



Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, Inc.

A Non-Profit Tax Exempt Organization:
Metropolitan Washington (DC) Chapter
301 Saybrooke View Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-3780



Phone/Fax: (301) 917-1555 ■ E-mail: pres_metrodc@vhp-america.org

11-21-2005

To: Mr. Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Director of Education; Mr. Gavin Payne Chief Deputy Superintendent; Ms. Sue Stickel, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction Branch; and Mr. Thomas Adams Executive Director to the Curriculum Commission and Director CFIR Division

Ms. Ruth Green, President State Board of Education; Ms. Glee Johnson, State Board Vice President; Mr. Alan Bersin; Ms. Ruth Bloom; Ms. Yvonne Chan; Mr. Donald G. Fisher; Mr. Kenneth Noonan; Mr. Joe Nuñez; Ms. Bonnie Reiss; Mr. Johnathan Xavier Williams ; Paul Gardner III 2005-2006 Student Member

Concerning: The proposed adoption of the current Social Studies textbooks and Bias and stereotyping of Hinduism in the world history textbooks

Respected Mr. O'Connell, Ms. Green, and members:

I am the president of VHPA, Washington DC Chapter. We provide a forum for all Hindu organizations and institutions to represent Hindu American interests. Our organization cultivates the spirit of self respect in your way of life, and respect for the people of all colors, creeds, races and religions. The official web site of VHP Of America is <http://www.vhp-america.org>.

It has come to our notice that many Hindu American parents have written letters to California department of education regarding the issue is related to bias and stereotype portrayal of Hindu religion and Indian history in the social studies textbooks recommended for adoption by the CDE.

The Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials specifically states, "To be adopted, materials must first meet *in full* Category 1, History-Social Science Content/Alignment with Standards." The principle defined under Category 1 further states that instructional materials present accurate, detailed content and a variety of perspectives and that history be based on the best recent scholarship.

Vedic Foundation and Hindu Education Foundation provided detailed comments to CDE and subsequently followed with corrections to make the textbooks free of bias and stereotypes. The review comments and suggested replacement sections were part of the due process for textbook selection, as defined by CDE rules, regulations, and procedures.

It is most disappointing to learn that the CDEs decision to make corrections in the textbooks so that these textbooks do not contain any bias and stereotype about Hinduism and Indian history is being opposed by a group of self proclaimed "international scholars". The letter sent by Prof Michael Witzel, and his 'group' to the CDE contains no specifics, except allegations. One wonders have they even reviewed the proposed textbooks or the suggested changes, being considered by the CDE? **One fails to understand why this 'group' is opposing textbooks free of bias, stereotype, mis-representation, inaccuracies, and personal opinion.**



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The rules must be the same for all groups for people to have faith in a system. The CDE's decision was postponed primarily on a letter which contains no specifics. If a Hindu/Christian/Muslim/Jews/Buddhist or any one with Indian/Middle Eastern/Asian/European/American group offers a non-specific letter, will CDE change its decision?

In the letter by this 'group', they mentioned that 'tens of millions of non-Hindu Indians, who are routinely discriminated against by these groups'. But they failed to inform the Board that since independence, merit alone determines a person occupying highest offices of national security in India. *In the free India 4 out of 14 Presidents of India were Muslims, 2 out of 3 Commander in Chiefs were non-Hindu, 3 out of 18 Army Chief were non-Hindus, 3 out of 14 Naval Chiefs were non-Hindus, and 7 out of 18 Air Force Chiefs were non-Hindus as shown in the attachment.* Only this 'group' can explain why they misrepresented the record. **That the 'group' is economical with truth is to say the least.**

The next paragraph of their letter further states that "in a brief period in which the central government was under Hindutva control," Once again the 'group' put an **inaccurate** portrayal of the events. They **omitted** the fact that the *current President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam (a Muslim) was nominated by this so called 'Hindutva' government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.* They also **distorted** the record of Vajpayee govt. **No wonder that this 'group' opposes any changes in the textbooks related to inaccuracies, omission, distortion, bias, and stereotypes.**

As a result of being taught incorrect information in social studies courses about India and Hinduism, Hindu students often undergo a conflicting and demoralizing religious and cultural education, while other students receive false understanding and build a negative perception of Hinduism and Indian culture.

It is imperative for school administrators and educators to accept the responsibility of ensuring that Social Studies courses accurately represent the diverse cultures and religions of the world, and teach them in a balanced and unbiased manner in the classroom. This will assure that children develop a correct identity of their own ethnic group, and view of other cultures and religions in the US and the rest of the world, in an open minded and mutually respectful manner.

We, the Hindu community will very much appreciate if the board will address the issues concerning parents and take remedial measures to rectify the bias and the inaccuracies existing in the world history textbooks. We request that the California Department of Education and State Board of Education adopts the textbooks which don't contain the following:

- **Unbalanced** coverage of Hinduism as compared to other religions
- **Negative** description of Hindu values and belief system
- **Incorrect** portrayal of origin of Indian civilization
- **Omission** of earlier river valley civilization of India
- Teaching of theories as facts and **biased** teaching of one side of these theories
- **Biased** description of Hindu and Indian women and their role in society
- **Factual inaccuracies** regarding the dates of the historical events
- **Stereotype** description of India as an exotic land



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Intolerance, bias and false sense of superiority stem from ignorance. By insisting on maintaining a status quo, this 'group' is just breeding that. We also requests that

- The Board follows the same set of rules, regulations, and standards in entertaining all groups.
- The textbooks which are finally selected must be reflective of latest scholarship and free of all bias, prejudice, distortions, or factually wrong information about any issue.
- **The CDE must not allow or permit this "Group's" ethno-centric views on Hinduism and Indian history.**

Sincerely,
Shivaram Sitaram
President, VHPA Washington-DC chapter
301 Saybrooke view Dr
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