



Underrepresented and Minority Progress

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To formulate the premise of the present argument, it is almost an imperative to look back at the core of the issues, though such formulations at the backdrop of the already produced stupendous works, might appear to be obtrusive and, at times, cliché. The terms 'Underrepresented' and 'Minorities' overlap each other in all ethnic, racial, sociological, political, cultural, and even in religious studies and practices in such a way that they can neither be practically compartmentalized nor abruptly decompartmentalized. None of these two terms is all-inclusive, hence they stand on their own, and speak (?) of their own, of course, with a sense of constant reciprocity.

The 'Underrepresented' is a subset of a population, characteristically outside of the center of the ruling power structure; they are the under propped and sidelined from the mainstream majority, with their ethnocultural, civic, economic and political rights downright drowned under the heavy weight of the majority representation resulting in their underrepresentation. Women, disabled people, American Indians, Hispanics, Indian-African religious untouchables, aborigines all across the globe, and dissidents of all nomenclature can be brought under the rubric of the 'Underrepresented' and 'Minority'. Women, for example, are typically underrepresented, and they remain minority in a gender-biased society despite the fact that they form half of the global population but deprived of their proportionate representation in the governance and power echelon. The case is even worse for the colored, black, racially alienated, religiously proletarianized women who are doubly underrepresented and minoritized. Again, minority encompasses a huge chunk of population including the color divides, racial and ethnic subsets, socio-economic, and religion-political subalterns besides women. In a world of much publicized democracy and equality, they are the unequal victims of historical wrongs.

It's all about deep darkness, but where lies the streak of light? The world is set to heal the wounds and understand the needs of the long-neglected segments of mankind with compassion and respect, with a strong commitment to address their education, health, economic alleviation, social and psychic rehabilitation, assimilation into the mainstream majority, and multiculturalism (at the cost of acculturation), handing back whatever is feasible thus minimizing the gap between the overrepresented and underrepresented-- the majority and the minority-- which can be summarized in a single fair-looking word 'progress'. Now to return to the praxis, what role can education possibly play in the global conundrum of ensuring progress of the numberless underrepresented and minorities? Let us dive down from dream to reality.

As education is fundamental to elevation of conscience and moral values, on the one hand, and on the other, a gateway to claim equal justice based on one's real worth (not color, caste or creed) in the larger spectrum of a nation, non-discriminated formal education might be an optionless modus operandi for dismantling age-old ethnic, lingua-cultural prejudices and allergies that infiltrated into the mainstream literatures. For that matter alone, other voices should be allowed to be heard and respected if they are merited so. Educational researchers can play a pivotal role to frame ways to bring equilibrium in a rather heavily tilted system. Community education, for example, can be a viable model for improving certain communities, though the concept is yet to be globally practiced. But the reality is, education from elementary to tertiary level is so gauged with a preset mindset that it requires an overhauling of the entire fabric of outlook which further requires a holistic approach by all the stakeholders of national education.

Literatures of all genres, postcolonial and neocolonial schools of thought, cultural studies, human rights groups and organizations etc. did raise voices and critiqued the status quo in the past, and are doing so right now. It would be relevant, and justified too, to applaud JOURNAL OF UNDERREPRESENTED AND MINORITY PROGRESS for assembling critically nuanced voices from across the globe to speak out their literary mind to drop the prefix 'Under' from the human segment known as 'Underrepresented', and at the same time to erase the stigma of the word 'Minority' in a way that assures us of what we call 'Progress'.

Progress of democratic values, social equality, respect for diversity and representation, accommodation of non-mainstream literatures into the mainstream literature and culture (of course, without forcing them to commit, what Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls, 'linguicide' or 'psychic suicide'), salvaging the dying minority languages and literatures, dismantling the barbed-wires between the centre and periphery, and above all, access to equal human rights--- can ensure true progress, be it materialistic or psychological or both. Let a changed mindset be the Sherpa in this journey through the terrains.

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