

## Critical Discourse Analysis of the Short Story “My Son the Fanatic” By Hanif Kureishi

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### Abstract

This research aims to study social power relations in a postcolonial hybrid culture. The purpose is to reveal what lexicons are used to control power. The researcher manually collected words expressing power and analyzed the characters and their languages embodied in Pakistani literature. My Son the Fanatic, a short story by Hanif Kureishi is a story of Parvaiz and his son, who rejects his father's Western secularism and returns to strict Islamic fundamentalism. This study follows Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model for studying the power relationship. Discourse analysis is a very coherent model for analyzing spoken and written language in the text of a short story. The results show that power is a constantly changing phenomenon. However, male dominance is seen in the language and social practices of postcolonial literature.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Short story, Fairclough, Ideology, identity

### 1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a system of critically analyzing the socio-historical context, power, interpersonal relationships and cultural and political influences. Our social practices and influences determine our language usage. This paper studies the text of Hanif Kureishi's short story “My Son the Fanatic”, to check the power relationship. The phenomenon of hybridization and imitation is reflected in this short story. It depicts the life story of a taxi driver, Pervaiz. He decided to leave Pakistan and migrate to England to live a decent life. His traumatized childhood was the result of a false education system, especially religious education, which was so rigorous that it created a different perception of religious recognition. Instead, his son's name was Ali. He defied all the customs of his father, who came from Eastern culture and stayed away from religion. The conflict between the perceptions of the two characters prompted the post-colonial analysis in this study.

### 2. Literature Review

Language assists people in forming and maintaining social ties with different humans. It also can be considered as a system for deriving meaning. It allows humans to shape mental photos of facts and make sense of what is going on around and within them. Language is generally used to discuss general matters of the world, both the external world things, events, attributes and so forth, or the internal thoughts, beliefs, emotions and many others, in written or spoken language.

Discourse deals with associated invisible sets of concepts, beliefs and values that exist therein social scenarios. A discursive event is an occasion of language use (Fairclough, 1993, p.138). Thus, the discursive event refers to social practice, text production and interpretation. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach used for interpreting and analyzing language. This approach is very crucial in research. It studies problems related to social issues in discourse. For example the production, domination and abuse of power. The struggle against inequality is studied and supported (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). Fairclough's CDA model focuses on the linguistic elements used in a text and analyzes the hidden meanings in the system of social relationships and their hidden effects on this system. Power relationships and inequalities are dealt with mainly by (Fairclough, 2010, Reisigl, 2013; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Wodak, 2009).

This paper investigates the social power relations in a post-colonial short story entitled as “My Son the Fanatic”, written by Hanif Kureishi. It was first published in The New Yorker magazine in 1994. The story throws light on the conflicts between Pervaiz, an immigrant father and his son, Ali, born in England. Pervaiz had been assimilating his grownup existence into the British lifestyle and desired that his son will transform too. He is consequently appalled whilst Ali abandons his passion for becoming an accountant. On the other hand, he devotes himself to a radicalized model of Islam and espouses hatred of the West. The father-son relationship gets complicated as time passes, influenced by many factors.

Applying Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Model to the story will help to analyze the practice of inter-discursivity and hegemony in the story and what lexicons are used to deal with social power issues. Also, to study discourse about baspower and ideology (Fairclough, 1992:86). Hanif Kureishi's “My son the Fanatic” discursively depicts paternalistic power and dominance in hybrid British Pakistani culture, a mix of east and west.

This story is about Pakistani Immigrants and the impact of Islamic Fundamentalism. A young boy gets influenced by the Islamic ideology, due to which certain changes in his behavior were observed. Father becomes concerned about this change

in the behavior of his son and tries to convince him about British culture and argues with him that it is better than Islam. This became the key point due to which the researcher intended to study the power practice in this discourse and wanted to find out who is more dominant.

### 3. Research Questions

How power is practiced in Pakistani Literature, “My son the fanatic”?

Who is more dominant in the text of the short story?

### 4. Methodology

Norman Fairclough is one of the most important people in the field of discourse, language and society. Furthermore, he also argues that language is a part of society. He proposed a model called the 3-D model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). His three-dimensional method for discourse analysis has three stages:

#### 4.1 Description Stage (Text Analysis):

In the description stage, we read and analyze the text. As well as we need to explain the basic theme and situation of the text by focusing on linguistic features which may include Vocabulary, Sentence structure, turn-taking, etc. SFL, Systemic Functional linguistics is involved in this stage and discovers the (Ideational, textual and interpersonal) meta-functions.

#### 4.2 Interpretation Stage (Processing Analysis):

It is the second stage and it deals with the relationship between the process of text production and interpretation. In this step, we analyze institutional practices. It deals with speech acts and intertextuality.

#### 4.3 Explanation Stage (Social Analysis):

In the last step, the relationship between the discourse and society is examined. We see the importance of these aids because they show us the mirror of our society, so this is one of the most important steps in the Fairclough model of CDA. Social context and era are given the highest priority.

### 5. Theoretical Framework

Critical discourse analysis, according to Fairclough (1993), is a sort of discourse research methodology that focuses largely on the abuse of social authority, power, inequality and domination practiced, replicated and resisted via text and talk in the social and political context; with such dissident reveal and eventually resist social inequality. To alter an unfair or oppressive situation, critical discourse analysis (CDA) aims to highlight social injustices, inequalities, constraints on freedom and discrimination. Therefore, those two theories consider language to be deliberate whether discursive decisions are conscious or unconscious. This Critical Discourse Analysis looks at the ideology and social power dynamics in postcolonial hybrid writing.

### 6. Analysis

The short story “My Son the Fanatic” sets a plot that revolves around a father having secular beliefs and his son who is inclined toward Religion. Where the father starts adopting British culture and is influenced by western traditions, the son “Ali”, starts going to the mosque and offering prayers. The title itself told us the basic core of the story. Since it concerns a "son" who is overly enthusiastic about Islam, we assume that the word “fanatic” is referring to the boy. Later, the story grows and becomes more complex and the writer leaves the reader wondering by ending the story with a question: “Who is the fanatic now?” The story is written in the third person’s perspective. The main characters include Pervaiz (father), Ali (son) and Bettina (Prostitute/ Pervaiz’s girlfriend). The minor characters are Perviaz’s friends and wife, who have not been even named in the story.

The short story doesn’t follow any chronological order, it begins with a complex situation in the plot already. Ali's process of becoming a Muslim "fanatic" and his father’s being worried about his changed behavior can be seen in the beginning. The narrator’s approach grabs the attention and develops a sense of harmony or sympathy with Pervaiz, being a concerned father. Identity crisis is a major conflict in Pakistani literature. Pervaiz being a taxi driver works day and night to pay for his son’s school expenses. He proudly says that his son has excelled in cricket, swimming and football. Ali secured first prize in school, studied accounting as his major in college and was on his way to getting the right job. His “British Dream” was about to come true but a problem arose between Pervaiz and Ali, as the father begins to notice changes in his son's behavior by throwing away teenage stuff, stopping dating, breaking up with his girlfriend and changing his look, schedule and taking responsibilities more seriously.

Pervaiz then began watching Ali's every move. He was suspicious that Ali was using drugs but that wasn’t the case. He discovered that Ali joined Mosque’s community and visits Mullah all the time. One of the most important themes in this story is gender. As the character of Pervaiz’s wife is analyzed, it is observed that very little importance is given to his wife. She is

not visible in the story. Pervaiz finds solace in his relationship with Bettina and shares his thoughts with her. On the other hand, his wife is treated as a servant, forced to cook pork sausages, bacon and other haram food. Pervaiz drinks and asks his family to adapt to this British Culture. Ali, born in England, is opposite of his father. He hates his father having a sexual relationship with Bettina and calls her a prostitute, who has no respect.

Due to Pervaiz's negligence and affair, Ali became outspoken and started raising his voice in front of his father. Pervaiz considered evicting Ali from his home and became violent with his son due to his inability to answer his questions and starts beating him out of rage. The Language of Hanif Kureishi's short story is generally easy to understand. However, some lexicons like "surreptitiously", "truanting" and "usury" are not so common and are considered more difficult to understand. These vocabulary choices indicate a formal style of writing.

The main focus of the analysis is on the main character's words which contain power in the social relation. Some examples of powers, control and threat are found in the main character's conversations as they want to dominate each other. Fairclough (1992) argues that "power relations always conflict relations".

The influential lexical items found in the text are given below in the table. These vocabulary items played a major role in influencing the ideology and showing the power practice in the story.

Following are some lexicons from the text that depict power relationships in the story.

Table 1 The Lexical items found in the text

WORDS	MEANING
Retaliate	to do something bad to someone because they have done something bad to you
Hypocrite	someone who pretends to have certain beliefs or opinions that they do not really have
Mend your ways	to improve the way you behave after behaving badly for a long time
Rip off	to remove something quickly and violently
Scrape	to rub against a rough surface in a way that causes slight damage or injury
Haul	to move somewhere with a lot of effort, especially because you are injured or tired
Dislodge	to force or knock something out of its position
Pitiless	showing no pity and not caring if people suffer
Reproach	criticism, blame, or disapproval
Grovel	to praise someone a lot or behave with a lot of respect towards them because you think that they are important and will be able to help you in some way
Fury	extreme, often uncontrolled anger
Pant	to breathe quickly with short noisy breaths, for example, because you have been running or because it is very hot
Retaliate	to do something bad to someone because they have done something bad to you
Quell	to end a situation in which people are behaving violently or protesting, especially by using force
Censure	the act of expressing strong disapproval and criticism -
Infidel	an offensive word for someone who has a different religion from you

Here, the researcher has quoted the few examples below from the text for the purpose of showing the exact examples and also for the purpose of providing the evidences.

Examples from Text:

Line 110

“He didn't, as his father expected, flinch guiltily from his gaze. In fact, the boy's mood was alert and steady in this sense: as well as being sullen, he was very watchful. He returned his father's long looks with more than a hint of criticism, of reproach even; so much so that Pervaiz began to feel that it was he who was in the wrong and not the boy!”

Line 390

“Pervaiz was panting. He knew that the boy was un390 reachable, but he struck him nonetheless. The boy neither covered himself nor retaliated; there was no fear in his eyes. He only said, through his split lip: 'So who's the fanatic now?'"

Line 370

“If Bettina looked at the boy in anger, he looked back at her with twice as much cold fury. She said, 'What kind of woman am I that I deserve to be spoken to like that?'"

Line 125

“Pervaiz hurried into his bedroom where his wife was still awake, sewing in bed. He ordered her to sit down and keep quiet, though she had neither stood up nor said a word.”

Line 210

“Ali then reminded Pervaiz that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her, ‘You’re not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in!’”

Line 300

“Ali accused Pervaiz of ‘groveling’ to the whites; in contrast, he explained, he was not ‘inferior’; there was more to the world than the West, though the West always thought it was best.”

As we can observe from the lines given that Pervaiz (Father) is trying to use his power by using physical force on his son which is common in Patriarchal society but his son, Ali, born in London fights back by showing an offensive attitude to his father and argues with him, In addition to that Ali criticize his father for changing his religious beliefs, drinking Alcohol and having a relationship. He claims that his father has no right to interfere in his life as he is following the right path of religion. The father, on the other hand, uses the same approach and both have an exchange of hot words so it can be seen that both males in the story are dominant and trying to prove their points.

The characters of Bettina and Perviaz's life are marginalized. Ali shames Bettina for being a prostitute though the whole time she was trying to help Pervaiz and claimed to just be a good friend of Pervaiz. She jumps out of the car due to the insult but didn't say a word to Ali. Similarly, there is no character development of Pervaiz's wife. She has been depicted as an eastern housewife, with religious beliefs who is forced to cook pork and obey all the orders of her husband.

## 7. Results and Discussion

The results demonstrate two things. First, is the power conflict between Pervaiz and Ali. Second, is the subordination of female characters in the story. The research shows that hegemonic masculinity is characterized by the discourse of story and the repressiveness of women. This research critically studies the context of this story having power conflict. Other participants can be seen challenging, questioning and resisting power. Thus, discourse is an interactive phenomenon. It is also called as a two-way process. The findings conclude that discourse is a war of words.

Hanif Kureshi elaborates on the polarities of the minds of fathers and sons. Ali is very different from his father. Seeing him endorse Maulvi and spit in Bettina's face, Pervaiz became mad at Ali. Pervaiz brings Ali home, he has a serious conversation with his son and beats him for insulting both Bettina and him. He screams:

Parvaiz: I won't stand for the extremity of anti-democratic and anti-Jewish rubbish.

Ali: Only the corrupt would say it is extreme to want.

The fact that Ali is bullied and unaccepted in Western society provokes a range of behaviors. Pervaiz, on the other hand, feels the need to assert their British identity and reject Eastern traditions. It has been observed that his father is too alienated from the culture of his origin. A limitation of this paper, however, is that it does not focus on other issues such as religion, identity, assimilation, generation and radicalization.

It is observed regarding women's roles that there are many differences in the kind of oppression that the two female characters in the story were subjected to, perhaps one of them being a woman and the human being also from Pakistan. It reflects the

situation. , the other is female but European. It is subordination, despite existing differences that she may indicate immigrants suffer.

Following ideals of masculinity that include separation and independence, Parvaiz has a wife, but rather than establishing an intimate bond with her, he excludes and dominates her. He obscures her consciousness and strips her of both her action and her voice. She is a character in the background that we cannot even find her name in the text. While Parvaiz plays an active dominant role in this story, his wife is to be accused of passivity. The research shows that both Ali and Pervaiz attempted to keep the floor and challenged power.

## 8. Conclusion

The results of the above analysis show that the power relationship is an interactive concept in which two or more people share or oppose power. It shows that no one is completely more powerful than the other character in this story.

Neither male participant remains powerful during the speech, but both share the same status. However, women have remained powerless over language and social factors throughout history. The main characters keep trying to resist energy devices.

Thus it can be seen that power is a concept that is constantly changing and moves from one participant to another. In this story a verbal power struggle between father and son. The only stability in shared power is practiced by the female characters. Therefore, it is concluded that males are more dominant in this text and the last line "Who is the fanatic?" leads us to believe that Ali has become more powerful in the language and his father is using physical violence by hitting him.

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