



HICAD Promoting Diversity, Pluralism and Tolerance

August 31, 2005

State Board of Education Members
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Education Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of HICAD to urge you to not adopt the current slate of social studies textbooks for the Public Schools grades K-8 in the state of California until they are corrected according to the comments provided here and by so many other Hindu American parents, educationists and concerned citizens.

The proposed textbooks, to some degree, present a distorted history of India concocted by the colonial British rule more than a century ago to serve their purpose in ruling India. They leave out the essential and positive aspects of Indian history, culture and traditions and dwell on the superfluous and peripheral material in order to depict India and Hinduism in a negative manner. India is now a free and democratic nation with a vibrant economy that is fast emerging as a global power and valued as a strategic partner by US in spreading freedom and democracy in the world. It is, therefore, imperative that our K-8 textbooks are updated to (1) present India's history, culture and traditions in a balanced and unbiased manner and (2) present the Hindu faith from the perspective of practitioners of the faith, just as all other faith traditions are presented from their practitioners' perspectives. Two million Hindu Americans are now citizens, or permanent residents of USA. They are parents; their children attend public schools. Schools have a responsibility to pay attention to their perspectives.

HICAD is committed to working toward the elimination of bias and misinformation about India and Indic traditions (including Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism) especially through schools, colleges, universities and other educational portals such as museums and art galleries because their misinformation generates a ripple effect that tends to engender bias against Hindus and Indic traditions in the society at large.

When young children are taught distorted versions of Indian history, culture and traditions by their teachers and textbooks in schools, it demoralizes them. As a result of negative stereotyping in schools (and in the media) many Indian students feel embarrassed and ashamed; they feel alienated from their religion and heritage. To understand the seriousness of this problem, read an essay at www.hicad.us/Essay by Trisha Pasricha.htm written by a 14-year old school girl from Houston, TX, about her experience in social studies classes. Some of them develop resentment against Hinduism and Hindus, including their own parents and relatives. Some feel forced to convert to Christianity to escape harassment.

Eliminating misinformation based on prejudices of the past generations from school textbooks is essential in order to eradicate bias from the society and create a society that allows all its citizens, including students, to enjoy and grow in true freedom and liberty.

Yours sincerely,

VedPChaudhary

Ved P. Chaudhary, Ph.D.

Copy to: Janeshwari Devi, Vedic Research Foundation

Dr. Piyush Agrawal, Educators' Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)

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Hindu International Council against Defamation - A Non-Profit 501(C)(3) Civil Rights Organization
22 Jackie Drive, Marlboro, NJ 07746 FAX 309-417-5503 email: ved@HICAD.us website: www.HICAD.us
Dedicated to Removing Bias Against Indic Traditions and Promoting Diversity, Pluralism and Tolerance

About the Author
Ved P. Chaudhary, Ph.D.

Dr. Chaudhary served as an **Assistant Professor** at Puntnagar University in India and as a **Vice-Principal** in a Community Development Center (Community College) in India before coming to USA.

Inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., he got involved in the civil rights work in 1987 when a group of misguided youth who called themselves “Dot-busters” started harassing Hindu men and women because they wear a “dot” on their forehead as a mark of Hindu culture and tradition. This youth gang started in Jersey City and spread in the nearby towns. This menace was halted, and a Hate Crimes bill was passed, by the active participation of many Hindu community leaders with various civil rights groups and ethnic groups in New Jersey. Currently, Ved serves as the **vice-chair** of the *NJ Advisory committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights*.

Dr. Chaudhary has also served on the *Governor's Ethnic Advisory Council* in New Jersey and as a charter member of the *Rutgers University Board of Trustees*.

Realizing that textbooks used in primary schools, middle schools and high schools in New Jersey -and other states in USA - are biased and incorrect with regard to India and Hinduism, and to remove institutional bias, Ved started working with the *Anti-Defamation League (ADL)* and later founded *Hindu Int'l Council Against Defamation (HICAD)*. He also served on the board of *A World of Difference Institute* of ADL to help promote *teaching of tolerance in schools*, colleges and government organizations.

Dr. Chaudhary has been affiliated with *Ved Mandir* (a Hindu Temple) in East Brunswick, N.J. since 1984 when he started a Sunday school to teach Indian culture and traditions to children from Hindu, Jain, and Sikh families in central New Jersey. Currently, as a director of the *World Hindi Foundation* he conducts, with the help of ten teachers, a Principal, and a Yoga teacher, a large scale program to teach Hindi language and Indian culture at Defino Central School in Marlboro, N.J.

Dr. Chaudhary took an early retirement to devote his time to removing bias and improving education about India and Hinduism. He gives talks and seminars on India and Hinduism to middle school, High School, college students and teachers and represents Hindu community in interfaith activities. Currently, he serves on the Board of *Monmouth Center for World Religions and Ethical Thought* to promote interfaith understanding.