Promulgation of Islamic Culture and Civilization through Children’s Literature in English: An Overview of Contributions by Selected Women Writers

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ABSTRACT

Children’s literature has always been created and published due to its importance to the aesthetical, cultural, and educational needs of young brains. It is purposefully written not only for pleasure and fun but also to teach fundamental socio-cultural values and develop early academic concepts. A voluminous juvenile literature has been produced in the English language for more than a century. However, it was dominated by

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British-American culture in its context, structure, vocabulary, presentation and even illustration. On the other hand, the growing number of immigrants and children who read English stories worldwide, either for learning or fun, felt it hard to relate themselves to the cultural settings of these stories. Eventually, this need drove giant publishers like Oxford, Cambridge, Macmillan, Scholastic Inc., and others to incorporate diversity and multi-ethnicity in their publications, rather than to make them Euro-American-centric. In general, Muslims—being a significant community in English speaking world—have been striving to maintain their religious identity, while attempting to assimilate into the majority culture. In addition to their various endeavours, from the dawn of the twenty-first century a significant number of women have started writing various fictional, non-fictional, illustrated, and non-illustrated books for children of different ages. In this context, this study provides an overview of women’s contributions to the promulgation of Islamic culture and civilization, using the children’s literature in the English language as their tool.

**Keywords:**
children literature, Islamophobia, Muslim women, Muslims in West, Islamic books in English
Summary of the Article

Childhood is a bedrock formative phase of personality development. Every human society has crafted folk tales, lullabies, symbolic poetry, religious mythology, and imaginary heroic stories to develop certain ethical values as well as to enhance the sense of civic responsibility among the kids. The centuries old tradition of storytelling to kids has been developed as a formal embodiment of children literature in all languages. The literature created in the world languages portrays various historical, religious, cultural and socio-political trends in all sorts of writings where children’s literature is not an exception. Stories written in the war hit areas, fables produced in the communist countries after socialist revolution, tales appeared during the economic repression are examples. This study is limited to focus on the women contribution countering the Islamophobia and trying to promulgate Islamic cultural values, and civilizational traits through kids’ stories produced in English language in the twentieth century.

English language and literature have crossed the continental borders since the British expanded their colonies from Americas to Oceania in the modern period. It has thus opened a new wave of travel, tour, trade, education, immigration etc. resulting in creating pluralistic multiethnic communities in the countries who
became part of British crown. Strong movements were launched by students, teachers, civil rights activists, and public librarians to cater the needs of culturally diverse community in language learning. Identity, color, race, illustration are not the only issues which became challenging for different communities, but islamophobia has also emerged as a hate crime against Muslims living in the English speaking world. Muslims have responded in various ways including production of books for kids in which significantly women authors have contributed as authors or illustrators.

At the dawn of 21st century, Salaam Reads — a project of Simon & Schuster aimed at portraying the joy, vibrancy and variety which is experienced by Muslim children and families to mainstream children’s media and KitaabWorld with the slogan of “Counter Islamophobia through Stories” have been initiated by women in the United States of America. It has gained popularity among children, parents, teachers, and school librarians. Our paper has analysed the content, style, and salient features of selected publications.

Regarding the number of publications, a multitude has been created as illustrated books for early readers (aged 3-7 or 4-8) as well as short stories and novelettes for middle years (11-14), however, nonfiction and poetry is comparatively less written. The illustrated books have
thematize issues of Islamic doctrines, Muslim cultural symbols, art, festivals, rituals, and ethics to demonstrate various aspects of a Muslims’ life. War and its aftermath are other recurrent themes. The authors have chosen young Muslim characters and emphasized on family integrity. As Hina Khan has elaborated the description of colors by associating them with Muslim religious symbols. Amatullah has illustrated the pets allowed for Muslim kids in the background lay out of her stories avoiding pictures of dogs and pigs. The racial variety of Islam is also highlighted through illustrating kids in all colors and robes. Islamic sacred month of fasting has been thematized recurrently with the Eid festivity. It seems a deliberate attempt to familiarize the kids with Islamic rituals such as ablution, prayer, separate mosques for male and female worshippers, charity for Allah in stories. Another major theme is the Eid-ul-Adha and philosophy of Ibrahim’s sacrifice behind it.

Hijab is one of the most targeted Muslim symbols of Islamophobia which got a remarkable consideration in the English literature and the illustration produced by women in 21st century. Novels written for teen aged has also incorporated hijab, its diversity among the Muslim world and its rationale as their major content.

War trodden Muslim cities and life of kids therein are a deep emotional enterprise depicted in some stories. Love of knowledge comes out as a more powerful weapon
against all sorts of aggression in the hope of a peaceful earth. They pen down the misery of poverty and ignorance prevailed after war, but it cannot kill the spark of hope, a bright future image and an untiring struggle for it.

The books produced have taken the life of immigrant Muslims and the challenges faced by them in Europe and USA as another significant subject. Racial, cultural, and religious differences posed a big identity crisis and have created many psychological problems among kids. Authors of those stories tried to convey the ways to cope with it quite successfully. They highlighted the beauty of diversity, common ancestry of all human beings and love for all the mankind in addition to the ethical values of tolerance, empathy, love, and kindness.

The nonfiction books are written to showcase the geography and history of Muslim sacred places. Some depict nature as a divine creation which is among the signs of Allah while other feature animals on earth, the wonders of insect life (entomology), splendid birds’ kingdom (ornithology) or oceanic worlds (marine biology) and environment care in their transcripts.

Derogation (blasphemy) against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is one of the foremost manifestations of Islamophobia in the English-speaking world. The female authors have dealt this sensitive topic with care and
presented Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a role model of a social justice who loved and cared all people irrespective of their faiths or colors or races.

The essay concludes that the children literature produced by women is significant in its volume as well as it is quite worthwhile in its diversity of themes and stylistic standards, hence got enormous popularity among kids, parents, schools and libraries. Some writers have won the prestigious literary awards which encourages the authors writing for kids in other languages.
بلکل ہوئیں۔


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Counter Islamophobia through Stories: A Kitaabworld Initiative

Saadia Faruqi, "Counter Islamophobia through Stor...
سکول کے اساتذہ، بہت بڑی کی ایک بہتری کی گلگاتوار، اوہ والدین کی تعلیم جیسے بچوں میں دل کرادی۔ تھیاں

ہم این متعینات کی کتاب کے موضوعات، خصوصیات اور ادب کی جانشینی کے

خواہیں متعینات کی کتاب کروکہ کب میں سے زیادہ تعداد اور حرفی ہو یہ کتاب کی اطلاعات سے بہت مقبول ہوئے۔ مخصوصاً این

عمائد کے کتب کیے ہوئے دل خیال کا یاد اور اس کے نکات اور کتابوں کے نکات کی دستائی میں مقبول ہوئے۔ البلاں جو ایم این اونوں این تعلیم

کے لیے ناMASTERے اور تعلیم کے نکات کو ایک اونوں تعلیم کے لیے مقبول ہوئے۔ "تعلیم کی

اپ ایم تعلیم کے دور کو متعینات کی کتاب کے ایک اونوں دل خیال کی دستائی میں مقبول ہوئے۔ ایم این اونوں این تعلیم

کے لیے ناMASTERے اور تعلیم کے نکات کو ایک اونوں تعلیم کے لیے مقبول ہوئے۔ "تعلیم کی
Red is the rug
Dad kneels on to pray
Facing towards Makkah
Five times a day
Blue is the Hijab
Mom likes to wear
Is the scarf, she uses to
Cover her hair
Gold is the dome of Mosque
Big and grand
Besides in two towering minarets stand
White is the Kufi
Round and flat
Grandpa wears
This traditional hat.⁷

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⁷ Hena Khan, “Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns”,
All of the colorful things
We have seen
Make up the world of my faith
My deen. (8)

Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets: A Muslim Book of Shapes

From a Crescent Moon to a Square to an Octagonal Fountain.

We Can Do (10) and Come and See (9)
We wait for the moon
We watch for the Ramadan moon.
We fast by day
Under the moon
Under the moon
Under the Ramadan moon
We eat at night
Under the moon
Under the moon
Under the Ramadan moon. (11)

Daddy leads us in a morning prayer called Fajar. We pray five times a day. Muslim follow a religion called “Islam” that means “peace” in Arabic. 

Before we sit down to eat, we wash our hands and eat a sweet date, just like Muslims did almost 1400 years ago. That is what Prophet Muhammad first taught his followers to break their fast with a date and a sip of water.

At last it is time for Iftar, our evening meal. We eat on the floor to keep our tradition. We say a prayer, called Maghrib and then it’s time to eat! I am so hungry. Everything tastes so good.

Ramadan Moon

My First Ramadan


13– Ibid.
Ramadan, the month of fasting does not begin at once, it brings with a whisper and a prayer and a wish. (14)

Ramadan, Rozana ka jamah, acha ho achar shama ho, jai ka rakho, diwana rakho, se shraya.

And we look for the night of power, better than thousand nights, extra special night, when we ask for all we desire, wishes upon wishes and prayers upon prayers. (15)


15- Ibid.
At the Prayer hall, the Imam gave a sermon about a Hajj pilgrimage. Aneesa had a hard time paying attention because she kept thinking about their parents and wishing they were with her. After the sermon ended, the women and children in the
women section of prayer hall enrolled their prayer rugs and hugged each other. (18)

My Mom’s Hijab is black
And soft and white
A fort for me
To hide inside
A Bedouin tent
A wedding Saree
A blanket,
When I need to rest,
But covering my Mom
Is part of her faith.
It ... the Hijab does best. (19)
The Hijab Boutique (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2014).
In the Koran, the first thing God said to Muhammad was “Read.”

Her Library is a meeting place for all who love books. They discuss matters of the world and the matters of spirit.

She waits and dreams of peace
She waits...........
And dreams of a new library

But until then,
The books are safe
Safe with the librarian of Basra.

The Grand Mosque Of Paris

21– Janette Winter, “The Librarian of Basra,”

22– Ibid.

23– Ibid.
After Zuhr prayer comes my favourite time of the day. It’s time when I get practice my skill as a carpet weaver. When I weaving I can escape the Jets, the nightmares, everything. With my fingers I create a world, a world which no one can touch, a little piece of Paradise... Each color that I weave has special meaning for me. The threads which line the frame upon which all the threads have nodded are white.

White for the shroud, we wrapped my father’s body in it. Black is for night, it cloak me from enemy’s eye. Brown is the color of life, Blue is the sky, one day it will free of jets. ... Red is my

favorite. Red is the color of blood of martyrs. But it's also the color of roses. I have never grown flowers. Every bit of land must yield food, so I must sure that there are plenty of roses in my carpet. I weave into pattern of roses. Each connected to others just like the tribes of Afghanistan. It's a garden of beauty, surrounded by a boarder, a wall, a wall around the little piece of paradise.”

Namae: Asma Mubinuddin

My Name is Bilal
Does My Head Look Big in This
Ten Things I Hate about Me
Ask Me No Question
Darling, if you love me, would you please, please smile
Many Windows
Muslim Child
A Little Piece of Ground
The Space Between our Footsteps
Where the Streets Had a Name
Mud City
Wanting More
Going to Mecca
Ayat Jamila: Beautiful Signs
The Islamic year
The Amazing Discoveries of Ibn e Sina
Islamic Festivals
Amr and the Ants (Rowa El-Maghazi)

He cared and was trying to share a special message page (30).

...he cared and was trying to share a special message page (10).

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28– Ibid., 25.

29– Ibid., 27.

30– Ibid., 28.
The Roses in My Carpets
List of Sources in Roman Script


