Exploring Power Relations in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride: An Analytical Study*

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Abstract
Bapsi Sidhwa's 'The Pakistani Bride' constructs social norms and cultural practices within Pakistani society. The novel represents complex and subtle power dynamics that demonstrate the urgent need for change in the challenges people, especially women, experience in gaining independence and rights in a constantly changing society. Despite deeply rooted patriarchal bonds, Sidhwa's critique of gender inequity is a call to action. Exploring issues of gender, class and ethnicity, the novel constructs a diverse range of viewpoints on power relations and their effects on individuals and society. The study focuses on women's discrimination in a patriarchal society where women face various types of discrimination and oppression. Fairclough's (2013) dialectical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis is used to analyse the selected passages from the novel under study. The focus of the study is to critically examine gender inequality in the novel The Pakistani Bride.
Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender, Patriarchal Power, Sidhwa, The Pakistani Bride

1. Introduction

The Pakistani Bride represents power relations within the patriarchal society of Pakistan. Investigating gender, class, and ethnicity, the novel presents varied views on how power relationships influence the relationships and experiences of its characters. This study analyses the discursive construction of power relations in The Pakistani Bride by exploring how diverse types of power affect the characters' lives. This research study focuses on how power is challenged, negotiated, and used in the novel to shed light on the fundamental power structures that control relationships and mould identities in a dynamic and ever-changing society. This study explores how Sidhwa's emotional and thought-provoking work portrays and examines power relations by carefully reading the text and critically engaging with pertinent theoretical frameworks. The novel explores women's sufferings, including issues such as domestic violence, arranged marriages, and the lack of dependence on their own lives. The central character, Zaitoon, faces numerous forms of oppression and discrimination due to her gender, highlighting the injustices and struggles faced by many women in patriarchal societies like Pakistan.

Critical discourse analysis, or CDA, is a potent analytical method for examining how language influences and reflects power relationships, ideologies, and social structures. Analyzing marginalized groups' portrayal in literature is one facet of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Fairclough (2001) pointed out how gender is portrayed in literature may disclose underlying power dynamics and social norms. We may learn more about how Sidhwa negotiates and challenges gender relations in her tales by looking at how she portrays the hardships and resiliency of her female characters during political unrest.

Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride constructs the intricacies of society, culture, and social norms in a patriarchal society. In contrast to the background of rural Pakistan, the novel narrates the story of Zaitoon, a young girl forced into an arranged marriage with an older man who belongs to a distant community. Zaitoon struggles with issues of identity and independence in a culture that sets expectations for her position, as she negotiates the difficulties of her new life as a bride.

With fascinating characters, Sidhwa highlights the complexities of gender relations, power, and tradition's influence on individual lives. Set in the specific context of rural Pakistan, the novel explores universal themes of love, determination, sacrifice, and the quest for freedom under suppressive societal frameworks. It constructs common themes of human experience that cut across cultural borders and the terrible realities women in traditional societies must endure, inviting the audience to reflect on their societal norms and power dynamics.

The Pakistani Bride presents the complexities of social relationships, social norms, and the durable capability of the human soul to overcome difficulties and pursue freedom. The novel turns on the real-life story of a girl who marries an old man from her father's community in Kohistan, Pakistan. After a month, she struggles to escape the area and return to Punjab as her life descends into misery. Her married life represents the brutality and inadequate opportunities in the Kohistani society (Safdar, Abbas, & Zafar, 2022).

Bapsi Sidhwa, a famous Pakistani novelist, has greatly enhanced literature by exploring gender, politics, and culture. Her masterwork, Ice Candy Man, deftly explores the effects of India's 1947 split on women and children. Sidhwa vividly depicts the human cost of political unrest from the viewpoint of a little child. In The Crow Eaters, Sidhwa uses comedy, satire, and social commentary to navigate colonial India's conflicts between culture and social standards. Her witty banter and colorful characters create a compelling story that delves into the complexities of tradition and identity.

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Culture significantly influences how people live and create their beliefs in every community, particularly regarding morality and ethics. Culture has always been the driving force behind all living things, giving societies their norms and values. One useful tool for modifying and adjusting the social environment is literature. Sidhwa's work is marked by vibrant imagery, careful attention to detail, and complex character depictions. Her tales captivate and provoke the mind, providing a unique viewpoint on Pakistani culture and its past.

2. Literature Review

Gender discourse relations are quite intricate in Pakistan. The study examines feminism in Pakistani culture and draws attention to the many forms of oppression women experience that go beyond gender stereotypes. The novel's main theme is men's patriarchal dominance in traditional ethno-cultural societies from a psychological (behavioral) and sexual stance. Three prominent female characters—Zaitoon, Carol, and Saki's mother, Hamida represent various aspects of women's challenges in a patriarchal society in The Pakistani Bride. These various kinds of challenges turn into defining characteristics of the painful lives of marginalized women. Women who live in ethnic societies and whose families are uninformed become far less lively (Malhotra, 2019, & Afaq et al., 2022).

This research, "Gender and Sexuality in Bapsi Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride: An Analytical Study" examines women's suppression in Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*. Sidhwa represents three social classes of women: from cities, tribes, and American women. Gendered roles refer to women's responsibilities and obligations because of the cultural division between males and females (Adil, Tahira, Akhter, 2021). Byers and Crocker (2012) states that every feminist issue is gone for communal growth, acquiring advantages for women from the community, as shown in Feminism and Culture Study on Feminism. Putting this out of mind, one may argue that women's rights in Pakistan are a myth. Pakistan has been fighting exploitation since its independence (with the support of their male spouses); however, women find it difficult to establish and defend their civil rights due to social, economic, and political circumstances.

In keeping with the binary barrier, women were shown as occupying oppressive roles that persisted in other traumatized areas where they were neither wholly welcomed nor rejected by society. Despite their social exclusion and limitations, they had to find a way to maintain their macho toughness and boost men's self-esteem. However, since it feeds one's ability to resist, this marginal positionality encodes a culture of resilience that one remains in and even clings to. It allows one to adopt a radical viewpoint to perceive, create, conceive alternatives, and construct new worlds (Toppo, Kumari, 2022, Ali et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

The current study adopts a qualitative method to examine power relations through critical discourse analysis. It focuses on *The Pakistani Bride* to examine power dynamics within the text (discourse). The scholar chooses specific extracts and discourses from the novel that represent power relations among various characters. Fairclough's (2013) dialectical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theoretical framework for exposing power structures implanted in language and discourse.

3.1. Fairclough's Analytical Framework

Fairclough (2013) suggests three perspectives that provide complementary approaches to understanding a complicated social occurrence. From a political perspective, he focuses on the discursive event within power and dominance relations. One aspect of his analytical framework is that it attempts to fuse a theory of power based on Gramsci's notion of hegemony with a discourse practice theory grounded in intertextuality. He states that discourse practice is understood to mediate the relationship between text and social practice: on the one hand, the processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by the social practice, and on the other hand, the production process shapes the text and leaves 'traces' in it, while the interpretative process acts on 'cues' in the text.

The interpretation of the discursive event as social practice may refer to many levels of social organization, including the institutional, situational, and larger societal contexts, also known as the 'context of culture' (Halliday, Hasan 1985, Gul et al., 2022(a), Gul et al., 2022(b) & Ishtiaq et al., 2021). At each of the three levels, power and ideology issues may arise. Fairclough (1992a) finds it helpful to consider hegemony when considering discourse and power. The position of hegemonic relations and struggle constrain and resist the apparently infinite possibilities of novelty in discursive practice implied by the idea of inter-discursivity—an unending mixing and recombination of genres and discourses.

Fairclough (2013) provides some of the key terms of his Analytical Framework of CDA:
"Discourse (abstract noun)   Language use conceived as social practice.

discursive event Instance of language use, analyzed as text, discursive practice, social practice.

Text   The written or spoken language produced in a discursive event.

Discourse practice: The production, distribution, and consumption of a text.

interdiscursivity The constitution of a text from diverse discourses and genres.

Discourse (count noun)   Way of signifying experience from a particular perspective.

Genre   Use of language associated with a particular social activity.

Order of discourse   Totality of discursive practices of an institution, and relations between them."
(Fairclough, 2013: pp. 95-96)

4. Data Analysis

By analyzing a text (discourse) using Fairclough's CDA Three-Dimensional Model, we may learn how language constructs cognitive and emotional reactions, maintain CDA has also become more institutionalized, in the sense that there are many more academic posts and programs of study and research. It has become more mainstream and certainly more 'respectable' than it was in the early days, maintains uneven power relations, and reflects larger societal norms and structures regarding gender, violence, and agency. Critical Discourse Analysis has established itself more in the sense that there are a lot of academic positions and research and study programs.

4.1. Discursive Construction of Power Abuse

The discourse constructs unequal power relationships between the wife (Zaitoon) and the husband (Sakhi) in Pakistan's tribal society. It describes men's brutality in the form of a spouse. Moreover, the discourse interprets the central ideologies of power abuse, discrimination, and gender inequality.

Text 1

"He dragged her along the crag. You whore, he hissed. His fury so intense she thought he would kill her. He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs… Grapping her with one hand he waved the other in a lewd caricature of the girl's brief gesture. Waving at that shit-eating swine. You wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn't you! Zaitoon stood in a cataleptic trance. Sakhi shook her like a rattle, and at last she cried, 'Forgive me, forgive me, I won't do it again… Forgive me,' she kept repeating the words to quell his murderous rage". (Sidhwa, 2008)

4.1.1. Discussion

The depiction of power abuse and control in a relationship is the primary theme of the text when observed through the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective. A husband's use of physical violence and pained language draws attention to the unequal power relations and unfair conduct that exist in the exchange. The female character's reaction of fear and submission highlights the unequal power relations at work, while the male character's violent and degrading language reveals a discourse of dominance and subordination.

4.1.2. Description

The use of expressions like "whore," "filthy," and "black little bitch," and the construction of violent actions like spitting, dragging, and threatening, represent a discourse of power and dominance in the text (discourse). The husband's hostile language use draws attention to violence against his wife and a gendered power dynamic. The words and phrases have ideological significance that constructs gendered-based violence and humiliation.

The text's experiential value causes the reader to experience intense feelings of terror, powerlessness, and submission. The text (discourse) both reproduces and reflects the power disparities and gender-based violence that are prevalent in the Pakistani tribal society.

Through the application of Fairclough's 3-D model of CDA to this text, we may discern the ways in which language functions to establish and perpetuate power imbalances, mold affective reactions, and mirror society's perspectives on gender, violence, and agency.

4.1.3. Interpretation and Explanation

The extract discursively represents a situation in which a male character (husband) abuses a female character (wife) physically and through language use. He constructs his dominance and control over her through manipulation, insulting rhetoric, and physical aggression. The female character (Zaitoon) becomes frightened and overawed due to Sakhi's violent activities, which include dragging her down the crag, spitting in her face, and making sexual gestures. Consequently, she stands in a lifeless stupor and begs for forgiveness in an attempt to calm him down.

This text (discourse) demonstrates the oppressive dynamics and uneven power relations that occur in the communication between the two characters. Sakhi emphasizes gender-based power inequalities by using physical violence and insulting words as a discursive tactic to use dominance and control over his wife. The submissive response and supplication for forgiveness from the female character highlight the internalization of this power dynamic and the regulating of abusive performance in the partnership. In addition to intimidating and subduing the female character, the male character's harsh words and deeds also represent larger societal norms and power structures that support gender-based violence and oppression. Through an examination of how language shapes and maintains power dynamics, Fairclough's (2001, 2013) Critical Discourse Analysis approach can illuminate the underlying social, cultural, and ideological elements that legitimize abusive conduct and marginalize victims in patriarchal structures.

Zaitoon's depiction as a victim of verbal and physical assault sparks empathy and anger for the unfairness and cruelty she experiences. By encouraging an emotional connection between the reader and the characters and circumstances, the book emphasizes the emotive power of language in influencing reactions and perceptions. The rhetoric that disparages and dehumanizes the female character nourishes destructive stereotypes and a culture of violence against women. The discourse mirrors larger societal norms and power systems that accept or ignore such violence by normalizing the violent actions of the male character.

4.2. Construction of Patriarchal Power

The selected excerpt centers on themes of responsibility, honor, and the significance of keeping one's word in a scenario involving a strong commitment to a marital arrangement.

Text 2

"I've given my word. Your marriage is to be a week from today. Tomorrow your betrothed goes to invite guests from the neighboring villages. I've given my word. On it depends my honour." (Sidhwa, 2008)

The text (discourse) centers on marital measures and the value of keeping promises. This can be understood in a cultural or historical setting where honor, social norms, and traditional values influence interpersonal relations and communal dynamics.

The extract reflects customs seen in cultures where arranged weddings are typical. In these cultures, keeping one's family name and social status intact requires keeping one's word about marriage contracts.

4.2.1. Description

The extract mainly employs language processes to construct discourse and actions concerning the marriage arrangement, such as "I've promised," "Your marriage is set," and "Tomorrow your future spouse departs." These expressions are ideologically significant in the context of patriarchal power. It defines the events and responsibilities related to the matrimonial arrangement in the present and future tenses. The use of modal verbs such as "to be" and "goes" represents obligation, necessity, or possibility. The use of pronouns like "I," "your," and "mine" emphasizes individual participation in the commitments made and strengthens the connections between individuals. Vocabulary like "betrothed," "invite guests" and "neighboring villages" are among the formal registers suitable for discussing marriage arrangements in the text.

4.2.2. Interpretation and Explanation

The selected text (discourse) discursively exposes power dynamics through the allegation of promises and commitments associated with the marriage arrangement. The recurrent phrase "I've given my word" constructs a sense of power and dominance over the situation.

The reference to "neighboring villages" and the importance of honor allude to customs and cultural norms that might affect the protagonists' choices and actions. In the context of the upcoming marriage, words like "word," "marriage," "honour," and "commitment" arouse feelings of trust, obligation, and integrity. The emphasis on honor discursively depicts how critical it is to respect social norms and preserve an individual's reputation in society. Given the mingled nature of honor, obligations, and social position within society, the discourse surrounding the marital arrangement reflects larger discursive practices within that group. The text (discourse) reflects social practices concerning marital customs and duties and directs interactive relationships within particular cultural contexts.

The expression "neighboring villages" refers to a rural society where interpersonal exchanges are strictly controlled and group ideals supersede personal judgment. This context constructs a customary or culturally specific setting in which a strong sense of honor and devotion to obligations characterize social connections.

5. Conclusion

The discussion about the forthcoming marriage plan represents a nuanced communication between power relations, responsibilities, and cultural standards. By examining the use of language such as formal vocabulary, modal verbs, and pronouns, we can explore the intricacies of power, social hierarchies, and social norms that are rooted in the discourse. In order to shape interpersonal interactions and community dynamics, the book depicts a setting in which honor, responsibility, and keeping commitments are of utmost significance. We may understand how language serves as a tool for negotiating relationships, exercising power, and defending societal norms within the complex web of social interactions around the marital arrangement by placing the discussion within a larger cultural or historical framework.

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