

To,
HRD Minister, Govt of India,
Ministers and Secretaries of Education of all Indian States,
Vice Chancellors of various universities,
Chairperson, NBHM,
Director, NCERT

Sub: Ensure that mathematics taught in public schools is religiously neutral.

Dear Minister/Secretary/Vice Chancellor/Chairperson/Director,

Colonial education served the interests of the coloniser, so it should have been critically reviewed after independence. Unfortunately, this was not done till now, and our education system still imitates the West. Uncritical imitation may be harmful. European universities were set up by the church and controlled by it for centuries. Long-term church control meant sustained pressure to make all knowledge theologically correct. So, religious biases are likely in Western knowledge.

Indeed, the [accompanying note](#) explains that this applies even to mathematics: mathematics developed differently in different cultures, but Europeans perceived it in religious terms relating to mathesis and eternal truth. As the note explains, most school mathematics, such as arithmetic, geometry, algebra, calculus, and probability, actually originated in the non-West and was imported into Europe for its practical value. However, Europeans attempted to make it theologically correct, and align the notion of infinity to the church notion of eternity. In the process, they turned mathematics into metaphysics and introduced elements of Christian dogma in it, so that there is a subtle religious bias in the way mathematics is taught in schools and universities today. Eliminating that religious bias does not affect any practical application of mathematics.

Teaching a religious bias through a compulsory subject in public schools is unconstitutional. Mathematics should be taught in public schools in a religiously-neutral way and for its practical value. Therefore, if the charge is right, the teaching of mathematics in schools must be changed forthwith. Mathematics is commonly regarded as a difficult subject, and the superfluous theological complexities in it may be the reason for that. We note that actual teaching experiments have been performed, in universities in various countries, to show that teaching mathematics, devoid of theological complexities, also makes it easy. If the charge were not right, then our educationists ought to have publicly refuted it long ago, since it has been published in [4 books, 32 scholarly articles and numerous newspapers](#), in various countries, for over a decade. The silence is strange.

This matter concerns millions of students each year, including our children or grandchildren about whose education we are deeply concerned. Accordingly, we feel that the issue must be decided in a transparent way. Usually, such decisions (regarding what mathematics to teach) are taken by experts. But to avoid a biased decision, the experts must be properly selected. The non-experts who select the experts must explain why they chose those experts. The customary practice is to select experts by blindly trusting Western endorsements and certifications, but that method is inappropriate in the present context of a critical review of colonial education, where the interests of the colonised and the coloniser may diverge fundamentally. *Whose interests do these experts represent?* This must be transparent, especially if there is no concrete evidence that these experts contributed to the welfare of people in India. Relying exclusively on Western certified experts just amounts to continuing the colonial system of requiring permission from the West for any change of policy.

Secondly, to ensure transparency, the experts involved must publicly declare any conflict of interests. If the teaching of mathematics were to change fundamentally, would that negatively impact their own future careers and past achievements? That is, do they have a vested interest in maintaining *status quo*?

As a final check, since the issue concerns the content of public education, the experts must respond publicly to the published critique so that people at large know the basis of the decision, and can check it independently. The issue of academic corruption, and the consequent mental corruption of children, is more worrisome than financial corruption, so responses behind closed doors are not acceptable.

We, the undersigned, are addressing this petition to you to bring the matter to your notice so that you will make the necessary changes in the mathematics curriculum in your institution(s). Alternatively, we would welcome it if you quickly carry out your own critical review, in the transparent way demanded above. We and you both understand that inaction is just an indirect admission of the inability to refute the charge plus a desire to support *status quo*. Therefore, we trust you will respond positively to this petition in the larger interests.

Sincerely,