

Training to Hate: The Ekal Vidyalaya Way

A Committee set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and headed by Avdhash Kaushal reported on Ekal Vidyalaya schools in the Singhbhum district in Jharkhand and in the Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts in Assam. The Committee's report, submitted to the MHRD in 2005, brings out the communalisation that is rampant in these schools and in their curriculum and textual materials.

These Ekal Vidyalayas, or one-teacher schools, are run by the Friends of Tribals Society (FTS), one of the many wings of the Sangh Parivar. Boards outside the Ekal Vidyalaya schools visited in Assam, and even the FTS headquarters, openly proclaimed that they were run by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The FTS along with other organisations of its ilk is a recipient of substantial grants from the government, including the MHRD, public money sanctioned for the education of tribal children. They also receive a large amount of foreign funding. The report recommends that the grants given to the FTS be frozen forthwith and a process to recover earlier monies be instituted.

In most of these schools, reading and learning materials are scarce and attendance records habitually inflated even as Hindu gods find their way into everyday rhymes and Hindu prayers abound. Teachers are provided with a host of training

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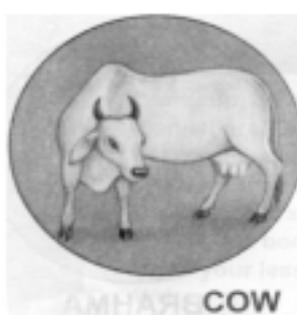
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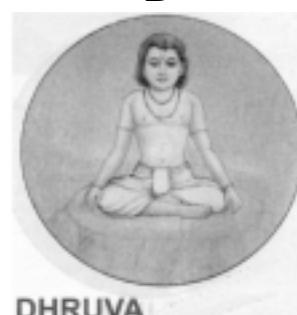
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The contents of an English primer (for Class 11) epitomise the function of Ekal Vidyalaya schools. A booklet for English teaching provided to teachers during FTS teacher training at Borguri, Nokhroy, in Tinsukia district (Assam), the primer was designed to sensitise teachers. Trainees at the session said they were not taught how to teach! "Our main aim is to defend Hindu culture and to spread and inculcate it."

material, songs, prayers, poems full of Hindu religious imagery and narratives replete with communal bias. At the Ekal Vidyalaya in Barakhata, Karanjo block, Singhbhum district (Jharkhand), where, in sharp contrast to the other FTS schools, students *were able* to read and write, a student answered roll-call with the words, "Jai Shri Ram". When asked about the child's response, his teacher explained that it was a part of their teacher training.

The teacher at the Ekal Vidyalaya in Chirchi in Tantanagar block, Singhbhum district, proudly claimed that rather than imparting alphabetical knowledge, he was more intent on protecting "Hindu culture". He also boasted of his role along with other colleagues in the illegal destruction of a half-built church in the village in 2002.

The report states: "The training to the teachers of Ekal schools was mainly to spread communal disharmony in the communities and also to inculcate a fundamentalist political ideology... creating enmity amongst communities on the basis of religion."

The complete report, 'Final Report on the field visit and observations of Mr Avdhash Kaushal for Singhbhum district in Jharkhand and Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts in Assam', can be accessed at: http://www.sabrang.com/khoj/ekal_report.pdf