



A Critical Discourse Analysis of Socio-Psychological Factors in Taufiq Rafat's "Wedding in the Flood"

Muhammad Amjad

RIPHAH International University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

mamjadfsd@gmail.com

Adnan Tahir

University of Okara, Okara, Pakistan

Muhammad Ahmad

Punjab College, Faisalabad, Pakistan

Abstract

People use language for different social practices in different contexts and perspectives, and discourse analysts examine these social practices for better understanding of the discourse. The language used by a poet is different from the language used by common people; the poetic diction helps to understand a poet's literary style, his ideology, and the use of descriptive language. This article focuses on exposing the socio-psychological factors through examining the use of language in a free verse poem 'Wedding in the Flood' by Taufiq Rafat who tried to present different aspects of Pakistani culture in the poem. The socio-psychological factors combine the social (family, society, wealth, religion) and the psychological factors (feelings, thoughts, actions, beliefs) that play an important role in shaping the personality of an individual, and the characters in the poem are the best examples of it. This analysis is based on Fairclough's conceptions in CDA that claims of an inter-link between ideologies and texts, and this link cannot be separated because there are many ways to interpret texts, and the Socio-Psychological Theory (20121) also combines many social and psychological factors of human life. Many researchers did the stylistic analysis of the poem, but nothing has been done to highlight its socio-psychological factors through CDA.

Keywords: CDA, Wedding, Pakistani Culture, Socio-Psychological Factors

1. Introduction

Background of the study

CDA is a set of problem-oriented and multidisciplinary methods commonly used in educational research..., and "discourse can be taken as a multimodal social practice" (Rogers, 2011). This



growing interdisciplinary approach has its own ideology to study practical use of language in different contexts focusing on the social practices of language (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), and these practices have their own purposes in different social situations. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), "Discourse studies have at least seven dimensions in common" without any of which the text will not be communicative. Common people use language for different social practices, but a poet enjoys a unique status and freedom among the users of language...Poetic language mostly violates or deviates from the general language rules (Leech 1969), and the discourse analysts examine the use of language for better understanding of the discourse. He critically studies the linguistic choices and their various aspects to understand the use of language behind the text. The focus is on constructing or exposing realities by using logical arguments or counterarguments. Discourse is always meaningful according to different interpretations in different contexts and perspectives (Amjad, 2018). Despite all that, gaps of ideas in discourse are always there which the researchers try to fill because the meaning of a sentence can be changed by placing the words, phrases, sentences in a different world. A sentence in a book of psychology can be interpreted differently from a sentence in literature. Moreover, the Socio-Psychological Theory (2021), according to businessjargons.com, asserts that individuals and society are interlinked; an individual strives to meet the needs of the society and the society helps him to attain his goals, and the personality of an individual is determined through this interaction. Critical discourse analysis emphasizes that ideas, facts, and knowledge are not static, but change while the discourse(s) change. It is a methodology that enables a vigorous assessment of what is meant when language is used to describe and explain something.

Cultural identity, diversity and activities, long-standing and time-honoured traditions, religious and widely-held beliefs, social justice and disorder, financial difficulties and success, increase and reduction in human values – build a bit bourgeois, an egalitarian or a permissive society that can be different from other civilized and democratic societies in the world. After a long-standing practice, the socio-psychological factors come into being and the people in that particular society act accordingly. Many researchers focused on the stylistic analysis of *Wedding in the Flood* to investigate the true nature and possible effects of linguistic features so that the readers can appreciate the writer's skills to use language, but nothing has yet been done either



by stylisticians or discourse analysts, to highlight the socio-psychological factors in the poem. Taufiq Rafat holds a unique status among Pakistani English poets because of his style of depicting Pakistani culture, and his major work *The Arrival of the Monsoon* is a memorable acknowledgement of it. The poem "Wedding in the Flood" has been taken from this major work for discourse analysis of socio-psychological factors.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

The study focused on the discourse analysis of 'Wedding in the Flood' according to Fairclough's concepts of an inter-link between ideologies and texts, and this link cannot be broken because there are many ways to interpret texts. There are different aspects of human life in this poem, but this study only focuses on exploring socio-psychological factors of human life presented in the poem through different characters. Many researchers made serious efforts to conduct stylistic analysis of the poem in different contexts, but nothing has yet been done in this context of CDA. In this way, the present study filled the research gap and contributed to the existing knowledge of the research community through the discourse analysis of socio-psychological factors of human life presented in the poem.

Research Questions

This study critically analyzed only one important aspect of human life through the following research question.

1. What are the important socio-psychological factors in the poem?
2. How did the poet present different aspects of socio-psychological factors?

2. Review of Literature

Critical discourse analysis is a qualitative analytical study for critically describing, interpreting and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain and legitimize social inequalities. Van Dijk (1998) believes that CDA and the studies of written and spoken texts have close connections that elaborate the discursive sources of power, dominance, bias and inequality. Fairclough (1993) developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse – analysis of spoken and written language texts that is the description, analysis of its processing



that is interpretation and social analysis that is explanation. Thus, CDA focuses on establishing logical connections among discourse, social practices, and their structures that a layman cannot understand. All social practices are possible because of language that fulfils the communicative purposes (Fairclough, 1995), and the language users perform their functions in different language structures. CDA tries to explore the links between structures and their social functions. Moreover, the socio-psychological factors of human life combine the social (family, society, wealth, religion) and the psychological factors (feelings, thoughts, actions, beliefs) that play an important role in shaping the personality of an individual that we can see through different characters in the poem.

CDA is a field of great interest for the international linguistic community to make intellectual efforts to do discourse analysis of famous speeches, newspapers, and a piece of literary work to unfold the hidden meanings and realities. Many researchers have done stylistic analysis of *Wedding in the Flood*, but there is nothing noticeable on this poem in CDA. This study is a deliberate effort to contribute to the existing knowledge by filling the research gap. The main analytical tool of this study is the "three-dimensional method of discourse analysis" by Fairclough namely the written or spoken language text, discourse, social and cultural practices.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher planned to analyse the poem 'Wedding in the Flood' by observing the references with a stamp of socio-psychological factors clearly seen through the characters, and their impacts on the social class where the marriage was celebrated. Only the qualitative paradigm was used for analysis through Fairclough's model of "three-dimensional method of discourse analysis."

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted focusing on the study questions of socio-psychological factors of human life.

Socio-Psychological Factors in The Poem



The analysis of the poem highlights the socio-psychological factors of human life through Pakistani cultural references in the poem that has a specific context. The most important verses from the poem with their critical discourse analysis are stated below to understand the socio-psychological factors behind the text.

a)

They are taking my girl away forever,
sobs the bride's mother, as the procession
forms slowly to the whine of the clarinet.

She was the shy one. How will she fare
in that cold house, among these strangers?

This has been a long and difficult day.

In every society worldwide, the love and affection of mothers are exemplary, and they are considered more intense than that of other blood relations. Mothers are always worried about the betterment of their children from the very first day. Moreover, girls are closer to their mothers, and they share their secrets, feelings, and problems that they cannot share with their fathers, brothers and other relatives. So, it is a naturally emotional reaction of a mother at the time of her daughter's marriage to think of her future life in a new house. It is also a social and cultural factor, particularly in a Pakistani society of middle, lower-middle and poor class, to express love and emotions by weeping, shedding tears or crying on such occasion; it is disliked if someone does not express such emotions, even fathers and brothers do so, but the strongest and matchless emotional expression is of a real mother, and the opening lines paint a true picture of it. There is a long complaining cry from a musical instrument and an expression of sadness from the mother. The mothers know almost everything about their daughters, so they can confirm the important factors of their daughters' personalities that the girls of such social classes can be nervous or timid in the company of other people. Based on her experience about the nature of her daughter, the mother is worried about her daughter's performance in a specific way in a particular situation of the new house where she is being taken for ever; the house where there is no one who has warm and strong feelings for her at this moment. Love, likeness, and feelings of sympathy are related to some blood relations and friends that develop gradually and cannot be



expected from the strangers. Because the bride is not emotionally attached and knows the people in the new house where she is going to live, so the first day with these people in that new house is a difficult one. When we talk about people from other parts of the world with different cultures, traditions and socio-psychological background, we find different kinds of behaviours and reactions on such martial occasions, but we see a strong touch of Pakistani culture, tradition and socio-psychological factor, where parents choose a match for their daughters with a lot of fear and prayers, in the opening lines of the poem; the opening lines show a mother's love, affection and worries about the future life of her daughter. While describing social psychology of different human relations, the poet put the relation of a mother on the top. This important status of mothers is not only related to Pakistani culture, tradition and socio-psychological factors but also to the Islamic culture where the respectful status of a mother is on the top in every corner of the world.

b)

...as they help the bride into the palankeen.

The girl has been licking too many pots...

After painting a natural scene of a rainy day, the poet gives many socio-psychological references of arranging the marriage lunch in the open, the bride is taken to the palanquin at the time of departure that is symbol of great respect and licking pot while eating meals. A cultural idiom 'pot licking' also gives a culturally specific meaning in a Pakistani society; for example, the girl is from a religious family, and she licks the pots after meals as recommended in Islamic teachings; she and her mother cook very delicious foods, so they lick the pots at the end of their meals. If it is not so, how can one lick the pot after meals? In a cultural context, it is believed that licking pots after meals can cause too much rain at the time of marriage. Rain because of pot licking, the few items given to the girl as her dowry that also shows the financial and social status of the girl's family, the fear and worries of the mother and bearing the bride's palanquin on shoulders are socio-psychological factors of a Pakistani society.

c)

I like the look of her hennaed hands,
gloats the bridegroom, as he glimpses



her slim fingers gripping the palankeen's side.

If only her face matches her hands,
and she gives me no mother-in-law problems,
...It was my luck to get a pot-licking wench.

After the intense feelings and worries of the bride's mother, the second character with the strongest feelings about the bride is the husband who is thinking about the bride in another way. In an open society, the socio-psychological factors might be different, but in a Pakistani society where males and females were not allowed and appreciated to mix up and interact freely, the young boys and girls waste much of their energy and time thinking about opposite genders and sex related activities. The bridegroom's thinking about the bride's hennaed hands, slim fingers and her face gives him great pleasure and satisfaction, and it is an authentic proof of socio-psychological factor of the society. In many cultures, there can be many complications in a married life if the girl is not beautiful. The poet expresses the strong feelings of the bridegroom by using the words 'if only' that is used to express a 'wish' regretfully – the face of the bride should be as beautiful as her hands, and she should not bring any problem because of her mother. The bride's mother is also considered a problem creating character in Pakistani culture because the guidance of the mother-in-law is directly related to the peaceful and happy life of the bridegroom. Some girls take private tuition from their mothers, family members or some friends, and they act accordingly in their new house and spoil their married life. The dowry of a girl is not very important for a bridegroom as it is important for some other members of the family. Even if it is, the boy can forget it easily if the girl is beautiful because there is nothing as much important in the life of a bridegroom as the beauty of the bride, and all the mutual marital activities related to the beauty of a girl. The use of word 'wench' shows that the bridegroom is a little bit angry because of bad weather and getting late; he might think of being in his bedroom earlier. The use of this word also shows the social class and mental approach of the bridegroom. He could have used the word 'bride, girl, lady' or else, but he used an old-fashioned and offensive word that, according to <https://www.merriam-webster.com>, refers to a young girl, a woman or a female prostitute, a female servant, a girl or a woman of a socially low class. It also



shows that the bridegroom might not be a man of good moral character. We can judge his character and personality through his feelings about hennaed hands and slim fingers that he liked, his mental approach to think about dowry and the use of this word 'wench' for a young girl who is his bride, and who is going to be a respectable member of his family. All these are good examples of socio-psychological factors of a Pakistani society.

d)

It is dark in the palankeen, thinks the bride...

...What sort of a man is my husband?

After the painting of the mother's and the bridegroom's characters and their feelings, the poet speaks of the bride's mind – the most important, fearful, worried and central character in the poem. The bride has a chain of thoughts in her mind; she thinks about getting dark, the leaking of palanquin and her wet feet because of raining, but she cannot tell anyone about them. She looks through the curtain and cannot find even a single familiar face whom she can talk about her uneasiness because of cold and scary moments at that time. At the same time, she is thinking about her cot, tin trunk and a mirror-glass that will be destroyed in the rain. She thinks about her future life in her husband's house, so she says, 'What sort of a man is my husband?' The focus of the bridegroom is the beauty of the bride; the focus of the bride is the character of the bridegroom. If her husband is a man of character, a man of principal, she is safe to lead a happy life; she will not be a stranger among the strangers in a new house because her husband will be there to lead and guide her in every difficult situation and lead a happy and respectful life. In a Pakistani socio-psychological framework, a good husband, in fact, is believed to be a symbol of power and respect at the back of a loyal and obedient wife, so the bride is thinking about her husband.

e)

They might have given a bullock at least...

all the things that she will use!



Every character shows a different picture of the socio-psychological factors of human life by the lexical choices according to their level of social and psychological maturity. Fathers are advanced in age, experienced in family matters, financially mature and think about the betterment of their children. The father of the bridegroom seems to complain in a bad-tempered way about the dowry given to the bride because he may think that a valuable dowry can help to make his son's financial position better. That is why, he desires of a bullock that can be used for ploughing – to make their financial position better. He is not happy at all to see a cot, a tin trunk and a looking glass because these things are of a little value and for the personal use of the bride; these things will bring no better change to his family. We can see that the father thinks about the betterment of his son and family, but he does not think about the financial condition, limitation of the bride's family that is a kind of selfishness and greediness. It is all because of the socio-psychological factors of human life prevailing in the Pakistani society of that time.

f)

...We are late by an hour,
or perhaps two. But whoever heard
of a marriage party arriving on time?
...and a wedding party always pays extra.
...Oh what a consummation is here:
...the coy bride is truly wedded at last.

The socio-psychological factors made the bridegroom's father think about pot-licking of the bride because of which there was a lot of rain, the ferryman ask them to be on time because marriage parties are always late, the ferryman wait and the father think of paying some extra money on such a happy occasion because of being late. Talking about the unpleasant weather, the river, their homeward journey and the impacts of weather on their marriage procession, the poet used two important words that help to understand the cultural and psychological meanings. From the words 'Oh what a consummation is here:' the readers may understand that the action



of making a marriage has been completed after such a difficult journey of the marriage procession through the river in the rain but using the word 'consummation' does not support this idea. Moreover, the use of 'is here' with 'consummation' gives an 'exclamation of amazement' even without 'Oh what' in the beginning of the statement. The series of actions mentioned after this statement with a colon sign in the end have nothing to do with the consummation of a happy and successful marriage. The husband's feelings about the girl when he was looking at her hands, thinking about her face beauty, the girl's perception of the bridegroom as her husband, the mental satisfaction of the bridegroom and the bride are very important because all these actions will lead to a happy sexual relationship – mental and physical satisfaction – and that will be the 'consummation' of the marriage. Another meaningful word used by the poet is 'coy' with 'bride.' No one knows the truth and reality; the bride can be shy and modest, but the poet does not seem to believe that. The word 'coy' means making a pretence of shyness or modesty that is really alluring. The shyness and modesty of a bride can be true, natural, tricky, or deceptive; no one knows the reality, but the poet preferred to convey a negative meaning on purpose. He could have used some other words; the bride's mother used the word 'shy' for her daughter in line four of the poem. All the characters are of different age and level of maturity, but we can see that maturity is not related to the age; maturity means manners. All these socio-psychological factors of human life are very important in different societies worldwide; they have strong roots in social and psychological development of an individual and a society as a whole.

5. Findings

a) The free-verse poem 'Wedding in the Flood' describes different cultural and social aspects of Pakistani society, but the socio-psychological factors of human life in a Pakistani society have only been taken for this research study.

b) The most important and noticeable character is the bride's mother who is too much worried about the married life of her daughter because there can be many problems in the life of a bride if the bridegroom and his family members are not cooperative. Moreover, the quality and value of dowry can also cause negative impacts on the married life of a girl, and it is clearly mentioned in the poem.



c) The most important thing for the bridegroom is the beauty of the bride that can help her to be an eye start for her husband, and he can ignore many things that are generally not ignorable for him because of some socio-psychological factors. Even a greedy bridegroom can ignore the value of dowry if the bride is beautiful and seductive, but some of the family members usually do not; the bridegroom's conditional remarks about the dowry and his father's expectation are the best example it.

d) The bridegroom's father has nothing to with the dowry of his daughter-in-law, but he looks worried about it because he may think that the valuable dowry, as he was expecting a bullock for ploughing, can help to make his son's financial position better. A marriage and a valuable dowry have nothing to do with the financial support of the bridegroom.

e) The innocent and dove-like character at this stage is only the still and silent bride; experiences can change this opinion in the future. She is also thinking like her mother; the mother thinks about the strangers in the new house with whom the bride is going to live her future life; the bride thinks about her husband saying, 'What sort of a man is my husband?' She seems to believe if her husband is a good person, if he is a man of character, if he is a man of principal, it will not be difficult at all to live with the strangers in the new house of her husband. This is believed that such a way of thinking, as seen through different characters, is because of the socio-psychological factors in a Pakistani society.

f) The ferryman knows the consequences of being late when crossing a river in such a bad weather, so he seems to be punctual and tells the bridegroom's father to come back on time. On the contrary, the bridegroom's father thinks about it a little, and he believes that the ferryman will wait because he will be paid extra. The father does not link the punctuality with a moral issue, with something embarrassing, with something the society does not like, but he links it with paying some extra money because of being late and that is all. This is another picture of the society with a stamp of socio-psychological factors on it.

g) The socio-psychological factors related to the idea of pot licking, using the words 'wench, consummation and coy' are far from the reality. Pot licking has nothing to do with bad weather and raining; the word 'wench' is not suitable for a bride; the word 'consummation' is a good one to express an idea related to marriage, but the word has not been



used positively in a proper place. Similarly, the word 'coy' shows the use of a dreadful pun when talking about a newly married bride; it does not give the due respect to the bride socially, legally and religiously, and all that is due to socio-psychological factors of a Pakistani society at that time that came into being after long-standing social practices.

h) The discourse analysis and its findings show that the researcher has successfully answered the research questions focusing on the socio-psychological factors of human life presented in the poem through different characters.

Conclusion

Discourse analysis is a broad research field to study written or spoken language focusing on its relation to social context, and it helps to understand how language is used in real life situations, the purposes, and effects of using different types of language choices. After going through the text of 'Wedding in the Flood,' the researcher has concluded that the poem is full of remarkable references that are because of the socio-psychological factors of human life in Pakistani society. These socio-psychological factors include the worries and restlessness of bride's mother about the future life her daughter, the possible consequences of the worthless dowry, the bridegroom's focus on bride's face beauty and its conditional link to the dowry, the expectations and feelings of the bride about her husband's character and personality, the bridegroom's father who is desperately thinking of the worthless dowry, paying extra to the ferryman because of being unpunctual or late, referring the bride as a pot licking wench, coy bride and sarcastic remark on the concept of consummation of marriage. All these are the references that clearly bear the stamp of socio-psychological factors of human life on them. These socio-psychological factors come into being after long-standing practices in a particular society, and then the people in that particular society act accordingly.

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