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Mill's Colonial-Racist Discourse in School Textbooks

One would like to think that a colonialist and racist discourse on Hindus and Hinduism was a thing of the past, with India and Hindus having gained political independence from the British Raj. This chapter will conclusively show that this is not the case. The discourse is still alive and kicking: a discourse that was constructed to show that Hinduism was nothing but rank savagery and that Hindus were one of the most uncouth and barbaric people on the face of the earth. We saw in the previous chapter that Mill's discourse on Hinduism was a complete projection with a sound basis in England's social and political climate. A sanitized and politically correct version of Mill's discourse is what is introduced to the Indian American children from sixth grade onward. The reason why we contend that the school-textbook discourse is a politically correct and sanitized version of nineteenth-century colonial and racist discourse is that all the coordinates around which Mill described and characterized Hinduism and Hindus remain the same—it is just that the current discourse is not explicitly calling the Hindus and Hinduism respectively as savage and the religion of barbaric people but in a subtle sense it is. Hinduism, equaling caste, hierarchy, and oppression, which was the primary container in which Mill's discourse was forged, is still the dominant discourse in which grade-school children are schooled. Not only are the

coordinates of the description of Hinduism and Hindus in Mill's History reproduced in the schoolbook discourse but also the sequence in which Mill unfolded the discourse in his *magnum opus* of Hindu denunciation, with a minor variation here and there, gets replicated. The following about the school textbook production process becomes pertinent to shed light on the preceding.

Since both of us authors are residents of California, our analysis will focus and concentrate on the State of California. Also, California follows, among the other states of the US, the most systematic and detailed process of public-school curriculum design and production. The California Department of Education begins the process of discourse production in school textbooks by setting the "History-Social Science Content Standards" or *HSS Content Standards* from now on. These content standards were formed when a report, *A Nation at Risk*, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 pointed out the falling standards in education in schools, citing the "rise of mediocrity." They specify in categorical terms what topics must be taught at every grade level, Kindergarten through 12. They are guidelines for developing the "Human and Social Science Framework" or the *HSS Framework* from now on. The textbooks later adopted by various school districts must be curated within the guidelines enumerated in the *HSS Framework*. The commitment of the California Board of Education to the *HSS Content Standards* is fair and square, intending to see them implemented at every level of grade-school education. It is steadfast in

completely aligning state efforts to these standards, including the statewide testing program, curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, professional development, preservice education, and compliance review. We will see a generation of educators who think of standards not as a *new layer* but as the *foundation* itself.¹

The *HSS Content Standards*, therefore, are foundational. Any edifice created or constructed is squarely dependent on the foundation; if the

¹"History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade 12," California Department of Education, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>, iv, emphasis in original.

foundation itself is faulty, there remains little chance of the edifice not getting affected. These content standards cascade effects from the *HSS Framework* to school textbooks and other instruction materials. As we stated earlier, both the sequence and the content of the materials produced at the behest of the California Board of Education are infused and suffused with Mill's colonial discourse. We will first show that Mill's *History* influences the choice of topics and their sequence in the *HSS Content Standards* and then analyze the contents of the *HSS Framework* and school textbooks. Instead of analyzing the school textbooks of all the publishers in the business, we will only take McGraw-Hill's *Impact California Social Studies: World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations* as an example to protect the discussion from becoming unwieldy. Given that *HSS Content Standards* and *HSS Framework* directly influence textbook production, we will use terms like the "McGraw-Hill textbook" or the "textbook" instead of the name of the textbook's author. The author will be cited and referenced at the appropriate places. Also, given California's expansive and detailed process, it becomes a role model for other states with content standards (not all states, by the way, have content standards). We will, therefore, not compare the content standards of all these states with California, but suffice it to say that in critically examining the content standards, the framework, and a textbook from the state of California, we are putting the pan-US discourse on Hinduism and India under critical inquiry.

Mill's *History* and the *HSS Content Standards*

In the first chapter on the Hindus in the *History*, after showing that the Hindus are savage because they have no sense of history, Mill goes on to contend that the Hindus are more savage than all the savages put together because they have spent far more time as nomads and wanderers than others before settling down to begin what could be considered "civilized" behavior. This history of the Hindu people is because of the bountiful nature of the terrain they inhabited—lush green with forests and rivers. The vast subcontinent with a favorable climate and food available from the forests did not render the settling down of the early Hindus necessary.

Therefore, in the first chapter itself, we see two critical discussions by Mill, which become the first two topics of the *HSS Content Standards*: the geography (land, soil, climate, rivers, etc.) of India and that the early Hindus spent considerable time in the Indian subcontinent as wandering nomads. Because of Mill's nomadic characterization of the early Hindus, the later Aryan Invasion Theory on India was built, soon to be discussed in greater detail below.

Consequently, the first two topics of the *HSS Content Standards* are the following:

1. Locate and describe the major river system and discuss the physical setting that supported the rise of this civilization.
2. Discuss the significance of the Aryan invasions.²

Mill's second chapter on Hindus begins with a vilification campaign on Brahmins, holding the Brahmins responsible for creating a false religion called Hinduism and for creating a social structure and system ensconced in and imbued with hierarchy and oppression. This chapter of Mill's work is predominantly about the caste system and oppression, as discussed in the preceding chapters, with Brahmins ruling the roost and sitting at the top of the caste hierarchy they created. We would also not want to miss that Mill created this narrative to prove how savage, barbaric, uncouth, uncivilized, and rude the Hindu people were. With a one-to-one correlation, the next two topics of the *HSS Content Standards* are the following:

3. Explain the major beliefs and practices of Brahmanism in India and how they evolved into early Hinduism.
4. Outline the social structure of the caste system.³

Mill's chapter six on the Hindus describes their religion. Apart from promoting myriad falsehoods based on the projections of his experiences with the Church of England, whose practices he derisively called the

²Ibid., 25.

³Ibid.

Church of Englandism, we saw how Mill concocted the description of Hinduism in the previous chapter. In describing Hinduism, he invented this narrative that the Brahmins persecuted the Buddhists and made them flee to different parts of South Asia and Asia. In the words of Mill:

But though Buddha is, by the Hindus, regarded as a manifestation of the Divine Being, the sect of Buddhists are regarded as heretical, and are persecuted by the Brahmins. It is conjectured that, at one time, a great number of them had been compelled to fly from the country, and spread their tenets in various directions. The religion of Buddha is now found to prevail over the greater part of the East; in Ceylon, in the further peninsula, in Thibet, in China, and even as far as Japan.⁴

The *HSS Content Standards* do not lag in making this the fifth topic of discussion for the grade-six students:

5. Know the life and moral teachings of Buddha and how Buddhism spread in India, Ceylon, and Central Asia.⁵

Mill's chapters three, four, and five discuss the Hindu form of governance, laws, and taxes. We have already seen how, within the container of showing the primitiveness and barbarianism of the Hindu people, Mill argued that their governance forms, social laws, and taxation structure were hierarchical and oppressive. We also saw in the previous chapter that these contentions were sheer fabrications and projections emanating from the parallel British systems that Mill and his fellow radicals were protesting and clamoring against to suppress and transform. The *HSS Content Standards* give the *HSS Framework* creators and publishers full sway in discussing these issues under the following topic, which deals with the governance, laws, and taxes of the Hindus:

6. Describe the growth of the Maurya empire and the political and moral achievements of the emperor Asoka.⁶

⁴ Mill, *History of British India*, 360.

⁵ "History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade 12," 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*

The last topic of the *HSS Content Standards* does not directly correlate with the writings of James Mill but with the concerns of another colonial, William Jones, who established the Asiatic Society of Calcutta in 1784 for a systematic study of India and its various aspects. However, given that this study is mainly about Mill and his legacy on the continued discourse of Hinduism and India, we will pass the seventh topic. What needs to be emphasized is that six of the seven topics of the *HSS Content Standards* bear a direct relationship and correlation with the highly degrading, demeaning, toxic, and racist discourse of James Mill. In addition to the content, even the sequence of the topics almost matches the arrangement of Mill's chapters on Hindus.

The textbook publishers do not belie the trust of *HSS Content Standards* in replicating the colonial and racist discourse of Mill. We now turn the gaze of our inquiry to McGraw-Hill's World History textbook.

Colonial Discourse and the Aryan Issue

After discussing the landscape of the Indian subcontinent ("mountains, plains, and rivers") and an extraordinarily brief description of the Harappan Civilization and its only two cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and ignoring many others like Lothal, Dholavira, Kalibangan, and Rakhigarhi, McGraw-Hill's *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations* quickly moves to describe the Aryan issue. This is in the context of the decline of the Harappan Civilization from 1900 BCE onwards. Earlier, it was held that it was the Aryans as a race that had invaded the Indian subcontinent and destroyed the Harappan civilization (*HSS Content Standards* still believes in it as we saw previously); it is now held that that Aryans migrated to the Indian subcontinent. The McGraw-Hill textbook and the *HSS Framework* represent this theory. Here is the textbook representation:

Groups of people called the Aryans (AR•ee•uhn) migrated to India.... The Aryans were not a race or ethnic group. Many historians believe that the Aryan people's language was part of a large language family known as Indo-European. A language family is a group of similar languages. Many

modern Indian languages like Hindi, are part of the Indo-European family. So are many in European languages, including English. The Aryans were speakers of Indo-European languages. Indo-European people lived in central Asia but began migrating to other places. Some moved west to Europe or south to Iran. The Aryans went to India. There is another point of view that suggests that Aryans and their language are indigenous to India. This point of view holds that the Aryans started in India and spread northward, and is held by a smaller number of scholars. Like most Indo-European, the Aryans raised cattle for meat, milk, and butter. They moved from place to place to find pastures and water for their cattle. The Aryans were expert horse riders and hunters, as well as fierce warriors. As they moved about, the Aryans sometimes raided nearby villages for food. From about 1500 B.C.E. to 1000 B.C.E., bands of Aryans moved throughout India. These groups mixed with the descendants of Indus valley people. Together they created a new culture. Over time, the Aryans in India adopted a new way of life. They settled down in one place and became farmers, though they still raised cattle.⁷

The Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) of *HSS Content Standards* and the consequent Aryan Migration Theory (AMT) of the *HSS Framework* and textbook are heavily contested theories. The contestations are not a minority view but a substantial one, with umpteen scholars, archaeologists, historians, and linguistics worldwide having contested AIT and AMT, including one of us—Kundan Singh. It was basically because of contestations that AIT has been transformed to AMT, which also has weak evidence in its support, but that is a different story. Since we have maintained throughout the book that we will not argue either in support or against the evidence of the textbook discourse that the school-going children are subjected to other than showing that the discourse that they are studying is a politically correct and sanitized version of the colonial and racist discourse of James Mill, we will refrain from arguing either in favor or against of the AIT or AMT. We will reproduce verbatim, with slight adaptations, the following two sections from Singh's published article "Colonial Roots of the Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory and the

⁷Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations* (Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019), 255.

Contemporary Evidence in Western Sources”⁸ with another section in between that shows James Mill’s connection with German Indology and Christian Lassen.

Colonialism and the Genesis of the Aryan Invasion Theory

William Jones⁹ outlined the connection between Sanskrit and European languages, contending for a shared ancestry between Indians and Europeans. He was a student of languages, and in his view, Sanskrit is profoundly copious and far more refined than Greek and Latin are, and these languages bear similarities in grammatical forms and verbs, which could not have been produced by chance. He also held that Sanskrit has similarities with the Gothic and Celtic languages and Persian; thus, they belong to one family.

The common ancestry theory was not born with Jones as Bryant¹⁰ demonstrates. Such conjectures were prevalent even before him. Scholars such as Pere Coeurdoux, as early as 1768, had contended that Sanskrit, as the language of the Brahmins, came to India from Caucasia. There were others such as Nathaniel Halhed and James Parsons, physician and fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of the Antiquities, who in the year 1776 had already drawn a connection between Indian and European languages. It was the reputation and stature of William Jones, who was a judge in the Supreme Court in Bengal, which engraved this idea in stone.¹¹

In the initial years of common Indo-European ancestry, India was the cradle of the civilization. Thinkers of the Modern Era, such as Voltaire, Sonnerat, Schelling, and Schlegel, argued that the epicenter of civilization was India and that Europe owed its cultural and philosophical

⁸Kundan Singh, “Colonial Roots of the Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory and the Contemporary Evidence in Western Sources,” *Indian Historical Review* 48, no. 2 (December 2021). Relevant sections republished with permission granted in the publishing contract itself.

⁹William Jones, “On the Origin and Family of Nations,” *Asiatic Researches* 3 (1792), in *The Collected Works of William Jones* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

¹⁰Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹¹Ibid.

origins to India. Monboddo,¹² Halhed, Schlegel, and Kennedy¹³ believed Greek and Latin originated from Sanskrit. The mother tongue of all the Indo-European languages was Sanskrit. This theory, however, did not remain static. With the political ascendancy of Europe over India, the mother-tongue theory began to fade into oblivion. One of the first people to challenge it was Frantz Bopp, who felt that there was instead an “original” tongue from which Sanskrit and the European languages were derived, although Sanskrit could preserve its originality better than others. The original tongue was termed the Proto-Indo-European language, of which Sanskrit became one of the daughters, albeit the eldest of them all. For the people thus being represented by these ideas, the terms Indo-German, Indo-European, and Aryan came into use beginning in the nineteenth century.¹⁴

With the decline of the status of Sanskrit as the original mother tongue of all European languages, India as the mother region of all Indo-Europeans also began to recede. Fredrick Schlegel's brother, A.W. von Schlegel, in 1842, asserted that instead of migrating from India to Europe, some central region existed from which people went in different directions to Europe and India. Benfey, consequently, contended that since Southern India consisted of a “tribal” population (and hence, by implication, inferior given the prominent discourse of the times), they had to be subjugated by the invading “superior” Aryans from the North. Muir,¹⁵ torturing the Sanskrit texts, claimed the gradual advance of Aryans from the Northwest of India to the East and South. The Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT) was thus born. Post the 1857 war, as the British established its political suzerainty over most of India, neither India as the home of the Aryans nor Sanskrit as the mother tongue of the European languages remained. Dilip Chakrabarti writes, “With the Raj firmly established, it was time to begin to visualize the history and cultural process of India as a series of invasions and foreign rules.”¹⁶

¹²J. B. Monboddo, *Of the Origins and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh: Balfour, 1774).

¹³V. Kennedy, *Researches into the Origin and Affinity of the Principal Languages of India* (London: Longman, 1828).

¹⁴Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*.

¹⁵J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts* (London: Trüber, 1860).

¹⁶Dilip K. Chakrabarti, “India and the Druids,” *Antiquity* 50, no. 197 (1976): 66–67.

Given that the colonizers and missionaries, more often than not, have been in cahoots with one another for the global subjugation of peoples and cultures, both parties seized the opportunity and began driving the AIT hard. A common ancestry of the Hindus and Europeans was an idea that had made most of the missionaries and colonizers uncomfortable. Missionaries such as Alexander Duff and William Hastie and colonizers such as James Mill opposed the idea tooth and nail. They were more inclined to emphasize the differences between Indians and Europeans rather than their similarities. Disparaging Indians—their culture, civilization, traditions, and religion—was the master note of their utterances instead of focusing on convergences or similarities. With the “discovery” by the Madras school of Orientalists that southern Indian languages and Sanskrit did not come from a common root,¹⁷ the notion mentioned above of “Aryans” invading the “Indians” began to gain further currency. The Vedas were further tortured to depict white and fair “Aryans,” coming through the northwest, in conflict with the dark-skinned and flat-nosed “Dravidians,” described as the original natives of the Indian subcontinent. The corollary to all this, as Trautmann¹⁸ shows, was that the European Aryans brought civilization and Sanskrit to India. The conclusion fitted exceptionally well with the “civilizing mission” notion of the Europeans: just as the Aryans of the past brought civilization, language, and culture to the Indians of the yore, the colonizers and missionaries were bringing a second wave of civilization to the inter-mixed and corrupted (hence by default inferior) Indians. The AIT served many different political ends—of missionaries, colonialists, and “native” Indians.¹⁹

The movement of the Aryan homeland from India to “somewhere in Asia” to Europe also happened in successive stages. It was assisted by German philology. As an emerging nation, Germany had found itself lagging in becoming a colonial power as some European nations such as England, France, Spain, Holland, and Portugal had done, and it was desperately looking for sources that could bolster its national identity and

¹⁷ Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*.

¹⁸ Thomas R. Trautmann, “Elephants and the Mauryas,” in *India: History and Thought*, ed. S. Muckerjee (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1982).

¹⁹ For details, see Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*.

ego. Sanskrit and India came in extremely handy for such an objective. If the Germans could show that they were the original Indo-Europeans, who were the cause of various European nations and India in history, their national pride would be stamped beyond question. This was the basis of their quest for the pure Indo-German race. The Indo-Germans could consequently not have a homeland in Asia. Therefore, the homeland of the Indo-Germans/Indo-Europeans/Aryans had to be changed first and moved to Europe.

And indeed, the process began. Robert G. Latham, in 1862, proposed a European homeland for the Indo-Europeans. In 1878, the German philologist L. Geiger contended that Indo-Europeans were blond and blue-eyed people and that these traits had become diluted and darkened in places with a foreign admixture of genes.²⁰ Since the contention served the European sense of superiority, in no time, it began to gather steam and get regurgitated. Finding evidence for unadulterated blond, fair, and blue-eyed Indo-Europeans in the regions of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Belgium was easy. Thus, this area became the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans. The rise of Nazism was exclusively related to this appropriation, although one must say that in the quest for the original homeland of Indo-Europeans, scholars have virtually pointed to almost every part of Europe.²¹

In this melee emerged the German Indologist Max Müller, whom the East India Company had hired to translate the Sanskrit texts in its possession. He arbitrarily attributed the date of the Rig Veda to around 1200 BCE. The arbitrariness of the dating was criticized by his contemporaries, to which he responded in 1890:

I have repeatedly dwelt on the merely hypothetical character of the dates, which I have ventured to assign to first periods of Vedic literature. All I have claimed for them has been that they are minimum dates, and that the literary productions of each period, which still exist or which formerly

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

existed could hardly be accounted for within shorter limits of time than those suggested.²²

He explains further:

If now we ask as to how we can fix the dates of these periods, it is quite clear that we cannot hope to fix a *terminum a qua*. Whether the Vedic hymns were composed [in] 1000 or 2000 or 3000 BC, no power on earth will ever determine.²³

Consequently, the coming of Aryans to India in 1500 BCE was determined—a date that gets regurgitated in all mainstream academic literature on India and Hinduism.²⁴ The following are three conclusions that emerge from the above:

1. The issue of Aryans and India has not been static. Over a period of time, the spectrum has evolved from India being the cradle of the Aryan civilization to being invaded by fair, blond, and blue-eyed Aryans who had their homeland in Europe.
2. It has changed with the changing fortunes of India. That the “Aryans” invaded India from the northwestern frontier was a theory developed when the suzerainty of the British over India was almost complete.
3. The Aryan Invasion Theory is not divorced from—on the contrary contiguous with—the imperialistic designs of the colonialists and the evangelical zeal of the missionaries. Depending upon the political and missionary expediencies, the Aryan Invasion Theory was used by various parties involved.

²² B. B. Lal, “Aryan Invasion of India: Perpetuation of a Myth,” in *The Indo-Aryan Controversy: Evidence and Inference in Indian History*, ed. Edwin F. Bryant and Laurie L. Patton (New York: Routledge, 2005), 51. He cites Max Müller’s own words in this regard.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For instance, Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

James Mill and Christian Lassen

In the shift and flow of ideas, Mill played a crucial role. His *History*, among many others, accomplished two things for sure: 1. It completely inverted the paradigm of William Jones's Asiatic Society, which was by and large generating truer accounts of India and its civilization because its researchers were based in India and were working in collaboration with Indian scholars.²⁵ Even if we concede that the research of Asiatic Society was colored by the romantic inclinations of William Jones (for he is stated to have influenced the Romanticism of nineteenth-century Europe), what is certain is that it was not representing India and Hindus as savage, uncivilized, and brute. Mill shifted the Britishers from, if we take Trautman's²⁶ terms into account, *Indomania* to *Indophobia*. 2. He broke the back of the paradigm of German Romantics, who, because of their romantic projections on India, were far more favorably disposed to India than were their successors who have been clubbed under the category of German Indologists to distinguish them from the German Romantics. His discourse on India and Hindus was picked up by Hegel,²⁷ who, following suit trashed the Indian civilization and Indian philosophy, which dented the enthusiasm of the German Romantics²⁸ and paved the way for the rise of German Indology,²⁹ which it would not be an exaggeration to say worked with the Millian representation of Hinduism and India to the hilt for many decades to come.³⁰ Mill's *History* is the Faultline when the idea of India being the cradle of civilization and Sanskrit being the mother of all Indo-European languages began to move and shift as discussed in the previous section. In addition, it helped the rise of the German Indologists, who were complicit in the creation and the

²⁵ For a discussion on Mill's flipping of the discourse of William Jones, see Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*.

²⁶ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

²⁷ Inden, *Imagining India*.

²⁸ Bradley L. Herling, *The German Gita: Hermeneutics and the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778–1831* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²⁹ Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁰ It would take at least a monograph to cover this topic in complete detail; therefore, we will abstain from going into the details.

perpetuation of Aryanism in Europe, which, as we all know, resulted in the holocaust of the Jewish people.

German Indology's beginnings can be traced to the writings of Christian Lassen, who, after having studied with A. W. Schlegel in Bonn between 1821 and 1824 proceeded to London and Paris for further studies (precisely the period in which Mill's *History* sold like hot cakes in London). He returned to Bonn in 1827 to obtain *venia legendi*, for which he wrote a dissertation on the geography and history of Punjab based on the Mahabharata and the accounts of travelers. In the following years, Lassen copiously wrote on ancient Indian history with Mahabharata as one of the central texts.³¹ Mill's ideas played a central role in this reconstruction of the Indic civilization. *Among others, Lassen fully absorbed Mill's (mis)representations of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, and it was he who was one of the key people in engendering the two-race theory within the Indian context: the superior and light-skinned Aryans who came from the west of the Indian subcontinent and invaded the dark aboriginals of the Indian subcontinent.*³² The Aryans in northern India, in his conceptualization, were the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, whereas the subjugated aboriginals were the Shudras. The Indian population was thus racialized. Beginning with Lassen, the German Indologists became busy with interpreting and reinterpreting Mill's contentions on Hindus and Hinduism within the binary divides of Aryan/aboriginal, Aryan/Dravidian, and Aryan/Dasyu for many decades to come. Summing up the contribution of Lassen in the racialization of ancient Indian History and tradition, Adluri and Bagchee write: "His racial theory constitutes a mainstay of his reconstruction of ancient Indian history in the first volume of his *Indische Alterthumskunde* ... as well as playing an occasional role in his reconstruction of the middle and late periods in the successive volumes of the work." The explicit racialized Indian history of Lassen was possible only because the groundwork of a colonial and implicitly racist

³¹ Adluri and Bagchee, *The Nay Science*.

³² Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-Aryan Mythology as Ideology and Science*, trans. Sonia Wichmann (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006); Tuska E. Benes, *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2008); Dorothy M. Figueira, *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

characterization of Hindus and Hinduism had already been accomplished by Mill. If Mill had not fabricated the hierarchical and oppressive social order of the Hindus (based on nothing but sheer projections as we saw earlier), it would not have been possible for Lassen to conflate the “oppressive” Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas with Aryans and the Shudras with the aboriginals.

James Mill, AIT, and AMT

In addition, Mill's description of the Hindu people as wandering savages in chapter one of Mill's section on Hindus in *History* solidified the description of ancient Hindus as wanderers, nomads, and cattle herders and paved the way for these “Aryans” to get onto the horseback as cattle-herding wandering nomads and invade India, perpetuating the Aryan Invasion Theory without the backing of any hard and conclusive evidence. This is also why when the cities of the Harappan Civilization were discovered, they were not linked to the Aryans (ancient Hindus), for in the European imagination (logic from their standpoint) a wandering nomadic people couldn't build a massive civilization of such material scale as the Harappan Civilization. It was, therefore, that the civilization (again without any hard and conclusive evidence) was linked to the “indigenous Dravidian” people whom the “invading Aryans” defeated. This is even though the same “cattle herding nomadic people” in abundance speak about cities in the Vedas.

Now that the AIT has been shot down, the description of the Aryan Migration Theory, which is the officially stated or unstated stance of western academia, surprisingly as it may sound, is only a politically correct and sanitized version of how Mill described the ancient Hindus in the early nineteenth century. The *HSS Framework* states the following:

People speaking Indic languages, which are part of the larger Indo-European family of languages, entered South Asia, probably by way of Iran... The early Indic speakers were most likely animal herders. They may have arrived in India in scattered bands, later intermarrying with

populations perhaps ancestral to those who speak Dravidian languages, such as Tamil and Telugu, in southern India and Sri Lanka today.³³

Why do we say that the above description by the *California HSS Framework* is a sanitized and politically correct version of the James Mill narrative? 1. Given that the Aryan is a much-derided term because of the holocaust that the Nazis caused appropriating the term, the *HSS Framework* does not use it; however, it still means Aryans, substituting it with “people speaking Indic languages, which are part of larger Indo-European family of languages.” And when it means Aryans, it does not suggest Aryans as indigenous to India. It means explicitly Aryans coming to India via Iran from Europe: the White, fair-skinned, blond, and blue-eyed Aryans. 2. The groups of “people speaking Indic languages” are essentially nomadic herders and wanderers, just like how they were in the James Mill description. It is just that in the current *HSS Framework* version, they are not being called barbaric, uncivilized, ignorant, and rude, and it does not describe the larger imperial context in which this narrative was framed to begin with. It is this very version that gets recycled in all History textbooks. In higher studies also, a narrative similar to the one mentioned in the *Framework* appears.

To sum up, the Aryan Invasion Theory or its politically correct sibling, the Aryan Migration Theory, is intimately tied with the colonial and racist projects. The invasion and migration theories are entwined with the racial superiority of the European people. The invasion or migration theory strips the Indians of their agency to conceive, foster, nurture, and perpetuate a civilization. It is about denying the indigenous Indian population the creative, intellectual, and rational capacity to engender a civilization. The direct colonial rule may have ended, but the paradigm running the colonial enterprise that it is only the European people or people with European lineage who are capable of establishing civilizations is solidly intact when we consider the AIT or AMT.

It is in the backdrop of this “othering”—this turning of the Indian civilization, its culture, its history, its contribution to humanity into the

³³ “Chapter Ten: History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2016,” California Department of Education, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfchapter10.pdf>, 162–63.

primitive “other”—that the picture of the early Aryans as wandering and nomadic cattle herders was painted, and James Mill is the architect-in-chief of this description. Max Müller arbitrarily ascribed the date of 1500 BCE to the coming of the Aryans. Since the day this issue became conflated with the stated and unstated aspirations of White and European supremacy, all reasoned evidence has been thrown to the wind. Scholars worldwide can keep providing evidence after evidence to show that neither the Aryan invasion nor the Aryan migration happened, the theory will remain intact. And it will remain intact until the time the scholars in the field with European ancestry consciously and unconsciously keep believing that they and they alone can build any civilization of any substance anywhere in the world.

Furthermore, the *HSS Framework* may abstain from using the term “Aryan,” but it does not preclude McGraw-Hill’s textbook from using it. The world knows that “Aryan” is a through-and-through racist term and yet, in a complete travesty of truth, has the audacity to teach the children that Aryans were neither a race nor an ethnic group. Let us look up the dictionary meaning of “race” and “ethnic.” Merriam-Webster dictionary gives the dated meaning of race as “a group of people sharing a common cultural, geographical, linguistic, or religious origin or background.” It defines “ethnic” as “of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background.”

The McGraw-Hill textbook says that Aryans are not a race or an ethnic group, yet, as described, they share a common linguistic heritage and a common region of origin (Central Asia). This is contradictory, for if we take the dictionary definitions into account, the Aryans or the Indo-European people very much become a racial and an ethnic category. McGraw-Hill’s description is nothing but a sleight of hand to camouflage a racist discourse, and that is why all that it has written describing the Aryan people (cattle herders, nomadic people, horse riders, etc.) are classic definitions of how the German Indologists described the Aryans. The Aryans were a race back then, and they are a race, however fictitious they may be, now. The *HSS Content Standards* explicitly and the *HSS Framework* and McGraw-Hill textbook implicitly, as soon as they begin the discourse on India, Hinduism, and Hindus, teach a racist discourse

that is suffused with the colonialist agenda to show the Hindus as savage and primitive. The accomplishments of the Harappan Civilization are carefully separated from the Hindus and the coming of Aryans to the Indian subcontinent in 1500 BCE, the creation of Vedas between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE (despite that the person who gave this date, Max Müller, kept on insisting that the dates are speculative) and the mixing of Aryans and Dravidians to create a common Vedic culture are taught as putative facts with complete confidence, as fitting as it can be of White supremacy.

Mill, Caste, Hierarchy, Oppression, and the Textbook Representation

In Chap. 3, we discussed in detail Mill's representation of the Hindu social order with the explicit agenda of characterizing the Hindu people as savage, primitive, uncivilized, and brute. Almost from the very beginning of his work, Mill framed the discourse on the savagery of the Hindus within the confines of caste, oppression, and hierarchy. His central idea in the chapter "Classification and Distribution of People" (which is his Chap. 2 on the Hindus) is that it was the Brahmins who ordered the Hindu society based on divine authority and took every measure to ensure that authority, power, and wealth remained in their hands. They were the *creme de la creme* of the society, far above the rest of the "castes." They controlled the Hindu society through the performance of rituals and by keeping religious matters guarded and shrouded in mystery. Next in importance in the hierarchical order are the Kshatriyas because they protect the society from enemies. In his conception, savages are prone to fear, and the more savage they are, the more fearful they are. In proportion to the fear they feel, they revere the protector. Given that the Kshatriyas are warriors and protectors of the society, they receive unbounded respect and adoration from the savage Hindus. Mill then describes the Vaishyas as farmers, craftspeople, and merchants—people superior to Shudras, who are engaged in servile labor. Shudras as a class are denied a just share in the labors of their production. He completes the

chapter with a portrayal of the Chandalas as people who are loathed by the rest of the Hindu society, who carry corpses, who carry out executions, and who carry out the dirty and unclean work of the community.

We have also shown in Chap. 4 that Mill mainly spoke about the English society of his time in describing the Hindu society. Also, he imagined the Hindu society in the light of the transformations he envisioned in his domestic context. He imagined the Hindu Brahmins in the light of English clergy, and all his gripes against the Church of England clergy were projected onto the Hindu Brahmins. We placed his India writings against his domestic writings and showed the correlations. When he spoke about the Hindu monarch, he essentially talked about the English monarch. In describing the Hindu Kshatriyas, he effectively represented the English aristocrats. In essence, the hierarchy and oppression that were imputed onto the Hindu society since the beginning of the time were what Mill was experiencing in his domestic context, which he drastically wanted to transform. In summary, we can say that in his portrayal of the Hindu society as hierarchical and oppressive along caste lines, two salient features were operational: 1. To show the Hindu people as savage, primitive, and uncivilized. 2. The descriptions of the Hindu society were fabrications, imaginations, and projections.

The McGraw-Hill textbook, after discussing the Aryan issue, seamlessly moves into describing the Hindu social order much along the lines of caste, hierarchy, and oppression, much like Mill, who had wasted no time in engendering such a discourse. There is no exaggeration or hyperbole when we say that McGraw-Hill's description of Hindu society is nothing but a precis of Mill's chapter two on Hindus. Have a look:

Priests, leaders, and other elites used religion to justify their high place in society.... The four social classes of ancient India are called *varnas* (VAR*nehhs). People were considered members of a *varna* based on their jobs and personal behavior, but mostly based on which *varna* they were born into. The most powerful *varnas* were the Brahmins (BRAH•mihns) and Kshatriyas (KSHA•tree•uhs). The Brahmins were the priests—the people who performed religious ceremonies... The Kshatriyas were warriors and governors who ran the government and army. Next were the Vaisyas (VYSH•yuhs), or commoners. Vaishyas were usually farmers,

craftspeople, and merchants. Below the Vaisyas came the Sudras (SOO•druhs). Sudras were **manual** workers and servants. Most Indians were in the Sudra *varna*. The thousands of distinct occupational and other groupings into which persons were actually born (called *jati*, “birth”) came to be associated or linked to one or another of the *varnas* over time. Each of these *jatis* has its own strict dietary and marriage rules and customs. Scholars refer to the *jati* system as a caste (KAST) system. In such a system, people remain in the same social group for life. People’s *jati* determine the jobs they may take. *Jati* also affects people’s choice of marriage partners. Higher classes came to be seen as purer than lower ones. Relations between classes were seen in terms of spiritual purity or impurity. By 500 C.E. or earlier there existed a community outside the *jati* system called the Dalits. Sometimes called the Untouchables, Dalits did work that *jati* Indians would not do, such as sanitation, disposal of dead animals, and cremation or burning of the dead.³⁴

Just like Wilson, the editor of the fourth edition of the *History of British India*, commissioned after the death of Mill, keeps pointing out the inaccuracies in Mill’s representation of the Hindus, we would like to state that there are profound inaccuracies in how McGraw-Hill represents the Hindu society as it existed in the past and how it exists in the present (though both Mill’s as well as Spielvogel’s portrayals of the Hindu society fossilize it and represent it as unchanging since the beginning of time). We will not go any further because, as we have maintained throughout, our objective in this work is only to show the correlation between Mill’s representations of Hindus that he carefully drafted over twelve years to prove to the world the savage existence of Hindus with *HSS Content Standards*, *HSS Frameworks*, and McGraw-Hill’s narrative on Hindus and Hinduism.

The textbook does not directly call the Hindus savage. It is a different world where the dominant must be careful about the political correctness in statements and narratives. However, just like Mill set the discourse in *History* about the Hindus being hierarchical and oppressive from the beginning itself, McGraw-Hill sets the tone on Hindus being hierarchical (and oppressive, for hierarchy and oppression are synonyms in the

³⁴ Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 258, bold in original.

contemporary world) as soon as it opens the discourse on them. It does not explicitly call the Hindus savage, but implicitly, it does. It not only regurgitates Mill's narrative in describing the Hindus sans the primitive-and-savage part but also "others" the Hindus in the present context. In today's context, the civilizational value of the United States is equality and liberty, which is the stark opposite of hierarchy and oppression. Without being explicit, the discourse constructs the binary between equality and freedom vs. hierarchy and oppression. As it privileges the civilizational value of equality and liberty, it undermines hierarchy and oppression (and rightly so). However, by conflating Hindus with hierarchy and oppression, it makes them the scapegoat of all kinds of shadow projection, for which the Indian American children must bear the brunt as we will see in the next chapter. In reproducing Mill's caste-hierarchy-and-oppression narrative on the Hindus, the McGraw-Hill textbook also follows the instructional guidelines of the *HSS Framework* to the minutest details:

Ancient Indian society formed into groups, *jatis*, that emphasized birth as the defining criteria. Jatis initially shared the same occupation and married only within the group. This system, often termed *caste*, provided social stability and gave an identity to each community. The *Vedas* also describe four main social categories, known as *varnas*: Brahmins (priests), *Kshatriyas* (kings and warriors), *Vaishyas* (merchants, artisans, and farmers), and *Sudras* (peasants and laborers). A person belonged to a particular varna not just by professional excellence and good conduct, but primarily by birth. In addition, by 500 CE or earlier, there existed certain communities outside the *jati* system, the *Dalits* (sometimes known as "Untouchables"), who did the most unclean work, such as cremation, disposal of dead animals, and sanitation. Relations between classes came to be expressed in terms of ritual purity or impurity, higher classes being purer than lower ones. This class system became distinctive over the centuries for being especially complex and formal, involving numerous customs and prohibitions on eating together and intermarrying that kept social and occupational groups distinct from one another in daily life.³⁵

³⁵"Chapter Ten: History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2016," 164.

Once the hierarchical and oppressive nature of the Hindus has been established, it becomes straightforward to wade into other areas where their tyrannical nature could be shown. Even the positives are turned into negatives. For instance:

In ancient India, the family was the center of life. Grandparents, parents, and children live together in an extended family. Elder family members were respected. The oldest male in the family was in charge of the entire household.³⁶

Family and respect for elders are values that are upheld in American society as well. However, notice how the positive description has been turned into a negative by suggesting that the family structure was patriarchal and, therefore, hierarchical and oppressive, where the eldest man of the family ruled the roost. Once again, the issue here is not whether this was true or not (untrue as far as we are concerned, which we will settle in future publications); one thing is quite certain: the textbook will leave no stone unturned in furthering the colonial “hierarchy and oppression” narrative on Hindus.

In discussing how Mill characterized the Hindus in Chap. 3, we made specific note of how he describes Hindu men as women abusers, and we also remarked that Mill’s narrative on this aspect of Hindu men is reproduced almost verbatim in the grade-school discourse. Though we direct our readers to his direct quote in Chap. 3, the following is the summary of his bile: Hindu men keep Hindu women in abject slavery as instruments of fulfilling their sexual lust and sexual lust alone. They do not enjoy any rights; they cannot inherit property; they are made entirely dependent on men; they are treated as property; they are subjected to perpetual and servile labor; they cannot on their own perform any religious rites, only with their husbands; they are denied any visibility in the sacred texts; and they live most degrading and humiliating of the conditions. The following is what the McGraw-Hill textbook states:

³⁶ Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 259.

Men had more rights than women in India. Males inherited property, unless there were no sons in the family. Men attended school or became priests, while women were educated at home. Both men and women attended religious ceremonies and celebrations, but not as equals.³⁷

The textbook author, of course, cannot be as crude as Mill in describing the status of Hindu women. Yet, he conveys quite effectively his description of the degraded status of Hindu women in India. There is another profoundly troubling dimension to the textbook narrative: Even when it speaks about Hindus of ancient India, it keeps inserting statements where the past/present dichotomy gets entirely blurred. The grade-school students begin interpreting the discourse as if it is describing the current Hindu condition. Again, this is understandable because, starting with Mill, the Hindu society has been frozen in a timeless dimension: a society that has not changed since the time memorial. In the binary of change and dynamism vs. frozen timelessness, the Europeans, with the Enlightenment persuasion, accorded themselves dynamism and progress. In contrast, they projected changelessness to the Hindus, frozen in time. Let us look at the following two descriptions:

Young men from India's leading families could marry only after finishing 12 years of education. In India, parents arranged marriages for their children. Even today, many marriages are arranged. In early India, boys and girls often married in their teens. People could not get divorced.³⁸

Many Hindus today in India and in the United States do not identify themselves as a member of a caste.³⁹

In stating that many Hindus in India and the United States do not identify themselves with a caste and that Indian parents engage in arranged marriages for their children, the textbook is making the description of the Hindus of Ancient India come alive in the present. The past does not remain buried in the past; it becomes the present—and present as defined

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 259.

³⁹Ibid., 259.

and characterized by Mill with the explicit agenda and intention of making the Hindus savages. The Indian American children suffer the consequences of this representation, which we will discuss in the subsequent chapter.

Mill, Hinduism, and the Textbook Representation

Since Mill considered the Hindus as the irrational “other” of the European rational men, he suffused his discourse, characterizing Hinduism as an irrational and incoherent religion. In his “learned” assessment, it is imprecise, chaotic, contradictory, and vague. He derides both the pantheism and the monotheism, liberally present in the tradition—well! traditions in his conceptualization, for Hinduism, in his scheme of things, is nothing but a rag-tag collocation of different contradictory traditions. He mocks the idea of the one Divine, which has become everything in the universe—the central idea of the Upanishads that there is nothing but one Brahman, which manifests in cosmic and universal multiplicity. He mocks the three central Deities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and derides the distribution of powers amongst them in the running of the universe—Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; Shiva, the transformer. Mill characterizes Hinduism as a “religion” full of mindless ceremonies, which far exceed the observation of morality and ethics. Panegyrics and flattery of the divine abound in the religion. He does not spare even yoga and meditation practices, conflating yoga with penances and equating it to what will contemporaneously be called sadism. He ridicules the respect for animals and closes the chapter “Religion of the Hindus,” scoffing at the karma theory and its two central ideas around which the theory is constructed: metempsychosis and transmigration. Karma, in his assessment, does not make the Hindus moral; on the contrary, it makes them devoid of free will, lazy, and fatalistic. The aforementioned summarizes our Chap. 3 discussion of Mill’s ideas on Hinduism, where we fully unfolded how Mill conceptualized his ideas in the larger framework of showing Hindus and Hinduism as savage and barbaric.

In Chap. 4, we showed how Mill constructed his ideas in the light of the Christianity of the Church of England—*Church of Englandism* as he derisively called it. Mill fashioned the characterization and representation of Hinduism in the backdrop of the practices of the clergy of the Church of England, with whom he not only was engaged in ideological warfare but also held them as people who had muddled and sullied Christianity. In the light of practices of the Church of England that he wanted to suppress and transform, he constructed the image of Hinduism. In other words, in the light of the shadows (pun unintended) of *Church of Englandism*, Mill's Hinduism was fabricated. Mill had profound issues with how the clergy controlled the minds of people using ceremonies and panegyrics directed towards God and felt that these activities reduced His omniscience and omnipresence, lowering Him from what He is. He held prayers and ceremonies as anti-Christian. Consequently, he spent considerable time in describing in the *History* Hinduism as a religion involving rituals, ceremonies, panegyrics, and flattery. The lack of morality in the practices of the Church of England was projected to show the lack of morality in Hinduism.

The McGraw-Hill textbook reflects a refined version of the discourse above. Apart from covering all the topics that Mill had written about, Brahman, Upanishads, Deities, and many others that we shall soon see, in “Lesson 2: Religions of Ancient India,” it describes Hinduism as a religion that was formed when the religion of the Brahmins mixed with the

ideas of the other people of India.... Hinduism includes many beliefs and practices.... acceptance of religious diversity also grew to be a central aspect of Hinduism.... [Hindus] believed in many different Deities. Hindus built temples and statues and held ceremonies for these Deities. Eventually four Deities became the most important: *Brahma* the creator, *Vishnu* the preserver, *Shiva* the Deity who transforms the world, and *Sarasvati* the Deity of learning. Over time, Hindus came to think of all the Deities as different parts of Brahman, the one universal spirit.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ibid., 261–62.

The above sentences should be carefully studied in light of what Mill has left behind for us. When the textbook states that Hinduism is a diverse tradition, it does not suggest the central Vedic dictum that it is the oneness of Brahman that simultaneously manifests in the diversity of Deities; on the contrary, it means how, over a period of time, different traditions mixed to become what is known as Hinduism today. Of course, in the current climate of political correctness, the textbook is not going to state as Mill boldly asserted, that Hinduism is a rag-tag collocation of different ideas that are incoherent and are in contradiction to one another, but if we dig only a little deeper, Mill's reflection on the description becomes clear. It is the same Millian idea that Hinduism's diversity is not an organic one that has been present since its inception revealed through the spiritual practices of the sages but a synthetic one that came about when "Brahmanism" mixed with other traditions. This description also reeks of the racist Aryan invasion or migration theory, which has long held that it was the mighty Aryans who came to India and established Brahmanism first and then, as they intermixed with the indigenous populations, gave birth to Hinduism. Whereas the textbook describes the Abrahamic religions as revealed and hence superior religions, it implicitly describes Hinduism as concocted or fabricated and, therefore, an inferior religion to the Abrahamic faiths.

The rituals and ceremonies directed to the Deities are also insidiously inserted in the above quote. Apart from all the vitriol that Mill poured against rituals and ceremonies in his domestic context, which further reinforced Protestant Christianity's distaste for the practices of Catholicism and which also became one of the defining features of his definition of Hinduism, the textbook makes Hinduism as the "other" of the dominant religion of the United States: Protestant Christianity. The effects of all of these become visible on the psyche of the Indian American children, as we will see in the next chapter.

We already saw that Mill had discussed the karma theory with metempsychosis and reincarnation as its two principles within the larger container of proving how savage and brute the Hindus were and have been. It would have been nothing short of a miracle if the McGraw-Hill textbook had not discussed it. Here is the discussion:

Another part of Hinduism is the belief in **reincarnation** (REE•ihn•kahr•NAY•shuhn) or the rebirth of the soul. Hindus strive for *moksha*, the ultimate peace.... In Hinduism, the idea of reincarnation is closely related to another idea known as **karma** (KAHR•muh). According to karma, people's **status** in life is not an accident. It is based on what they did in past lives. In addition, the things people do in this life determine how they will be reborn. If someone leads an evil life, that person is reborn into a lower form of life. When good people die, their souls are reborn into a higher form of life.... Beliefs such as reincarnation also made many Indians more accepting of the *jati* system. A devout Hindu believed that the people in a higher *jati* were superior and deserved their status. At the same time, the belief in reincarnation gave hope to people from every walk of life. A person who leads a good life is reborn into a higher *jati*.⁴¹

Apart from the fact that the above is a simplistic and reductionist understanding of karma, which most indigenous scholars of Hinduism would reject (but that is not the point here), the karma theory here is linked specifically to the “Hinduism equals caste equals hierarchy equals oppression” rendition of Mill. Mill's exposition of the equation is explicit, whereas McGraw-Hill's textbook does the same without being explicit.

Next in the target line is dharma, one of the most cherished concepts of the Hindus. Dharma comes from the root word *dhr*, which means to uphold. It is dharma that makes the Hindus revere rivers, mountains, forests, the earth, and their family and family kins, village, nation, etc. It is dharma that binds the Hindu to the divine. The McGraw-Hill textbook does not spare even dharma—which it defines as people's duties—from linking it with caste and hierarchy and obliquely with oppression: “People's duties are different, depending on their place in society. A farmer has different duties than a priest. Men have different duties than women.”⁴² Dharma, therefore, becomes a tool for the oppression of people along the caste and gender lines—not explicitly stated, but the implicit meaning is as clear as daylight. It further conjoins dharma with karma, which has already been conflated with caste and hierarchy, and

⁴¹ Ibid., 262–63, bold in original.

⁴² Ibid., 263.

through this conjoining, consigns some of the most essential epics and texts of the Hindus to the gut of oppression:

Hindus believe that through acceptance and performance of their personal duties [dharma], they can influence how their soul is reincarnated in a future life [karma]. How do Indian texts, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana* describe the importance of dharma? How does dharma vary from one person to another?⁴³

And then ensures that the *Bhagavad Gita* is represented as a book promoting war along with promoting casteism:

One section of the *Bhagavad Gita*, “Of the Distress of Arjuna” explains the struggle that Arjuna endures when forced to face his relatives on the battlefield. The Deity Krishna explains to Arjuna his responsibilities as a warrior.⁴⁴

“Responsibilities as a warrior” is a euphemism for performing Kshatriya responsibilities. Not that it is untrue, but there are not more than three or four verses in the Gita out of seven hundred that speak about Varna. The McGraw-Hill description not only reduces the Gita but also surreptitiously links it with the recurring theme we encounter in the representation of Hinduism: Hinduism is nothing but caste and hierarchy.

The textbook further ensures that dharma responsibilities and obligations are squarely linked to caste, and nothing is left to imagination:

The laws of Manu (c.100 C.E) is an ancient text that explains the obligations of all Hindus. It includes 12 chapters and more than 2,600 verses. Attributed to the Hindu scholar Manu, the laws describe how individuals from each of the four varnas are expected to behave, including specific expectations for men and women.⁴⁵

For Hindus, the textbook once again on this topic breaks the past/present dichotomy and represents the Hindus as living in a timeless continuum:

⁴³ Ibid., 280.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Many Hindus today still believe that a man should go through four stages in his life: a student (preparing to live in the world), a married man (accepting worldly responsibilities), a forest dweller (retirement from the world), and, finally a wandering monk (completely renouncing the world).⁴⁶

The textbook, as it mirrors the colonial and racist narrative of Mill, therefore cannot absolve itself by saying that it is describing the Hindu past, however erroneously misrepresented it may be. Just as there was no difference for Mill in the Hindu past and the Hindu present, there is no distinction for the McGraw-Hill textbook either. The past it describes in the name of Hindu history is very well the Hindu present.

Further, in engaging in the above representation, the textbook meticulously follows the contents of the *HSS Framework*:

These teachings were transmitted orally at first, and then later in written texts, the *Upanishads* and, later, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Performance of duties and ceremonies, along with devotion and meditation, became dimensions of the supreme quest to achieve oneness with God. That fulfillment, however, demands obedience to the moral law of the universe, called *dharma*, which also refers to performance of social duties. Fulfilling *dharma* is one of the four primary goals of human life, along with *kama* (love), *artha* (wealth) and *moksha* (oneness with God). Success or failure at existing in harmony with *dharma* determines how many times an individual might be subject to reincarnation, or repeated death and rebirth at either lower or higher positions of moral and ritual purity. Progress toward spiritual realization is governed by *karma*, the principle of cause-and-effect by which human actions, good and bad, affect this and future lives. Many of the central practices of Hinduism today, including home and temple worship, yoga and meditation, rites of passage (*samskaras*), festivals, pilgrimage, respect for saints and gurus, and, above all, a profound acceptance of religious diversity, developed over time.⁴⁷

The Indian American children consequently bear the brunt, as we shall shortly see.

⁴⁶Ibid., 263.

⁴⁷"Chapter Ten: History Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, 2016," 163–64.

Oppressive Hinduism vs. Emancipatory Buddhism

As we saw earlier, Mill conjectured that oppressive Brahmins persecuted the Buddhist monks, leading to the monks fleeing India and settling in Southeast and East Asia. With the foundation of this representation laid, the German Indologists carefully erected the edifice of emancipatory Buddhism, emerging from the shackles of oppressive Brahmanism in the next few decades.⁴⁸ The McGraw-Hill textbook, in a nuanced manner, reflects the dichotomy above. We also saw how Mill, who was extremely dissatisfied with the ritual practices of the priests of the Church of England, constructed a negative characterization of Hinduism surrounding ceremonies. In his rant on the Hindus, hierarchy, oppression, Brahmins, and ceremonies are synonyms. Any postcolonial representation of Hinduism that relies exclusively on ceremonies in characterizing it inheres within itself the prejudice and bias of Mill. The McGraw-Hill textbook does exactly that:

During the 500s B.C.E., some Indians felt unhappy with the many ceremonies of the Hindu religion. They wanted a simpler, more spiritual faith. They left their homes and looked for peace in the hills and forests. Many trained their minds to focus and think in positive ways. This training was called meditation. Meditation had originated within Hinduism over 1000 years earlier. Using meditation, some seekers developed new ideas and became religious teachers. One of these teachers was Siddhartha Gautama (sih•DAHR•tuh GOW•tah•muh). He became known as the Buddha (BOO•dah). He founded a new religion called Buddhism (BOO•dih•zuhm).⁴⁹

In saying that there was dissatisfaction amongst people due to the ceremonies of Hinduism, the textbook fundamentally reproduces the Millian narrative that Brahmins, with their ceremonies, were oppressing the masses, due to which some of them left their homes in search of peace. It

⁴⁸ See for details Adluri and Bagchee, *The Nay Science*.

⁴⁹ Spielfogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 264.

is a different matter that the individual pursuit of divinity and truth has been built into Hinduism through *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*—which do not involve rituals and ceremonies—that led people like the Buddha to step out.

The McGraw-Hill textbook further constructs the image of Buddhism in the backdrop of oppressive Hinduism through its caste system, which becomes crystallized in the following:

Buddhism spread because it welcomed people from all walks of life. The Buddha placed little importance on the *jati* system. He believed people's place in life did not depend on the *jati* into which they were born. The Buddha explained that the success of life depended on people's behavior now. Like Hindus, the Buddha believed in reincarnation, but in a different way. He thought that people could end the cycle of rebirth by following the eightfold path rather than their dharma.⁵⁰

The textbook, in a nutshell, replicates the oppressive Hinduism vs emancipatory Buddhism narrative. Hinduism is once again subtly represented as an oppressive system ensconced in caste and caste-based dharma. This dichotomy is entrenched in the children's minds when asked to make the following inquiry: "Why was Buddhism so appealing to some followers of the Hindu religion?"⁵¹

In addition, it subtly describes the pre-Buddhist Indian society (aka the Hindu society) as one where there was massive poverty and suffering for the masses and an inordinate amount of richness for the privileged:

[Siddhartha Gautama] grew up as a prince in a small Kingdom near the Himalaya.... As a young man, Siddhartha seemed to have everything. He was rich, handsome, and happily married with a newborn son. Then one day he left his palace to explore the life of ordinary people in the kingdom. As he traveled, Siddhartha was shocked at the misery and poverty around him. He saw beggars, people who were sick, and aged people with nowhere to live.⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid., 265.

⁵¹Ibid., 267.

⁵²Ibid., 264.

The documented biography or hagiography of the Buddha—however one may look at it—states that Siddhartha Gautama encountered an old person, a sick person, a dead person, and a monk in the four trips that he took from his palace, which inspired him to leave his kingdom in search of truth.⁵³ It nowhere talks about poverty and beggars. It is essential to question the genesis of this falsehood. It can be traced to Mill's representation of the Hindu society, where only the monarchs and Brahmins were wealthy, and the masses lived in stark poverty. In the backdrop of Mill's characterization, the Buddha's predominantly existential quest becomes social, inspired by poverty caused by wealthy monarchs. And Buddhism becomes a religion to escape the oppression of the ceremony-obsessed Brahmins, who also crafted the hierarchical caste system.

Oppressive Hindu King vs. Emancipatory Buddhist King

We saw earlier how Mill painted a picture of Hindu kings as despotic and absolutist. In his representation, the monarchical king held exclusive control over executive, legislative, and judicial matters, with all the powers collapsed in him. The absolutist form of governance necessitated maintaining a vast army, for which he taxed his subjects heavily. He ruled with arbitrary power and will. In addition, Mill also generated the narrative of India being a land of invasions since antiquity.

Not to flog a dead horse, we also saw that the above representations were projections and fabrications, with Mill generating data from his domestic context. More specifically, his characterizations of Hindu governance were in the light of the British governance structure that he found highly troubling, which he desperately needed to transform in Britain. These pieces of lies, distortions, fabrications, and projections that Mill crafted to show the Hindus as savage and primitive once again sans the primitive part are reflected in the McGraw-Hill textbook. In the section "Origin of an Empire," the textbook begins with the Millian representation of India being a land of invading armies:

⁵³ See Charles S. Prebish and Damien Keown, *Introducing Buddhism* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

By the 500s B.C.E, India was divided into many small kingdoms. Conflict over land and trade weakened the kingdoms, leaving them open to foreign invasion. First, Persian armies conquered the Indus Valley in the 500s B.C.E and made it part of the Persian Empire. The Greeks, under Alexander the Great, that defeated the Persians. Alexander entered India but turned back in 325 B.C.E, when his homesick troops threatened to rebel.⁵⁴

Alexander's army threatened to rebel because it not only encountered stiff resistance from the army of a small Indian kingdom ruled by Porus, which led to Alexander getting injured and the loss of its several men, but also came to know that there were far bigger and ferocious armies awaiting its men in the interiors of India if it dared to proceed further.^{55,56} However, this is something the textbook does not speak about, for it would run contrary to the Millian narrative. Instead, it paints a distorted picture, arguing that Alexander's army threatened to rebel because it was tired and homesick.

The textbook continues with the Millian representation:

After Alexander left India, an Indian military officer named Chandragupta Maurya built a strong army. He knew that only a large and powerful empire

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁵⁵ In Arrian, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The Brief Life and Towering Exploits of History's Greatest Conqueror: As Told by His Original Biographers*, eds. Tania Gergel and Michael Wood (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 120, Plutarch writes: "As for the Macedonians, however, their struggle with Porus blunted their courage and stayed their further advance into India. For having had all they could do to repulse an enemy who mustered only twenty thousand infantry and two thousand horses, they violently opposed Alexander when he insisted on crossing the river Ganges also, the width of which, as they learned, was thirty-two furlongs, its depth a hundred fathoms, while its banks on the further side were covered with multitudes of men-at-arms and horsemen and elephants. For they were told that the kings of the Ganderites and Praesii were awaiting them with eighty thousand horsemen, two hundred thousand footmen, eight thousand chariots, and six thousand fighting elephants."

⁵⁶ In J. W. McCrindle, ed. and trans., *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017), 33, Megasthenes writes: "Gangaridai, a nation which possesses a vast force of the largest-sized elephants. Owing to this, their country has never been conquered by any foreign king; for all other nations dread the overwhelming number and strength of these animals. Thus Alexander the Macedonian, after conquering all Asia, did not make war upon the Gangaridai, as he did on all others; for when he had arrived with all his troops at the river Ganges, he abandoned as hopeless an invasion of the Gangaridai when he learned that they possessed four thousand elephants well trained and equipped for war."

could defend India against invasion. In 321 B.C.E., Chandragupta set out to conquer northern India and unify the region under his rule.⁵⁷

Chandragupta Maurya defeated the Greeks that Alexander had left behind in that part of India that had come under Persian control. The defeat of the Greeks resulted in a matrimonial alliance between Seleucus Nicator's daughter and Chandragupta Maurya's son Bindusara, but these facts are not mentioned, for they would run contrary to the Millian legacy, which the McGraw-Hill textbook tends to inherit. Seleucus Nicator was the successor of Alexander and, after the latter's death, became the emperor of the Seleucid empire, which in its heydays covered Asia Minor, the Iranian plateau, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

Reflecting the Millian construction that Hindu kings were despots and absolutist, the textbook states:

Chandragupta was the first ruler of the Mauryan dynasty. He set up a highly centralized government in the capital city of Patliputra (PAH•tah•lih•POO•truh). He divided his empire into provinces which were ruled by governors whom he appointed. This helped him organize such a large territory.⁵⁸

With the above characterization, the textbook kills any possibility of people's participation in the Hindu governance structure. On the contrary, what emerges is that he ruled with an iron hand and did not tolerate any dissent. He was cruel and cared more for his own interests than the lives of the people who served him. In addition, he was a coward.

More than 600,000 strong, Chandragupta's powerful army crushed any resistance to his rule. He also used spies to report any disloyalty among his subjects. While he was a strong ruler, Chandragupta was very cautious. He was afraid of being poisoned, so he had servants taste his food before he ate it. He was so concerned about being attacked that he never slept two nights in a row in the same bed.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Spielvogel, *World History & Geography: Ancient Civilizations*, 270.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 270.

Chandragupta had a grandson, Ashoka, who eventually became the ruler of the Mauryan empire. The textbook descriptions related to him crystalize the binary between an oppressive Hindu king, Chandragupta Maurya, and an emancipatory Buddhist king, Ashoka. The following from the textbook will make it amply evident:

Ashoka was an unusual king. Like many rulers, Ashoka began his rule with fierce wars of conquest. Eventually, he came to hate killing. After one battle, he looked at the fields covered with dead and wounded soldiers. He was horrified by what he saw. Ashoka committed his life to spreading Buddhist teachings and becoming a man of peace. Ashoka kept his promise. During the rest of his life, he tried to improve the lives of his people. Ashoka made laws that encouraged good deeds, family harmony, nonviolence, and toleration of other religions. He created hospitals for people and for animals. He built fine roads, with rest houses and shade trees for the travelers' comfort.⁶⁰

Ashoka's civic engagements pertaining to the improvement of the lives of the people, like building hospitals, roads, and rest houses and "making" laws to ensure family harmony and toleration of religions that are attributed to his turn to Buddhism do not come from Buddhism but from the text of statecraft, which was composed by the mentor and the teacher of his grandfather: Kautilya. Kautilya quickly identified the precocity of Chandragupta Maurya and helped him become the ruler of almost the entire Indian subcontinent. In the process, the former also authored a text in the lineage of *Arthaśāstra*, which, among other vital issues related to statecraft, outlines quite clearly what an ideal king should do to be respected among the people.⁶¹ However, given Mill's prejudices on Hinduism that the textbook has inherited, the author does not and will not investigate and represent the influence of Kautilya's text on Ashoka, for Kautilya and Chandragupta Maurya are conflated with the Hindu tradition.

The imprint of Mill's *History* on the school textbooks is not peripheral or minimal; on the contrary, it is central. This explicit connection and

⁶⁰Ibid., 271.

⁶¹Kautilya, *The Arthashastra*, ed. and trans., L. N. Rangarajan (New Delhi: Penguin, 1992).

correlation between Mill's colonial and racist discourse on Hindus, Hinduism, and Ancient India and the current textbook discourse on their parallel counterparts involving caste, hierarchy, and implicit oppression affect Indian American children deeply. In the backdrop of the currently upheld values of equality and emancipation, they are "othered." As soon as they are exposed to this narrative, even when they cannot cognitively comprehend the projection of the shadows they are subjected to, they begin to feel it. They are affected by it in more ways than one. We now turn to comprehensively investigating and discussing the negative psychological consequences that the representation above of Hinduism has on Indian American children, which is our topic for the next and concluding chapter.

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