Teaching of Hinduism in the California State School System: Evaluation and Recommendations

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Abstract

In 2005-2006 the Hindu community participated for the first time in the 6th and 7th grades social studies textbook adoption process of the California State Board of Education. The process was contentious, resulting in two lawsuits and subsequent dismay among Hindus at the lack of substantive improvement to the books. It is the hypothesis of this paper that the textbooks' inequitable and inadequate treatment of the Hindu religion is inherent in the state's *History-Social Science Framework* and is compounded by a lack of "best recent scholarship" guiding the production of the textbooks themselves. Through an examination of the *Framework* and the approved textbooks, it is shown that the narrative of the Hindu religion follows an old Orientalist approach. It is largely limited to the social institution of caste and disregards the religion's scriptures, beliefs, teachings, saints, ethics and practices. In contrast, the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam—presented in the *Framework* and the books are comprehensively and favorably treated. This unequal treatment is contrary to California state law and US Supreme Court decisions requiring that religions be dealt with equitably in the public school system. It has had a dramatic negative impact on Hindu children, who have been subject to harassment and left ashamed of their heritage as a result of these classes. Recommendations are made for an improved presentation of Hinduism.

Introduction

The official guidelines for teaching history and the social sciences in California's K-12 public school system are described in the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools,*[1] published in 2005 by the California State Board of Education (CSBE). It describes the various skills and information to be conveyed to the student, including a basic knowledge of each of the world's major religions.

In addition to the *Framework*, supplemental guidelines adopted by the state direct the teaching process. The most important of these is the *Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content*.[2] The major publishers are expected to produce their textbooks in accordance with the *Framework* and guidelines. The textbooks are subject to a public review and adoption process. Each school district then selects one or more of the approved books for use in its schools.

The most recent textbook adoption process by the CSBE's Curriculum Commission and later the Board itself in 2005-2006 was a contentious affair in regard to the textbooks' treatment of Hinduism and the history of India. Meetings were heated, outside parties jumped into the fray and lawsuits were filed. The CSBE was found in court to have violated California's open meeting laws during critical moments in the review

process.

It is not the purpose of this paper to dissect the 2005-2006 review process.[3] Certain aspects of those proceedings, however, will be referenced in this paper. The review process itself was restricted to minor edits and adjustments. There was no scope for addressing major issues—and Hindus had several. These originated in the *Framework* itself, exacerbated by individual publishers' biases, lack of knowledge and failure to adhere to the supplemental guidelines.

The scope of this paper is: 1) to critically examine the *Framework's* treatment of religion—particularly Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism; 2) to analyze the application of the supplemental guidelines in the context of "adverse reflection;" 3) to evaluate the approved textbooks' treatment of Hinduism, both as such and in comparison to Judaism, Christianity and Islam; and 4) to recommend improvements to the *Framework* and the textbooks.

In making this analysis, we employ a method not previously used in the evaluation of the textbooks: a detailed comparison of (a) the relevant legal texts pertaining to the school books and their treatment of religions, and (b) how the authors of these schoolbooks have actually implemented those mandatory guidelines.

1. The Framework and the Guidelines for Teaching Religion

The *Framework's* stated goal is to help students become responsible citizens through acquiring historical knowledge and developing cultural understanding. The main body of the text contains specific curricular instructions for each grade level. Each topic is covered twice: once in the essay-style Narrative and again in the bullet-point "Content Standards," which were adopted in 1998. One would expect a correspondence here, but each contains points not included in the other. The CSBE is currently attempting to better align the Narrative with the Content Standards.

California has legal mandates and established guidelines for teaching about religion. Its Constitution forbids the teaching of any sectarian doctrine, directly or indirectly.[4] The state education code forbids any classroom material or activity "which reflects adversely upon persons because of their race, sex, color, creed, handicap, national origin or ancestry." The CSBE's *Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials*[5] requires that history instruction must be "based on the best recent scholarship" and that that "materials on religious subject matter remain neutral; do not advocate one religion over another; do not include derogatory language about a religion or use examples from sacred texts or other religious literature that are derogatory, accusatory, or instill prejudice against other religions or those who believe in other religions." The CSBE's *Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content*[6] are intended to "enable all students to become aware and accepting of religious diversity while being allowed to remain secure in any religious beliefs they may already have." They forbid "adverse reflection" against a religion or religious belief, and state, "No religious belief or practice may be held up to ridicule and no religious group may be portrayed as inferior."

2. The Framework Narrative and Content Standards

The *Framework* for 6th grade covers the time period from the development of agriculture and settled civilizations up to 300 ce; the 7th grade covers from 300 ce to 1800 ce. Students in 6th grade study the ancient Hebrews, India and Christianity. In the 7th they study the development of Islam and the Reformation.[7] The *Framework* barely mentions India after 300 ce—disregarding 25% of the world's population, an economy which dwarfed that of Europe and a society which was highly advanced in both the arts and the sciences.

For most religions, the *Framework's* Narrative section proposes similar, nearly parallel topics. Students are to learn from Judaism about "wisdom, righteousness, law, and justice;" from Buddhism, "unselfishness (returning good for evil); compassion for the suffering of others; tolerance and nonviolence; and the prohibition of lying, stealing,

killing, finding fault with others, and gossiping;" from Jainism, "ahimsa, or nonviolence;" from Christianity, "those teachings of Jesus that advocate compassion, justice, and love for others;" from Islam, "the Islamic way of life, its code of ethics and justice, and its rule of law;" and from the Reformation, "religious beliefs of Martin Luther and John Calvin as well as the history of the English Bible."

Hinduism is dealt with very differently. The Narrative on ancient India and Hinduism reads in its entirety:

> "Over a thousand years earlier, the Harappan civilization had developed and reached its zenith in the Indus River Valley, having developed complex cities, brick platforms, script, granaries, and craft workshops. After its collapse, succeeding waves of Aryas from the north spread their influence across the Punjab and Ganges plains. This resulted in a composite civilization rich in its aesthetic culture (architecture, sculpture, painting, dance, and music) and in its intellectual traditions (Arabic numbers, the zero, medical tradition, and metallurgy). …[section on Buddhism is here]… Students should also study the development of Hinduism and the role of one of its most revered texts, the Bhagavad Gita."

All other religions are presented in proper chronological order and accorded historical importance. Hinduism is introduced as something to "also study"—and this following a description of Buddhism as "a civilizing force." Might a teacher logically conclude that the study of Hinduism is optional and that Hindu society of the time was uncivilized?

No mention is made of Hinduism's scriptures as for Judaism, ethics as for Buddhism and Jainism, compassion and love as for Christianity, justice as for Islam or major historical religious figures such as Luther and Calvin for the Reformation. Even Hinduism's famed acceptance of religious pluralism receives no mention. The Narrative credits Jainism with the concept of ahimsa—which was a major moral directive in Hindu texts predating Jainism by centuries.[8] And although caste is not mentioned in the Narrative, that institution is a main focus of the Content Standards and the final textbooks.

In 1998 the Content Standards were adopted to define "the specific academic knowledge, skills and abilities" to be taught. This bullet-point list governs both the textbooks and what is taught in the classroom, though not to the exclusion of the Narrative. For Judaism the Standards include the origin of the Jews, concept of God, ethical teachings, central beliefs, scriptures, key religious figures (e.g., Abraham, Moses), and key events (the Exodus, destruction of the Second Temple). For Christianity the Standards include Jesus, the New Testament, St. Paul, specific beliefs including the Trinity, resurrection and salvation, and the spread of the religion. For Islam they include Muhammad, scriptures, beliefs, practices, law, daily life, and the spread of the religion. The Reformation is covered in a detailed list of events, people and issues.

The Standards treat India and Hinduism differently, just as the Narrative did. They read in their entirety:

> "6.5 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious and social structures of the early civilizations of India:
>
> 1. Locate and describe the major river system and discuss the physical setting that supported the rise of this civilization.
> 2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.
> 3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.
> 4. Outline the social structure of the caste system.
> 5. Know the life and moral teachings of the Buddha and how Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon and Central Asia.
> 6. Describe the growth of the Maurya empire and the political and moral achievements of the emperor Asoka.
> 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)."

Absent from the Standards on Hinduism is any specific reference to God, list of central beliefs, mention of major religious figures, or major historical events. No mention is made of any Hindu scripture other than the *Gita,* such as the *Vedas,* which are central to all sects of Hinduism, but rather a general statement is made about "Sanskrit literature."

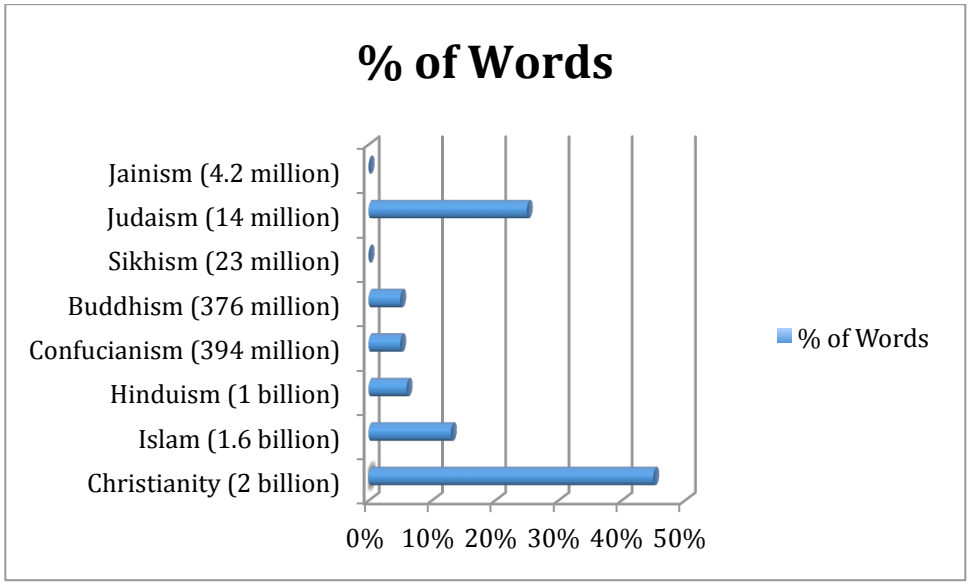

Figure 1: *The relative emphasis in the 6th and 7th grade Content Standards is indicated by the percentage of words allotted to each religion.*

Neither the Narrative nor the Content Standards treats Hinduism with the depth and respect afforded other religions. Effectively, the Standards distilled Indian history into a single concept: caste. The following exploration of the *Framework* development since the 1980s sheds some light on how Hinduism came to be dealt with as it is.

3. Historical Development of the Framework

A 2010 doctoral dissertation by Bradley Fogo, *The Making of California's Framework, Standards and Tests for History-Social Science*, analyzes the process which created the *Framework*.[9] A former social studies teacher, Fogo is now Director of Curriculum Development for the Stanford History Education Group. According to his paper, the Academic Standards Commission was appointed by a political process. Specific expertise was not required, and the commission included no professors of history or K-12 history teachers. He termed it "politics trumping subject matter expertise."

Then, certain religious groups—but not others—helped to develop their respective standards. The Council for Islamic Education provided nearly all the wording for Standard 7.2 on Islam. The only significant Commission addition was "through military conquests and treaties" in describing the spread of Islam. Once that was done, the Commission was obliged to incorporate most of the seventeen suggestions of the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco. It likewise considered those of David Barton, the former Vice-President of the Texas Republican party and founder of Wallbuilders—an organization focused on promoting history that depicts the United States as, unequivocally, a Christian nation. There is no record of any Hindu expert or Hindu groups being consulted in developing the standards on Hinduism.

The first draft for Standard 6.5 on India was taken from the National Standards in

World History developed in 1996 at UCLA. Originally this included no mention of caste or the Aryan Invasion.[10] Fogo does not describe how caste became a major point in the Standards. But he does explain the inclusion of the Aryan Invasion theory: "In a move that would later prove controversial, the team added 'explain the significance of the Aryan invasions' to the sixth grade standard on India, as recommended, without a rationale, by Stanley Burstein, a history professor at California State University-Los Angeles." Burstein is a specialist in Greek history.

Ross Dunn, professor of world history at San Diego State University and part of UCLA's National History Standards team, reviewed the draft Standards for the Commission. Fogo writes, *"Dunn encouraged the committee to cut standard 6.5.2 on the 'Aryan Invasion' in Ancient India, arguing that 'none of the recent scholarship' indicated it occurred…. The standard remained and helped contribute to a 2005 lawsuit that the Hindu American Foundation brought against the State Board of Education over the depiction of Ancient India in state-approved textbooks." (emphasis added)*

When the final Standards were released, the Commission proclaimed them the result of a process which "welcomed public debate, excluded no one, and forged consensus." Fogo disagrees: "These characterizations are incomplete at best and misleading and superficial at worst. Most of the decisions … lacked clear consensus. [Some] proved contentious in time, as with the sixth grade sub-standard on the Aryan Invasion. … Several groups did not participate. For example, advocates for Hindu, Sikh, Korean, or any other Asian group did not submit public comment or expert review to the history committee or standards commission."

The CSBE has no process to seek out comment and input from minority groups; only those sufficiently organized to create access to the process are heard. This is not unique to California. *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* notes, "Curriculum processes do not necessarily provide very much direct opportunity for input from various interests. As usual in political processes, those bodies that are better organized and financed or whose concerns are more deeply felt will tend to be much more active and may have disproportionate influence."[11] This dynamic is evident in the *Framework* revision process currently under way (November, 2014). The Department of Education has consulted cooperatively with Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups, but any input offered to date by Hindu groups is not reflected in the draft revision.

4. The German Textbook Experience: Gandhi and the Cow

A 1986 study found Germany's textbooks had many of the same problems as California's. Sebastian Murken (now of the Psychology of Religion Research Group at the University of Trier) [12] wrote an analysis, *Gandhi und die Kuh*, evaluating all approved religious books for grades 5 to 10 in Germany's Catholic and Protestant schools.

In his summary and conclusions he writes, "The theological and pedagogic concepts for discussing the non-Christian religions … are still very un-unified and immature. The individual schoolbooks show in part an alarming approach to Hinduism. It was depicted in a distorted manner by reducing it to a few characteristics (cow, Gandhi, castes and karma) and often intentionally putting it in one-sided contrast to Christianity. The question was often not whether the depicted information is correct or false, but whether the way of compiling it creates a false impression. An entire generation of students gets an impression from these schoolbooks that alienates them in regard to Hinduism rather than waking their curiosity."

Murken identifies the pedagogical issue as how to explain a religion using neutral terms and classification rather than by a comparison with Christianity, which tends to be judgmental. His study demonstrates that the difficulties in teaching about Hinduism are not limited to California or even to the United States.

5. The 2005-2006 Textbook Review Process

For all the controversy around the 2005-2006 adoption process in California, only small

changes were ever made in the actual books.[13] Substantive "additional content" was not allowed; only minor edits and corrections could be considered—and all had to be in accord with the Narrative and the Content Standards, which were not up for debate.

Some corrections were easy. For example, *The Ancient South Asian World* had said: "But not everyone in South Asia is Hindu. Some, like most Nepalis, are Buddhist." In actuality, Nepal is 89% Hindu. Another textbook had said, "Hindi is written with the Arabic alphabet, which uses 18 letters for sounds." Hindi, however, is written in the Devanagari script and contains 49 basic letters.

Change was difficult or impossible for questionable historical notions. On the Aryan Invasions/Migrations, the best that Hindus could achieve was to have the CSBE send this advice to the publishers: "When referencing the Aryan invasion or migration theory, publishers should provide a statement that this concept is debated by scholars."

A Houghton-Mifflin book included this exercise: "Use the Internet to learn about Hindu customs concerning one of these topics: Ganges River, cows, funerals, diet." Objecting to this stereotyping exercise, Hindus requested more illuminating topics, such as nonviolence and Ayurveda. The CSBE ruled, "Existing passage is not inaccurate," and refused to change it but offered no justification for its relevance in the context.

Other religions were treated with deference. For example, the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco requested 186 edits in 2005, many invoking "adverse reflection" in one form or another. Nearly all 186 were approved. In one book the original text read, "King Herod was known for his cruelty...." Their reviewers called this "another instance of unnecessary negative information about Jewish kings." The board deleted the text.

Another edit dealt with this text: "Unfortunately, Egyptian records from the time don't mention the Exodus... Archaeology hasn't uncovered any evidence... We have only the biblical account...." The Institute complained, "Christianity and Islam are not subjected to the same test of verifiability," citing "lack of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus." The board ordered the offending statements to be rewritten, as well as a passage that prompted this complaint: "Students could only conclude [from the textbook] that God punished the Jews for their evil ways. This is a theological interpretation that has historically been used to promote anti-Semitism; it has no place in a public school text."

The Hindu organizations challenging the textbooks in California were inexperienced and did not know about the Social Content Standards, including the adverse reflection rule.[14] They did not object when Buddhism was presented as an "improvement" over Hinduism, though the Jewish Council successfully objected each time Christianity was presented as some type of improvement or replacement for Judaism. Nor did they object to the emphasis on caste in ancient India, though the books did not similarly highlight the acceptance of slavery in Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

During this contentious period, any Hindu or Hindu organization objecting to the textbooks was labeled a Hindu nationalist, Hindu fundamentalist or advocate of Hindutva by a coalition of academics and activists who were purportedly defending the rights of India's minorities. This campaign resulted in a distrust of the Hindu parties which lingers to this day with the Department of Education—though it is unlikely anyone in the department has any idea what these terms mean in the context of India's politics.

Hindutva et al are explained in *The Battle for Ancient India, An Essay in the Sociopolitics of Indian Archaeology*,[15] by Dilip K. Chakrabarti, Professor of South Asian Archaeology at Cambridge University (UK). He writes that, "The voice of the politically and otherwise dominant academic establishment of both India and the West [relegates] everything that is being said against its cherished premises to the often undefined framework of Hindu fundamentalism or what has come to be known, quite illogically, as *Hindutva,* which simply means the essence of being a Hindu and has been used as such by many secular Indian nationalists including Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindra Nath Tagore…. This establishment … never tires of crying out loud against the real or imagined dilution of secularism in school textbooks, whether in India or Cali-

fornia."

Those claiming to oppose "Hindu fundamentalism" during the 2005-2006 textbook adoption process made no mention of the California *Framework*, the Social Content Standards, the legally mandated guidelines for the teaching of religion or the treatment of Hinduism relative to the other religions in the same books—all issues they were well aware of. Instead they used these invectives to undermine the legitimate issues Hindus had with the books.

Two lawsuits were filed against the CSBE following the 2005-2006 CSBE textbook adoption process. The first, filed by the Hindu American Foundation in California state court, sought to overturn the approval of the 6th-grade textbooks concluded by the CSBE early in 2006.[16] The suit basically made two claims: First, the CSBE violated the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act by holding meetings not open to the public and without proper notice or agenda. The court upheld this claim and ordered the CSBE to revise its procedures. Second, the textbooks were approved even though they contained material not in compliance with substantive legal standards applicable to their content.

The judge denied the second claim, which if substantiated could have resulted in the CSBE restarting the entire textbook adoption process. He ruled that the books did meet the applicable standards. He justified the extensive coverage of the caste system because, "Nothing in the applicable standards requires textbook writers to ignore a historical reality of such significant dimension, even if studying it might engender certain negative reactions in students." Though aware of the social content standards, he did not explain how this negative reaction does not constitute adverse reflection nor how a Hindu student is to remain secure in his religious beliefs in the face of this negative class presentation on caste.

The second lawsuit was filed in the Federal Court in Sacramento by the California Parents for Equalization of Educational Materials (CAPEEM). The court largely ruled against CAPEEM. The judge applied a standard of "historical reality," as in the HAF suit.[17] Significantly, the judge did agree there were issues which could only be decided at trial with regard to CAPEEM's claims of discrimination at the hands of the CSBE. His judgment cited over four pages of evidence that Hindus were subjected to submission deadlines on the Hindu edits that others were not, that the CSBE ignored concerns about bias and hostility among experts they brought in to oppose the Hindu edits, that similar edits were granted to other religions but not to Hindus, and several other issues.

The judgment referred to the "Lemon Test," a 1971 Supreme Court decision for claims brought under the Establishment Clause of the Constitution. The test requires a finding that an objective sixth grader (not an outside adult expert) would find that the primary message of the textbooks is that the government endorses Abrahamic religions or disapproves of Hinduism. The judge concluded the case failed the Lemon Test because "Conveying accurate but what may well be perceived as negative aspects of Hinduism does not mean that the primary effect of the textbooks is to inhibit religion." In other words, the books do adversely reflect on Hinduism, contrary to state guidelines.

Consider the presentation of caste and slavery in both the *Framework* and the textbooks. As we will discuss later, the 6th and 7th grade *Framework* and the textbooks themselves avoid the topic of slavery entirely with regard to Judaism, Christianity and—with the exception of two textbooks—Islam. This despite slavery being, equally with caste, a "historical reality of such significant dimension," as the state court wrote, or "an accurate… but negative aspect," as the federal court put it. The criteria of significant historical reality or supposed accuracy has only been applied to portray Hinduism in a negative light in the textbooks but not to so portray any other religion.

6. The Framework's Orientalist Agenda: Aryan Invasion, Brahmanism and Caste

A 19th-century German or British Indologist would approve of the California curricula on ancient India. Unfortunately, their conclusions made 200 years ago about an Aryan invasion, Brahmanism and caste were driven by ulterior motives of converting India to

Christianity. In this, they followed the colonialist presumption that Europeans were the experts and the peoples they colonized were not qualified to define themselves—as Edward Said postulated in *Orientalism*.[18]

The German style in particular is fully explored in the just published *The Nay Science, A History of German Indology*,[19] by Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, who conclude that German Indology reflects the prejudices of Protestant—specifically Lutheran—theology to such an extent as to render not only their conclusions about India inaccurate, but their entire method of historical research suspect.

Max Muller, a German who spent most of his career in England, wrote to his wife that his work on translating the Vedas was to show Indians the root of their religion as "the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3,000 years."[20] In an 1873 lecture he called the worship of Siva, Vishnu and other popular Deities "degraded and savage."[21] He called the religion of India "doomed" and pleaded for Christianity to step in.[22] When Joseph Boden established the influential chair in Sanskrit at the University of Oxford in his will in 1832, he expressed that "a critical knowledge of that language will be a means of enabling my countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian Religion."[23] This underlying contempt for Hinduism remains within mainstream Western Indological studies, even if not recognized as such by those under its influence.

Aryan invasion, Brahmanism and caste are closely tied together in the Orientalist construct of India: Invading Aryans subjugated the native population, and Aryan brahmin priests imposed the caste system upon them. But modern research in climatology, archeology, geology and anthropology, as well as discoveries by satellite photography, DNA analysis of the Indian population and other developments, have eliminated the possibility of a military invasion and also point to caste being a long-standing aspect of Indian society, as it was of many ancient societies. Regardless, the textbooks of all states still teach the Aryan domination scenario.

In both the invasion and migration conjectures, the brahmins and their religion of Brahmanism are the villains in a critique mirroring the Reformation view of the Catholic priesthood. The term *Brahmanism* is derived from the term for the high priest, *brahmana*, in the Vedas as well as in Hindu tradition, and not from *Brahman*, the Supreme God. *Brahmanism* was coined by Orientalists inspired by the disparaging and now archaic Protestant terms for Catholicism including popeism, popery, papalism and papist.[24]

At the conclusion of the 2005-2006 textbook revision process the CSBE ordered textbook publishers to "drop all reference to a religion called Brahmanism."[25] It is notable that all the four scholars[26] consulted by the CSBE agreed to drop Brahmanism. The term "Early Hinduism" was used instead for one edit in the revision process, "Hinduism" alone in some edits, "what is known today as Hinduism" in another, and "the religion that became Hinduism" in yet another—there was no consistency.

Language has long been to Indologists a central issue in Indian history: how is it that the people of the Vedas spoke a language which has common ancestry with the languages of Europe? Did the Vedic people of India originate in Europe? Or did the Indo-European languages spread from an origin in India? Or is there some other explanation for these linguistic developments some five millennia ago? One might consider this an esoteric matter, of interest only to a few historians, but unfortunately it has consequences to this day in the academic circles, the politics of India and the teaching of Hinduism to California's 11-year-olds.

Edwin Bryant, professor of Hindu religion and philosophy at Rutgers University, has developed something of a cottage industry in the last decade explaining this issue, most recently in *Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilization, New Perspectives*, published in 2014.[27] Bryant explains in the article how in many cases the same evidence can be used either for or against an invasion/migration scenario. He also explains just how contentious the issue is: "Although the [Aryan Invasion] issue was one of the most hotly contested debates in Indology in the 1990s, the debate has died down somewhat in mainstream Western aca-

demic circles recently, not because it has necessarily been resolved decisively in the minds of everyone, but, in part, because many otherwise interested scholars became exhausted with the polemical and strident tenor of the discussions, the ad-hominem emotionality, and the zealous insistency with which the opposing views were pursued."

Back in 1998 Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, now professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and one of the world's leading experts on the Saraswati-Indus civilization, was even more blunt: "The invasion and/or migration models assumed that the Indo-Aryan-speaking Vedic communities destroyed the Indus cities and replaced the complex urban civilization with their new rituals, language and culture. Many scholars have tried to correct this theory, by pointing out misinterpreted basic facts, inappropriate models and an uncritical reading of Vedic texts. However, until recently, these scientific and well-reasoned arguments were unsuccessful in rooting out the misinterpretations entrenched in the popular literature."[28]

Practically speaking for the textbooks, this comes down to three issues: the identity of the Indus civilization with the Vedic culture, the significant continuity of cultural elements of the Indus civilization in later Indian society, and the caste system. The first of these is based on: 1) the drying up in 1900 bce of the Saraswati which the *Rig Veda* says "flowed from the mountains to the sea" and was the cradle of Vedic civilization; 2) the presence of Vedic fire worship in the Indus-Saraswati religion and 3) literary evidence from the Vedas themselves. The second is obvious enough from the various artifacts found around the Indus, but this is still overshadowed by the invasion mentality. Finally, was the caste system imposed upon hapless natives as a direct consequence of the religious beliefs of invaders or dominant migrants? Or is it something organic to Indian society that developed as a social, economic and cultural institution over many centuries? If the former, then "Hinduism" is to blame for all its supposed injustices, and if the latter, it is a social organization developed over time but not a result of Hindu philosophy as such.

Caste presents multiple curricular issues. The English term itself is derived from the Portuguese *casta*, meaning "race, lineage or breed" and was first applied by them to the endogamous social groups, *jati*, of India upon their arrival in 1498. In modern usage, caste is also applied to the four-tiered *varna* system (brahmins, including priests and scholars; kshatriyas including kings and warriors; vaishyas, including ranchers, farmers, artisans, and businessmen; and shudras, laborers and service providers). These two systems are only loosely related to each other. Attempts by the British to classify the thousands of jatis within specific varnas were not particularly successful. According to scripture, a person belonged to a certain varna according to his nature, whereas jati was entirely a matter of family lineage. Individual jatis were more concerned with their relative rank in relation to other jatis and not whether they were considered sudras, vaishyas or kshatriyas. The California *Framework* and the textbooks fail to differentiate between jati and varna when talking about caste.

Second, caste is always presented as entirely negative, with the focus on the bottom of the system, the untouchables, a tiny minority community through historical times, who did the most unclean work in urban life. In every society some people are at the bottom of the economic scale. Other societies of the time solved this problem by enslaving people; at least in Indian society the untouchables were a free and largely self-governing group. The caste system actually offered many advantages. The famed Indologist J.H. Hutton, professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, wrote back in the 1950s, "India is composed of all sorts of different elements of great diversity, of different creeds, different customs and even different colors. All these varied peoples have been enabled to live together, in conditions of comparative stability and forming what may be described as a multiple society, by the caste system. … [It] has proved historically to be very stable. It has proved capable of absorbing any intrusive society, and no intruders have yet succeeded in revolutionizing it, though it is not so rigid that a caste cannot rise in social scale."[29] This Hindu ability to absorb a wide range of peoples

into a single society stands in contrast to the fate of the Native Americans in America or Canada.

The ultimate problem with caste, as currently taught, it that it wrongly essentializes India to a single dimension. Nicholas B. Dirks, formerly history professor at Columbia University and now chancellor of the UC Berkeley opens his book, *Castes of Mind, Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, by noting: "In comparative sociology and in common parlance alike, caste has become a central symbol of India, indexing it as fundamentally different from other places as well as expressing its essence. … Caste, as we know it today, is not in fact some unchanged survival of ancient India, not some single system that reflects a core civilization value, not a basic expression of Indian tradition."[30]

The proposed revision to the Framework now under review seems to recognize the issue and tries to justify discussing caste by the Content Standards' reference to "social structure." But the textbooks' approach to this discussion varies widely by religion and society. For the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, the social structure of slavery is discussed in a substantial manner. But "social structure" for Judaism, Christianity and Islam is only covered in a short discussions of the family and the position of women. Although the Bible (both Old and New Testament) and the Qu'ran have historically been used to justify slavery, and early Jewish, Christian and Muslim societies did not condemn it, none of the approved texts discuss slavery as practiced in Jewish and Christian society of the same era as Greek and Rome, and only two do so for Islam in any significant manner. In making this point, we are not arguing that slavery should become a major topic in the sixth and seventh grade books.[31] We do not question California's silence on slavery under Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We do question, however, why caste should dominate the sections on India and Hinduism at the expense of any comprehensive narrative of Hindu religion itself.

These curricular issues are not limited to India alone. Won-Pyo Hong, of Seoul National University, has published a paper[32] similar in ways to this one in which he analyzes the treatment of Asia (particularly Korea) in geography books in use in Texas and California. He concludes, "The textbooks are more likely to perpetuate stereotypical and Oriental perceptions of Asians as rather strange and exotic, instead of helping American readers develop more humanist and friendly understandings.

Hong's analysis is in the context of a broader critique of curriculum as a reflection of the society that created it more than the society it purports to study. He writes, "We need to consider that as social institutions, schools have often been used as an apparatus to shape young students' minds with colonial perspectives. Decolonizing the textbooks would include investigating how the differences between Asia and the US are constructed in textbooks, what kind of perceptions and positions American readers are encouraged to take up with regard to Asia, and how the textbooks represent Asia to inscribe, maintain, and reinforce colonial messages."

7. Evaluation of the Textbooks

For the purposes of analysis, the authors purchased copies of each of the social studies books approved by the CSBE. Of the approved books for use in 6th and 7th grade, only those which covered the entire curriculum for the year were selected, a total of 13 books.[33] For clarity, we will reference them by the publisher and grade level: Glencoe, 6th and 7th; Holt, 6th and 7th; McDougal/Houghton Mifflin, 6th and 7th; Houghton Mifflin, 6th; Harcourt, 6th; Macmillan, 6th; Pearson, 6th and 7th, TCI, 6th and 7th. The Houghton Mifflin 6th grade text is identical (except for its cover) to McDougal's 6th grade book and is not dealt with separately.[34]

The School Annual Report Card (SARC) filed yearly by every school in California lists the textbooks in use. There are 4,630 schools in California with a sixth grade, with a total of 461,541 students. Though not every single school filed a SARC, the reports gave this share of the market for each publisher: Holt 26%, TCI 20%, Houghton Mif-

flin/McDougal 19%, Glencoe 14%, Harcourt 11%, Macmillan/McGraw Hill 5% and Pearson Prentice-Hall 5%.

In general, most of the books give a comprehensive historical, social and theological narrative for each of the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The presentation of Buddhism is less comprehensive, largely the same from one book to another and generally well done, while Jainism is covered in just a few paragraphs, if at all. The seven approved 6th-grade books devote an average of ten pages to Hinduism, ranging from four pages in Harcourt to 23 in Pearson-Prentice Hall. Holt, Glencoe, McDougal/Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt and MacMillan take very similar approaches to Hinduism.

We should warn and apologize to the reader that much of what is to follow will seem repetitive, as naturally what is in the textbooks follows the Framework that we have covered in such detail. The point to be made here is that the books —for the most part— faithfully incorporate the bias and errors of the Framework, and sometimes even compound them.

We will summarize Holt, the most popular. Holt's nine pages on Hinduism[35] begin with the Aryan Invasion: "Not long after the Harappan civilization crumbled, a new group took power in the Indus Valley. They were called the Aryans. Historians have long debated the origins of the Aryans. Some historians believe they came from Central Asia, but others disagree. … [They] were skilled warriors. Using chariots and advanced weapons, … by 1200 bc Arya warriors had swept through the Hindu Kush and taken control of the entire Indus Valley. From there they moved east to the Ganges River Valley."

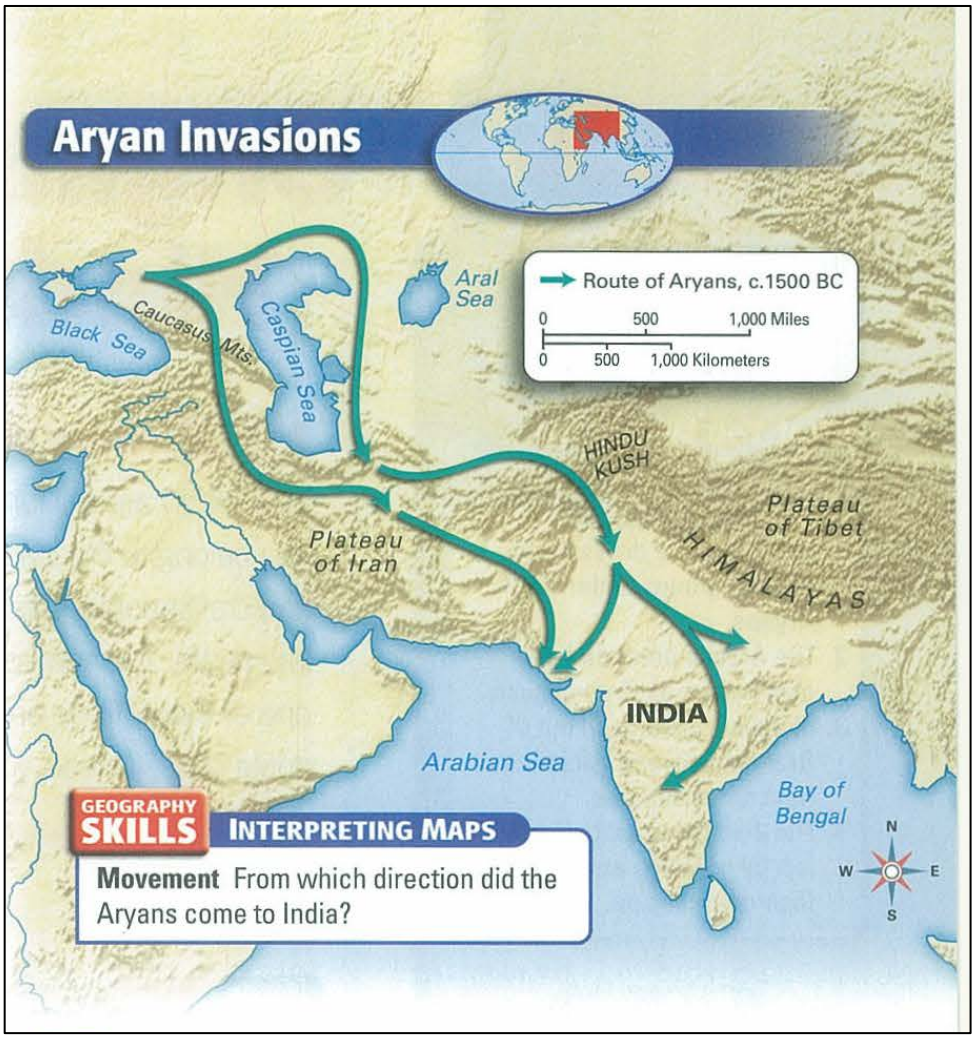

Figure 2: *An incorrect and misleading map from Holt, chapter 6, Ancient India, showing "Aryan Invasions." Five of the seven approved books have a similar map; the others are labeled "Aryan Migrations."*[36]

The text moves next into the topic of caste, also with a typical illustration (Figure 3): "[The Aryans] developed a strict system of social classes…. Before long, this class system was a key part of Indian society…. The Aryans developed … guides which listed all the rules…. For example, people were not allowed to marry anyone from a different class."

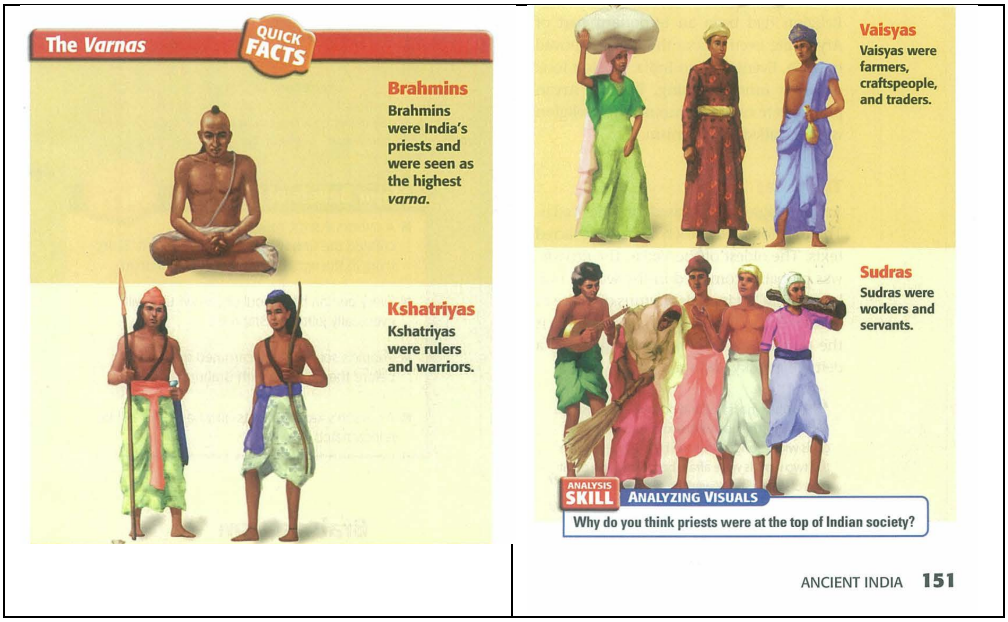

Figure 3: *Caste system as depicted in Holt*[37]

Following the Content Standards, but not of the CSBE's explicit instructions in 2006 to drop this non-historical term, the next topic is *Brahmanism* and the evolution of early Hinduism. These are listed as Main Ideas: "The Aryans practiced a religion known as Brahmanism. Hinduism developed out of Brahmanism and influences from other cultures." As with most of the other texts, Holt describes a Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu, creator, destroyer, preserver. While this idea exists in Hinduism, it is quite different from the Father-Son-Holy Ghost Trinity of Christianity. Usually it is a way to speak of God's powers, not of three separate beings.

A short description of the Vedas describes animal sacrifice and rituals "so secret that they had to be done in the forest, far from other people." The latter concept seems to be derived from the name of one minor section of the Veda, *Aranyaka*, which means "forest" and does contain special rituals, but they are not secrets.

Next is an explanation that Hinduism developed as the Vedic tradition blended "with ideas from other cultures… People from Persia and other kingdoms in Central Asia, for example, brought their ideas to India. In time, this blending of ideas created a religion called Hinduism." There is no historical evidence that Hinduism was formed with influences from outside India.[38] This theory is not found in other textbooks and is also absent from the *Framework*.

For Hindu beliefs, Holt presents brief explanations of the soul, union with Brahman, reincarnation and karma. These beliefs are all gratuitously explained in terms of caste. "People with good karma are born into a higher caste in their next lives. In time, good karma will bring salvation, or freedom from life's worries and the cycle of rebirth. This salvation is called moksha."

Holt, Glencoe, McDougal/Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt and MacMillan offer a nearly identical presentation of Hinduism. Focused on caste, it is largely so negative a narrative that the average Hindu would not recognize it.

Pearson Prentice Hall's coverage is much more extensive, running 23 pages. Pearson and McDougal/Houghton Mifflin are the only texts that use capital-G *God* when discussing the Supreme Being in Hinduism. Supplementing the standard material on Aryans, caste and basic beliefs, Pearson discusses the four goals of life, three paths to God, Hindu sects, Hinduism's spread to Southeast Asia and its modern manifestation. It is unique in presenting a map of "India of the Early Vedas," instead of an invasion map.

TCI's ten-page chapter, "Learning about Hindu Beliefs," starts out by questioning the Aryan migration theory, allotting three sentences to the topic and not mentioning it

again, as their CEO, Bert Bower, does not find the theory plausible.[39] The book deals with the caste system as required by the Standards, but in a single page, and then proceeds to relatively informed discussions of Brahman, temples, Deities, dharma, karma, reincarnation, pilgrimage, and even Hindu monks, sannyasins. It properly credits the principle of nonviolence to Hinduism, instead of Jainism as most of the books do. While not being written from an "insider" point of view, it is a better presentation than the others. Still, TCI contains errors such as, "Today, the most important Hindu deities are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva." In all of India there is only a single temple to Brahma.

Hindus who read the textbooks would be perturbed by the primacy of caste in the description of Hinduism. The word *caste* is used repeatedly. *Varna, jati, class* and *group* are used as alternative terms (Figure 4). For the most part, they are talking about what should be called *jati*, but that word is rarely used. In Holt's seven pages, these related terms are used 43 times—caste 20, varna 7, class 9 and group 7)

Text	Pages on Hinduism	Use of *caste* and related terms
Glencoe	7	30
Holt	9	43
McDougal/ Houghton Mifflin	6	22
Harcourt	4	29
Pearson-Prentice Hall	23	63
Macmillian	11	20
TCI	10	32
Average	**10**	**35.6**

Figure 4: *Number of pages devoted to Hindu religion and occurrence of the words caste, varna, jati, class and group—all in the sense of caste—for each textbook.*

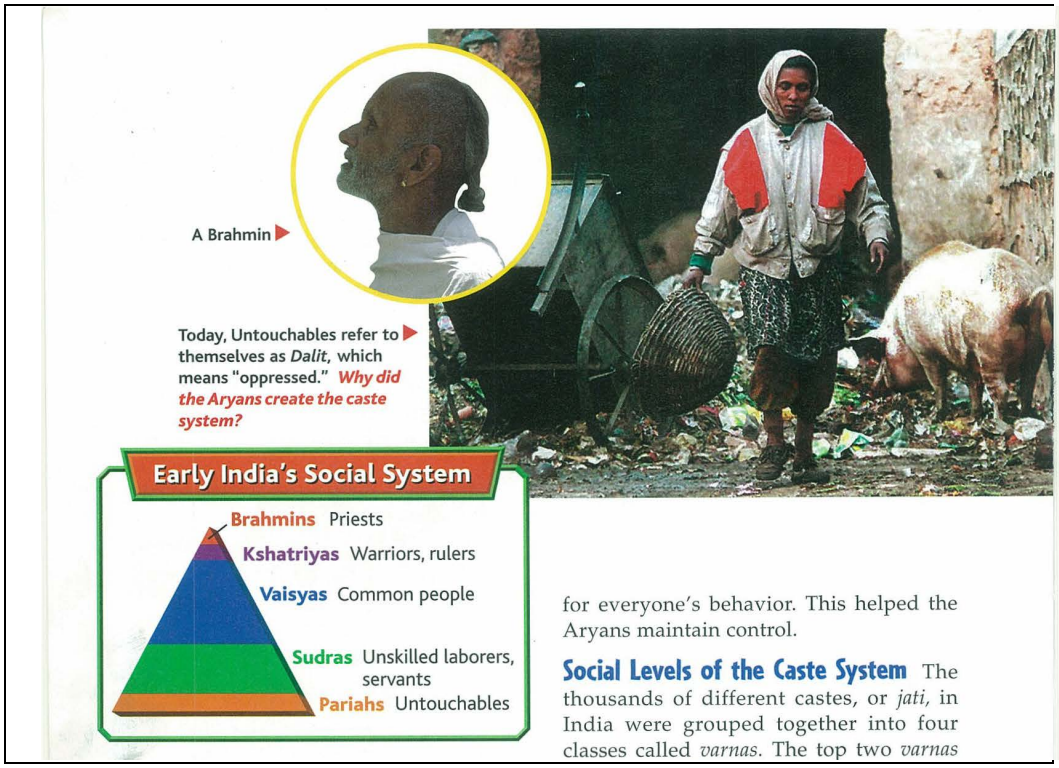

Figure 5: *Depiction of the caste system from Glencoe. Every book except TCI has a version of the colored*

pyramid chart at left. [40]

Several of the photos and illustrations in these texts are offensive, and show poor knowledge of India by the authors themselves. The most objectionable of these is from Glencoe, in Figure 5. Hindu protested its inclusion during the 2005-2006 adoption process but were overruled by the CSBE. The photo caption indicates the woman is an Untouchable and implies she is scavenging at a dump site. The photo, however, shows a lower middle-class person (as indicated by her clothes) walking away after dumping the garbage from her own household. No similar negative depiction occurs in any other book for any other religion. Other photos show toy-like statues of Deities, village scenes, people bathing in rivers, and shots of fire worship ceremonies that look strange, exotic or simply incomprehensible. Also questionable are Glencoe's and Pearson Prentice-Hall's large photos of Khajuraho temple, famed—and unique—for its erotic sculpture. Have they considered that students may look up the temple on the Internet and discover this aspect of the temple?

The distortions of Indian history and Hindu theology and practice are manifold. The obvious continuity between the Indus Valley culture and later Indian civilization is ignored. The Hindu concept of God—though that word is rarely used—is presented as a form of pantheism, ignoring the many and varied theistic traditions to which the vast majority of Hindus belong. Key aspects of Hindu theology—karma, dharma, reincarnation, moksha—are made out to support caste, which is presented as an evil system imposed by priests and without redeeming qualities. Nonviolence is ascribed to the Jains, even though it was important in Hinduism long before the Jain religion came to prominence. Ashoka, a Buddhist, is credited with religious tolerance, with no mention of the tradition of tolerance within Hindu kingdoms long before and long after him. Except for Pearson Prentice-Hall and TCI, the elements a Hindu considers central to the religion—goals of life, paths to God, teaching lineages, festivals, pilgrimages, rites of passage, temple and home worship—are ignored.

Overall, the textbook writers appear at a loss to portray a religion theologically and philosophically unfamiliar to them, which has no founder and which did not develop through a specific series of historical events, as did all the other religions under discussion. This imperfect presentation has had real-life consequences. Anecdotal evidence produced during the 2005-2006 textbook adoption process included stories of Hindu children feeling ashamed of their religion after the India section of social studies, others being taunted about their caste or laughed at about Hinduism in general. More than one child came home saying, "I don't want to be a Hindu any more." One class, with a majority of Hindu-American children, was so incensed with the material that they went into full-scale revolt—which the teacher handled by letting them devise their own course on India

8. Judaism: Presentation and Critique

The average approved textbook contains 25.1 pages of material on Judaism, a religion of 12 million people—2.5 times as many pages as for Hinduism, which numbers one billion. Holt's chapter 8, "The Hebrews and Judaism," is 20 pages long. Its first section covers Abraham, Moses, Exodus, David, Solomon, through to the Roman conquest of the Jews in 63 bce. The second section, closely tracking the Content Standards, covers the central Jewish beliefs in one God, the value of education, justice, righteousness, obedience and law, all based in the sacred texts of the Torah, the Hebrew Bible and the commentaries, such as the Talmud. The third second covers the revolts against Rome and the subsequent scattering of the Jews across the Mediterranean region. The chapter concludes with an account of the Ashkenazim and Sephardim traditions and discusses major Jewish holidays, depicted as they are practiced today.

Books that devote more pages to Judaism include additional material such as a listing of the Ten Commandments, an account of the prophets with examples of their writing, and a description of the Jewish way of life, including clothing, family living and diet. Glencoe has one-page sidebars on King David and Ruth and Naomi. Houghton Mifflin/McDougal features a four-page illustrated account of the Exodus. The 44-page account in Harcourt—nearly three times what it allots to Christianity and 11 times its Hindu section—includes abundant sidebars, such

as on the Tower of Babel and Moses, and many photos and illustrations, including the aesthetically pleasing depiction of Jewish religious artifacts in **Figure 6**.

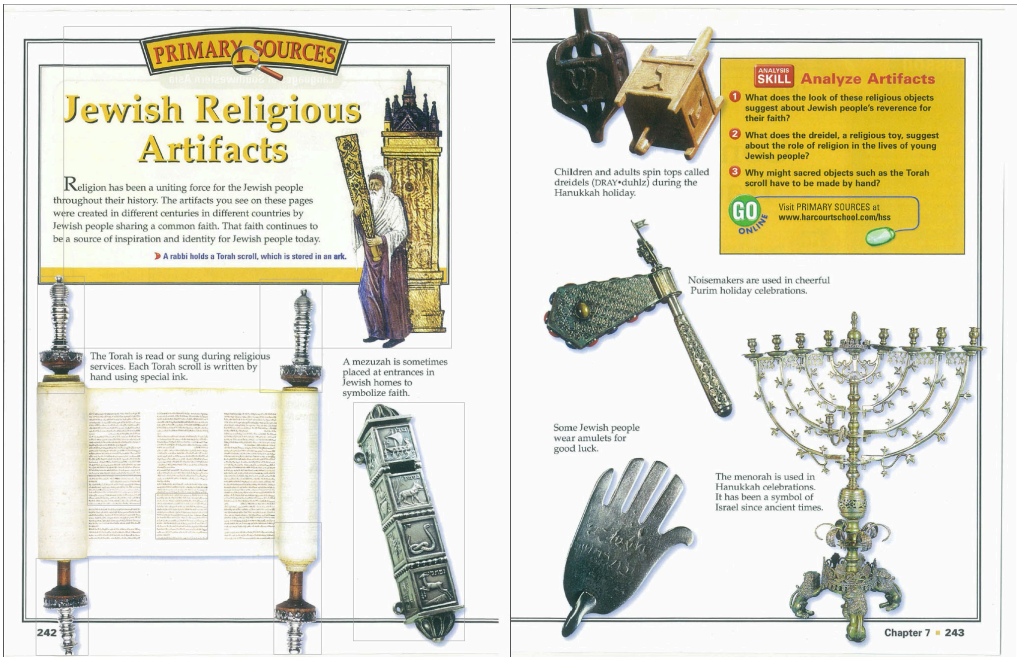

Figure 6: *Two-page spread on Jewish Religious Artifacts in Harcourt's chapter 7, "Changes for the Jewish People."*[41]

The account of Judaism in every textbook is entirely positive and completely recognizable to a Jewish person. The text is supplemented by artistic photographs and illustrations, and informative sidebar material, with nothing which would leave a negative impression.

9. Christianity: Presentation and Critique

Holt covers Christianity in 12 pages—twice the pages for Hinduism but half the space devoted to Judaism. As with Judaism, coverage tracks the *Framework*. It begins with the birth of Jesus, his time of travel and teaching, arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. It details his miracles, including, "How Jesus once fed an entire crowd with just a few loaves of bread and a few fish." It recounts his parables and message: "The way people treated others, Jesus said, showed how much they loved God." Then follows the story of the Apostles, especially Paul, and of the Gospels, with a two-page excerpt from the New Testament containing the Sermon on the Mount and the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Next is the spread of Christianity to Rome, subsequent persecution, the end to Rome's ban on Christianity by Constantine and the subsequent ban on all other religions by Theodosius I in 381 ce. As with Judaism, the illustrations and photos accompanying the text are pleasant and artistic—to be sure, for both religions, the publishers have the Renaissance masters to draw upon. Holt, Harcourt, Macmillan and TCI give similar coverage of Christianity in 10 to 12 pages.

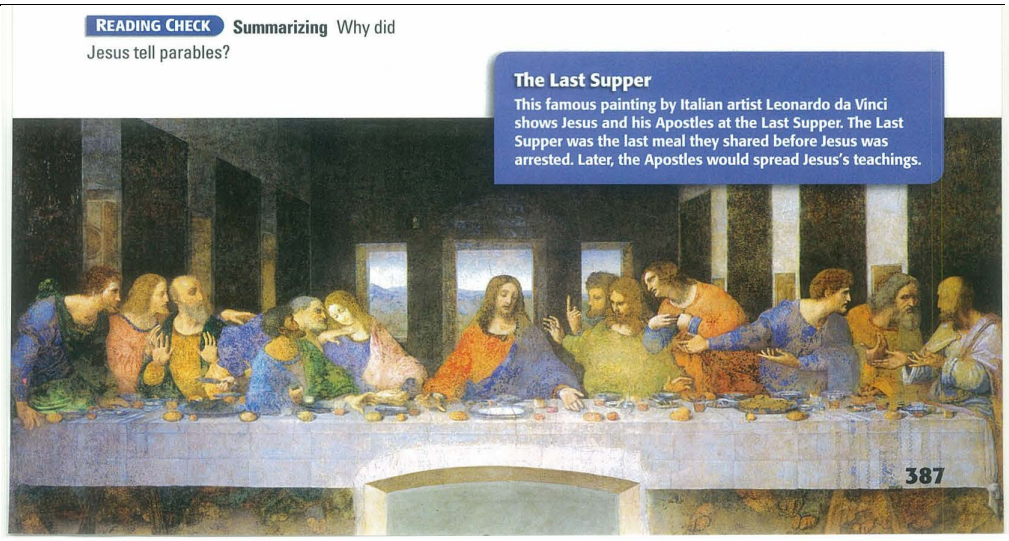

Figure 7: *The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci illustrates Holt's chapter on Christianity.*[42]

Houghton Mifflin/McDougal and Pearson Prentice-Hall run double—20 to 24 pages. They are more pious, often reminding one of a Sunday sermon. Prentice Hall, for example, states, "Jesus taught that all people are equal in the eyes of God. He preached that God was especially concerned for poor and humble people. … He said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.' " One measure of each chapter's preachiness is how often the name of Jesus is mentioned (see **Figure 8**)—nearly one hundred times a lesson on average.

Publisher	**pages**	**Jesus**	**God**
Glencoe	24	127	29
Holt	12	125	22
Houghton Mifflin/ McDougal	23	79	15
Harcourt	15	77	15
Pearson Prentice Hall	20	140	44
Macmillian	12	56	14
TCI	13	86	25
Average	**17**	**98.6**	**23.4**

Figure 8: *Table listing the number of pages dedicated to Christianity for each publisher and the number of times "God" and "Jesus" are used in those pages.*

As with Judaism, the presentation of Christianity is entirely positive, and very much in line with how a Christian would view their religion.

10. Islam: Presentation and Critique

Harcourt and Macmillan do not produce a 7th grade social studies text, so for Islam we have only five books. These vary greatly in coverage, from just 7 pages in Glencoe to 23 in TCI. Holt devotes 16 pages to Islam; this is the average for the five texts. Its section, "Origins of Islam," recounts the early life of Muhammad, his encounter with an angel and subsequent preaching in 613 ce. It explains that he taught a belief in one God, and that the people should stop worshiping the popular gods and goddesses of the time. It describes the spread of Muhammad's teachings across the Arabian peninsula. The next section describes the Qur'an and its central teaching of one God, Allah, its guidelines for behavior and the concept of jihad. The five pillars of Islam are explained, along with Shariah or Islamic law. The section concludes with a two-page excerpt from the Qur'an. The third section, "The Spread of Islam," describes

the expansion of the Muslim empires west across Africa, north to the Caucasus mountains and east to India. The chapters are beautifully illustrated (Figure 9).

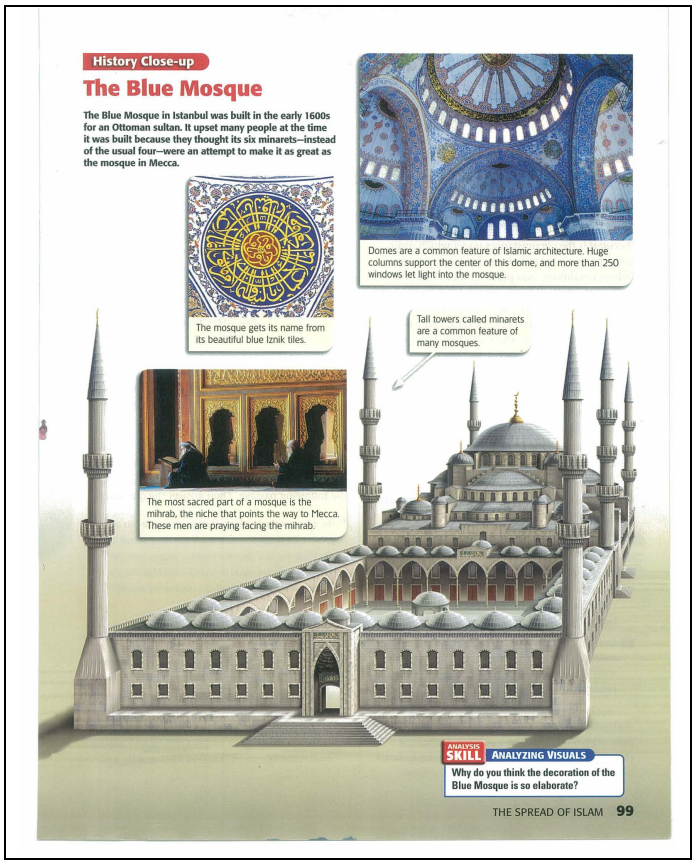

Figure 9: *Illustration of the Blue Mosque in Holt, grade 7.*[43]

While Hinduism had little interaction with Christianity and Judaism in ancient or medieval times, it experienced waves of invasion, conquest and forced conversion by Muslim armies from the 10th century onward. All Holt says about India is this: "Merchants introduced Islam into India," making no mention of military conquest—though conquest is part of Content Standard 7.2.5. As to conversion, Holt states, "Muslims generally practiced religious tolerance, or acceptance, with regard to people they conquered." For India, they present the example of the atypical and anachronistic Mogul Emperor Akbar (1556-1605), who was indeed tolerant. But, he came centuries after the beginning of Muslim rule. Holt does offer this: "In the later 1600s a new emperor [Akbar's great-grandson] changed the tolerant religious policies Akbar had established …. destroyed Hindu temples throughout India … persecuted non-Muslims." Glencoe alone gives a slight sense of the impact of just one of the Muslim invasions of India: "The Moguls used guns, cannons, elephants and horses to conquer territory. After Akbar, … rulers tried to force the Hindus to convert to Islam and banned the building of Hindu temples."

McDougal makes no mention of Muslim conquests in India. Pearson Prentice Hall makes two statements: "Arab armies moved into Afghanistan and India" and "Muslim Mongols also invaded India and converted many Hindus to Islam." TCI makes three: "The Umayyad caliphs sent armies into … northwestern India," "[Timur] invaded India…." and "In 1526 Babur invaded India and founded the Mughal Empire…. Mughal emperors ruled most of India until sometime after 1700."

On the issue of slavery, which was practiced throughout the Muslim world, Holt makes this statement: "In addition to trade with Asia, African trade was important to Muslim merchants. They wanted African products such as ivory, cloves, and slaves." Glencoe makes a similar casual statement in regard to slavery and Muslim merchants: "On their return, they brought rubies, silk, ivory, gold, and slaves." TCI mentions slavery in passing; McDougal Hough-

ton/Mifflin makes no mention. Pearson alone critiques the topic: "Despite the emphasis on equality, social classes did exist in the Islamic world. In the early days of the caliphate, Islamic society was divided into four main classes. At the top were the Arabs. Next came the non-Arabs who had converted to Islam. The third class was made up of Jews and Christians, who were respected as 'People of the Book.' At the bottom were slaves. Slavery was an important institution in the Islamic world. Slaves were non-Muslims who were captured in war or born to slave parents."

At issue for Hindus is the misrepresentation of the Muslim conquest and rule in India. The initial military attacks, extending over centuries and resulting in tens of millions of deaths and the destruction of famed temples such as Somnath, find little mention.[44] In comparison, the same textbooks chronicle in some depth the death and destruction associated with the Crusades. Rudolph Rummel, late professor of political science at the University of Hawaii, estimated the death toll from the Crusades at one million.[45] The sections on Islam might be acceptable if there were another place in the 7th grade text that discussed India, but there is not, even though India saw immense developments in religion, arts and science during the very time period.

Again, as with Judaism and Christianity, the presentation of Islam is—with minor exceptions—entirely positive and recognizable to a follow of the faith.

11. Summary

The intent of this paper has been to explore the treatment of Hinduism in California 6th grade social studies classes in comparison with the treatment of other religions. The formal guidelines for teaching religion are contained in the California State Board of Education's *Framework* and related guides. A detailed examination of the *Framework* and the resulting textbooks show that Hinduism is: 1) given less attention than the Abrahamic religions; 2) reduced to a discussion of caste and Aryan invasion/migration at the expense of a substantive description of the religion; 3) not presented consistently with the Social Content Standards' mandatory prohibition on "adverse reflection," nor in a manner to enable Hindu students "to remain secure in any religious belief they may already have." Bradley Fogo's 2010 dissertation explains that the *Framework* and Content Standards were developed in a politicized process, lacking in adequate expert participation and accommodating the concerns of some religious groups while ignoring others. A 1986 analysis by Sebastian Murken of the treatment of Hinduism in German textbooks found similar lapses as in the California *Framework.* During the 2005-2006 textbook review process nearly all the edits requested by the Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups were granted; those requested by Hindus were challenged, amid baseless accusations of "Hindu fundamentalism." Two lawsuits which arose from the review process failed to overturn the approval process, though in our opinion the judgments in both cases, affirmed that Hinduism was subject to adverse reflection.

The *Framework* and the resulting textbooks take the Orientalist view of Indian and Hindu history developed in the 19th century with the underlying motivation to facilitate the conversion of India to Christianity. In this view, largely informed by the Protestant view of Catholicism, invading Aryans and their priests imposed a caste system upon the native Indian population. The *Framework* directs the curricula to include the "social structures" of societies and religions, but in practice this mandate is only applied to the practice of slavery under Egypt, Greece and Rome and caste under Hinduism —and not to slavery under Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

In the approved textbooks for 6th and 7th grade, the relatively short sections on Hinduism focus on the Aryan Invasion/Migration and caste. Hindu doctrines of karma, dharma, reincarnation and moksha are all explained in terms of caste. Only Pearson Prentice Hall and TCI provide a more comprehensive, though still inadequate, view of Hinduism. In contrast, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are accorded a lengthy positive presentation of their history, beliefs and practices which are in accord with the views of each religion. As stark visual demonstration of this bias, compare the chapter openings shown in Figure 9: India is about social inequality; the Hebrews about their positive impact on Western civilization.

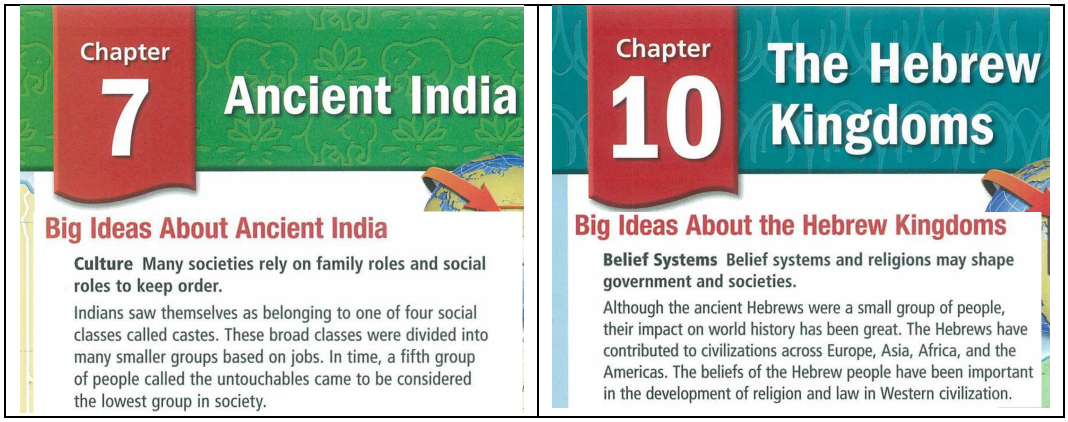

Figure 10: *Chapter openings from Houghton Mifflin/McDougal Littell for Ancient India.* [46]

12. Recommendations

The authors have given considerable time and effort to the issue of how to present Hinduism for middle school. The reader is encouraged to consult their book, *The History of Hindu India,* and a documentary based on the book,[47] for a complete 6th-grade presentation of Hinduism and the history of India in a manner that is both academically sound and acceptable to the Hindu community.

A proper and equitable presentation of Hinduism for sixth grade, in our opinion, should include most of the following elements:

1. The origins and significance of Hinduism as a religion of respect and tolerance based on the concept that "Truth is one, paths are many."
2. Discussion of Hinduism's profound spirituality, including yoga and a philosophy that encompasses both the immanence and transcendence of God.
3. The Hindu belief in an Absolute Supreme Being, Brahman, who in action becomes both God and Goddess, and the multiple Deities with various names and forms.
4. The beliefs, ethics and practices of Hinduism in its varied manifestations, including belief in the identity of the soul (atman) with Brahman, home and temple worship, festivals, pilgrimage, dharma, karma, reincarnation, nonviolence, rites of passage, stages of life and respect for the guru and the many different paths to God.
5. The central Hindu scriptures, including the *Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and Agamas*.
6. The significance of key Divinities (e.g., Shiva, Krishna, Durga), prominent saints (e.g. Vyasa and Tiruvalluvar), and sacred places (e.g., Prayag, Haridwar, Mathura, Varanasi and Rameswaram) in the development of the Hindu tradition.
7. The cultural similarity between Indus-Saraswati civilization and Hindu culture, and the importance of Sanskrit within Hinduism and its relationship to the larger family of Indo-European languages.
8. The aspects of social organization and Hindu religion which have allowed the Indian culture to survive since ancient times, including the acceptance of a wide range of social and religious customs (both patriarchal and matriarchal), beliefs and practices.
9. The spread of Hinduism outside of India in ancient and modern times.

Specifically for California, we recommend that Content Standard 6.5 be revised as follows:

> 6.5 Students analyze the geographical, political, economic, religious and social structures of the early civilizations of India.
>
> 1. Locate and describe on the Indian subcontinent the origins of the early Mehgarh and Bhirrana[48] culture and the later Harappan Civilization in the Indus and Saraswati regions of northwest India (including trade with Mesopotamia and Egypt) and discuss the subsequent development of the Ganga River culture.

2. Understand the significance of the Sanskrit language in India, the composition of the Vedas, the evidence of cultural continuity from the Harappan Civilization into Vedic times, and the Vedic religion, Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism), with its central religious teachings including the key principle of tolerance that "Truth is one, paths are many."
3. Explain the Hindu belief in an Absolute Supreme Being, Brahman, both immanent within all things and transcendent beyond them, who in action becomes both God and Goddess, and the multiple Deities with various names and forms, both male and female.
4. Outline the beliefs, ethics and practices of Hinduism in its varied manifestations, including belief in the identity of the soul (atman) with Brahman, home and temple worship, festivals, pilgrimage, dharma, karma, reincarnation, nonviolence, rites of passage, stages of life and respect for the guru and the many different paths to God.
5. Identify key Divinities, eg. Shiva, Krishna, Durga; prominent saints of north and south India, eg. Vyasa and Tiruvalluvar; central scriptures including *Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and Agamas;* and the spiritual practices of yoga and meditation.
6. Describe the political and socio-economic growth of the Maurya and Gupta empires including their influence outside of India, the complex social structure of the Indian culture which has allowed the inclusion of a wide range of social and religious customs as well as foreign communities over time, and important discoveries in medicine, metallurgy and mathematics, including the zero and the base-ten numerical system with positional notation.
7. Know the life and moral teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism and its spread in India and Asia, also the life and moral teachings of the Jain master teacher Mahavira and how Jainism spread to most of India.

For a descriptive narrative of the basics of Hinduism, we recommend the following:

> By 600 BCE the social, religious, and philosophical ideas and practices central to early Hinduism are fully evident and in continuity with the Harappan culture and the teachings and ceremonial worship of the Vedas. Nineteenth-century historians spoke of a priest-dominated religion at this time called Brahmanism, but this concept has been discarded. In addition to the early Vedic and Upanishadic texts, Hindu scriptures taking their present form at this time include later Upanishads, the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and Agamas. Brahman, the Supreme God, is defined in scripture as immanent (present throughout the world) and transcendent (beyond it as well). In action, Brahman creates, preserves and dissolves the universe over vast periods of time. Brahman also becomes the various Deities with multiple names and forms who are worshipped as distinct personal Gods or Goddesses, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Sarasvati, Durga, etc. Key Hindu beliefs evident at this time include the identity of the soul (atman) with Brahman, dharma (including ethics, law and justice), karma, reincarnation, and liberation from rebirth. Central practices include home and temple worship, yoga and meditation, rites of passage (samskaras), festivals, pilgrimage, respect for saints and gurus, and, above all, a profound acceptance of religious diversity exemplified by the Vedic statement, "Truth is one, paths are many."

The proposed recommendations are in line with the best recent scholarship of teaching India at grade school level.

13. Conclusion

The core problem is both curricular and pedagogical. The treatment of caste in California schools is a case study in essentialism, the reduction of a complex historical narrative to a single, supposedly defining aspect—in this case, a product of the British colonial view of India as explained in Nicholas B. Dirks' book. Neither the Standards nor the Narrative offers specifics

to address the multifaceted Hindu understanding of God, Gods and worship. Each leaves those details to the textbook writers to address or not. Without any guideline for discussing caste, this one topic dominates the texts, distorts the presentation of Hindu philosophy and leaves no room for any substantive description of the religion.

Murken understood how perplexing Hindu theology was to the writers of the German textbooks. He felt they expected something like a Western religion: a one God, a founder, a holy book, a place where people go to worship every week, a relatively clear theology and history. With Hinduism they got none of this, and they struggled to summarize what little they knew. We see the same difficulties in the California textbooks which do not present this living faith in a historically accurate manner.

Representatives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam were allowed to actively participate in the development of the Content Standards for their faiths; other religions were left to the mercy of outsiders and a politicized process which lacked any empathic scholarly and/or community input. The result is that "the Hindu religion" described in most of California's approved textbooks is unrecognizable to a practicing adult Hindu and degrading and demeaning to the Hindu child who encounters this teaching in school.

Footnotes

[1] *History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, 2001 Updated Edition
[2] *Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content*, 2000, California State Board of Education <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/socialcontent.pdf >
[3] During which our senior author (Bajpai) was retained by the CSBE as a Content Panel Expert.
[4] *California Constitution*, Article 9, Education, Section 8, <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/.const/.article_9>
[5] *Framework*, pp. 180-191
[6] *Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content*, <www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/socialcontent.pdf>
[7] A similar analysis of the Content Standards by the Hindu American Foundation can be found at <http://hafsite.org/sites/default/files/HAF%20Submission.April%201.2009.pdf>
[8] for example, *Chandogya Upanishad* 8.15.1
[9] Bradley Fogo, *The Making Of California's Framework, Standards, And Tests, 2010, For History-Social Science* < (https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:mg814cd9837/Fogo-Dissertation-augmented.pdf)>
[10] *National Standards in World History*, 1996, National Center for History in the School, UCL, http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/history-standards/world-history-content-standards/world-history-era-3#section-3
[11] p. 16, *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*, F. Michael Connelly, editor, SAGE Publications, Inc, 2008
[12] Sabastian Murken, *Gandhi und die Kuh, Die Darstellung des Hinduismus in deutschen Religionsbüchern. Eine kritische Analysem* Diagonal Verlag, Marburg, 1988.
[13] During the 2005-2006 review process by the CSBE, the task of our senior author, Dr. Bajpai, was to evaluate the edits requested by two Hindu groups, the Vedic Foundation and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh. See *Hinduism Today* magazine, April/May/June, 2006, "Outcome Unknown on California Texts," p. 63, <http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=1487>
[14] Nor, for that matter, was the Content Review Specialist, Dr. Bajpai, ever informed by the CSBE of these rules, even though hired by them to evaluate the edits.
[15] Dilip K. Chakrabarti*, The Battle For Ancient India, An Essay in the Sociopolitics of Indian Archaeology*, Aryan Books International, 2008
[16] Hindu American Foundation, et al., v. California State Board Of Education, et al., Case No. 06 CS 00386: <http://web.archive.org/web/20061018163334/http://www.saccourt.com/courtrooms/trulings/dept19/sep1d19--06cs00386.doc>
[17] United States District Court, Eastern District Of California, Parents For The Equalization Of Educational Materials, Plaintiff, No. Civ. S-06-532 Fcd Kjm V. Kenneth Noonan, Et Al., Defendants. Case 2:06-Cv-00532-Fcd-Kjm Document 212 Filed 02/26/2009, <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/CAPEEEM-FedCourtRuling-Feb25-30676520.pdf>
[18] As summarized by Merry M. Merryfield in "Moving the Center of Global Education," *Critical Issues in Social Studies Research for the 21st Century*. Greenwich, CN: Information Age Publishing.
[19] Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science, a History of German Indology*, Oxford University Press, 2014
[20] Letter to his wife Georgina, published in *The Life and Letters of Right Honorable Friedrich Max Müller* (1902), edited by Georgina Müller
[21] Lecture at Westminster Abbey (1873); as quoted in *Hinduism: A Religion to Live By* (1997) by Nirad C. Chaudhari
[22] Letter to the Duke of Argyll, op cit
[23] "Oxford," *The Observer*, November, 1827, p. 2.

[24] See Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science, A History of German Indology*, Oxford University Press, 2014, where this is discussed at length. For example, the authors state on p. 110 of the early German Indologist, Adolf Holtzman, that he was "obsessed with drawing a parallel between Brahmanism and Catholicism."
[25] *Final Minutes*, State Board of Education, March 8, 2006, p. 12, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/mt/ms/documents/finalmins030806.doc>
[26] Bajpai, Michael Witzel of Harvard, James Heitzman of UC Davis and Stanley Wolpert of UCLA
[27] Edwin Bryant, "The Debate on Indo-Aryan Origins: Malleability and Circularity," pp. 247-264, in *Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilization, New Perspectives*, Nalanda International, DK Printworld, 2014
[28] Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*, American Institute of Pakistan Studies, Oxford University Press 1998, p. 174.
[29] Hutton, J.H. *Caste in India*, fourth edition, 1963, Oxford University Press, SBN 195600568
[30] Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind, Colonialism and the Making of Modern India,* Princeton University Press, 2001, pp 3, 5
[31] Slavery in America is dealt with at length in the 8th grade, but with no mention of religion.
[32] Won-Pyo Hong, "Reading School Textbooks as a Cultural and Political Text, Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, Vo. 25, #1, 2009
[33] The Oxford University series, *The World in Ancient Times*, was not included as it a series of supplementary textbooks.
[34] Following is a complete list of the approved textbooks:

1. Glencoe/Mcgraw-Hill, Spielvogel and others, *Discovering Our Past: Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 6, ISBN# 78688744, 2006
2. Glencoe/Mcgraw-Hill, Spielvogel and others, *Discovering Our Past: Medieval and Early Modern Times*, Grade 7, ISBN# 78688760, 2006
3. Holt McDougal, Division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (formerly Holt, Rinehart, Winston), Richard Shek and Stanley Burstein, *World History, Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 6, ISBN# 30734592, 2006
4. Holt McDougal, Division Of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (formerly McDougal Littell), Garcia, and others, *World History: Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 6, ISBN# 618531246, 2006
5. Holt McDougal, Division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (formerly McDougal Littell), Garcia, and others, *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times*, Grade 7, ISBN# 618532943, 2006
6. Holt McDougal, Division Of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (formerly Holt, Rinehart, Winston), Richard Shek and Stanley Burstein, *World History, Medieval to Early Modern Times*, Grade 7, ISBN# 30733995, 2006
7. Houghton Mifflin Company, Drs. H. Viola and C. Cortés, and others, *World History: Ancient Civilizations*, Level 6, ISBN# 061842394X, 2007
8. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt School Publishers, Dr. Priscilla H. Porter and others, *Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 6, ISBN# 153385049, 2007
9. Macmillan/Mcgraw-Hill Sch. Division, Banks, and others, California Vistas, *Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 6, ISBN# 21505144, 2007
10. Pearson Prentice Hall, Hart, Davidson, and others, *Ancient Civilizations*, Grade 6, ISBN# 131817469, 2006
11. Pearson Prentice Hall, Hart, Davidson, and others, *Medieval and Early Modern Times*, Grade 7, ISBN# 131817477, 2006
12. Teachers Curriculum Institute, Bert Bower and Jim Lobdell, *History Alive! The Ancient World*, Grade 6, ISBN# 1583713514, 2004
13. Teachers Curriculum Institute, Bert Bower and Jim Lobdell, *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*, Grade 7, ISBN# 158371376X, 2005

[35] Holt, 6th grade, parts of Chapter 6, pp 140-177
[36] Holt, 6th grade, p. 149
[37] Holt, 6th grade, p. 151
[38] Unless one considers the "invading" Aryans themselves the "outside" influence, but that doesn't seem to be what Holt is talking about
[39] Personal communication with Bert Bower, August 13, 2014
[40] Glencoe, p. 244
[41] Harcourt, 6th grade, pp. 242-243

[42] Holt, 6th grade, p. 387
[43] Holt, 7th grade, p. 99
[44] See, for example, K.S. Lal's estimate of 60 to 100 million between 1000 and 1524, in *Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India (1000-1800)*, 1973, Research Publications in Social Sciences, Delhi.
[45] Rudolph Rummel, *Statistics of Democide*, table 3.1, <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/SOD.CHAP2.HTM>
[46] Houghton Mifflin (same as McDougal Little), chapter 7, Ancient India, p. 214; chapter 10, The Hebrew Kingdoms, p. 320
[47] Both the epub of the book and the movie can be found here: <http://www.himalayanacademy.com/readlearn/hindu-history>
[48] This recently excavated site is in the heart of the Harappan area and goes back to the 6th–7th millennium bce