Construction of Masculinity and Nationalism in India: Role of Textbooks

Dr. Madhu Kushwaha
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education (K)
Banaras Hindu University,
Varanasi-221010 U.P. India
mts.kushwaha@gmail.com

Abstract

Education has been of interest to the modern nation-states in order to control the discourses of citizenship, and nationality. For the creation of nationalist ideology organized schooling is one of the most favoured state agencies to carry forward the nationalist agenda. The problem is that most of the nationalist ideologies are rooted in patriarchal social systems and nationalism itself is a masculine project. The ideology of hegemonic nationalism is not complete without the ideology of hegemonic masculinity because the latter is about protecting ‘ones women’ whereas the former one about protecting the motherland.

Schooling is a complex process and textbooks are the most tangible and concrete aspect of school life. Nationalist, masculine discourses get solidified in textbooks and provides site for interaction between ‘state’ and ‘future generation’.

The present research study (discourse analysis in social constructivist framework) of class VI textbooks found that nationalism and masculinity were presented as one and the same. Mostly ruling class, powerful and physically strong males without any trace of weakness were presented in the textbooks. In most of the textbooks, gendered discourse of nationalism foregrounded the protector (men) and that which had to be protected, i.e. the nation presented as mother/women. For this purpose heroes from national history has been selected and presented and sometimes metaphors were also used to construct the ideals of virile, sacrificing men. Textbooks provide very fertile grounds to inculcate hegemonic masculinity which is aggressive and superior to femininity but aggression was wrapped or disguised under the cover of patriotism and nationalistic demand. The study was financially supported by the South Asian Network to Address Masculinity, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Key Words: Masculinity, Nationalism, Textbooks
Background

One of the important characteristics of modern nations is the creation of schools as special institution entrusted with the responsibility of educating future generations. School became legitimizing agency of valid ‘knowledge’ and disseminating it. With the emphasis given to ‘education for all’ more and more children are attending schools every day and spend their considerable formative years in the schools. Every education system is embedded in its social system and the contours of patriarchal social system and ideology affects education system. School becomes an important site for the learning of gender identities. In addition to cognitive skills and abilities our children also learn about masculinities and femininities at the school. School life experiences (in terms of curriculum and subject choices, pedagogical practices, learning materials and school ethos) are organized in such a way that it must have conformity not in confrontations with societal gendered norms (Chanana, 2007).

Since education has been of interest to the modern nation-states in order to control the discourses of citizenship, and nationality so education system cannot remain insulated from state ideologies. Modern states prefer to call themselves nation states, and strive for the creation of nationalist feelings among its citizens. Nationalism is an ideology about nation and its people and it prevails before the emergence of actual state. As Gellner (1983, p. 49) argues, ‘it is nationalism that engenders nations, and not the other way around’. Nationalist seeks to achieve both the nationhood and the statehood (Nagel, 1998). Nationalism is a feeling of ‘we’ which needs constant interpretations. The creation of nationalist ideology is not one time task and constant effort is required to inculcate this ‘we’ feeling. For that organized schooling is most favoured state agency to carry forward the nationalist agenda.

The link between Masculinity and Nationalism

The problem is that most of the nationalist ideologies are rooted in patriarchal social systems and nationalism itself is a masculine project. Hegemonic nationalism is about shared sufferings, glory, and vision mostly woven around gendered line. Nationalist agenda has clearly demarcated pre-ordained roles for men and women. Within this, there is both the representation of women as
mother and the nation itself as a woman in need of protection from men. Further, women are presented as bearer of ‘national honour’ and men as owner and protector of the nation and national pride. The ideology of hegemonic nationalism is not complete without the ideology of hegemonic masculinity because the latter is about protecting ‘ones women’ whereas the former one about protecting the motherland. This ideology of the protector (men) and to be protected (women) expands from private to public life and remains a dominant model for the construction of masculinities and femininities. The idea of protection from the ‘enemy’ necessarily involves the idea of conflict and violence thus nationalism has close links with militaristic masculinity. As Nagel (1998) notes the “‘microculture’ of masculinity in everyday life articulates very well with the demands of nationalism, particularly its militaristic side and terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness”.

Through the construction of masculinity state, societies prepare/manufacture ‘men’ out of boys to accomplish the nationalistic goal. Education/schooling plays very significant role in the construction of masculinity because in broader sense education is the process of preparation for the adult social life. Requirements of adult social life are source of concern for educational planners while pondering over the aims of education system/ schooling. Schooling is a complex process and among various stakeholders (like, state, teachers, text-book, students, community, and parents) textbooks are the most tangible and concrete aspect of school life. Since children's textbooks are a dominant blueprint of shared cultural values, meanings, and expectations, they contribute to how children understand what is expected of women and men, and shape the way children will think about their own place in the world. Nationalist, masculine discourses get solidified in textbooks and provides site for interaction between ‘state’ and ‘future generation’. Thus study of textbooks gives an opportunity to understand these discourses.

**Need of the study**

Role of textbooks in the construction of femininity (ies) in Indian contexts have been studied extensively (Banda, S., 1992; Michael, M. R., 1991; Dhand, H., 1990; Mohan, S. & Krishnaraj, R., 1991; Gandhi, N., 1991) and some of the studies (Saxena, R., 1991; Thomas, P.E. &
Pichandy, C., 1992) focused on women magazine and other educational materials in the construction of femininity. All the studies focused on sexist biases and prejudices against women in textbooks, curriculum and in the women magazines. Though the role of textbooks and children’s literature in the construction of masculinity (Wannamaker, A. 2008; Lee & Collins, 2010; Clark, B. L., 2004; Lesko, N., 2000) has been studied in the western social contexts and Kobia, 2009 studied it in Kenyan society, the role of textbooks in the construction of masculinity remains a neglected area for the Indian context. Hence, this study seeks to address a significant knowledge gap. In particular, it seeks to address the following questions;

**Research Questions**

- What kinds of messages regarding masculinities (in terms of class, caste, religion) are present in textbooks?
- Is there any difference in messages among textbooks followed at national and regional level?
- How are discourses of nationalism and masculinity inter-woven and presented in textbooks?
- How does the state’s political ideology affect the representation of messages of masculinities?

**Method of the Study**

Discourse analysis in social constructivist framework was used for analyzing the textbooks. Besides this 2-3 students were interviewed to examine their reactions regarding the messages given in the textbooks.

**Sample**

For the purpose of study class 6th textbooks were selected. Students at this age are in their most impressionable age (12-13 years) so it was assumed that class 6th textbooks contain more clear and explicit messages regarding masculinity. Three sets of textbooks for class 6th were chosen;

**Set 1-** NCERT\(^1\) textbooks based on National Curriculum Framework 2005 and currently being used in the Central Board of Secondary Education schools,

\(^1\) National Council of Educational Research and Training is responsible for the preparation of curriculum framework for Indian schools.
Set 2- NCERT textbooks based on previous curriculum framework of 2000\(^2\) and currently not in use. These two sets (set 1 and 2) of textbooks were selected to study the effects of political ideology on the notions of masculinity presented in the textbooks.

Set 3 - Madhaymik Shiksha Parishad Uttar Pradesh textbooks based on NCF 2005 were selected and it is currently being used in all the U.P. Board schools.

Selection of Textbooks- textbooks have been selected in two stages; in the first stage the researcher read class 6\(^{th}\) textbooks of all the subjects and at the second stage textbooks having explicit messages regarding masculinity and nationalism have been selected for the study. Textbooks of languages Hindi and English (including supplementary reader), Social Studies (History section) from all the three sets were selected. Besides this U.P. Board’s Moral Education textbook and NCERT 2000 (old curriculum framework) textbooks of Science and Mathematics were also selected. A total 13 textbooks were selected. Out of these 13 textbooks Hindi and Moral education textbooks of set 2 & 3 respectively contained most explicit messages regarding masculinity and others have moderate or subtle messages. The detailed list of selected textbooks is given in the appendix-A.

Research Procedure-

First of all, the researcher read and re-read all the textbooks.

Coding was done

Themes were identified

Thematic analysis in terms of research question was done.

\(^2\) The political ideology of the then BJP led NDA government was exclusivist and based on pro-hindutva philosophy.
Findings: The following findings were based on the analysis of 13 textbooks of class 6th

Table 1- Number of Chapters on Each Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Chapters on Each Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set 1 Textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Heroes (Imperialist)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militant Nationalism and Patriotism</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotism</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in Nationalist Project</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism (India’s Glory), Male achievers (ancient and contemporary)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegemonic Masculinity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman Masculinity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Masculinity / Subordinate Masculinity</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Female protagonist

The chapters in different textbooks didn’t have neat thematic categories because in most of the chapters/texts themes were overlapping. Hence above categorization was done on the basis of most dominant theme of the text. The table is only indicative to provide a glimpse of various themes pertaining to masculinity and nationalism in the textbooks and their relative weight.

Thematic Analysis: The following themes have been identified during discourse analysis;

War- Though we live in 21st century but it seems that textbooks particularly Hindi and Moral Education textbooks have fascination for war and war heroes. One fourth of the chapters of Hindi textbook of set 2 and 12 out of 31 chapters in moral education textbook of set 3 were about war either between gods and demons, among kings, between native king and Muslim invaders, or India’s militant independence struggle against British. There were numerous references of war
against enemy, real, mythological or hypothetical (symbolic). Masculine ideals find utmost prominence in war. War heroes are celebrated for showing utmost courage for the clan, nation. These stories are suppose to inspire young students

**Militant nationalism**-

Set 2 Hindi textbook provides the most vivid, bold and direct description of militant nationalism. 6 out of 22 chapters are directly propagating militant nationalism. The overtone of the whole book is exclusively masculine. All the chapters were about male characters except one poem which was about a female protagonist Rani Laxmibai, depicting 'manly' qualities of bravery and sacrifice for the nation. The theme of the poem was to celebrate patriotism and it was woven in nationalist discourse. It invoked the masculinity, virility, and sacrifice for the nation. Chapter 2, (set 2 Hindi) Baisakhi Phir Aa Gai was a description of sacrifice of Panch Pyare and the demand by Guru Gobind Singh for five heads, “आँखों से चिंगारियां विखेरता, नंगी चमचमाती तलवार घुमाता हुआ तैलीस वर्षाय युवा व्यक्ति कह रहा था मुझे सिर चहिये...... मुझे सिर चहिये ...... मैं अपना सिर देने को तैयार हुँः......

खटाक ....और खेमे से खून की धार वह निकलती है

चौथी मांग के साथ तलवार पर खून की परत और गहरी हो गई.....एक सिर और चाहिए

(“a thirty three years old young man was revolving bare, shining sword and his eyes were blazing with anger asked, I want head......I want your head”........ “I am ready to give my head”....... “Crashed” ...... “and stream of blood flows from tent”. “Sword has thick blood stain after fourth head.......one more head is needed”)

The language, theme of the text and description showed such enthusiasm to sacrifice, for bloodshed that it seemed like a festivity, like a ‘celebration of violence’.

Patriotic poems were exhorting men to be the protector of the nation and protect the country from enemies. In protection they (men) must be ready for the utmost sacrifice like one of the poems in set 3 Hindi textbook, there was wish of a man that he could serve his head in the service of nation. Another poem ‘Khooni Hastakshar’ (blood soaked signature) dedicated to the Subhash Chandra Bose, freedom fighter in Hindi textbook of set 2 was invoking virility of men;

---

3 Ninth and the last religious head of Sikhs who founded Khalsa Panth, a warrior group/ caste
“आजादी का इतिहास कहीं काली स्याही लिख पाती है?
इसके लिखने के लिए खून की नदी बहाई जाती है.,
आजानु बापू ऋंची करके ये बोले, रक्त मुझे देना.
इसके बदले में भारत की आजादी तुम मुझसे लेना...........
वह आगे आये जिसके तन में भारतीय खून बहता हो,
वह आगे आये जो अपने को हिंदुस्तानी कहता हो……...
सारी जनता हुंकार उठी--हम आते हैं, हम आते हैं.
माता के चरणों में यह लो हम अपना रक्त चढ़ाते हैं.
(History of freedom struggle can’t be written by ink, for this we need blood. He raised his hand,
and asked, “give me your blood…in return I will give you freedom”. Come forward who has
Indian blood and who call themselves Indian……..People responded in enthusiasm…we are
coming, we are coming, to sacrifice ourselves for mother nation)

**Contribution of women in militant nationalism** - Set 3 Hindi textbook and set 2 Hindi
textbooks have three common chapters. One of the common chapters was about the role of
mother in the life of a revolutionary freedom fighter Ramprasad Bismil, it was an excerpt from the
autobiographical account of the above said revolutionary. Contribution of women as ‘mothers’
in national project were the highlight of this text e.g.,

मॉ कुँ खँगे यह विश्वास है, तुम यह समझ कर धैर्य धारण करोगी कि तुम्हारा पुत्र माताओं की
माता भारत माता की सेवा में अपने जीवन को बलिवेदी की भंड कर गया और उसने तुम्हारे कुल
को कलंकित न किया; अपनी प्रतिज्ञा में ढढ़ रहा. (Mother, I believe that you will patiently
understand that your son has sacrificed his life for the supreme mother - Mother India and he
didn’t betray the family name and kept his promise).

Contribution of female as mothers was also highlighted in another chapter of set 3 Hindi
textbook, ‘Amar Shahid Bhagat Singh Ke Patr’ “……….लेकिन दिलेका टंग से भेरे फांसी चढ़ने
की सूरत में हिंदुस्तानी माताएं अपने बच्चों को भगवत सिंह बनने की आरजू किया करेंगी. (The
way I embrace death by going to the gallows (and sacrifice my life for nation), would inspire Indian mothers to have children (sons) like Bhagat Singh).

At surface level it may seem that women are missing from nationalist project and it is play of men, by men, for men but in the script some of the roles are also given to women as mothers (Davis & Enthias, 1989). These texts gave very clear messages to boys and girls regarding what are expected from them in nationalist project. Nation belongs to men; they are the owner and protector of it. Women are incorporated in the nation in different capacities like some time as symbolic mother nation and sometimes as actual producers of future citizens (virile men).

**Patriotism-** Masculinity at private or individual level is about protecting one’s own women folk and family whereas manifestation of masculinity in public life (ICRW, 2002) is perceived as the ability to protect the honour of one’s clan, tribe and nation. Hence, patriotism is one of the dominant themes woven around desired qualities of masculinity. Most of the males presented in the textbooks as role models to students were great patriots. The context in which patriotism was defined in the textbook was primarily war like or conflicting situations e.g., battle against Muslim invaders or freedom struggle against the colonial rule. But sometimes scientists, industrialists and political leaders (all male) were also described as patriots and their contribution in the nation building were highlighted.

Muslim men were primarily portrayed as rulers, kings or invaders and at two instances as a Sufi saint and as a poet. Nizamuddin Aauliya, sufi saint was portrayed as person who stood for Hindu-Muslim unity and known for his religious tolerance. Moral education textbook of set 3 described Amir Khusaro (1253-1325 AD) a poet of medieval India in the following words,

“…..उन्हें भारतीय होने का बहुत गर्व था. अमीर खुसरो ने अपने ग्रन्थ ‘गुर्रतुल कलाम’ में लिखा है मैं एक हिन्दुस्तानी तुर्क हूँ, आपके प्रश्नों का उत्तर हिंदी में दे सकता हूँ........मैं तूति हिन्दुस्तान का लोक हूँ आप मुझसे हिंदी में प्रश्न करें, ताकि मैं आपसे भली भाषा बात कर सकूँ (“…..he was proud of being Indian. He wrote in his book ‘Gurrutul Kalam’, “I am an Indian Turk. I can answer your questions in Hindi……..I am parrot of Hidustan. Question me in Hindi, so that I can talk you properly”).

In general, muslim men and masculinity were less represented and whenever represented it seems that it have been co-opted by hegemonic discourses of Nationalism. Above representation
used the word ‘Indian’ but at that time the concept of India or Indian nation was not emerged. Thus, when Muslims were not represented as invaders they were represented as patriots, and proud of their Indians traditions.

Why is patriotism one of the most desired qualities of masculinity in the modern nation states? The discourse of nationalism particularly militant nationalism is not complete unless there are some men ready to sacrifice their lives for the protection of national pride and glory. There is connection between masculinity and nationalism because creation of nation is a masculine project as Cynthia Enloe (1990, p. 45) observes that ‘nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope’. Nationalism is an extension of a man’s individual sense of honour, pride etc. to the national level. According to the ideology of masculinity women are considered as a property of men, clan, and nation. If men dishonour/insults a woman then actually he dishonours the man she belongs. Men are the beholder of honour, pride and women’s role is to keep that sense of honour intact by not bringing shame to the nation by her conduct and appearance. Patriotism legitimizes the control over the nation by some men. It provides a cover to the aggressive, brutal side of masculinity, indulgence in wars and conflict etc. It also brings honour to men.

When we define patriots as heroes in conflicting situations, these situations need an opponent or enemy, real or hypothetical. Hence any account of brave man was not complete unless and until he fought with an enemy. It is interesting to note that almost all the patriots included in the textbooks fought against enemy like Maharana Pratap and Guru Gobind Singh were presented as patriots because they fought against Muslim invaders. But Begum Hazrat Mahal and Bahadur Shah Jafar were also presented as patriots because they fought against British. Most of the heroes who found place in set 2 and 3 textbooks belong to militant nationalist masculine ideals like, Guru Gobind Singh, Mangal Pandey, Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, Yatindra Nath Mukerjee, Ram Prasad Bismil, Kunwar Singh, Rani Luxmibai.

**Gendered account of Nation**

Both nationalism and masculinity are discursive concepts or ideas. As Gellner (1983, p. 49) argues, ‘it is nationalism that engenders nations, and not the other way around’. The whole
discourse of Indian nationalism was gendered in which nation was defined or embodied as women and men were defined as the custodian/protector of it. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s ‘Anand Math’ constructed an image of national land as an embodiment of Indian mother chained by British rulers (alien/enemy) and called men to free and restore the pride of mother India. This call resonated with masculine cultural theme.

Analysis of the textbook showed that almost all the times Indian nation has been referred as female, ‘Bharat Mata’. Patriotic song/poems particularly in set 2 and 3 textbooks addressed and encouraged men to be ready to sacrifice for the Indian nation portrayed as sacred mother. Earlier it was a usual practice to represent the above theme in the form of visual like Indian map with background picture of female figure representing as Indian nation and male soldier with gun to protect it from ‘enemy’. Though none of the textbooks analyzed had this image but at the discourse or content level the gendered message was not changed and kept repeated.

Thus in the textbooks the boundary between nationhood and womanhood was presented in a very specific manner and nation’s pride has been referred as women’s pride and her insult was nation’s insult. The hegemonic nationalism and hegemonic masculinity have common ideology both reinforcing each other.

**Nationalism- India’s Past glory and Uniqueness**

Nationalism is an idea about nation which develops during discourses around the ‘what we are’ and ‘how we were’, and ‘what we would be’ in future at collective level. Since it is an idea it needs constant interpretations and repetition. For the development of nationalistic feelings belief in the shared and glorified past is of utmost important. In the making of nation it is ‘commonness’ among the members is emphasized but the nation always needs ‘others’ to define the meaning of ‘we’. Nationalistic feelings are evoked by posing ‘others’ as enemy History helps in the reconstruction of glorified past that is why it is one of the most sensitive school subjects inviting lot of attention not only from academicians but from politicians and civil society members also.

Class 6th history textbooks of all the three sets don’t have sections belonging to medieval India and dealt only from pre-historic period to 7th Century A.D. Indian history. Analysis of the
textbooks showed that nationalism has been promoted through emphasizing India and Indian culture, its glory, its ancientness, and its contribution to world civilizations was highlighted. For example chapter 8 of History textbook of set 3;

(Foreign invaders didn’t have their own language, script, and organized religion………………Indian culture has this unique capacity to assimilate other cultures. This is the reason that foreign invaders became part of Indian society. Other cultures like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome have been extinct whereas Indian culture is still surviving due to its ideals of tolerance, social harmony, flexibility, liberal attitude and the notion of ‘whole world is family’.)

Though there are repeated recommendations that textbook should be written in simple language (mother tongue) so that students can understand it easily but above excerpt shows that textbooks under analysis were using very literary Hindi with heavy Sanskrit overtone. This kind of Sankritized Hindi is not the spoken language of thousands of children even in Hindi belt. Its continued use in the textbooks is again a marker of hegemony of certain (Brahmanic) class and their culture.

Foreign traveler Xuanzang’s account has been used to validate the claim of Indian superiority. There was an illustrated account of Harsh Vardhan’s and India’s greatness without any reference of source in the chapter 10 of set 3 History textbook e.g.,

(I saw so many kings but none
of them as great as Harsh. Saw so many countries but not like India. India is a great country and its greatness is due people (king) like Harsh)

Unlike set 2 and 3, set 1 History textbook emphasized sharing and exchange among cultures at different points of time rather than talking about only Indian civilization’s contribution. For example, set 2 and 3 History textbooks mentioned Harappa/Sindhu civilization as Indian or Hindu civilization and the overtone of the chapters were nationalist but set 1 mentioned it only as Harappa civilization. Besides this set 1 History textbook was written in an interactive and engaging manner suitable to class 6th students and one could see visible shift from rulers’ history towards people’s history.

Mathematics textbook of set 2 has four sections As history Tells Us on the contributions of Indian mathematicians like Aryabhatt, Brahmgupta, Bhaskara I, Mahavira, Bhaskara II, Varahmihir (all male). In the last section the greatness of Vedic civilization has been highlighted to invoke the feelings of glorified past. But none of these sections mentioned Lilavati, mathematically talented daughter of Bhaskara II.

Science textbook of set 2 included eight biographies of great male scientists of the world including two Indians, Aryabhatt and Maharaja Jai Singh II and their contributions to the field of science and humanity.

All the textbooks of Set 3 have national anthem on back cover page. And in the English textbook ‘Rainbow’ there was a text printed as ‘My Personal Page’ on the inside of the back cover page. Besides routine types of information like name, fathers’ name this page has a column, “I love my country. My country is…………….. . It is the most beautiful country in the world.”

Masculinity is about adventure also (Adams 1990 and Green, 1993 cited by Nagel, 1998). It is interesting and unusual to see that the obverse page of front cover of English textbook ‘Honeysuckle’ of set 1 has an advertisement to join Indian Army. The advertisement promised an extraordinary life of adventure, honour, and glory and it has the half page picture of three male soldiers in action, showing manly gait and pride and one tiny photograph of a female sitting in front of the computer.
Textbooks actively shape the feelings towards ‘nation’ by selecting the content and its presentation to students. Sometimes it was done in most deliberate fashion like set 2 and 3 textbooks and sometimes in somewhat indirect manner like giving Indian Army advertisement in set 1 English textbook.

**Positive Masculinity**— Most of the times men and hegemonic masculinity was shown in the context of nationalistic patriotism, and in war like situation or in conflict. But when men were not represented in above situations still bravery was a staple quality of manhood. Almost all the depiction of male characters was done in very positive manner. Almost all the kings were depicted as very brave, brutal and harsh to enemies but gentle to their subjects. Convergence between these opposite qualities were somewhat similar to masculine ideals of late nineteenth-century ‘ideals of manhood’ in the middle-class northern US. Rotundo (1987) divides these into ‘Masculine Achiever’ (competitiveness, independence, persistence), the ‘Christian Gentleman’ (willpower, restraint, discipline), and the ‘Masculine Primitive’ (strength, virility, courage).

Bravery, benevolence, kindness, adventure, and reason were some of qualities attached to almost all male characters. There was no trace of dilemma, weakness-moral or physical, was shown and contempt for weakness was prevalent in set 2 and 3 textbooks.

Cowardice was not desirable and there was contempt for a *man* who has shown cowardice. One of the poems in Hindi textbook of set 3, chapter 15 ‘Khag Udate Rahana Jeevan Bhar’, described through the metaphor of a bird that death is better than showing cowardice because brave death makes one martyr and respected but a coward *man* is ridiculed and it is the highest kind of insult for a person (*man*),

```
खग उड़ते रहना जीवन भर।
भूल गया है तू अपना पथ, और नहीं पंखों में भी गति,
किन्तु लौटना पीछे पथ पर, अरे ! मौत से भी है बदतर
खग उड़ते रहना जीवन भर

................
यदि तू लौट पड़ेगा थक कर अंधड काल बवंडर से डर,
प्यार तुझे करने याले ही, देखेंगे तुझको हँस हँस कर।
खग उड़ते रहना जीवन भर
और मिट गया चलते चलते, मंजिल पथ तय करते करते,
```
(Bird, fly forever!
Though you are lost and tired, but even death is better than going back.
Bird, fly forever!

........
If you return by fearing stormy weather, even your friends will laugh at you.
Bird, fly forever!
And if you die on your journey, the world will remember you as ‘martyr’.
Bird, fly forever!) 

Unlike Hindi textbooks, English textbooks of set 2 and 3 both didn’t contain explicit messages regarding masculinity and nationalism, patriotism or militant nationalism. But the depictions of male characters are along the line of attributes of positive masculinity like bravery, fearlessness, honesty, intelligence, devotion to parents etc.

English supplementary reader textbook of set 2 has two stories from Panchtantra, ‘The Friendly Mongoose’ and ‘The Monkey and the Crocodiles’ both the stories depict female characters as irrational, short tempered and selfish. Indigenous or folk stories are tend to be more gendered so whenever attempt is being made to make the textbook indigenous there is a threat that it would become gender insensitive. Therefore a careful, balanced approach of content selection is needed which must have consistency with the constitutional commitment of gender equality.

Very high behavioral, moral standards were set in the Hindi and Moral Education textbooks of set 2 and 3. Sometimes it seems that these textbooks are not meant for children but for adults. It is not surprising because children were so central to the nationalist project in India that their ideals were the same as those of adults. National Commission of Education, 1966 (popularly known as Kothari Commission) says that, “The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms”. Above remark is sufficient to show that how national system of education perceives the role of education and place of children in nation building project. It can be easily understood that how state (through education system) use and socialize children to carry forward the discourses of citizenship and nationality and why children’s textbooks has such high moral values of sacrifice and martyrdom.
Hegemony in terms of message- Analysis of the textbooks showed that almost all the masculine ideals in set 2 and 3 textbooks have been taken from upper/ruling class. Set 1 textbooks were an exception because; first it contained least messages regarding hegemonic masculinity, second these were the most inclusive in terms of class and gender identity. There were very few instances when men from lower caste and class were depicted in proper light. For example set 2 Hindi textbook chapter two Baisakhi Phir Aa Gai, not only talked about militant nationalism (sacrificing one’s head) but it also dealt with caste issue like,

मैं अपना सिर देने को तैयार हूँ पर....... क्या आप मेरा सिर भी स्वीकार करेंगे? मैं छोटी जाति का हूँ....... छीपा.....कपड़े छापने वाला..... (I am ready to give my head but.....will you accept my head? Because I am from lower caste......dyer.....one who dyes cloth)

मेरा सिर चाहिए ! मैं नाई हूँ, मैं अपने उस्तरे से लोगों के बाल काटता हूँ, मैं बाल काटता रहा और छोटा बनता रहा. लोगों ने मेरे सामने सिर झुकाए पर मेरे हाथ का चुआ पानी नहीं पिया. आप तो गुरु हैं. लाखों लोग आपके सामने सिर झुकाते हैं पर आपकी प्यास नहीं बुझाते. लीजिए मेरा सिर.....शायद आपकी प्यास थोड़ी सो बुझ जाये.

(take my head ! I am a barber. I cut people’s hair. I faced humiliation everyday by cutting hairs. People bowed their head before me but thought that I am polluting so did not accept water from me. You are Guru, lakhs of people bowed before you but not ready to give their heads. Please take my head.......perhaps it would quench your thirst)

The whole chapter did not emphasize the contribution of these lower caste men but kept focus on Guru Gobind Singh. It seems that like women, lower caste men were also not portrayed in proper light and denied their contributions. In a sense, lower caste/class men were feminized and depicted as less powerful and vulnerable (like a woman) in front of high caste/class men. Another example was the story of Aiklavya, a tribal boy in set 3 Moral Education textbook. This story didn’t question the caste hegemony over educational opportunity and injustice inflicted upon a tribal boy but glorify the Dronacharya as greatest teacher and Aiklavya as a good student. Leadership position in struggle, war usually depicted upper class/caste, ruling males. Though India is a diverse country and this rhetoric found place in all the textbooks but as far as religious and ethnic minorities are concerned males from these groups were not adequately represented.
Muslim males found place in one or two chapters either as rulers, invaders or sometimes if they had fought against British during Indian freedom movement.

Under representation of women as rule was being followed in set 2 and 3 textbooks. Science is considered as a masculine subject and this belief was reaffirmed when we see the science textbook of set 2. Textbook contained biographies of only male scientists besides this in general women/girls were missing in the textbook. There were total 35 pictures depicting human figure to show some scientific activities and only 6 pictures (2 showed women involved in cleaning!) showed females doing some activity and rest of the pictures (29) were of males.

Though one of the recommendations of NCF 2005 was that gender issues must be addressed in all the subjects. But it is depressing to note that set 3 textbooks (currently being used in Uttar Pradesh government schools) which claim that these are based on NCF 2005 recommendations also under represent female in almost all the textbooks. It is clear that these recommendations were not given due attention in Set 3 textbooks. Textbooks from set 1 gave fair representation not only to women but also other ethnic groups. Not a single textbook in any of the sets depicted subordinate masculinity (Connell, 1995; 2000).

**Students’ Reaction**-

In order to understand how children receive the messages of masculinity given in the textbooks researcher interviewed 3 students (2 male and 1 female) of class 6 individually. Two students were studying in the schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education and one from Uttar Pradesh Board. The interview was task based and the researcher gave them texts (from sample) to read and after that had informal talk about their perception, feelings regarding the text.

Nationalist discourses have powerful influence on students as one of the students said that he liked most the chapter ‘Jhansi ki Rani’ (set 1 Hindi). In response to the question why did he like he said that because she fought for the nation’s freedom. He further said that everybody should be patriot and should fight for the nation.

*सबको देशभक्त होना चाहिए और दुश्मनों से भारत माता की रक्षा करनी चाहिए*
He said if he will be given the opportunity he would fight for the nation. In response to the question who can fight for the nation all the students responded that male soldiers. The researcher asked whether women could be patriot. They paused for some time and said ‘yes’. The researcher further probed how, two students said that they don’t know and one (male) said that by buying only Indian goods. At the end of interview the same student said that women could nurse the wounded soldiers in battlefield.

Both male students said that bloodshed and fighting is not ok but later on legitimized that it is essential to protect one’s nation. Both the male students said that Indian army is peaceful army it never initiated fight but fought to protect the nation.

लड़ना पड़ता है...अगर कोई हमला करे

One student said that soldiers have more respect in society. In response to the question whether he would join the army, he said, ‘No’ and added that he was not afraid but had other interest (ऐसा नहीं है कि मूढ़े डर लगता है.... पर मेरा इंटरेस्ट कुछ और है). The girl student gave very brief responses to this sort of questions and simply said that it was men’s (military) duty to protect the nation and it was important.

In response to the question which chapter did she like most, the girl student said that ‘ईदगाह’ a famous story by Premchand and ‘लत्ता जादूगर’ another story of a magician boy. Both the story had little boys as main character and disguised moral teaching of ‘care and sacrifice for mother’ but these stories were not about violence and war. It seemed that unlike the boys the girl student liked the stories that had themes of care and sacrifice rather than patriotism and violence.

The researcher asked why we refer to India as ‘bharat mata’ (mother India) one male students said that because it is written in the textbooks. All the students said that they found the story ‘baisakhi phir aa gai’ (set 2 Hindi textbook) weird as they couldn’t understand why the fellow was asking for head (मुझे सिर चाहिए, मुझे सिर चाहिए). It seemed that the text was beyond the comprehension level of the students.

All of them said that they don’t understand the meaning of national anthem completely but knew who had written it. One male student said that though he couldn’t understand it but it filled him
with enthusiasm. One boy said patriotic poems and texts about freedom fighters motivate us but another said that he was not sure about it.

Analysis of the students’ interview made it clear that at class 6th level students have accepted the gendered account of nation. They have clear idea about what was expected from males in nationalist discourse but were not very sure about what women could do for the nation however, one of the boys had assigned supportive role (as nurses) to females in nationalism. Students are not the passive receiver of the messages presented in the textbooks. They read, interpret and construct meaning out of the messages. They have agency in terms of likings for the texts given however this agency is made limited by powerful discourses presented through textbooks, other children’s literature, popular culture and mass media.

**Conclusions-**

1. The messages regarding masculinity given in the textbooks have conformity with the notion of hegemonic masculinity with some exceptions in set 1 textbooks. Mostly upper/ruling class, powerful and physically strong males without any trace of weakness were presented in the textbooks. And boys and men were invoked to achieve the high ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Hindi and Moral Education textbooks of set 2 and 3 respectively had most articulate messages regarding hegemonic masculinity.

2. In terms of regional variation regarding messages of masculinity it was found that Uttar Pradesh textbooks were more vocal than national level (set 1) textbooks. It has mainly national heroes from hegemonic tradition rather than having regional character with only one exception. In spite of the claim that Uttar Pradesh has revised its textbooks on the basis of the NCF 2005 recommendations, it was not following most of the recommendations. Regarding the messages of masculinity Uttar Pradesh textbooks were more along the lines of set 2 textbooks which were based on NCF 2000 (old curriculum). It had clear and bold messages of hegemonic masculinity interwoven with nationalistic demand particularly in the Hindi and Moral Education textbooks.
3. Nationalism and masculinity were presented as one and the same. Highest ideals for men and masculinity were to fulfill the nationalist demand. In most of the textbooks, gendered discourse of nationalism foregrounded the protector (men) and that which had to be protected, i.e. the nation presented as mother/women. For this purpose heroes from national history has been selected and presented and sometimes metaphors were also used to construct the ideals of virile, sacrificing men. Textbooks provide very fertile grounds to inculcate hegemonic masculinity which is aggressive and superior to femininity but aggression was wrapped or disguised under the cover of patriotism and nationalistic demand.

4. The political ideology of government does affect the messages presented in the textbooks regarding masculinity and nationalism. State’s political ideology affected the messages of masculinity as set 2 textbooks had the most bold messages of aggressive masculinity. Set 2 textbooks were commissioned during the rule of BJP led National Democratic Alliance. BJP is a political party known for its Hindu Nationalistic ideology. Hence almost all the masculine ideals were selected from Hindu community and the dominant discourses were militant nationalism and attempt to revive (Hindu) India’s past glory. Not a single chapter in Hindi textbook had a central character belonging to ethnic groups other than Hindu.

While the set 1 textbooks based on National Curriculum Framework 2005 were written during the rule of Congress led United Progressive Alliance and the ideological leaning of the congress is commitment towards secularism and inclusiveness. Besides the political ideology of government the whole process of preparation of NCF 2005 was different and for the first time in history of curriculum making a focus group was constituted on ‘Gender Issues in Education’. This group’s recommendations have contributed much to make this framework inclusive and gender sensitive. Thus, set1 textbooks (based on NCF 2005) contained least messages regarding hegemonic masculinity and least reference of war and violence to invoke virility among men. Men as the ‘Protector of Nation’ discourse were avoided. The perspective chosen to represent dominant males of Indian history was different as we can take the example of Gandhi Ji.
All the three sets of textbooks have chapters on Gandhi; while caring and nurturing aspect of Gandhi Ji’s personality has been highlighted most in the set 1 Hindi textbook, even three illustrations showed Gandhi ji –cooking, cleaning, and spinning. Set 2 English textbook, chapter 5 Portrait of Bapu also discussed the sensitivity of Gandhi ji towards downtrodden and depicted him somewhat similar fashion like set 1. Set 3 textbook of Moral Education has a chapter on Gnadhi Ji but his contribution as a freedom fighter and leader got prominence. It was interesting to note that set 2 textbook mentioned the birth of Gandhi but not the death, perhaps to avoid any direct reference of militant Hindu ideology which claimed Gandhi ji’s life.

Set 2 textbooks had most visible and bold massages regarding hegemonic masculinity and nationalism. Preparation of men to fulfill the demand of militant nationalism was very obvious in all the textbooks of this set particularly in the Hindi textbook. Generally History and language (Hindi) textbooks are chosen to represent the nationalist discourse but in set 2 even Mathematics (As History Tells Us) and Science textbooks were used to forward the agenda of nationalism. Set 1 and 2 textbooks differ significantly regarding the messages of masculinity.

The expression of masculinity or femininity depends on the social contexts. We have seen from the above that masculinity in the text books under analysis relates to the most significant categories of social life, such as caste, class and religious identity. That is to say that gender identities are simultaneously located within a number of contexts. Hence, my analysis shows that while it is important to study masculinity, it is just as important to not see it as an autonomus realm of analysis. We have seen, for example, that men of lower status can be feminised, whereas women of high status (such as the Rani of Jhansi) can be masculinised. The study of masculine cultures is then, also a study of the shifting nature of identities depending on the contexts of class, caste and religion.
Limitations- In India, besides NCERT and state board textbooks there were whole lot of textbooks by private publishers used in unaided private schools. Due to paucity of time and resources the present study was delimited only to NCERT and U.P. board textbooks.

References:


