

## **CONCLUSION**

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Considerable research has been done to understand the role of education, socialization and instruction process in schools that go into gender construction. The schools definitely play a formative role in forming the normative approach on gender relations. The present study took up the study of women and gender construction through RSS school system, primarily undertaking the study of its textbooks. The study has looked into whether RSS objectives and ideology as specified in its literature and published from time to time, could get communicated through its school books. It has examined the ways in which RSS school textbooks impart lessons on gender to its pupil.

RSS school textbooks as it proceeds to the higher level sharpen on its message and instructions. The textbooks throughout emphasizes on duties and respect for traditional Hindu values. Interestingly, it tries to catch the child quite young through its humanizing language and various symbols denoting women and men, and the gender relations. The modern sensibility about women's empowerment and women agency also finds its place in the construction; the tradition and modernity build into the narrative so as to appear rationalistic and humanistic to the pupils and their parents.

The textbooks particularly take up lessons in patriotism and duties for the nation consistently and introduce the concepts of bharatmata quite early for children. The chapter I, on gender and nation in school textbooks, looks into RSS position on nation, its gendered imaging and close representation of its ideology and instructions in its school textbooks. There appear differences in

Sangh and Samiti's representation of bharatmata iconography which are also reflected in textbook representations. The textbooks however generally follow the Sangh position where the deity, bharatmata, is presented as a caring nurturing mother, rather than the Samiti's image of bharatmata as '*goddess Ashtabuja*' which is fierce, bold and with warrior qualities. In comparison Sangh presentation of bharatmata clearly dominate in textbook representations. The physical feminine form of the nation is elaborated in akhand bharat (indivisible India), as the real form of mother, which should be preserved at all cost. The nuances and descriptions of female beauty and body have been highlighted for its particular importance in masculinized scheme of politics.

The text is primarily addressed to the boys, bringing out stories of great men, their courage and prowess in defense of the motherland. These project only male children's enthusiasm and patriotism for the motherland. A specific gender relation is drafted through these textual and pictorial presentations. Particularly striking is the overall evasion of text-books' representation of women's roles in public domain. The duties of the nation in the public domain remain specifically for men. Women have duties to nation more specifically through their roles as mothers and custodians of culture. Though RSS in its pamphlets speaks of women's social and community roles and the more recent times witnessed women's role in politics, we do not see these aspects represented in the textbooks.

The chapter 2, women and gender in the text books' presentation of religious narrative looks into the gender construction through the religious

narratives. The social normative is laid down for the young minds with full authority of the religious prescription. The content is made simpler and presented in interesting readable form to students, avoiding complicated matters and omitting certain parts. The dose of religious content and moral training in Hindu *sanskaras* increases with higher classes. The process starts with nursery books which bring in images of gods, goddesses, saints and devotees. Students are acquainted with religious symbols and values very early. The values of sacrifice, devotion, family norms and values, culture, tradition and customs are emphasized throughout in these texts. However, goddesses, like Sita, Savitri etc. are idealized for their sacrifices and devotion to their husbands and families, thereby fixing the patriarchal family norm. The model of subservient Indian womanhood is clearly invoked through the use of religious literature.

Ideal social normative and gender construction is through various ways. For instance, the manner in which gods are represented with martial, warlike qualities, strong physique and other ‘masculine’ virtues, while the goddesses on the other hand are spoken primarily in relation to their husband gods and as submissive wives. For men, devotion is towards their elders and obviously not towards wife. Through the medium of the religious narratives, the patriarchal norm is clearly laid down. Women are made vulnerable and in need of protection from men. In a separate chapter on Sita *ki Agnepareeksha*, the concepts of chastity and modesty in women’s body are emphasized. Similar depiction is of the episode of Draupadi’s *cheerharan* from the other epic,

Mahabharata. The pictorial representation of the scenes and figures of the gods and goddesses also bring them in contrast. By selective use of the episodes and employing different focus, the school textbooks bring out highly patriarchal gender order of gods, and present these as ‘ideal’ gender relations to its learners.

Similarly, the representation of women and gender in History textbooks socialize students in such concepts as the glorious Indian womanhood of the ‘golden age’. The study of History textbooks has brought out the recreation of the ‘glorious Hindu past,’ closely following the Altekarian treatment of ancient India, which is off course is a great resource for RSS. The status of women in ancient India is described of considerable high status which deteriorated in the period of Muslim Rule in India. The advocacy of ancient as Hindu/glorious and medieval as Muslim/dark period could then easily invoke the ground for hatred against Muslims on the plank of woman’s plight. History textbooks also bring in references from the epic and religious literature to emphasize the point of greater freedoms for women in ancient India. The problem in treatment of women in the History textbooks especially of the ancient and medieval India therefore is not so much about their invisibility in the accounts but more on account of the manner of their representation in the past societies. The representation of women and gender in history has become a matter for settling scores in the present. The attack on Indian women and their modesty has been recurrent theme in RSS’ medieval Indian history. It has been primarily thus in the realm of history of sexuality that the strained relations between the caste

Hindus and elite Muslims had been constructed. The enemy is presented in worst form with voracious sexual appetite.

At the same time these episodes in the history textbooks try to bring out the narrative of consistent resistance to the ‘tyranny and oppression unleashed by Muslim invaders’, this perhaps is to build up confident collective consciousness ready for action to redeem past wrong. The stories on the other hand of Indian women’s supreme sacrifice by death to preserve honour, exemplify their devotion to their men, spiritual strength and physical courage which then essentialize Indian womanhood as essentially self sacrificing.

The representations of women in ancient and medieval India are neatly comparable. The account of modern India continues with the narrative of the loot and plunder of the motherland by foreigners. Here the bharatmata iconography for the rashtra is more frequently used. However, the resistance stories of women as we found in medieval India are hardly forthcoming now, except for the account of Rani Lakshmibai. The entire representation of nationalist movement appears as purely masculine in practice to the near total exclusion of women, thereby also stereotyping the gender roles.

The modern Indian narrative brings out the Indian male reformers response to the Colonial onslaught on Indian culture, society and religion. As ‘woman’s question’ remained important in the nineteenth century colonial discourse, the issues like sati, child marriage widow remarriage remained the major issues in reform. The point reiterated while discussing reformers efforts on women’s education was the emphasis on women as mothers and initiators of

their children's education. The representation of women and gender coming through History textbooks has the effect of socializing students into considering the public political spaces as distinctly masculine.

The portrayal of women and gender in domestic domain by Sangh and Samiti closely follow the 'separate spheres' Victorian ideal. Only on certain points Samiti differ from Sangh's postulation, but essentially remains patriarchal in content. The discourse remains strictly in the duty-bound framework. Samiti's publication is more numerous in this regard as it is in charge of the matters relating to women and family. Samiti tries to fix family responsibilities also with other family members. Especially in imparting *sanskaras*, the role of both father and mother is discussed, something which is not forthcoming from Sangh literature. However, home clearly remains the domain of woman and the ideal Hindu home depends on the efforts and active involvement of women. Mothers have special responsibilities towards children. It is through training their children in proper *sanskaras* that women contribute in the task of nation making. The traditional emphasis of RSS has remained on women for home and men for work. The textbook representations also bring the stereotypical role of women in home and their domestic responsibilities. Children are also socialized into gender roles through various devices – depiction of religiosity, of games children play, involvement in active pursuits, sciences, use of technology etc.

The chapter also looks into the more recent pamphlets of Sangh where its position on women and domesticity appear moderated. RSS speaks of

women's education, financial independence, self-respect and career, health etc. clearly appropriating a number of issues from the women's movement. As women's movement and the issues of equality and women's rights made tremendous inroads among Hindu women, RSS appears compelled to address these issues. However on the other hand, it brings in a parallel discourse on duties as opposed to rights. RSS literature particularly keeps reiterating the need for women to keep a balance between responsibilities at home and work. The last chapter on women and work brings out RSS' recent perspective on work and looks into the feature of how the textbooks continue to represent RSS' traditional position of – 'work for men and home for women'. While there was a need to extend certain provisions (especially of work) for the middle class Hindu women, whose consciousness had advanced with the women's rights campaign. The RSS pamphlets were thus addressed to them. There was however no such urgency for changing the textbook portrayal of gender relations in public domain and at work meant for young readers.