

Pedagogy and the Future Citizen

A primary institution through which values and norms are simultaneously constituted and reproduced in society is the school. While conceptual categories such as the educational code, pedagogic work, pedagogic authority and so on have been examined as essential components of schooling practices that further relations of power and social control, it is contended here that the pedagogic encounter that does not exclusively take place in the location and context of the school is critical to this process.

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One aspect of the current war being waged by the US in Iraq is the manner in which the Muslim and 'uncivilised' other has been carefully constructed into an untrustworthy and alien foe. Although supporters of the American president may cry themselves hoarse about Saddam's vile dictatorship as being the single most convincing reason for the use of force, there is no doubt that they have succeeded in the othering, and exclusion, of Muslims across the world from what they consider the civilised and modern world. Civilised nations, it appears, must therefore go to war with the barbaric and uncivilised in their laudatory attempts to curtail the spread of what they consider immoral and destructive behaviour. In such a construction, normative definitions of 'right' values and morals, 'right' judgments and forms of ideal citizenship, abound in the already fractured domain of the national and international imaginary. These values are constructed not only by the politics of international coalitions but are also embedded in national cultures and practices and find legitimacy in the manner in which they are reproduced through state and other institutions in society.

A primary institution through which values and norms are simultaneously constituted and reproduced in society is the school. The relationship between pedagogy and citizenship is premised on the relationship between pedagogy and values that has been examined in the context of school textbooks in terms of the manner in which they reflect and identify the constituents of citizenship within the parameters of the dominant ideologies of society. In schools, notions of citizenship are embedded within the ethics of citizenship, namely, what constitutes a good citizen and normative definitions of

citizenship that prevail in terms such as 'ek achha nagrik', whether this takes place textually or in the everyday discourse of schools in India. The self is constructed in terms of a normative value placed on relationship to the nation in terms of the components of selfhood, citizenship and nation-building. Schooling produces through excessive specialisation, and clearly demarcated and strictly maintained boundaries, an 'abhorrence of mixed categories, blurred identities and intolerance of ambiguity' as Rubina Saigol, the well known Pakistani sociologist tells us, which results in the construction of pure and unmixed social categories.

We find that this takes place not only through the habitus but also through processes of social reproduction in schools. However, although conceptual categories such as the educational code, pedagogic work, pedagogic authority, and so on, have been examined as essential components of schooling practices that further relations of power and social control, I contend that the pedagogic encounter that does not exclusively take place in the location and context of the school is critical to this process. The pedagogic encounter indicates the process of transmission which is critical to life in school. Such transmission is not however a one-way process but an encounter in which both the pedagogue and the pupil are simultaneously engaged. Such an encounter is also not limited spatially to the school and includes, for example, historically, the colonialist discourse on educating natives as well as nationalist interventions in educational practice. It is located also in the family in the process of socialisation practices that lead, for example, to the constitution of gendered identities and reproduction of patriarchy. The pedagogic encounter is therefore the process of communication through which knowledge and culture is

communicated, contested, revised, appropriated or challenged; and it becomes crucial to understand this process in terms of the socio-political underpinnings of the different contexts and locations within which such encounters take place. In the contemporary public and social discourse, these include the space within which the creation of the notion of citizen as protector of national honour takes place, viewed through coloured lens, and a valorisation of aspects of relations between self and nation that emphasise honour, integrity, purity and above all, dignity.

Who now constitutes the 'good' citizen? It is significant that in this post-colonial society, the good citizen remains one who seeks to protect national honour and liberate the nation from foreign domination of different kinds. The 'achha nagrik' is now one who emphasises the pure, the constant, the dominant in terms of what is sacred and dominant in a Hindu India as being that which must prevail. The othering of those who are excluded from notions of citizenship takes place through an emphasis on the 'foreignness' of some citizens such as Christians who may even occupy positions of constitutional power and authority (for example, our Chief Election Commissioner) thereby excluding them morally from a legitimate public and social domain that is encased in the 'values' of a dominant culture.

All these normative definitions of citizenship do not necessarily articulate within the classroom in a school but through the media, and other public spaces, finding a place in the minds and lives of children. The pedagogic encounter therefore is not restricted to a building or an institution but takes place in the everyday lives of children both within well-defined spaces as well as in more amorphous and nebulous spaces where identities are constructed, selfhood is defined and redefined, and boundaries are created and recreated. If we examine these spaces, as well as those within schools, as constitutive of relations of ruling in the everyday life histories of both selves and societies, we will find how selves are not only included or excluded, affirmed or alienated, but how socially constructed and other-ed selves are eventually removed, with surgical precision, from the social and public domain. We must surely be conscious that in this process we are only stepping back into history, into conflict, struggle and war and not moving forward into a just, fearless and more enabling future. **EPW**

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