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Aadhaar's New Face

Here comes facial recognition. What's next?

TOI Editorials



In what is implicit acceptance of exclusion errors, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has begun face recognition for Aadhaar authentication. UIDAI circulars since January harp on the need to make Aadhaar authentication "more inclusive" by performing facial recognition in addition to fingerprint/iris scans. In April, UIDAI told Supreme Court that authentication failure rates were 6% for fingerprint scan and 8.54% for iris scans. In July 2018, there were 71

crore fingerprint and 1.6 crore iris authentications indicating a whopping 4 crore fingerprint authentication failures last month.

These failures could have happened to people accessing rations or purchasing new SIM cards. Aadhaar was initially pitched as an efficient way of delivering welfare. But now, like Leviathan, it is extending its empire everywhere. Limiting Aadhaar to welfare and fixing the glitches must precede overreach. The trust quotient with Aadhaar is falling. Earlier, we were told fingerprints are almost foolproof but then iris scanners were introduced. Goalposts keep changing all the time. Or is it Aadhaar that is floundering?

While UIDAI submitted to SC a proof of concept study that showed Aadhaar authentication rose from 83% to 99% among elderly when face recognition supplemented fingerprints, experience in other countries is mixed. UIDAI doesn't rule out malfeasance by agents, which raises worries about identity theft. The reality is that there is no perfect magic key that will solve the authentication problem, do away with inclusion and exclusion errors, and be proof against theft, hacking, malfeasance, breach of privacy and criminal misuse, on top of India's poor internet connectivity. We must beware of a techno-nationalism that privileges technology over how human beings live and work. The solution is to limit usages of Aadhaar, and have other backup systems to establish identity.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Giving is a Very Serious Business

Prabhat Pani & Bjørn Lomborg , [Pani is head, partnerships & technology, Tata Trusts, and Lomborg is president, Copenhagen Consensus Centre]

India is a pioneer in enshrining, through Section 135 in the Companies Act, 2013, corporate-giving into law. The requirement that businesses spend 2% of their profits on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has ensured that more than Rs 28,000 crore has gone into donating in the last three years. This amount reached a peak of above Rs 13,800 crore in 2015-16. This is more than 10 times the entire amount spent annually by Tata Trusts, India's oldest philanthropic organisation. When such large sums are being spent, there is a lot at stake. At the same time, companies would be comfortable making a choice if there were a process determined by empirical evidence. This would also help them justify the selection of the cause(s) to their board, and to their shareholders.

One way to do this is to look to economic science. Much can be achieved by focusing on a couple of ideas that economics shows should be prioritised at the state level by governments. Improving educational outcomes, for instance, can transform lives. But it isn't as simple as investing in education and getting a good outcome. There are many educational investments that don't actually improve learning outcomes, as measured by test scores. But research shows that teaching children in groups at the right level, and computer-assisted learning would have a huge impact.

Researchers from Sunay Policy Advisory documented how Rs 1 spent on the initiative in Andhra Pradesh could achieve more than Rs 60 in social benefits, as they had the potential of significantly improving the child's lifelong earnings. Similarly, among a large range of health interventions, one that stood out in Rajasthan was investment in improving private care of tuberculosis (TB).

Research by Nimalan Arinaminpathy of Imperial College, London, found that the number of TB patients in Rajasthan receiving high quality treatment could be increased by more than one lakh over three decades, saving 3,300 lives every year on an average — or more than 11% of deaths today. Every rupee spent by Rajasthan would generate Rs 179 of benefits, representing saved lives, fewer new infections, and quicker and lower cost treatment of the infected.

These are just two of more than 75 ideas examined and ranked by economists. This provides a glimpse of an approach that can be used for determining appropriate causes for CSR investments by a corporate to maximise 'doing good'. However, what is a great solution in Rajasthan may not be the most useful idea in Andhra Pradesh. The public conversation may focus on other issues or solutions. That way, benefactors who really want to leverage their corporate giving can also invest in the prioritisation themselves. Companies should take the same approach to CSR as they do to every other aspect of their businesses: pay heed to the evidence and conditions, and seek to maximise returns.



दैनिक भास्कर

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पदोन्नति में आरक्षण पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के तीखे सवाल

दिग्गज वकीलों से अदालत ने पूछा है कि क्या आरक्षण अनंत काल तक चलना चाहिए

संपादकीय

अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जनजाति के कर्मचारियों को तरक्की में आरक्षण दिए जाने की बहस में सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीशों ने पैरवी करने वाले वकीलों से तीखे सवाल पूछकर समाज में चल रही चर्चा को स्वर देने का प्रयास किया है। भारत के मुख्य न्यायाधीश दीपक मिश्र के नेतृत्व में पांच सदस्यों की संविधान पीठ में चल रही सुनवाई में पदोन्नति में आरक्षण की पैरवी करने वाले केके वेणुगोपाल, तुषार मेहता, इंदिरा जय सिंह, दिनेश द्वािवेदी और पीएस पटवालिया जैसे दिग्गज वकीलों से अदालत ने पूछा है कि क्या आरक्षण अनंत काल तक चलना चाहिए और क्या एक आईएएस अधिकारी के पड़पोते को भी आरक्षण दिया जाना चाहिए।

उनका प्रश्न यह भी है कि नौकरी में प्रवेश के वक्त तो आरक्षण ठीक है लेकिन, तरक्की में आरक्षण देने का क्या मतलब है। यह ऐसा मसला है जिस पर लंबे समय से विवाद चल रहा है। 2006 में सुप्रीम कोर्ट के ही फैसले में कहा गया था कि समाज के इस समुदाय का सरकारी पदों पर प्रतिनिधित्व अपर्याप्त है इस बारे में सरकार को पूरी तरह छानबीन करके आंकड़े उपलब्ध कराना चाहिए। इस बीच कई उच्च न्यायालयों के फैसले भी तरक्की में आरक्षण के विरुद्ध आने के कारण सरकार निर्णय ले पाने में असमर्थ थी। उत्तर प्रदेश में अगर बसपा की सरकार इसके पक्ष में थी तो समाजवादी पार्टी की सरकार इसके विरुद्ध थी।

अदालत में यह दलील भी आई कि 1992 के इंदिरा साहनी फैसले की तरह क्यों न अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग की तरह एससी और एसटी के आरक्षण में क्रीमी लेयर की अवधारणा लागू कर दी जाए। इस बहस में संविधान के अनुच्छेद 16 में वर्णित समानता के अधिकार और दूसरे संबंधित प्रावधानों की भी चर्चाएं हो रही हैं। भारत इस समय जातिगत और सांस्कृतिक समानता के सवाल पर बेहद नाजुक दौर से गुजर रहा है। दलित और पिछड़े तबकों की शिकायतें भी उग्र रूप ले रही हैं। उधर, सवर्ण समाज को लगता है कि वोट बैंक की राजनीति आरक्षण को कभी खत्म नहीं होने देगी। आरक्षण सकारात्मक भेदभाव के सिद्धांत के तहत लाया गया ऐसा कार्यक्रम है जो अगर आरंभ में देश को जोड़ने का काम कर रहा था और बाद में विभाजित करने की भूमिका निभा रहा है। इसलिए इसे न्याय से जोड़ना होगा और पदोन्नति में आरक्षण को लागू करने लिए सिर्फ भावनात्मक तर्क ही नहीं सामाजिक और आर्थिक पिछड़ेपन और प्रतिनिधित्व न होने के आंकड़े भी देखे जाएं।

राष्ट्रीय
सहारा

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नदी जोड़ पर पुनर्विचार

पंकज चतुर्वेदी

केरल में बरसात साल के आठ महीने होती है। लेकिन इस बार जैसी बरसात हुई, ठीक उसी तरह थी जैसे दो साल पहले चैन्ने और उससे पहले साल कश्मीर में। जाहिर है कि जलवायु परिवर्तन का भयानक असर हिन्दुस्तान में दिखने लगा है। अचानक किसी क्षेत्र विशेष में भीषण बरसात हो जाती है तो बाकी हिस्से सूखे रह जाते हैं। जब बरसात की जरूरत हो तब गरमी होती है, और ठंड के दिनों में गरमी। केरल बानगी है कि बड़े बांधों में बरसात का पानी रोक कर रखना मौसम के इस बेतुके मिजाज में तबाही ला सकता है।

केरल के चार जिलों में भारी नुकसान का कारक बांधों के लबालब होने पर उनके मजबूरी में सभी दरवाजे खोलना था। ये हालात चेतावनी हैं उन परियोजनाओं के लिए जिनमें बड़े बांध बनाए जा रहे हैं। सारी दुनिया जब अपने यहां कार्बन फुटप्रिंट घटाने को प्रतिबद्ध है, तो वहीं भारत में नदियों को जोड़ने की परियोजना लागू की जा रही है। शुरुआत बुंदेलखंड से होगी जहां केन और बेतवा को जोड़ा जाएगा। असल में, आम आदमी नदियों को जोड़ने का अर्थ समझता है कि किन्हीं पास बह रहीं नदियों को किसी नहर जैसी संरचना के माध्यम से जोड़ दिया जाए जिससे जब एक में पानी कम हो तो दूसरे का उसमें मिल जाए। पहले जानना जरूरी है कि असल में नदी जोड़ने का मतलब है, एक विशाल बांध और जलाशय बनाना और उसमें जमा दोनों नदियों के पानी को नहरों के माध्यम से उपभोक्ता तक पहुंचाना। केन-बेतवा जोड़ योजना कोई 12 साल पहले जब तैयार की गई थी, तो उसकी लागत 500 करोड़ रुपये के करीब थी, अभी वह कागज पर ही है, और 2015 में इसकी अनुमानित लागत 1800 करोड़ पहुंच गई है।

सबसे बड़ी बात जब नदियों को जोड़ने की योजना बनाई गई थी, तब देश और दुनिया के सामने ग्लोबल वार्मिंग, ओजोन क्षरण, ग्रीन हाउस इफेक्ट जैसी चुनौतियां नहीं थीं। गंभीरता से देखें तो नदी जोड़ जैसी परियोजनाएं इन नियंत्रण संकटों को और बढ़ा देंगी। जलवायु परिवर्तन के कारण प्राकृतिक आपदा का स्वाद उस बुंदेलखंड के लोग चख ही रहे हैं, जहां नदी जोड़ योजना लागू की जानी है। सूखे का तो वहां तीन साल में एक बार डेरा रहता ही है। लेकिन अब वहां बरसात का पैटर्न भी बिल्कुल बदल गया है। सावन तक सूखा, फिर भादों में किसी एक जगह पर इतनी बरसात कि तबाही हो जाए। बरसात की त्रासदी इतनी गहरी है कि भले ही जल-स्त्रोत लबालब हो गए हैं, लेकिन खेतों में बुवाई नहीं हो पाई और जहां हुई वहां बीज सड़ गए। यह भी जान लें कि आने वाले दिनों में संकट और गहराना है, खासकर भारत में मौसम के चरम रूप यानी असीम गरमी, भीषण ठंड, बेहिसाब सूखा या बरसात के रूप में।

प्रायः जिम्मेदार लोग यह कह कर पल्ला झाड़ते दिखते हैं कि यह तो नियंत्रण दिक्कत है। हम क्यों कर सकते हैं। फिर दिसम्बर-2015 में पेरिस “जलवायु शिखर सम्मेलन” में तत्कालीन पर्यावरण मंत्री प्रकाश जावड़ेकर की वह प्रतिबद्धता याद करने की जरूरत है, जिसमें उन्होंने आने वाले दस सालों में भारत की ओर से कार्बन उत्सर्जन घटाने का आश्वासन दिया था। राष्ट्रीय जल संवर्धन प्राधिकरण के दस्तावेज बताते हैं कि भारत में नदी जोड़ की मूलभूत योजना 1850 में पहली बार सर आर्थर कॉटन ने बनाई थी। फिर 1972 में डॉ. के. एल. राव ने गंगा-कावेरी जोड़ने पर काम किया था। 1978 में कैप्टन डॉस्टर्स का गार्लंड नहर योजना पर काम हुआ और 1980 में नदी जोड़ का राष्ट्रीय परिदृश्य परियोजना तैयार हुई। देश में जिन परियोजनाओं पर विचार हो रहा है, उनका आधार वही 1980 का दस्तावेज है।

जाहिर है कि 1980 में जलवायु परिवर्तन या ग्रीनहाउस गैसों की कल्पना भी नहीं हुई थी। कहने की जरूरत नहीं कि इस योजना पर काम शुरू भी हुआ तो कम से कम एक दशक तो इसे पूरा होने में लगेगा और इस दौरान अनियमित जलवायु, नदियों के अपने रास्ता बदलने की त्रासदियां और गहरी हॉगी। ऐसे में जरूरी है कि सरकार नई नियंत्रण परिस्थितियों में नदियों को जोड़ने की योजना का मूल्यांकन करे। ध्यान रखे कि इतने बड़े पर्यावरणीय नुकसान,

विस्थापन, पलायन और धन व्यय करने के बाद भी बुंदेलखंड के महज तीन से चार जिलों को मिलेगा क्या? इससे एक चौथाई से भी कम धन खर्च कर समूचे बुंदेलखंड के पारंपरिक तालाब, बावड़ी, कुओं और जोहड़ों को दुरुस्त किया जा सकता है। सिकुड़ गई छोटी नदियों को उनके मूल स्वरूप में लाने के लिए काम हो सकता है। गौर करें कि अंग्रेजों के बनाए पांच बांध 100 साल में दम तोड़ गए, आजादी के बाद बने तटबंध और स्टाप डेम पांच साल भी नहीं चले, लेकिन समूचे बुंदेलखंड में एक हजार साल पुराने चंदेलकालीन तालाब लाख उपेक्षा के बावजूद आज भी खरे हैं।



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Hold out an olive branch

Government today again holds upper hand vis a vis Naxals. It's the best time to make peace

Prakash Singh , [The writer, chairman of India Police Foundation, was member of Planning Commission's Expert Group to study 'Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas']

The Home Minister of India recently claimed that the challenge of Naxalism in the country is on its "last legs". His assessment stems from the fact that the security forces have been achieving signal successes against the Maoists. Fifteen Maoists were killed in an encounter in the Konta area of Sukma district in Chhattisgarh on August 6. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, at least 122 Maoists have been killed across the country in the first six months of 2018. This is the highest number of fatalities suffered by Maoists over the same period during the last eight years. It is also a fact that the total area affected by Naxalism has shrunk to 90 districts of the country. The trajectory of Maoist violence has been showing a downward trend. A number of central committee and politburo members have been neutralised.

The government of India's National Policy and Action Plan, with its emphasis on security and development, is definitely making an impact. Apart from the construction of roads, mobile towers, setting up of banks, post offices, Kendriya Vidyalayas, etc, the most significant achievement has been in poverty reduction. A recent study published in a Brookings blog says that by 2022, less than 3 per cent of Indians will be poor and that extreme poverty could be eliminated altogether by 2030.

The above trends are, no doubt, positive. It would, however, be naïve to think that we are about to see the end of Naxalism/Maoism in the country. If a historical overview were taken of the movement during the last more than 50 years, there were two occasions in the past when the government of India thought that the Naxal movement had been disintegrated. The split in the party, the joint army-police operations — 'Operation Steeplechase', as it was called — from July 1 to August 15, 1971 followed by the arrest and subsequent death of Charu Majumdar on July 28, 1972, gave, what then appeared to be a coup de grace to the movement.

The formation of the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh in 1980, however, marked the revival of the movement and the beginning of its second phase. It soon spread to the adjoining states of Maharashtra,

Madhya Pradesh and Orissa and extended to Bihar, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Naxal violence touched a peak in 1991. The movement was again hit hard by coordinated operations undertaken by the security forces in the affected states. Internal dissensions leading to the expulsion of Kondapalli Seetharamaiah weakened it further. The government was lulled into believing that the movement had run its course.

The third phase of the movement began when the left-wing extremists decided, on December 2, 2000, to set up a People's Guerilla Army. In a comprehensive document Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution, it was said: "We cannot conceive a people's war without a people's army". The merger of the People's War and the Maoist Communist Centre in 2004 and the resultant formation of the CPI (Maoist) consolidated the left-wing extremists and augmented their strength. The prime minister (Manmohan Singh) said on September 15, 2009, while addressing the police chiefs of the country, that "left-wing extremism is, perhaps, the greatest threat our country faces." The home minister (P Chidambaram), speaking at the same gathering, stated that Maoist groups had pockets of influence in 20 states across the country and 223 districts in these states were partially or substantially affected.

The government today again holds the upper hand. However, the fact remains that the basic problems which gave rise to the Naxal problem continue to haunt us. It was rightly pointed out by the Expert Group of the Planning Commission back in 2008 that "the development paradigm pursued since Independence has aggravated the prevailing discontent among marginalised sections of society" because "the benefits of this paradigm have been disproportionately cornered by the dominant section at the expense of the poor, who have borne most of the costs".

It has been said that India has moved from British Raj to Billionaire Raj. India has 119 dollar billionaires, behind only the US and China. At the same time, according to the World Inequality Report, 22 per cent of India's national income is cornered by the top one per cent. Inequalities have sharpened over the years. Such disparities always have seeds of discontent, which have the potential to explode into a rebellion. It is also a fact that on corruption, according to Transparency International, we have slipped by two positions. Corruption is at the root of several factors which cause popular dissatisfaction. Agrarian unrest continues to cause serious concern. We saw in the month of March this year, the kisan long march from Nashik to Mumbai. There are also reports that the Maoists have made a dent in the Northeast and that they are active at the tri-junction of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. All these are dangerous portents.

The government of India has two options before it. One, that it goes ahead and crushes the Maoist movement. The possibility, in that case, is that the movement would resurrect again, maybe in a new avatar, which could be even more lethal and devastating than what we have seen so far. The other option is to offer the olive branch to the Maoist leaders and carry out sincere measures to redress grievances, particularly those relating to tribals.

Any offer of peace from a position of strength is always credible and has greater chance of success. Perhaps the present situation offers an ideal opportunity to solve the problem and save the future generations from the anger and frustrations of a disgruntled and disaffected group of people. The government will, of course, have to be careful that the Maoists do not use the peace period to gain time and regroup their forces.

The Path To Excellence

Empowering existing institutes holds the key to creating institutes of eminence

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In his 2016 union budget speech, the finance minister announced that an “enabling regulatory architecture will be provided to 10 public and 10 private institutions to emerge as world-class institutions”. This path-breaking initiative was widely appreciated. In early 2017, the UGC approved the guidelines for creating 20 world-class institutions that were renamed “institutes of eminence” (IoE). The outcome of the process that took more than two years was that out of over 900 universities, only six have the potential to become world-class universities. It is a damning

indictment of the Indian higher education system in ways that the original policy clearly did not intend. The IoE process needs a fresh perspective.

Other than the UGC Guidelines (2016) and Regulations (2017), and statements by the finance and HRD ministers, the exercise to confer IoE status to 20 institutions was reiterated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a speech at the Patna University in October 2017. Based on these statements that expressed the government’s seriousness in creating world-class universities, one can’t help but reflect upon the legitimate expectations of the applicant institutions. In all, 114 institutions applied on the basis of a promise laid down in policies announced by the government. The terms of references under which the Empowered Committee was tasked to identify universities were not made public. The process of selecting the empowering universities was arbitrary.

Universities take decades to evolve. The attention should have been on empowering existing brown-field universities, rather than recognising non-existing universities as contenders. Institution building is about a deeper recognition of what it takes to build a culture of excellence. Lived experiences of individuals matter more in universities than in any other organisation. Even if there was a vision to recognise green-field institutions, there should have been a separate criteria and process to evaluate them. At a policy level, identical treatment of existing and green-field institutions was unfair and a grave mistake.

India is the only large country with no world-class universities that are globally ranked. Within a decade, there will be 14 crore youngsters in India hoping to enter a university. Only three Indian universities featured in the top 250 in the QS World University Rankings 2018, while just 11 made it to top 700. No Indian university features in the top 250 in the Times Higher Education World Rankings 2018 while only two have made it to the top 500. This is both surprising and embarrassing for a country with one of the largest academic systems.

There seems to be a paralysis in India’s higher education system in not just policy, but also in procedure, planning and perspective. The task for the Committee should have been to simply select from the existing pool of universities and empower them to compete internationally. The Committee should have taken cognisance of the robust methodology that is used to rank institutions. Of course, research is of paramount importance. However, the key characteristics that are vital to any world-class university were

missing from the exercise of selecting institutions. This includes, for instance, internationalisation of faculty, research, students, courses and outlook. Moreover, the selection process should have had a holistic approach to disciplines. By giving preeminence to the sciences and engineering, we have completely neglected the humanities and social sciences.

China's recent academic progress has been remarkable since it focused on supporting 100 research universities, many of which have achieved international stature. The QS considered 300 universities from India for ranking from among the 9,000 BRIC universities and 79 Indian universities were identified in the final BRIC rankings. It is disappointing that the Committee couldn't identify more universities from a list of those already ranked. It is important that the government unbundle the established methodologies of global ranking agencies. By selecting only six institutions, we have lost a historical opportunity to build world-class universities in India. India has a lot to learn from the Asian experience. We must recognise that excellence leading to eminence is not just about governmental recognition, but ought to be the *raison d'être* of all higher education institutions.



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Why history matters so much

Its importance in shaping our political ethos is undiminished, but the subject has no place in the competitive education culture

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Why is history such an important school subject? And why does it not receive the importance it deserves? These two were among the major questions debated at a conference recently held in Kolkata. A brief answer to the second question is that history cannot compete with science subjects in the market that shapes and controls education today. Yet, history is an important subject because it moulds the outlook of the younger generation. By turning the past into a narrative, history creates a public ethos and influences culture. From architecture to film, and from ancient India to Partition, the Kolkata conference, organised by the History for Peace initiative of the Seagull Foundation for the Arts, covered a broad canvas to trace the complex relationship between history and culture.

I can think of few other gatherings where school teachers got a chance to discuss their classroom experience with scholars of history and culture. The outcome was a richer understanding of the constraints that a poorly functioning system of education places on a society's capacity to cope with its present difficulties and imagine sustainable solutions.

Debates over texts

The history syllabus and textbooks have been at the heart of a deep political controversy in India. India is not alone in this respect. No country in the world is immune to debates about the past and how it should

be presented to school children. To take just two instances, America's discomfort with Hiroshima and Britain's discomfort with Gandhi continue to be reflected in their school syllabi.

The main reason why portrayal of the past in school textbooks arouses controversy is that a publicly shared past imparts a collective memory and identity. Textbooks are viewed as officially approved documents — even if they are privately produced and have no official sanction — and are therefore believed to be associated with state power. Significantly, they do shape the perceptions of the young because children are impressionable. Children introduced to a certain version of the past at school acquire a disposition which can be politically mobilised in the future.

Debates over school textbooks seldom take into account the significance of curricular design and the preparation of a syllabus. When criticising poor quality textbooks, people do not recognise that the problem may be at the level of syllabus and curriculum. Similarly, when good textbooks are appreciated, people seldom realise the effort required in redesigning the curriculum and syllabus.

The new history textbooks brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) from 2006 onwards are a case in point. They have survived the change of government. One reason for their longevity is their professional quality. They have no single authors. Teams of eminent historians worked through deliberation and dialogue, first drafting a new syllabus and then the text itself. They represent the spirit of the National Curriculum Framework, 2005, which is still in place, which gives precedence to inquiry through direct exposure to evidence. The textbooks based on it do not narrate a long story. Instead, they enable children to explore different, often divergent, themes, such as lives of peasants and women, architectural styles, etc. Archival material is cited as evidence, and debates among historians are highlighted to demonstrate the difficulties of interpreting evidence.

Problem of perception

These books mark a major step forward in the teaching of history, but older ways of teaching and conventional textbooks have persisted. As a presentation at the Kolkata conference pointed out, the history teacher at school is often someone who has not studied history or enjoyed it. So, despite a shift in historiography, old problems continue to affect the system. One of these is the perception that history is all about wars, kings and dates. Another is the tenacity of dividing India's past into three long chunks: ancient, medieval and modern. These categories flatten out the complexity and richness of India's history, wasting the opportunity of studying it with the aim of arousing curiosity and imparting tools of inquiry. The examination system also reinforces flat perceptions by asking questions that are best answered with the help of guidebooks. The 2005 curricular revolution has made little impact on this wider scene.

In most States, the use of history to build collective memory and identity continues. Assam-like situations suggest that education is not perceived as a means of resolving a problem. The fear that incoming migrants would push the regional language into minority status or hurt the State's cultural identity shows how poor the State's trust in education is.

On the contrary, schools are actively engaged in creating a delusion of an ongoing collective 'self' which thrives on a monolithic 'other'. Teachers of social sciences work in an atmosphere of relentless regimentation of children's bodies, thoughts and emotions. Fear pervades life at school, taking many forms. It forms the core of the intensely competitive environment that our schools, including the most reputed ones, love to sustain. In that environment, the teacher's attempt to make children reflective and sensitive to details gets drowned in the din of everyday life.

The importance of history

Schooling adds a dimension to culture that we do not quite understand. As public institutions, schools carry many burdens the society is not always aware of. Government schools cope with bureaucratic norms and private schools cope with parental pressure to maintain heightened competition. The natural sciences bear the brunt of this pressure. For the growing middle class, including the vast multitude of first-generation educated, science and mathematics represent the golden route to high income jobs in medicine and engineering, including information technology. The social sciences and humanities do not figure in this landscape, yet they also suffer the consequences of the command that the entrance test culture wields over schools.

Although history has no place in the competitive culture of education, its importance in shaping the larger political ethos of the country remains undiminished. Children depend on adults to learn about the past, and that is what makes history the most challenging school subject. Ironically, poorly taught history matters even more than well-taught history, simply because when history does not arouse curiosity or impart the tools of analysis, it creates an emotional barrier for further inquiry.
