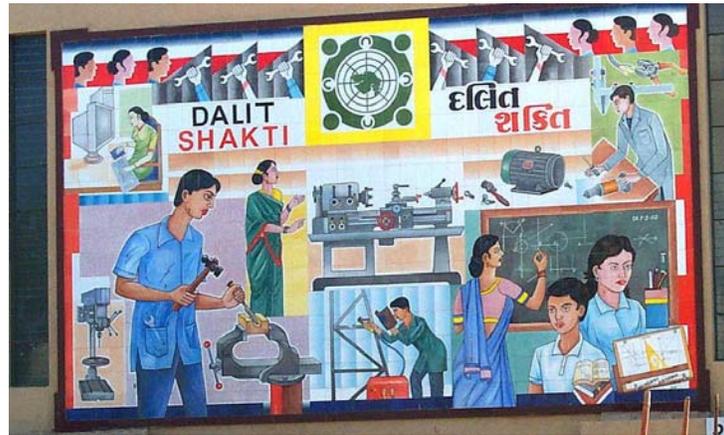


A Representation to the California State Board of Education from:

Martin Macwan, A Dalit Activist from Gujarat, India, Winner of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, Founder of Navsarjan Trust and head of Dalit Shakti Kendra, which focuses on educating and training Dalit youth.



January 5, 2006
Gujarat, India

Re: Proposed Edits to Grade 6 History Books on India and Hinduism

Dear members of the California Board of Education,

I am making this representation on behalf of Dalit Shakti Kendra, located in Gujarat.

I have read several pages of the material on the edits and proposed recommendations. The suggestion to remove the picture of the untouchable on one hand and to underline the tone that discrimination based on caste and untouchability practices existed for legitimate reasons does not surprise me. What surprises me is the total deletion of the material from the books on what is happening today in India, especially on the living conditions of the untouchables. History is kept alive by norms, language, phrases, behavior, practices and the belief system.

I am using the word untouchable, not because they are untouchable for any reasons or rationale but because the vast section of Indian society is facing physical and social exclusion.

History is always written with the approval of people in power in any society. Why else Jesus would be painted as a white man? Why the slaves in the US were prohibited from communicating in their native languages?

My suggestions would be to teach history to children not by giving them information and views but by asking them to investigate and reason. Following would be certain questions that could find place in the text books?

1. Why in every Indian village the untouchables have segregated housing colonies, drinking water spots/wells and cemeteries?
2. Why does the Indian constitution recognize 'caste' as the criteria for distinguishing social groups and not the 'varna'?
3. Why the movements such as RSS and the VHP have failed to ensure that at least all Hindus can enter the temples?
4. Do you know that in temples such as Delwara in mount Abu in Rajasthan has public written notice on temple walls that 'women entering in temple while in menstruation may suffer'?
5. Why do you think the Indian Parliament made the provision in 'The atrocities on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (prevention) Act 1989 that 'any person (not being the member of SC/ST) who forces the member of SC/ST to eat human excreta (shall be punished)?
6. Why in numerous incidents of atrocities on SC/ST, those who are paraded naked in public are only women and not men?
7. Do you know that the principled opposition of industrial groups in India have towards government's attempts to extend the system of reservation to the private sector is that the "quality of services shall suffer"?
8. What are the historical reasons responsible for the fact that almost all manual scavengers in India happen to be from the lowest considered sub-caste within the untouchables?
9. Do you know that even today in many schools untouchable children are seated separately especially during the mid-day meals?

Yours Sincerely,

Martin Macwan

Dalit Shakti Kendra
Nani Devti, Tk. Sanand, Dt. Ahmedabad
Gujarat, India

P.S. I am appending a link from yesterday's news -- an example of [daily caste atrocities in India](#) mostly directed against Dalits.