



Hindu University of America

A Unique Dimension of Hindu Thought and Traditions

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Sub: CA text Books and Hinduism related information for the K-grade students

I Dr.B.V.Venkatakrisna Sastry, Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Hindu University of America, Orlando, Florida, submit the following.

The debates about the educational material used for Hinduism instruction in the CA text books was brought to my awareness through web forums and many academic scholars dealing with this issue. I have gone through the following records accessible over web.

Documents referred:

- a. CA text books –Hinduism section matters as proposed.
- b. The secondary links from the proposed text books which take the student to a number of web sources.
- c. The web petition supposedly initiated and signed by Prof. Micahel Witzel, Steve Farmer and team, mustering signatures as a show of strength.
- d. The related floating arguments on both sides of the team.
- e. Response of the CA board for the Jewish community response.

Based on this, I am desirous of placing my observations on the following points as below on select portions of the Hinduism related information in the text books which is inaccurate and to say the least, offensive.

These are the issues related to:

- **Historicity of the Vedic traditions (represented through Aryan Invasion theory)**
- **Classical Hindu societal structure (represented through Caste related issues)**
- **Devotion and worship (represented through the historicity of Gods/goddesses).**
- **Introduction to the sacred literature of Hinduism from a profane perspective**
- **Absence of the integrating, secular religious views and dominance of fissiparous views amongst religions**

The point wise observation is placed below.

HISTORY

(Historicity of the Vedic traditions (represented through Aryan Invasion theory)

1. What is in the reference? The beginning of Hinduism is marked for 3000 BCE in the chronology of religions. The invasion of Aryans to India is marked for 1500 BCE. Hinduism grew out of the ancient belief of Aryans.

Why this is inaccurate? Aryan Invasion theory (AIT), was one of the interpretations presented about the history of Hinduism some time in the past in the post colonial period. The current studies by the scholars and academicians- both in east and west, based on more textual, linguistic, comparative studies, archaeological, anthropological evidences have shown clear clinkers and pitfalls of the Aryan Invasion theory. Recognizing this fact, the writings, research findings and interpretations based on the grounds of Aryan Invasion theory for the reference become clearly flawed.

In the current situation, the AIT theory has been placed on hold due to this shortcoming. Till further evidences and concurrences emerge in the academia on this subject, it would be safe to defer any introduction of Aryan Invasion theory and related interpretational views about Hinduism in the introductory classes. That calls for a careful scrutiny of the web links/resources provided which may lead to and are built up on the AIT theory. This calls for a clear review from the CA text books review committee.

If the argument is Hinduism is originating from the Vedic traditions at 3000 BCE or earlier in India, and it needs to be associated with Aryan invasion at 1500 BCE, there appears to be an anachronism. Based on this position in the text, either one has to say Aryans brought Hinduism/Vedas to India at 1500 BCE (which means Vedic tradition is Not the source of Hinduism; and this is not factual) OR Hinduism existed in India along with the Vedas prior to Aryan invasion in 1500 BCE.

2. SOCIETAL STRUCTURE

(Classical Hindu societal structure (represented through Caste related issues)

What is in the reference? The text speaks of *Varna, caste, jati* and societal structure in interchangeable way. And makes a statement that majority of Indian society was shudras.

Why this is inaccurate? The technical terms of *Varna, jati* are NOT concurrent with the understanding of caste and social order in the modern studies. The words *Varna, jati* have technical religious meanings and are do not fit the generic translation presented here.

3. GODS , SACRED LITERATURE

Devotion and worship (represented through the historicity of Gods/goddesses)

What is in the reference? Aryans brought a new language called Sanskrit; they had no written language; Every being has a soul that wants to unite with Bramhan and that this happens when a person dies;

Why this is inaccurate? This statement about the Sanskrit language which is the sacred and scriptural language of Hindus is inaccurate.

The language of the Vedas, which existed in India prior to supposed Aryan Invasion has been proven to be Sanskrit. How can an invading tribe bring a language that was already there in the land as a native tradition ?

Hinduism presents a long cycle of births and deaths before the final salvation. The text is clearly confused between the ‘death’ and ‘salvation’ concepts in Hindu traditions. The statement in the text misrepresents the vital concept of Hinduism explaining the ‘cycle of lifes’ and ‘salvation’.

The description of Gods in ‘Major Hindu gods and goddesses’ section does not match with the links provided about the Vedic Gods in an earlier section. The pictures of many vedic gods provided are not accurate-either religiously or culturally.

4. Introduction to the sacred literature of Hinduism from a profane perspective

What is in the reference? Vedas are introduced as ‘composed poetry and literature; Bhagavadgita is presented as a dance-song literature.

Why this is inaccurate? Vedas are considered as a sacred revelation without any human voluntary intervention. The human intervention is to the extent of being the ‘recipient’ of the divine words in a state of transcendental state of consciousness. Bhagavadgita was generally a treatise of serious deliberation and not a piece of entertainment.

4.GENDER DISPARITY,CUSTOMS,VALUES

(Absence of the integrating, secular religious views and dominance of fissiparous views amongst religions)

What is in the reference? There are explanations mentioning that the lives of men were more important than the women and the reference goes to the ‘suttee’ practice. Indian society favored men over women.

Why this is inaccurate? The study of Hindu traditions shows very clearly that this is a misrepresentation. The Hindu society has highest respect for the women in the family; Women are regarded as the ‘representation of the Supreme’. The lives of men are placed at stake to protect the honor of women, as history of many Hindu communities would show. Picking up an outdated minor hindu practice, that was limited to a locale and a historic period to draw outlandish conclusion and sweeping remarks as above is an inaccurate representation of the Hindu tradition.

I request you to kindly take these points in to consideration and initiate the necessary review-corrective actions in the interest of providing proper introduction of Hinduism, which is the oldest religion of the humanity.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Regards

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