

# Misrepresentation of Ancient India and Hinduism in American School Textbooks

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(With inputs from Hindu Education Foundation and The Vedic Foundation)

## 1.0 Academic Hinduphobia and American School Textbooks

Numerous studies have demonstrated the prevalence of strong bias towards the history of Ancient India leading to Hinduphobia at all academic levels in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Strangely, bias of this kind is missing from the books which besides Hinduism also deal with Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Due to this researchers specializing in pedagogy have noted that children from Indian or Hindu heritage often feel ashamed of their identity as a result of this prejudice.<sup>2</sup> Several middle school students,<sup>3</sup> or adult second-generation Indian Americans,<sup>4</sup> who had studied about India and Hinduism in their younger years in American schools, have complained that they suffered adverse psychological effects. Parents of such children have also spoken out about the problems that they faced when their children came home, feeling traumatized ('Will I be burned on

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<sup>1</sup> See the following articles on this phenomenon:

Rajiv Malhotra (2001), "Stereotyping Hinduism in American Education," available online at <http://www.sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?cid=970>

Rajiv Malhotra and Dave Freedholm (2002), "Hinduism in American Classrooms," available online at <http://www.sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?cid=4419>

Dave Freedholm (2003), "Women and Hinduism in U.S. Textbooks," available online at <http://www.sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?cid=4564>

Sankrant Sanu (2002), "Are Hinduism Studies Prejudiced? A look at Microsoft Encarta," available online at <http://www.sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?cid=4499>

Alex Alexander (2005), "Indian Identity in American Schools," available online at <http://www.sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?cid=40752>

Yvette Rosser. "The Clandestine Curriculum. Temple of Doom in the Classroom." 2001. In 'Education about Asia,' vol. 6, Number 3, Winter 2001

<sup>2</sup> Yvette Rosser (2001), "Stereotypes in Schooling: Negative Pressures in the American Schooling System on Hindu Identity Formation," in 'Teaching South Asia: An Internet Journal of Pedagogy,' vol. I, issue 1, Winter 2001. Available online at <http://www.mssu.edu/projectsouthasia/tsa/VIN1/Rosser.htm>

<sup>3</sup> See Trisha Pascricha's account "How US Schools Misrepresent Hinduism" available online at <http://www.hvk.org/articles/1003/0.html>

There is no doubt that such negative and prejudiced portrayals render Indian American children vulnerable to racist attacks by their classmates. See for instance the reminiscence of Professor Sreenath Srinivasan, "Making Peace with Oscar," available online at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/mar/25clint.htm>

The author has personally witnessed public testimonies of several school Indian-American children narrating their depressing experiences to California Education Board officials in Sacramento (California) on 27 February 2006. These have been recorded in my "Report on Sacramento Hearing" available online at <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/95/1>

<sup>4</sup> See Niraj Mohanka's "California Textbook Wars, Forgetting the Child- the Heart of the Matter" available online at <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/90/1/>

my husband's pyre?'), insulted and slighted, and declared that they want to disown their own heritage ('I do not want to be a Hindu').<sup>5</sup> Some Indian parents have approached schools and education boards in the United States on their own to offer alternate course material and classes in an effort to counter this negative propaganda.<sup>6</sup> The results of such initiatives have been mixed so far.

## **2.0 American Textbook Reform Initiative**

The sixth grade textbooks in the progressive state of California are no exception to this widespread pattern of academic Hinduphobia. Every six years, California revises its history textbooks for grade VI (equivalent to '6<sup>th</sup> standard' in India). These books cover all ancient civilizations and also have extensive sections and chapters on Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions, whether living or extinct. Islam is covered in seventh grade textbooks (which cover the medieval period), and so are later developments in Christianity. The periodic adoption of textbooks is preceded by extensive public review and comment, allowing for various advocacy groups to revise and improve these textbooks and eliminate errors or biases. There were nine proposed textbooks for grade VI, and six for grade VII during the recent cycle of textbook adoption process. The publishers and titles of the former are listed below:

1. Teachers' Curriculum Institute's *History Alive!* (henceforth **TCI**)
2. McDougal Littell's *World History - Ancient Civilizations*
3. Houghton Mifflin's *History Social Science, World History, Ancient Civilizations*
4. MacMillan/McGraw-Hill's *Our World* (henceforth '**MacMillan**')
5. Harcourt's *Ancient Civilization*
6. Holt, Rinehart, Winston's *World History - Ancient Civilizations* (henceforth '**Holt**')
7. Pearson - Prentice Hall's *History of Our World* (henceforth '**Pearson**')
8. Oxford University Press' *The Ancient South Asian World* (henceforth '**OUP**')
9. Glencoe/McGraw-Hill's *Discovering Our Past - Ancient Civilizations* (henceforth '**Glencoe**')

Books 2 and 3 are identical as far as their text is concerned. Book 9 reproduces verbatim a lot of material from book 4 because both are printed by McGraw Hill.

Two Hindu-American organizations named 'The Vedic Foundation (henceforth 'VF', homepage at <http://thevedicfoundation.org/>)' and 'The Hindu Education Foundation

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<sup>5</sup> See in this regard, see "Parents frustrated by Portrayal of Hinduism in California Textbooks," in *India Post*, issue dt. 06 January 2006. Text available online at [http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/html/IndiaPost\\_01-06-06.htm](http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/html/IndiaPost_01-06-06.htm)

<sup>6</sup> See as examples the following articles in American newspapers:

"Mona Vijaykar battles to get Misrepresentation of India removed from Textbooks," appearing in the newspaper '*India Abroad*,' issue dt. 11 August 2004, and available online at <http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/html/IndiaAbroadAugust2003.pdf>

"Putting a Spotlight on Indian History" in '*The Mercury News*' (a newspaper in the San Jose area), issue dt. 29 July 2003

"Wiping Stereotypes of India off the Books" in '*The Washington Post*,' issue dt. 17 April 2005. Available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A59613-2005Apr16.html>

(henceforth 'HEF', homepage at <http://hindueducation.org/>)' initiated efforts to ensure that sixth grade children receive a fair and accurate portrayal of ancient Indian history and Hinduism.<sup>7</sup> They were supported by thousands of parents of Indian origin, almost a hundred scholars, and by over forty American organizations and educational bodies.<sup>8</sup>

### ***3.0 Types of Errors in California Textbooks***

When The Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) and The Vedic Foundation (VF) and examined the textbooks proposed for adoption in the current cycle, they identified hundreds of errors of the following types:

***3.1 Factual errors:*** The textbooks were replete with blatant errors giving wrong information about the most elementary facts related to India and Hinduism. I want to emphasize that the examples given below are not exhaustive, but merely a *sample* of the errors found in these textbooks.

The **OUP** textbook says, on p. 155, that "... most Nepalese are Buddhist" when in reality almost 80% people of Nepal are Hindus. Likewise, on p. 157, the festival of Onam is confused with Diwali. The textbook has also reinvented the Ramayana and states that Dasharatha had "two families" (**OUP**, p. 85) whereas in fact he had three wives (Kaushalya, Kekeyi and Sumitra). On p. 86, the textbook says that Lord Rama and Lakshmana spent fourteen years to search for Devi Sita who had been kidnapped by Ravana. But the Ramayana says that it was towards the very end of their 14 year-long *vanavaasa* (forest-exile) that the abduction occurred. Therefore the textbook should have said that they spent the 'next' year to search for her. On p. 87, the books claims: "The monkey king Hanuman loved Rama so much that it is said that he is present every time the Ramayana is told. So look around—see any monkeys?" In reality, Hanuman is not the monkey 'king.' The king was Sugriva. Moreover, students in classrooms might use such an exercise to tease or ridicule their Hindu class-mates and call them monkeys. The text has many more such frivolous statements. There is an anachronistic emphasis on untouchability (**OUP**, p. 79). Saraswati is wrongly called "Vishnu's partner" (p. 91) although she is actually Brahma's partner, and Shiva is merely described as "god of fertility" (**OUP**, p. 91)!. Vardhamana (Mahavira) is spelt incorrectly as 'Vardamana' (**OUP**, p. 96), and the name of another Teerthankara 'Parshvanatha' is spelt as '*Prashavanatha*' on the same page. The height of the icon of Bahubali in Karnataka is said (**OUP**, p. 99) to be 20 feet and 18 meters *at the same time* when in fact it is approximately 58 feet (= 18 meters) tall. Even though more than half of Harappan sites are located within India, almost 95% of the relevant photographs in this textbook are from Pakistani sites.

Another textbook starts the description of ancient India with the ridiculous claim (**Harcourt**, p. 364) that "Hindi is written with the Arabic alphabet, which uses 18 letters

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<sup>7</sup> For the chronology of their efforts in improving the textbooks, refer my article dt. January 2006, titled "The Uphill Battle Faced by Hindu Americans", available online at <http://www.indiaforum.com/articles/83/1/>

<sup>8</sup> A list of supporting organizations is available at <http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/03.htm>

that stand for sounds”. The textbook even gives “A.D. 9” as the exact year in which Hindi developed, although both the script and the language evolved several centuries later!

In the **TCI** textbook, it is stated (p. 148) that “To recite them (the Vedas) orally, the Brahmins had to memorize more than 100,000 verses!” In reality, most Brahmins memorized one Veda, and all the Vedas put together have less than 30,000 verses anyway.

The **MacMillan** textbook has a map on p. 242 showing “Harappan Civilization, circa 1500 BC”. This map excludes erroneously Gujarat, Ghaggar-Hakra plains, northern intervening plains (doab) of Yamuna-Ganga from the shaded area indicating the extent of the civilization. The textbook also claims that the Harappan culture “began to decline around 1500 BC” (ibid) when in fact the decline began around 1900 BC. Thus, even elementary chronological milestones of ancient India are stated incorrectly. In the same textbook, the direction of the monsoon winds shown in the map of India (p. 238) is inaccurate. It would appear that N E India does not receive any S W Monsoons.

The **Holt** textbook, on p. 169 also makes the following astonishing revelation: “The Ramayana, written later than the Mahabharata,...” Hindu tradition and mainstream modern scholarship generally agree that the Ramayana was composed<sup>9</sup> earlier than the Mahabharata.

*3.2 Insensitive and frivolous remarks:* A textbook uses a sidebar title “Where’s the Beef?” (**OUP**, p. 144) in a section dealing with Hindu emphasis on vegetarianism. Kali and Durga are referred to as “terrible and blood-thirsty” goddesses in this textbook (**OUP**, p. 92). Puranas are described as “a collection of Hindu myths” that “explain how people should worship the *statues*” (**OUP**, p. 153, emphasis added)!

The **TCI** book makes patronizing remarks (p. 148): “Cows are sacred animals to Hindus. They often wander freely in marketplaces, helping themselves to food” and the accompanying picture shows a cow eating food from a roadside shop selling grocery. The textbook also adds, “They (Hindus) were not to kill a cow even to feed people who were starving.” The author of the **TCI** book could have used this opportunity to explain why Hindus revere the cow, but instead chose to present this belief as a fetish. Obviously, the textbook does not include statements for other religions, such as, “Even if a Jew or a Muslim is starving, he will not eat pork because pigs are considered.”

Hindu scriptures are typically referred to in a dismissive manner as ‘poems,’ ‘stories,’ and ‘*myths*,’ whereas the Jewish, Christian and Islamic scriptures are called Holy Books and their descriptions are called ‘accounts.’ The textbooks abound in statements starting with the words “According to Bible ...,” “According to Torah ...,” “The Torah says ...”

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<sup>9</sup> The word ‘written’ in the text obviously refers to ‘composed’ but it would be perhaps better to clarify that the epics might have been composed orally. See Robert P. Goldman, *The Ramayana of Valmiki, Volume I*, Princeton: 1984, pp, 14 sqq for the scholarly viewpoint that the Ramayana was written before the Mahabharata. Some scholars (e.g. John Brockington) however believe that the most parts of the Mahabharata predate most parts of the Ramayana.

while describing the history of ancient Israel and the Middle East. It appears that Biblical accounts are being treated as history, whereas those of Hindu scriptures are considered as pure fiction. The following are representative examples from textbooks (emphasis added):

“There are four Vedas. Each is *made up* of hymns, *tales*, lessons, and *even battle songs* .... The Bhagavad Gita ... is part of the larger ancient Indian *poem* called the Mahabharata. In this selection, the Hindu *god* Vishnu speaks to Arjuna, a *character* in the *poem*.” [Harcourt, p. 386]

“Like *adventure movies of today*, the Mahabharata *tells thrilling stories* about *great heroes*. For this reason, it has had a great impact on Hinduism.” [Glencoe, p. 265]

But the same **Glencoe** textbook uses the following respectful language for Judaism and Christianity:

“The Israelites spoke a language called Hebrew. They wrote down their *history* and many of their religious beliefs in what later became the Hebrew Bible.... In the Bible, it says that God told Abraham and his followers ... God promised that the land ... the Bible says that God sent 10 plagues.... According to the Bible, God parted the Red Sea.... The Bible says that during this journey, Moses ... received laws from God....” [Glencoe, p. 201]

“Much of what we know about Jesus, whose life and teachings established the Christian religion, is based on *accounts* found in the Bible.... According to the Bible, Jesus’ birth was guided by God.... The Bible tells very little about the middle years of Jesus’ life.... The *accounts* of Jesus’ miracles ...” [Glencoe, p. 504]

The Vedic Foundation’s ‘*Master Document*’ submitted to CDE correctly complained that, “It is blasphemous to compare sacred writings to movies and Hinduism’s revered personalities to film actors” (p. 16).

Some textbooks propose very trivial and non-illuminating exercises for school-children in the chapters on India and Hinduism. For instance, the **Houghton Mifflin** textbook suggests the following internet activity (p. 231): “Use the Internet to learn about Hindu customs concerning one of these topics: the Ganges River, cows, funerals, diet.” Instead, the textbook could have asked the student to learn about *ahimsa* (non-violence) and how it is practiced in daily life, or to discover why Hindus practice vegetarianism. For other religions, it provides more illuminating exercises. In this way, the textbook continues to perpetuate stereotypical views of Hinduism and India by utilizing what has now been coined in the mass media as the “caste, cows and curry” approach to Hinduism.

3.3 Obsessive negative focus: Many textbooks (such as the **Glencoe** and **Holt**) have entire paragraphs and sections with completely negative remarks on Hinduism and India, without a single positive statement. In fact, they often introduce India or Hinduism with

negative remarks or non-illuminating descriptions. In its initial complaint to CDE (*The Master Document*), The Vedic Foundation observed:

“Under the heading *Big Ideas About Ancient India*, one textbook introduces ancient India as follows, “Indians saw themselves as belonging to one of four social classes called castes... In time, a fifth group of people called the untouchables came to be considered the lowest group in society.” [McDougal Littell, p. 214]

Whereas the following positive, inspiring and pride-instilling statement appears in the same textbook under the heading *Big Ideas About the Hebrew Kingdoms*, “Although the ancient Hebrews were a small group of people, their impact on world history has been great. The Hebrews have contributed to civilizations across Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The beliefs of the Hebrew people have been important in the development of religion and law in Western civilization.” [McDougal Littell, p.320]

Indian civilization and Hindu religion have had a significant positive impact in the world and on Eastern religions. The text fails to recognize these contributions and instead presents a negative and inaccurate description of a rigid caste system as the non-illuminating introduction to ancient India.”

The section on Hinduism in the **Holt** textbook also *begins* on a negative note, emphasizing the hereditary nature of the caste system and how helpless ancient Indians were in this respect. This section ends (**Holt**, p. 150) by asking students: “How would you feel about remaining a weaver?” The textbook, of course, does not ask questions such as “How would you feel if you were told that you will go to an everlasting hell unless you convert to Christianity” in the chapters on Christianity.

Untouchability was a marginal practice in ancient India,<sup>10</sup> and yet some of the textbooks focus obsessively on it and even back-project modern social inequities in India to ancient Hinduism. One textbook (**MacMillan**) actually *begins* its section on Hinduism with the pitiable description of an untouchable girl, as if the practice was the cornerstone of the ancient Hindu society. The textbook writes (p. 249), “The girl often wondered about the fairness of it all.... Still, there was nothing for them to do but worship gods and do their duty....” which seems to be a direct quote from some Christian missionary pamphlet

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<sup>10</sup> For some relevant discussion, see the last sections in Vishal Agarwal (2006), “*Do Hindu Edits whitewash Untouchability in California Textbooks,*” available online at <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/96/1> The marginality of untouchability as a practice in ancient India (even though it is elaborated considerably in these textbooks dealing with a period before 600 AD) is summarized in a standard work as follows:

“The Rgveda shows no knowledge of people who must not be touched. Neither do the later Vedic texts give any indication of untouchability, although tribal groups of Candalas and the Pulkasas are mentioned with malice and revulsion. In the second phase, extending up to AD 200, certain tribal groups like Candalas and the Pulkasas emerge clearly as untouchables. The third phase being a continuation of the second, throws up some more ethnic groups as untouchables, but the peak is attained in the fourth phase from AD 600 to 1200 AD, when a number of occupational groups such as the carmakaras and the rajakas are degraded to the untouchable status and several new ethnic groups are added to the list.” [Jaiswal, Suvira., *Caste: Origin, Function and Dimensions of Change*. Manohar Books: New Delhi (1998), pp. 86-87]

seeking donations for carrying out conversions amongst Hindus in India This is not just anachronistic, but also discriminatory against Hindus because sections on other religions are not commenced with negative remarks. The net impact on the minds of the student would be to compare only the Hindu society unfavorably with the egalitarian American society around him.

Perhaps the most negative and hate-filled book is *Discovering Our Past: Ancient Civilization* published by **Glencoe**. The author, Dr Spielvogel, has edited an entire series of history textbooks for elementary, middle school and high school levels. These textbooks are used all over the United States. Earlier, in April 2005, Hindu parents under the banner of the 'Vedic Education Foundation' (VEF) in Fairfax county in the state of Virginia, had protested against the excessively negative depiction of India and Hinduism in his textbooks. As a result of this, the county board of education rejected one of them (meant for grade X) after a panel of five teachers and scholars found them appallingly negative in their treatment of India and Hinduism.<sup>11</sup> Later that year, other Hindu organizations objected to errors and prejudices in his books again in California. Spielvogel responded by stereotyping Hindu American parents as 'Hindu Nationalists,' in an interview appearing in *The Wall Street Journal*.<sup>12</sup> This textbook has the same publisher (McGraw Hill) as that of the **MacMillan** book, and therefore reproduces entire sections verbatim from it, especially those related to Vedic Aryans and ancient Hindu society. Therefore, many errors pointed out for the **MacMillan** textbook are found in this book also, especially for the sections dealing with Aryans and Hinduism. Moreover, the **Glencoe** book also adds several new sections and sentences, which actually make this book even more erroneous and negative.

In keeping with its overall negative outlook towards India and Hinduism, the textbook (**Glencoe**, p. 244), while describing the ancient Hindu society has a large picture of a lady sweeper next to a garbage heap and some pigs helping themselves. In contrast, Spielvogel does not include pictures of Hispanic lady toilet cleaners in his chapters on the United States, or pictures of Nazi gas chambers in his chapters on Christianity despite scholarly consensus that the Bible contains as many as 500 anti-Semitic statements. The caption of this picture of the sweeper woman reads: "Today, untouchables refer to themselves as Dalits, which means 'oppressed'." The claim that Untouchables refer to themselves as

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<sup>11</sup> A summary of the comments made by the expert panel on this textbook was made available to me by the Vedic Education Foundation. I reproduce them below (I have withheld the names):

**Expert 1** – "The imbalance of material presented is the major complaint against this text. Of all the texts reviewed, this one seems the most negative in its portrayal and the text requiring the most consideration to append."

**Expert 2** – "In short I think this reader presents a rather unbalanced view of Indian history and has a tendency to play up negative stereotypes with no attempt at providing balance."

**Expert 3** – "This is virtually the same book that 9<sup>th</sup> graders use. It must be discarded for numerous reasons: incorrect facts, self-contradictory discussions, transliteration errors, misplaced emphasis."

**Expert 4** – "This text's brief preview of Indian history is full of generalization and simplifications that distort history."

<sup>12</sup> "Defending the Faith, New Battleground in Textbook Wars", by Dan Golden in *'Wall Street Journal'*, issue dt. 25 January 2006

Dalits is a myth propagated by Christian missionaries<sup>13</sup> and some activists of the community<sup>14</sup> who have abandoned Hinduism and who often bear hostility towards the religion. Several surveys show that the Dalit identity as a pan-Indian identity simply does not exist,<sup>15</sup> and that people belonging to these communities refer to themselves by their traditional *jaati* names.<sup>16</sup>

Page 245 of the **Glencoe** textbook is comprised almost entirely of negative statements regarding untouchability and the status of women in ancient India and Hinduism, reproduced verbatim from the **MacMillan** textbook, and further embellished. Such negativity has no parallel in Spielvogel's treatment of Christianity<sup>17</sup> or other religions. The book incorrectly states that in ancient India, only men inherited property, that widows of prominent men were despised and ostracized if they did not commit sati (burning themselves on their husband's funeral pyre), that only men went to school and that men could remarry if their wives did not produce children. It totally neglects the counter-perspective that sati was a rare occurrence in the historical period (before 550 AD) covered in the textbook, that women did inherit wealth ('*stridhana*'), that several women were indeed among the Sages credited with revelation of Vedas, and that a wife who did not beget children due to her husband's incapacity was also allowed to have a levirate to beget progeny according to several religious texts. The textbook ignores positive facets of women in ancient Hindu society such as the fact that Hinduism alone of all the current organized religions worships God in 'Her' feminine aspect as well, that Hindus have a continuous tradition of women saints, seers, that Hindu texts speak of

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<sup>13</sup> On February 20, 2006, Professor Ramdas Lamb (University of Hawaii), who has researched on untouchables for over two decades, wrote a letter to the SBE/CDE stating that "*The government actually refers to them as "Scheduled Castes," and most refer to themselves, when they must state caste identity, as either a "Scheduled Caste" or "Harijan."* The term "*Dalit*" is used primarily by those who have not only rejected untouchability but Hinduism as well..."

<sup>14</sup> Smita Nirula's "*Broken People*" (1999) published by 'Human Rights Watch' group based in New York says that the word is used by activists of the community (see the glossary section of the book).

Robert Deliege, in "*The Untouchables of India*"(1999), says that most of these Dalit activists do not represent the vast majority of Hindu untouchables, and many such movements actually have non Hindu roots. The word is merely a politically correct, but a very inaccurate term

Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany in "*The Untouchables.*" Cambridge University Press (1998), on p. 4 say that most members of the community still do not use the word Dalit to refer to themselves, and it is a very politically loaded word with militant overtones. Untouchables in the Gangetic plains do not use it to refer to themselves in particular.

Likewise, other books reveal that the word Dalit was first popularized (not used) as a proper noun to denote the untouchable community by the militant Dalit Panther's Party (modeled after the Black Panthers) as recently as 1970's, for instance Joshi, B., *Untouchables! Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement*, Zed, MRG, London (1986), pp. 141-147.

<sup>15</sup> See R. Upadhyay's "Politics of Dalitism, Creating Dalits among Dalits," available online at [http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/html/02\\_d\\_politicsofdalitism.htm](http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/html/02_d_politicsofdalitism.htm)

<sup>16</sup> See Alan Marriott's "Dalit or Harijan? Self-Naming by Scheduled Caste Interviewees," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, issue dated 06 September 2006

<sup>17</sup> E.g., while discussing Christianity, Spielvogel claims that early Christianity was a liberating ideology for women and it empowered them! Similarly, in the context of Islam, the 7th grade **Glencoe** textbook approaches gender issues gently by saying, "Men and Women had distinct roles in the Muslim world" (p. 193, grade VII textbook) as opposed to the blanket statement similar to that used for Hinduism that states that, "Men had many more rights than women" (p. 245) in his Grade VI book.

learned women with a profound knowledge of scriptures, that Hindu women philosophers are also known to have participated in intellectual debates (e.g., Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.3).<sup>18</sup>

Equality of sexes is a modern ideal that is yet to be realized in our own times. Therefore, all traditional and ancient societies, and all organized religions ascribe an unequal status to women and men.<sup>19</sup> But the **Glencoe** textbook singles out Hinduism of all the surviving religions for a negative treatment while discussing gender issues.

*3.4 Discriminatory Treatment of Hinduism:* The textbooks deal with Abrahamic religions from an insider's perspective, whereas Hinduism is treated often from a hostile outsider's perspective. For instance, the accounts of the Bible are used to explain the origins of Judaism and Christianity (ignoring the Sumerian and Zoroastrian origins of many of their beliefs and narratives), whereas the Aryan invasion theory or its variants are used to explain the genesis of Hinduism even though this theory is absent in the entire length and breadth of Indic traditions and literature.

The Vedic Foundation's Master Document also noted (p. 18) that, "When a primary source is used to explain the teachings or beliefs of Hinduism, it is often found to be biased." As example, they cited the **MacMillan** textbook:

"A primary source used in this text to explain the teachings of Judaism is the Ten Commandments. The student is asked, "Which commandments require a person to tell the truth?" [**MacMillan**, p. 75]

A primary source used in the same text to explain the teachings of Christianity is an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount describing the teachings of Jesus. It

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<sup>18</sup> Several examples of achievements of Hindu women in ancient and medieval times are listed at [http://jitnasa.india-forum.com/Docs/HinduWomen\\_CATextbooks.pdf](http://jitnasa.india-forum.com/Docs/HinduWomen_CATextbooks.pdf) This website refers the reader to academic literature on this subject.

<sup>19</sup> In a letter to the State Board of Education (California) dated 20 February 2006, Dr. Ramdas Lamb, Professor in the Department of Religion in the University of Hawaii, wrote: "Regarding the roles of men and women in ancient Hinduism, several of the texts discuss the inferior roles women had. However, it must be understood from the outset that NONE of the major religious traditions, especially the Western traditions, have a good record with respect to the treatment of, status of, and rights afforded to women. In ancient Judaism, women could not bear witness, could not read the Torah, and could not participate in many aspects of the tradition. In early Christianity, although the Gospels tell of many women who were close to Jesus, especially his mother and Mary Magdalene, none of them are given the status of Apostle, and none were allowed a pivotal role in the religion. Augustine, a major fourth century Christian philosopher depicts women as the cause of sin and in need of being under the authority of men. In Islam, women have long been limited in ways men have not, and wives were traditionally seen and treated as the possessions of their husbands...Are such facts found in the sections of the texts dealing with those sections? If not, then bringing up the inferior status of women solely in the context of Hinduism goes against your [CDE] guidelines. I have also read several sections on Buddhism in the proposed texts and found no mention that the Buddha warned his disciples against the guile of women and that the latter were not allowed in the community of monks. There is no mention that Buddhist nuns were and are still expected to treat monks with deference, no matter how old the nun or how young the monk. Also, many early Buddhists believed that women could not become enlightened, yet all these issues are ignored in the proposed texts as well."

asks the student, “What two things does Jesus tell his followers to do?” [MacMillan, p. 242]

A primary source used in the same text to explain the teachings of Islam is an excerpt from the Quran and it even asks students to pray, “... It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (*Pray:*) “Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; ...” It asks students, “What does the prayer ask Allah for?” [MacMillan, p. 289]

By comparison a primary source to explain the teachings of Hinduism in this text is merely a description of the dawn and does not teach any lesson or explain a Hindu belief. It asks students, “What are some of the activities of the dawn?” [MacMillan, p. 125]”

The textbooks introduce the positives for other religions, while Hinduism is singled out for a negative treatment e.g., on issues of social and gender inequality. The discriminatory treatment accorded to Hinduism on different themes in these textbooks has been summarized in the following table:<sup>20</sup>

Topic	Table 1: How religions are treated in textbooks			
	Islam	Judaism	Christianity	Hinduism
Women are shown equal to men?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Oppression of social groups is discussed?	No	No	No	Yes
Beliefs are considered as historical fact?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Insiders’ interpretations emphasized?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Treated as a world religion independently of the social/political issues of any foreign country	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Let us expand on the *first* example (i.e., gender issues) given in the table above. According to California’s Education Code sections 60040(a) and 60044 (a)&(b), while describing men and women in history, the achievements of both sexes should be described equally in textbooks. One tradition should not be privileged over another, and history should be taught in such a way that the student feels secure in his or her own respective heritage and tradition. But even a brief perusal of these textbooks indicates that the guidelines are violated most often with regard to Buddhism and Hinduism. The results of my investigation are summarized in the table below:

Religion	Table 2: How do textbooks cover the role of women in these religions?						
	Totally negative	Largely negative	Neutral	No coverage	Largely Positive	Totally positive	Total no. of books
Hinduism (6 <sup>th</sup> grade)	3	1	0	5	0	0	9

<sup>20</sup> Reproduced from “Hinduism Treated Unequally in California Textbooks” by Rajiv Malhotra, in *Little India*, issue dt. March 2003

Judaism (6 <sup>th</sup> grade)	0	0	0	1	3	5	9
Buddhism (6 <sup>th</sup> grade)	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
Christianity (6 <sup>th</sup> grade)	0	0	0	3	2	4	9
Christianity (7 <sup>th</sup> grade)	0	0	0	5	0	1	6
Islam (7 <sup>th</sup> grade)	0	0	1	1	4	0	6

All the textbooks ignore the role of women in Buddhism. And for Hinduism, all the textbooks that do discuss the role of women give a *completely negative or an overwhelmingly negative* picture.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, eight out of nine textbooks give a completely or overwhelmingly positive view of the status and role of women in Judaism, while the ninth ignores this topic altogether. For Islam, the secularized textbook by **OUP** gives a rather balanced account, one textbook omits this topic whereas the remaining four give a completely positive, if not a considerably whitewashed account of the role and status of women in that faith. The situation is rather complex (but overall favorable) for Christianity. For instance, most 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks while dealing with early Christianity, mention that the teachings of Jesus offered upward social mobility to women and gave them enhanced rights due to which large numbers of women joined this emerging faith. They also emphasize that empowered Christian women also patronized and assisted other Christian congregations. They completely whitewash the negatives such as the facts that women were barred from becoming priests by the Apostles and no Apostle was a woman, that women were expected to be subservient to men. Biblical prejudices against women (such as the claim that God cursed women that they will have a painful child-birth, or using adjectives such as ‘whores’ liberally throughout the scripture) are whitewashed wholesale for the entire Judeo-Christian tradition. Augustine, a major fourth century Christian philosopher depicts women as the cause of sin and in need of being under the authority of men. But such statements are not seen in any textbook in their chapters on Christianity.

*3.5 Promotion and Perpetuation of Colonial and Racist stereotypes:* Many textbooks repeat the colonial equation of Hinduism with caste, cow, curry, sati. The **Glencoe** textbook (p. 245) even uses the colonial spelling “*suttee*” for Sati.

The **OUP** text, authored by two scholars (including the renowned Harappan archaeologist Jonathan Mark Kenoyer<sup>22</sup>) says:

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion on how gender issues are treated in California textbooks for different religions, see my article “*Do California Textbooks discriminate against Hindus? How do they describe the role of women,*” dt. 08 March 2006, available online at <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/98/1>

<sup>22</sup> It is very disturbing to note that such errors should be found in the book by Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, who is a renowned archaeologist of Harappan Culture and actually grew up in India as the child of Christian missionary parents stationed in north-east India. In the face of mounting criticism of his book, Kenoyer signed a petition of Hinduphobic academics led by Michael Witzel, claiming that Hindu groups who were suggesting such corrections were Hindu nationalists linked to murders of Muslims in Gujarat. At the same time however, his publisher contacted these Hindu groups and stated that Kenoyer is sympathetic to their

“The Vedic peoples discriminated against the Dasa, a group of people who spoke a different language that did not sound at all like Sanskrit. The Brahmins sometimes made fun of the Dasa and said that they spoke as if they had no noses. (Pinch your nose and see what you would sound like.) The Dasa had wide flat noses and long curly black hair, and the Brahmins claimed that they had darker skin and called them uncivilized barbarians, who didn’t know how to behave.” (p. 81).

Though the authors have rejected the Aryan Invasion Theory in the earlier pages of their book, they seem to hold on to part of it. In chapter 11, some of the South Asians are referred to as ‘Indo-Aryans’ (p. 76) to set them apart from the ‘native’ inhabitants of ancient India who are identified as ‘Dasa.’ There is no conclusive evidence proving that the Aryans and Dasa were racially distinct. The invitation to students to imitate the alleged speech pattern of the Dasa is uncalled for. The statement “Pinch your noses...” is frivolous, and is demeaning to people who speak ‘non-Aryan’ languages. The statement that Dasas were insulted by Brahmins as ‘dark-skinned’ etc. is based on 19<sup>th</sup> century racist and colonial interpretations of the Hindu texts, something that even Indologists<sup>23</sup> and Indo-European linguists dismiss today.<sup>24</sup> As to the description ‘flat-nosed,’ which presumably refers to the word ‘*anas*’ in Vedic texts, there are numerous scholarly publications<sup>25</sup> which explain the word in a different way. In short, the authors have reproduced the prejudiced 19<sup>th</sup> century Eurocentric scholarship of colonial historians.

On p. 81, the **OUP** textbook says:

“The Dasa had, in reality lived in the region for hundreds of years. Their ancestors in the Indus Valley were the Harappans who had named the rivers and mountains, and had built the cities that now lay abandoned.”

The fact is that there are no surviving names of rivers and mountains in the greater Indus valley that were given by these imagined indigenous Indian Dasas. The statement is a figment of the imagination. In other words, like many other textbooks, this one also first casts a doubt on the Aryan invasion theory (AIT) but then proceeds to construct Indian past and religion on the basis of this unproven theory!

Let us examine the second textbook named *Ancient Civilization*, published by **Holt**. On p. 148, the text says the following about the Vedas: “Though they are mostly religious,

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suggestions, and even attached a long list of errors that will be corrected. A copy of both the letters are available with me. In my opinion, such behavior on the part of the author of the textbook is unethical and duplicitous.

<sup>23</sup> Maria Schetelich, “The Problem of the ‘Dark Skin’ (Krsna Tvac) in the Rgveda,” in *Visva Bharati Annals*, vol. 3 (1990), pp. 244-249

<sup>24</sup> See for instance: Hock, H. H.. 1999. “Through a glass darkly: Modern “racial” interpretations,” in Madhav M. Deshpande and Johannes Bronkhorst (eds.), pp. 145-174, *Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia – Evidence, Interpretation and Ideology*, Harvard Oriental Series, Opera Minora Vol. 3, Harvard University: Cambridge (MA)

<sup>25</sup> Stephen H. Levitt. “What does ‘Noseless’ mean in the Rgveda,” *ABORI* vol. 70 (1989), pp. 47-63

some of the Vedas describe Aryan victories during their invasion of India.” Obviously, the text is teaching the Aryan Invasion theory, and has relied upon 19<sup>th</sup> century racist and colonial interpretations of the Rigveda for ‘proof’ of Aryan invasions of India. The demise of the Harappan culture is also attributed to Aryan ‘invaders’ in this textbook.

Considering that the **Harcourt** textbook gives so little information on ancient India or on Indic religions (with useless fluff abounding on the large margins), it is depressing that four pages (**Harcourt**, pp. 371-373) are devoted to a fictionalized story related to the invention of chess in ancient India. The story includes the typical colonial/oriental stereotypes and clichés about elephants, an oriental despot ‘Rajah,’ poor and starving villagers, and illustrations that would suit depict Mughal India rather than ancient India. On p. 385, the **Harcourt** textbook even has a large illustration for the immigrating ‘Aryans’ who look more like Jewish tribes leaving Egypt in the Hollywood movie *Ten Commandments*.

The student reader is misled by a textbook’s statement, “As nomads, they (Aryans) had no written language, but in India they developed a written language called Sanskrit” (**MacMillan**, p. 243). This would imply that Sanskrit was always a ‘written’ language, a claim with which scholars would vehemently disagree. This textbook further states on p. 243, “Because Aryans were skilled ironworkers, they improved farming in India. They invented the iron plow to help clear many jungles and built irrigation canals. They slowly turned the Ganges river valley into good farmland.” The paradigm that Aryans brought iron technology into India is now rejected by historians and archaeologists.<sup>26</sup> The notion that iron technology improved farming in India (irrespective of who brought this technology) is itself now questioned by archaeologists and it has been argued that iron was used in the Gangetic plains on a large scale just a little before the middle of first millennium BCE. Therefore iron technology had a small role in improving agriculture in the Gangetic plains.<sup>27</sup> It is pointed out by the same archaeologists that it is easier to clear forested land by fire than by iron axes.

On p. 267 of the **MacMillan** textbook, it is also speculated that Alexander’s invasion of India “may have lead to the first Indian empire.” Do Indians always need a stimulus from the West to develop anything new, even the idea of monarchy? Does not the author know that the Nandas had an empire covering large parts of Northern and Central India even before the invasion of Alexander? One thought that such ideas were propagated only in British colonial textbooks on India.

The **Glencoe** textbook approaches the genesis of Indian civilization and Hinduism in typical hypothetical terms incorporating the Aryan migrations, domination of aboriginal Indians and so on. On the origin of the caste system, the author Spielvogel speculates (p.

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<sup>26</sup> See for instance Erdosy, George; 1995; ‘The Prelude to urbanization: ethnicity and the rise of Late Vedic chiefdoms’; in *The Archaeology of the Early Historic South Asia: The Emergence of Cities and States*, Allchin, F. R. et al (eds.), pg. 75-98; Cambridge University Press; Cambridge; pp. 83-84

<sup>27</sup> Gregory Possehl and Praveena Gullapalli. ‘The Early Iron Age in South Asia.’ Pages 153-176 in Vincent Pigott (ed), *The Archaeology of the Ancient Asian World*, University of Pennsylvania (1999).

244): “Why was this system created? No one is sure, but ideas about skin color were probably part of it. The Aryans were a light-skinned people. They thought that they were better than the dark-skinned people they encountered in India. The idea was wrong, but the Aryans believed it.” The author has unnecessarily back-projected modern racial prejudices based on skin-color on an ancient culture in which these did not exist. This view that Aryans discriminated against the Dasas on the basis of skin color has been rejected by modern scholarship<sup>28</sup> and originated from 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial understanding of India’s past. It is shameful therefore that such speculations should find a place in a modern 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. Practically all errors related to the Vedic Aryan that are present in the **MacMillan** textbook are also replicated in the Glencoe textbook. Following the MacMillan book, the Glencoe book also adds erroneously (p. 243), “The earliest example of *written* Sanskrit appears in the four Vedas, the oldest *writings* of the Hindu religion” (emphasis added).

In so far as ancient Indian history is concerned, the **TCI** textbook is somewhat better. But it still retains numerous errors similar to the ones present in other textbooks. Thus, on p. 134-135, the **TCI** text elaborates the reasons for rejecting the Aryan Invasion theory, but on p. 144, it goes on to add: “Around 1500 BCE invaders called Aryans conquered northern India. Others believe that traces of Hinduism can be found in ancient artifacts left by India’s original settlers.... Most likely, Hinduism is a blend of Aryan beliefs and the beliefs of the people they conquered.” In other words, a racist theory rejected by the textbook is then used by the same textbook to explain the origin of Hinduism!

The textbooks also back-project current caste inequities into ancient India. They say that the immigrating or invading Aryans subjugated the ‘natives’ of India, and made them Shudras. The Aryans themselves constituted only the three upper castes in these textbooks. For instance, the **Pearson** textbook says (p. 181, emphasis added): “When Indo-Aryans arrived in the Indus River valley, their society already had three social classes: priests, rulers, and common people. They soon added a fourth caste for the *native* peoples who already lived in the area.” On p. 181, a table gives the duties of the four castes and says that Shudras were “*Native* peoples; performed services for members of the three higher castes and did more labor intensive work” (emphasis added). It says again (p. 182, emphasis added), “At the bottom of the caste system stood the *native* peoples known as Sudras.” Not only is the theory that the invading Aryans forced the ‘native’ Indians to become shudras to perform labor intensive work now rejected even by many hostile historians,<sup>29</sup> it is pure speculation. The three upper castes constitute perhaps

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<sup>28</sup> Refer relevant discussions on Thomas Trautmann (1997), *Aryans and British India*, University of California Press: Berkeley

<sup>29</sup> There is no proof that the ‘native peoples’ were relegated to Shudra status. Contrary theories such as by Marxist historian D D Koshambi state that Brahmins were also derived from native priesthood. Even scholars hostile to Hinduism (see reference below) and operating within the Aryan Invasion/Migration paradigms state that the Shudra caste was allied (originally) with the Indo Aryan stock (p. 39), and that large sections of both Indo-Aryans and ‘pre-Aryans’ were reduced to Sudra caste partly through internal and partly through external conflicts between different peoples (p. 45). See :

R. S. Sharma. 2002. ‘*The Sudras in Ancient India*.’ New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

20-25% of the population of northern India, but all recent genetic studies completely rule out any traceable (let alone a massive) immigration of ‘Aryans’ from Central Asia to India in the second millennium BCE.<sup>30</sup> Yet, some modern authors<sup>31</sup> still adhere to these colonial interpretations of ancient Indian society due to academic inertia, and the California textbooks have followed them.

*3.6 Distortion and caricaturing of Hinduism:* Many Hindu beliefs and customs are caricatured or presented too simplistically in the textbooks. For example, the subtle doctrine of karma is stated in the following irreverent and caricaturist terms: “If you earned bad karma, you might come back as a chicken, a fish,…” (OUP, p. 88). How would a Christian child feel if the belief in resurrection on the Day of Judgment were described in the following words, “According to Christian belief, our bodies are resurrected from graves on the Day of Judgment. Therefore, if we were crippled in our lives, we will get a crippled body”?

According to the **Glencoe** textbook (p. 248), “Dedicated Hindus believe that the people in a higher caste are superior and that they are supposed to be on the top.” This assertion, which reflects poorly on Hindus, would make Mahatma Gandhi (mentioned subsequently in the same textbook) a ‘bad’ Hindu because he rejected the inequality of castes. The statement is wrong because it contradicts the highest teachings of the most authoritative Hindu scriptures, according to which a wise man sees the same Brahman in a Brahmin as well as in a Chandala (Gita), and the same Brahman manifests in people of all castes, genders and professions (Atharvaveda, Paippalada Samhita VIII.9). The textbook does not include similar statements while discussing other religions. For instance, the chapter on Christianity does not say, “According to dedicated Christians, pagans who do not accept Christ as their personal savior will be tormented in everlasting hell.” Then why is Hinduism caricatured in this way?

In the **Harcourt** textbook, p. 387 describes the Bhagavadgita as “... a discussion between a god and a Vedic warrior,” and the preceding page cites three verses that are not at all

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Even Dr B R Ambedkar, a pre-eminent leader of lower castes, stated in his research that there is no proof of an Aryan invasion, and that the Shudras were derived from Kshatriyas (cited in Sharma 2002:40).

<sup>30</sup> See for e.g., the following two recent papers:

Sahoo, S., Singh, A., Himabindu, G., Banerjee, J., Sitalaximi, T., Gaikwad, S., Trivedi, R., Endicott, P., Kivisild, T., Metspalu, M., Villems, R., and Kashyap, V.K. 2006. Prehistory of Indian Y chromosomes, evaluating Demic diffusion scenarios. *Proceedings of the American National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS) 103(4): 843–48.

Sengupta, S., Zhivotovsky, L.A., King, R., Mehdi, S.Q., Edmonds, C.A., Cheryl-Emiliane, Chow, T., Lin, A.A., Mitra, M., Sil, S.K., 6 A. Ramesh, A., Usha Rani, M.V., Thakur, C.M., Cavalli-Sforza, L.L., Majumder, P.P., and Peter A. Underhill, P.A. 2006. Polarity and temporality of high-resolution Y-chromosome distributions in India identify both indigenous and exogenous expansions and reveal minor genetic influence of Central Asian pastoralists. *American Journal of Human Genetics* 78: 202–21.

<sup>31</sup> As an example, “This tedious work, notably that of rice cultivation which first becomes visible in the Atharvaveda, was apparently carried out by the local population and not by the Aryan cattle herders themselves.” [P. xx in, Witzel, Michael 1997. Introduction. In M. Witzel, A. Lubotsky and M.S. Oort (eds), *F.B.J. Kuiper – Selected Writings on Indian Linguistics and Philology*. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi].

representative of this scripture, because they belong to the ‘despondency of Arjuna’ section of this scripture. It is quite misleading to classify Arjuna as a ‘Vedic warrior.’ The **Harcourt** book also sends a subtle message throughout that Hindus are a violent people. The Gupta rulers are noted only for their violence, and Ashoka is described as being cruel and violent until he adopted Buddhism. Only the most Machiavellian quotes from the *Arthashastra* are cited. The textbook later provides “Jack the Giant Killer” as one of only two examples of stories from the *Panchatantra*.

3.7 Reductionism and Omissions: The contributions of tribals, women and underprivileged sections of the Indian society to Hinduism are completely ignored. The textbooks focus on caste inequalities, but forget to mention that many Hindu sages and saints had very humble origins, and that ancient Indian society was relatively free of slavery, in contrast to many other ancient societies. Hindu tradition is viewed solely as a Sanskritic tradition and the role of other languages and cultures such as Tamil is ignored. Finally, there is an obsessive focus on scriptures to define the tenets of Hinduism as in the treatment of Abrahamic faiths. In most textbooks, the sections on Hinduism do not have any discussion on the liberating *yogas* (*jnanayoga* etc.) in Hindu theology, *ashrama* system, *purusharthas* and so on. As a result, the account of Hinduism is very imbalanced, overtly negative, disconnected and confusing. There is no mention or discussion of Hindu systems of philosophy, with the exception of Vedanta, whose principles are sometimes discussed in connection with the Upanishads.

One textbook (**Harcourt**) does not mention Jainism whereas another devotes just a single sentence to this religion. In this textbook, there is no mention of Ramayana in the text at all. Less than one page of text is devoted to the principles of Hinduism. There is no mention of the notion of Brahman, or Supreme Being, and Hindus are erroneously portrayed as polytheistic. Another textbook (**OUP**) mentions Islam in its concluding chapter on ancient India but Sikhism is not discussed adequately in any textbook for grades VI and VII. In fact, most textbooks do not even mention Sikhism.

Since these textbooks erroneously conflate the linguistic categories of ‘Aryan’ and ‘Dravidian’ to cover culture, ethnicity, religion etc., they also tend to downplay the ‘non-Aryan’ element of Indian and Hindu heritage. For example, one textbook says: “Much of Indian civilization is based on Aryan ideas and culture... One of the most important and long-lasting contributions of the Aryans is the main religion of India, Hinduism... Hinduism grew out of the ancient beliefs of the Aryans.” (p. **Glencoe**, pp. 246-247). Absolutist statements are made, contradicting the more flexible historical reality. For instance, the **OUP** textbook claims that “people could not move between the varnas *at all*,” (p. 95, emphasis added) even though caste mobility did happen in the Indian society.

In the **Pearson** textbook, a discussion about the Bhagavad Gita on p. 195 describes Lord Krishna as goading Arjuna to “spill the blood of his relatives,” missing the essential teachings of the Gita. Similarly, the **Houghton Mifflin** textbook (p. 230) cites some verses of the Gita that are in no way representative of this scripture. Two textbooks (**Houghton-Mifflin** and **McDougal Littell**) devote a mere 8 short paragraphs to Hinduism, 8 to Buddhism and just 6 paragraphs to cultural achievements of ancient

Indians. In contrast, more extensive coverage is given to other religions and to the achievements of other cultures.

3.8 Adverse Reflection: In most textbooks, Buddhism is treated as an advance over Hinduism. Conversely, Christianity is never treated as an advance over Judaism, nor is Islam treated as an advance over either of these religions. The **Glencoe** textbook (p. 249 sqq.) depicts the development of Buddhism as a rejection of Hinduism by people who were disgusted with ritualism. Conversely, it does not say that Islam was accepted by those who rejected the notion of trinity as followed by Arab Christians. The textbook indulges in anachronism by stating that in 600 BC, “The Brahmin priests seemed to focus only on their temple ceremonies and not on the needs of their people” (**Glencoe**, p. 249). It is questionable whether India had any ‘temples’ before Buddha. The author also overlooks the fact that within the Vedic stream itself emerged Sages who compiled spiritual treatises known as the Upanishads. Likewise, the Samkhya and other ‘orthodox’ Hindu philosophers rejected or downplayed the role of rituals. Therefore Lord Buddha was not alone in rejecting rituals as the sole means of liberation.

The **Holt** book implies that Buddhism and Jainism were improvements upon Hinduism, calling Jainism a “reaction” to Hinduism and Buddhism a “challenge” to it. In the **TCI** textbook, it is stated (p. 170) that Hindus and Buddhists founded universities during the Golden Age. It states that only the upper classes were allowed to attend *Hindu* universities. It does not make the same claim of Buddhist universities despite it being true of both religions. The **Houghton Mifflin** textbook contrasts so-called ‘elitist’ Hinduism with presumably more egalitarian Buddhism and states (p. 236), “Early Hinduism had a set of complex sacrifices that only priests could perform. They conducted the rites in Sanskrit, which few people spoke any more. This caused people to feel distant from the gods. Many people turned to Buddhism instead.” However, this is a sectarian interpretation propagated by Marxist historians and it is contradicted by the fact that Buddhism initially appealed largely to the elitist sections of the Indian society,<sup>32</sup> and Buddhist monks were drawn from the same social elite from which orthodox schools of Hinduism also drew their philosophers (notably the Brahmins).<sup>33</sup>

3.9 Mutual Contradictions: The textbooks contradict each other, and also themselves! For instance, one textbook teaches the Aryan migration theory, another teaches the Aryan

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. , “There is a general view, largely inspired by Marxist theories on the relations of religious philosophy with the prevailing class system, that the rise of the heterodoxies such as Buddhism and Jainism was concomitant with the rise of an influential mercantile class that gave its support to these new movements, which were less expensive than orthodoxy and gave a greater place to the laity in religious activities. There may be some truth in this, but there were many other factors in the rise of these sects, and the idea that the main supporters of early Buddhism were well-to-do merchants is not wholly borne out by the evidence of the early Buddhist texts. Though many members of the middle classes gave support to Buddhism, it appears that brahmins formed the largest group of both the monks and the lay supporters of Buddhism. Buddhism in its early form appealed chiefly to the intellectuals and rulers, and few members of the lower orders supported it.” In Basham, A. L. *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, Ed. and annotated by Kenneth G. Zysk. Beacon Press: Boston (1989).

<sup>33</sup> Cf., Chakravarty, Uma, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, “Appendix C: The Social Background of the Bhikshus and Upasakas,” Oxford University Press (1997), pp. 198-221

invasion theory. **Holt**, **Glencoe** and **MacMillan** textbooks teach the Aryan invasion theory (or its euphemistic versions) as an undisputed fact and do not question it or offer any alternate theories. The **TCI** textbook doubts the Aryan invasion theory but then uses it to explain the genesis of Hinduism! The **Houghton Mifflin** book states (p. 228) that the Harappan cities already lay in ruins for *200 years* when the Aryans arrived, but then proceeds to state on the same page that the autochthonous Dravidians taught the immigrant Aryans about city life! Some books (**Glencoe**, p. 247; **Pearson**, p. 193) say that ‘Brahmanism’ means the worship of Brahman or the Supreme Spirit. Other books (e.g., **Houghton Mifflin**, p. 229) say that the word ‘Brahmanism’ derives from the word ‘Brahmins’ or ‘Aryan priests.’ The two definitions clearly contradict each other. In reality, the word ‘Brahmanism’ is a meaningless colonial term used to disparage Hindus, and should not be used in the textbooks at all. Little wonder then that the authors of these textbooks are not sure what it actually means!

### 3.10 Anachronisms: Islamization of ancient India!

With one exception, none of the textbooks for Grade VI mention Islam in chapters of ancient India. The obvious reason is that the period dealt with is 3000 BCE to 600 CE when Islam was not even born yet. Amusingly however, Indian-American Communist organizations such as ‘Friends of South Asia’ (FOSA) opposing the Hindu textbook reform initiative have charged that there is an attempt to exclude Islam from Indian history in these textbooks!<sup>34</sup> Despite their imaginary phobias, one can actually perceive a subtle attempt to Islamize Judaism and Christianity in these textbooks,<sup>35</sup> and find blatant attempts to do so with Hinduism. One textbook (**Harcourt**), as noted above, erroneously states that Hindi is written with the Arabic alphabet. This textbook (**Harcourt**, pp. 371-373) stereotypes ancient India by introducing typical clichés of starving villagers exploited by a ‘Rajah,’ and the accompanying illustrations show scenes from a Muslim *kasbah*, mosques, minarets and so on while narrating a fictional story on the invention of chess based in ancient India. On p. 403, the **Harcourt** textbook, has an illustration depicting a 19<sup>th</sup> century or early 20<sup>th</sup> century Muslim prince but the captioned refers to it as a representation of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. In the **MacMillan** textbook, the first few pages of the India chapter narrate the story of Ramayana in a very cavalier manner, accompanied with Mughal style paintings, one of which shows Dasharatha (mis-spelled as ‘Dashrat’ throughout) as a look-alike of Akbar! On p. 244, the **Glencoe** textbook has a picture of a bearded and turbaned man praying in a typical Muslim gesture (the two palms facing up and abutting each other) but the caption says ‘A Brahman.’ Another textbook shows the Hindu ascetic (*sadhu*) against the backdrop of the Taj Mahal (**TCI**, p. 149). One wonders why a picture of a Sadhu along the sacred Ganga river or in a temple was not chosen instead. The same textbook does not introduce alien imagery in chapters dealing with other religions.

<sup>34</sup> Historian D N Jha sent a supporting letter to FOSA alleging that the organizations (HEF and VF) opposing mention of Aryan migration and invasion theories in these textbooks actually wanted to label Islam as a foreign religion in India by positing an indigenous Indian origin for Aryans!

<sup>35</sup> In this regard, see the following two articles by Kalavai Venkat:

“California Textbooks Proselytize for Allah” at

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=21197> and “Textbooks Proselytize for Allah” at <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=21334>

*3.11 Perspectives from Pedagogy:*

HEF volunteers, including Hindu parents and teachers, reviewed and ranked the books based upon both the treatment of Hinduism and upon their unique readability features. To do this they relied upon the research of Doran, Rosen, and Wilson.<sup>36</sup> With the exception of the **OUP** textbook, the other textbooks had Raygor Readability Estimate (RRE) higher than what is expected of sixth grade students. In other words, the India and Hinduism related chapters of these textbooks would appear difficult and confusing to most sixth grade students because of their poor style.

In the **OUP** textbook (RRE = 7.6), the authors used metadiscourse, voice, explicit signals to readers about organizational patterns, and other rhetorical devices. These elements give the texts a trade book feel that makes them more readable and enjoyable. The text uses context clues, synonyms, and margin guides to introduce new words. But the **OUP** textbook had numerous insensitive remarks and erroneous statements, and the length of the material was excessive for sixth grade level students. With appropriate corrections, this textbook may actually be suitable for higher-grade students for teaching Indian history. The worst (RRE = 9.0) were judged to be the **Holt, MacMillan, Glencoe** and the **Harcourt** textbooks. The graphics in these books often decorate the page without actually enhancing main ideas. When they do enhance information in the body of the text, the visual aids frequently do not appear on the same page or the facing page as the facts that they support. Visuals are frequently mislabelled or inappropriately labelled. This was especially true of the **Macmillan** text. The caption for a picture of Lord Shiva asks the students to count the number arms Shiva has, yet it does not explain the deep spiritual meaning behind his arms. Furthermore, this question hardly calls for higher order thinking. Information is rarely organized thematically, and the texts lack voice and metadiscourse.

**4.0 Flawed ‘Standards of Learning’ of California Board of Education**

One of the root causes of such a shoddy treatment of India and Hinduism in American school textbooks is that the syllabus (‘Standards’) that they are expected to follow are flawed. For the sake of comparison, the California standards<sup>37</sup> for Ancient India/Hinduism, and Judaism are tabulated below:

<b>Table 3: California Board of Education standards</b>	
<p><b>Section 6.3: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, social structures of Ancient Hebrews.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the origins and significance of Judaism as the first monotheistic religion based on the concept of one God who sets down moral laws for humanity.</li> <li>2. Identify the sources of the ethical teachings</li> </ol>	<p><b>Section 6.5: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of India.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Locate and describe the major river system and discuss the physical setting that supported the rise of this civilization.</li> <li>2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.</li> </ol>

<sup>36</sup> Doran, R., Rosen, L.M., & Wilson, M. (1997). *“Multiple Voices, Multiple Texts.”* Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/ Cook

<sup>37</sup> Refer <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fp/documents/histsocsci-stnd.pdf>

<p>and central beliefs of Judaism (the Hebrew Bible, the Commentaries): belief in God, observance of law, practice of the concepts of righteousness and justice, and importance of study; and describe how the ideas of the Hebrew traditions are reflected in the moral and ethical traditions of Western Civilization.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Explain the significance of Abraham, Moses, Naomi, Ruth, David, and Yohanan ben Zaccai in the development of the Jewish religion.</li> <li>4. Discuss the locations of the settlements and movements of Hebrew peoples, including the Exodus to the Jewish and other people.</li> <li>5. Discuss how Judaism survived and developed despite the continuing dispersion of much of the Jewish population from Jerusalem and the rest of Israel after the destruction of the second Temple in A.D. 70.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.</li> <li>4. Outline the social structure of the caste system.</li> <li>5. Know the life and moral teachings of Buddha and how Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon, and Central Asia.</li> <li>6. Describe the growth of the Maurya empire and the political and moral achievements of the emperor Asoka.</li> <li>7. Discuss important aesthetic and intellectual traditions (e.g., Sanskrit literature, including the Bhagavad Gita; medicine; metallurgy; and mathematics, including Hindu Arabic numerals and the zero).</li> </ol>
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What strikes one immediately is that outdated, colonial, racist and etic (= outsider) concepts and categories such as the ‘Aryan invasions’ and ‘Brahmanism’ are used to define ancient India and Hinduism, and there is no mention of the various knowledge systems and philosophies that evolved in ancient India. In contrast, the treatment of Judaism (and Christianity and Islam) is coherent, and is purely from an emic or ‘insider’ sympathetic point of view. Finally, there is a considerable emphasis on the doctrinal, ethical and philosophical aspects of the Jewish tradition. The standards still use the obsolete name ‘Ceylon’ for Sri Lanka. The Gita is included almost as an afterthought under the category ‘literature.’ It is interesting to note that the Judeo-Christian heritage is presented as the bedrock of Western civilization in standard 6.3.2. By implication, Hinduism and Buddhism will get treated as ‘the other.’ As a result, one observes the ‘othering’ of Indic religions in some textbooks. For instance, in the **Houghton Mifflin** textbook for grade VI, Judaism and Christianity are treated under the section “Roots of Western Civilization.” It follows then that China, India and the cultures associated with them are foreign cultures and religions for American students.

### ***5.0 Are American Textbooks already ‘Saffronized’?***

In a lighter vein, these textbooks contain certain statements that would earn them the label ‘toxic,’ ‘saffronized’ and ‘communal’ from Indian marxists, leftists and secularists. For example, the **TCI** book uses the phrase ‘Indus-Saraswati Civilization’ for the Harappan Culture, perhaps keeping in mind suggestions by contemporary archaeologists.<sup>38</sup> The same book (as well as the **Harcourt** textbook) also notes that some

<sup>38</sup> “...Suddenly it became apparent that the “Indus” Civilization was a misnomer – although the Indus had played a major role in the development of the civilization, the “lost Saraswati” River, judging by the density of settlement along its banks, had contributed an equal or greater part to its prosperity. Many people today refer to this early state as the “Indus-Sarswati Civilization” and continuing references to the “Indus Civilization” should be seen as an abbreviation in which the “Saraswati” is implied.”

scholars consider the Aryans indigenous to India. The **Houghton Mifflin** textbook starts its narrative about Harappan Culture with a story titled ‘The Saraswati Earthquake’ (pp. 216-217) that suggests that an earthquake led to the desiccation of river Saraswati, dealing a death blow to this culture. This would be anathema to India’s marxist historians such as Irfan Habib and archaeologists such as Shireen Ratnagar. They brand anyone who mentions this river in north India as ‘Communal,’ ‘Hindu fascist’ and ‘anti-Dravidian’!

Several textbooks use the phrase ‘Golden Age’ (e.g., **Houghton-Mifflin, McDougal Littell, TCI**) when dealing with the Gupta Empire, whereas marxist historians such as D. N. Jha<sup>39</sup> have striven to downplay the achievements of this period for the fear of arousing Hindu fundamentalism. Several textbooks also praise the beauty of the Sanskrit language, and some devote large sections to the scientific and artistic achievements of ancient Hindus. All textbooks are required to discuss the tenets of Hinduism in ancient India, whereas India’s Leftists and Marxist historians deny that Hinduism even existed before the British invented it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> At least two textbooks (**TCI** and **Pearson**) portray Hinduism rather sympathetically, whereas the NCERT textbooks and other history books authored by marxist historians in India tend to cast negative aspersions on Hindu traditions at every opportunity, even while presenting other religions in a favorable light.<sup>41</sup> Several textbooks emphasize that Hindus do not eat beef, whereas NCERT textbooks in India do not fail to mention that ancient ‘Aryans ate beef.’ Leftist scholars often deny the existence of Hindi (preferring to use terms such as ‘Hindustani’ and ‘Hindi-Urdu’ instead) as a language and suggest that it is an artificial and recent construct of Hindu nationalists and hegemonic upper caste Hindus.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, the California textbooks dare to mention Hindi (**Harcourt**, p. 364; **McMillan**, p. 243, **Glencoe**, p. 243), even though one of them (**Harcourt**) says that it is written in the Arabic script! One textbook (**OUP**, p.62) traces the roots of Hinduism to Harappan culture, giving the use of Swastika as an example of continuity of the religion. But a marxist historian lampoons<sup>43</sup> those who see such continuities as follows: “The view that the Indo-Aryans came to India from outside is not acceptable to Hindu fundamentalists

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[P. 24 in McIntosh, Jane R. 2002. *A Peaceful Realm - The Rise and Fall of the Indus Civilization*. Westview Press: Boulder (Colorado)]

<sup>39</sup> See his ‘*Ancient India - In Historical Outline*’ (1998). Manohar: New Delhi, chapter VIII titled “The Myth of the Golden Age.”

<sup>40</sup> See for instance,

Vasudha Dalmia. 1996. “‘The only real religion of Hindus’: Vaishnava self-representation in the Late Nineteenth Century,” pp. 176-210 in Dalmia, Vasudha and Heinrich von Stietencron (eds.). 1995. *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Thapar, Romila. 1985. “Syndicated Moksha?” *Seminar*, September, pp. 14–22.

———. 1989. “Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity,” *Modern Asian Studies* 23: 209–31.

———. 1996. “The Tyranny of Labels,” IX Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture. New Delhi: Zakir Husain College.

<sup>41</sup> Agarwal, Vishal. “Misrepresentation and Stereotyping of Hindu Dharma in Indian History Textbooks,” pp. 61-76 in *History Today*, No. 5 (2004-2005)

<sup>42</sup> Alok Rai. 2001. *"Hindi Nationalism"*. Hyderabad, A.P. : Orient Longman, 2001.

<sup>43</sup> R. S. Sharma. 1999. *The Advent of The Aryans in India*. Manohar: New Delhi, pp. 99-100

and the western champions of the continuity of the local cultural tradition.....All this reminds us of the eternal or sanatana dharma propagated in present times....”

### ***6.0 Opposition to Hindu Textbook Reform Initiative***

Inaccurate and derogatory information in the textbooks may lead to harassment, embarrassment and a tendency to reject their religious and cultural heritage of Hindu Indian American students in classrooms. Concerned that these textbooks give flawed and prejudiced information about India and Hinduism to students, HEF and VF proposed a modest set of approximately 175 corrections (called ‘edits’) to the CDE.<sup>44</sup> An expert on ancient Indian history, Dr. Shiva Bajpai (Professor Emeritus, California State University, Northridge), was hired by CDE to review these edits and he approved 91% of them for implementation.

Suddenly a group of Hinduphobic academics<sup>45</sup> (many with a track record of making remarks verging on racism) approached the Board to influence its decision against final acceptance of the edits approved by the Curriculum Commission and the Content Review Panelists. These academics alleged that HEF and VF were Hindu fundamentalist organizations somehow linked to murders of Muslims in Gujarat, and that their edits were not consistent with accepted scholarly wisdom. Several California parents objected to this hateful labeling.<sup>46</sup>

The Californian officials panicked, and this led to a chain of events culminating in a final decision that does injustice to Hindus in retaining several of the above-mentioned errors. It became quite apparent right from the start that the opposition of these groups was not motivated by concern for American children, or for academic accuracy. Rather, they seemed to be motivated by a hatred for Hinduism, and had no hesitation in using the hearts and minds of our eleven-year old children as battlegrounds for their divisive political ideologies.<sup>47</sup> For instance, Michael Witzel (assisted by historian Stanley Wolpert and James Heitzman) insisted to the CDE/SBE officials that textbooks should retain statements like “The Mahabharata was written earlier than the Ramayana” because “how does it matter to a sixth grade student which text was written earlier”! When HEF/VF objected that the sketches in textbooks depicting the members of four castes in ancient India should be replaced because they were inaccurate, these academics countered that “The illustration is no worse than anything one sees in *Amar Chitra Katha*”! When HEF

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<sup>44</sup> VF had proposed an additional 500 corrections, but these were not even considered by the CDE/SBE officials under the pretext that they had run out of time. But the same officials did not mind spending additional time reviewing and approving in toto hundreds of corrections submitted by the Jewish and Islamic groups.

<sup>45</sup> For an analysis of this petition containing fraudulent statements, and the questionable activities of these academics, refer my “*Genesis of the Hate Filled Michael Witzel Petition*” at <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/89/1> and “*Critical Observations on the Michael Witzel Petition*” at <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/91/1/> (Part I) and <http://www.india-forum.com/articles/91/2/> (Part II)

<sup>46</sup> See for instance Kalavai Venkat’s “California Textbook Trial,” dt. 06 December 2005, and available online at <http://www.sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?contributor=Kalavai%20Venkat>

<sup>47</sup> However, in defense of some scholars, it must be said that they were unaware of the political agendas of these ultra-leftist organizations. As the lawsuit filed by the Hindu American Foundation proceeded, many scholars refused to lend their signatures to opposing legal briefs filed by FOSA. To persuade these scholars, the services of eminent historian Romila Thapar were employed by opponents of Hindu edits.

advocated correction of a picture of a Muslim worshipper with the caption ‘a brahmin’ (Glencoe, p. 244), these three academics suggested: ‘Delete the inserted circular image entirely, leaving us with a powerful picture of the scavenging lifestyle associated with untouchability’!

In promoting erroneous descriptions of Hinduism in these textbooks, the Hinduphobic academics lead by Michael Witzel<sup>48</sup> who had approached the Board initially were soon joined by a motley group<sup>49</sup> of Indian-American communists/leftists;<sup>50</sup> ultra-leftist academics; Christian evangelical organizations such as Dalit Solidarity Forum and Dalit Freedom Network (who often pretend to represent ‘Dalit’ interests); Islamists and marginal Sikh groups; certain regional groups accused in the past of raising money for terrorist organizations;<sup>51</sup> Marxist historians of India and Indian students with Communist leanings studying in American universities. Interestingly, many of these groups claim to be ‘South Asian’<sup>52</sup> but are completely silent about the whitewashing of other South Asian religions (Islam, Buddhism, Christianity) in these textbooks. Is Hinduism the only religion of ‘South Asia’? These groups even deny their Indian and Hindu identities, and call themselves ‘South Asians’ instead. Yet, they want to decide how India and Hinduism should be represented in American textbooks.

### ***7.0 Flawed Government Process Leads to a Flawed Outcome***

Following the receipt of a petition dt. November 8, 2005 from Michael Witzel of the Harvard University, SBE/CDE demonstrated a discriminatory attitude in dealing with the Hindu advocacy groups, as summarized in the table below:<sup>53</sup>

Public Process	Table 4: How the California process has worked			
	Islam	Judaism	Christianity	Hinduism

<sup>48</sup> For a compilation of his activities and utterances demeaning Hinduism, refer ‘*Thus Spake Professor Michael Witzel, A Harvard Case Study in Prejudice?*’, available for downloading at [http://www.vigilonline.org/downloads/Dossier\\_on\\_Witzel.pdf](http://www.vigilonline.org/downloads/Dossier_on_Witzel.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> For more information on these groups promoting divisive politics, refer the website <http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/04.htm>

<sup>50</sup> For instance the ‘Friends of South Asia’ (FOSA) group, whose own website (<http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org>) reveals that FOSA has organized seminars and panel discussions with hardcore communists on topics such as “Self Determination in South Asia,” featuring anarchists and hardcore communists such as Angana Chatterjee. Such seminars also discuss topics such as ‘means of strengthening communist movements in S. Asia.’

<sup>51</sup> During this controversy, FOSA actively collaborated with a Tamil group named FETNA, which has been implicated several times in the past for raising funds for the Sri Lankan terrorist group LTTE, which was involved in the murder of Rajiv Gandhi, the ex-Prime Minister of India. See for instance, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation\\_of\\_Tamil\\_Sangams\\_of\\_North\\_America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Tamil_Sangams_of_North_America) <checked on 08 October 2006> where FETNA’s links with LTTE are described.

FETNA was a co-signatory with FOSA in two amici curiae that was filed by them to oppose the HAF in its lawsuit against the State of California. The Judge disregarded the content of their first document, and dismissed the second one on grounds that it lacked merit and relevance. In effect, the state courts shut these organizations completely out of the legal process.

<sup>52</sup> For the politics associated with the ‘South Asian’ label, refer Ramesh N. Rao’s ‘*It is India, not South Asia*’ (2003), available online at <http://sulekha.com/blogs/blogdisplay.aspx?cid=4603>

<sup>53</sup> Adapted from “Hinduism Treated Unequally in California Textbooks” by Rajiv Malhotra, in ‘*Little India*,’ issue dt. March 2003

Organized community advocacy groups are lobbying for change?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have some academics protested against the community's activism?	No	No	No	Yes
Did Education Board bring hostile academics as advisors?	No	No	No	Yes
Are advocates of the religion being branded as "chauvinists," "fundamentalists," "nationalists," etc.?	No	No	No	Yes
Repeated scrutiny of edits proposed by religious advocacy groups?	No	No	No	Yes
Have CDE/SBE predominantly adopted secretive measures to make their final recommendations?	No	No	No	Yes
CDE/SBE make conflicting recommendations on multiple edits related to similar topics?	No	No	No	Yes
Overseas politics injected by opponents into textbook adoption process to derail the efforts of advocacy groups?	No	No	No	Yes

As a result of the flawed process, the final adopted document is full of errors which are self-evident, and reflects the incompetence of the authorities. There are at least 13 pairs of mutually contradictory recommendations made by the State Board that impact 15% of all Hindu group proposed corrections.<sup>54</sup>

### ***8.0 Lawsuits by Hindu-American Groups:***

Frustrated in their efforts to obtain parity with other American groups, two Hindu American organizations namely the Hindu American Foundation (HAF),<sup>55</sup> and California Parents for Equalization in Educational Materials (CAPEEM)<sup>56</sup> filed civil rights cases in the California state and US federal courts respectively to challenge this official discrimination against Hindus by the CDE/SBE. At the time of writing this article, the State Court of California has already announced its verdict on the former case, and has declared that the Californian authorities did indeed violate their own procedures in adopting secretive and underground processes for adopting these books. However, the judge refused to recall these textbooks because he felt that the books were not compromised as a result of the flawed process. He said that they were no longer 'grossly inaccurate' after SBE officials committed to correct many of the errors that I have listed in this article earlier. He also indicated that if he were to reject the adopted textbooks based on the flawed procedure, he would have to invalidate all the textbooks adopted in the last 13 years because SBE had not been following established procedures all along. In

<sup>54</sup> For a listing of some of these contradictory recommendations, refer <http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/html/Contradictions-in-SBErecommendations.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Their website listing their efforts in this controversy is at [http://hinduamericanfoundation.org/campaigns\\_education.htm](http://hinduamericanfoundation.org/campaigns_education.htm)

<sup>56</sup> Updates on their lawsuit may be read online at <http://capeem.org/>

my opinion, the judge has erred because patchwork corrections accomplished by this initiative are not sufficient, and textbooks need to be rewritten to remove errors that I have pointed above. Meanwhile, the Federal court has also rejected a plea by SBE/CDE to dismiss the CAPEEM case, and this will now take its logical course.

It should be noted however that as a result of the efforts of various Hindu American and Indian American organizations, almost 74% of the Hindu group edits were accepted. The textbooks are certainly much better now as a result of the efforts of HEF and VF. Moreover, SBE has asked the publishers to add statements to all textbooks to the effect that the Aryan invasion/migration theories are disputed, that Hindus do believe in one Supreme God of whom all other deities are manifestations, that the textbooks should use the word 'deity' in lieu of 'gods' and 'goddesses' and that Vedas should be uniformly referred to as 'scriptures,' and not as 'poems' and 'stories.' The net result of this is that almost 80% of Hindu groups' edits are now approved in one form or the other, whereas the hostile academics led by Michael Witzel had initially agreed to accept only 37% of them. And yet, several demeaning statements about India and Hinduism still remain in the textbooks and only a partial rewrite can rectify this situation in future textbook editions.

The opposition to the edits also has exposed the widespread academic Hinduphobia, which I have referred to at the beginning of the article. It also became apparent that many educated Indians are alienated from their own cultural roots, and look at their own heritage through borrowed eyes, and through ill-digested ethnocentric western theories and paradigms. This alone explains why they did not hesitate to align themselves with academics who have a tainted record (such as calling North-American Hindus as '*hiina*,' a Sanskrit word meaning 'lowly, 'mean,' 'inferior'). Perhaps it is with regard to such people that Rabindranath Tagore had once remarked:

*“He who has no light is unfortunate enough, but utterly miserable is he who having it, has been deprived of it, or has forgotten all about it.”*

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**Postscript:** Interested readers may read further details on this controversy at the website “*Internet Resources on the California Textbook Hindu Controversy*” whose address is <http://letindiadevelop.org/irochtc/>