

Us vs Them: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Nadeem Aslam's Novel '*The Golden Legend*'

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Abstract

The paper explores the unequal power relationships between the two religious groups (Muslim majority and Christian minority) in Pakistan. The discourse in Nadeem Aslam's novel "The Golden Legend" is critically analyzed to discover the unequal relationships and power imbalance between the majority and the minority. The discursive patterns in literary discourse are analyzed using Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and ideological squaring. The purpose is to reveal how opposing concepts are linked to the participants through discourse structures using multiple strategies. The text shows the positive representation of Muslims and the negative representation of Christians which ultimately results in 'the powerful' and 'the powerless'.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideological Squaring, Novels

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1. Introduction

The religious minorities in South Asian countries are experiencing dominance and inequality owing to their sporadic and meager presence. Similarly, Hindus and Christian minorities in Pakistan have been unable to get their rights as 1st grade citizens in the country. Farahnaz Ispahani (2018) says that religious minorities have suffered severe legal and social discrimination because of the State's failure to protect them. One of the reasons for this inequality and segregation is the infiltration of radical Islamist groups in politics. The rise of Islamic radicalism in Pakistan has greatly contributed to the growth of religious terrorism, especially against Ahmadiyas and Christians,' (Rasul, 2007).

Although at the time of its birth, Pakistan was promised to be a democratic state where minorities could live freely and religion would hardly be the benchmark to rate one's nationality. The father of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his famous speech of 1947, promised to consider all the religious groups as equal citizens of Pakistan. But the minorities such as Hindus and Christians were destined to survive in the country as dominated and marginalized groups. Tanveer Afzal (2012) is of the view that minorities are given the status of 'sub-nationalism' instead of including them into mainstream nationalism. The dominant majority's suspecting the loyalty of minority Christians and Hindus in Pakistan has been constructing their identities as 'out-group'. "This leads to an erosion in the citizenship of minority groups leading to the birth of the term, 'second class citizen'." (Afzal, 2012)

The onus of responsibility partly falls on the Islamic ideology which was one of the motives to make this new state and partly on the radical Islamist groups which were used unnecessarily by the politicians and military bureaucracy to fulfill their obnoxious desire to rule. Rasul Baksh (2007) also discusses the role of religion in Pakistani politics and the way it is used against the minorities. Tariq Rehman (2012) studies that the 'gradual Islamization of Pakistan' and 'State's inactive role to protect the minorities like Hindus and Christians have caused inequality and social segregation in the country. Consequently, he concludes, 'non-Muslims are more vulnerable to Muslim aggression than ever before'. The minorities feel the dominance of the majority group in

their religious sphere of life. They do not feel free to practice their religions and Islamic extremism has made them prey of violence and disparity. They are suffering at the hands of state as its policies of supporting radical group 'marginalized' 'disillusioned' and 'frightened' the minorities groups further (Rehman, 2012)

The Christian minority is the second largest minority in Pakistan (Shaun Gregory, Tariq Rehman, 2012). Most of them live in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Yet, it is the worst affected minority due to the occurrence of some unfavorable incidents like Islamization and War on Terror. The use of some laws like blasphemy has been misused against the minority. The blasphemy laws in Pakistan have badly affected the lives of minorities especially Christians (Julius, 2015). Adding oil to the fire, the War on Terror, which was taken as a war between the Muslims and the Christians, exacerbated the already hostile atmosphere for them. As the US was fighting this war in Afghanistan, the US forces used drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, there has been a rise in anti-American/anti-Western sentiments among Pakistani Muslims (Zahid and Musharraf, 2020).

As this paper will discuss the two religious groups in a specific social context, we will try to explore the majority presenting themselves as the saviors of ideology. The minority shows the resistance and counter-power to achieve the justice and its due status. Van Dijk's social cognitive approach and ideological squaring strategies will be used to unravel this social problem in a literary discourse.

The Christian representation in Pakistanis 2% to 2.5% of the total population. Owing to the scant representation they suffer from inequality and discrimination. The social inequality and marginalization can be clearly seen in the discourse of Pakistani society. Even the discourse of minority clearly shows the social division according to their religious representation.

The study discusses the literary text of the novel written about the relationship of two religious groups. The majority discourse clearly shows the dominance and enacted in the discourse which involves the interaction between the two groups. The paper focuses on the discourse in the novel 'The Golden Legend'. As the minority is involved in the battle to attain the power and show resentment and against the unequal power relationship in a Pakistani society. It explores the discourse patterns in the literary text.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

The main focus of CDA is on social problems whether they are related to racism, sexism, or any form of social inequality (Van Dijk, 1995). In other words, CDA not only tries to point out the unequal power relations in society but also often recommends a solution. Fairclough points out that the main aim of CDA is to unleash the inequality in power between the two groups and institutions. Wodak (2001) opines that CDA not only discovers the overt patterns of imbalance but also tries to explore the covert currents which contribute to relationships of discrimination, and power as manifested in language. Hence, CDA discusses how discourse contributes to synthesizing the imbalanced power relations between the different social groups. These groups may be related to different ideologies i.e., religious, ethnic, economic and political. CDA studies the role of language in the construction, reflection, and assertion of dominance and inequality (Aldosari, 2020). CDA should deal primarily with the discourse dimension of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it. As a multidisciplinary paradigm, it focuses on the 'pressing social issues' and tries to understand through the lenses of discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1993).

Locke (2004) views discourse as language in context. Fairclough (2003) states that language with a particular viewpoint is discourse. An important insight that can be gained from CDA studies is that language (discourse) plays a significant role in encouraging certain ideologies, institutions, nationalistic self-glorification, positive self and negative other presentations, construction and imposition of ideologies, and the like. 'CDA contends that language is indeed a social force, and also a means of domination' (Lindgren, 2009). Van Leeuwen (1993, 193) argues, CDA revolves around two fundamental aspects of discourse, "discourse as the instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality" (Abid and Manan, 2015). Fairclough (1984) argues that CDA should focus on the discursive strategies that validate power and dominance that is usually 'organized' and 'institutionalized'.

3. Van Dijk's Ideological social cognition and ideological squaring

According to Van Dijk (1998) ideologies are abstract principles or 'axiomatic beliefs' of a social group. Ideologies of a social group are formed on the basis of social cognition which is shared by the members of that group. Reisigl and Wodak (2017) describe ideology as a specific view of the world that consists of mental representations, opinions, attitudes, and evaluations that are common between the members of a particular group. It is a combination of 'shred cognitive views' and 'knowledge on common and specific ground' which contribute to the (re)production of the discourse of that group. The role of discourse is pivotal here because through analyzing the discursive events, we can access the socio-cognition of that group. Discourse as a means is used to make ideologies concrete, specific and influential (van Dijk, 2005, p, 731-34). In short, discourse not only forms ideologies but also are formed by them through social cognition.

Van Dijk (1993) explains that in order to relate discourse to dominance, we need to examine the social cognitions which monitor the action and interaction and also ideologies are the fundamental social cognitions that reflect the basic aims, interests and values of a group.

Ideology can be understood as some kind of ideas or belief systems that members of a society share collectively to create social representation of groups (Dijk, 2000). his simply means that ideologies sometimes have a polarized nature when they belong to opposing groups—as the discourses of racial prejudice related to immigrants (Dijk, 1998)

Ideological squaring model involves the socio-cognitive strategies through which the dominant or powerful group legitimate or justify the inequality and dominance in a society (Van Dijk, 1993). This strategy involves the positive representation of the own group and the negative representation of others. Van Dijk (1993) gives the example of ethnic minorities where the in-group (Us) ‘tolerance’ ‘help’ is emphasized and ‘threats’ ‘deviances’ of the out-group are emphasized in the news and political discourse.

One of the ways through which this ‘polarized’ representation is carried out is using the semantic content such as that directly to give negative details of others. This can include argumentation, rhetorical figures, and negative lexicalization. However, this discursive marginalization may be done in a covert and subtle way like victimization (self), categorization, implication, presupposition, disclaimer, and polarization.

Van Dijk calls this the ‘Ideological Square’ model. It basically has four moves which are as follows:

- Emphasize Our good things
- Emphasize Their bad things
- De-emphasize Our bad things
- De-emphasize Their good things

4. CDA and Novels

Literature as a cultural product reflects human experiences through language and can be seen from various dimensions such as ideas, language, and style which can be explored by a literary critic (Fairclough, 1992). Azeez (2012) gives a detailed analysis of power relationships in Kurdish novels. Employing Huckin’s theory he studies the reproduction of power through linguistic devices in the text. As Van Dijk (1979) is of the view that literature is a kind of speech act; a kind of discourse. It also reflects the social circumstances and can be a means to show the social cognition of different groups. Rogers (2011) opines that literature is a social practice shaped in the form of discourse.

CDA is used to analyze not only the structural or linguistic aspect of the (literary) text but also the ideological note carried in the text. Although Van Dijk’s ideological squaring has been used to analyze the media and political discourse, this study employs it to unravel the imbalance power relationship in the text of the novel.

The Golden Legend

While discussing the themes of violence and hope in *The Golden Legend*, Vandana Sukheja (2017) explores that Christians are the victims of violence. The religious fundamentalism has resulted in hatred against the minorities especially Christians. Besides, religious extremism is also supported by some of the state institutions. The author gives hope at the end saying that ‘religion unites not divides.’

5. Literature Review

Rashidi and Souzandehfar (2010) employs Van Dijk’s comprehensive approach to analyze the political debate between Republican and Democrats. In the background of the Iraq War both the political groups highlight the positives of self and negatives of others. The study covers strategies proposed by Van Dijk in Us vs Them representation. These include ‘actor representation’ ‘categorization’ ‘irony’ ‘lexicalization’ and ‘implication’ ‘self-glorification’ to untangle the ideological squaring in the political speeches.

Mouna Hamrita (2016) uses Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach through ‘actor representation’ to see how Tunisian Post-Revolution Secularists criticize their Islamic rivals on Facebook. The secularists’ ideological discourse clearly shows how they criticize the Islamists and represent their ideology through discursive strategies such as negative lexicalization, generalization, and hyperbole on Facebook.

Exploring representation of Muslims in two Australian newspapers, Ghauri and Umber (2019) employs Van Dijk’s ideological square and lexicalization approaches. He identifies how the discourse of violence, othering, and female underrepresentation are attached to Muslims in *The Australian* editorials while *The Age* covers the same story using themes of harmony, solidarity, and cohesion.

Van Dijk’s social cognition and ideological squaring has also been used to analyze the debate which contains the ideological discourse. Yang (2013), analyzes Taiwan’s national debate on ECFA with mainland China. The study focus on the Us vs Them, evasion, and diversity of discourse. It analyzes the lexical choices and syntactic structures in the discourse of Taiwan President and the DPP leader Tsai, both emphasizing their positives and

deemphasizing their negatives.

The identity of the American Muslim minority has been reconstructed in the study of Boulahane (2019) as he analyzes Orlando shooting media transcripts. The mental representations of both the 'in-group' and the 'out-group' are going to be noticed in the discursive strategies which employ lexical items, metaphors, quotations and presupposition. The writer has unraveled the depiction of Islamophobia often attributed to minority Muslims in CNN and Fox news media discourse which can be a threat to 'Us (Americanness). Daghigha and Rahim (2020) integrates Wodak's notion of Discourse Historical Approach (referential and predicational strategies) and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (lexicalization, counterfactuals, disclaimers, populism, and number games) to analyze the representation of Muslim minority in Jacinda Arden and Donald Trump's political discourses. On one hand, Wodak's historical approach discovers the historical context of these different political discourses, while on the other hand, Van Dijk's the difference in the polarized representation of Muslim minorities in the political discourse.

Abid and Manan (2018) covers the ideological discourse in Bush's speeches before and after the Iraq War. Material, mental, and relational processes of transitivity analysis (Michal Halliday) were used to show the alteration in the depiction of 'Iraq' as the 'Other'. They also pay attention to the adjectives and modifiers which build Bush's self as 'endowed with glory and virtue'.

There is a difference between the social acceptance of the strong and weak groups in the society whether these are religious, ethnic or political groups. Nuryadi et al. (2017) discusses how the dominant group tries to establish its authority through spreading its ideology and media can be one of the means through which discourses and ideologies are disseminated. The study employs Van Dijk's theory of ideological squaring on macrostructure (thematic), superstructure (semantic) and microstructure (syntactic, stylistic) levels. Alsayyid (2018) combines Leeuwen's (2008) actor representations and Van Dijk's ideological squaring to analyze the representation of Iraqi refugees in Western media. Social actor representation can be generalized/specified, activated/passivized.

6. Analysis

The data used in this study is taken from the Novel 'The Golden Legend'. This English novel is written by a Pakistani writer about the sorry plight of minorities in Pakistan. In this paper, we will use the discursive structures in the novel which enlighten us about the marginalization and segregation of Christians as a minority in Pakistan. These excerpts are selected because they are replete with the information and ideas about resistance and polarization of 'Us' vs 'Them'.

In ideological squaring, we will focus on *self-identity description, negative lexicalization, irony, self-victimization, blasphemy and Christians*.

i. Self-identity description:

One of the strategies of discursive representation as 'Us' vs 'Them' is how the in-group identifies itself in a discourse. The novel has some examples where the in-group gives a positive description of 'Us' and the negative representation of 'Them'.

The dominance and inequality can be seen in the sentences like

'They had asked her what she thought she was doing in Zamana, what she thought she was doing in Pakistan.

'You should go and live in Christian country. This is a country for Muslims.' (p.122)

The majority emphasizing their identity and also giving the identity of minority members as out-group. It also gives the identity of a Pakistani nation from a majority religious group's point of view for which Islam is the first criterion. The phrase '**a despised Christian in a Muslim land**' (p.99) reinforces the Islamic identity of Pakistan.

'Sometimes I find it to believe that this is Pakistan,' he said. 'I am surrounded by Christians.' (p.91) The idea here is to link the identity of in-group with nationalism and consider Christians as out-group.

ii. Irony

The rhetoric devices such as irony and metaphors are discursive strategies used in the discourse to emphasize the good about 'us'.

'Sometimes I find it hard to believe that this is Pakistan,' he said. 'I am surrounded by Christians. Our mosque is a stone's throw from a place that openly sells alcohol, and there is no restriction on the noise they can make with their church bell on Sunday morning.' (p. 91)

The statement, 'I am surrounded by Christians' is quite ironic and describes the circumstances which are quite contrary to this. The Christians minority consists of 2-2.5% of the population and that is spread across the country. This means that approximately 1.5 out of 100 people are related to the 'out-group'. The second part of the excerpt also shows dominance 'as noise on Sunday morning' is ironic because the Mosques (which are related to majority group members) call for prayers five times a day.

The question asked by a superintendent from a Christian girl who was blamed for blasphemy without any proof. *'Why won't you infidels let us live in peace? Why are you people so shameless?'* is ironic in a way that as representing the majority and a representative of state, the onus of creating a peaceful environment lies on him.

iii. Negative Lexicalization:

One of the strategies to unravel to describe the negative of others is the use of negative words and collocations. Van Dijk says lexicalization is oft-used to express the ideological dichotomies (Kadkhodae and Tari, 2019). The minority members are described as *'traitorous Christians'* (p.210). The words *'humiliations'* *'discrimination'* are used to describe the minority.

Examples:

'If someone were to discover he was a Christian, he could be accused of *polluting* the water.'(p.211)

'humiliations at the hands of Muslims.'

'duplicitous nature of Christians' (p.202)

Lexical items such as *'infidels'* and *'shameless'* are used for the minority. The use of the above negative lexicalizations for the minority gives the evidence that they are tagged as out-group on the basis of their religious association.

iv. Blasphemy and the Christian minority

One of the codes that is used in the discourse to 'categorize' the Christian minority as involved in blasphemy. Although the blasphemy laws are reported to be misused against the minority. We find some instances in the text where the 'out-group' is tagged as 'blasphemer'.

The killer of a blasphemer became a hero to a vast number of Pakistani Muslims. His prison cell was said to smell of roses. The weapon with which he killed would be auctioned off as a holy instrument. (p. 141)

'That man defiled the mosque with his presence.'

'This is a matter of the dignity of Islam.'

'Let's burn down every Christian house before daybreak.' (p.140)

The discursive patterns provide an evidence that Christians are involved in blasphemy and the majority has the **authority** to take law into their hands and deliver the justice in their own way. The following lines show how the law are misused against the minority.

Lily was ultimately responsible for the death of eleven Christians and of the hundred or so injured. Lily the blasphemer, who deserved penalty, and his daughter. (p.156)

v. Self-Victimization

According to Van Dijk (1993) one of the subtle ways to present the other in a negative way is self-victimization which discredits the 'powerless group'. *The Golden Legend* is replete with such instances where the Muslims, the dominant, present themselves as victims at the hands of Christians in other countries.

'We Muslims are being murdered and insulted and persecuted everywhere, in Kashmir, Burma, Palestine, Chechnya...' (p. 157)

'Have you ever been to France?'

'No.'

Well, I have. I lived as an immigrant in a number of Western countries. You have no idea how your beloved secular world treats our fellow Muslims. My wife was spat on by men on three separate occasions because she wore a burqa. We are treated like scum all across the Western countries, worse than dogs, and when we complain we are told we are inventing grievances, that what we have is scars without wounds,' (p.114)

Here the member of a minority group describes himself and his group members as being victimized and discriminated against by the majority group members at different places. This strategy highlights the negatives of others.

Conclusion

Although CDA is commonly used to analyze political speeches and nonfictional texts, this study employed it as a theoretical framework to analyze the fictional text. Results show that majority actors use ideological squaring to the 'emphasize the bad things of others' and 'the good things about themselves'. Minority members are facing this problem owing to their scanty representation which ultimately results in the unequal power relationships. Christian minority members face discrimination because of their religion in a majority Muslim country. This study will benefit the future studies which combine the analysis of literary text and van Dijk's concept of critical discourse analysis.

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