to the claim of pure “nationalism.” Indeed, students claim they are taught only about “Indian” culture and deny that they are taught to hate other communities.<sup>28</sup>

Interspersed between the speeches were catchy songs describing the victory of Hindu kings like Rana Pratap against the Mughals or comparing Hinduism to a sea into which all religions flow. The Sangh insists that all those living in India are part of “Hindutva,” which it defines as a “way of life” and simultaneously demonises Christianity and Islam for being foreign to India. It thus claims both Hindu tolerance and the need to defend Hinduism against the very existence of religions of which it needs to be tolerant. The entire program was prefaced and suffixed with an *aarti* (lighting of lamp, garlanding) to a picture of “Mother India” (Durga against a map of India, representing a Hindu nation).

While Republic Day is inevitably an occasion for a display of patriotism, a moment when schooling reveals its connections to state projects, and the constitutional ideal of secularism and sovereignty is reiterated (however imperfect the practice), in the hands of Vidya Bharati, such occasions become weapons to destroy this fragile constitutional existence. If children are schooled, it is only to become better soldiers for a Hindu nation. Even the leaders of the groups into which students are divided for extracurricular activities are called *senapatis* (generals). For the RSS, as for the Nazis, “education is never for its own sake; its content is never confined to training, culture, knowledge, the furtherance of human advancement through instruction. Instead it has sole reference, often enough with implication of violence, to the fixed idea of national pre-eminence and warlike preparedness” (see also Mann 1938, p. 6; Kandel 1935, pp. 12–13).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter looks at schooling as part of the RSS agenda to create certain notions of citizenship and identity. The RSS/BJP has attempted to affect a radical departure in the existing educational ethos, through the use of both state power (packing state educational institutions with its own ideologues), and the instruments of “civil society” (creating its own network of schools in order to feed into a well developed cadre structure). Like revolutionary movements elsewhere, the RSS believes in the idea of education as a means toward social transformation. However, whereas Soviet communists, at least in theory, saw education as a means toward liberation, equality and inclusion (see Ewing 2004), the RSS’s aims are indoctrination, hierarchy, and exclusion.

Inevitably, the “success” of ideological reproduction through schooling depends on a variety of factors such as the degree of conformity of the child’s lived experience with the dominant ideology, or the extent to which

this ideology is reinforced through wider cultural practices and political developments in society. So far, children going to RSS schools have tended to come from upper-caste Hindu backgrounds and schooling has merely reinforced existing sympathies,<sup>29</sup> but as the RSS expands among dalits and adivasis, their relationship with the Sangh's message is bound to be somewhat different. The RSS educational and political agenda includes both absorbing subaltern groups into a Hindu fold to fight against "minorities" and using violence against these same groups in order to perpetuate the existing social order.<sup>30</sup>

RSS schools are popular with a wider circle of parents beyond the strictly converted, primarily because they perform the requisite *educational* function of producing "good exam results," which appeals to middle-class parents and children in a certificate- and degree-oriented economy in a context where state schools suffer from gross neglect and underfunding. In keeping with Gramsci's idea that the content of education must be seen to be disinterested to become hegemonic (Forgacs 1988, pp. 313–318), while such non-RSS parents may not desire an overtly Hindu education, here the discipline and *sanskars* become a bonus because they are tagged on to success in exams. The positive valuation of discipline is also perhaps a result of the widespread internalization of the Sangh's argument that Hindus were historically vulnerable and defeated by invaders because they lacked unity and organization, compared with Muslims and Christians, and that they need to be disciplined to defend themselves.

The situation also varies across genders. In a society where films and social custom privilege certain modes of womanhood—the idea that girls must study and perhaps even have careers but never abandon their primary duty to their family—girls themselves seem to welcome the training in "values" they get.<sup>31</sup> The Sangh's appeal lies in its ability to lay claim to Hindu culture at large, to conceal its own warped and petty version of Hinduism within a larger stream of diversity.

What non-RSS parents need to realize, however, is that the RSS project is distinct from all other schools in the harnessing of pedagogy to a clear political end. Although in the past Jesuit schools had great proselytizing zeal, now schools like Loyola act primarily as channels for middle-class mobility. RSS schools, while teaching children to pass exams and get white-collar jobs, also produce children, particularly boys, steeped in aggression and chauvinist attitudes toward non-Hindu "others." With boys, this aggression is also directed to girls and women, with the nonconventional or non-Hindu woman becoming an object of both prurient interest and disgust. Curricular and extracurricular messages such as uniforms, functions, or cultural knowledge exams all serve to remove non-Hindus from the discursive space of the nation. When they appear it is only as insoluble "problems" for the Hindu body politic. Coupled with the emphasis on militarism, such as physical training in knife and stick wielding and repeated exhortations to "defend" the "nation," the stage is set for internal civil war. The tragedy is that, imbricated in the banality of exams and results and the middle-class desire for service jobs, this is legitimized as just an alternative form of education.

## AFTERWORD

Since this article was written (December 2003), the national situation has changed considerably. The BJP led coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, lost the general elections in May 2004, and was replaced by a Congress led coalition government, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The new government set up a committee to review the NCERT textbooks and has appointed a new Director for the NCERT, who is a well-known and progressive educationist. The national situation thus appears more hopeful. However, the RSS continues to run its own schools, and influence policy in the states where the BJP is in power, such as Chhattisgarh. While the first half of the article is dated, it shows what might happen were the BJP to return to power. The second half, which describes the Saraswati Shishu Mandirs, continues to be of salience.

## NOTES

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1. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an ostensibly “cultural” organisation was set up in 1925 by Dr. K. B. Hegdewar to promote a “Hindu rashtra” or Hindu nation in which members of minority religions would occupy a subordinate role. The RSS has no official membership but has an estimated 45,000 *shakhas* or branches all over the country (Noorani 2000, p. 13), and a well developed organizational structure. *Shakhas* are places where boys and men, wearing the standard RSS uniform of khaki shorts, meet for an hour a day to do physical exercise and military style drill which includes training in martial arts, and learning to wield a stick or a knife, ostensibly for “self defence.” They also receive instruction in proper behavior (*sanskars*) and ideological training (*baudhik*) (Anderson and Damle 1987; Hansen 1999, p. 113; Jaffrelot 1996, pp. 35–40; Kanungo 2002, pp. 25–26). The RSS was banned in 1948 after one of its (allegedly former) members killed Mahatma Gandhi for ostensibly being pro-Muslim, and again during the Emergency (1975–77), when normal rights were suspended and people were arrested across the political spectrum. For long, it was a secretive and shadowy organization—for instance, its finances are still not audited. Since the BJP came to power, it has achieved public respectability and gets considerable and positive media coverage.
2. For a history of the scholarly debate over the site, see Lal (2003, pp. 141–185). In September 2003, the government run Archaeological Survey of India issued a report concluding that the mosque did indeed replace a temple. University archaeologists have described this report as biased and unprofessional, pointing out several flaws in method and interpretation (Sahmat 2003).
3. This article was completed in December 2003, when the BJP was still in power. See the afterword for an update.
4. The University Grants Commission funds and administers all universities in the country. Other national educational bodies which have been packed by RSS sympathizers (almost all unknown figures in their professional fields) include the

- Indian Council for Social Science Research (the Indian equivalent of the Social Science Research Council), and the Indian Council for Historical Research.
5. <www.Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan.htm>.
  6. Since the term *adivasi* challenges the notion that the Rig Vedic peoples were the original settlers of the country, the RSS prefers to call them *vanvasis* or forest dwellers.
  7. In central India, Sewa Bharati runs a girls' hostel in Pathalgaon and two boys' hostels in Gwalior and Bhopal. They also have a big school at Kurukshetra near Delhi. According to one VKA spokesperson, the idea behind Sewa Bharti's schools was to train future administrators.
  8. The institutional contexts are clearly different but the conservatives' attempt to tar professional historians as antinational and unpatriotic, when they challenge dominant histories, is remarkably similar. For instance, in 2001 when professional historians in India protested against deletions in existing texts that ostensibly hurt religious sentiment and objected to the idea that religious leaders should vet textbooks, the Human Resource Development Minister in India responded by calling it "intellectual terrorism unleashed by the left . . . more dangerous than cross border terrorism" (*Indian Express*, December 20, 2001). Such language would not be unfamiliar to those involved in the American debate over the National History Standards. A letter from Kim Weissman in the *Wall Street Journal*, for example, accused the authors of the National History Standards of wanting to "indoctrinate children with their own hatred of America; to steal the American birthright from the children of our country; to teach our children to feel guilt over their own heritage. Now the special interest pressure groups seek, through Goals 2000, to complete the balkanization of America" (reproduced in Nash et al. 2000, p. 189).
  9. Militarized education can be found in other context, such as the pre-World War II British public schools. For examples in contemporary Indian education, see Beni (2003).
  10. There were brief exceptions such as in the 1970s when four history textbooks were withdrawn by a right leaning government (Chaudhury 1977).
  11. For instance, the government boys school in Kunkuri celebrates Saraswati Puja, in honour of the Hindu goddess of learning. Much depends on the predilections of individual principals and teachers.
  12. This attempt to "Indianize" at the university level includes introducing courses like Vedic rituals and Vedic Astrology. Many of the country's scientists and social scientists repudiate the latter as spurious science, and not particularly Indian. An appeal against the course is currently pending in the Supreme Court (Sundar 2002a).
  13. Skocpol defines social revolutions as "rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures . . . accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below . . . set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative processes above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation" (Skocpol 1979, p. 4).
  14. Judgement by Justice M. B. Shah, D. M. Dharmadhikari, and H. K. Sema in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 98 of 2002, Ms. Aruna Roy and others versus Union of India and others.
  15. See Habib et al. (2003), and the riposte by Lal et al. (2003), which brings the debate to a new low. See also Sahmat 2002.

16. For similar conclusions about the role of schooling in generating feelings of inferiority and thus reproducing structures of class, gender, and ethnicity elsewhere, see McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) and Brown et al. (1997).
17. Currently, the paucity of buildings forces it to run in two shifts—7.30 AM to 11.00 AM for kindergarten and grades 1–4 and 11.30 AM to 4.30 PM for grades 5–10.
18. A more likely reason is that Loyola starts only from middle school and the Loyola English medium is slightly more expensive.
19. They get between Rs. 1250 and Rs. 1800 (\$26–38) per month as basic pay, depending on whether they are primary or higher secondary school teachers. The managing committee for each locality decides on how much it is able to pay.
20. Interviews with graduates of the Saraswati Shishu Mandir, studying in the government girls' high school and in Loyola school.
21. South Asia Citizens Web and Sabrang Communications (2002).
22. Although the RSS organizations claim they refuse to take government aid on principle because it saps their voluntarism and makes them dependent on the whims of the government of the day, access to state power through the BJP has definitely helped in expanding the scope of schools and other organizations. The Principal of the Saraswati Shishu Mandir in Rohinipuram, Raipur said that although Vidya Bharati work began in Chhattisgarh in 1968, they received a new impetus in the 1990s (coinciding with the BJP-led Sundarlal Patwa government). Reports of government patronage—gifts of prime land in the Capital to RSS organizations at very low rates—made newspaper headlines in late 2002.
23. This both reflects and reinforces a phenomenon in wider cultural practice and media representations as well, where a Muslim or Christian presence in films or elsewhere is much more rare than it used to be.
24. Unlike government schools whose walls are bare, save perhaps one poster of Saraswati or Ganesh over the blackboard, or Catholic schools which have a cross in each classroom, the Saraswati shishu mandirs have a proliferation of calendars and posters with pictures of Gods/Goddesses. Ram in his martial pose is particularly popular.
25. The implication clearly is that festivals like Id and Christmas are not locally rooted.
26. Interview with teachers at a Saraswati Shishu Mandir in Raipur.
27. For the importance of camps to fascist education, see Schiedeck and Stahlman (1997)
28. Interview with ex-students of SSM, now at the Government Girls higher Secondary School, Kunkuri
29. Tanika Sarkar (1996, p. 246) notes that “with school hours in daytime and shakhas in early morning or evening, the whole day is disciplined by various agencies of the sangh, stretching from family to school and shakha, in an unbroken and totalitarian circuit of influence and training. The schools, with a committed lot of teachers and a good record of discipline also act as pivotal points of RSS influence within entire localities, where they function in conjunction with other RSS facilities.”
30. In Gujarat, dalits and tribals were mobilised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to loot, burn, and kill Muslims, during the genocide of March 2002. In October the same year, however, in Jhajjar, Haryana, a VHP mob lynched five dalits for allegedly skinning a live cow, followed by one of their leaders declaring that the life of one cow was more important than that of five dalits.
31. Interview with ex-students of SSM, now at the Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Kunkuri.

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