

## Review

# Stereotypic contents in textbooks and discourse on Hindu minority in Pakistan

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**The purpose of the paper is to investigate the stereotypic concepts generated against Hindu minority in the discourse of Pakistani government schools textbooks. An attempt has been made to conduct a multidimensional research based investigation by using critical approach to discourse. The critical approach is used on selected text from a Pakistan studies textbook as a case. The analysis finds that writers use manipulation in order to transmit their political intentions. In such challenging socio cultural context, critical discourse studies must be taught at upper level of education. The implications suggest that critical approaches that are desperately needed in order to make teachers critically educated and they should not more than the consumers of textbooks contents. Critical approaches to discourse can play an important role to address some social and political biased realities and can also raise awareness among students about language manipulations used in these textbooks.**

**Keywords:** Stereotypic contents, Hindu minority, critical discourse studies, ideology, textbooks, Pakistan.

## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a multilingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. But the Pakistani education system has always maintained the particular ideology which indicates that Pakistan is an Islamic state rather than a country with a majority Muslim population (Non-Muslims are an important part of the society; many of them have contributed enormously to its welfare and prosperity). This ideology has been reflected in the contents of government school textbooks and has created an unjust environment to the existing religious diversity (see, for example, Nayyar, 2003). Successive Pakistani governments have used this formal education system as a tool to transmit and legitimize its political intentions (see, for example Rahman, 1997; Hasanain and Nayyar, 2002; Rahman, 2004). VanDijk (2005: 1) recognizes this reality as a form of ideology that is found "everywhere where social groups or organizations get organized to impose or legitimate their power".

The ideological content of textbooks in Pakistani government schools is a phenomenon that took place in the beginning of 1980. Before 1980's the textbooks included minorities' history, lifestyle and literature. The military government of General Zia ul Haq came into power in 1977, attempted to legitimize the military coup, and opted for so-called Islamization of the society by

attempting to redesign all the textbooks of pre-university levels to include what Nayyar and (Ahmad, 2003: 5) describe as "distorted narration of history, factual inaccuracies, inclusion of hate material, a disproportionate inclusion of Islamic studies in other disciplines, glorification of war and the military, gender bias". The military government then in power, in a quest of to Islamize the state, redesigned curriculums and rewrote textbooks in order to create a monolithic image of Pakistan as an Islamic state and Pakistani citizens as Muslims only. The message was clear: that the Hindu minority is excluded from any national identity and historical binding to the country. A detailed account of this shift in the contents of Pakistani state-sponsored school textbooks is well documented in (Rahman, 1996; Aziz, 2004; Nayyar, 2004; Saigol, 2003; Hoodbhoy, 2005; Salim and Khan, 2004).

Consequently, minorities (especially Hindus) are systematically denied their national and historical contributions in textbooks contents, but it also created an environment of hatred towards them based on false and fabricated facts and stereotypical portrayals.

Given this context, this paper is designed;  
1) To review the existing debate surrounding textbook contents and how minorities are misrepresented in the

curriculum in Pakistan.

11) To analyse an extract taken from a social studies text book as a sample by applying a multi-dimensional critical discourse approach. The purpose of selection is to focus on how the language has been used for protection and manipulation of political power. The chosen extract is taken Social Studies Class V, Punjab Textbook Board, and Lahore. (Hussein et al, 2005), lesson: 1 Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Religious, Political and economic Differences between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Before applying the critical discourse approach, the researcher has attempted to differentiate both the non-critical and critical approaches to discourse, and to identify the illegitimate influence of politics in Pakistani government-funded schools textbooks by the use of certain discourse manipulation (Dijk, 1977; Fairclough, 2001; McCarthy, 2002).

The selection textbook contents reflect the intentions of the writers and the principles of the educational authorities who manipulate the power of their social group, their abilities to influence the minds of students and the discourse features. Curriculum Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education and the provincial Text Book Boards are responsible for designing government schools text books. These departments are responsible to design all pre-university curricula and issue guidelines to textbook writers and school teachers. Provincial Textbook Boards commission writing of textbooks get their books printed after their contents are approved by the Curriculum Wing, (Ahmad, 2003)

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: section II consists of a brief overview of critical and non critical discourse studies, section III contains a critical review of literature around the debate in Pakistani context, section IV consists of an application of critical discourse analysis on the selected text, section V consists of CDA and ELT context in Pakistan, the last section VI is the conclusion and recommendations.

### **Critical Discourse and Non-Critical Discourse Studies**

Discourse studies (DS) concern the written and the spoken discourse in its cognitive, social, political, historical and cultural contexts, whereas Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), commonly known as Critical Discourse Analysis, use different methods and aim to detect, among other things, the abuse of power in discourse. Van Dijk (1998) comments: "Although critical approaches to discourse are commonly known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the researcher prefers to speak of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). This general term suggests that such a critical approach not only involves critical analysis, but also critical theory, as well as critical applications." (p. 62). Therefore, critical discourse studies are a form of multidisciplinary research, where frameworks can vary, but the aim is not to

describe and explain paradigms, but rather to find out how members of groups, such as politicians, media corporations and textbooks writers, legitimise oppression and control the thinking of other groups such as minorities, women, students and others.

Researchers in critical discourse studies are typically interested in the way discourse create social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may resist such abuse. The main features of critical discourse analysis are summarized as follows: i) CDA addresses social problems, ii) discursive power relations iii) discourse constitutes society and culture iv) discourse does ideological work v) discourse is historical vi) the link between text and society is mediated vii) discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory viii) discourse is a form of social action, (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 271-272).

Non-critical studies of discourse are generally concerned with the description of texts or their formal characteristics. (Halliday, 1985) indicates that a text is a semantic component, not a grammatical one, because grammar is limited to the analysis of discourse at sentence level. In contrast, Hoey (1994) argues that the meaning of a text is only realized through the grammar enclosed within the text. Winter (1994) and Coulthard (1994) summarize non-critical approaches to written texts study. They indicate that non critical discourse approaches study texts in terms of their vocabulary and grammar and how these relate to the cohesion and to the realization of the whole text. Another non-critical approach to discourse is Genre Analysis, where common linguistic features of texts of related type, for example, biological and scientific reports are explained.

Fairclough (2001) argues that non critical approaches to discourse have limitations because they record language in ways that do not refer to the abuse of language for the sake of socio-political power. For him, CDS are ways to detect the common sense assumptions which make authority look natural and to help the understanding of different implications of language abuse. Further, Yule (1987) and McCarthy (2002) both point out that non critical discourse approaches study the internal structure of language and deny the varied uses of language in human life. That is to say, they focus on the form of language and ignore its various functions, which can show how language is abused for specific inclinations. Consequently, one of the aims of CDS is to address power and power abuse by many means, manipulation being one of them. I have attempted to use these approaches in my analysis below.

### **Literature Review**

There is vast body of literature that sheds light on the contents of government-controlled school textbooks, which stereotypically portray the Hindu minority. In

Pakistan, there exist four types of schools: the elitist, the Non-elicit, the vernacular languages medium schools and the religious ones. The elitist and the Non - elicited schools adopt textbooks whose contents do not focus on Pakistan and are generally published by foreign firms such as Cambridge and Oxford. The government and religious schools textbooks are locally designed and their discourse is directed towards Pakistani issues, for full details on schools in Pakistan, their attendance and their different textbooks (Rahman, 2002).

Ahmad (2003) mention that most textbooks generate evil images about Hindus who are excluded from any national representation. This has been identified through a numbers of features in textbooks: the creation of hatred discourse towards them, false impressions about their religion and life style, factual inaccuracies about them and the omission of the Hindu pre-Islamic history époque. Old Hindu civilizations of "Moen Jo Daro", "Harappa" and "Gandhara" are ignored in the narration of history, also the early Hindu mythologies of "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" are not covered and the great Hindu kingdom of the "Guptas", (see Aziz, 2004). Rahman (2002) recognizes that these textbooks contain content which polarizes Hindus and Muslims and creates two separate worlds. The Muslims are valued as superiors (the in group) and the Hindus are known as the out group. This polarization of "us" versus "them" was used in the Pakistani education system as a tool to invent a huge amount of hatred discourse directed towards Hindus in a number of Pakistani government schools textbooks. Moreover, "us" versus "them" is the most effective strategy to deny or to hide one's own ideology and to demonize the "other" as indicated by (VanDijk, 1984). Saigol (1993) finds a great deal of evidence of "hate material" directed towards Hindus. She concludes that the objective of creating such hate discourse is to serve the military and the radical Islamists' political agendas, a view which is also supported by (Nayyar and Salim, 2003). Other studies which tracked hate discourse towards the Hindu minority in Pakistani government schools can be found in (Hoodbhoy and Nayyar, 1985; Aziz, 2004; Rahman, 1995 and Hasanain and Nayyar, 1997).

Hoodbhoy and Nayyar (1985) argue that the textbooks include a specific ideology which holds the Hindus responsible for the partition of Pakistan from India. The Hindus are also held responsible for inciting the Bengalis to separate from Pakistan in 1971. Aziz (2004) conducted a study in 66 textbooks, in which he exposed the exaggerations that the Pakistani government textbooks made about the Hindus cruelly killing Muslims. He argues: "After the partition of the subcontinent the Hindu enemies of mankind killed and dishonored thousands, hundreds of thousands of women, children, the old and the young with extreme cruelty and heartlessness" (page 160). He also replies: "the Hindus and Sikhs were not the only aggressors in the riots of 1947; Muslims also killed

and raped and looted wherever they had the opportunity." (Page: 161).

Apart from hatred discourse towards Hindus and factual inaccuracies about them, there is also a total refutation of the pre-Islamic historical époque which includes the Hindus ancient civilizations, such as "Moen Jo Daro", "Harappa" and "Gandhara". (Nayyar and Salim, 2003) mentioned historical denial in Pakistani government schools textbooks. Some crucial parts of the history of South Asia is omitted, making it difficult to properly follow historical events, and prevent student from being informed in history as a discipline.

Aziz (2004) and Salim (2003) also found other issues related to stereotypical intentions towards Hindus. They both indicate that a large part of textbooks tend to portray Hindus as backward and they include comparisons which praise the Muslim religion, their homes and their behavior while demonizing the Hindus in the same aspects. It is also said in some contents that "they burnt their widows and wives and that Brahmins were inherently cruel, and if given a chance, would assert their power over the weak, especially Muslims and Shuddras" (Salim, 2003:83).

The literature demonstrates how language and power functions in the content of government-controlled textbooks. The power holders (in this context, the textbook writers) attempt to use their power in a number of ways, including manipulation. I will now attempt to apply CDA tools to a selected text.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis of a Selected Text**

There are a number of concepts in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) that require attention because they entail power abuse. Manipulation of discourse is one of them. A discourse approach is important because most manipulation takes place in the discourse of the text under study. Secondly, manipulation takes place through the manipulation of receivers' minds, in this context learners who study the textbook, the cognitive account will shed light on that practice of manipulation. Thirdly, manipulation is a form of social interaction, which implies illegitimate power abuse by textbooks writers, a social approach is also important in this perspective. Critical analysis within a multidisciplinary outline connects discourse, cognition and society (Van Dijk, 2001). The chosen extract is taken from a Social Studies Class V, Punjab Textbook Board, written by Hussein et al. (2005). The text is from Lesson 1: "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Religious, Political and economic Differences between the Hindus and the Muslims." (See Appendix - an extract).

#### **A. Manipulation and Society**

At the macro level, the writers of the textbook, the

Ministry of Education, the Curriculum Wing, the Textbook Boards and their collaborative writers, are largely from elites, who form a powerful group in Pakistani society. They empower themselves and their intentions through the manipulation of their social status and through the power of access to write textbooks the way they want. In this case manipulation is one of the discursive social practices of dominant groups geared towards the maintenance and extension of their power through providing information aimed at influencing the knowledge and the beliefs of the recipients (Van Dijk, 1996; Rahman, 2002; and Kumar, 2001) for details. Put clearly, manipulation is exercised between two social groups: the powerful elites and their victims, the students at recipient level. This kind of social practice is illegitimate because the powerful party acts in their interests against the interests of the students. It is also illegitimate because it violates the human and social rights of those who are manipulated (Etzioni-Halevy, 1989).

## B. Manipulation and Cognition

Van Dijk (2006) says: "Manipulating people involve manipulating their minds, that is, people's beliefs, such as the knowledge, opinions and ideologies which in turn control their actions" (p: 365). The powerful group use special strategies in the discourse that affect the mind of the recipients. There are details of such manipulation strategies and cognition processing in (Britton and Graesser, 1996; Kintsch, 1998; and Van Oostendorp and Goldman, 1999). Some noticeable cognitive tricks that the textbook under study writers manipulated are as follows:

1. Writing the head line of the text in different color. In the text under study, "Religious, Political, Social and Economic Differences between the Hindus and the Muslims" (page: 2) is written in dark red color.

2. Writing in larger or bold fonts. The same text mentioned above is written in large and bold fonts, as one can see in the appendix. These two devices attract the attention of the reader, and hence the knowledge they represent will be processed easily into the recipient minds. Refer for further details on this issue to (Rosinski et al, 1975).

3. Another cognitive trick is the inclusion of a visual device. On (page: 1), and as seen in the appendix, the writer colors the map of Pakistan in 6 colors and excludes borders. The whole map is overwritten with the larger, bold red colour statement: "ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN". The writer wants the students to concentrate on Islam and Pakistan through a picture-word strategy, a cognitive technique that shows that students will process the words despite any intention to ignore them, and a fact which is also emphasized by (Ehri, 1999).

4. Another cognitive device the writers use to manipulate the recipients mind is the use of simple language, short sentences and clear topics, for example: "The religious beliefs between the Muslims and the Hindus are absolutely different." "The Hindus worship many idols." "The Muslims believe in one Allah." (Page: 2) from the source book, see the Appendix. Writing in a simple style tends to favor understanding, instead of complicated style which generally limits the understanding. In other words, if dominant groups or institutions want to facilitate the understanding of the information that is consistent with their interests, and hinder the comprehension of the information that is not in their best interests, they use very easy language style. This has also been recognized by (Fiske and Taylor, 1991).

5. The inclusion of personal memories that characterize one's history is another cognitive technique the powerful group uses to manipulate the minds of the recipients (This has been noticed by (Neisser and Fivush, 1994). Pakistani students grow up hearing the stories of partition from India. The writers use that experience from Pakistani history as a trick to attract the children mind about something they constantly hear from their grandparents, from folkloric songs and local literature: "On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940, a resolution was passed in which it was unanimously decided that Muslims should get a separate independent state on the basis of "Two Nation Theory" (page: 3) in the text.

## C. Manipulation and Discourse

Manipulation is a social and cognitive practice of power abuse, involving dominant and dominated groups. The manipulation of discourse means different discursive features of linguistic manipulation are used by the writers to strengthen their arguments. The contents of the textbooks used in Pakistani government schools are loaded with stereotypic images towards the Hindu minority in the country (see the literature review above for details). One of the main arguments around this discourse is the polarization between Muslims and Hindus or "us versus them" (Rahman, 2002). Van Dijk (2006) calls this kind of ideology "strong polarization between us (good, innocent) and them (evil, guilty)" (P: 270).

The discourse features involved in manipulating the polarization of Muslims and Hindus are as follows:

1. Positive Self-Presentation. "In Islam, Muslims are equal and are brotherly with one another." (Page :2) "Islam teaches respect towards women." (Page: 2).

2. Negative Other-Presentation. "The British favoring the Hindus openly because they remained biased against Muslims." (Page: 3) "The Hindus were absolutely different from Muslims." (Page: 3).The writers

manipulate discourse to portray the Hindus being cruel towards the Muslims and as opportunists who cooperate with the English. The book is full of this the polarization of positive representation of the self and negative presentations of the other; for details refer to Hussein et al (2005).

3. Generalization. "The Hindus" rather than "the Hindus who did not support partition" is a general term in which the writers manipulate generalizations to make students have a biased stereotypical view not only towards the Indian Hindus, but the Hindus anywhere, for full details see, (Jafar, 1999).

4. Lexicon. The writers use positive words for the Muslims and negative one for the Hindus. "The Hindus are divided into different classes by their system of caste and creed" (page: 2) "In the Hindus religion the women are given a low status." (page : 2) "In Islam, Muslims are equal and are brotherly with one another" (Page :2). "Islam teaches respect towards women." (Page: 2).

5. The Use of Emotionally Charged Language. "The Hindus became very much against the creation of Pakistan." (Page :3) "The Hindus did not accept the creation of Pakistan from their hearts." (Page: 3) "The Hindus did great injustice for people of Pakistan." (Page : 3) The writers of the textbooks, because of their ideology of the Islamization of Pakistan, want to legitimate political power and manipulate their social status, through their knowledge of cognitive mind controls and discourse features. They create stereotypic images about the Hindus; a very effective strategy for taking attention away from the policies of the government or other elites.

### **CDA and ELT in Pakistan**

In Pakistani government schools, teachers are socially disadvantageous and professionally untrained. Moreover, the methods of teaching English language are based on rote memory, preparation for examinations and passive students' participation in the learning process. That is why the majority of students who attend these schools finish their primary schooling handicapped in English language literacy. Moreover, the textbooks content is often irrelevant to students' life, contains false knowledge and biased truths. These realities force a number of parents, of middle and low classes, to sacrifice in order to send their children to non-elicited private schools, where the learning methods are quite different. The Pakistani government encourages the booming of Non- elicited private schools because he does not want to invest money in quality education in government depended schools, see (Mansoor et al, 2009).

In such challenging socio cultural context, I think CDS should be taught in upper levels because it is more about learning content and not literacy process as it is the case in the first four primary years of schooling. These are the approaches that are desperately needed in order to make

teachers critically educated and be more than just textbooks content consumers. Moreover, students will be more informed about the social problems in their own milieu. This goal can be realized if teachers' educational training is taken to the professional levels and if they are supported in the school to handle a number of difficulties they will face if they want to teach critical approaches to discourse in their classrooms. A number of Pakistani researchers such as (Halai, 2002) and (Dean, 2009) acknowledge that a number of constraints stand against introducing innovation in teaching practices in Pakistani government schools. There are many obstacles that face the inclusion of innovative teaching methods, such as CDS, in the Pakistani government school context. (Dean,2009) summarized a few of them as lack of time (which is generally consumed by the coverage of the prescribed textbook and preparation of students for examinations), students lack high levels of literacy to grasp new teaching methods, and teachers' inability to enrich the contents of the textbooks.

But still they stress the necessity of a commitment to change in language teaching practices and believe that critical approaches to discourse can be seen as action research methods and can play an important role to address some social and political biased realities and also raise students' awareness about language manipulation used in Pakistani government schools textbooks. Fakir and Kumari (2009) as well as many other Pakistani researchers who emphasize the importance of modern teaching methods such as CDS, define Action Research as "an attempt for a teacher committed to fundamental change in teaching practices, to make impact classrooms as well as on the larger society, through analysis of own actions, its outcomes" (p. 112).

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate how stereotypic concepts generate the discourse towards Hindu minority in Pakistani government schools textbooks. An attempt has been made to conduct a multidimensional research based on a critical approach to discourse application, on the select text from a textbook. The analysis found that writers use manipulation in order to transmit their political intentions. In ELT, CDS is a method through which teachers and students will understand the ways in which they have been formed within the context of the ideological and material practices that dominate their society. And above all, it will allow the spread of tolerance in a multi ethnic and religious society such as Pakistan. The researcher is agree with Zarina (2002) who says: "Tolerance and forbearance require cultivation of minds and attitudes. It is all too easy to destroy peace within a society or between societies by raising jingoistic passions, the first casualty of which is tolerance. Resolving conflicts, be

they between individuals, groups or nations, peacefully by interaction and dialogue is also something that does not come to humans naturally, and requires training” (p:143), a training that CDS can help to accomplish if teachers are professionally trained and locally supported.

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## Appendix –An Extract

The Religious beliefs of the Muslims and the Hindus are absolutely different. The Hindus worship many idols. They have many gods and goddesses. The Muslims believe in one Allah who is almighty and who is Creator of the universe. The Muslims worship Allah. In the Hindu Religion the men are divided into different classes by their system of caste and creed, whereas in Islam all the Muslims are equal and are brotherly with one another. In Hindu religion the women are given a low status. Whereas, Islam teaches to give due respect to the women.

The Hindus and the Muslims lived together for a very long time in India before partition, but the identity of these two nations, their religions, their socio-economic system and their way of life are absolutely different. In 1857, the British had, in a way, snatched the rule of India from Muslims. This is the reason that the British Government always remained biased against the Muslims. They adopted such a way that their lands were transferred to the Hindu workers. The English language was declared the official language of the Government and thus the government jobs for the Muslims, in a way, banned for the Muslims because they did not care to learn English language. The cottage and traditional industries of the Muslims were destroyed to give them a great economic set back. The war of Independence of 1857 was jointly fought by the Muslims and the Hindus. After it the Muslims were declared responsible for this war against the British, the British started favoring the Hindus openly. They started giving them concessions and special facilities. In the beginning the Hindus and the Muslims jointly started a struggle to get freedom from the British. When this movement became popular, the Hindus started asking for an independent government by the Indian National congress all over India after freedom from the British. In this way they wanted to govern all over India.

When the All India congress was formed, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan realized that the Muslims were much less in number than the Hindus and if the Congress succeeded to get freedom for India from the British, the Muslims would not be able to safeguard their rights because of their minority. Keeping in view this point Sir Syed Ahmed Khan rejected the 'One nation theory'-that the Muslims and the Hindus are like one nation of India. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan said that the people of different relations lived in India therefore to call them one nation was incorrect. The Hindus and the Muslims formed two major and different religions of India therefore they were two different nations.

In 1930, Allama Muhammad Iqbal delivered a speech in Allahabad in which he clearly pointed out that the Muslims and the Hindus were absolutely two different nations because of their different religions and styles of living. They should have two independent states where they could lie independently and freely of each other's interference. Chaudhary Rehmet Ali suggested the name of the state for the Muslims as Pakistan. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940, a resolution was passed in which it was unanimously decided that the Muslims should get a separate independent state on the basis of 'Two Nation theory'.

When the time for independence came nearer, the Hindus became very much against the creation of Pakistan. In these circumstances Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah gave an exemplary leadership to compel the Hindus and the British for the creation of a new state for the Muslims (Pakistan). The Hindus did not accept the creation of Pakistan from their hearts. At the time of the partition of India it was decided to give Pathankot and Gurdaspur to Pakistan, but when the division was announced these two districts were announced as part of India. Thus India got an access to the state of Kashmir. Majority of the boundaries of Kashmir were adjacent to Pakistan, this land access given to India through Gurdaspur and Pathankot was great injustice for the people of Pakistan.

## Source

Social Studies Class V, Punjab Textbook Board, and Lahore written by Hussein et al. (2005), lesson: 1 Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Religious, Political and economic Differences between the Hindus and the Muslims, Page 2-3

**1**

وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

**Historical Background**

Nearly four thousand years before, the Arians, who lived in Central Asia started making attacks upon India. After conquering over the local Indians they started living in India. At that time the civilizations of Mohenjodaro and Harrapa were at their climax. The Arians believed in the caste and creed system of India. The so called people of the higher caste hated and considered the people of the lower caste as low and treated them with hatred. Later on this system of caste and creed developed into Hindu religion. At present majority of the Indians are the followers of this Hindu religion.

**Source:** Social Studies Class V, Punjab Textbook Board, and Lahore written by Hussein et al. (2005), lesson: 1 Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Religious, Political and economic Differences between the Hindus and the Muslims