

Why I Feel The BJP Is Using Education To Brainwash Students

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By **Hamna Mariyam Binth Ashraf:**



It was a few months ago when TV sets and FM stations started running government sponsored advertisements, commemorating October 31st as **National Unity Day** (Rashtriya Ekta Divas). This particular episode was a perfect example of the center appropriating history for its own benefits by using the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhai Patel the freedom fighter – a figure who was at loggerheads with the Congress, including the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. BJP is trying to create a new version of Indian history for India. However, the danger lies not only in the crafty creation of a unilateral history but also in the act of suppression of dissident voices using diverse strategies.

When one analyses these strategies of repression, it is shocking to see that more than direct violence, which was the modus operandi earlier, those in power have now resorted to cultural repression. In other words, there is an ideological warfare, which concentrates mainly on the educational system – schools and universities. I had a personal experience while studying at Delhi University when A.K Ramanujan's *Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation*, which was part of the syllabus of B.A (Hons) History back then, was unceremoniously scrapped from the syllabus **due to protests by ABVP activists**. Their argument was that the text hurt the sentiments of the Hindu population. However, they were not ready to consider the beauty and marvel of the many versions of the story of Sita and Ram, transmitted orally to different parts of India, Srilanka, Malaysia and Indo-China geographic locations.

This seething cultural intolerance was aggravated after the current government came to power. Universities have been consistently targeted since 2014 with the likes of IIT Madras, FTII, Hyderabad Central University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jadavpur University increasingly being attacked as anti-national hubs, by putting weight on the obsolete and draconian **Macaulay's Indian Penal Code**.

I wish to throw light into something equally conspiring which has not caught the limelight. It is a question from the Social Science examination conducted by CBSE in this academic year. The question reads like this, *"When was the Bharatiya Janata Party founded? Discuss any four of its policies and programs."* What would a fifteen year old write to the second part of the question? What exactly is the policy of the BJP? What ideology does it have? Hindutva, communal hatred, and Digital India might fetch full marks!

This question is a blatant weapon which again targets to create a new history. School students in their history classes learn about the formation of the Indian National Congress and its activities since 1885 to the present day or at least till 1947 in their syllabus. They also learn about the formation of CPI in 1925 and various reformation movements it has heralded. However, there is no presence of the BJP in the history of India before independence or during its initial years. Its inception is much later deriving its essence from the post-emergency amalgam that Janata party was. Hence, this question is a calculated move to instill the young minds with a notion of history regarding the BJP. It is not just a notion, but also a premonition where countless students from next year, while referring to the previous year's question papers, will be forced to learn the policies of BJP and the teachers would be compelled to cover such topics in detail and include lectures about the BJP's policies in the curriculum.

Thus, such a seemingly innocent question will probably take off causing ripples in the cultural space of educational institutions. If the reader dismisses my argument regarding just one question as hypersensitive, then I would use Althusser for greater substantiation. According to him, the two modes employed by the state to ascertain its supremacy are the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). While RSA is more obvious while observing as it includes strict law-enforcing and governing bodies such as the police and the military, the ISA is comparatively much more plural and diverse. The latter comprises of social institutions and structures such as schools, colleges, religious institutions, and even the family all of which ideologically interpellates people as 'subjects' of the state. Without giving a neatly tied up conclusion or a dictatorial solution, let the piece end with an Althusserian quote itself, *"what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ideological State apparatus, the Church (religious institutions)."*

The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English in Farook College, Kozhikode, Kerala

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