

Journal of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies: Vol 11. No. 1, June 2025

Understanding Gender & Sexuality through Hidden Curriculum in Schools

Nishaa Ghosh & Archana Prasad

Understanding Gender & Sexuality through Hidden Curriculum in Schools

Nishaa Ghosh ¹ & Archana Prasad ²

Abstract

Sexuality is a culturally diverse conceptual category which could refer to a wide range of things like sexual orientation and desires, which could be same-sex, bisexual, and heterosexual, gender roles, construction of femininity and masculinity, gender relations, and consequent sex roles (Vance, 1991). Sexuality is also ideological because socialization into appropriate sexual behaviour is a social process which leads to the construction of gender identity. The school is one of the primary institutions for reproducing conventional gender and sexual norms. This paper argues that a form of sex education is always part and parcel of school systems by focusing on hidden curricula. The paper conducts a relational analysis of the school and the wider society and argues that there is conformity, tension, and resistance in schools and how the school is not a neutral body outside of society but functions within the larger political and social landscape. Thus, this study will examine the State, the significant gatekeepers (family, teachers and guardians), and adolescents. The paper, therefore, also focuses on adolescents who negotiate the hegemonic patterns and inculcation intended to produce good citizens (good girls and good boys).

Introduction

Sexuality has been represented as a private affair differentiated from the public sphere of economy, production and politics (Correa and Petchesky 2007:298, Rubin:2007, 156, Padgug:2007 ,19, Vance: 2007, 49). Gayle Rubin (2007, 150) states that sexuality is often regarded as a marginal matter and overshadowed by critical topics like poverty, war and diseases; however, discourses around sexuality have led to significant social upheavals across societies in different periods of history. Starting from the late nineteenth-century Victorian morality in England, which abolished prostitution and masturbation and outlawed child pornography and representation of nudity in art and culture (Rubin:2007,150), the innovation in birth control methods like condoms and diaphragm (Stearns:2009, 99), the 20th-century rise in rates of venereal disease like syphilis,

gonorrhea epidemic and the HIV-AIDs epidemic in different parts of the world (Stearns:2009,131), the invention of the birth control pill (Zimmerman:2015,chapter-3), the radical gay movements in Europe and North America (Weeks:2007,126) to the more contemporary anti-gender mobilisation across Europe and America (Corredor:2019,613).

In the Indian context, too, activism regarding gender and sexuality evolved through various periods, from the introduction of Western morality with colonialism (Stearns: 2009, 129) to the construction of acceptable male and female sexuality by nationalist leaders in the late 19th and 20th centuries (Srivastava: 1998, 88). Contemporary 21st-century queer parades in different regions of the country (Sircar: 2022, 226-227) as well as the political activism against brutal rape case like the 2012 Nirbhaya case (Corrêa & Khanna: 2015, 48). These public outcries led to legal transformation, like the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013, which led to stricter punishments for sexual offenders and widened the ambit to include voyeurism and stalking, and the legalization of same-sex relationships and Amendment of Article 15 of the Indian Constitution to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation (Yamini:2015).

In recent times, several global efforts have been made to achieve gender equality, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Fifth SDG on *Gender Equality to Empower and Achieve Equality for all Women and Girls* focuses on eliminating all forms of discrimination, sexual violence and harmful practices, easy access to sexual and reproductive health rights, recognizing unpaid work, ensuring women's participation in the economic and political sphere, bringing reforms for women's equal rights to economic resources and land control, enhancing the use of information technology to advocate for women's empowerment, the adoption of policies and enforcement of legalization to ensure women's empowerment and equality (United Nations:2016).

Despite the attempt to introduce a series of legislative measures, the silence on sexuality remains a matter of concern. The construction of invisibility takes place foremost in the schools, which, on the contrary, should have been a space for dissemination of information on the topic of sexuality. Information on sexuality issues is also channeled through informal sources such as peer group socialisation and popular culture, mainly movies, magazines, newspapers and the internet (Chowkhani:2020,131). There have been many contestations regarding implementing sex education curricula in schools. Different programs have been proposed at different times, expressing concerns and the need for sex education (Chowkhani: 2013).

In this paper, sex education is not limited to physical and biological aspects of the body but a broader understanding of sex as culturally and socially constructed. Most literature on sex

education starts with a definition: "Sex education can be defined as a broad program that aims to build a strong foundation for lifelong sexual health by acquiring information and attitudes, beliefs and values about one's identity, relationship and intimacy" (Ismail et al. 2015:333). It is significant to note that this definition applies to sexuality education, which is more than just sex. Sexuality is a culturally diverse concept which includes sexual orientation and desires, gender roles, construction of femininity and masculinity, gender relations, and consequent sex roles (Vance:2007,47). Scholars like Abraham (2007), Padgug (2007), and Vance (2007) have argued that sexuality is not fixed and static; rather, it is socially constructed. Several anthropological cross-cultural studies have shown differences in human sexuality, indicating socially constructed behaviour (Vance: 2007, 46), which is also referred to as sexual scripting (Simon & Gagnon: 2007, 36). This also implies that sexuality is ideological (Abraham: 2007, 359). Ideology is a set of ideas that hides reality; it performs certain functions of legitimizing unequal structures (Althusser: 1970). Sexuality is ideological because socialization into appropriate sexual behaviour is a social process and not an individual isolated process whereby people are expected to follow specific set trajectories or go through life states which indicate a pattern within a particular society (Simon & Gagnon: 2007, 36).

However, it is significant to understand that sexuality is marginalized in the school curriculum, especially sex education programmes. In India, sex education began within the context of population control, shifting focus to adolescence and AIDS prevention after the 1994 Population and Development Conference. In 2005 and 2006, the government attempted to facilitate comprehensive sex education in schools in collaboration with the National AIDS Control Organisation. However, it was met with fierce opposition from many states and failed as many debated that sex education is a Western concept (Anandhi: 2007, 3367). Subsequently, programs like Delhi's YUVA life skill, Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram, were introduced to support youth well-being. Both supporters and critics of sex education in India emphasise sexual restraint, while some view it as part of globalization, either to be rejected or used to advocate sexual abstinence (Anandhi:2007,3368 & Chakravarti:2011,389-390).

However, this paper argues that a form of sex education is always part of school systems by focusing on hidden curricula. The paper conducts a relational analysis of the school and the wider society and argues that there is conformity, tension, and resistance in schools and how the school functions within the larger political and social landscape. The paper focuses on adolescents who negotiate the hegemonic patterns and inculcation intended to produce good citizens as good girls and boys. Citizenship is a gendered concept (Thapan:2015); therefore, the *Good Girl* refers to the regulated and controlled female sexuality based on upholding community and family honour

(Gupta:2001,8 & Chakravarti:2018,143); on the other hand, the *Good Boy* analogy refers to the restrained sexuality along with scientific temper and rationality (Gupta:2001,68-69). The concept of purity and pollution is central to Indian society (Srinivas: 1952), and it differs by caste. Dube (1997) states especially upper-caste women are burdened with maintaining the purity of the home; however, women's sexuality can be potentially dangerous and require regulation and control. Consequently, a woman is constantly categorised between the binaries of good/bad. Chaste/unchaste, pure/impure, thereby become the repositories of family honor (Chakravarti: 2018,143 & Sinha: 2001,8). Meanwhile, men have the responsibility to safeguard the women in their communities and be the controllers of female sexuality (Chakravarti: 1993,579 & Chakravarti: 2018).

Sex education is subsumed under the more extensive discussion on sexual and reproductive health and rights, which sparked globally after the 1994 Conference on Population and Development (Saiz: 2007.) The history of sexual and reproductive health and rights can be traced to shifting focus from population control (Chowkhani: 2013), family planning, and STI prevention (Khan & Raby: 2019, 3) to a focus on adolescent sexuality (Chowkhani: 2013). The literature on sex education suggests a linkage between sex education and a specific youth identity construction (Phadke: 2005, 67), as scholars have argued that sex education became a moralising tool for reinforcement of dominant culture (Chakravarti:2011, 390). Thus, earlier studies suggest that youth sexuality is seen as problematic by the State and, therefore, has to be regulated, which can be understood by looking at three sets of literature.

The three main sets of literature on sexuality education include: first, studies on sex education and youth sexual and reproductive behaviour, which examines the disconnect between the intent of school and gatekeepers by treating adolescents as innocent and asexual and the reality of adolescent behaviour (Carlson: 2012,161 & Powell: 2010,12). Second, the literature on international bodies and feminist advocacy for sexual and reproductive rights as human rights and the parallel change in focus from population control to family planning and finally to adolescent Sexuality (Saiz:2007, Correa & Petchesky:2007, Carlson:2012, Chowkhani:2022). Third, the studies on UN, WHO, and UNESCO reports on sex education emphasise schooling years as the relevant period for sex education, defining the 10 -19 as the adolescent group, while the UN Convention on Child Rights classifies anyone under 18 as a child (Goldman: 2012, 201).

On the other hand, data from South Asia suggests that sexual debut among adolescents/ youths, as well as the prevalence of early marriage, is widely known (Bott et.al:2003,7 & Murshid. et al., 2020). Signatories of international treaties such as Sustainable Development Goals and Millennium Development Goals based on the universal human rights frameworks, specifically

the goals of SRH (Sexual and Reproductive Health), imply acknowledgement of adolescents as sexual agents rather than rendering them of any knowledge concerning sexuality. On the contrary, adolescence is stated as a problematic stage, and the solution applied is to render them asexual and innocent children to be protected; that is, the State and the gatekeepers have a protectionist approach towards the adolescents (Chowkhani:2022,60).

Official and Hidden Curriculum in Schools

Different types of schools exist in India, such as those run by government schools, aided schools, and private schools (Thapan:2015,143). A National Educational Policy guides all these schools' curricula. Historically, the term curriculum has evolved, originally meant to study or train at school (Pinar et al.:1995, 26), later broadened to include school experiences by John Dewey and Franklin Bobbit.

Franklin Bobbitt and John Dewey are seminal figures who have influenced the school curriculum differently. Franklin Bobbit's understanding of curriculum has influenced modern reforms in education, such as competency-based instruction, standard curriculum, central role of teachers and examination (De Paor: 270, 2021). However, later, he adopted a similar view to Dewey's for a child-centered educational module (De Paor: 277, 2021).

John Dewey advocated for critical thinking and experiential learning by focusing on children's needs, interests and personal histories (Hlebowitsh: 67, 2023). Since the 1990s, child-centered education has been influential in the Indian school curriculum (Sriprakash, 297:2010), yet the teacher's dominance, exams, and the textbook-centered education module continues (Sriprakash, 298: 2010). Meanwhile, academicians' input in the curriculum has shrunk, and there is greater control by politicians, textbook companies and subject matter specialists (Pinar et al.: 14 & 41).

In '*Life in a Classroom*', Philipp Jackson identified two types of curricula: the official/ written curriculum and the hidden/unwritten curriculum (Walton: 2005, 20). An official curriculum is the written down and clear objectives of formal instruction, while the hidden curriculum means the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that students learn (Giroux and Penna: 1979, 22). Understanding the official curriculum is essential for examining the hidden curriculum, as all schools follow the state-sanctioned official curriculum (NEP: 2020, NEP: 2010). Second, this focus on the official curriculum highlights the centrality of teachers, textbooks, examinations and the neo-liberal influence on education emphasized within the nation's education policy, shifting the focus away from everyday school realities.

In India, the two waves of liberalization in the 1990s and 2000s led to the development of market-

oriented policies (Batra: 2014, S7). The ushering of liberalization and then neo-liberalization meant significant change in government policies, which emphasised "national competitiveness" to fit in a globalizing world (Batra: 2014, S6& Velaskar: 2015), instrumental output, science and technology (Benei: 2009, Srivastava: 1998, Thapan: 2015). Second, educational institutions are primarily viewed to offer occupational training (Collins: 1971).

This is the backdrop against which the hidden curriculum can help us realize that the school is not just an equalizer (Bourdieu: 1997, 493) with instrumental goals of providing jobs but also a disciplining institution. The hidden curriculum is the unstated norms and values internalized by the students in school settings, which reflect the protectionist approach of the State and the stakeholders towards adolescents. Educational institutions are not neutral in their operations but reflect society's social and political landscape, using hidden curricula to create hegemony (manufactured consent) using ideology, state power and institutions (Apple: 1990, 1, 5).

Among all the ideological state apparatus, schools are significant in disseminating and maintaining societal hegemony. Thus, education helps the dominant class maintain and reinforce its hegemony through the ideological tool of the hidden curriculum. Bourdieu further explains the hidden curriculum through the concept of cultural capital, which includes non-economic assets like knowledge but also mannerisms, values and tastes as arbitrarily defined by the dominant middle class of the society (Bourdieu: 1986, 16-18) and coveted by the schools.

At this point, it is significant to state that structural functionalists like Talcott Parsons (1955) and Kinsley David(1940)have stated that along with school, the family is also a primary socialising unit which inculcates various role responsibilities to children. Judith Butler, in her article '*Merely Cultural*' first published in 1977, has argued that the family is also the first site where gendered socialisation occurs (Ngyuen:120,2023), and the parental choices in this socialization are influenced by the larger societal and cultural expectation (Ngyuen:121,2023). Thus, the reproduction of acceptable social behaviour in adolescents includes the role of various institutions, such as the family, the educational institutes, the State and the medical institution (Chowkhani: 2022, 60). The following sections will examine everyday rituals and schooling that help shape adolescents.

The Schooling process

John Dewey (1916) argued that education develops intellect and wisdom among young people, which helps them develop into mature and influential citizens of society who then transmit the acquired culture to the next generation and transform it in the face of change. According to Rousseau (1977), education aimed to develop citizens who want what is good for the entire

community, and thus, he wished for the elimination of independent individual achievement.

Meenakshi Thapan, in her PhD thesis, *'Life at School'* (2006a), states that school culture consists of transcendental order (school values and ethos) and local order (classroom activities, exams, discussions); together, they produce good citizens. Thapan (2015, 2006b) notes that pedagogic practice contributes to constructing "good citizens". Citizenship education in schools, focusing on education on government, laws, national boundaries, detailed history, and civic knowledge, aims to produce obedient citizens who respect the rule of law and the authority of the State (Thapan:2006b,4197). This kind of subordinate relationship of the citizen to the State is realized in various ways in the school through the official school culture (Thapan: 2006b, 4198).

The production of docile citizens is both a gendered and an ideological process. First, gender influences how we organise society and distribute power. Patriarchy is a structure in all institutions, social relations, and interactions, thus determining the different life chances for men and women (Acker: 1987). Second, socialisation is not just gendered; it is also about constructing a religious identity (Thapan: 2006b, 4198), specifically a Hindu identity, as opposed to the figures of Muslims and Christians (Benei: 2009). This disciplining has religious contouring because the nationalist leaders have constructed identities based on community membership; precedence was given to caste, ethnicity and religion over individual identity (Menon: 2015, 38). The concept of the individual was drawn from Western colonialism, but the community took precedence over individual identity, as evident in the Indian constitution (Menon: 2015, 38).

Studies like Sanjay Srivastava's *'Constructing Post-Colonial National Character and the Doon School'* (1998) and Veronique Beni's *'Schooling India: Hindu Muslims and the Forging of the Citizens'* (2009) examine the ideological and gendered construction of school students into contributing individuals of society.

Srivastava (1998) mainly focused on the Doon School, Mayo College (Ajmer) and the Lawrence School (Himachal Pradesh) to explore the construction of a modern Indian citizen in post-colonial India. He argues that in the pre-independence period, British public schools aimed to produce loyal, rational and calculating individuals well-versed in British values. In the post-independence period, the public schools aimed to construct an "All-conquering modernist, male hero, guardian of the free market, a bridge between progressive West and regressive India" (Srivastava:1998,6). This project emphasised producing rational beings, inducing individuals with a scientific temper with this worldly attitude and finally imbibing them with intellectual masculinity (Srivastava: 1998, 49 -50).

First, the school's citizenship project is inherently gendered because nation-building was a

gendered process (Srivastava: 1998, 88). Influenced by two scholars, VAN der Veer and Partha Chatterjee, Srivastava argued that the nationalist discourse assigned gender-specific roles (88). Chatterjee used the concept of binaries: the home/world, the public/ private, the outer/inner, the material/spiritual, whereby men represented the public and learned the scientific and rational temper from the Western man, while the women represented the inner/private/home/spiritual and ensured the sanctity of Indian culture (Srivastava: 1998, 88 & Chatterjee: 1993).

However, this division between the roles of men and women stands problematic as it is largely based on the cultural construction of gender and supported by biological determinism, which allocates a subordinate and secondary position to women universally in different degrees across different cultures (Lamphere & Rosaldo: 1974, Otner: 1974). Biological determinists argued an inherent genetic lack made men naturally superior to women (Otner: 1974, 71). Feminist scholars like Butler (1990), Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974), and Sherry Otner (1974) reject biological determinism by stating that gender identity is also shaped by culture, environment and individual agency, race, class, and ethnicity. Sinha (1995) critiqued the glorification of women's roles as mothers and wives to preserve the sanctity of the inner domain, while Sarkar (2001) argued against the lack of intersectionality in studying women and the lack of representation of lower caste women (Sarkar:2001,6).

Secondly, the school's citizenship project had a religious and specifically Hindu orientation, despite its attempts to be secular in all its functions. For example, several things semiotically indicate a Hindu context, such as the lamp of learning as the school crest has Hindu significance, and the symbol of fire or lamp is part of the Hindu cultural system (Srivastava: 1998, 104). The placement of carved rocks and a rose bowl, along with statues of Mahavira (founder of Jainism), Buddha (founder of Buddhism), and Vivekananda (the Hindu leader), were symbolic of Hinduism (Srivastava:1998,108).

By applying a phenomenological approach, Benei (2009) analyzes gendered and political socialization that has taken place in schools in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, after the India-Pakistan Kargil conflict. She notes that religious and cultural semiotics (images of Shivaji, singing the National anthem, and Hindu values in textbooks) are used in school to reproduce Hindu nationalism and devotional sentiments disguised as secular practices (Benei:2009,77). The reproduction of nationalist and patriotic emotions vis-a-vis a religious sensorium contradicts secular ideals adopted in the Indian constitution (Benei: 2009, 22-24). Second, she argued that the gendered self is not exclusive to the national and religious identity as both are mutually co-produced. The ideal female identity (*Bharat Mata*) is based on the mother figure, an exclusive Hindu iconography understandable at the familial, regional, and national levels used to promote national development

during various periods in post-independent India (Benei:2009,104). The ideal male identity is the icon of *SonsoftheSoil*- the warriors who strategize (Benei: 2009, 153) in contrast to the 'fantasized Muslim other' (Benei: 2009, 154).

Essays from the book '*Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India*', edited by Meenakshi Thapan (2014), argue that schools upheld the vision of an ideal student through gender-specific uniform policies like a correct length of skirt and pants, fastened buttons, short hair for boys and properly tied hair for girls. This character building primarily involves gendered role socialisation. Deka (2014, 76-77) notes a difference in the supervision of male and female students; boys were often subjected to physical punishment, while female students were exempted from physical punishment and faced verbal disapproval only. Deka (2014, 77) notes that the bodies are subjected to various disciplinary actions to produce obedient individuals, whereby school works as an Ideological State Apparatus and instills middle-class Hindu values.

Similarly, in her ethnography of an all-girls school, Bhandari (2014) notes the gendered aspect of socialisation and consequent reproduction of docile bodies who are not only good ideal Indians but also good Christians well-versed with Christian values and ethos. Likewise, the essay '*Being Muslim, Becoming Citizens: A Muslim Girl's School in Post-Riot Ahmedabad*' states that the school aims to produce not just good Indians but also good Muslim girls by emphasising neutral values like cleanliness, good neighbourliness, nature protection, kindness, generosity, as well as gendered values like Izzat (honour), and Lihaz (respect and obedience). The school, supported by the parents and guardians, upheld the image of a good Muslim girl (Matthan et al.:225:2014).

Thus, every school has instrumental and ideological goals that shape everyday processes and constitute the school culture. Second, all schools contribute to the reproduction of values of the dominant sections of society, which has both gendered and ideological reproduction.

The construction of national identity is not devoid of individuality and agency; thus, students actively create the self and the "other". Thapan (2006b) has argued that students are not mindless robots, and therefore, their comprehension of selfhood is not just shaped by the family and school, but they form their views. Scholars have argued that students learn about their country via school, parents and guardians, and through exposure to television and newspapers, which help them shape their own identity and construct the figure of the social "other" (Thapan:2014 and 2006).

Students and School Culture

Adolescence is a socio-cultural construct that, while recognised in pre-capitalist times, became institutionalised in the capitalist period (Carlson: 2012). Capitalism constructed this period of adolescence between childhood and adulthood, utilizing modern schools to guide adolescents

into roles of workers, family members, and citizens (Carlson: 2012). Adolescents undergo physiological and psychological changes (Arnett: 2006, Carlson:2012), fostering curiosity and critical thinking about parents' views (Carlson:2012,167) and may lead to norm-breaking behaviour (Nurmi:2004,102). They undergo stress about the future and form an identity based on parental instructions, societal influence, and institutional structure but also individual agency and choice by exploration, decision making and planning to create specific careers, achieve a particular peer group and have a particular lifestyle (Nurmi:2004,87).

Adolescents negotiate the hegemonic patterns and inculcation promoted to produce good citizens (Good Girls and Good Boys). Connel's '*Making the Difference: Schools, families and Social Division*', published in 1982, argued that social reproduction (gender and class ideologies) and resistance displayed by students co-occur with accommodation, interpretation and resistance by students towards the attempts of hegemonic socialisation by the school at both the individual and group level (Thorne:1993,106-107). Students' culture is shaped by the interaction between peers and teachers; comprehension of identity and resistance to socialization are strongly influenced by the broader social, cultural, and economic circumstances (Thapan: 2014 & 2006b).

Students' resistance to the school's authorities is shaped by rapid globalisation and consumerism (Powell: 2010). Giddens argued that traditional institutions like religion and family have declined in the neo-liberal era (Powell: 2010, 13), which is a result of commercialism and consumerism (Powell: 2010). Appadurai has argued that imagination is central to constructing modern identities brought out by the media industry or mediascapes: films, various mediated images and videos, print media, and the internet. Thus, in this globalized context, students' interactions reflect Western influence, like their preference for Western clothing, music and movies (Deka: 2014) and consumerist behaviour, like indulging in foreign products and branded commodities (Bhandari: 2014).

Thapan (2014) argues that most students become socialised individuals who accept the school authority and good academic performance. On the other hand, schools are also sites of resistance. Most students unquestionably internalised the academic demands for achieving their prospective future, but they disobeyed gendered norms and anti-consumer values propagated in schools (Bhandari: 2014, 198).

Exploring the Hidden Curriculum is therefore important as contemporary education is focused on the instrumental needs of education influenced by the priorities of the gatekeepers, the educators, the State, the parents (Nussbaum:2015). Nussbaum (2015) fosters liberal studies to create active agents, but a strong control of the State on liberal studies leads to the reproduction of

the knowledge by the dominant section of society. For example, most textbooks focus on military and state history and marginalise women and labour class history, implying that the history of the marginalised sections remains absent. We can infer the subject of adolescence is discussed with a protectionist approach by infantilising them as children. Therefore, it's essential to understand the youth subculture to grasp the protectionist (read disciplinary) role of the state and the gatekeepers.

Youth sub-culture

Youth culture is a type of subculture (Mclaren: 1948). Subculture refers to the subset of dominant and subordinate cultures (Mclaren: 1948). Subcultures resist the imposition of dominant culture dispensed through mainstream media, schools, religion and culture industry (Mclaren: 1948).). However, the youth sub-culture is not entirely oppositional but negotiated (Mclaren: 1948, 139). Understanding youth culture requires examining peer groups formed in the elementary school based on sex segregation and providing a space outside adult control (Parsons, 1959,442). In secondary school, the peer group changes to a youth peer group, providing significant emotional support, developing positive cross-sex friendships and shaping adolescent personality (Parsons:1959,451). This implies that youths are a diverse group (Abraham:2007). Second, same-sex peer groups based on fun, mutual interest and friendship are the norms where peer socialisation and specifically sexual socialization occurs (Abraham:2007).

There is increasing evidence from India that young people engage in premarital romantic and sexual relationships. A cross-sectional study in Dharavi, Mumbai, conducted by SNEHA(Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action), surveyed respondents aged 11-19 years from different socioeconomic, caste, sex, religion, disability and education through a questionnaire. The study revealed girls' views coincide with normative socialisation and expectations such as little knowledge of sex, masturbation, disapproval of premarital relationships, dress code, and acceptance of arranged marriages. Conversely, boys were less conforming to traditional views, with many engaging in masturbation premarital relationships and not accepting sexual refusals from girls (Daruwalla et.al:2017,321).

Studies reveal young boys engage in risky premarital relationships, often with sex workers and older women, but cultural norms require women to remain "chaste."Bott et al., 2003; Abraham, 2007; Chowkhani, 2020).In a survey conducted by the All India Educational and Vocational Guidance Association, 54% of males and 42% of females lacked adequate sexual knowledge. Another survey in Mumbai revealed that 88% of men and 58% of women depended on books, magazines, and youth counselors for sex education (Tripathi and Sekher, 2013, 3). Two major household surveys carried out in 2006-08 and 2006-2007 found support for family life education

among half of the respondents and among 83% of men and 78% of women, respectively. Thus, despite the demand for adequate sexual knowledge, parents, teachers, and the State remain reluctant to discuss sexuality among youths (Sullivan et al.:2018).

Conclusion

Schools are essential socializing agents. Thus, pedagogies are not just the science of teaching but also discipline the body (Thapan:2006b, Foucault:1980, Carlson:2012). Schools operate in a societal context; in the post-colonial period, schools started the mission of producing good citizens, and this school project is gendered and ideological. The presence or absence of a formal sex education curriculum is insignificant as the hidden curriculum works to produce docile bodies simultaneously as well as without any formal sex education curriculum in schools.

Second, this inculcation of individuals with gendered and ideological values is the same as socializing them with sexual values and acceptable sexual behaviour through official sex education programs.

Sexuality Education programmes, where it exists, focus on biological reproduction. (Carlson:2012) and promote moralistic behaviour rooted in class, family, and marriage institutions, often emphasizing abstinence and fear-based HIV prevention (Chakravarti, 2011, p. 390). There is silence around non-normative sexualities and ongoing discrimination against sexual minorities despite various legal developments as the 2014 NALSA judgment, which recognized transgender individuals as a third gender, allowing them to self-identify and obtain identity certificates (Singh et al., 2024, 164), and the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 through the repeal of Article 377, led by the NGO Naz Foundation (Singh et al., 2024, 159).

In their essay, *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and School Life in India* (2024:165-166), Singh, Kaur and Mittal argue that the National Education Policy 2020 is progressive and inclusive by proposing a Gender-Inclusive Fund. However, LGBTQIA+ activists state it as tokenism, demanding age-appropriate sex education to foster sensitivity towards all genders and sexual identities (Bhasak:2020).

Social stigma continues to marginalize sexual minorities, leading to school dropout rates and low literacy levels, which result in economic oppression and vulnerability to abuse (Singh et al.:2024, 162). Data from CBSE in 2020 revealed that only 19 out of 1.8 million transgender students and 6 out of 1.2 million in grades 10th and 12th, respectively, took their board examinations (Singh et al., 2024). Thus, while the decriminalization of LGBTQIA+ identities, recognition of transgender individuals, and the gender inclusion fund are important steps, they are insufficient in challenging the heteronormative discourse that promotes ideal heterosexual,

cis-gendered citizens (Good girls & Good Boys) in schools and society.

References-

- Abraham, Leena. 2007. Bhai-behen, True Love, Time Pass: Friendships and Sexual Partnerships among Youth in an Indian Metropolis. (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge. In Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, Society, and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 358-371). London and New York: Routledge.
- Anandhi, S. 2007. 'Sex education conundrum'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(33), 3367-3369.
- Apple, M. W. 1990. On analyzing hegemony. In *Ideology and Curriculum* (pp. 1-23). New York: Routledge.
- Arnett, J. 2006. G. Stanley Hall's Adolescence: Brilliance and Nonsense. History of psychology. 9.pg 186–97.
- Batra, P. 2014. 'Problematising Teacher Education Practice in India: Developing a Research Agenda'. *Education as Change*, 18(sup1), S5-S18.
- Bénéi, V. 2009. *Schooling India: Hindus, Muslims, and the Forging of Citizens*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Bhandari, P. 2014. In Quest of Identity: Student Culture in a Religious Minority. In M. Thapan (Ed.), *Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India* (pp. 182-224). New Delhi: Sage.
- Basak, S. *Where's the rainbow in NEP?*
- Queeractivists explain what's missing in gender-inclusive policy News18. <https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/wheres-the-rainbow-in-nep-queer-activists-explain-whats-missing-in-gender-inclusive-policy-2844815.html> (accessed on 6th September 2020).
- Bourdieu, P. 1997. Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In J. Karabel & A. H. Hasley (Eds.), *Power and Ideology in Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 15-29). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Bott, S., Jejeebhoy, S., Shah, I., & Puri, C. (Eds.). 2003. *Towards Adulthood: Exploring the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents in South Asia*. World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research.

- Chatterjee, P. 1993. *The Nation and Its Women. in the Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton University Press.
- Chakravarti, P. 2011. 'The Sex Education Debate: Teaching 'Life Style' in West Bengal, India. *Sex Education*, 11(4), 389-400'.
- Chakravarti, U. 2018. *Caste and gender in contemporary India*. In Gendering caste through a feminist lens (Revised ed., pp. 133-161). SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd.
- Chakravarti, U. 1993. 'Conceptualising Brahmanical patriarchy in early India: Gender, caste, class, and state'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(14), 579-585.
- Carlson, D. L. 2012. *The education of Eros: A history of education and the problem of adolescent sexuality*. Routledge.
- Corrêa, S., & Petchesky, R. 2007. *Reproductive and sexual rights: A feminist perspective* (pp. 298-316). In *Culture, Society and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed.). London, UK & New York, NY: Routledge.
- Chandra-Mouli, V., Gómez Garbero, L., Plesons, M., Lang, I., & Vargas, E. 2018. 'Evolution and Resistance to Sexuality Education in Mexico'. *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 6, 137-149.
- Chowdhry, P. 1997. 'Enforcing Cultural Codes: Gender and Violence in Northern India'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1019-1028.
- Chowkhani, K. 2013. 'Sexuality education: Why we need it'? *Teacher Plus*, 5.
- Chowkhani, K. 2020. *Learning about Sex in Mumbai Rethinking the 'Knowledge Gap' Debate in Sexuality Education. (Hi)Stories of Desire: Sexualities and Culture in Modern India Eds Rajeev Kumaramkandath and Sanjay Srivastava, Cambridge University Press .pg116-133*
- Chowkhani, K. 2022. "Nothing Much Happened": Rethinking heterosexual middle-class adolescent boys' romance in Mumbai. In P. Kumar (Ed.), *Sexuality, Abjection and Queer Existence in Contemporary India* (pp. 60-76). Routledge India.
- Corredor, E. S. 2019. 'Unpacking "gender ideology" and the global right's antigender counter-movement'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 44(3), 613-638.
- Corrêa, S., & Khanna, A. 2015. *Emerging powers, sexuality and human rights: "Fumbling around the elephant?"* (Working Paper). Sexuality Policy Watch.

- Collins, R. 1971. 'Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification'. *American Sociological Review*, 36(6), 1002-1019.
- Das, A. K., & Roy, S. 2016. 'Unheard Narratives of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) of Adolescent Girls of the Holy Cross College, Dhaka, Bangladesh'. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 21(2), 01-08. Retrieved from
- Deka, M. 2014. Schooling and the Production of Student Culture: Principles and Practice. *In Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India* (pp. 66-103). SAGE Publications.
- De Paor, C. 2021. 'The curriculum in an era of global reform: Bobbitt's ideas on efficiency and teacher knowledge'. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(3), 270-278.
- Daruwalla, N., Mishra, T., Pantvaidya, S., & Osrin, D. 2017. 'Good girls and boys: Findings From a Cross-Sectional Survey on Adolescent Rights, Relationships and Sexuality in an Urban Informal Settlement in India'. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 23(3), 308-324.
- Davis, K. 1940. 'The sociology of parent-youth conflict'. *American Sociological Review*, 5(4), 523-535.
- Dewey, J. 1916. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Dore, B. 2014. Living in the Bubble: Rishi Valley School and the Sense of Community. *In Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India* (pp. 270-332). SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd.
- Dube, L. 1997. *Women and Kinship: Comparative perspectives on gender in South and Southeast Asia*. United Nations University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, & Kate Soper. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Goldman, J. D. G. 2012. 'A critical analysis of UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on school-based Education for puberty and sexuality'. *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*, 12(2), 199-218.
- Giroux, H. A. 2001. *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.

- Giroux, H., & Penna, A. 1979. 'Social Education in the Classroom: The Dynamics of Hidden Curriculum'. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 7, 21–42.
- Gupta, C. 2001. *Sexuality, obscenity, community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu public in colonial India*. Permanent Black.
- Government of India. 2020. National Education Policy. New Delhi: Ministry of Education.
- National Education Policy 2010.
- Government of Bangladesh. 2010. National Education Policy. Dhaka: Ministry of Education.
- Hlebowitsh, P. 2023. Curriculum: The Educational Experience in the School Curriculum. In T. M. Christou (Ed.), *Historical Foundations of Education*. Bloomsbury Academic. <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5606008>.
- Ismail, S., Shajahan, A., Rao, T. S. S., & Wylie, K. 2015. Adolescent sex education in India: Current perspective. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 57. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.171843>
- Khan, T., & Raby, R. 2019. From missing to misdirected: Young men's experiences of sex education in Bangladesh. *Sex Education*, 20, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2019.1703177>
- Lamphere, L., & Rosaldo, M. Introduction. (Eds.). 1974. *Woman, Culture, and Society*. Stanford University Press. pp1-17.
- McLaren, P. 1948. *Life in Schools: an Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*. New York: Longman, 1994.
- Menon, N. 2015. 'Is Feminism about 'Women'? A Critical View on Intersectionality from India'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(17), 37-44. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24481823>
- Murshid, N. S., & Irish, A. 2020. 'Understanding teen sex in Bangladesh: Results from Global School Health Survey 2014'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 119, 105619.
- Nussbaum, M. 2015. Tagore, Dewey and the demise of liberal Education. In Meenakshi Thapan (ed) *Education and Society: themes, Perspective and Practices*. Oxford Indian readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology.
- Nurmi, J.-E. 2004. *Socialization and self-development: Channeling, selection, adjustment, and reflection*. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology*

(2nd ed., pp. 85–124). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- O'Sullivan, L. F., Byers, E. S., & Mitra, K. 2019. Sexual and Reproductive Health Education: Attitudes and Experience in India: How Much Support Is There for Comprehensive Sex Education? Findings from an Internet Survey. *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*, 19(2), 145-161.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, culture, and society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 68-87.
- Padgug, R. 2007. Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in Culture, Society, and Sexuality (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge. In Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, Society, and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 17-30). London and New York: Routledge.
- Parsons, T. 1959. 'The Social Class as a Social System: Some of Its Functions in American Society'. *Harvard Educational Review*, pp. 434–455.
- Parsons, T. 1955. Family structure and the socialization of the child. In Parsons, T., & Bales, R. F. (1955). *Family, socialization, and interaction process* (in collaboration with J. Olds, M. Zelditch Jr., & P. E. Slater). The Free Press.
- Paiva, V. 2007. Gendered Scripts and the Sexual Scene: Promoting Sexual Subjects among Brazilian Teenagers. In Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 31-40). London and New York: Routledge.
- Phadke, S. 2005. Some Notes towards Understanding the Construction of Middle-Class Urban Women's Sexuality in India. In H. Islam, S. Quader, & S. Khan (Eds.), *Sexuality, Gender and Rights: Exploring Theory and Practice in South and Southeast Asia* (pp. 67-81).
- Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. 1995. Chapter 1: Understanding curriculum: An introduction. *Counterpoints*, 17, 3-65. Retrieved October 15, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42974917>.
- Powell, A. 2010. *Sex, Power and Consent: Youth Culture and the Unwritten Rules*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rubin, G. 2007. Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality, (2nd ed) In Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp.150-187). London and New York: Routledge.

- Rousseau, J. J. 1977. *Emile* (B. Foxley, Trans.). London: J. M. Dent and Sons.
- Saiz, I. 2007. Bracketing Sexuality: Human Rights and Sexual Orientation: A Decade of Development and Denial at the UN. *Health and Human Rights*. In Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 459-479). London and New York: Routledge.
- Sarkar, T. 2001. *Introduction*. Hindu wife, Hindu nation, community, religion, and cultural nationalism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sinha, M. 1995. *Colonial Masculinity: The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Singh, T., Kaur, H., & Mittal, S. 2024. *Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) minority and school life in India*. In M. Kasai, Y. Toda, & S. Russell (Eds.), *Sexual orientation and gender identity and school life in Asian contexts: Beyond bullying and conflict toward inter-minority empathy*. Routledge. (pp. 156-170).
- Sircar, O. 2022. *A brief prehistory of queer freedom in the New India*. In P. Kumar (Ed.), *Sexuality, abjection, and queer existence in contemporary India* (pp.226-250). Routledge.
- Srinivas, M. N. 1952. *Religion and society among the Coorgs of South India*. Oxford University Press.
- Srivastava, S. 1998. *Constructing Post-Colonial India: National Character and the Doon School*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sriprakash, A. 2010. Child-centred education and the promise of democratic learning: Pedagogic messages in rural Indian primary schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30(3), 297–304. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.11.010>
- Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. 2007. Sexual Scripts. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. In Parker, R., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 31-40). London and New York: Routledge.
- Stearns, P. N. 2009. *Sexuality in world history*. 2nd edition: 2017. London: Routledge
- Matthan, T., Anusha, C., & Thapa, M. . 2014. Being Muslims, becoming citizens: A Muslim girls' school in post-riot Ahmedabad. In Thapan, M. (Ed.), *Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India*, 225-270.

- Thapan, M. 2006a. *Life at School: An Ethnographic Study*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thapan, M. 2006b. 'Docile' bodies, 'good' citizens or 'agential' subjects? Pedagogy and citizenship in contemporary society. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(39), 4195-4203.
- Thapan, Meenakshi (Ed.). 2014. *Ethnographies of Schooling in Contemporary India*. Sage Publications.
- Thapan, M. 2015. Curriculum and Its Possibilities. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum Studies in India* (pp. 141-161). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137477156_6
- Thorne, B. 1993. *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School* (2nd ed.). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Tripathi, N., & Sekher, T. V. 2013. Youth in India Ready for Sex Education? Emerging Evidence from National Surveys. *PLoS ONE*, 8(8), e71584. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0071584.
- United Nations. 2016. *The Sustainable Development Goals report*. United Nations
- Vance, C. 2007. Anthropology Rediscovered Sexuality: Sexual Scripts. In R. Parker & P. Aggleton (Eds.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 41-57). London and New York: Routledge.
- Velaskar, Padma. 2015. Educational Stratification, Dominant Ideology, and Reproduction of Disadvantage in India. In Thapan, Meenakshi (Ed.), *Education and Society: Themes, Perspectives, Practices*. Oxford University Press.
- Walton, Gerald. 2005. The Hidden Curriculum in Schools for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth. *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, 21, 18-39.
- Williams-Ørberg, E. 2008. The 'Paradox' of Being Young in New Delhi: Urban Middle-Class Youth Negotiations with Popular Indian Film (Working Paper No. 24). Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University, Sweden. Retrieved from <http://www.ace.lu.se>
- Yamini. *Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013: Sexual Offences*. Academike - Lawctopus. <http://www.lawctopus.com/academike/criminal-law-amendment/> (retrieved on 8th April 2015).

Endnotes

Dominant culture refers to the culture which is arbitrarily selected by the ruling class or the social class which has symbolic, and economic dominance in society (McLaren,139)

Subordinate culture is the culture of the working class (ibid, 139).

Bio profile of the Authors:

¹Independent research scholar

Email ID: nishaaghosh63@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi

