



ESHI

Educators' Society for the Heritage of India

December 5, 2005

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mr. Mayank Shekhar 919-740-7129

Re: California School Board under pressure to show fairness to the heritage of India

Educators' Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI) expresses its deep concern over the events leading to the California Board of Education (CBE) review and adoption of social studies textbooks for grades 6 to 8 this year. While improvement in textbooks are expected based on the review/comments provided by various ethnic groups (Blacks, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, etc.) and organizations, the CBE has singled out Hindu and Sikh groups for biased and unfair treatment.

“The high handedness of CBE is totally unacceptable in the 21st century world where the young minds in the California classrooms would be taught distorted and prejudiced views of colonialists about Indian history and culture”, said ESHI President, Dr. Ved Chaudhary. “Our concern is heightened due to the fact that many other states end up using the same textbooks that are published for California” he added.

We commend Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation who had reviewed textbooks and provided detailed, line by line, comments. ESHI also provided its comments to CBE in a letter by Dr. Piyush Agrawal (a former Superintendent of Schools) as the chair of the ESHI Committee for Textbook Reviews. Highly respected professors like T.S. Rukmani, Anant Rambachan, Subhash Kak and others had also reviewed the textbooks and provided comments. The reviews clearly revealed that the coverage of India and Hinduism were too negative, not balanced and in many instances factually incorrect or misleading.

“We were appreciative of CBE’s transparent handling of the review process leading up to the November 9th meeting. However, it is appalling that even though CBE hired Prof Shiva Bajpai of Cal State Univ. at Northridge as the expert to review the comments of the Hindu groups, it did not follow his recommendations” laments Dr. Bal Ram Singh, Chair of the Indic Studies program at University of Massachusetts at Amherst. “The CBE conduct is absolutely puzzling, especially in view of the fact that it had accepted Prof. Bajpai’s recommendations and was ready to announce them on Nov 9” he added.

ESHI totally rejects last minute interjection of a group called IER (Indo-Eurasian Research), who were not involved in the reviews, but at the last minute forced their way into the deliberations by alleging that “It would trigger an immediate international

scandal if the California State Board of Education were to unwittingly endorse religious-nationalistic views of Indian history ...”.

Led by Professor Michael Witzel of Harvard, IER is a politically motivated group, as stated in their mission statement: “The orientation of Indo-Eurasian Research is politically progressive, international, secular, and scientific. List discussions of political-religious developments are encouraged ...” Witzel sent a petition to the CBE with blanket condemnation of comments of all Hindu groups, including many professors of Indian history and Hinduism, without having read their comments.

In the face of this anti-Hindu movement, ESHI contacted many academics to be signatories to the ESHI letter supporting changes demanded by the Hindu groups. We also urged the Indian Archeological Society to send, by overnight courier, two letters to the CBE with 35 signatories and with several pertinent documents attached. ESHI also contacted Prof. J.S. Rajput, former President of the National Council for Educational Research (NCERT), India, to write about the efforts of textbook corrections in India. Thus, about 100 scholars and academics responded with lightning speed to refute the distortions of the Witzel group.

Among many organizations who have worked together, Hindu Students Council and the Network of Hindu Minds (NetOHM) provided major support. Scores of organizations, including Hindu temples, also sent letters to the CBE. Several political figures including Congresswoman Linda Sanchez also wrote to the Department of Education to intervene on behalf of the Hindu community in her district. ESHI also supported Sikh community demand that the textbooks must also provide coverage of Sikh culture and tradition. California has a large Sikh population and Sikh community in USA has born the brunt of communal prejudice after 9/11 due to mistaken identity.

On December 1, over 30 individuals and organizations attended the meeting of the Curriculum Commission. On behalf of ESHI, Prof. Nalini Rao of Soka University of America in Los Angeles, attended the meeting and presented her academic viewpoints refuting the Aryan Invasion Theory. On December 2, ESHI sent another letter to CBE discrediting the veracity of the allegations of the IER letter, while pointing out that the signatories of the IER letter were not experts in Indian history and Hinduism, as claimed in their petition.

During the final meeting of the Curriculum Commission on December 2nd, one of the commissioners, Prof. Metzenberg, a biologist, followed up on the letter sent by Dr. Chandra Kant Panse’ on behalf of ESHI. Dr Panse’ provided genetic evidence against Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) that commissioner Metzenberg upheld as more reliable than the old AIT theory. "I've read the DNA research and (concluded that) there was no Aryan migration. I believe the hard evidence of DNA more than I believe historians" he said. However, ESHI is disappointed that after six hours of review /debate and voting on each proposed change by the curriculum commission on Dec 2nd, the commission has compromised its principles and guidelines as it decided to keep some of the old information about Aryan Invasion Theory (while calling it Aryan Migration) and the caste system, which is inaccurate, biased, and derogatory to the heritage of India.

“This stereo-typical coverage tends to engender prejudice against Indic traditions in the minds of all school children,” said Dr. Piyush Agrawal, former Superintendent of schools. “It will have an adverse effect on the intellectual development and self-esteem of children from families who follow Indic traditions. They may find what is taught in school, through inaccurate textbooks, is at variance from the practices followed in their own homes and community. This would be contrary to the Board’s Equal Opportunity guidelines which state ‘Portray accurately and equitably’ and ‘Instill a sense of pride in every child in his/her heritage’. We urge the CBE to consult with experts who have respect for the heritage of India and make changes accordingly” he added.

Educators’ Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI), a non-profit organization, was registered in 2003 with an objective to create accurate and balanced content on India and Indic traditions for textbooks and publications and to advise school districts, state boards, publishers, libraries, museums and other educational institutions in this regard. For information, please visit our web-site: www.eshiusa.org or call any of the contact persons listed below.



Ved P. Chaudhary
President
Educators Society for the Heritage of India (ESHI)

Contact Persons (email, phone):

Dr. Ved Chaudhary	ved.chaudhary@gmail.com	732-972-1489
Mr. Kanchan Banerjee	k bkali@yahoo.com	617-306-6609
Mr. Mayank Shekhar	mayank.s.shekhar@gmail.com	919-740-7129
Dr. Bal Ram Singh	bsingh@umassd.edu	508-999-8588
Dr. Nalini Rao	NRao@soka.edu	415-503-8527
Dr. Piyush Agrawal	sudhapca@aol.com	954-648-6494