



March 3, 2006
State Board of Education

Dear Board Members:

In response to the requirements specified in your announcement dated Monday, February 20, 2006 for the February 27th meeting, Hindu Education Foundation (HEF) and Vedic Foundation (VF) sent a joint response that included:

1. A proposal to provide consistent and accurate changes for the 6th grade textbooks.
2. A request that an independent committee of Hindu scholars be appointed to address the changes proposed by VF and HEF.
3. A request to consider the pending lists of edits proposed by VF and HEF for which no action has yet been taken.
4. A list of changes that publisher Oxford University Press had agreed separately to Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation.

During the meeting on February 27th about hundred parents, organization representatives, and youth supporting VF and HEF had come to Sacramento from all over California. Unfortunately the majority of them did not get a chance to speak on that day. But many had consistently appealed to you, recommending all of our proposed changes.

HEF notes with extreme disappointment the abrupt way in which the sub-committee, following the public presentations, decided to forward the CDE/SBE recommendations without any deliberation. This certainly gave the impression that the sub-committee members had already made up their minds how they would vote before hearing any of the testimony.

HEF is concerned about the sub-committee's recommendations for following reasons:

1. **Unjustified rejections:** We are disappointed to note that several of our edits have been rejected by CDE/SBE without any explanation to us. In contrast, all of Islamic edits have been accepted, and practically all of the Jewish edits have been accepted although they are not necessarily of a better quality or more correct than ours. Many of the changes not accepted leave a distorted view of the basic tenets of Hinduism and leave a negative feeling about India and Hinduism in the textbooks.
2. **Contradictions:** We do want to point out however that in almost 10 of these rejected HEF edits, SBE/CDE has offered contradictory recommendations for concurring edits. We feel that at least these 7 edits can be resolved if CDE/SBE

looks at their own recommendations made on similar or concurrent edits. We have attached a table (**Appendix 1**) for your quick reference that will assist you in resolving these edits.

3. **Political Correctness vs. Historical Accuracy:** We are aware of considerable controversy over our edit 86 (Prentice Hall) dealing with the word 'Dalit'. We wish to reiterate that it is SBE/CDE who will have to decide if they want to compromise historical accuracy at the cost of political correctness and expediency. **Appendix II** gives academic reasons for our edit, which recommended a removal of this word.

We request the SBE to give a fair treatment to Hindus by implementing following suggestions:

1. **Concurring / conforming changes to the pending edits:** We have about two dozen pending edits that were submitted to CDE within the required deadlines. We feel that these need to be addressed, and can be addressed because practically all of them are concurring edits. We also request you to address the pending list of Vedic Foundation edits.
2. **Independent committee of Hindu scholars:** We are calling for an independent panel of scholars from within U.S. academia who are Hindu and who specialize in the topics covered in the textbooks to review our pending lists
3. **Inclusion of OUP changes in the list:** Once rejected program from Oxford University Press, was re-inducted only after their acceptance of issues of Jewish and Hindu communities. The officials of the publisher met HEF office bearers twice and accepted our extended edits (in appendix III). HEF and the publisher had informed those changes to Dr. Tom Adams, director, Curriculum Commission. We request you to add the promised changes in your list of recommendations.
4. **Aryan Invasion/migration Theory:** Though it is widely accepted that the theory is disproved or at least scholarly disputed, the books rely on the theory and its implications on social structure and religion. Due to this, many statements in all the textbooks are incorrect or at the least misleading. Hence we would request you to instruct the publishers to specifically mention that the theory is disputed and to provide the explanation of an alternative theory consisting of at least one paragraph.
5. **Women's role:** The textbooks, unfortunately, do not cover the important roles like scholar, sage-seer, saint, warrior, mother, administrator, artist, and poet played by Hindu women during the period of time covered in the textbooks. Compared to other religions at that time of history, Hindu women's enjoyed much better rights than other civilizations.

Will Durant (1885-1981) American historian says: "Women enjoyed far greater freedom in the Vedic period than in later India. She had more to say in the choice of her mate than the forms of marriage might suggest. She appeared freely at feasts and dances, and joined with men in religious sacrifice. She could study, and like Gargi, engage in philosophical

disputation. If she was left a widow there were no restrictions upon her remarriage."

Sir Monier Monier-Williams (1860-1888) Indologist and head of the Oxford's Boden Chair, wrote: "Indian wives often possess greater influence than wives of Europeans."

6. Social Ills: It is wrong to project social ills of recent years to the ancient civilization. It is also inappropriate to attribute them to Hinduism. While covering Hinduism most of the content is about such negative stereotype and not about basic tenets, value system and beliefs of Hindus. This again violates your religion neutral criteria.

We would like to place it on record that, in our opinion, the textbooks approved by CDE for adoption **do not meet your own criteria** listed in Education Code (specifically Code 60044 subsections a and b) because they have an excessive negative bias in their treatment of ancient India and Hinduism and because they also treat Hinduism as an inferior tradition in comparison with other religious traditions.

As a result, the textbooks will tend to make Hindu American children feel ashamed of their heritage. Even with our modest edits, we cannot hope to redeem the situation because the textbooks' coverage of ancient India and Hinduism is truly very bad. Therefore, we are all the more disappointed that the Board judged HEF and VF's proposed edits adversely on the basis of reckless allegations made by certain biased academics. We re-iterate our disappointment about your decision to engage the very same academicians, who objected out changes, as CRP. This decision is like appointing the accuser as prosecutor, jury and judge. These same academics have not and are not objecting to the ahistorical descriptions on other traditions.

We also wish to place on record our displeasure with the lack of communication from CDE and SBE during last few months, due to which we have not been given any opportunity to explain our edits, and also defend ourselves against calumny that the 'CRP' members hired by CDE heaped on us. In our assessment, our detractors have not added any value to the entire process; they have only muddied and politicized the situation.

Sincerely,

Hindu Education Foundation