



# THE CLANDESTINE CURRICULUM

## IN THE CLASSROOM

By Yvette C. Rosser

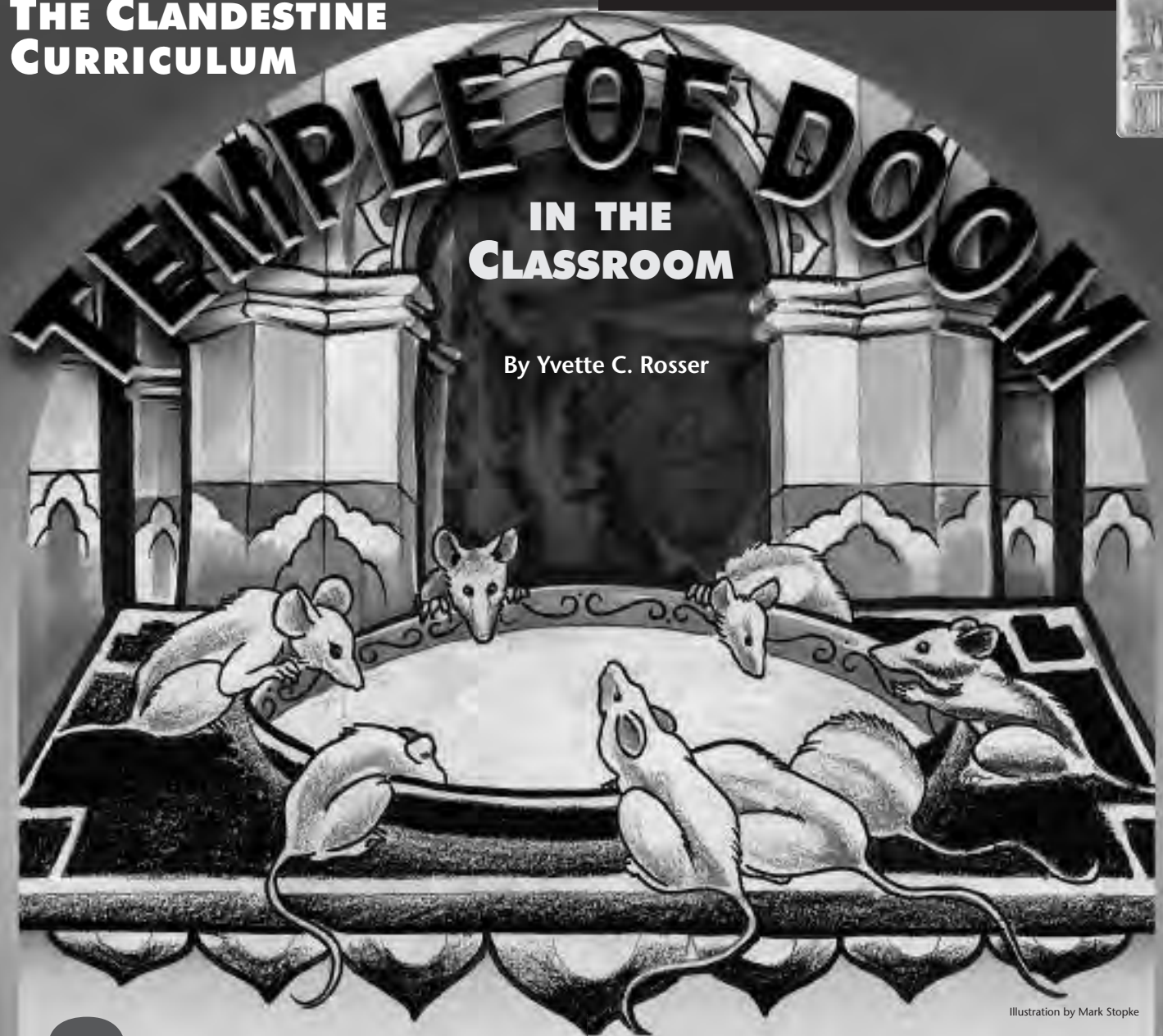


Illustration by Mark Stopke

**S**ocial studies classrooms often have a back door through which a clandestine curriculum enters with images from popular myths, media, and movies. The scholarly discourse and the learning experience intertwine with this backdoor curriculum of folklore, stereotypes, and sensational misinformation. Often the fusion between Hollywood and the syllabus is so complete that fact and fiction become confused, and ultimately, like Shakespeare or the Bible, we are unsure of the source of our knowledge.

Content on India is particularly susceptible to these covert pressures. At educational workshops about India and when making presentations to high school students, I am inevitably asked about the worship of rats in India. When I assert that it is absurd to teach this to students, teachers often argue that they “read it in an AP newswire.” I found it difficult to believe that in American classrooms rat worship is actually taught as a bonafide Hindu practice until my own son came home from high school and told me his World History teacher had made that very statement. The son of my friend who lives in another state also reported the same thing. Urban legends have metamorphosed into fact.

I have often explained to educators and students that the worship of rats among Hindus, at an obscure temple in Rajasthan mentioned in that now infamous AP wire report during the ‘epidemic’ in Surat in the early nineties, is comparable to the worship among Christians of David Koresh at the Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. This is an effective strategy, since teachers and students respond passionately that though some Christians may have worshiped David Koresh, it is certainly not a defining characteristic of Christianity and is actually abhorrent to most Christians—as is rat worship among Hindus. This analogy helps to deconstruct and discard the flimsy tale of so-called rat worship in India.

When I make presentations about India at teachers’ conferences or in classrooms, the two most often asked questions are: “Why do women wear a ‘dot’ on their foreheads?” and “Why, when there is so much poverty in India, don’t they eat all those cows?” These questions broach issues of relevance and correlating non-Western practices to similar experiences in the students’ lives, within a context they can comprehend.

When information about India is contextualized and made relevant rather than exotic and inexplicable, students will have a

more realistic, and hopefully nonbiased perspective of Indian culture. In answering the question about beef eating, I explain it in several ways. I mention the negative impact that raising beef for meat can have on the environment and, citing statistics, explain that it is ecologically highly inefficient to raise cattle for meat. It takes approximately sixteen pounds of edible vegetable protein and 44,000 gallons of water to make one pound of beef.<sup>1</sup> India cannot afford to waste that much protein and water in an inversely productive ratio. I explain that cows are used primarily for milk, which is a staple and one of the main caloric sources in India. In addition, oxen are essential for pulling plows and carts and for crop irrigation.

Even more importantly, the cow is the national symbol, like the eagle is the symbol of the U.S., where, in some states, even to be in possession of an eagle feather, unless you are a member of a registered tribe, is a criminal offense punishable by a \$5,000 fine. To many Hindus, their cow is a member of the family, like the family dog is loved in the U.S. We would never eat Rover. Americans are repulsed by the thought of eating dog meat. Most Indians feel the same about the flesh of cows. Americans can easily understand this canine analogy: the thought of eating a cow is as repulsive to most Hindus as the thought of eating a dog or a horse is to most Americans. This does not preclude the eating of dogs or horses in other countries. Culinary habits are quite culturally specific.

A university student of Indian heritage suggested that teachers in World History classes should make associations

*with something Western that kids can understand—associate rebirth or moksha with a Christian principle like being born again or salvation. If [teachers discussed] the American flag and its [patriotic] symbolism, suddenly it would become clear what a symbol is. Instead of just saying that Hindus are idolaters, tell the students that the idols [revered by Hindus] are [religious] symbols to them. Unless the teacher explains it, in their own terms, the [students] think ‘these people are weird,’ but if you explain about the symbolism of the flag, it becomes rational.*

Relating perceived oddities about India to aspects of life in the West can shine a sympathetic light of commonality on practices and theories that might otherwise appear laughable and strange. Grounding the unfamiliar in a recognizable cultural context encourages transferability of respect for other traditions and an appreciation for the pluralistic nature of our world.

The “dot” on the forehead of Indian women is also easy to explain. Though historically originating from a mark with religious connotations still used by holy men and women and by priests, contemporary forms of the ‘dot’ are often made from velvet and glitter. They play the same glamorous role as lipstick or mascara.

Some fashion statements are shared across cultures, such as the painting of women’s nails and piercing of ear lobes, and others are particular to a certain people, such as the *bindi*, or dot. As



Illustration by Mark Stopke

can be seen by the growing popularity of nose rings among Western youths and blue jeans among Indian teens, fashions borrowed from other countries can easily become the norm.<sup>2</sup>

High school teachers often lament that India is more difficult to teach than other countries in Asia. They complain it’s too diverse, too ancient, too exotic, too many gods with too many arms. Unfortunately, only a small fraction of aspiring teachers are able to take courses about India during their college experiences. Many educators are therefore at a disadvantage when trying to understand the complexities, sophistication, and resilience of Indic civilization, particularly the tremendous pressures and dynamic changes that have occurred in Hindu/Indic traditions through

the millennia. Since teachers generally have inadequate academic preparation to teach about India, the focus in our classrooms is often centered on the three P’s: population, poverty, and pollution—the usual perspective found in popular media treatments of modern India.

Following the chronology of the World History curriculum from the “Cradle of Civilization” approach, teachers often highlight the Indus-Saraswati culture while studying ancient river valleys. Excavated ruins from the Indus-Saraswati civilization extend over an area covering half a million square miles, roughly the size of Western Europe—stretching a thousand miles from the Himalayan foothills to the shores of the Arabian Sea. Sites have been found in western Afghanistan near the Iranian border, across most of present-day Pakistan and much of northwest India, including a large seaport in Southern Gujarat. Salient archaeological and cultural characteristics link these far-flung sites: the uniformity of building styles and materials, advanced urban planning, a uniform standard of weights and measures, hundreds of small seals carved from soapstone and decorated with a wide variety of animal figures, and an as yet undeciphered script. The symbols on these many small seals such as the Pipal or Bo tree, the Brahma bull, the swastika, the trident, serpents, tigers, and a male figure in a yogic or meditative position, often referred to as a “Proto-Shiva,” are still sacred to modern-day Hindus.

High school level textbooks often take great interest in explaining about the amazing drainage system of these 5,000-year-old urban sites. Many dwellings were equipped with bathrooms that had facilities for showering as well as a toilet. The sewage was channeled out of the private houses to covered canals that ran alongside the public roadways. This hygienic sewer system was far more advanced than anything found in contemporaneous urban sites in the Middle East and even more efficient than can be found in some less developed areas of modern India.

Many teachers in American high schools take the time, during the first weeks of a World History course, to teach about this remarkable culture that thrived for thousands of years with an economy based on commerce and agriculture. Goods sent from the Indian subcontinent to Mesopotamia and Sumeria, 4,500 years ago,

included luxury items such as teak and sandalwood, cotton, sesame oil, etched carnelian beads, lapis lazuli, precious and semi-precious stones, and bronze ware. DNA testing has shown that cotton used for wrapping a mummy in an Egyptian pyramid dated 2400 B.C.E. was of Indian origin. There are cuneiform records indicating that even peacocks were exported to the Fertile Crescent thousands of years ago. These are facts that make history fascinating. However, the treatment of the Indus-Saraswati civilization may be one of the only positive representations of India offered to students until they get to the modern period, when most teachers will take up the topic of Mahatma Gandhi and his influence on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The rest, several millennia of Indian history, is often skipped because of the teacher's lack of familiarity or shortage of time.

**W**hen topics about India are discussed in American classrooms, one of the most common themes is to focus on the caste system as the defining feature of Indic civilization, the lens, as it were, through which a foreigner can understand Hinduism. This is the usual approach, not only in World History and World Geography classrooms, but in university courses as well. At the high school level students sometimes play games in which they draw lots to determine into what caste they have *by chance* been born. The students must abide by prescribed hierarchical rules that proscribe certain behaviors and allow specific privileges to a select group, namely the “power-hungry dogmatic Brahmins.” The untouchables are banished to one corner of the classroom or forced to stand outside in the hallway.

American students, who are taught from grade one that equality is the basis of our democratic society, will inherently feel negatively towards the privileged Brahmins. Teachers consider the game successful if the students playing the role of the upper castes gleefully lord their status over their classmates, commanding them to do demeaning chores. The luck of the draw determines their caste, their fate. There is little discussion of the concepts of *karma* and *samsara* upon which the caste system is based.

*Karma* is often erroneously defined as chance, fortune, fate, or coincidence, when it is more aptly the sum total of a soul's experiences. Our Karma is the residue or residual energy created by the power of our thoughts, words, and deeds—this energy determines the future trajectory of our soul's path. Karma has been likened to little specks of dust that attach themselves to the pure white light of the soul that color and distort our perceptions, which then create our understandings, thus determining how we experience and respond to our lives. It is the result of an individual's free will—cause and effect—that determines his or her destiny . . . not random luck.

*Samsara* refers to the “rounds of rebirth” through which a soul must pass in order to burn off accumulated karma and transcend to higher states of consciousness. Our birth family, which according to this system of thought we consciously choose at the time of conception, as well as the personal challenges we will face, including the strengths and weaknesses of our character, are determined by our past thoughts and deeds. In this system each individual is responsible for his or her own fate or destiny. There are no accidents of birth—poverty or riches, a sorrow-filled life or one full of joy, traits such as kindness or cruelty, are determined by our own

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previous actions and intentions. However, it is important to understand that karma is not etched in stone and can be altered by conscious efforts toward self-realization. Each soul is on a journey that will ultimately lead to enlightenment. Our *dharma*, determined by our accumulated karma, is more than mere chance or luck. It is an intimate, individual spiritual path or calling, the unfolding of which is unavoidable and also a sacred duty.<sup>3</sup>

In the ancient past, caste was not determined by birth but rather by ability. This is one important historical caveat about the caste system that is rarely explained to students. Historically there was a high degree of caste mobility, and interrelationships between groups were in constant flux. Many famous characters in Indian history, such as Valmiki, who wrote the epic *The Ramayana*, are referred to as Brahmins, though Valmiki was actually born in a low caste family. Numerous famous dynasties were founded by men who were born into the servant caste and due to their great deeds became kings—the strength of their personalities determined their caste, not their parentage. Many scholars point out that through census data formulated to serve the colonial project, and a quota system designed to divide and rule, the British helped to reify the caste system. Caste identity was, in the distant past, and is even now, far more adaptable and far less codified than is understood in World History textbooks.

If being born in a certain caste is *by chance*, like the drawing of lots, then it is certainly cavalier and unfair. But, if the caste system is explained in the context of the broader epistemology, including a discussion of *dharma* (duty, personal spiritual path) and *karma*, then the original concept—dividing the work of society up according to the skill and predilection of the individual—does not seem inherently evil but has a rationale, which is seldom explained to school children.

**T**he caste system, as taught in American classrooms, is represented as the exact opposite of our democratic institutions. If a rigid caste system is employed to explain the primary expression or essence of Indic civilization, it makes that culture seem heartless and quite unfair and does not further the understanding of the fluidity and mobility inherent in Hinduism. This critique is not offered as an apology for the caste system, but as an alternative to negatively objectifying caste as the evil other that ultimately becomes the hallmark of Indian civilization. In a survey of high school level World History textbooks, I found that more space is devoted to the caste system than all the other characteristics of Hindu India combined, such as art, literature, architecture, philosophy, economics, politics, and the culturally rich and diverse population.

In textbooks, few other aspects of Hinduism are considered as relevant or dealt with in comparable depth as is the caste system. What is downplayed or rarely mentioned are India's post-independence efforts toward national integration of its minorities and low caste citizens. Caste was made illegal by the Indian con-

**Students should be informed, when discussing the Caste System, that modern Hindu teachers such as Swami Vivekananda, who visited the U.S. in the 1890s, Shri Aurobindo, a revered twentieth-century philosopher and vocal advocate for Indian independence, and also the well-known leader Mahatma Gandhi, have been at the**

stitution in 1950. But just as the Civil Rights Amendment of 1965 did not immediately end racism in the U.S., the legal prohibition against caste prejudice did not automatically end centuries of social discrimination. Instead of objectifying the caste system as a curiosity to be deplored, teachers should draw parallels between caste-based discrimination and the tremendous obstacles that poverty stricken inner-city minority families must face to overcome low class status in the United States. Affirmative Action programs exist in both countries and are actually written into the Indian Constitution.

From the perspective of Western civilization, which we regard as liberal and egalitarian rising from the Enlightenment, we condemn hereditary castes. Yet, our own societies have a similar past—divine right to rule, inherited aristocracies and sharp class inequities. In all countries, East and West, there are social divisions and vast differences in economic classes that persist, despite the Reformation, Humanism, Marxism, or Capitalism. The Brahman priest is a handy scapegoat to salve the Western conscience and assert our moral superiority over this type of religiously sanctioned inherited status. In later Sanskrit literature there are ironic stories about “stupid Brahmans,” but the spiritual powers of such saintly figures as the sages, Vishwamitra and Valmiki, were considered essential to the survival of the state.

In classical India, Brahmans were charged with the maintenance of religious and societal continuity. There were instances of corrupt Brahmans, and Hindu history has condemned them. However, countless Brahman priests undoubtedly took their duties to the community seriously as well as their own personal *sadhana* or religious practice. In most texts written in the West, Brahmans are uniformly shown as irrelevant hangers-on to the royal court and exploiters of the people.

For example, one textbook that I surveyed, *World History: People and Nations*, by Anatole G. Mazour and John M. Peoples, published by Harcourt, Brace, Javonovich in 1990, stressed that moral conduct was unimportant to the Aryans—which, for those familiar with the relevant literature, is easily refuted by the many Sanskrit eulogies to noble and virtuous character. In fact, in the Hindu law books, Brahmans are given harsher penalties than those given to other castes for the same crime. Brahmans were held to a stricter moral code. This was not imposed upon them; Brahmans wrote the law books.

The Mazour-Peoples textbook goes on to explain that during Brahmanic rituals, “The important point was to perform the ceremony properly. The good qualities of the person performing it did not matter.” This implies that Brahmans were not bestowed with adequately “good qualities,” when in fact, according to Vedic tradition, Brahmans had to be in a state of ritual purity to perform the ceremonies, which included proper behavior. Statements such as this reinforce the perception that moral conduct, as found in Indian philosophy, is relative and unimportant. Compared to the later Semitic traditions, with their clearly articulated and specific lists of do’s and don’ts, Hinduism can appear to have fluid views of morality when in fact there are detailed codes of behavior—honesty and trustworthiness are highly valued.

Several times this World History textbook calls the moral character of the Brahman priests into question. It states, “priests, called Brahmans, prepared the proper ceremony for almost every occasion in life and charged heavily for their services.” However, many references from Vedic sources indicate that the majority of Brahmans were poor and often took only alms for their services. In later periods, due to royal land-grants and the colonial patronage, many Brahmans became rich and powerful, and some were corrupt. However, most were, and still are, scholars with modest incomes. Still, the authors exclusively categorize Brahmans as rich people who charged heavily for their services. This one-sided stereotype negates a more well-rounded student understanding of Vedic-period Brahmans.

In the post-Enlightenment West, politics and government—political economy—are primary in the historical narrative. The place of religion and its role in the everyday functioning of historical and contemporary Indian society is not adequately addressed. Brahmans are therefore always suspect and unnecessary. A well-known historian of India, Stanley Wolpert, wrote that Brahmans were “guardians and interpreters of that sacred lore,” and as “officiators of the royal sacrifice, the Brahman priesthood maintained its special privileges and courtly influence.”<sup>4</sup> Though this at least allows the Brahmans some social worth, there is a tone indicating their ultimate political uselessness and economic self-interest. However, on the ground realities, the rulers and the merchants, the farmers, and even the low caste laborers depended on the Brahmans for spiritual guidance and advice.

The vast majority of Brahmans were not hangers-on at the royal court. Brahmans were scholars. They preserved and passed on the sacred texts, ensuring their survival through the ages. It could be said that Brahmans are the main reason that Vedic knowledge and Hindu philosophical treatises are still extant, after centuries of foreign occupations, and the vicissitudes of a hot climate with torrential seasonal rains. It was, after all, their duty or dharma to preserve and transmit the Vedic/Indic traditions.

Students should be informed, when discussing the Caste System, that modern Hindu teachers such as Swami Vivekananda, who visited the U.S. in the 1890s, Shri Aurobindo, a revered twentieth-century philosopher and vocal advocate for Indian independence, and also the well-known leader Mahatma Gandhi, have been at the forefront of removing caste from Indian society. Anti-caste movements in modern India include the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875, the largest religious organization in India, and Swadhyaya, a popular religious movement devoted to social

causes founded in 1954. The current ruling party of India, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) rejects caste and has made an effort to give prominence to leaders from lower classes.

There are socio-religious organizations in India working to open the Hindu priesthood to members of all castes, and to woman, who have gained acceptance in many communities. Though caste continues to be a problem and caste conflicts can occasionally erupt in violence, much like racial violence in the U.S., there are many ongoing reform efforts associated with Hindu social, religious and political movements.<sup>5</sup>

**A**nother field applied to the study of India that can be shaped to offer primarily negative views of the society is the discourse on the condition of women. The role that women played in the independence movement is rarely discussed in classes, nor is the fact that Indian women continue to be deeply involved in politics. Significantly, at the local *panchayat*, village council level, over fifty percent of democratically elected *gram pradhans*, village headmasters (mayors), are now women. After independence in 1947, women were given the franchise and did not have to wait for the suffragette or the women's liberation movement to earn their constitutional rights. Additionally, there is currently a bill in parliament to amend the constitution and reserve thirty percent of the seats for women in the Lok Saba (the democratically elected "lower" house of the Indian parliament). Though there are ongoing debates about how those reservations should be implemented, and the bill has not yet passed, it can be assumed that it will be a long time until thirty percent of the members of the U.S. Congress are female.

According to most Americans, women in India are to be pitied. The positive social progress made by many Indian women in the twentieth century is usually ignored. The very gradual and much maligned development of the Suffragette movement in the U.S. is rarely compared to the correspondingly slow process of upliftment of modern Indian women. The image prevails that if the unfortunate female in India survives a deprived childhood, she is likely to be burned in a dowry death after her forced marriage to a complete stranger. Indian women are shown as downtrodden and powerless victims, unlike American women who have more freedom. Indira Gandhi is seen as an anomaly.

Indian feminist scholars often complain that the production of the "third world woman" in Western feminist discourse creates an image of Hindu women as victims of oppressive traditional structures and denies them any agency over their own lives. Indian feminists argue that there are culture differences in terms of oppression, and not all women in the world want to be "liberated" by a universalizing Western white middle-class feminist perspective. They claim that focusing on patriarchal oppression alone, and discounting economic and political disempowerment which are also prevalent in Western, predominately Christian societies, serves to continue the ethnocentrism of post-colonialism.

One highly inflated stereotype that is regularly used to describe Indian/Hindu cultural practices is the discourse regarding *sati*, or as the British spelled it, "suttee"—the burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres. Sati has never been widely practiced in India, and in fact in the modern period is very, very rare. Defining Hindu practices through a discussion of sati is no

more accurate than defining Christianity by delving at length into the "Burning Times" in Medieval Europe when as many as nine million women, and even children, were burned at the stake as witches through the encouragement and official approval of the Christian Church. The burning of women does not define Christianity any more than the burning of widows defines Hinduism—both are long discarded practices of the past.

The British justified their exploitation of India by the White Man's Burden, which often meant rescuing "Brown women" from "Brown men." Madhu Kishwar, the editor of the Indian feminist journal, *Manushi*, wrote,

*Our erstwhile colonial rulers who needed the pretense of being on a civilizing mission here to justify their brutal reign had a vested interest in identifying select criminal acts and projecting them as Indian traditions in need of reform. They began this cultural invasion by deliberately targeting a few cases of young widows in Bengal who were forcibly burnt on their husbands' pyres, calling those murders sati and banning it by law, so they could appear as agents of a superior civilization rescuing victims from a savage culture. They even called their mission the White Man's Burden! Thereafter, the supposedly miserable plight of a newly invented creature called the Indian woman became emblematic of the inferior civilization and culture of the Indian people.<sup>6</sup>*

The popular media in the West often runs stories about "dowry deaths," when women are murdered by their in-laws because of blind greed. Often the media's explanation of such criminal behavior is blamed on inherent anti-female bias in Hindu society. Yet the cases of "bride burning" or "dowry deaths" are few and far between in a country of a billion people. Wives and girlfriends murdered by their husbands or significant others are all too common crimes, certainly not unknown in modern Western countries. But such crimes are carried out by rogues and have no more to do with Hinduism or the Hindu way of life than they do with Christianity or the American way of life.

But in the media, "dowry deaths" are sensationalized and are often given worldwide publicity, particularly by proselytization groups, in an effort to denigrate Hindu traditions and Indian society. In contrast, crimes in America such as the burning of Black churches, or hate crimes against homosexuals, or wife murdering to collect insurance, or wife battering, of which there are thousands of cases each year, are treated as secular crimes and receive very little or no publicity. We do not define American society with images of domestic abuse. Introducing American students to India through a discussion of dowry deaths is as unrealistic as teaching school children in India about America by focusing primarily on domestic violence, as if it is the defining characteristic of either society.<sup>7</sup> There are criminal elements in every country that victimize women and children.

In our classrooms, many conscientious teachers strive to present nonbiased materials in their classes. Unfortunately, often recommended readings, such as *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India*<sup>8</sup> are highly stereotyped and use the untenable convention of comparing the

lives of poor village women in India with the lives of middle class urban American women. Naturally, the village women seem less free and independent.

A more appropriate approach would be a comparison of village women in India with poor women in rural Appalachia, or upper class women in Bombay with their counterparts in urban America.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes the textbooks themselves can undermine the teachers' efforts.<sup>10</sup> For example, this statement in large bolded italics meant to stimulate interest on the first page of the chapter about India from a World History textbook:

*Although many Hindu rituals no longer exist in India, some, such as walking across a bed of hot coals or lying on a bed of nails, are still practiced to gain forgiveness for sins or to build spiritual control. They continue to intrigue outsiders who have never experienced the rich cultural diversity of India.*<sup>11</sup>

This implies that though Hinduism seems to be fading out in India, some strange rituals are commonplace and still practiced. After a hard day at the office, the banker or farmer comes home and walks across a bed of hot coals before dinner. In reality, most Indians have never seen, let alone tried, this type of *tapasya*, mortification of the flesh, unless they have gone to a *Kumbha Mela* or other spiritual fair where *Sadhus* and holy men may indeed perform these tricks. This casual statement leads the naïve reader to assume that these rituals may be widely practiced in modern India, when they are actually very rare.<sup>12</sup>

Making this sensationalist comment in bold italics at the very beginning of the chapter on India immediately creates an exotic picture in the mind of the student, whose Indian teenage counterpart, after doing his or her homework, lies around on a bed of nails watching ZTV (India's version of MTV). If this book is the only source of information about India available to the students, they may assume that Indian teens regularly walk on coals and sit on nails. Perhaps such *tapasya* will become a fad in the U.S. much like body piercing and painting the hands and feet with henna have become popular.

Wild fictitious accounts about India, such as eating monkey brains and eyeballs and other strange practices portrayed in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, often find their way into the classroom through the back door. With films such as *Schindler's List* and *Amistad*, Hollywood is writing the scripts for our historical narratives, but when they get it really, really wrong, like Spielberg did in *Temple of Doom*, the negative images can have pervasive repercussions with unexpected longevity. ■

## NOTES

1. Frances Moore Lappe, *Diet for a Small Planet*, (Ballantine Books, 1992).
2. In the context of cultural borrowing, it is interesting to note one of India's lasting contributions to what has come to be considered the "Western" lifestyle and that was the export of a thick cotton cloth known as "Dungaree" which, in the sixteenth century was sold at a market near the Dongarii Fort in Bombay. Portuguese and Genoan sailors used this durable blue broad cloth, dyed with indigo, for their bellbottom sailing pants; it soon became popular with farmers and others.
3. For an excellent resource about Ancient India, see: "Ancient India," part of the Ancient World History Program of History Alive! Created by the Development Team of Teacher's Curriculum Institute, Executive Director, Bert Bower, 2465 Latham Street, Suite 100, Mountain View, California 94040: 1997. For more

information call (800) 497-6138 or e-mail at [info@historyalive.com](mailto:info@historyalive.com). This thick binder is rich with useful activities and ideas and valuable information. An example of the contents can be found at: <http://www.teachtci.com/curriculum/wh6-program.asp>

4. Stanley Wolpert. *A New History of India*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 40.
5. These two books may be of use when seeking to "read against the text" of the usual negative treatment of Indic traditions: S. Kak, *The Wishing Tree: The Presence and Promise of India* (Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 2001). This book is based on invited lectures at Stanford University and the University of California in 2000. The book presents an overview of Indian history with special emphasis on the Vedic period and history of science. It begins with recent archaeological discoveries including the discovery of the rock art and the elucidation of the Indus-Sarasvati cultural tradition. It describes the influence of Indic ideas on modern science. The book is addressed to the layperson and scholar alike. And: G. Feuerstein, S. Kak, D. Frawley, *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization: New Light on Ancient India* (Quest Books, Wheaton, IL, 1995, 2001). Synthesizing recent scholarship from archaeology and literary analysis, this book dispenses with several jaded and timeworn academic myths about ancient India to create a new understanding. Written in a straightforward style, it carefully presents the significance of ancient Indian civilization and culture for the study of world history.
6. "Deadly Laws and Zealous Reformers: The Conflicting Interpretations and Politics of Sati," by Madhu Kishwar, editor of Indian feminist journal, *Manushi*, full text available at: [http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/s\\_es/s\\_es\\_kishw\\_deadly\\_fra\\_maset.htm](http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/s_es/s_es_kishw_deadly_fra_maset.htm).
7. The following compilation of statistics reflects a dysfunctional aspect of American society: "Somewhere in America a woman is battered, usually by her intimate partner, every 15 seconds (United Nations Study on the Status of Women, 2000). Somewhere in America, a woman is raped every 90 seconds (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). One in 3 murdered females are killed by a partner, versus 3.6 percent of males (U.S. Department of Justice, May 2000). Pregnant or recently pregnant women are more likely to be the victims of homicide than to die of any other cause (Journal of the American Medical Association, March 2001). Battering is the leading cause of injury to women aged 15 to 44 in the United States (U.S. Surgeon General, 1992)." See: <http://www.vday.org/ie/index.cfm?articleID=522>.
8. Elisabeth Bumiller, *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India* (New York: Random House, 1990).
9. For an excellent critique of the book by Elisabeth Bumiller, *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons*, see the review by Veena T. Oldenburg at <http://sipa.columbia.edu/REGIONAL/SAI/veena.html>. Professor Oldenburg writes, "Out of a single village she extrapolates and conjures up a homogenized larger reality of rural India. All its dull, dusty, changeless tedium is captured in 'thick description,' reprehensibly uninformed by the work of several scholars, some of them Western women, who have worked in villages nearby that might have tempered her conclusions. Instead she generates for the reader the impression that the poverty, dirt, flies, and the "ways of the 1,000 people of Khajuron are the ways of most of humanity [in India]" (p.76). Bumiller's brisk desire to arrive at conclusions on her journey remind me of anthropology's beginnings under the aegis of colonial rule for "places without history," to "observe" people and judge their strange, barbaric, and unchanging ways. Unwittingly she manages to revive the old-fashioned view of 'the Indian village' as that quintessentially unchanging place that exists outside of history."
10. Of the numerous textbooks I surveyed, the one that had the most authentic and inclusive treatments of Indian Civilization is *World History: Continuity and Change*, by William Travis Hanes, III, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston of the Harcourt Brace & Company, Austin: 1997.
11. Anatole G. Mazour and John M. Peoples, *World History: People and Nations* (Harcourt, Brace, Javonovich, 1990).
12. For an excellent Web site on Indian history, see: <http://www.historyofindia.com/home.html>.

**YVETTE C. ROSSER**, who has a long-time interest in India and is a former secondary school teacher, is currently finishing her Ph.D. in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas. The topic of her dissertation is a comparison of historical narratives in school textbooks used in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.