

Incomplete Exposition or Propaganda Tools? A Look at Sundat School Textbooks as Case Study

This paper argues that three stylistic flaws in writing--- liberal generalizations, partial exposition of concepts and literary gloss--- create problems in comprehension and accuracy for readers of religious textbooks. Textbooks used in Islamic Sunday schools (Islamic schools that run briefly on Sundays) can be termed as indigenous literature because they combine historical texts, religious learning and cultural awareness within informal learning systems. Sunday schools tread a delicate path; they aim to imbue students with sense of communal identity yet must also teach respect for pluralism. The corpus for this paper uses excerpts from Islamic Studies Weekend Learning Series, which have been written by traditional community leaders with an ESL background. Because the textbooks are casually written, they are imbued with stylistic flaws, which include liberal generalizations, which are broad sweeping statements that cover a multitude of topics. Partial exposition is the inadequate explanation of terms or concepts that in turn create cognitive gaps in comprehension. Literary gloss is reinterpretation or rewriting of historical facts to avoid blaming political or religious personalities/groups or whitewash partisan policies. The audiences in this case study are second-generation Pakistani---Americans children and teenagers who attend Islamic Sunday schools. Vigorous editing and rewriting of Sunday school textbooks will explain terms clearly and balance historical facts. This in turn will discourage the creation of "otherness" and teach tolerance and respect for non---Muslims and Muslim minorities. Presently the textbooks afflicted by writing deficiencies can be used to radicalize students in the hands of a zealot teacher. Radicalization of American--- born and raised Muslims particularly from Pakistan or converts is a minor yet significant trend.