

Unveiling Gender And Religious Dynamics In The Narratives Of “Our Lady Of Alice Bhatti” By Mohammad Hanif

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Abstract

The language used in literature reveals the culture and social gestalt of any society in which it has been constructed and consumed. This paper carries the same rationale which aims to track certain socio-religious and cultural-economic disparities and discrepancies towards minorities, particularly Christians in an Islamic re(public) where there is a clear majority of Muslims with the help of analysis of instances of language used in the narratives “Our Lady of Alice Bhatti” by Mohammad Hanif. It would highlight social inequalities practised deep in socio-cultural discourse. Moreover, this research would also touch upon the question of gender discrimination and gender construction as a female entity in a male-chauvinistic scenic turnout using language; since the novel revolves around communicative forfeits of Alice Bhatti’s life where she is fraying in fisticuffs to befit herself in a miss-fitted society. It would employ using Fairclough’s framework for analysis to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the text at three axiom levels namely textual analysis, discursive practices, and socio-cultural analysis. Thus, the results would reveal textual findings in linguistic analysis, a range of embedded discourses in discursive practices, and consumption of the text into socio-cultural explications with the use of language and lexicalization employed in the selected excerpts.

Keywords: Gendered Discourse, Scio-economic Disparities Minorities, Islamization, Analytical Framework

Introduction

A system of signs, symbols, and guidelines for employing them as a form of expression and communication is produced by language through literature, newspapers, textbooks, media, etc. Discourse analysis spans many disciplines, schools, and philosophies, and is growing in importance as a field of research in the humanities and social sciences. The scientific literature on "discourse analysis" has significant differences in meaning and analysis, and also differs in historical and historical significance (Guihua, & Mi, 2023). These are enacted as identity symbols that abet to enforce the state's promoted principles, perspectives, and regulations (Rehman, 2003). It is the language that has been used in domains of power---the administration, armed forces, commerce, media, and education. When it comes to using language or speech, there is a relationship between speaking (expressing), doing (doing) and doing (self). Gee, 2011

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proposed this concept, seeing language as communication, action and language when someone says something to someone, it cannot be fully understood without knowing what the speaker wants to express (emotion) (Khan & Satti, 2021).

The study of language use is called conversation analysis. Interview analysis is often done from multiple perspectives. There is a process called "paraphrasing" whose purpose is to interpret language to understand it. On the other hand, there are other methods for emotional catharsis, such as "critical content analysis". The words uttered by human beings are never neutral. These words constitute a force in the construction and perpetuation of social reality which makes language a socio-political, ideological, and cultural phenomenon (Fiske, 1994). These linguistic parameters underplay a significant role to play at social and political levels to reinforce distinct national ideology and political mindset which directly corresponds with the state policies and practices (Romaine, 2000). Thus, language functions and infiltrates gradually into its users' thoughts to create the unique worldviews they reside.

Literature, as a cultural product, gives important information on the social structure, morals, religious ethos, traditions, values, and attitudes of a society in which a protagonist lives or battles to survive. It is the vocabulary used to discuss questions of identity, culture, and ideology during the creation process. It tries to create, disassemble, or recreate any character's perspective in a narrative. It tries to create, disassemble, or recreate any character's perspective in a narrative (Carroll, 2008). The language employed by literary masters serves several purposes, the primary ones being to amuse through satire or irony and to represent social and cultural issues. There are purposes for the language employed by literary greats; the primary purpose is to amuse through sarcasm or irony and to represent social and cultural aspects. Words have their meaning and only CDA can understand the usage and impact of the actual meaning. Voting also affects the way they vote. To understand the interaction between language, power and emotion, Fairclough's three-dimensional speech model and van Dijk's socio-cognitive model were used as theoretical frameworks in this qualitative study. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) analysis, developed with a particular focus on lexicalization, has proven to be very useful in the analysis of spoken language (Kaleem, Siraj, & Asif, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Saussure as cited by Fairclough (2001: 5) introduces two terms *langue* and *parole* to describe the two aspects of language and interpret the phenomenon of language. *Langue* denotes the rules and regulations, and *parole* refers to the actual and contextual use of language. Thereby language has a strong connection with its users and socio-political milieu as it impacts and influences in selecting our choice and use of specific words and not otherwise. Critical discourse analysis defines and determines the socio-political status of utterances in each context. Van Dijk defines CDA as an approach that seeks to investigate.

Primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality.

CDA is a method that is employed to research any instance of language used to highlight certain implicit inequalities or biases of a writer, group, or individual. Some discourse genres, such as those of party rallies, indoctrination, and political propaganda indeed have the explicit aim of 'teaching' ideologies to group members and newcomers (Van Dijk, 2004). Various discourses have been dissected e.g., speeches, narratives, ELT pedagogical texts, radio,

and telephonic conversations, and national and international policies of war and conflict. Anthonissen and Bloommant (2007), Bloommant (2005), de cilia and Wodak (2008), Ensinh and Saucer (2003, Heer et al (2006)), Martin and Wodak (2003), Reisigl (2007), Wodak and de cilia (2007), studied and analyzed papers, policies, scandals, political discourse, short-narratives, war and conflicts, and social dynamism. Hence, CDA is a method that is employed to research any instance of language used to highlight certain implicit inequalities or biases of a writer, group, or individual (Fairclough, 1992). It critiques the language in use as a powerful medium that can be used as a challenge; subvert power, and ideological basis of a text (Ruth Wodak, 1982).

The Selected Text

The researcher has selected a chapter of written narratives from a novel titled “Our Lady of Alice Bhatti” which is written by Muhammad Hanif, a Pakistani-Punjabi author settled in Karachi. The chosen excerpt consists of the first chapter of the novel containing 415 lines, and 3362 words. The novel primarily focuses on the lives of the Christian community in a metropolitan i.e., Karachi. The main protagonist of the novel is a Catholic Christian named Alice Bhatti; she is the daughter of Joseph Bhatti. She struggles to secure a job at a hospital as a junior nurse after imprisonment for fourteen months in Borstal Jail. The selected chapter is the description of an interview experience of Alice Bhatti with the top slot of hospital administration and personnel.

Research Objective

The objective of this research is to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of our written narratives about Pakistani society. This research aims to find out socio-religious and socio-economic disparities against Christians as a minority with the help of analysis of the language in use. It would also highlight certain other social inequalities practised in our scenario; a Pakistani perspective where Muslims are in a clear majority. Secondly, this research would also touch upon the question of gender discrimination and the construction of a woman’s identity as a weak entity socially, economically, and physically as the novel’s main protagonist is a woman named Alice Bhatti. It would employ Fairclough’s analytical framework to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the text. The excerpt also follows the pattern of Labov’s description of narratives while conducting CDA. Thus, the research would uncover the hidden agenda of the author, which is to show, that the process of Islamization is contributing to the oppression and harassment of minorities.

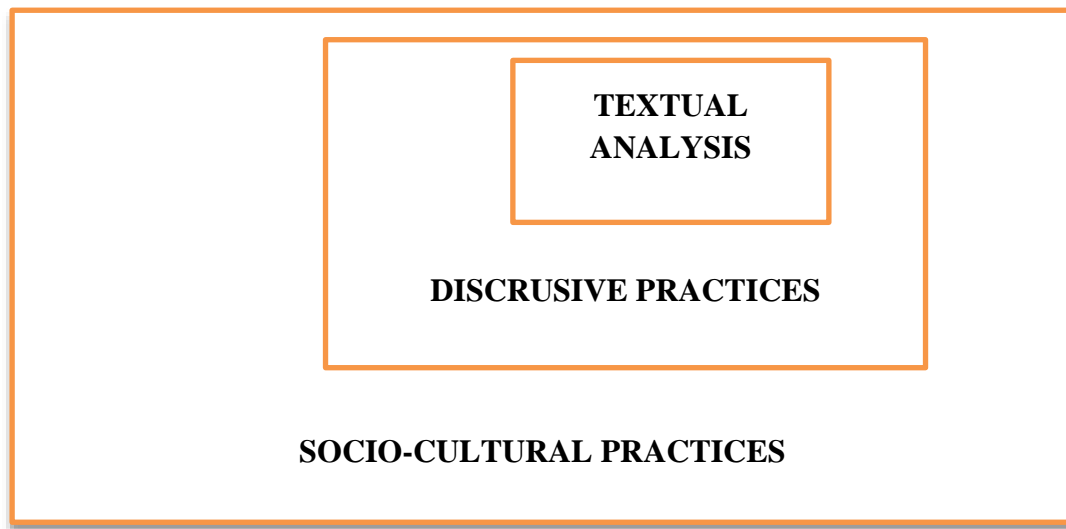
Research Question

The leading question of this research would be the critical role of language concerning politics, religion, and gender with production and discursive approaches in the language in use in narratives of Pakistani literature. Hence it would also address certain sub-questions as well.

1. What is the relationship between gender and politics in leading discourse with the help of language in use?
2. How does lexicalization create a distinct identity of co-religious against other religions (us vs. them) which aims to harass and exploit minorities?
3. What is the relationship between common sense and coherence, stereotypes, religion, politics, and nationalism in a manifested range of discourses?

Methodology

Fairclough's analytical framework as a tool to conduct CDA at three levels involves an in-depth analysis of the text. Firstly, textual analysis requires an analysis of the text on the linguistic front. It would encounter different linguistic tools to incorporate it such as ethos, metaphor, lexicalization, and grammar (Transitivity, Mood and modality, thematic structure, Ellipsis, Reiteration, Collocation, Substitution, Parallelism, Reference, and Conjunction). Secondly, discursive practices help to understand the nature of the process of text production, interpretation, and consumption in a particular context. It is done with the help of intertextuality both manifested and constituted. Finally, Fairclough's CDA framework includes socio-cultural practices to understand the societal and organizational circumstances of the discursive event



GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF FAIRCLOUGH'S ANALYTICAL MODEL

This research at certain places employs some of the analytical devices selected from Fairclough's (2003) framework such as implication, negation, assumption, representation, comparison, presupposition, difference, and evaluation.

Data Analysis

According to Labov abstract consists of the title of the narrative and a clause or two at the beginning of a narrative summarizing the story to come. The abstract announces that the narrator has a story to tell and makes a claim to the right to tell it that it will be a delightful story, worth the audience's time. The novel has the title "Our Lady of Alice Bhatti." The very first line of the chapter announces that the narrator has a story to tell about Alice Bhatti who is "Our Lady" paradoxically as we are not ready to own her. This makes the writer's claim the right to tell that it would be an unusual story and would be pertinent to our times. Orientation in a narrative introduces characters, temporal and physical settings, and situations. Characters have been introduced like the main protagonist Alice Bhatti, her father Joseph Bhatti, and the interview panel like Sir Ortho, Dr. James Pereira, and Senior Sister Hina Alvi. The physical setting is that of a hospital and the temporal setting is around the Zia era in which the process

of Islamization is on the rise, but we are not exactly told by the author any timeframe. The place is that of Karachi and Alice Bhatti belongs to a slump which is called French Colony.

Complicated action clauses are narrative clauses that recapitulate a sequence of events leading up to their climax, the point of maximum suspense. Line 190 to Line 200 holds climax when the interview panel starts bombarding questions her furiously and she gets nervous instantly. Evaluation clauses are something unusual and interesting about the story, why the audience should keep listening and allow the teller to keep talking. In the excerpt, there are many evaluating clauses. Evaluation is of different forms in a narrative according to Labov such as intensifiers, correlatives, quantifiers, explicative, etc. Evaluation clauses are in the passage like in lines 54, 55, 86, 117, 179, 197, and 415. The resolution releases the tension and tells what finally happened. Line 286 releases the tension when senior sister Hina Alvi declares; they need experienced girls in the hospital. The teller may announce via a coda that the story is over. The last paragraph from lines 409 to 415 refers to the coda (end of the story/chapter) in which it is referred that her interview is over now.

Line 409 As she walks out of the room at the end of the interview,

Textual analysis of the text according to Fairclough's analytical model encompasses the detailed linguistic analysis of the text which involves the micro aspects of discourse practices. It involves linguistic analysis in terms of a corpus, lexicalization, grammar (transitivity, theme, and modality), semantics, the sound system, and cohesion organization above the sentence structure. Fairclough (1995b, p.57) A metaphor is a way of representing something in terms of something else (Baker and Ellece 2011). The identification and analysis of metaphors are often used in the description stage of CDA as a way of revealing ideologies. This chosen excerpt has many metaphorical implications. Line 11 "Muslas" is a metaphor used for Muslims who consider themselves as an emblem of cleanliness and other religions as untouchables. Similarly, in line 260 "peacocks" are metaphors used for Muslims who walk proudly although they too are living beings like other creatures. Lines 39, 57, 129, and 135 "Dubai and Toronto" used metaphorical places; refer to places for prosperity and development and a home for all South Asian (Pakistanis) immigrants. Line 59 "Sacred Heart Hospital" is a metaphor for the poor who die there due to the negligence of corrupt doctors. Line 286 "work-experience girls" is a metaphor used for nurses as a sex-worker. Line 141, "Mecca" is a metaphor for a spiritually sacred place for Muslims where they go to perform their hajj.

The use of lexicalization in this chapter is apartheid in nature against Christians. Ideologically heavily loaded vocabulary is used which reflects the socio-cultural and economic inequalities against minorities. As such:

(Line4-6) "A sharp tingling in the back of her neck warns her that not getting the job not even be the worst thing that could happen here"
(Line14-15) "These Muslas will make you clean their shit and then complain that you stink"
(Line252) "He is too polite to point out that not all Christians are sweepers. He also fears the retort: "But all sweepers are Christian"

There are sexual images that show harassment at workplaces in our society and women as the genital sexual entity which is suggestive and exploitative for any female to work in such an insure sexual environment. Here is an example of it.

(Line276) this hospital has been around for 107 years, and its main purpose is to save lives, not suck cocks in VIP rooms.
 (Line286) ‘Dears, we have to use work-experience girls sometimes. Otherwise, how would we manage?’
 (Line293) ‘Postnatal care?’ His eyes are level with Alice Bhatti’s breasts.

Modality can be expressed via a set of verbs known as modal verbs. Modal verbs like “May,” “would,” “can,” “will,” “might,” “could,” “must” and “should.” ‘Semi-modals’ such as “want to,” and “meant to,” are used. It shows power inequality at large practiced in our society. There is a life that is full of uncertainties.

According to Winter (2001:46), reiteration is the repetition of certain lexical items used either for the confirmation of the discussed idea or because they relate to the same lexical set of the discussed topic. It can be conducted using the identical item in many sentences or implicitly using synonyms, near-synonyms, or antonyms of the original items. There are several examples of reiteration.

Table 1: Examples from the Excerpt of Reiteration

No	Reiteration	Type	No	Reiteration	Type
1	Warns, worst	Near-synonym	11	Battles, massacres	Synonymy
2	Deceased, death	Synonymy	12	Vulgar, contempt	Near-synonym
3	Shit, stink	Near-synonym	13	Miraculous, surprised	Synonym
4	Brazen, rude	Synonym	14	Jazz beat, drums	Near-synonym
5	Superiors, little gods	Near-synonym	15	Politeness, good manners	Synonym
6	Alien, foreign	Synonym	16	Silly, reckless	Synonym
7	Only, lonely	Synonym	17	Intimacy, acceptance	Near-synonym
8	Vacancy, candidate	Near-synonym	18	Swells up, anguish	Synonym
9	Hostage, riot	Near-synonym	19	Compensation, cure	Near-synonym
10	Hope, optimistic	Synonym	20	Slashing, pulling up	Synonym

There are examples of other sorts of reiteration as well. Superordinate and hyponyms, the relationship between a general class and its sub-classes has been described as hyponymy. The item referring to the general class is called superordinate: those referring to the sub-classes are known as its hyponym.

Table 2: Examples from the Excerpt of Super-ordinate and Hyponyms

No.	Super-ordinate (general class)	Hyponyms (sub-classes)
1.	Money	Dirhams, Dollars

2.	This Planet (Earth)	Macca, China, Canada, Toronto, Dubai, Punjab,
3.	Religion	Christian, Muslas
4.	Hospital	Ambulance, Nurse, Patients, Orthopedic Unit, Maternity Ward, TB Ward, First-aid course, and Pediatric management.

Repetition is there in texts like “Dubai and Toronto” are repeated thrice in the text, and similar words like “professionalism” “sweepers” “work experience” “deceased” and “prayers” are also repeated repeatedly in the excerpt. Conjunctions are words or phrases, which explicitly draw attention to the type of relationship, which exists, between one sentence or clause and another (Baker & Ellece, 2011). There are examples of additive, adversative, causal, and temporal conjunctions in the text. has ‘but,’ ‘then,’ ‘and’ ‘owns’ ‘otherwise.’

Discursive Practices in the Text

The analysis will focus on the intertextuality aspects of the narrative. This analysis will also bring forth a range of manifested discourse embedded in it, such as historical discourse, cultural discourse, patriarchal and feminist discourse, geographical discourse, and racial discourse. Fairclough (1992, p. 84) defines intertextuality as, "basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth." Manifested Intertextuality refers to the heterogeneous constitution of texts by which “specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text.” This kind of intertextuality is marked by explicit signs such as quotation marks, indicating the presence of other texts. The excerpt has many manifested intertextual references. For example, in line 132 “Holy Mother” refers to the mother of Jesus Mary. Similarly, in line 65, “Catholic establishments” refers to those institutions, which were established by Christians during colonial rule. These include hospitals, schools, and colleges. Line 87 refers to the “Bible” which is the holy Book of Christians. Line 249 mentions another example of manifested intertextuality of the FRCS degree, which is the abbreviation for Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS). It is a professional qualification to practice as a surgeon in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

There are many advertisements mentioned in the text, which makes this passage loaded with commercial discourse. It also shows that people are very professionally oriented rather than preserving values and norms. A doctor’s room is an emblem of highlighting top brands overall instead of being true to their profession and serving humanity.

(Line21) the room is a monument to pharmaceutical merchandising: the orange wall clock from GlaxoSmithKline, the calendar with blonde models in various stages of migraine from Pfizer Pain Management Systems, the box of pink tissues promising Dry Days, Dry Nights. (Line55) Put Your Faith in Philips, (Line 272) Gillette razor

These reflections of the commercialism of society suggest the superfluous nature of social values and religious ethos where these values are lost and exist for namesake solely. Here is one of its examples.

Line 11 wasted investment' halal money down the haram drain,
Line32 the interview panel is too busy debating the cost-benefit ratio for patients on pacemakers

The narrative reflects racial discourse in its disposition. The excerpt is full of questions and uncertainties, which reflect racism embedded in Pakistani society. Muslims are biased against other religious followers; they distinguish each other based on caste and creed.

(Line18-20) Have you cleaned the floor, Alice? Why have you not cleaned the floor?
Who do you think will clean that blood on the floor, Alice? Your father?
(Line109) 'How many candidates have we got?'
(Line121) 'Then why do we have to go through this?'
(line164) 'So are you Alice or are you, Bhatti?'
(Line)Why should anybody have a problem hiring a nurse who happens to be catholic?
(Line190) Why should we give you this job?
(Line231-233) What was she doing in the ambulance? Why was her face covered in ice cubes? Why was the ambulance rushing away from the hospital?
(Line236) Did you say you worked in Accidents?
(Line238-39) Didn't we have a little accident there? How could I forget?
(Line294-95) How do you deal with them? Should you deal with them?
(Line) 'Is your mother dead yet?'

There is an interview panel that sounds biased, and they lay great emphasis on the caste, color, and creed of a particular person before preceding the final interview.

(Line173) now Bhatti is a respectable clan from Punjab
(Line188) Bhatti's are pretty much everywhere, in every religion,

Although, it has nothing to do with the nature of the job and it is not ethically and constitutionally allowed to distinguish one another based on any clan or creed. It makes this discourse racial. The passage used religious connotations. For example, Halal, haram, sacred, the verse from the Quran exhorting the virtues of cleanliness, kafir fantasy, and grey diamond-shaped mark on his forehead is a testament to his five-times-a-day prayer routine, church, catholic, muslas, Christians, faith, holy mother, family bible, little gods, Mecca, Lord Yassoo and Hadith.

Sociocultural Aspect

Socio-cultural analysis of the text refers to the interpretation and description of the text. for Fairclough (1995b, p. 62), analysis in this dimension pertains to three aspects of the sociocultural context of a communicative event: economic, political, and cultural. Gender inequality is especially important to expect from this text. A woman in Pakistani society is deprived of her basic rights. Alice Bhatti is an epitomizer of that Pakistani woman who is

socially, economically, and politically deprived. She belongs to a slump. She has also been imprisoned for fourteen months in Borstal Jail because she strongly resisted sexual harassment in her workplace. Moreover, it is said that she is aware of the hospital environment which is considered a nurse as a prostitute. Furthermore, she also used to keep a "Gillette razor" in her uniform pocket to cope with bitter situations like this. It also shows that having been harassed at the workplace is routine work. She is economically weak as she is struggling hard to get a job as a junior nurse although exploitation is rife. It is also a great turmoil that despite having laws for women harassment bills passed by our parliament, there is no implementation of these laws. It is more pathetic to learn that Alice's mother, who worked as a house cleaner, was raped, and killed with impunity by one of her employers.

The poignant situation in a metropolitan city like Karachi, even a hospital is not secure for anyone where it is mentioned at the gate "Enter at your peril." There is also mention of police and Bristol jail in terms of fear and anguish. Even the protagonist is a criminal. It shows that a criminal lifestyle is part of their routine work. Nobody bothers about it, especially those who are in power. Even the police also seem like culprits on their own because the police system is not there to ensure a law-and-order situation, it is a sign of intimidation.

Line 414 'There is a police van outside. I hope they are not here for you

Corruption and hypocrisy are all pervasive in the text. The characters off and on refer to other places like "Dubai and Toronto" and currencies such as "Dollars and Dirhams" as a sign of their bright future. It represents hypocrisy which has deeply penetrated Pakistani society. Here people prefer to go to other countries and serve them instead of working honestly on their own. They have no respect for their soil. Inefficient infrastructure and poor administration of hospitals refer to corruption overall. Similarly, recruitment is done by not adopting a reliable process also shows that there is no transparency and meritocracy in our systems.

The process of Islamization is contributing its large measure of madness and oppression to a society already deformed by corruption and religious strife. There is no religious plurality in society. People have no patience for other religions.

Line 285 is a crowd that is headed for pre-planned lynching.

Christianity as a minority is suffering in Pakistan in which it was promised that minorities will enjoy equal rights because the state has nothing to do with religion. The state will be responsible for its welfare, but the situation is averse to it. Christians as minorities are suffering and no one cares about their rights at all. Slumps have been denoted to them. The Muslims use them to clean their shit. On the other hand, Muslim administrations at Catholic Christian Hospitals that Muslims have sabotaged Christian institutions. There is an entire process of nationalization in which Muslims took all the educational institutes and hospitals from Christians to establish their monopoly. Strong religious biasedness is evident against other religions. Low-cadre jobs are given to them. Joseph Bhatti excels in pinpointing tough-to-find sewer blockages. They hail a Christian slump called "French Colony" which is often the target of violence. This is a colony for the homes of untouchables.

Conclusion

Thus, critical discourse analysis is a contemporary approach to conducting research that aims to highlight social, cultural, economic, and religious discrimination. It helps to unveil the hidden stance of an author or a group against others with the help of language in use. Fairclough's analytical framework is very cosmic and comprehensive while conducting CDA. It aims to explore three consecutive levels of analysis: textual analysis, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices of a communicative event. Though employing this framework, this paper explores the hidden stance of "Muhammad Hanif" the author to highlight the apartheid attitude of the Muslim majority towards minorities. He makes use of a powerful medium of narrative to educate the masses at large that minorities are in danger in our society. The text is exposed to several linguistic devices and sociocultural devices to unveil the hidden ideology, beliefs, and attitudes in a three-dimensional way.

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