



University of
Massachusetts
Dartmouth

285 Old Westport Rd.
Dartmouth, MA
02747-2300

UMass Dartmouth
Center for
Indic Studies

508.910.6630
508.999.8588
www.umassd.edu/indic

November 25, 2005

Ms. Ruth Green, President
California State Board of Education
1430 N. Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Also via facsimile to
916-319-0172*

Re: Textbook revisions- Edits on India and Hindus

Dear President Green,

I write this letter after learning of a last minute intervention by Professor Michael Witzel of Harvard University in a manner that is neither procedurally appropriate nor professionally ethical. I write this letter on behalf of the Center for Indic Studies at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and I myself am the founding Director of the Center, since 2000.

First, I would like to point out that the major reason for establishing the Center for Indic Studies was to present an authentic view of Indian civilization, history, culture, traditions, philosophy, art, music, science, which we felt was not being conveyed despite India being a free democratic country for the more than half a century, and a vibrant civilization for much longer than that. We have made substantial progress in that effort in the past five years through annual conferences, teaching courses, conducting research, and holding monthly seminars.

The topic of Indian history and civilization is a constant subject of our discussion, and we are aware of the intense debate especially on certain topics such as the social structure in India, and the racial origin of current Indian population. While such debates and scholarship must be encouraged to learn and understand the truth, we have found in our deliberations with scholars and academics that there is no academic basis for continuing with the colonial view of the Indian society.

I have read Professor Witzel's letter to you, which certainly smacks of racism, derogation, and condescension, not only against a major civilization, but also against a huge body of scholars, academics, and more importantly parents and teachers who are trying to introduce middle school children right kind of information in the 21st century.

Let me please point out that I am not against Professor Witzel's line of research and theories developed through his analysis of linguistic evidence. However, it is well known that modern science and archeology holds substantially larger advantage in fathoming the truth than linguistic analysis practiced by Professor Witzel. In 2002, I had personally invited Professor



Witzel to a conference at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth to a conference on India's Contributions to the World, to which he did initially agree but later did not show up.

While my own field of Indic scholarship is scientific understanding of yoga and philosophy, and not either history or linguistics, I as an organizer of several conferences and Director of the Center, have learned numerous scholars and academics that Professor Witzel generally refuses to engage other scholars in an open public and professional domain on the subject matter, and indulges in mudslinging and calling of names of those who do not agree with his opinion.

I must therefore caution you against giving any credence to Professor Witzel's opinion on the subject of India's culture or history, especially when it relates to conveying simple concepts at middle school level.

Your Board seems to have followed a well-established fair procedure so far, I urge you to guide the Board without any extraneous interference from sources that have dubious scholarly and political credence.

If there are any questions, comments, or need of further information, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 508-999-8588.

Sincerely,



Bal Ram Singh, Ph.D.
Professor and Director