



## **Full Length Research Article**

### **A MAN WHO LEADS TO GOD AND NOT TO SIN, IS ALWAYS WORTH THE WAIT: A CRITICAL CULTURAL CRITIQUE OF SECTARIANISM IN *HOW IT HAPPENED***

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The sectarian aspects in the norms, attitudes and social set up within the current cultural scenario and the issue of marrying and arranging marriages within one's religious cast has been the long practiced tradition observed in Pakistan. The undertaken study deals with the tug of war that has been witnessed in the multi religious society of Pakistan. Shazaf Fatima Haider in *How It Happened* (2013) tries to depict the norms of the traditional and typical Pakistani society especially while settling the issues and making arrangements for the marital bonds. The study draws upon the cultural conceptual framework proposed by Schleicher (2007) and the post war British Cultural Theory. This descriptive research uses the text of the novel as the data. The data relevant to the theme of religion, sects and sectarian biasness in settling marital affairs. The findings which are based on comparative analysis of themes of religion and matrimony, revealed the presence of strong sectarian issues and prejudice that exists among people, affecting their thoughts, norms, attitude and action. The comparative analysis also depicts that religion and matrimony go parallel and are interwoven. The author further describes in detail the tension that exists between two major religious sects, Shias and Sunnis, creating rivalry between them, especially in arranging and approving marriages. The findings revealed that Haider (2013) brings forward the comparison of notion in acceptability and granting space for all the matters including general acceptance of giving freedom to new generation for all the sects especially in matters of marital bonds. The comparison highlights the preferences between old and young generations in the same but alternating cultural scenario.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Cultural studies are often attached to research orientation, with a focus on contexts and opposition to analysis which is text-centered, including textual analysis as well. The early cultural studies ascended as a reply to intrinsic and exclusive concepts of culture and its significance, that were prominently infused particularly in the literary workings. Despite this reaction, abandoning the textual analysis itself never occurred. This aspect is associated with the reality that the acute establishments of cultural studies fall in the connection of bookish and socio theoretical factors. Initially the occurrence resulted in positions of the structuralism ideal, rendering to which the texts comprised of multiple implications, among which few are accessible as predictable or favored, therefore allowing the reader to decode the text against the texture. However, later on, there action stole the demonstration making

the reception or audience studies the centrally and surely, a noticeable and observable constituent of ethnic mechanism. Michel Butor, opines that, "We are part of a complex of evolving cultures... one is never the sole source of a text... All this undermines the walls put up by our society between author and reader..."; (as quoted in Newman, 1995, p. 191). Thus, Michel Butor succeeded in declaring rewriting a freedom and awakening. The intercultural approach is used to the cross international, bilingual and transcultural settings, which are territories where powerful regional identities crossbreed. The problem of implication of textual analysis with the mention to cultural studies is logically wider paradigm. Several methods that are contextualize in their constitution, had been blamed for minimizing the approach and extent like, socio-economic, Marxist, and several feminist methods, the fresh historicism, structures in comparative literature. Nevertheless, in association with traditional and cultural studies, context has turned a matter of its own, sideways the analysis of textual, that appears to be under taking deep variations on other grounds. A current article by Gérard Genette (2001), deals with the relationship of criticism in between text orient and

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conceptuality. He concludes the critique with the notion of wholeness or contextually of implication, which later became popular and resulted in decline of debates.

## Literature Review

The survey of target culture increases the consciousness of the readers and knowledge of the original mentioned texts with rising new meanings (Bazerman, 2003; Rayner *et al.*, 2004; Furutaka, 2009). Zima (1992) relates intertextuality to influence and intercultural exchange as in the traditional comparative criticism field. The intercultural approach is used to the cross international, bilingual and transcultural settings, which are territories where powerful regional identities crossbreed. The rewriting phenomena can combine the approaches of, "translation studies, intercultural criticism and comparative studies" (Saibene, 2009, p. 17). The works of the Austrian Peter Handke (as cited in Sebald, 2013), the Italians Pier P. Pasolini and Fulvio Tomizza (as cited in Boldor, 2003), are a few exemplars of a joint historical understanding, a mutual geographical space, related cultural designs and shared ethnographic codes. Juvan (2008) hypothesizes that the comparative method is used to determine the supremacy in cultural wars amid individuals and literatures of numerous cultures. Yet, in the last century, academics like Posnett and Text insisted on the necessity of enlisting in the comparative studies to help take a well-defined methodological structure to authenticate the results (Jusdanis, 2003). Bolder (2003) asserts that field like antiquity, domestic literature and philosophical system, and so on are influenced by comparatives combined with initial historicist creativity, whereas, the field of cultural studies, on the philosophical level, contradicts the classic acceptance of comparatives. The statement of Clements (1978) confirms the earlier comment that, "It is a fact of life that the term comparative literature will remain. Its differentiation is seen in... titles of many important literary journals and books... on every continent, and most college catalogs" (p. 11).

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2003, p. 13). Originated in England, the task of ethnic fields, was to understand the feeling of being active at a certain time and place through the explanation of cultural, artistic and expansive texts (Grossberg, 1997). In fact, the British cultural studies in its primary stage heavily relied on adjacent investigation of customary methods in texts (Nelson, 1992). Far ahead, the textual examination surrounded by the framework of cultural studies progressed to an importance on the studies of reception gradually. Principally, this happened in relations of the structuralized model, insisting that the texts contain numerous implications, amongst which some are obtainable as forecasting and chosen; simultaneously, against the texture, the reader can decode the text too. Far along, the reception or audience studies also turned out to be the center and certainly a conspicuous and noticeable organization in the works pertaining to culture. In this state, the reception has been witnessed in an expansive logic, negating the literary pattern and linking least value to the connotation, thus creating space for a multiplicity of daily tradition and situation. Cultural studies are usually known to be investigation focused, aiming at the contexts and moving opposite to text-centered analysis which is related to textual analysis. Undeniably, primary cultural studies grew as a response against ingrained concepts of culture and importance for works of literary importance (as cited in Kovala, 2002). However, meanwhile, the textual analysis was not neglected as a consequence of this response. The real fact is that the traditions of cultural studies have been present at the crossing of literary theories and domains of sociology. The task of cultural fields, as it is originated in England, was to observe the understanding of being alert at a specific time and space, surrounded by the thought fullness for artistic, traditional and communicative texts (Grossberg, 1998). Therefore, within the boundaries and framework of the cultural studies, the textual analysis advanced near an importance on studies of reception.

Due to the prominence on reception and the doubts, the cultural studies turned susceptible to the accusations of over-contextualization. While the other side of the picture depicted that the cultural areas have been like wise assessed in the realm of over-textualisation, in the matter of spinning its subject substance into a text ignoring its factors of context. It is a belief of the critics that featuring reception glaringly in the application of cultural fields would result in the production which has been cornered. Joly Jensen and John J. Pauly pertinently describe the results of textualisation that, "Embedded in the term text are all our long-contested practices of literacy, instruction, organization, worship, science, and artistry. In fact, much of the troubles which are being dubbed textualism are due to the fact that the very term 'text' incorporates and therefore reiterates long contested assumptions and practices concerning literacy, instruction, organization, worship, science, and art" (as cited in Kovala, 2002, p. 3). Grossberg (1998) further criticized the conceptions of, "mediation, communication, and social constructionism" (p. 75). He describes that the concern with these tendencies lies in the fact that they minimize to questions of meaning and interpretation of all that makes sense. Instead of relating to the meaning of texts or to assess of how the people intend to deal with texts, the cultural studies, "should be concerned with what discursive practices do in the world" (p. 75). Within audience studies, another attack on substance and rendering is launched by Hermes. Hermes (1992) opines that many of audience studies have been cursed with, "fallacy of meaningfulness" (p.12-15) and her additional debates asserts

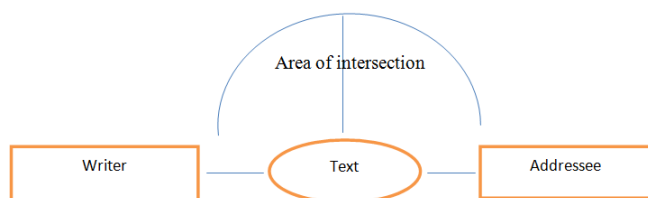
that these sort of works do not cater daily routine of sense-making, because they have been focused a lot on some particular texts only. She rejects text analysis as that would, forwards the understanding that some aspect is slipped by the reader during the passage of reading, establishing the profound senses of texts. Hermes (1992) further explains that, "Text analysis assumes that texts offer a special scope of substances that cannot but be consumed up by readers. My position is that texts acquire meaning only in the interaction between readers and texts and that psychoanalysis of the text on its own is never enough to reconstruct these meanings" (p. 10). Although, the evaluations repose on diverse ideas related to context and text, Grossberg (1997) and Hermes (1992) seem to be accomplishing the similar point regarding the contradiction of the analysis of the text. For Grossberg (1997), the boundary of both the text and context vanishes, and holding onto the grid of transcripts and backgrounds, which is nothing but a rhizomatic entity. Whereas, Hermes (1992), in turn, brings a more traditional view of context when she stress on general, routing life usage of contexts. *How It Happened* (2013) by Shazaf Fatima Haider, depicts that though in the background of the novel, the city Karachi, might be exploding with political upheavals and could be the hot theme of discussion, but the drawing rooms, bursting with chats and centering around trays of red drink and tête-à-têtes, engrossed in finding good Shia Syed matches for the youngsters of the household, and not at any cost crossing or allowing to cross the observations of faith and loyalty to ones sect, is the pulse of the story.

### Theoretical framework

The undertaken study rests on two theoretical frameworks which are described below:

#### The Schleicher's Textual Analysis Model (2007)

The model below was used by Schleicher (2007) to carry the intertextuality and rewriting evaluation in '*Intertextuality in the Tales of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*'. The author, the addressee and the current and previous contexts make the textual surfaces that transect and make up a three-dimensional space, in which language substitutes between three coordinates. The model is presented below:



(Adopted from Schleicher, 2007, p. 11)

Along the vertical axis, the text intervenes from the historical context and the text itself. On the horizontal axis the text intercedes in-between the writer and the addressee. The author and addressee both share the language of the schoolbook. This mediating role of the text leads to intertextuality and rewriting.

### The cultural theory

The works of Raymond Williams (1961) and E. P. Thompson (1963) in the realm of Cultural Studies and Cultural Text Analysis, have been especially influential in the evolution of

post-war British cultural theory. The theory of articulation lays extraordinary stress on horizontal and contextual relatives of meaning which fall opposite to the relations which are perpendicular and semantic (as cited in Kovala, 2002). Simultaneously, the theory pressures the necessity of providing an adjacent consideration to the exclusive and case-focused, expressions of the marvel to be contemplated. Essentially, within cultural studies, the poststructuralist emphasis on contextual networks is also a topic of discussion (Kovala, 2002). As a result of this development, the customary perception of sighted and interpretation as the inactive happenings for the implication of any text became doubtful. The change of focus ranging from the analysis of text forwarding to the meanings of contexts, is positioned in 1980. As a result of this approach, the *Cultural Studies* editors wrote in their the book, in the introduction section that, "although in that respect is no prohibition against close textual readings in cultural works, they are also not taken" (Nelson et al., 1992). The further addition comprised of the opinion that the analysis of text in literary studies is loaded with suppositions that are related to autonomy, self-sufficiency along with canonicity, which do not compose the elements of a cultural studies orientation. Therefore, the textual analysis turned out to be another approach with a multiple number of ideological underpinnings still to fight against (Kovala, 2002).

### Data Analysis

The audience or reception studies undoubtedly became the focused and surely had a prominent and visible place in cultural studies. According to Schleicher's (2007) model, Haider (2013) dealt with her cultural values which are hybrid and amalgamation of old and new; the colonial, colonized and the decolonized, an era where religion is altered according to the whims and needs. The initial occurrence was witnessed in footings of the structuralize model, which asserted that texts are consists of some connotations, among which, few could be fore grounded and supposed whereas the reader's interpretation of the text might fall in contradiction to the trend. Raymond Williams added to the idea of culture, by taking it further away than the legendary notions while conceptualizing the culture and considering it as a way of life, along with accepting the means of susceptibility, ethnicities and exercise (1958 and 1961). Williams (1958) opined that the need to have the thought of culture and society, and not ignoring the significance of media culture and a struggle to overcome the difference between high and low culture.

Haider (2013) portrays the religious manipulation for justifying dance and music when Zeba was dancing and Zainab Phuppo declared that Alam should not, "waste his attentions on dancing girls" (p. 110) as dancing, being the Hindu tradition should be avoided by the Muslims. For Hall (1996) textualization deals with establishing the influence and policies as strongly as language pertaining matters or dissertations and determined that merely textuality was not enough. Haider (2013) identify the exoticism in native culture and through this she constitutes the political biasness of the people, powered by their religious faith believes and understandings. Zeba answered that dancing was a tradition of Lucknow for both Shia and Sunni, to which Zainab Phuppo declares it a disrespected activity for Muslim girls. The author, smiling with irony, states the opinion of mothers that actually Mehndi is the most appropriate occasion to show off girls, and, "it has nothing to do with Islam and everything to do with

henna, dancing, singing and other revelry” (p. 111). It could be witnessed here that the contradiction of text and context had constantly been repeated within various expressions and the matter is not the association of text and context rather, it is found to be, “something else” (Kovala, 2002, p. 3). Haider (2013) writes various instances of religious manipulations and presents her own regional ethnicity. Dadi justifies, “shopping for girls” for Haroon by saying that, “go around dating shating, bringing shame on the family. This process, in the only way respectable Muslim girls can get married” (Haider, 2013, p. 51). When Zeba decided to meet Gullan personally, Dadi glared in agony saying, “the Bandian family whose women are known for their purdah and modesty...your modern ways have corrupted your daughters!” (p. 161-62). But Dadi believes that meeting, “with your entire family as chaperone” (p. 211) is acceptable for respectable girls. The religious manipulation is at peak in *How It Happened*. Religious creed issues license to flirt. Saleha ponders about her first crush that, “...if he was a Shia...I would have a sanction to flirt with him, but I found out...that he was a Sunni” (p. 167). While catching Zeba red handed on her date, Dadi intruded, “route to fight a valiant jihad to protect the virtue of her wayward granddaughter” (p. 198) and that, “these Sunni’s want to sabotage our ways” and that, “are we Syeds!” (p. 202). She further manipulates her son by saying, “Hussain, have you considered that Zeba’s children will be Sunni?” (p. 238). Fati Phupps denies obeying and observing the orthodox cultural norms blended with religious rules, uttering, “I lived my life my way, not according to some archaic formula drawn by a palsied old man with a frown on his face and a fatwa on his lips!” (p. 247).

Dadi never gives up the religious blackmailing especially when she does not have appropriate answers with logic to give back. Here, it is seen that the interpretation of the text has conventionally been assigned the vital part inside the notions and believes of the specific devout crowd. In brief, the cultural studies is an essentially a reductionist mean, that aids some context or contexts over text and textual analysis. When Fati Phupps talks of ‘gays’ Dadi does not have a proper argument, thus inserts religion, “What haram living are you earning...Hai Allah! Forgive us all!” (p. 30-31). On milad, a lady rebuked Saleha for talking, saying, “The Prophet’s family is here in this room...Do you want to go to hell?” (p. 112). When Dadi caught Zeba on date with Omer, she yelled, “If you stopped watching Amreekan movies and started reading the Quran, you would realize what a sin you are committing!” (p. 200). Dadi objected to Omer’s being a Sunni and when FatiPhupps reasoned the argument, Dadi had no answer to give back, but cried, “Fatima, show some respect! What does the Quran say about the rights of the parents? You’re not allowed to even say, “uff” to me!” (p. 228). Fornäs (2000) gave a different attitude to the general culture by emphasizing on textuality and intermediation. He opines that the cultural studies could not escape interpreting textual meanings. He further assesses that the life and existence of a text depends on four levels that are interrelated: substantial, form-relations, inference and practical usage. Therefore, it is the obligation of ethnic educators to comprehend and apply all the above mentioned levels alongside the meanings (Fornäs, 2000). Haider (2013) suggests to let the barking dogs sleep. FatiPhupps advised Dadi not to show fear and, “just like that-thup goes the conversation” (p. 269) and, “As FatiPhupps had predicted, such open support to the match resulted in the general loss of interest” (Haider, 2013, p. 294). Haider (2013) centralizes her moral view about the people discussing the unconventional code of conduct of

people. The attitude of FatiPhupps declaring that she would not observe conventional mourning on her husband’s death. Fati, “had caused a scandal by not waiting for the body of her husband” and, “refused to allow any condolences at the home” (p. 73). This violence of a cultural norm became a stigma for the family as Qurrat never forgets to taunt Dadi that, “But sometimes women have demons inside them!” (p. 261). Here, Haider’s analysis shows that the operational aim of the textual examination proves that the texts are a main foundation of observer to lay their rights about community constructions, associations and developments. John B. Thompson had stressed on the fact that the examination of philosophy should be referred back to the thorough qualities of the text (as cited in Fairclough, 1997).

According to Norman Fairclough (1997), the analysis of the text could be useful and simultaneously essential while studying the social context. The speculative aim is that the social constructions that comprise attention of many social scientists, and in return the texts compose an essential method of societal action. Similarly, Haider (2013) shows that Qurrat’s son had married an Afro-American, breaking the ancient chain of arranging marriages, to which Dadi taunted, “luckier are those who arrange good matches for their sons” (p. 256). On the declaration of Zeba’s engagement to a Sunni, Qurrat cried, “...not announcing that it was a love marriage! And to a Sunni!” to which Dadi replies, “you are right; we never had a Sunni...African American Christian, yes, but no Sunni” (p. 284). Haider (2013) clearly depicts to be incorporating the view of Fairclough (1997) that the language associations widely misunderstood and declared as impartial, the accurate devices of the social along with philosophical work forecast the functions of language, “in producing, reproducing or transforming social structures, relations and identities”, which under routine is generally overlooked (p. 208- 09.) The ancient motive of the standing of analysis of text is that the texts are profound indicators of societal procedures, measure and variety, whereas the textual analysis can offer chiefly respectable pointers in the community modification (Fairclough, 1997). The analysis of the text generates a counter-balance to excessively inflexible and systematizing social investigations, being a valued technique in the studies of social and cultural alteration (Fairclough, 1997). Haider (2013) portrays the imperialism of Dadi, who, after catching Zeba red handed, dating with Omer yelled, using her authority of a religious and ethical interpreter, “After all those years of respectability, where we lived segregated lives and never looked at a na-mehram, my own granddaughter is acting like a prostitute behind my very back!” (p. 201).

Dadi blames a Sunni girl for losing her son, “First my Fareed taken away by that red-lipped Sunni! Now Zeba as well” (p. 205). Thus, Haider (2013) portrays that the textual analysis is continually based on a context and therefore, cultural as Fish opines that, “We are never not in a situation” (p. 284) and pulling in particular and communal backgrounds in bringing approval in construing and understanding. Haider (2013) through the opinion of her characters, depicts that the characteristic of cultural analysis of texts, is contextual. But, just to say that a certain approach is contextual cannot matter much or perhaps in determining the pertinent context in itself is a material of contextual acceptance (Kovala, 2002). The analysis of the text attends to the societal contexts particularly in bringing out the social and cultural alterations and associations of influence. As Grossberg asserts, “cultural

studies is ... a context-specific theory/analysis of how contexts are made, unmade and remade as structures of power and domination" (1997, p. 68). Haider (2013) depicts the dominative power of the ancient norms and cultural beliefs, special of the geographical context, and the non challenged standards based on sectarian politics and cultural standards of purity. She writes about the elopement of Iraj and the as consequences of this action of Iraj, her parents, "could never look anyone in the eye again" and she brought the shame, "upon that family! Three unmarried sisters...all remained unmarried. Who would give a proposal to a family...with such dishonor?" (p. 196). The society intact in its religious values with no margin to forgive the sin of falling in love is depicted. Mikko Lehtonen offered a model of textual analysis by focusing on the growths within the studies of culture and focused on connotation and understanding (Kovala, 2002). He asserts that the analysis of any culture demands the focus equally on all the three levels which are those of texts, contexts and the level of the readers, by consuming several dissimilar methodologies like the poetics of texts, the contextual hermeneutics and the ethnographical value of implications (Lehtonen, 2000).

Haider (2013) depicts a former colonized society which seems to pull themselves through under the shelter of their religious imperialism. *How It Happened* depicts Dadi's view of girls settling their own matters of marriage as, "They have no sense of shame" (p. 55). Dadi reproaches the idea of Zeba's meeting a man, "Is my granddaughter, the little girl I changed and fed and raised with good Muslim values ACTUALLY OUT ON A DATE?" (p. 199), "like a prostitute" (p. 196). This approach supports the opinion that the texts, contexts and meanings, all are multifaceted, complicated and perspective-dependent occurrences. Haider (2013) elaborates the cultural concepts and supports Kellner, who opined that when the perceptions are used and available, the probabilities of manufacturing an understanding of the critical analyses of the texts and overlooking one-sided, abridged and restricted readings also experience an enhancement (Kellner, 1997).

## Conclusion

The study rests on the conclusion that an intensive attitude of biasness in the matters of religious preference and priority for certain religious sects, still prevails among the people of South Asian Pakistan. Kovala (2002) and Tötösy (2000) rightly explained that the activities that based on culture are to be converted into texts to be read than institutions or acts that are required to be investigated, and Haider (2013) rightly agrees to this trend by focusing on audiences and on the empirical work, and portraying a culture that is part and parcel of the religious community that is depicted. Haider (2013) highlights the scrutiny which the stakeholders observe during marriage settlements and make sure the band stays within the clan and particularly within religious creed. These differences are observed as a general sense of pride along with the social status and family name among the people of this region. The statement of Ferguson and Golding seems true that with in cultural studies there have been some symbols and with the rising restlessness of the textual and postmodern inclinations, the alteration of cultural examination is diverted from its practical governmental, societal and substantial roots in order to revive the sociological approaches and reevaluating the purposes and practices of studies pertaining to culture (as cited in Kovala, 2002).

Haider (2013) rediscovers the cultural analysis by focusing that behind every norm and trend lies a bond and a promise with religious and a breach with sect is a disconnection with existence. The data analysis depicts a rigid attitude of the first generation towards the bond with the particular religious sect and urges the marital bonds to be settled within and not intruded otherwise. Thus, it is increasingly through texts that social control and social domination are exercised. Though, the textual analysis could be found to have the political source as well (Fairclough, 1997), but Haider (2013) does not indulge the political resources, rather describes the politics of biasness and religious preferences of everyday people towards settling marriage issues. Thus, the religious prejudice provide the context of sectarian choice and approval for marital partner as well. As Mikko Lehtonen asserts that the kinds and extent of contextualization needed in textual analysis cannot be decided on in advance, they depend on context (as cited in Kovala, 2002). Therefore, Haider (2013) depicts a social context, within a typical cultural scenario, and promulgates that the cultural values and norms are a revolutionary phenomena's, and the evolution is constantly taking place with the changing contexts. She further depicts that religion and rituals run parallel and a comparison of these two show that they are also constantly interwoven with each other and cannot be separated easily.

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