

# From “Pasts” to “Civilisation”: Ideological Realignment in India’s NCERT Grade 6 History Curriculum

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**Abstract**— This study examines recent revisions to the NCERT Grade 6 history curriculum through a comparative analysis of the 2017 *Our Pasts-I* and the 2025 *Exploring Society: India and Beyond*. Moving beyond the official framing of these changes as a process of “rationalisation,” the paper investigates how shifts in content, structure, and narrative framing reshape the representation of the past. Drawing on qualitative textual analysis, the study focuses on changes in conceptual orientation, nomenclature, external interactions, and chronological scope.

The findings indicate a pattern in which pedagogical continuity coexists with notable shifts in historical representation. While inquiry-based learning and source-oriented approaches are retained, providing continuity in instructional form, the underlying narrative framework shows signs of reorientation. The 2017 textbook explicitly foregrounds plurality through its use of “pasts,” whereas the 2025 edition places greater emphasis on civilisational continuity. This shift is accompanied by an expanded and more narrativised treatment of “India” and “Bharat,” a rebalancing of external interactions from exchange toward representation, and a contraction of chronological scope that foregrounds early civilisational phases. As summarised in Table 1, these changes collectively suggest a reconfiguration of emphasis rather than a simple reduction of content.

Rather than interpreting these developments as a complete departure from earlier frameworks, the study argues that they reflect a process of selective reconfiguration in which continuity in pedagogical structure mediates changes in narrative organisation. Situating these findings within broader discussions of curriculum and historical representation, the paper highlights the role of textbooks as key sites where historical knowledge is structured and communicated. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates on how history education shapes the interpretation of the past and the formation of historical understanding in contemporary India.

**Keywords**— NCERT: history education: curriculum reform: historical representation: civilisational narrative: India–Bharat: textbook analysis.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, Indian school education has undergone a significant transformation, marked by a shift from the pluralistic and constructivist framework associated with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 to the more centralised and culturally rooted orientation articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This transition extends beyond pedagogical reform and reflects a broader reconfiguration of how historical knowledge is selected, structured, and presented within the school curriculum. At the centre of this transformation lies the revision of history

textbooks, which play a critical role in shaping students’ initial engagement with the past and, by extension, their understanding of national identity.

Under the NCF 2005, NCERT textbooks were designed to move away from rote memorisation and towards a more inquiry-driven and pluralistic approach to history. These textbooks emphasised diversity, foregrounding the coexistence of multiple social experiences and perspectives across time. They encouraged students to recognise the heterogeneity of the past, highlighting differences in class, occupation, region, and cultural practice. In doing so, they aligned with broader historiographical trends that privilege social history and multiplicity over singular, unified narratives.

By contrast, the NEP 2020 advances an educational vision that places greater emphasis on cultural rootedness, “Indian Knowledge Systems,” and the re-evaluation of inherited curricular frameworks. While these aims are framed in terms of intellectual autonomy and decolonisation, they have also prompted debate regarding their implications for the representation of history in school education. Rather than assuming a direct correspondence between policy objectives and textbook content, it is necessary to examine how these shifts are manifested in the structure and narrative of specific educational materials.

A key mechanism through which recent curricular changes have been implemented is the process described as “rationalisation.” Introduced in response to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, rationalisation has been officially presented as a measure to reduce content load and improve accessibility for students. While this framing highlights its administrative rationale, rationalisation can also be understood as a process that reshapes the selection, organisation, and emphasis of historical knowledge. In this sense, it operates not only as a quantitative reduction but as a qualitative reconfiguration of the curriculum.

These dynamics are particularly significant in the context of Grade 6 education, which represents a foundational stage in students’ engagement with history as a discipline. At this level, learners transition from generalised environmental studies to more structured forms of historical reasoning, developing an understanding of time, causation, and social change. The narratives encountered at this stage often function as conceptual frameworks that shape subsequent learning. The shift from the standalone history textbook *Our Pasts-I* (2017)

to the integrated social science volume *Exploring Society: India and Beyond* (2025) therefore carries implications that extend beyond content revision to the organisation of knowledge itself.

This study examines these changes through a comparative textual analysis of the two textbooks. Drawing on Apple's (2004) concept of textbooks as "selective traditions," it approaches them as socially constructed artefacts that reflect broader institutional priorities and interpretive frameworks. The analysis proceeds along three interrelated dimensions. First, it considers structural changes, including chapter organisation and chronological scope. Second, it examines conceptual shifts in narrative framing, focusing on themes such as plurality, nomenclature, and external interaction. Third, it analyses patterns of emphasis and omission to identify how certain aspects of the past are foregrounded while others recede.

By bringing these dimensions together, the study seeks to move beyond binary interpretations of curricular change as either administrative or ideological. Instead, it highlights the ways in which continuity and transformation operate simultaneously, producing a curriculum that appears stable in form while evolving in its representation of the past.

## II. CONTINUITY IN PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

### 2.1. *The Persistence of Inquiry-Based Learning as Structural Continuity*

Despite substantial revisions in content and organisation, one of the most striking features of the transition from the 2017 *Our Pasts-I* to the 2025 *Exploring Society: India and Beyond* is the persistence of inquiry-based learning (IBL) as the dominant pedagogical framework. This continuity suggests that curricular reform has been implemented primarily through the reconfiguration of historical representation rather than through a fundamental transformation of instructional form.

In the 2017 textbook, inquiry-based learning is embedded within the narrative structure of each chapter. The text frequently introduces historical topics through the curiosity of student figures, whose questions serve as an entry point into broader discussions about the past. For instance, the opening chapter presents a student reflecting on how historians come to know about events that occurred long ago, thereby framing history as a process of investigation rather than a fixed body of knowledge. This approach encourages students to perceive historical knowledge as constructed through questioning, interpretation, and engagement with evidence.

The 2025 textbook retains this emphasis on inquiry, although it adopts a more modular and structured format. Instead of character-led narratives, it introduces pedagogical devices such as "The Big Questions," "Let's Explore," and guided activities that prompt students to reflect on key themes and engage actively with the material. These features continue to position students as participants in the learning process, reinforcing the idea that historical understanding emerges through exploration rather than passive reception.

The persistence of this pedagogical approach is significant for several reasons. First, it ensures continuity in classroom practice, allowing teachers and students to navigate the revised

curriculum within a familiar instructional framework. Second, it maintains the appearance of alignment with constructivist principles associated with earlier curricular reforms, thereby framing the transition as an evolution rather than a rupture.

At the same time, this continuity raises important analytical questions. While the form of inquiry-based learning remains stable, the content to which it is applied has undergone notable changes. Students are still encouraged to ask questions and engage with historical material, but the range of topics, themes, and narratives available for exploration may differ from those presented in the earlier edition. As a result, the persistence of IBL does not necessarily indicate continuity in the conceptualisation of the past; rather, it suggests that changes in historical representation are mediated through an established pedagogical structure.

This dynamic can be understood as a form of structural continuity that coexists with shifts in narrative emphasis. By preserving the outward features of inquiry-based learning, the curriculum provides a stable framework within which revised interpretations of the past can be introduced. In this sense, pedagogical continuity functions not simply as a carryover from previous frameworks but as a mechanism that shapes how curricular change is experienced and understood.

### 2.2. *Sources and the Framing of Historical Knowledge*

A second major area of continuity between the 2017 and 2025 textbooks lies in their sustained emphasis on historical sources as the foundation of knowledge. In both editions, history is presented as an evidence-based discipline, grounded in the interpretation of material remains, textual records, and archaeological findings. This continuity reinforces the idea that historical understanding is constructed through engagement with empirical evidence.

In the 2017 textbook, this emphasis is articulated through clear explanations of how historians work with different types of sources. Students are introduced to manuscripts, inscriptions, and artefacts, and are encouraged to think about how these materials can be used to reconstruct the past. The text often compares historians to investigators who piece together clues, highlighting the interpretive nature of historical work. This framing underscores the provisional character of historical knowledge, suggesting that interpretations may change as new evidence becomes available.

The 2025 textbook retains this focus on sources, continuing to foreground the importance of evidence in historical inquiry. It presents archaeological discoveries, textual traditions, and material culture as key means through which the past can be understood. At a surface level, this suggests a strong continuity in the epistemological orientation of history education, with both editions emphasising the role of evidence and interpretation.

However, a closer comparison indicates that the context in which sources are presented has shifted. In the earlier edition, sources are often embedded within discussions that highlight diversity and variation, encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives and interpretations. In the revised edition, sources are more closely integrated into broader

thematic narratives, particularly those related to cultural continuity and civilisational development.

This shift does not eliminate the interpretive dimension of historical inquiry, but it may influence the ways in which evidence is understood. The selection and organisation of sources shape the interpretive frameworks available to students, guiding how they make sense of the past. In this sense, the continued emphasis on sources functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a means of structuring historical representation.

Thus, while the epistemic foundation of history education remains consistent, the framing of historical knowledge appears to have been reoriented. The persistence of source-based learning reinforces continuity in method, even as the narrative contexts within which sources are interpreted undergo modification.

### 2.3. Continuity as Pedagogical Mediation

The coexistence of pedagogical continuity and changes in historical representation suggests that the former may function as a mediating mechanism within the revised curriculum. By preserving familiar instructional structures—such as inquiry-based learning, guided questions, and source analysis—the textbooks maintain a sense of stability that facilitates the introduction of new narrative orientations.

In both editions, students are positioned as active participants in the learning process, encouraged to engage with questions, interpret evidence, and reflect on historical themes. This continuity in pedagogical approach reinforces the perception that the curriculum remains aligned with established educational principles. However, the scope and direction of inquiry are shaped by the organisation of the textbook itself, which determines the themes, examples, and narratives that are brought into focus.

This dynamic highlights the relationship between pedagogy and content. While inquiry-based learning encourages critical engagement, it operates within defined parameters set by the curriculum. The questions posed, the sources selected, and the topics emphasised all influence how students interpret historical material. As a result, pedagogical continuity does not necessarily imply interpretive openness; rather, it structures the conditions under which interpretation takes place.

From this perspective, continuity in instructional form can be understood as a means of mediating change. By maintaining familiar modes of engagement, the curriculum creates a stable environment in which shifts in historical representation can be introduced without appearing abrupt. Students encounter new narrative emphases through established pedagogical practices, allowing these changes to be integrated into the learning process.

This does not suggest that inquiry-based learning loses its critical potential. Instead, it underscores the importance of examining how pedagogical structures interact with the content they convey. The persistence of inquiry-based learning in the 2025 textbook reflects both continuity and adaptation, illustrating how educational frameworks can accommodate

evolving approaches to historical representation while maintaining a consistent mode of engagement.

## III. DISCONTINUITY IN HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

### 3.1. From “Pasts” to “Civilisation”: Reframing Historical Multiplicity

One of the most consequential differences between the 2017 and 2025 NCERT Grade 6 textbooks lies in their conceptualisation of the past and the interpretive frameworks through which historical experience is presented. While both editions introduce students to early historical developments, they differ significantly in how they frame the nature of historical plurality and continuity.

The 2017 textbook explicitly foregrounds multiplicity as a defining feature of historical understanding. It states: “We have used the word ‘pasts’ in plural to draw attention to the fact that the past was different for different groups of people.” (2017, *Our Pasts-1*, p.10.).

This formulation does more than describe variation; it establishes plurality as a methodological principle. By emphasising that different social groups—such as farmers, herders, rulers, and craft specialists—experienced history differently, the textbook invites students to approach the past as a field of diverse and sometimes divergent experiences. The emphasis on “pasts” aligns with historiographical traditions that prioritise social differentiation and the coexistence of multiple perspectives within a shared temporal framework.

This orientation is reinforced through the organisation of content. The 2017 textbook frequently moves between different social groups and regions, highlighting variation in livelihoods, cultural practices, and forms of social organisation. Historical knowledge is presented as layered and heterogeneous, encouraging students to consider how different forms of experience coexist within broader historical processes. In this sense, plurality functions not only as a descriptive feature but as an analytical lens through which the past is interpreted.

In contrast, the 2025 textbook adopts a more integrated narrative orientation, in which continuity emerges as a central organising principle. While the revised text does not explicitly reject multiplicity, it places greater emphasis on the idea of a long-standing and continuous civilisation. This is captured in the statement: “India is a young nation but an old civilisation.” (2025, *Exploring Society*, p.5)

Here, the past is framed as part of an extended civilisational trajectory that precedes and underpins the modern nation-state. The emphasis shifts from analysing differences between social groups to situating those differences within a broader narrative of continuity and cultural development.

This shift can be interpreted as a reorientation in the conceptual grammar of historical representation. In the earlier edition, multiplicity is foregrounded as the starting point for understanding the past. In the revised edition, continuity provides a more prominent framework, within which diversity is incorporated rather than emphasised independently. The analytical focus moves from difference to cohesion, from

fragmentation to integration.

Importantly, this transformation does not take the form of an explicit replacement of one framework with another. Elements of plurality remain present in the 2025 textbook, but they are more likely to be embedded within a narrative that emphasises long-term continuity. As a result, diversity is not eliminated but recontextualised, becoming part of a broader civilisational narrative.

From a pedagogical perspective, this shift has important implications for how students conceptualise the past. A framework centred on plurality encourages attention to variation, complexity, and social differentiation. A framework oriented toward continuity may encourage students to identify connections across time and to perceive the past as part of a unified trajectory. Both approaches have analytical value, but their relative emphasis shapes the interpretive possibilities available to learners.

Thus, the transition from “pasts” to “civilisation” can be understood not as a simple change in terminology but as a broader reconfiguration of how historical knowledge is structured and communicated. It reflects a shift in the balance between multiplicity and continuity, suggesting a reorientation in the way the past is presented within the curriculum.

### 3.2. *The Politics of Naming: Reconfiguring “India” and “Bharat”*

A second key dimension of change between the two textbooks concerns the treatment of national nomenclature, particularly the relationship between “India” and “Bharat.” While both editions address the historical origins of these terms, they differ in the depth, structure, and framing of their explanations, revealing distinct approaches to historical representation.

In the 2017 textbook, the discussion of nomenclature is relatively concise and descriptive. The text explains the origins of the term “India” as deriving from the Indus (Sindhu) and notes the use of “Bharata” in early textual traditions: “The word India comes from the Indus... The name Bharata was used for a group of people... Later it was used for the country.” (2017, *Our Pasts-1*, p. 7)

This explanation situates both terms within a historical and linguistic framework without assigning particular significance to either. The two names are presented as parallel designations that emerged in different contexts, allowing students to understand them as part of a broader process of historical development.

In the 2025 textbook, the discussion of nomenclature is considerably expanded and more explicitly narrativised. The text traces the evolution of names across multiple cultural and linguistic contexts: “Persians referred to the region as ‘Hind’, ‘Hidu’ or ‘Hindu’... Greeks as ‘Indoi’ or ‘Indike’.” (2025, *Exploring Society*, p. 81)

This is complemented by the inclusion of the constitutional formulation: “India, that is Bharat.” (2025, *Exploring Society*, p.75, p.82)

The expanded treatment introduces several layers of meaning. First, it foregrounds the role of external actors in naming the subcontinent, emphasising processes of linguistic

transformation and cross-cultural interaction. Second, it connects these historical processes to contemporary political identity through the reference to the Constitution.

The difference between the two editions can be understood as a shift from a descriptive to a more narrativised account of naming. In the earlier textbook, names function primarily as historical facts that illustrate linguistic change. In the revised textbook, they are embedded within a broader narrative that highlights continuity, transformation, and identity.

This shift does not necessarily impose a single interpretation, but it may influence how students engage with the concept of naming. By expanding the discussion and linking it to broader themes, the 2025 textbook encourages students to consider how names are connected to historical processes and contemporary identity. Naming becomes not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a site through which historical representation is articulated.

From an analytical perspective, this transformation suggests a reorientation in the role of nomenclature within history education. Rather than serving as a peripheral detail, naming becomes a focal point for understanding how the past is interpreted and communicated. The expanded treatment reflects a broader pattern in which elements of historical knowledge are integrated into more cohesive narrative frameworks.

### 3.3. *External Interactions and the Reorientation of Historical Perspective*

The treatment of external interactions provides another important lens through which differences between the two textbooks can be examined. While both editions acknowledge the movement of people and the exchange of ideas, they differ in how these processes are framed and integrated into the narrative.

In the 2017 textbook, external interactions are presented primarily in terms of exchange and mutual influence. The movement of people is described as contributing to the development of cultural traditions: “These movements of people enriched our cultural traditions... [leading to] the sharing of ideas.” (2017, *Our Pasts-1*, p. 7))

This framing emphasises interconnectedness, highlighting the ways in which interactions between different groups contribute to diversity and change. External contacts are understood as dynamic processes that shape cultural development, reinforcing a relational model of history in which societies are interconnected.

In the 2025 textbook, external interactions are still acknowledged, but the emphasis shifts toward how the subcontinent has been perceived and described by others. The discussion of naming by Persians, Greeks, and other groups highlights processes of classification and representation.

This shift suggests a reorientation from a relational to a representational perspective. Rather than focusing primarily on the effects of interaction, the revised textbook places greater emphasis on how the region has been understood and articulated in different contexts. The analytical focus moves from exchange to perception, from interaction to representation.

This change does not eliminate the relational dimension of history, but it alters its prominence within the narrative. By foregrounding processes of naming and classification, the 2025 textbook introduces a different way of understanding external interactions—one that emphasises how identities are constructed and communicated.

From a pedagogical perspective, this reorientation may influence how students conceptualise the relationship between the subcontinent and the wider world. A focus on exchange encourages an understanding of mutual influence and interconnectedness, while a focus on representation highlights processes of interpretation and categorisation. The shift between these perspectives reflects a broader change in how historical processes are framed within the curriculum.

### *3.4. Contraction of Historical Scope and the Reconfiguration of Narrative Emphasis*

The most tangible difference between the 2017 and 2025 textbooks lies in the restructuring of historical scope and the ways in which this restructuring reshapes the overall configuration of historical representation. While earlier sections have examined conceptual and narrative shifts, the transformation of chronological coverage provides a concrete illustration of how these changes are materialised within the curriculum.

The 2017 *Our Pasts-I* textbook presents a relatively extensive chronological narrative, comprising twelve chapters that trace developments from early human societies to later historical periods. This structure enables students to engage with a broad temporal framework, exposing them to multiple phases of historical change and a range of social, political, and cultural processes. By moving across different periods and themes, the textbook encourages an understanding of history as dynamic and evolving, characterised by both continuity and transformation.

In contrast, the 2025 *Exploring Society: India and Beyond* textbook integrates history into a broader social science framework, resulting in a significant reduction in the proportion of content devoted specifically to historical material. While this integration reflects a multidisciplinary approach consistent with recent curricular reforms, it also entails a contraction of chronological scope. The revised textbook places a stronger emphasis on early civilisational phases, with comparatively less attention given to later periods.

This shift is not merely quantitative. Rather than functioning as a simple reduction of content, it can be understood as a reorganisation of emphasis that reshapes the temporal horizon within which history is encountered. By foregrounding early developments, the revised curriculum directs attention toward origins and foundational narratives, potentially influencing how students conceptualise the trajectory of the past. Later periods, which often involve more complex social dynamics and historical contingencies, become less central within the overall narrative structure.

From an analytical perspective, it is therefore more productive to interpret this transformation as a process of selective visibility rather than omission. Certain aspects of the past are made more prominent, while others recede, resulting

in a reconfiguration of what is presented as historically significant. This pattern reflects broader dynamics in curriculum design, where decisions about inclusion and emphasis shape not only what students learn but also how they understand historical processes.

The contraction of scope also interacts with the conceptual shifts discussed in previous sections. The emphasis on early civilisational phases aligns with the broader movement toward a more integrated narrative framework, in which continuity across time is foregrounded. By concentrating on foundational periods, the curriculum reinforces the idea of a long-standing civilisational trajectory, within which later developments are implicitly situated. In this sense, structural changes in scope and conceptual shifts in narrative framing operate together, producing a coherent—if reconfigured—representation of the past.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that such restructuring does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of engaging with complexity or diversity. Elements of variation and change remain present within the revised textbook, but they are situated within a more focused temporal and thematic framework. The effect is not to replace one form of historical understanding with another entirely, but to recalibrate the balance between different emphases.

When considered alongside the persistence of pedagogical continuity discussed in Section II, this restructuring acquires additional significance. The stable framework of inquiry-based learning and source-oriented instruction provides a familiar mode of engagement, even as the scope and organisation of content are reconfigured. Students continue to encounter history through established pedagogical practices, but the range of material available for exploration is more selectively defined. This interaction between continuity in form and change in scope contributes to the overall coherence of the revised curriculum.

Taken together, the patterns identified in this section—along with those discussed in earlier parts of the analysis—suggest a broader process of reconfiguration in historical representation. The contraction of chronological scope, the reorganisation of emphasis, and the alignment of structural and conceptual changes collectively point toward a recalibration of how the past is framed within the curriculum.

From a broader perspective, these developments can be situated within ongoing debates about curriculum, identity, and historical representation. Some scholars have interpreted similar shifts in terms of wider ideological trends in education, including processes sometimes described as “Saffronization.” In the present analysis, however, such interpretations are approached with caution. Rather than serving as a starting point, they emerge as one possible lens through which the observed patterns may be understood.

Overall, the restructuring of historical scope highlights the importance of examining not only what is included in the curriculum but also how it is organised. By shaping the temporal and thematic boundaries of historical knowledge, the textbook plays a central role in defining the contours of historical understanding. The changes observed here suggest a movement toward a more focused and integrated narrative

framework, in which continuity and emphasis are recalibrated through both structural and conceptual adjustments. The comparative patterns identified across these dimensions are summarised in Table 1, which consolidates the key shifts in narrative framing, conceptual orientation, and historical scope between the 2017 and 2025 textbooks.

TABLE I. Comparative Shifts in Historical Representation in NCERT Grade 6 Textbooks (2017 and 2025)

Dimension	2017 (Our Pasts-1)	2025 (Exploring Society)	Analytical Shift
Concept of the Past	Explicitly plural pasts	Emphasis on civilisational continuity	Plural → Integration
Narrative Orientation	Social diversity, Multiple experiences	Unified civilisational trajectory	Social differentiation → Narrative consolidation
Naming (India/Bharat)	Descriptive, parallel explanation	Expanded, Narrativised, constitutionally framed	Description → Identity framing
Chronological Scope	Broad, Multi-period coverage	Condensed, Early civilisational focus	Expansion → Selective continuity
Pedagogical Structure	Inquiry-based learning	Inquiry-based learning retained	Structural Continuity
Use of Sources	Open-minded, Interpretive	Integrated into thematic narrative	Interpretation openness → Framed interpretation

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the recent revision of the NCERT Grade 6 history curriculum, moving beyond its official framing as a process of “rationalisation” to explore how it reshapes the representation of the past. Through a comparative analysis of the 2017 Our Pasts-I and the 2025 Exploring Society: India and Beyond, the findings indicate a complex dynamic in which pedagogical continuity coexists with shifts in narrative and conceptual framing. As summarised in Table 1, these changes are observable across multiple dimensions, including conceptual orientation, narrative structure, and chronological scope.

At the level of pedagogy, the persistence of inquiry-based learning and the continued emphasis on historical sources suggest a deliberate effort to maintain continuity with earlier curricular frameworks. Students are still encouraged to question, interpret, and engage actively with evidence, preserving the outward structure of constructivist learning associated with the NCF 2005. This continuity provides a stable framework through which curricular changes are introduced, allowing the revised textbook to retain a sense of familiarity in classroom practice. However, as the analysis has shown, continuity in instructional form does not necessarily imply continuity in meaning. Rather, it shapes the conditions within which historical knowledge is encountered and interpreted.

The most significant transformations are evident in the conceptualisation and organisation of historical representation. The shift from the explicitly plural framing of “pasts” in the 2017 textbook to a more integrated understanding of a continuous civilisation in the 2025 edition suggests a reorientation in how the past is structured. While multiplicity remains present, it is more frequently situated within a broader narrative of continuity, in which diverse experiences are interpreted as part of a longer civilisational trajectory. This change reflects a recalibration in the balance between diversity and cohesion, rather than a complete replacement of one framework by another.

A comparable pattern can be observed in the treatment of nomenclature, particularly in the relationship between “India” and “Bharat.” The earlier edition presents these terms in a concise and descriptive manner, whereas the revised textbook expands their discussion, embedding them within a more elaborated narrative that connects linguistic history with broader questions of identity. By tracing the evolution of these names across different contexts and linking them to constitutional language, the 2025 textbook positions nomenclature as a site through which historical meaning is articulated, rather than as a purely explanatory detail.

The reorientation of external interactions further reinforces this broader transformation. Where the 2017 textbook emphasises exchange, mobility, and cultural interaction, the 2025 edition places greater emphasis on processes of naming, classification, and representation. This shift does not eliminate the relational dimension of history, but it rebalances it, drawing attention to how the subcontinent has been perceived and described in different contexts. As a result, the analytical lens through which students encounter the past expands to include questions of representation alongside those of interaction.

These conceptual and narrative changes are closely linked to the restructuring of historical scope. The contraction of the history component within the integrated social science framework results in a more focused engagement with early civilisational phases, while later periods receive comparatively less emphasis. This transformation can be understood as a process of selective visibility, in which certain aspects of the past are foregrounded while others recede. Rather than constituting a simple reduction of content, it reflects a reorganisation of emphasis that reshapes the temporal horizon of historical understanding.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that the revised curriculum operates through a process of selective reconfiguration rather than explicit rupture. The persistence of pedagogical structures provides continuity in form, while shifts in narrative framing and scope reshape the conceptual landscape of history education. This interaction allows the curriculum to appear stable while accommodating changes in how the past is represented.

From a broader perspective, these findings contribute to ongoing discussions about the relationship between curriculum, historical representation, and the construction of collective identity. Textbooks do not simply transmit knowledge; they organise it in ways that shape how students

understand the past and their place within it. The patterns identified in this study suggest a movement toward a more integrated narrative framework, in which continuity is given greater prominence alongside diversity.

At the same time, it is important to approach these developments with analytical caution. Existing scholarship has examined similar trends in relation to broader ideological debates in education, including processes sometimes described as “Saffronization.” In this study, however, such interpretations are not treated as starting assumptions but are considered as one possible lens through which the observed patterns may be understood. The analysis instead emphasises how these patterns emerge from the textual evidence itself, highlighting the importance of close reading in understanding curricular change.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the immediate context of Grade 6 education. As an early stage in students’ engagement with history, this level plays a formative role in shaping how key concepts such as diversity, continuity, and identity are understood. The ways in which these concepts are framed can influence subsequent learning and contribute to the development of historical consciousness. Recognising how textbooks organise and present historical knowledge is therefore essential to understanding the broader role of education in shaping interpretive frameworks.

This study is not without limitations. Its focus on textual analysis means that it does not address how textbooks are interpreted in classroom settings or how teachers and students engage with them in practice. Future research could extend this analysis by examining the reception of these materials and exploring how curricular changes are mediated through pedagogical contexts. Such work would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between

textbook content and educational experience.

In conclusion, the revision of the NCERT Grade 6 history curriculum reflects a nuanced process in which continuity and change are intertwined. By maintaining established pedagogical structures while reconfiguring narrative emphasis and scope, the curriculum reshapes how the past is presented and understood. This study underscores how history education functions as a key site in the ongoing negotiation of historical meaning and national identity, highlighting the importance of examining both what is taught and how it is organised within the curriculum.

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