

Social Science textbook for Class VII innovative

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"Book tends to avoid definitions to sum up a concept"*

NEW DELHI: Several national and international, prominent and not-so-prominent figures are featured in the new Social Science textbook for Class VII.

Developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the book, *Social and Political Life - II*, was released this year after the second phase of restructuring of textbooks. It is a new subject in middle school social science, replacing Civics. It uses real situations to teach different concepts.

In *On Equality* chapter, there are references to famous Dalit writer Omprakash Valmiki and his autobiography *Joothan*, where he talks about his experience of growing up a Dalit boy; the Ansaris who faced problems getting accommodation in an Indian city owing to their religion; and renowned African-American civil rights activist Rosa Parks.

All are equal

Lamenting how the Valmikis and Ansaris were treated unequally on the basis of caste and religion, the book informs the students that the Constitution recognises every person from all castes, religions, tribes and educational and economic backgrounds as equal.

Clippings from Deewar

The book also has clippings from the 1975 Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *Deewar* where a shoeshine boy refuses to pick up a coin thrown at him as he feels that there is dignity in his work and insists that his fee be given respectfully.

In the chapter *Growing up as Boys and Girls*, students get to study the real life story of Melani, a domestic worker and her dreadful experience in Delhi.

Similarly, in the following chapter on *Women Change the World*, there are references to Laxmi Lakra - the first woman engine driver of the Northern Railway and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, the prolific writer, feminist and social worker in undivided Bengal in the early 20th century.

"Laxmi's parents are not literate but they struggled and overcame many hardships to make sure their children were educated. Laxmi studied in a government school. Even in school, Laxmi helped with the housework and did odd jobs. She studied hard and did well and then went on to get a diploma in electronics. She then took the railway board exam and passed in her very first attempt," reads a special box on her.

NCERT Assistant Public Relations Officer B.C. Patro said: "The book tends to avoid the use of definitions to sum up a concept. Instead it uses case studies and narratives to explain concepts to children. Our aim is to make students understand the concepts through their own experiences.

"That is why the case studies and narratives used in the book are a mix of rural and urban examples. Laxmi's story will be a great inspiration to shy girls as well as those from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds."