



# **The Construction of History and Nationalism in India: Textbooks, Controversies and Politics (Routledge Advances in South Asian Studies)**

*Sylvie Guichard*

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Most studies on nations and nationalism argue that history, or more precisely a 'common past', is crucial for the process of national identity building. However, the existence of one or more concurrent narratives for the construction of this identity is often not accounted for, and there are cases where the 'common past' or a 'collective memory' is no longer shared.

This book centres on the construction, elaboration and negotiation of the narratives that have become official history in India. These narratives influence politics and the representation of the nation. Depending on the chosen definition of the nation, over 160 million Muslim Indians are either included or excluded from the nation, and considered as 'foreigners from inside'. The author shows that beyond the antagonism of two representations of history, two conceptions of the Indian nation – secular and Hindu nationalist – confronted each other during the history textbook controversy between 1998 and 2004. The diverging elements of the two discourses are underlined, and surprising similarities are uncovered. Yet, in contemporary India this convergence remains overshadowed in political debates as the definition of the political has been shaped by the opposition between these two visions of the nation. This book analyzes and questions the conception of the school?textbook as a tool of national construction and more generally highlights the complexity of the link between historiography, nation-state and nation-building.

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