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India was never saffron and will never be, say activists

A.S. Mandira

The BJP's agenda is different; it aims to make India saffron. It was never saffron, and it would never be said Apoorva C.M., Vice President of AIDSO, Bangalore district. In the convention held against the changes made in the school textbooks, numerous student organisation leaders called out the agenda of the government. "The BJP as a regime is very radical and out of frame. They act as if they don't have senses, but they do. Their ideology speaks for itself. They want to build a 'Hindu Rashtra', and no other religion has the right to live in this country. This is very preposterous because India is a country where all religions are united and diverse.

All religions shared friendships and lived in peace, equity and harmony here. But the ruling party wants the new generation to forget this harmony and hence they are trying to implement such moves." Stating that the revision of textbooks should be withdrawn, she added, "We hope that the audience who have come here take away one message – BJP as a regime has no place in our country. Also, whatever revision that has taken place till now, we want it to be stopped. A democratic body must be set up, consisting of intellectuals, retired HODs, principals, and student organisations to discuss the changes that need to be implemented."

Chakrathirtha given mandate bypassing CM, cabinet

Trupti Khillare and Moksha Garg

The changes made in textbooks in Karnataka are unconstitutional, opaque, and smack of autocratic attitude, said Dr V P Niranjan Aradhya, a leading developmental educationist of Karnataka. He was addressing the gathering at a convention organised by the All India Save Education Committee (AISEC) opposing the changes made in the school textbooks of Karnataka. Terming the revision process as unconstitutional, Aradhya said, "Socialism, democracy and secularism are the foundation pillars of the preamble and must be the guiding light for any changes in the education system. Education is a device to fulfil the constitutional aspirations and the recent changes are a clear vi-



Dr V P Niranjan Aradhya addressing the AISEC convention

Narayan B

olation of these principles." Terming the process of revision as being opaque, he said the committee under Rohith Chakrathirtha was asked to submit a report containing the suggestions on the revision of the textbooks which later was supposed to be taken up by an expert committee for review. "However, the

committee changed the textbook and for which it did not have a mandate," he added. Aradhya said the committee was given the mandate to change the textbooks without the knowledge of the cabinet and the Chief Minister. Waving a copy of the government circular, he said the government had fixed

the responsibility on the Chairman of the committee for providing any explanation on the changes made. "Government has not taken any ownership of the revisions. They say they are not responsible. Cabinet has also not approved; hence there was no transparency. There was no consultation or dis-

ussion with the cabinet." Aradhya said, "Suresh Kumar got a letter from a head of the mutt asking for immediate removal of a particular chapter that hurt the sentiments of a community. He didn't conduct a consultation process; the officers responded and removed the chapters." Referring to how the National Education Policy (NEP) was formulated, he said the rationale behind the NEP was neither discussed in the parliament nor was there any draft presented at the state level. "We aren't opposing change. Any change in the curriculum must be preceded by a normative framework. This has to be discussed with primary stakeholders." AISEC demanded the scrapping of new textbooks and continuing old textbooks for the 2022 Academic year.

'Those opposing the revision of textbooks are Talibanis'

Thanmaya Prakash

Criticising those opposing the textbook revision, the Chairman of the Textbook Revision Committee, Rohith Chakrathirtha questioned whether they are 'Talibanis'. "What's wrong in Indianising the textbook. Are people who are opposing these, Talibanis? Why are they opposing Indianising the textbooks, they must be non-Indian (sic)," he said.

Defending the addition of a chapter on Savarkar, Chakrathirtha said that introducing Savarkar or Hedgewar does not mean introducing Hindutva.

Referring to Savarkar as a freedom fighter he said, "If someone is opposing this, then their intentions have to be given a thought."

He further alleged that the former textbook revision committee headed by Baraguru Ramachandrappa had hurt the sentiments of certain minority and Hindu communities. "Aspects related to Indianess, patriotism and nationalist thoughts were removed by the old committee," he added.

The major objective of revising the textbook was to highlight the Indianess, the Indian culture and

nationalistic thoughts, said Chakrathirtha.

Various writers have aired their opposition to the revision of the textbooks and a few have resigned in protest from their positions.

Hampa Nagarajaiah who last week resigned as the president of Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Prathistana said to the Beacon, "My major concern and opposition is regarding the disgrace to Rashtrakavi Kuvempu. Government awarding such persons is not acceptable," he said.

Criticizing the Textbook Revision Committee for being filled with upper



Rohith Chakrathirtha

Distortion of textbooks is not new: Dr Puniyani

Arushi Srivastava and Sutapa Dhara

Saffronisation of the curriculum is part of the agenda of the BJP all over the country. In India this process began in 1998 with Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, the then HRD Minister in Vajpayee Government, who tweaked the history books by introducing astrology and the ritual methods, said Ram Puniyani, a renowned activist and historian. As the controversy over changes made to the Kannada and social science textbooks in Karnataka escalates, many intellectuals and academicians expressed concern at a meeting organised by AISEC on Wednesday at the Scouts and Guides Campus, Bangalore. Raj Shekhar VN, Vice President of All India Save Education committee (AISEC) referring to a similar situation in the past when the textbooks were revised with a communal tint, said, "AISEC represented the concerns regarding textbooks to then government; later all the textbooks were reviewed by an expert committee. In 2012, during the BJP's reign in the state, the textbooks were again distorted. All the false history was being propagated in the textbooks."

'Are orders coming from Keshava Krupa?'

Siddhant Garud

RSS did not fight for the freedom of the country and Hedgewar was not a freedom fighter, so why have they included him in the textbooks now, questioned former Advocate General, Ravivarma Kumar on Wednesday in the convention held against the distortion of school textbooks in Karnataka.

Speaking at the convention organised by the All India Save Education Committee (AISEC), he criticised the recent changes made in the Karnataka textbooks and said that the changes are riddled with factual inaccuracies and historical misinterpretations.



Prof Ravivarma Kumar addressing the audience

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"Are the orders coming from Keshava Krupa (RSS Karnataka State headquarters) or Vidhan Soudha?" he questioned. Criticising how the changes were made, he said, "The changes are being done without any transparency or consultation."

In regards to repealing these changes, Kumar opined that

the courts should not be involved. "I think it is better if the courts are not approached, as they will say we are not education experts." He also added that even though the current committee doesn't seem to be education experts, it is still a matter of government policy, so it is better to directly approach the government.

History is not fiction: Dr Romila Thapar

Niharika Bajaj

While formulating the content of a science textbook is the prerogative of a scientist, why is the job of deciding the history curriculum not left to the historians, questioned Prof. Romila Thapar, renowned Historian and former Chairperson of the NCERT Textbooks Committee, on Wednesday.

Academicians and scholars across the country expressed their dismay about the recent changes made to the school textbooks in Karnataka by sending the message in solidarity with the AISEC convention. Criticising the government

for not consulting the experts before tweaking the content, she said, "Textbooks in the sciences are not interfered with and are left to the scientists to decide what is important, so why are textbooks in the social sciences interfered with by persons who do not have specialised knowledge. Textbooks in the social sciences like history must also be the responsibility of the specialists in the subject." The purpose of teaching history is to encourage students to question their understanding of the past. "There can't be mere claims without proven evidence. History is not fiction: it has to be based on proven facts."