

தேமதுரத் தமிழோகச உலகமெலாம்
பரவும் வகை செய்தல் வேண்டும்

அமெரிக்கத் தமிழ்ச்சங்கப் பேரவை

Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America

(A Registered, Non-Profit, Tax - Exempt Organization)

5700 Hearthstone Lane, Brentwood, TN 37027-4314 U.S.A

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February 19, 2006

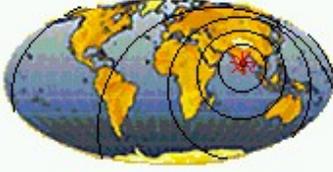
Ms. Glee Johnson,
State Board of Education,
1430 N St., Ste. 5111,
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Johnson,

The Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA) expresses its sincere appreciation to the Members of the California State Board of Education (SBE) and the staff of the California Department of Education for their extraordinary efforts in working to ensure the accuracy of the contents of the History and Social Science textbooks for the sixth grade students in California. We also thank the three scholars, Dr. Michael Witzel, Dr. James Heitzman, and Dr. Stanley Wolpert, for their efforts in reviewing the edits proposed by the Hindu Education Foundation and Vedic Foundation and working to ensure the accuracy of the contents of the above-mentioned textbooks.

FeTNA believes that the contents of American school textbooks should be based on critical scholarship and not religious extremism. One of the reasons why FeTNA has taken an active interest in these proceedings is the historical chronology of early India according to the Vedic Foundation is based on a Sanskrit text called Bhagavatam or Bhagavata Purana, which the Vedic Foundation claims to have existed in the 4th millennium B.C. (See <http://tinyurl.com/b826e>) This chronology contradicts the scholarly view that the Bhagavata Purana was most likely composed in the Tamil country in the 9th or early 10th century A.D. and served as a conduit to export the relatively egalitarian devotional religious movement of the Alvars, the Tamil Vaishnava saints, to the rest of India. (See attachment 1.) A date in the 4th millennium B.C. or earlier for Bhagavata Purana is not only unscientific, but also elides an important contribution of the Tamils to the overall Indian culture. (It should be pointed out that in 2004, the Government of India recognized Tamil as a classical language of India in addition to Sanskrit.) Another reason why Tamils are interested in these proceedings is the fact that the early Tamil texts clearly distinguish between Tamils and Aryans. These texts clearly associated the Aryans with North India and Sanskrit. (See attachment 2.)

As regards the specific edits/corrections, FeTNA is gratified that many of the edits recommended by SBE/CDE staff are now historically accurate. However, FeTNA would like to recommend a few corrections noted below.



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Hindu Education Foundation Edits

Glencoe/McGraw-Hill

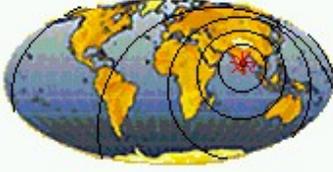
Edit Number	SBE/CDE Staff Recommendation	FeTNA Edits/Correction
15	"The basic principles of what is known today as Hinduism were already formulated by 1500 B.C. They are to be found in the four Vedas."	Vedas were not the only source for Hinduism. For example, Murugan, a non-Vedic Tamil god, has been included in the Hindu pantheon. So, the text should be revised to be "Some aspects of what is known today as Hinduism were already formulated by 1500 B.C. They are to be found in the four Vedas."
18	"Some historians believe that the Aryans were part of a larger group they refer to as Indo-Europeans."	Replace "Some" with "Most" so that it reads, "Most historians believe that the Aryans were part of a larger group they refer to as Indo-Europeans."

Holt, Rinehart and Winston

Edit Number	SBE/CDE Staff Recommendation	FeTNA Edits/Correction
30	"Sanskrit is no longer widely spoken today, but it is the root of many modern South Asian Languages."	Clarify that Sanskrit is not the root of the Dravidian languages so that the text reads, "Sanskrit is no longer widely spoken today, but it is the root of many, but not all, modern South Asian languages, which also include Tamil, Kannada Telugu, and Malayalam belonging to the Dravidian linguistic family."

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill

Edit Number	SBE/CDE Staff Recommendation	FeTNA Edits/Correction
44	"Sanskrit became the most important language for public affairs in much of ancient India. Hindi, the national language of India today (and other regional languages) evolved out of Sanskrit. The earliest example of orally transmitted, ancient Sanskrit is the four Vedas. Sanskrit was in common usage until about A.D. 1100, and was used in some official communications until A.D. 1830."	Up to the middle of the first millennium A.D., in South India, Tamil and Prakrit (derived from Sanskrit) were the official languages. We have coins with Tamil legends issued by Tamil kings and coins with Tamil and Prakrit legends issued by non-Tamil Satavahana kings. (See attachment 3.) Early inscriptions in the Tamil country were also in Tamil up to 6 th century A. D. Hindi is only one of many national languages of India. According to the Indian constitution, Hindi is the official language of India. So the text should be revised to read, "Sanskrit and Tamil became the most important languages for public affairs in much of ancient India. Hindi, the official language of India today (and some regional languages) evolved out of Sanskrit. The earliest example of orally transmitted, ancient Sanskrit is the four Vedas. Sanskrit was in common usage until about A.D. 1100, and was used in some official communications until A.D. 1830."



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Edit Number	SBE/CDE Staff Recommendation	FeTNA Edits/Correction
45	"Men had many more property rights than women. Typically, only sons could inherit property, and only men could go to school or become priests. Women's education was mostly done at home."	Defer to original text.
52	"There was one group that did not belong to any varna. Its members were called untouchables because they performed dirty work such as skinning animals or handling dead bodies."	The untouchables did not choose to perform dirty work. The text should be revised to read, "There was one group that did not belong to any varna (caste). Its members were called untouchables. They performed work other Indians thought was too dirty, such as collecting trash, skinning animals, or handling dead bodies."

We strongly urge you to incorporate the above corrections.

Sincerely,

Thillai Kumaran
(Representing FeTNA)

Attachments
cc: Thomas Adams